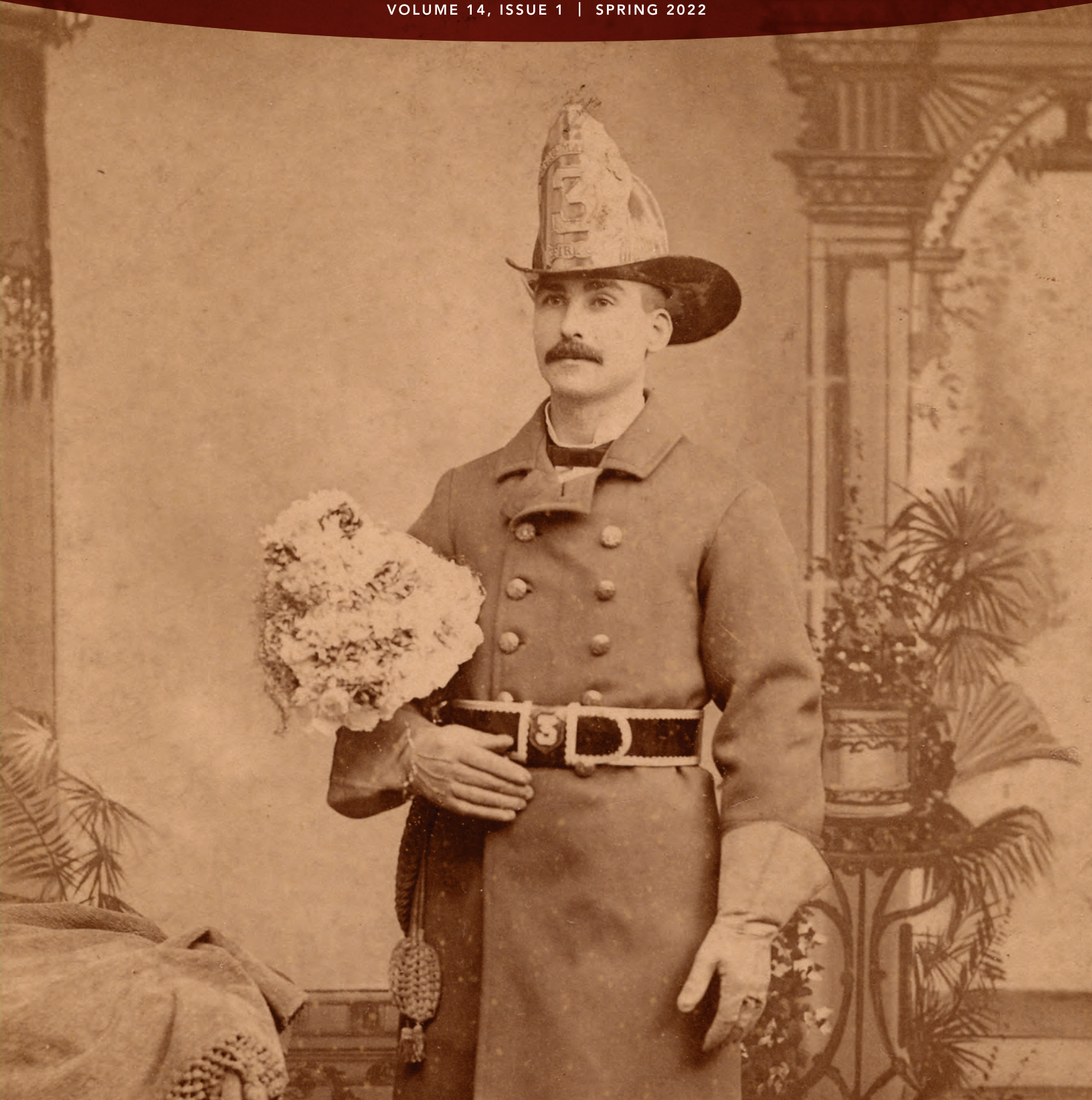


DELAWARE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAKING HISTORY

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2022



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Cover: Sam Chadwick in Wilmington Fire Company No. 3 fireman's uniform, ca. late 19th-early 20th century. This image is part of the Delaware Historical Society's Paul Preston Davis Collection.

