Understand the past. Engage in the present. Create a better future.
A Letter from the Chairman of the Board

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) is an international resource for those exploring the stories of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the United States. During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the staff shared HSP's collections with new audiences here in the Mid-Atlantic and, through our developing digital resources, around the world.

This year, HSP's Library and collections were featured in a number of nationally televised programs, entering the living rooms of millions of Americans. Every Sunday, lesser known and “hidden” collections were introduced to thousands of readers in HSP’s weekly series, Memory Stream, published in the Philadelphia Inquirer. HSP staff traveled across the country, presenting at professional conferences on topics ranging from the importance of primary sources in elementary education to strategies that small historic organizations can use to better organize and protect their holdings.

As part of our commitment to education, over 20 classes visited the library for field trips, helping to bring history to life. More than 4,000 individuals researched our collections, with another 4,300 attending HSP's public programs. This year also witnessed a new partnership with the Greater Philadelphia Area Chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists to provide one-on-one genealogy consultations on Wednesday evenings. Along with our burgeoning collaborations with Findmypast, FamilySearch, and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, HSP's ongoing genealogy education programs mark mutually beneficial partnerships between organizations dedicated to family history.

HSP’s new initiatives and collaborations have been made possible through the support of our generous donors and members. We have accomplished all of these wonderful things in order to fulfill our mission to inspire individuals and organizations to create a better future through historical understanding. Thank you for your continued support.

Bruce Fenton
Chairman, HSP Board of Councilors
In the mid-19th century, a young man from outside Philadelphia set out for the American West, seeking to recover from illness, and perhaps to find his fortune. Little did he know that a simple hat made with his hands, using the skills he learned in his family trade and the ingenuity of necessity, would become an American icon for 150 years.

For Stetson’s 150th Anniversary, the haberdasher decided to shoot part of its Autumn/Winter 2015 collection catalog at HSP. As the massive Stetson factory once occupied acres of Philadelphia—with many of the company’s records housed in the archive—HSP was the natural choice. Keep your eyes peeled for HSP’s Communications Manager Vincent Fraley, Director of Institutional Development and Grants Management JC Hatalski, and Wells Fargo Education Manager Alicia Parks.

Lights, Camera, HSP

Several national television programs visited HSP’s library this past year, introducing the institution and its collections to millions who tuned in across the country.

As part of the second season of Finding Your Roots, WHYY film crews stopped by in October to film several clips with staff and members. Senior Director of the Library Lee Arnold disclosed his secret to deciphering difficult handwriting, while Research Services Librarian Sarah Heim shared tricks-of-the-trade for researching ancestors with common surnames. HSP member Brian Geverd, who discovered much of his family history in HSP’s collections, discussed the joys and challenges of genealogical research.

PBS’ Genealogy Roadshow also visited HSP in October during the show’s second-season stop in Philadelphia. Set against the book-laden backdrop of HSP’s Reading Room, hosts Joshua Taylor, Kenyatta D. Berry, and Mary Tedesco explored the family histories of featured guests while over 500 attendees shared their stories with local genealogical professionals and organizations.

In March, actress Angie Harmon uncovered a few family secrets at HSP as part of TLC’s Who Do You Think You Are? Through research in HSP’s collections, Harmon discovered that her 5x great-grandfather travelled to the US from Germany as an indentured servant before serving in the Continental Army, wintering under Washington’s command at Valley Forge.

Clips from each show are available on HSP’s YouTube channel, youtube.com/HistoricalPA
HSP: A Visionary Institution

Hosted by actor Sam Waterston, the documentary series Visionaries highlights the rarely told stories of nonprofit organizations all around the world working to make a positive difference in their community and beyond. Wishing to explore the unique challenges and opportunities facing historical institutions in an increasingly all-digital world, the production selected HSP in recognition of its innovative conservation, digitization, and education practices.

HSP’s President & CEO Page Talbott toured the producers through two centuries of HSP’s history, and Lee Arnold, Senior Director of the Library, snuck the film crew into the most secure collection vaults for a look at several treasured items.

“HSP is like the Roman god Janus, looking both to the future and the past. What makes HSP staff visionary is that we believe that knowing and preserving the past is essential for having a vision of the future.”
~ Lee Arnold, Senior Director of the Library

Senior Director of Programs and Services Beth Twiss Houting and Wells Fargo Education Manager Alicia Parks discussed their strategies for making history come alive in the classroom with primary source education, while Philadelphia school teachers and local students shared their stories of HSP’s pivotal role in Philadelphia’s National History Day program.

