

# Archive Gifts Received in 2016

Cheryl Leibold

The Society was the beneficiary of an outstanding array of gifts in 2016, and two collections are especially important: the materials regarding A. Edward Newton, Daylesford's most famous resident, and the scrapbooks and photographs of Franklin Lorenzo Burns.

## Alfred Edward Newton

Alfred Edward Newton was born in Philadelphia in 1864. He first worked in a stationery shop, and eventually became a wealthy man after he rose from clerk to president, of the Cutter Electrical Equipment company. He retired in 1931, and with money to spend on his passion for books, and frequent buying trips to London, he became one of this country's most renowned book collectors and antiquarians. He eventually amassed, by his count, a collection of 10,000 books.



Oak Knoll Library. Courtesy of John P. Hemcher & Philip E. Hemcher.

In 1918, Newton published a collection of essays, *The Amenities of Book Collecting and Kindred Affections*, which came to be considered a classic of the genre. He published numerous essays about books, authors and travel, in magazines such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, he socialized with many of the literary lights of America and England, often hosting them at his Daylesford home "Oak Knoll." Newton had a wry sense of humor and was known for his partiality to wearing a checked suit. He was very active in the local community, personally raising the funds to build the first library in Paoli. He was also one of the original founders of the Tredyffrin Country Club, then serving on the board for just a few months, until he revealed that he



1933 caricature of Newton from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.



never played golf. In his will he stipulated that all his books should go to auction, so that new collectors could enjoy them, rather than have the collection donated to a single museum or library.

In 1896, Newton designed and built what he called a “country cottage” in Daylesford. In 1910, he and his wife decided that they would live in Daylesford year-round. He named his property “Oak Knoll,” and expanded it several times. To get to his center city office he simply walked over to the Daylesford station and took the Paoli train into the city. After Newton’s death in 1940, Oak Knoll fell into disrepair and was eventually demolished. By the 1980s, a town-home community, also called Oak Knoll, occupied the property.

The Society received two never-before published items related to Newton in 2005, so we will “launch” them here. The Newtons often gave elaborate parties for local children. Charlotte E. Dallett, who actually attended a party in her youth, donated the printed invitation and wooden souvenir from the “Marionette Party for Little Children” held at Oak Knoll in 1926. The wooden paddle is a modern reproduction of a horn book, used when books were rare and hard to come by. Its inner face reproduces the alphabet, the numerals 1 through 12, and the Lord’s Prayer.



1926 wooden paddle “horn book” reproduction.



Frontispiece drawing from *A Ridiculous Philosopher*, published in 1913 by A. Edward Newton, “Oak Knoll” Daylesford, Pennsylvania

In 2016, Bob and Joan Thibault donated ten printed booklets written by A. Edward Newton. These short essays were created as special Christmas gifts, which he had printed as small booklets and sent to many friends. Like all of his booklets, *A Ridiculous Philosopher*, from 1913, is simply bound in blue papers. The title refers to William Godwin, who is shown in a drawing on the title page. Godwin was a British political philosopher and a novelist writing in the 1790s and the first three decades of the 1800s. Godwin is also known as the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft, an early English feminist writer, and as the father of Mary Godwin Shelley, the author of the novel *Frankenstein*. The 26-page essay in the booklet is a biographical study about Godwin, and his lifelong and fruitless search for recognition in his writing. As with many of the booklets, there is no mention of Christmas. In Newton’s 1936 booklet, the last of any length, he included a short introduction commenting on the high prices these little essays were bringing at book sellers, and then stated that he promptly destroyed many of his extra copies. In 1937 and 1938 he produced just a very short holiday message. He died of cancer in 1940.



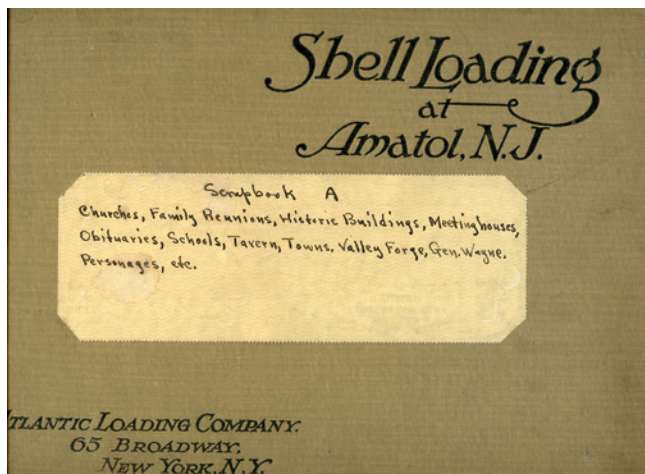
### The Wadsworth-Burns Collection

A very important gift came from Judith Wadsworth of Berwyn, who donated three scrapbooks and 35 photographs collected by her husband's family. After careful examination of these items, it was decided to title this collection *The Wadsworth-Burns Collection* for reasons which are explained below.