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

dehistory.org

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The way historians, museums, and historic organizations do their work has never been more exciting and relevant—or so rapidly changing. Hybrid programs, digital access, and web-based delivery of educational materials expand the tools we work with and provide to the public. The ways we make history part of the conversation involve many perspectives and even a traditional organization like the Delaware Historical Society shows how innovative history can be. And it has to be in order to be meaningful. The field is changing and the ways we see meaning in the past are too. Status quo is the riskiest option.

A recent report published by the American Association of State and Local History suggests ways to frame how we talk about history in ways that are diligent and diverse, but without the barriers to access that have excluded perspectives or highlighted an idealized and overarching “truth” to history. In fact, like detectives at work, history organizations consider multiple ways to consider the evidence of history, including what new information and alternative perspectives tell us about the past. These can compel us to change our understanding. DHS staff have been discussing reframing history and while we find a lot of work to do, we also recognize that groundwork has already been laid from which to build upon that helps make the case for history's relevance today.

Our activated historic buildings show preservation science in action. The work reveals more about who built, worked in, and lived in the buildings—all of which are adapted spaces that grow in meaning as we care for them and uncover new approaches to use them and connect to the community. Experiencing historic buildings allows people to see them in new ways, such as in evening programs, concerts, and partnerships enlivening the spaces.

We have transformed the use of Willingtown Square for the Delaware Center for Jewish History, for instance, and formed new partnerships with the owners of the hotel that will open later this year in the old Kuumba Academy building.

Expert metal conservators are on the case working on the 1929 Research Library and its art deco façade; the scientific analysis of the five different kinds of metals that comprise the grate offer insights that present its design features in new ways from when it was a bank.

Partnerships at the Read House connect young people with the gardens of the National Historic Landmark. The Mitchell Center for African American Heritage celebrated five years of bringing five centuries of the African American experience to audiences old and young—as a community hub as well as a place for discussion about whose history and what stories we present. Sororities and



The Read House & Gardens has partnered with Pure Yoga Pilates Studio in Wilmington to host weekly yoga classes in the walled garden. Our newly reimagined house and neighborhood tours welcome audiences to bring their many types of intelligence to the site and to practice critical-thinking skills as they engage in active dialogue. Garden Yoga offers yet another vantage point for learning and engaging at the Read House. The series welcomes new and old friends to experience the space with an emphasis on emotional intelligence and wellness. One weekly class each month will extend beyond the yoga mat and offer a tour of the Read House & Gardens, as well as an opportunity to picnic amid the historic landscape.

David W. Young, Ph.D.
Executive Director

fraternal organizations use the Mitchell Center to commemorate anniversaries of their founding bearing witness to their achievements in a space dedicated to African American heritage. That exhibitions such as Journey to Freedom can now be experienced as videos and with interactive elements accessible by phone or from far away bring new ways of knowing to people who cannot attend in person.

The detective work that historians do—incorporating multiple points of view, weighing varieties of evidence from many sources—has long been a staple for DHS. For decades our staff and trustees have embraced a bold vision demanding active engagement with diverse communities alongside broad scholarly input so that we present the past in ways that embrace change and make Delaware's history impossible to ignore.

The Delaware Historical Society is a designated trail site on the newly relaunched Delaware History Trail which spotlights 30 culturally significant locations throughout the state. As part of the relaunch, Governor John Carney toured the Mitchell Center for African American Heritage on May 2. His visit coincided with National Travel and Tourism Week.



A fervent history buff, the governor commented that the Mitchell Center does a great job of identifying people and times that were important to Delaware history, from enslaved people up to our current leadership. He noted, "It's a message of pain, but also of perseverance."