“I enjoyed the opportunity to showcase Kevin’s work with National History Day in the Visionaries series. Working directly with primary sources provides a unique opportunity for students to get a connection to history that cannot happen through a textbook.”
~ Alicia Parks, Wells Fargo Education Manager

The show aired Fall 2015 on WHYY, Philadelphia’s local PBS station. To learn more about volunteer and intern opportunities, visit hsp.org/Visionaries

Interns and Volunteers

Philadelphia has a storied history of volunteerism. Civic concern and community solidarity were responsible for many of the city’s first hospitals, orphanages, and other public institutions. HSP itself is the result of such voluntary associations, and its most recent interns and volunteers continue to embody this spirit of service.

HSP’s volunteers and interns are, like its members and staff, a varied bunch. From students stealing time from their summers and social lives, to educators helping students on Wednesday nights as HSP Student Mentors, to those who find retirement well spent sharing the stories of the past, HSP is forever grateful for the time and energy of these generous individuals.

To learn more about volunteer and intern opportunities, visit hsp.org/Opportunities

2014-15 Interns

Tyler Antoine
Alex Ames
Sandy Bluth
Derek Brennen
Mark Carnesi
Anthony DiGiovanni

2014-15 Volunteers

Ellen Bateman
Terry Braskow
Sabrina Bocanegra
Jennifer Burd
Cara Cloniger
Erin Cloniger
Lisa Costello
Jim DeWalt
Kristin Geiger

Katherine Fancolino
Samuel Forman
Eden Heller
Randi Kaminer
Susan Kearney
Michael Kuder
Helen Longhurst
Tom Longhurst
Robert Miller
Maureen Murray

Olivia D’Aiutolo
Alexandria Einspahr
Irena Frumkin
Aaya Kingsbury
Melissa Lairgan
Mary Lakowski
Alexandra Leber

Mary O’Neill
Gaye Painten
Natalie Porter
Russ Scarboro
Joshua Sherman
Ken Smith
Samantha Spott
Jerry Syme
Margaret Syme
Marjorie Wiener
Sue Wiley

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Mary O’Neill
Gaye Painten
Natalie Porter
Russ Scarboro
Joshua Sherman
Ken Smith
Samantha Spott
Jerry Syme
Margaret Syme
Marjorie Wiener
Sue Wiley

Interns Tyler Antoine, Beth Potens, Alexandra Leber, and Clare Michel.
Adopt-a-Collection

Within HSP’s total holdings of over 21 million items, many collections require organization and preservation to ensure their proper care and continued accessibility to researchers. From mending tears and tightening spines, to replacing whole covers and re-housing in specially designed boxes, the Adopt-a-Collection program assists HSP with processing and preserving collections so that researchers can more easily identify relevant materials.

Thank you to the generous donors who adopted collections this year:

- Carol Ingald - Contemporary Club Records
- Michael McDowell - PA Abolition Society (partial adoption)
- Randall Miller - Frank C. Di Pima Papers
- Wayne Strasbaugh - Richard Peters Papers (partial adoption)
- Young Friends of HSP - French Benevolent Society Papers, Judith Shuman Eden Papers, Richard Peters Papers (partial adoption), PA Abolition Society Papers (partial adoption), and the Balch Institute Sheet Music Collection

To learn more about HSP’s Adopt-a-Collection program, or to browse previously adopted collections, visit hsp.org/AAC
Members of the Young Friends of HSP Board at the Founder’s Award dinner at the Union League of Philadelphia on May 7, 2015.

The Young Friends had fun posing with George Washington in a photo booth at the ‘Staches and Spirits party in the fall of 2014.

Young Friends of HSP

Established in September 2014, the Young Friends of HSP Board oversaw the growth of the group’s membership and impact among the city-wide young professional community. Governed by individuals hailing from careers as diverse as finance, law, and non-profits, the 25 member Board is united in their passion for making history relevant and engaging for those 21-45 years old.

The Young Friends of HSP Board is responsible for planning and hosting fun and engaging events that raise money for HSP’s Adopt-a-Collection program. After each event the board identifies which collections and projects it will support with the proceeds.

For more information about the Young Friends of HSP and upcoming events, visit hsp.org/YoungFriends

FamilySearch

HSP’s card catalog—the key to the manuscript collection—contains over one million individual, typed and hand-written cards with information about unpublished materials currently not searchable in HSP’s online catalog. For most manuscript materials, researchers must visit the library in-person to discover these collections. Scanning and indexing the card catalog by HSP staff or private contractors was previously estimated to take nearly a decade and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Through FamilySearch, one of the world’s largest online genealogy databases, the card catalog has been scanned in its entirety, lead by two volunteers, Helen and Tom Longhurst, in less than three months. The couple, from Florence, Montana, set up their scanning station in HSP’s Information Commons this June and began the process—drawer by drawer, card by card—of creating digital records of the manuscript holdings.

