



LancasterHistory

For Immediate Release

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LancasterHistory Completes Large Digitization Project of Historical Scrapbooks

Now available online to the public, scans of the scrapbooks provide a window into life in Lancaster

County as far back as 1738.

LANCASTER, PA — In June 2024, LancasterHistory completed a large digitization project of four historic scrapbooks and 850 individual historic documents, creating a total of 3,565 digital scans of the items that are now accessible to the public. The funding for the project came from a **Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) Historic Archives & Records Care (HARC)** grant LancasterHistory received in 2021 for \$5,000. The project focused on the digitization of four of the most significant and frequently requested scrapbooks in the LancasterHistory Archival Collections: the George Steinman Album & Papers, the Marietta Scrapbook, and two scrapbooks kept by Francis X. Reuss of Columbia, Pennsylvania.

Scrapbooks provide a unique record of individuals, families, organizations, and associations that can evade formal archival collections, such as handwritten or typed personal letters or notes and other ephemera and memorabilia chronicling daily life. However, materials used to save items in scrapbooks are often detrimental to the long-term preservation of the objects, including poor-

quality paper and harmful tapes and adhesives that can become brittle or yellow over time or degrade the objects saved in the scrapbooks. Because of the fragile conditions of each scrapbook listed above, access to each has been restricted for more than a decade despite their popularity and importance to the public and researchers.

The Steinman Album and Papers (1738-1955) contain documents that represent local, state, and national history. The Album, compiled by George Steinman (1847-1920), contains a treasure trove of photographs and ephemera of places, people, and events related to Lancaster County. They are as varied as Postlethwaite's Tavern (Lancaster's first seat of municipal government), hotels and taverns, firehouses, the Conestoga Massacre of 1763, churches, cemeteries, Ephrata Cloister, prominent citizens and their homes, the Stehli Silk Mill, and several schools. Later items in the Album include marginalia (handwritten notes in the margins) made by John Gibson, who donated the collection to LancasterHistory in 1968. [Please click here to view the digitized George Steinman Papers, Series 1 Steinman Album.](#)

An accompanying collection of papers includes original correspondence, documents, photographs, and ephemera that largely relate to 18th and 19th-century Lancaster. The Revolutionary War is highlighted, with documents and images related to George Washington, Lancaster's Atlee family, and General Edward Hand. There are images relating to the Christiana Resistance in 1851 and to buildings in early Lancaster, including the Old Jail, the British Prison, and Postlethwaite's Tavern. Also included in the collection are currency printed by Benjamin Franklin in 1764 and Confederate States currency and bonds. [Please click here to view the digitized George Steinman Papers, Series 2 Documents, Images, & Ephemera.](#)

The Marietta Scrapbook (1879-1919) contains historical information about the towns of Marietta and Columbia and the rest of Lancaster County. The pages convey a well-rounded view of local history, including the topics of education, population, crime, taxes, elections, and occupations. There are also articles on the Pennsylvania Germans, personal histories, crime, and genealogical information within the book. [Please click here to view the Marietta Scrapbook.](#)

The two **Scrapbooks of Francis X. Reuss of Columbia (1841-1913)** are excellent resources about many aspects of life in Columbia, Pennsylvania. Both books focus on residents of the borough and the history of Columbia and Chiques Park. In both scrapbooks, there are newspaper clippings, handwritten correspondence, programs, photographs, and handwritten notes in the margins. Born in Columbia, PA in 1847, Francis X. Reuss was a founding member of the Society

of Old Columbia Residents, an organization of former Columbia, PA residents living in Philadelphia. These scrapbooks are often requested by those researching the history of Columbia. [Please click here to view the scrapbooks of Francis X. Reuss of Columbia.](#)

The digitization of the scrapbooks was done by [Backstage Library Works](#) in Bethlehem, PA. Backstage Library Works previously digitized historic materials for LancasterHistory, including the James Buchanan Online Presidential Library and the Thaddeus Stevens & Black History Collections, which were also funded through PHMC HARC grants in 2018 and 2020 respectively. After receiving the final, high-resolution, and archival images and PDFs, LancasterHistory staff and volunteers reviewed each object, created database records, and cataloged each item. In particular, LancasterHistory spent over 150 hours re-cataloging previous items related to each newly digitized scrapbook, updating legacy descriptions that were inaccurate or incomplete, and making items more accessible to researchers.

“We are excited that researchers around the world can now access these items online and that we are able to preserve the originals in the archives at LancasterHistory,” said **Heather Tennies**, Director of Archives & Manuscript Collections. “Our goal is to provide access to documents and manuscripts that tell the many stories of Lancaster County’s history. The completion of this project brings us one step closer to that goal.”

All 3,565 digital scans are available for the public to view online for free at <https://collections.lancasterhistory.org>.

About LancasterHistory

LancasterHistory is a community-based, not-for-profit organization established to educate the public on the history of Lancaster County and its place in the history of Pennsylvania and the United States, to advance the missions of regional historical organizations, and to promote the acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of resources representing the history of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania within the broader context of state and national history, including the homes of 15th US President James Buchanan and Congressman Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith.

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