

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

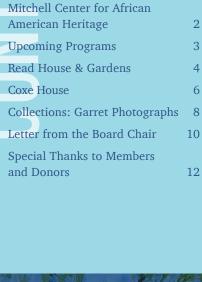
hile the Delaware Historical Society staff is immersed in history, continually researching, examining objects, and planning programming, it is ironic that over the past two months, we enjoyed a front row seat to history being made next door—President Elect Biden's Transition Team met daily at The Queen Theater.

On November 20, President-Elect Biden, Vice-President Elect Harris, Sen. Charles Schumer, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi met in The Queen's second-floor Olympia Room—which offers a beautiful view of DHS's Research Library (photo below). From The Queen, Biden announced the appointment of Ron Klain, his Chief of Staff, and the appointment of the following cabinet nominees who made personal appearances: Antony Blinken, Sec. of State; Gen. Lloyd Austin, Sec. of Defense; Janet Yellen, Sec. of Treasury; Alejandro Mayorkas, Sec. of Homeland Security; Xavier Becerra, Sec. of Health and Human Services; Miguel Cardona, Sec. of Education; Pete Buttigieg, Sec. of Transportation; and Judge Merrick Garland, Attorney General; plus Jake Sullivan, National Security Adviser; Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Ambassador to the United Nations; and Susan Rice, White House Domestic Policy Council Director.

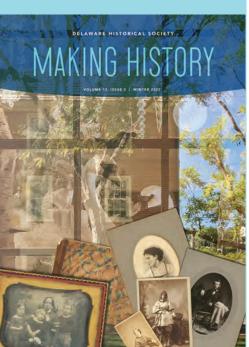
Our once quiet block was abuzz as the national spotlight landed on Wilmington. Trucks with huge satellite dishes, reporters, and camera crews became common sights. Late night host Stephen Colbert interviewed the Bidens at The Queen in December. DHS staff met reporters from media outlets from France, Germany and Norway. I even had the pleasure of giving a tour of the museum to *New York Times* reporter Neil MacFarquhar.

We soon became accustomed to working in what was essentially a protected zone from November 7, 2020 to January 19, 2021. Secret Service officers were friendly and polite in their requests to move parked cars and use an elevator in the museum to access the roof of The Queen.

When we launched COVID Chronicles early last year, we expected to record the experiences of Delawareans through a once-in-a-century pandemic, including the experiences of DHS staff. Now we will be adding to the record first-hand accounts of what it was like to be in the center of the action as President-Elect Biden's Team transitioned into President Biden's cabinet. We have been living through a remarkably consequential time in U.S. history—if you have not yet shared your thoughts about this unprecedented year, please consider adding them to DHS's collection at covidchroniclesde.org.



Delaware History Makers Award 1



Cover: Collage of photos of the Coxe House, Read House window display, and Ellwood Garrett collection

Delaware History Museum
Mitchell Center for
African American Heritage
Old Town Hall
Research Library
Willingtown Square
Read House & Gardens