Each drawer contained anywhere from 500 to 1,200 individual cards; with the couple averaging nearly 90,000 cards per week. To ensure the scanned image of each card is readable and complete, a three-layer review process was instituted with other FamilySearch volunteers in Salt Lake City, Utah. Despite their breakneck speed, the Longhursds did not have to re-scan a single card.

With the card catalog scanning project complete, the next step in HSP’s collaboration with FamilySearch begins: indexing the scanned images to make the information fully searchable online, connecting researchers around the world to the full breadth and depth of HSP’s collections.

“Bringing the HSP card catalog online will give unprecedented item-level access to our collections from anywhere in the world.”
- Heather Willever-Farr, Digital Services Manager

To browse HSP’s card catalog online—including over 900,000 materials previously “hidden”—visit hsp.org/FamilySearch
Co-Op Collaboration with Drexel University

Thanks to the generosity of HSP Councilor emeritus George Connell, the Drexel University Co-Op, one of the oldest and most expansive university cooperative education programs in the world, has partnered with HSP to offer its students paid employment opportunities at HSP as a complement to their traditional university education. This spring, HSP welcomed its inaugural Drexel Co-Op students, Sessalli Obasuyi and Sandesh Pathak. Joining HSP full-time for their six-month program, Sessalli and Sandesh quickly became integral parts of the Programs and Services and IT Divisions, respectively.

From helping to create the document displays in HSP’s Information Commons, to maintaining the plethora of digital resources, including HSP’s members-only digital resources HSP Encounters and Discover, both Sessalli and Sandesh gained valuable experience in the fast-paced professional setting of a cultural institution. HSP’s collaboration with the Drexel University Co-Op program will continue for five more semesters.

Family History Days

As one of the largest repositories of genealogical information in the country, HSP hosted Family History Days in March. Supporting beginner and seasoned genealogists alike, the two-day conference immersed more than 500 attendees in HSP’s historic library as they learned new ways to discover and celebrate their family history.

Attendees took a break from lectures and research with behind-the-scenes tours to grab a sneak peek at the vaults where HSP’s more than 21 million items are housed. For those curious about how HSP cares for its 350+ year old materials, Director of Conservation Tara O’Brien demonstrated first-hand how different collection items are repaired and protected for future researchers.

The Greater Philadelphia Area Chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists, and dozens of other local family history organizations were on hand to help attendees brush up on old skills, learn new tricks, and network with fellow family history travellers during their time at HSP.

To learn more about HSP’s upcoming programming, visit hsp.org/Calendar
Symes in the Stacks

With only a small percentage of its collection digitized and made available online, HSP has embarked on new collaborations to make its collections more accessible to researchers across the country and around the world.

Over the past year, HSP partnered with FamilySearch to help increase the digitization of its collection. As part of this new partnership, HSP was joined by its first pair of FamilySearch volunteers, husband and wife team Jerrol and Margaret Syme.

Arriving in August 2014, the couple from Mapleton, Utah, worked seven hours a day, five days a week, scanning HSP’s published family histories, page by page. These volumes, originally published in very small runs—often for other family members—contain information on individuals and families in the Mid-Atlantic region. Many of these histories are found nowhere else in the world.

“The pace at which one would need to move to have a substantial number of records digitized is practically impossible,” said Page Talbott, HSP’s President and CEO. “But FamilySearch has developed an infrastructure that is remarkable.”

To prepare for their time in Philadelphia, the Symes received training in Salt Lake City on best practices of scanning and handling special collection materials.

“I have to re-remember all the spreadsheet and Windows applications I was hoping to put in the back of my brain and never use again,” said Jerry Syme, a retired Air Force colonel and nuclear missile launch officer.

HSP staff grew quite accustomed to the congenial presence of the Symes, with many sad to see them leave this June after scanning volumes from A to M. HSP’s collaboration with FamilySearch will continue unabated in the coming year with a second couple visiting the Library in the fall of 2015 to resume the published family histories scanning project.
H.E.A.D. for the Future (History Education And Documents)

This year HSP partnered with Wells Fargo to implement a new initiative called H.E.A.D. for the Future, a K-12 education program focusing on putting primary source materials—i.e. original historical documents—into students’ hands. HSP’s relationship with Wells Fargo began in 2012 with the preservation of the records of the Bank of North America (BNA), the nation’s first central bank and predecessor of today’s Wells Fargo. HSP and Wells Fargo then expanded with H.E.A.D. for the Future, a model K-12 document-based learning initiative that calls directly upon HSP’s nationally significant archival collections—such as the BNA records—and promotes them as discovery-based learning tools for students and educators.