Carney encourages all Delawareans to learn more about our history, saying it's an important obligation to understand and learn from the past.



JOIN US FOR YOGA AT THE READ HOUSE & GARDENS!

According to studio owner Meredith McFadden, their teachers pride themselves on a non-intimidating approach to learning. All are welcome with open arms knowing that everyone learns at their own pace. For one hour, between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., attendees will be able to create new experiences while learning a new skill in our expansive gardens.

For more information about the class or to register, visit pureyogapilatesstudio.com. For information about tours of the Read House & Gardens, visit readhouseandgardens.org.



NEW HIRES AT DHS!

Ivan Henderson joined the staff of Delaware Historical Society on April 4 as the Director of the Mitchell Center for African American Heritage. He also serves in the newly created position of Vice President for Programming.

A Wilmington resident, Ivan has nearly two decades of experience in museum education in Delaware and Philadelphia. He served as the VP for Programming at the African American Museum in Philadelphia where he led the work of the Programming and Curatorial Services teams in designing a wide array of exhibitions and adult, family, and youth programming. Before that, he was the Curator of Education and Outreach for the University of Delaware museum galleries and has worked with many DHS colleagues and partners at UD in museum studies, art history, Black American studies, and history. A graduate of Harvard University and the Bank Street Program in Leadership in Museum Education, Ivan brings substantial connections in Delaware and across the country.



Ivan shared some of his perspectives and insights with Making History...

What appeals to you about Delaware history?

I have been in Delaware since 2014 and I really like it here. There is still so much to explore and — because of its size and sense of community — I find it very reachable. The First State is a special place. Exploring our shared and intersecting histories helps us learn to understand each other and look at each other with new eyes, with respect and compassion.

What excites you about your work?

Early in my career I had the opportunity to facilitate a literacy workshop at the African American Museum in Philadelphia. I chose to incorporate Hip Hop into the program, and it went over really well. I had serious, full-body goosebumps. Since then, I measure much of my work in goosebumps. Beyond that, I believe that building shared learning experiences with our guests can draw us closer to strangers in ways that can be disarming, and that can encourage the growth and strength of civic pride and community connections.

What drew you to work at a center for African American heritage?

I have found empowerment and affirmation in learning about and sharing the stories of Black history makers whose stories often aren't known. I am inspired by African Americans who, against all odds, managed to improve their plight. It is personally very fulfilling to discover the stories of these history makers and have a role in sharing their stories with the world. Many of the objects that represent Delaware history have been collected and donated by a relatively homogenous group of people over the years. Here we have an opportunity to start to build trust with current and future generations of learners by admitting the limitations of past practice, co-authoring the tenets of 21-st century inclusive practice, and moving forward from there.

Why is it important for diverse audiences to learn about African American history?

African American history isn't just for Black audiences. This history is inextricably woven into American history, even though much of it has been lost or muted over the decades and centuries. I sincerely believe that everyone can be enriched by learning the truth. Though my early career was spent in totally Black spaces, I deliberately chose to expand my experience by moving to the University of Delaware, where I welcomed the challenges of new opportunities and exposure to objects representing a broader variety of cultures and ideas. We learn best when we engage in risk-taking and allow for new truths to inform our understanding.

What is your vision of programmatic success and how will you apply it at DHS?

DHS is a thriving organization with multiple seemingly disparate operations. I am already deeply impressed with the expertise and professionalism of my new colleagues. I bring a strength in strategic thinking and planning and will offer a leadership umbrella where sustainable practice informs individual projects. Overarching themes will help link the many facets of DHS while allowing each area to retain its personality and unique value to the organization as a whole. As we move toward America's 250th birthday, we will join our audiences in discourse and reflection on the progress of the American experiment, and the First State's unique role in driving that progress. With DHS's assortment of assets and sites—including the Mitchell Center—we hope to facilitate learning opportunities that are broadly accessible, enriching, fun, and (as often as possible) surprisingly pleasant!