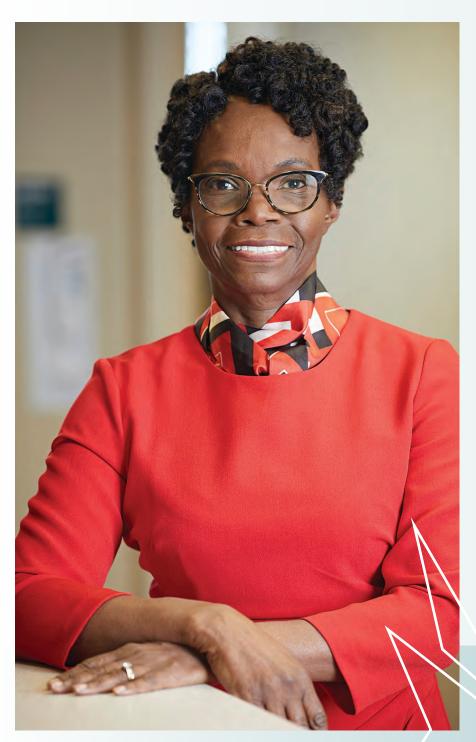
dehistory.org



The Delaware Historical Society to honor

DR. VELMA P. SCANTLEBURY-WHITE

October 7, 2021. Save the Date



he Thirteenth Annual Delaware History Makers' Award honors Velma P. Scantlebury-White, M.D. associate director of the Kidney Transplant Program at Christiana Care who became the nation's first African American woman specializing in transplant surgery in 1989. Dr. Scantlebury-White, through a series of outstanding achievements, reached the top of her field while breaking barriers and inspiring others along the way. A native of Barbados, she earned her medical degree from Columbia University, completed her residency at Harlem Hospital Center in New York, then completed training in transplant surgery at the University of Pittsburgh. A fellow of the American College of Surgeons, Dr. Scantlebury-White is a member of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons and the American Society of Minority Health and Transplant Professionals, among other organizations. She is the co-author of more than 85 peer-reviewed papers and ten monographs and book chapters. She sits on numerous boards and committees, including Donate Life America, the National Minority Organ and Tissue Transplant Education Program, and the United Network for Organ Sharing.

Dr. Scantlebury-White has served as a national spokesperson for Linkages to Life, an initiative to address the shortage of African American organ donors, and has been awarded the Gift of Life Award from the National Kidney Foundation, plus Carlow University's Woman of Spirit Award for service-inspired leadership. Her memoir, *Beyond Every Wall: Becoming the First Black, Female Kidney Transplant Surgeon* was published in 2018 and is available at beyondeverywall.com.

DEMOCRACYUPCOMING

JANE AND LITTLETON MITCHELL CENTER FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE



During this historic time, the Mitchell Center continues to offer engaging virtual public programs that speak to current events and issues. In 2021, we will be exploring the history of the environment as it relates to the African American experience. Conversations will range from environmental justice, geographies of freedom, Delaware's historically Black neighborhoods, and more.

Throughout the pandemic, we have taken time to build and strengthen our networks and partnerships. We joined with the Christina Cultural Arts Center to host a community dialogue in June following the deaths of George Floyd and many others at the hands of police brutality, racism, and injustice. We maintain our support of Preservation Delaware's African American Cultural Heritage Task Force in its efforts to preserve the history of African American education, and we continue to work closely with scholars involved with the Colored Conventions Project.

In honor of Black History Month, the Mitchell Center and dance ensemble, Pieces of a Dream, have collaborated to present two workshops that connect art and dance. Using select prints from the Delaware Historical Society collections by local artist Gertrude Howland Balch (1909-1964), participants will consider Balch's candid close-ups of past scenes from Wilmington's Eastside and translate their feelings to movement before joining a discussion on how art and movement lead participants to consider their current neighborhoods. In March, we look forward to learning more about Black girlhood studies from two University of Delaware Ph.D candidates, Kelli Coles and Mali Collins-White.

Our video, "Journey to Freedom: The African American Experience in Delaware" is always available on the Delaware Historical Society's YouTube page. Be sure to follow The Mitchell Center on Facebook (@MitchellCenterAfricanAmericanHeritageDHS) as we highlight key figures in Delaware's African American History throughout the month of February.

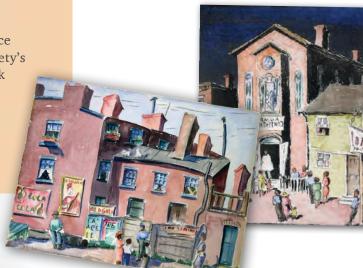
FEBRUARY

20 | Black History Month Virtual Dance Workshop

Saturday, 1-2 p.m. FREE Register on ZOOM via **dehistory.org/calendar-main** \$10 suggested donation

Join the Mitchell Center and dance corps *Pieces of a Dream*, for a one-hour workshop that connects art and dance. Inspired by selected prints by local artist Gertrude Howland Balch (1909-1964) in the Delaware Historical Society collection (pictured below), attendees will relate candid close-ups of Wilmington's neighborhoods and scenes from the Eastside to physical movement. Afterwards groups will be divided into breakout rooms to discuss how art and movement allows them to restore a connection to the neighborhoods of their childhood.

Ashley S.K. Davis is the Executive & Artistic Director of Pieces of a Dream, Inc., a Wilmington-based dance company whose choreographic focus explores socially meaningful and culturally relevant topics, such as domestic violence, homelessness, and the 1968 National Guard occupation of Wilmington. A Wilmington native, she earned her B.A. in philosophy at Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga., where she was active in the arts community on campus.