H.E.A.D. promotes learning through a unique blend of literacy, humanities, and math (through financial literacy and economic history). In the 2014-15 academic year, HSP’s Wells Fargo Education Manager Alicia Parks coordinated more than 25 visits to regional K-12 classrooms and 20 classroom field trips to HSP’s library, including a group of elementary students pictured above who participated in a lesson about the 18th century yellow fever epidemic. The students studied original letters sent to Dr. Benjamin Rush and wrote with quill pens to create a stronger personal connection with the materials.

Through H.E.A.D., HSP reached over 1,000 students, tripling the number of students HSP has worked with in any given previous year. As the program expands in size and impact, HSP is thrilled to reach more students and educators in the Mid-Atlantic and across the country.

HSP Encounters and Discover

Over the past year, HSP underwent several major online initiatives to make collection materials more accessible to members and researchers. Through the work of several staff, HSP launched HSP Encounters, a new digital resource comprised of an ever-growing number of genealogical and biographical databases, and an enhanced Discover, HSP’s online catalog, to make locating materials easier than ever before.

HSP Encounters is an ongoing project in which records and materials deemed of high research value, particularly to family historians, are digitized and made available to HSP members online, in searchable form. Historical essays describe each database, and the historical context for the records it contains. As of today, six databases await researchers. HSP will add new databases to HSP Encounters as staff continue to digitize and index new materials.

“Many of our patrons have extensive knowledge of various HSP collections. With the new comment and tagging features in Discover, knowledgeable users can share valuable information about our collections with other researchers. These social sharing tools give users the opportunity to enrich contextual metadata about our collections and increase the online accessibility of those materials.”

~ Heather Willever-Farr, Digital Services Manager

Discover will sport a new record source, the Names Database, containing more than 258,000 names extracted from HSP Encounters and other digital collections. The Names Database is a boon for genealogists and family historians—many of whom begin their research with little more than an ancestor’s name.

The new Discover also includes improved book bag and other social functions. Researchers may use public lists to share records with friends, family, and other researchers, while private lists help to keep track of findings. Tagging and commenting enable users to improve HSP’s records and to increase their findability, while also creating a social experience with individuals interested in the same collection materials and topics.

To learn more about HSP Encounters and Discover, visit hsp.org/BecomeAMember
When we look back in time, we cannot know everything that happened in full detail. The historical record is rarely, if ever, complete. Yet when we present history, we inevitably fill in the gaps, create the voices that spoke, the characters that lived. Are we creating fiction? Have we made history un-true? Or have we actually created a truth greater than mere fact?

With support from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, HSP is in the midst of a two-year program “embedding” Obie award-winning playwright Ain Gordon in HSP’s Programs and Services team, expanding the traditional artist-in-residence model. In addition to influencing HSP’s programming, Gordon is using HSP’s collections as source material and inspiration for his new play to be performed at Philadelphia’s Painted Bride Art Center in May 2016.

Leading up to the play’s debut, Gordon and HSP are hosting a series of public programs with visiting artists and scholars to engage the audience in an expansive discussion of individual rights and their relation to historical events as well as a consideration of what is “historical fact.”

Beth Twiss Houting, Senior Director of Programs and Services, remarks that working with a playwright has shaped how the institution is thinking about programs in general: “Working with Ain has forced us to go beyond the traditional history subjects represented in our collection and the usual ‘talking heads’ model of history programming.”

For information about upcoming Artist Embedded programming, visit hsp.org/AinGordon

Historic Images, New Technologies (HINT)

In partnership with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), HSP wrapped up a two-year project to enhance description and discovery of digitized graphics materials and promote the linking and sharing of content among institutions and scholars. Known as “Historic Images, New Technologies” (HINT), the project produced an enhanced digital image viewer and digital history exhibit demonstrating the new viewer’s capabilities. The exhibit, called Politics in Graphic Detail, features richly annotated and interactive political cartoons from 1754 through the early 20th century.

For each cartoon, the project team created a description of the image, identified the figures, transcribed all text, and drew zones on the images connecting visual details with pop-up text boxes. A number of educational resources were also developed as part of the project, available at hsp.org/HINT.