Jonah Delasanta joined the Delaware Historical Society in the position of Development and Communication Coordinator in the Advancement and Communication Department in late January. In his new role, Jonah manages the donor database and has also taken the helm of our public relations and social media outreach.

Jonah comes to us from the Northeast Archeological Resources Program where he led the digital media team and used his strong analytical skills to monitor and manage an array of database programs. He has a bachelor's degree in history and anthropology with a minor in education and is nearing completion of his masters in historical archaeology. Jonah is new to Delaware and is eager to add his energy and enthusiasm to further the great work we do at DHS.



Iyannah Walton-Bacon joined Delaware Historical Society as a temporary employee in July of 2021 and became a regular team member in January of this year. Her title is Executive Office Coordinator, with responsibilities running the gamut including bookkeeping, ordering supplies, scheduling, keeping track of timesheets and even answering the front door. Iyannah says her favorite part of the job is that each day is different, and she never knows quite what to expect. Her colleagues welcome her cheery morning emails announcing birthdays, work anniversaries, and other special occasions.

Iyannah is completing her degree in Health Care Administration and Management from Strayer University. When she's not working, studying or taking care of her 3 children, Iyannah might be found teaching class to aspiring dancers age 5-17. She has also performed extensively both locally and regionally.



505 NORTH MARKET STREET

A Once & Future Masterpiece

by Kathleen Butler

The Delaware Historical Society's Research Library at 505 North Market Street stands as an impressive art deco marvel. Completed in 1929 as the fifth iteration of the Artisans' Savings Bank headquarters in downtown Wilmington, designed by Tilghman Moyer Company, it was constructed of brick with a façade clad in limestone and black granite and fronted by a multi-panel metal frame central window. Such a description gets at only part of the story of our work on this building, where researchers enjoy natural light under a massive skylight and exterior windows. Unfortunately, any accurate current description will have to include words like rusted, broken, stained, cracked, corroded and disrepair.



Years of benign neglect have taken their toll on the building. According to Martha Moffat, DHS preservation consultant on this project, "One of the things that makes this building so interesting and beautiful is the use of 5 different metals on the façade including bronze, steel, aluminum, brass and lead. The problem is that each of these metals needs to be cared for in a special way. The combination of bronze hinges on aluminum grillwork caused a negative reaction called galvanic corrosion which needs to be addressed."

A recent damage assessment by Kreilick Conservation, LLC indicates that the overall condition of the metal gate is largely good despite rusting on some of the jambs. The conservation experts also found that the fasteners and hinges are in significant disrepair and require immediate rectification. The report describes a laundry list of broken hinges, heavy rust, missing nuts and bolts, incorrect fasteners in use, failed flashings, and cracked stone.

Initial estimate for Phase 1 of the repairs on the façade exceeds \$225,000, though that number is climbing. Asbestos was recently discovered in some of the caulking, and remediation will include tenting and scaffolding. Rusting on windows in the back of the building facing Shipley Street must also be addressed. Support from the State of Delaware Community Redevelopment Fund has allowed DHS to begin work on the critical repairs, though it will run out quickly as the scope of the project evolves.



In addition to the necessary work on the façade, the entire library complex requires attention. Decades old carpets and paint are the backdrop for issues that threaten the safekeeping of our 3 million artifacts. New HVAC units were recently installed to address the urgent need for proper temperature and humidity control, but this is just a first step to ensure full protection of our collections. Shading of the light streaming in through the large front windows and new glass are necessary to protect the books and paintings in the reading room. A new, modern shelving system is needed to provide safe housing and storage of our collections.