MARCH

10 | What Does Democracy Mean to You? What Does it Mean to be an Informed Citizen? An Oral History Workshop for Students and Teachers

Wednesday, 10-11 a.m. FREE Grades 7-12. Register on ZOOM via dehistory.org/calendar-main

Participants will learn how to design oral history interview questions, conduct virtual interviews, and properly document and preserve recordings. Students will be offered the opportunity to utilize skills learned in the workshop through scheduled interviews with local journalists. Students are invited to submit their interviews to Delaware Humanities for a chance to be featured on their podcast, *A Matter of Facts*.

This is a collaborative program organized and hosted by Delaware Humanities, Delaware Historical Society, and the University of Delaware and is part of the *Democracy and the Informed Citizen Initiative*. Special thanks to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their generous support, and the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Pulitzer Prizes for their partnership.

10 | Harriet Tubman Day

Wednesday, 12-2 p.m. FREE Register on ZOOM via dehistory.org/calendar-main

Join Deanna Mitchell, Superintendent of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, as she profiles the geography of freedom featuring Harriet's story and discusses contributions of African Americans in the study and preservation of the environment. Teachers and students encouraged to attend.

13 | Mélomanie Virtual Performance

Wednesday, 3-4 p.m. FREE melomanie.org/concert-new/ Donations welcome

Enjoy a virtual signature concert experience with provocative pairings of early and contemporary works, including artist interviews interwoven throughout the musical performances.

Music includes a movement from Telemann's Paris Quartet in A Major; a short interview by flutist Kim Reighley and harpsichordist Tracy Richardson with composer Mark Hagerty on his work Trefoil and on The Four Gifts of God by Sergio Roberto de Oliveira; a short interview by Tracy Richardson with composer Bonnie McAlvin on Sandstone Peak; Live excerpts of The Four Gifts of God and Trefoil, plus excerpts from Mélomanie's new CDs a hint of light remains and Ultraviolet.

Join in a live chat with the audience and artists during the performance—tell us about your experience! Following the performance, you are invited to join in a virtual reception with the artists via Zoom.

23 | New Directions in African American History Black Girlhood

Tuesday, 6-8 p.m. FREE Register on ZOOM via dehistory.org/calendar-main

Join us in discussion with Kelli Coles and Mali Collins-White as we explore the field of Black Girlhood Studies, the adultification of Black girls and the erasure of Black girls and women from the archives. Coles and Collins-White will discuss how the experiences of Black girls and mothers have been shared historically and how new scholarly publications are providing a deeper understanding of this history.

Kelli Coles is a Ph.D. candidate in the History Department at the University of Delaware. Mali Collins-White is a NEH Next Generation Ph.D. Fellow, African American Public Humanities Initiative at the University of Delaware.

This program is partially funded by a grant from the Delaware Humanities, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

APRIL

10 | Mélomanie Virtual Performance

Saturday, 3-4 p.m. FREE melomanie.org/concert-new/ Donations welcome

Enjoy a virtual signature concert experience with provocative pairings of early and contemporary works, including artist interviews interwoven throughout the musical performances.

Music includes a movement from Telemann's *Paris Quartet in A Major*; a short interview by Kim Reighley with composer David Schelat on his work *Just a Regular Child*, a short interview by Donna Fournier with composer Mark Hagerty on *Icelandic Songs, Sacred and Secular*; Live excerpts of *Just a Regular Child* and *Icelandic Songs*, plus excerpts from Mélomanie's new CDs, *Up to the Light* and *a hint of light remains*.

Join in a live chat with the audience and artists during the performance—tell us about your experience! Following the performance, you are invited to join in a virtual reception with the artists via Zoom.

FORWARD TOGETHER



s 2020 came to a close, everyone dreamed of leaving behind the pandemic that had ravaged families, roiled the economy, and challenged our mental health. Good riddance, too, to the most rancorous election cycle in modern times. Bringing together 120 people in the Read House garden in mid-December, carefully distanced from one another to enjoy the *Lit for the Holidays* art installations and settle in with a hot drink, was a momentary balm.

In spite of unprecedented challenges, the needs and energy of our community have inspired more gratitude and resolve than ever. With collaboration among staff, board, and community partners, the Read House & Gardens found momentum on many fronts, headlined by the completion of a \$1 million upgrade to the heating and air conditioning systems after years of stops and starts. We rolled out virtual field trips and an at-home summer camp for children, and found renewed inspiration in the garden, inviting the community in to grow produce, and selling home-grown bouquets and produce to our neighbors. We looked to the outdoors with an all-new walking tour that contemplates the history of preservation and tastemaking in Old New Castle. And we partnered with contemporary artists on multiple projects, including December's holiday event.