Visit ‘Politics in Graphic Detail’ at hsp.org/HINT, or follow HINT staff on the blog, Fondly, PA, at hsp.org/Blogs
The 2015 Founder’s Award dinner took place on May 7, 2015 at The Union League of Philadelphia. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania honored novelist Sue Monk Kidd with its prestigious Founder’s Award, given to those who champion history’s uses and enhance its value to the public. Board member Alice Lea Tasman received HSP’s Heritage Award.

Kidd is a New York Times best-selling author known for her beloved novel, The Secret Life of Bees. She has also authored The Mermaid Chair, Traveling with Pomegranates, and three highly regarded spiritual memoirs: God’s Joyful Surprise, When the Heart Waits, and The Dance of the Dissident Daughter, which together comprise her groundbreaking work in the field of feminine spirituality and feminist theology. Kidd’s latest best-selling 2014 novel, The Invention of Wings, was chosen as the newest Oprah’s Book Club 2.0 selection and focuses on the 19th-century abolitionist Grimké sisters. The book was released in paperback on May 5, 2015, days before the Founder’s Award dinner.

Over 243 individuals attended the 2015 dinner. The evening, themed around women of excellence through history, began with a cocktail hour and silent auction, followed by the dinner, awards ceremony, and live auction. Wells Fargo served as the Premiere Sponsor for the event, with Wells Fargo’s Chief Historian Andy Anderson speaking about the importance of institutions such as HSP. Mr. Anderson also discussed the various HSP projects funded by Wells Fargo, including the preservation of the records of the Bank of North America and HEAD for the Future (History, Education, And Documents), a new national education program putting primary sources in the hands of students and educators.

Gerry Lenfest presented Alice Lea Tasman with the Heritage Award, and HSP Board Chair Bruce Fenton presented the Founder’s Award to Sue Monk Kidd. Samuel T. Freeman III of Freeman’s Auction led the live auction, featuring weeklong stays on Amelia Island, the Island of Nevis, and more.

Former Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell concluded the evening with a “charitable auction” in which attendees raised their paddles to donate anywhere between $100 and $2,500 to help preserve and protect women’s collections at HSP. The generosity of participants in this portion of the event alone raised over $30,000.

Founder’s Award 2015 raised over $210,000 in net income, 100% of which is directed towards HSP’s mission of inspiring individuals and organizations to create a better future through historical understanding.
Small Repositories

Many important archival collections are not held at well-known institutions with trained archival staff such as HSP. Instead, many may be found at small repositories without professional archivists on staff.

HSP’s Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR), a three-phase project to make better known and more accessible the largely hidden collections of the numerous small archival and manuscript repositories in the Philadelphia area, is currently in its final phase, running from November 2014 through April 2016.

From the Conservation Lab

HSP’s collections include items more than 700 years old, many of which are showing their age. The staff in the Conservation Lab, located on the fourth floor of HSP, was hard at work this year preserving several large and historically significant collections. To ensure that HSP’s collections are accessible to researchers in the future, Conservation staff members perform repairs and maintenance year round. This work includes:

- Creating new acid-free housing boxes for books and collections
- Mending paper tears
- Dry cleaning, humidification, and flattening
- Rebinding of entire books

Follow the adventures of HSP’s Conservation Lab on the blog, Fondly, PA, at hsp.org/Blogs

Project staff have continued to identify small repositories in the Greater Philadelphia area, writing descriptions of their archival collections for inclusion in an online catalog, and providing participating repositories with assessment reports on their collections. The scope of the project expanded to include more types of repositories with significant archival holdings, including churches, fraternal and ethnic organizations, and community groups.

Additionally, project staff have continued to offer training programs, foster information-sharing opportunities, and worked to create sustainable advances in professionalism and capacity among small archives in the region’s archival community. Project staff are also promoting HCI-PSAR as a national model, presenting on the project at professional conferences and working with archivists in other parts of the country to develop small repository initiatives in their areas.

HCI-PSAR is funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Project staff includes Project Director Jack McCarthy, Project Coordinator Andrée Mey Miller, Lead Surveyor Sarah Leu, and Surveying and Outreach Archivist Anastasia Matijkiw. HSP’s Director of Archives and Collections Management Matthew Lyons serves as Project Supervisor. Former Senior Project Surveyor Celia Caust-Ellenbogen is now at the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. The project was featured in the Society of American Archivist’s June 2015 issue of Archival Outlook.

Follow the HCI-PSAR staff on the blog, Adventures in Small Archival Repositories, at hsp.org/Blogs

895 items conserved and repaired in HSP’s conservation lab

30% of items were conserved by interns and volunteers

One in Four items conserved were part of the Bank of North America Collection supported by Wells Fargo
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