To modernize 505 North Market and activate it in ways that reflect its original glory is now a DHS priority. Ensuring access to the collections housed in it requires careful work on this building, considered one of Wilmington's most beautiful structures. Preserving the former bank and updating it as a contemporary research facility is a major undertaking and will be costly. DHS is seeking support for the critical project through government funds, grants, foundations, and gifts from loyal friends of the organization. With the help of those who share our commitment to keeping history alive for future generations of Delawareans, 505 North Market will soon once again be the masterpiece it was destined to be.

OUR NEW PLATFORM FOR SEARCHING DIGITAL COLLECTIONS IS LIVE!



After more than a year of hard work and some help from our friends in the JP Morgan Chase Force for Good program, we're thrilled to invite you in to explore amazing images and historical documents from our digital collections, with more to come.

Check out what we have digitized on digital.dehistory.org and return regularly for updates and new content!



DELA...WHO? DELA...WHAT? DELA...WHERE!

by Kristin Geiger-Rayca

Speaking of Delaware... did you know that Emily Webb, one of the founders of the Delaware SPCA, was also one of the state's first women portrait photographers? A portraitist of humans and animals, Webb mastered her craft through photographs of individuals, families with children, pets, and chickens (pictured on the right). You can learn more about her in "Emily Webb: 19th Century Photographer and Activist," episode 2 of the Delaware Historical Society's new video series, *Speaking of Delaware*...

Speaking of Delaware... consists of short videos featuring objects and stories from our collections – paintings by Ed Loper, Thomas Garrett's silver tray and teapot, and Civil War flags of the First Delaware Regiment to name a few. New videos premiere the first Thursday of every month on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and our website at dehistory.org/speaking-of-delaware. Be sure to watch, like, comment, and share!

This series is part of a larger grant-funded project that we began at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase virtual access to our collections since we were not able to welcome visitors in person. While we were already working to increase visibility and accessibility prior to the pandemic, the worldwide shift away from in-person visits inspired us to take a digital-first approach. With that perspective, we can create digital content that complements rather than supplements existing in-person experiences.

We were inspired to develop this series to share objects and stories in new ways, allowing people to get closer and feel more connected to our collections. To produce the series, we worked with Short Order Production House, a recent ADDY award winner and Wilmington neighbor. Their production quality is unlike any video content we've released before, in structure, format and resolution. We're delighted to see that based on audience response so far, our strategy has been very effective.



SPEAKING OF DELAWARE...

A Conversation with Chief Dennis Coker of the Lenape Tribe

Chief Dennis Coker of Lenape Tribe of Delaware being interviewed for "A Conversation with Chief Dennis Coker of the Lenape Tribe," from *Speaking of Delaware*... This episode will premiere Thursday November 3, 2022.



We premiered the first episode, "Journey to Freedom: Exhibition Tour," on February 3, 2022 to great success – more than 172 people watched it on YouTube the day it premiered and since its publishing, that number has doubled. One commentator wrote, "Very impressive! Look forward to visiting this exhibition." One of our goals for the series was to bring people into our spaces, be it physically or digitally. Comments like the one above and others left on our videos suggest that we are achieving this goal.

Episodes are available for free online, so you can watch them any time you want. Don't miss a single one! Our latest video premiered May 5th, on one of our favorite collection items, Miss Nagano, a Japanese Friendship Doll. Coming soon in our summer videos are stories about Tyman Stidham, the first doctor of New Sweden, Peter Spencer, founder of Delaware's independent Black church movement, and the Belton and Bulah v. Gebhart court case concerning the desegregation of high schools in Delaware.

Everything about this project represents progress towards our goal of making Delaware history impossible to ignore. We look forward to working on more videos in the near future centering on The Read House & Gardens. Be sure to follow this exciting video series through the next year to learn about the many voices and fascinating life stories that have shaped the first-state's history. The saying goes that there are two sides to every story. Join us to discover the human side of history.