In 2020, the Read House's history as a gathering place was needed more than ever. We enlisted the creative power of Dallas Shaw and Jillian Keys to design a COVID-safe outdoor wonderland. They filled the garden with lights, candles, firepits, and amply spaced tents where households could enjoy warm food and a holiday cocktail menu curated by restauranteur Dwayne Foster of New Castle. The festive air was contagious as college students and octogenarians, neighbors and newcomers, trustees and former tour guides all drew energy from one other across the distances. It was the only holiday gathering they would attend this year, many said.

The featured attraction was a series of 20 illuminated window displays created by artists from up and down the East Coast, each window sponsored by generous businesses and individuals. After the December party, visitors continued touring the garden on special viewing nights into January.

Each artistic collaborator brings a different way of seeing and framing this landmark, much the way each generation of owners has chosen what to highlight, embellish, or conceal. Artist Nataki Oliver, who teamed up with colleague James Wyatt on an installation

One of three winter dreamscapes by Jaime Davenport, a floral designer in Philadelphia

Guests gather for a candle-lit toast.



Through all of the past year's uncertainty, one theme has emerged clearly: the Read House family has grown, making the prospects for 2021 brighter than ever.

in his native Wilmington.

Photography by Laura McDonald

Lit for the Holidays artists came from near and far, mirroring the Read House and Gardens long history of bridging Delaware with a wider world.

DALLAS SHAW'S roster of clients as a fashion illustrator and creative director is a who's-who of international glamor—Oscar de la Renta, Four Seasons, and Maybelline are just a few—but lately she's the design force behind Blitzen, Girard Craft & Cork, and other new concept venues in Wilmington, her home base.

NATAKI OLIVER returned home to Delaware after nearly a decade in New York, and is founder of The Sold Firm gallery in downtown Wilmington, which promotes emerging minority artists. She was pictured in *The New York Times* in December for her advocacy work.

JILLIAN KEYS is a veteran theatrical designer, and JAIME DAVENPORT is a Philadelphia floral designer who also serves as a caretaker for Woodford Mansion in Fairmount Park.

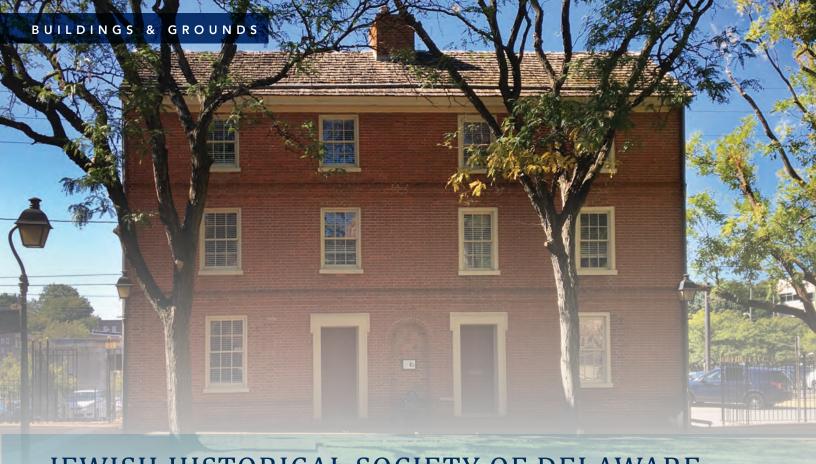
COLTON ACKERMAN is an illustrator and display artist based in New York, and HANNAH CARROLL is a fashion designer from Richmond, Virginia. The dress she designed stood nine feet tall not just to fill a massive window, but also to make a point about the hyperbolic nature of the house. From its monumental scale to the profusion of ornament inside, George Read II pushed the design vocabulary of his time to its extremes.



has been shown in galleries across

the country but remains rooted in

explorations of African American experience



JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE & THE DELAWARE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Partnership 46 Years Strong & Growing

Built side-by-side in 1801 on East Sixth Street, the Coxe houses, constructed specifically for sisters Margaret and Catherine, were a gift from their parents. One hundred and seventy-five years later, the brick houses were carefully picked up, loaded onto a flatbed trailer, and driven one and a half blocks to their current location in Willingtown Square on North Market Street to save them from demolition.