The scrapbooks contain hundreds of newspaper clippings glued down onto the pages of printed books. This was a common practice in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The book would have been free, something no longer wanted, and probably well bound, with strong paper providing a very stable surface for the fragile clippings—in fact, far better paper than that found in the soft black paper of commercial photo albums. The clippings encompass the years 1922 to 1943, and deal with events and persons in locations from Wayne to Malvern, as well as a few other sites in Chester County, but the majority deal with Berwyn and Paoli.

The clippings are in random, rather than chronological, order, suggesting that the books were assembled in a relatively short space of time. Scrapbook A is titled

“Churches, Family Reunions, Historic Buildings, Meeting Houses, Obituaries, Schools, Taverns, Valley Forge, Gen. Wayne, Personages, etc.” and contains 92 pages of clippings. Perhaps somewhat incongruously, the book in which the clippings are held is titled *Shell Loading at Amato, N.J.*, published in 1918.



Front cover of Scrapbook A

<p>"Battle of the Clouds," pp. 1-3. Boone, Daniel, Monestial, 21. Burns, J. H., 9, Byberry, 64 Peach Boy Assembly, 69. St. Ann's, 68, 69. Vincent Sept. 68, Penna River Sept. 68. Church, Abington Presby. 19, Charlestown, " 18, Mt. Zion African Meth. 18. Old Swede, 19 St. Peter's Episc. 18, 34 "Collections," East Jersey, 25. Chester Co. Hist. Soc. 11.</p> <p>Devon Park Developments, 23. Wyattville, 27.</p> <p>English Refugee, 28.</p> <p>Family Reunion, St. Peter, 49. Fort Matt, 28. Green, Dr. Jesse Cope, 48b Hart, Rev. John R. 46. Hestonville, 20 Historic Sites in Del. Co. 24. Heagy, Mrs. John S. 46. Horse, Stallion Post Boy, 64.</p>	<p>Independence Hall, 65. Revis, Nigzie, 46. Sea, Mrs. Arthur H. 44. Livingood, Rev. James Charles, 19. Mason, Mr. John Alden, 7, Mill, Malvernville, 21. Monton, John, House, 25, 59. Moose Hall, 68. Mathew, Francis, 49. North, Col. Caleb, Personal Files, 26 Obituary - Colgan, Col. John C. 15, Gibbermin, Albert, 15, Revis, Elizabeth M. 15. McQuistren, John H. C. 15 Moore, Mrs. W. E. 15. Newson, A. Edward, 15. Phelps, J. J. Warren, 16, Roberts, Clarence B. 10, Sagebeer, Mrs. Joseph E. 16, Seamer, Mrs. Samuel O. 16. Sumner, Mrs. John P. 16, Pechin, John R. 44. South, Mrs. E. 44. Swick, South Annis. 50 - Walker, W. W. 16. - and Pechin, Mrs. John - other obits - 44</p>	<p>Old Gloucester, 48, Oldest Va. Family, 26, Overbrook, 27. Pannell, Wagnor, 46. Post Office, Sablet, 18 Roxborough, 70. Racial Strains, Philadelphia, 48. Octagonal, 70. School, Locally Used Readers, 23, S. E. J. High, 21, 22, Sea Breezes on Chubb's Bay, 26. Shored Eagle Sentinel Tree, 22. Sullivan, Judge, House, 22. Sagebeer, Rev. Jos. E. 46, 44. Shee, Mrs. Elizabeth, 48. Stiel, John, 48. Shack Rammer, 64. Tavern, Blue Bell, 24, Douglas, 72. Seamer, S. Paul, Math 5. S. E. Hist. Club, 1937, 29-31, 1938, 31, 38-41. 1939, 31-33, 1940, 35-37. Valley Forge, 66 - Wayne, Anthony, Statue, 66 Wilde, Mary E. 17, 70.</p>
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The clippings are glued down right up to the edges of the book pages, and are in good shape for being treated this way. Many of the articles contain excellent photographs from the Sunday pictorial sections of the newspapers. There are numerous fascinating or surprising things in the books, and one of these was a photograph and obituary of Julius Sachse, who contributed so much to the study of local history in the late nineteenth century, decades before our organization was even in existence. He could perhaps be called the grandfather of the TEHS.