This series was made possible with funding in part by the Longwood Foundation, Delmarva Power, an Exelon Company, Institute of Museum and Library Services, and by a grant from the Delaware Humanities, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

SCHEDULE:

FEBRUARY 3

Journey to Freedom: Exhibition Tour
(released)

MARCH 3

Emily Webb: 19th Century
Photographer and Activist
(released)

APRIL 7

Regimental Flags of the Civil War
(released)

MAY 5

Miss Nagano:
The Japanese Friendship Doll
(released)

JUNE 2

Tymen Stidham: The First
Doctor of New Sweden

JULY 7

Peter Spencer: Father of the
Independent Black Church Movement

AUGUST 4

Belton and Bulah VS. Gebhart: The Fight
to End School Segregation in Delaware

MORE TO COME!

For updates to the release schedule or to
watch episodes of *Speaking of Delaware...*,
visit dehistory.org/speaking-of-delaware.



Visitor walking through stained glass display in Forging Faith, Building Freedom, within the Journey to Freedom exhibit at the Delaware History Museum and Mitchell Center for African American Heritage, from "Journey to Freedom: Exhibition Tour," *Speaking of Delaware...* (2022).



FOUR-ALARM ACQUISITIONS

by Sharon Folkenroth Hess, M.A., Project Archivist

When Wilmington's fire department professionalized in the early 20th century, its first volunteer fire company was already over 145 years old. As one of the city's oldest institutions, the Wilmington Fire Department amassed a rare cache of objects, photographs, manuscripts, records, and ephemera. This astounding collection captures the history of the state's largest metropolis as few others can. In cooperation with the city's Historic Preservation Planner and Cultural Affairs Director and with the blessing of the Wilmington Fire Department, the Delaware Historical Society (DHS) agreed to oversee the inventory and preservation of this incomparable historical resource.

In late 2019, we began a six-month project to assess the collection, stored at the department's Heald Street headquarters. As the project archivist, my goal was to document, organize the holdings, and digitize select categories. Upon completion of this process, parts of the collection would be rehomed among appropriate cultural repositories, including DHS. Little did we know that we had embarked on a three-year odyssey.

This collection was initially stored at Station No. 5 in the old Water Witch Fire Company building. Few remembered its contents when it was relocated to the current department headquarters over a decade ago. Treasures were rediscovered. Long-lost stories were revealed. Danger abounded. Grenades filled with the carcinogen carbon tetrachloride popped up like Easter eggs in the storage areas. During the project, the fire department grew, and our work and temporary storage space shrank significantly. Suffocating heat in the storage areas distressed objects and archivists alike. We soon discovered that our original estimates of the object collection's size were off by half.

Nevertheless, we persisted. By March 2020, the project was wrapping up with the objects inventory. We prepared to dig into the photographic and archival materials.

Enter the global pandemic. The project paused for two weeks to help flatten the curve. It was 14 months before we could return. The fire department was commemorating its centennial when we resumed the project and requested DHS' participation. We created an exhibit for the department's 100th-anniversary banquet featuring highlights from the newly inventoried collection. It recounted the legacy of the volunteer years and the birth of the Wilmington Fire Department.

At long last we dug into the photographic collections; like the objects, they exceeded our estimates. After transporting dozens of boxes to the DHS Research



Wilmington Fire Department badge, circa 1900

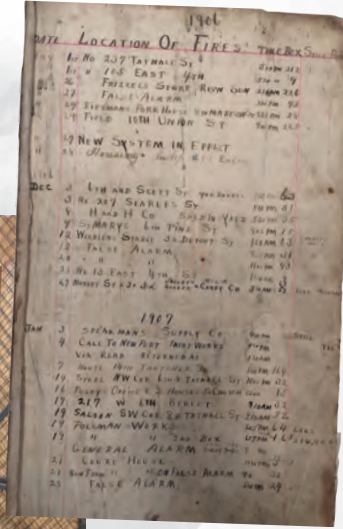


Postcard of the Friendship Fire Co., circa 1908



Omega Chemical Co.
fire, February 8, 1975

Storage cage at headquarters before
the project began, October 1, 2019



First page from Fame
Fire Company House
ledger 1906-1917

Library for processing, we cleaned, scanned, and rehouseed nearly 7,000 images. The entire Wilmington Fire Department inventory reached approximately 17,000 entries upon completion in April 2022.