With the interior renovated, making the two houses one, the building will be known as the *Delaware Center* for Jewish History at the Coxe House thanks to a dynamic partnership between two history organizations, the generosity of several individual donors, and grants from True Access Capital, the Crystal Trust, and the Welfare



Foundation. When the Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1974, Delaware Historical Society president, Dr. Walter Heacock offered storage space in the library archives and the partnership was born. The collection, now 536 linear feet, consists of photographs, slides, letters, audio recordings and newspapers. A favorite of the Jewish Historical Society's archivist, Gail Pietryzk, is their "Dear Mollye" collection. In the 1940s, Wilmington resident Mollye Sklut wrote to all the local Jewish men and women serving in World War II. She saved all the letters written to her in reply and donated them to the collection.

By 2018, it became apparent that the Jewish Historical Society had outgrown their storage space. This, coupled with the Delaware Historical Society's need for additional storage, prompted former Executive Director David Fleming to meet

Jewish Historical Society's archives in the basement of the Delaware Historical Society's Library

with the Jewish Historical Society's trustees to ask if they would be interested in relocating the collection to the now empty Coxe House. (Staff offices in the Coxe House had moved to the renovated Delaware History Museum in 2017.) The answer was "yes" and soon the Jewish Federation of Delaware, the Jewish Historical Society, and the Delaware Historical Society began a successful fundraising campaign to make improvements to heating, air conditioning and access that are necessary to house such an important collection. A long-term lease formalizing the relationship was signed in 2020. Dr. Gerald Resnick, Co-President of the Jewish Historical Society had this to say:

E SISTEMANT OF THE STATE OF THE

Lease signing celebration October 16, 2020. Pictured: the Delaware Historical Society's Board Chair Dr. Margaret Laird, and Executive Director Dr. David Young; The Jewish Historical Society's Co-President Dr. Gerald Resnick, Board member Richard D. Levin, and Co-President Rabbi Peter H. Grumbacher.

As the creation of the *Delaware Center for Jewish History at the Coxe House* in Willingtown Square nears completion, I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who contributed their time and energy to make this project a success. The cooperative efforts of the Delaware Historical Society and the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware have made me proud to be a part of this project.

Work is in progress to upgrade the Coxe House from top to bottom, inside and out in accordance with the highest historic preservation standards. The first floor will house the archivist's office and a reading/meeting room. The second and third floors will be devoted to archival storage and the offices of the Halina Wind Holocaust Remembrance Committee and the Jewish Veterans of Delaware. Once complete the building will include a state-of-the-art fire detection and suppression system, and new heating and air conditioning. A ramp will be added on the on the Willingtown Square side of the building to provide wheelchair access, and a dumbwaiter inside will assist in transporting materials from floor to floor.

The Delaware Historical Society is pleased that after 47 years, the Jewish Historical Society can enjoy a space of their own. "This innovative preservation project has activated one of Wilmington's oldest buildings while ensuring greater access to important collections and providing visibility for the Jewish Historical Society on Market Street —a historic commercial corridor." said Dr. David Young the Delaware Historical Society's Executive Director.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Coxe House project, please visit coxehouse.org.

Journey to

THE MITCHELL CENTER FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE HAS LAUNCHED A NEW BLOG!

FREEDOM

At the Journey to Freedom Blog, we aim to create a culture of continual learning through the exploration of stories found in Delaware's African American history and engage our community with exclusive Mitchell Center content. You'll find new blog posts, event information, and project updates.

Visit the blog here: https://journeytofreedomblog.com/

RETURN TO MARKET STREET RARE ELLWOOD GARRETT PHOTOGRAPHS ADDED TO THE COLLECTION

llwood Garrett died of old age. This would be an unremarkable fact, except that it was one of the last things written about the accomplished photographer, whose artistic talents and standing as a longtime member of the Wilmington business community surely warranted a mention. Yet when local newspapers announced his death in May 1910, he was described simply as an "aged resident." The newspapers offered only the briefest mention of his career as a noted daguerreotypist, focusing instead on the life of his famous father, Thomas; ultimately, Ellwood Garrett was a minor character in his own obituary.





Ellwood Garrett family portrait

Ellwood Garrett's wife with three children - circa 1860's

It is unsurprising, then, that so many Delawareans automatically associate the Garrett name with the life and work of a prominent abolitionist, despite the notable lives and careers of others in his family tree. But the Delaware Historical Society's recent, against-the-odds acquisition of a collection related to Ellwood Garrett offers an opportunity to acquaint our audience with a man whose work remains an important part of the Wilmington photography community and the Garrett family legacy.