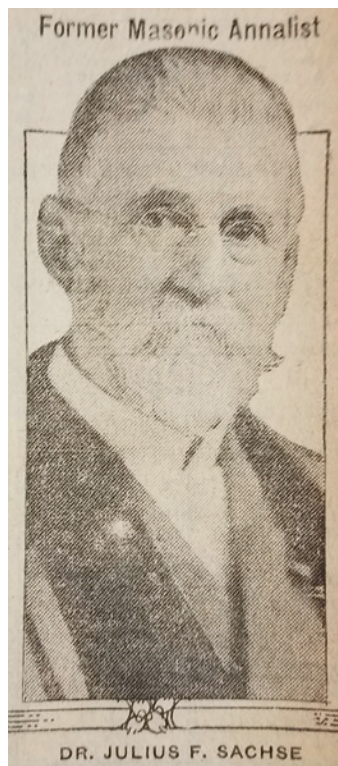


Photo of Julius Sachse from obituary clipping.

Fortunately, the scrapbook compiler created an index to the clippings, which appears at the start of each volume, and makes the content very accessible. This method of indexing a randomly arranged mass of clippings or correspondence was in common use for decades. The compiler glued several blank sheets of good paper into the front of each book. Then as each clipping went into the volume, he would enter a word like Devon, or Fires, or Obituaries, and then below it, the page number on which a clipping for the subject appears. With this index, if you have a specific subject of interest, you can find a relevant clipping, and whole index can be scanned in just a few minutes.



Mrs. Eleanor Cassatt Laird

## Photographs

Another fascinating item from the scrapbooks is a photograph of Mrs. Eleanor Cassatt Laird who owned Chesterbrook Farm from the death of her first husband Edward Cassatt in 1923, to her death in 1962. In 1925, she

married Dr. J. Packard Laird and took his name, but he lived for only two years after their marriage. Photographs of her are rare, as are images of Edward Cassatt, one of which was found on a different page. The 35 loose photographs that arrived with the Wadsworth-Burns collection are also of significant value for the TEHS collection—some of them never seen before.

The Devon Inn, originally constructed in 1882, operated as a resort hotel until 1913. The hotel was considered the height of elegance, and many wealthy Philadelphians spent one or two summer months here. The Devon Inn opened before the modern Horse Show grounds were created, and in fact hosted the first informal local horse show on its spacious lawns in 1884. The building was located just south of the what is today the Devon Horse Show property. A 1927 aerial photograph shows the location of what was then known as the Devon Park Hotel. From 1914 to 1919, bankruptcy left the hotel empty. From 1919 to 1924, the building housed a girls' school, and then in 1926 it opened as the Devon Park Hotel, a destination that was just as elegant and desirable as the Devon Inn had been.

The Wadsworth-Burns Collection brings a completely new image to the Society's photograph collection, namely the ruins of the building after the fire of 1929. The Devon Park Hotel was in operation for just under three years, and by the fall of 1928 had gone out of business. Afterwards, the building was the first, and very briefly, home of the Valley Forge Military Academy. Fate intervened and the building burned early on the morning of January 18, 1929. This image (seen below) must have been taken in the weeks or months following the fire.







Another photograph from the Wadsworth-Burns Collection is new to our Society: an image of the Mennonite Church that once stood adjacent to the Diamond Rock Schoolhouse. The photograph is just 2 x 2 ½ inches, and is inscribed on the back: “Rear of the Mennonite Church near Diamond Rock / Taken by Chas. Groff, January, 1898.” This is one of the most important items we received in 2016 because up to now we had no photograph of the Mennonite Church (and knew of only one, in a private collection). This image shows the rear and one side of the church. One can see the separate doors, for men and women, and the simple undecorated construction. The Mennonites of the Tredyffrin area built the Diamond Rock Octagonal school in 1818, and then built their adjacent church 16 years later in 1835. The church was demolished in 1927, and its date stone was installed in the perimeter wall that was constructed around the Diamond Rock School, using the stone from the church.

The new collection contains seven loose prints by our well-known local photographer, Lucy Sampson. She evidently thought enough of the photograph of the Peter Burns house, or more likely its subject, to carefully mount it on dark gray board and inscribe in white ink: “Residence for fifty years of Peter Burn Sr. / L. A. Sampson / Photo Artist / Photographed 1902 / Erected 1767.” The fact that Lucy thought of herself as a “photo artist” suggests that she may have been aware of ideas then current in the world of photography in which photographers espoused the idea that a photograph could be as evocative and expressive as a painting. She could have seen one or more important exhibitions of the so-called Pictorialist photographers either in Philadelphia or New York.