PICTURE IT: Delaware, Thanksgiving weekend, 2020. While others filled their online carts with holiday bargains, this curator embarked on a shopping spree of a different kind. Armed with intel from a longtime photo historian who introduced me to a collection of rare Ellwood Garrett materials slated for auction, I prepared for an all-out bidding war. The Delaware Historical Society collection already includes a few of Garrett's works, so I knew that his daguerreotypes were coveted by private collectors and competition would be fierce. Fortunately, I entered the fray with the support of two generous donors; their gifts allowed me to bid on some of the most valuable pieces, including pristine family portraits and images of Garrett's children. Following an afternoon of intense, rapid-fire bidding, we prevailed, winning 17 of the 19 lots on the auction block. Ellwood Garrett, or more accurately, his daguerreotypes, would come home to Wilmington.

I soon discovered that daguerreotypes were not the only gems among the auction items. Boxes of cartes de visite, glass plate negatives, and other photographic treasures awaited. A sketch book inscribed with the name "Emily Garrett" peeked out from a pile of letters and postcards. My heart raced as I unpacked a small hand-painted banner believed to contain the names of attendees at Ellwood Garrett's funeral. These materials are wide-ranging in format and content, and many can be attributed to other Garrett family members and their associates. They will undoubtedly provide valuable context for researchers seeking to connect disparate pieces of the family's history and business dealings.

It is doubtful that Ellwood Garrett ever considered how or if his daguerreotypes would be preserved, and he certainly couldn't have foreseen the journey that some of his images would take to return to Market Street nearly 170 years later. That's why it is so fitting to give these deeply personal examples of his work a permanent home in our archives, mere blocks from his original studio. Acquiring the Garrett

Collection accomplishes several goals. First, it preserves the intellectual integrity of a group of stunning objects by keeping them together. Second, it allows us to establish meaningful connections between members and generations of a family whose contributions to the abolitionist movement, local business, and the visual arts made them an integral part of Delaware's story. Third, it offers donors an opportunity to honor Dr. Peter Dalleo, a historian, retired Clerk of the District of Delaware, and former teacher at the Tatnall School, by gifting the collection to the Delaware Historical Society in his name. Finally, it enables a broader discovery of the earliest form of commercial photography through the work of Ellwood Garrett himself,

giving Wilmington's "aged resident" new life and the spotlight he deserves.

In times like these it may seem easy, or at least prudent, to deprioritize institutional collecting. But the responsibility to preserve the physical remnants of the past, even as we watch history unfold in the present, remains. If we collect with intention when the opportunity arises, weighing the cost of acquisition against the cost of stories and images lost and voices silenced, the priority is clear. We can't do it alone—with or without a global pandemic—but when friends and donors understand this delicate balance and step forward to help, the Delaware Historical Society is able to meet the moment and advance its mission.



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Margaret L. Laird, Ph.D. Chair, Board of Trustees

While I enjoy every aspect of the Delaware Historical Society (DHS), I am constantly amazed by the new stories the DHS collections reveal. As members of the Society, you also may be drawn to objects like the Civil War draft wheel, the photo of children at the Buttonwood School, or the painted wallpaper at the Read House. The items on display in the Delaware History Museum, Mitchell Center for African American Heritage, and Read House are just a small percentage of the entire collection. The storage areas reveal treasure after treasure, each illuminating a facet of our state's history.

DHS curators are conscientious stewards, following the highest professional standards in caring for these artefacts. The Collections Policy was recently revised to address the collections of the Read House and the Mitchell Center and to set priorities for

future acquisitions. One of those priorities is Delaware photography. With the help of generous donors, DHS purchased 19th-century photographs, glass plate negatives, and portraits belonging to photographer Ellwood Garrett, son of abolitionist Thomas Garrett, at auction in November (see p. 8).

In addition, DHS has received a generous grant from The Longwood Foundation, which will make more of the collections accessible to the world via dehistory.org. In the coming months, curators will select a wide range of objects to feature in videos, including those not often on display such as Helen Jones' scrap book of photos from her 1920 road trip through 19 states and a book of herbal remedies from the 1600s compiled by early settler Tyman Stidham.

We look forward to sharing all with you in 2021!

for supporting the Delaware Historical Society. We are emboldened by our mission to preserve, promote, and share Delaware history in a welcoming environment to educate, inspire, and empower people and communities. We are grateful to our loyal donors who support our work with the generous contributions listed below made between July 1, 2019 and January 21, 2021.

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