Peter Burns, Sr. founded a small dynasty of carpenter-builders in Berwyn. He was born Peter Burn in 1797 and died in 1877. He served in the War of 1812, and married Elizabeth Jones in 1818. He was a cabinetmaker and farmer whose property encompassed 75 acres in the area of what is today Conestoga High School. The family name, even at the time of this photograph, was already Burns and had been since Peter Burns, Sr. changed it to Burns in the mid-nineteenth century for reasons unknown. Why Lucy Sampson used Burn in 1902 is also unknown. Peter Burns had four children between 1820 and 1827, thus raising them in the period from the 1820s to the 1840s. He might



*Residence for fifty years of Peter Burn Sr.*

*L. A. Sampson Photo Artist - Berwyn Pa.*

*Photographed 1902*

*Erected 1767*





William Burns House on Kromer Ave. in Berwyn, 1890, photographer unknown



Contemporary photograph of the former William Burns house.  
*Courtesy of Cheryl Leibold*

have lived in this house for about fifty years, even though, photographed in 1902, it looks a dilapidated wreck. He and his youngest son Peter Burns, Jr. (1827-1907) were active in many areas of Berwyn life for decades. Both were builders, and both were deeply involved in the drive to erect the first Trinity Church in the 1860s. Peter Jr., and his son William, were also instrumental in building the second Trinity Church in the 1890s.

William Burns (1856-1910) was part of the third generation of the Burns family, being the first of eight children born to Peter Burns, Jr. As a builder, he worked

with his father, and is recorded as having done the stone work for the steeple of the second Trinity Church in the 1890s. He built many other structures, including railroad stations, the Berwyn Bank, and numerous Victorian-style homes in Berwyn, including one for his family at 634 Kromer Avenue. The 1890 photograph of William's home is also a valuable new addition to Society's collection.

Comparing the 1890 Burns home to a contemporary photograph shows that the Burns house has been well cared for and still boasts much of the same Victorian architectural decoration.

William Burns also built and operated the Berwyn Planing Mill, a well-known landmark of Berwyn history, which stood just off Lancaster on the current site of the Mack Oil Company. In photographs of the mill, the tall end gables of William Burns' house on Kromer Avenue are visible on the left behind the mill building, and with the new gift, we now have a complete view of the house.



William Burns. *Courtesy of Trinity Church Archives*



The Berwyn Planing Mill, owned by William Burns, about 1910.  
*Courtesy of Herb and Barbara Fry*



William Burns was also the older brother of Franklin Lorenzo Burns (1868-1946). Frank Burns is shown in a studio portrait from the 1920s, also a part of the new gift. Frank Burns was one of the most important founding charter members of the Tredyffrin Easttown History Club—as it was first known in 1936—that later became the current Historical Society. He was an early editor of and very frequent contributor to its *Quarterly* publication, and its second president from 1940 to 1942. He was a life-long resident of Berwyn and a keen observer of the passing scene. He earned his living as a house painter (in fact, painting the interior of A. Edward Newton's home, Oak Knoll), and devoted his free time to his passionate avocation of ornithology. He was far more than an amateur ornithologist however. He published many articles, and his book, *The Ornithology of Chester County Pa.*, was regarded as the definitive study for many decades. In 1926, he wrote a short autobiographical essay for an ornithology magazine, in which he made no mention whatsoever of any interest in local history. This pursuit must have emerged in the mid-1930s when he would have reached retirement age. Once Frank Burns became interested in local history, he really went to town, writing almost forty articles in the *Quarterly*, as well as a book-length history of Berwyn. After spending a lot of time with this collection, I have come to the conclusion that the scrapbooks and photographs were assembled and created by Frank Burns, in the years between about 1925 and his death in 1946.<sup>2</sup>

The primary evidence for this attribution is handwriting comparison. Along with Frank Burns' book length history of Berwyn (unpublished), the TEHS has masses of research notes in his hand. The same hand appears on the cover of Scrapbooks A and B, and on the indexes to the three scrapbooks. Likewise, the back of the studio portrait of Burns is covered with descriptions of his ornithological achievements, also in his hand. Ten of the loose photographs we acquired are inscribed on the back in his hand, and he appears in several of them—for example, the 1939 dedication of the Stone Chimney Picket Memorial, one of several photographs of this event included in the gift. I also took into consideration the fact that so many of the photographs in this collection relate to the Burns family. In addition, there is a postcard sent to Frank Burns by Lucy Sampson about 1905 referring to a photographic enlargement.

Given these observations, I believe this collection was Frank Burns' creation, and at his death his younger sister Martie Burns Wadsworth probably acquired it. Martie



Portrait of Frank Burns, ca. 1920, photograph by Marceau Studio

Burns had married John Harvey Wadsworth in 1901, and their son Charles Henry was the father-in-law of the donor Judith Wadsworth. This connection explains how these materials came to be donated by a Wadsworth in 2016.

Tredyffrin Easttown History Club dedication of the new Stone Chimney Picket commemorative plaque, 1 August 1939. Franklin Burns appears on the far left, with other notable early club leaders J. Alden Mason behind the flag, and S. Paul Teamer on the far right.