The fire company project took us on a journey, complete with detours. The opportunity to preserve two hundred and-fifty years of this unique and important segment of Delaware history was well worth the trip.

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE, THERE'S HISTORY...

The harnessing of fire has touched nearly every aspect of human history, allowing us to mold the world to our needs and modify the landscape. Cities expanded with fossil-fueled fire during the Industrial Revolution, giving rise to densely packed neighborhoods and skyscraping edifices. For all that it has allowed us to create, fire's destructive energy determines the shape of our urban areas. Researchers familiar with the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps can attest to its power. Our ability to extinguish fires and stem the loss of both life and resources affects whether a community can sustain population growth and support the advancement of commerce and industry. From infrastructure and building codes to city budgets and politics, fires and firefighting are essential components of any city's history.

The significance of fire department records as a historical resource is evidenced in the newly added Wilmington Fire Department Firehouse Ledger Collection (1906-1994). The 278 books contain between 300 and 600 pages documenting the daily activities of an engine company, including:

- Firefighters on duty (time in, out)
- Emergency responses
- Interactions with the public
- Weather conditions
- Phone calls and telegraphs
- Alarm locations
- Extent of damage to property and loss of life
- Maintenance of equipment and station

This unique collection records the many elements that shaped Wilmington, from the catastrophic to the mundane. We are excited to add this collection to the Delaware Historical Society's holdings and make it available to researchers in the coming months.



history with a small “h”

by John Sweeney

We tend to like big history. History with a capital “H” translates into wars, disasters, politics, and scandals. It’s filled with the drama of outsized villains and the larger-than-life heroes.

But most history isn’t like that. The kind of history that actually touches us is usually spelled with a small letter “h.” It’s more ordinary, but more real. It’s almost tangible, no matter how old.

For example, how many times have you been caught short by a faded photograph, or a worn, well-read letter in an old box in the attic? What about the time a set of old dog tags slipped out of an envelope in that suitcase stuffed with graduation cards and mementos from long-ago vacations?

For a second, you see yourself next to the stranger in that faded photo. You imagine yourself wearing the ill-fitting old-timey clothes. Costume party regalia to you, but to the man in the picture, they were his Sunday best.

Or you can picture the hand gracefully writing that now creased and frail letter. Where, you wonder, did she get the patience to make the letters so neat and still say so much in so few words? What feelings are hidden behind the proper formality of the words? And who, you ask, read it first? Finally, how did he come to save it?

Or what about the time you found your grandfather’s dog tags? You heard them clink. You carefully ran your fingertips across the impersonally stamped letters and numbers that summed up your grandfather in a name, serial number, and blood type. Suddenly, your grandfather was no longer old. He was a young man with a life ahead, but with a war to fight. For a moment, the gray hair and the bad knees no longer defined him.

It’s small history, something almost trivial and easily overlooked. But it really is a key to the world of yesterday.

One man who understood this better than anyone I ever came across was the late Paul Preston Davis. He began collecting when he was nine. An aunt left him a ledger from 18th Century Philadelphia. Young Davis knew that book held secrets. A real form of history was inside it. That realization spurred him to go on collecting. As he grew older, his passion only grew. His collecting became more serious. At the end, his collections filled hundreds of storage boxes, each containing small “h” history treasures.

He collected children’s books, old photographs, and business cards. He would move on to collect books and materials related to the famous Brandywine Valley Illustrator Howard Pyle. As his career advanced with the Delmarva Power Company, he began collecting business papers and advertisements that, put together, would tell a compelling history of Wilmington’s growth in the 19th and 20th centuries.

More was to come.



NOT A MEMBER?

In addition to unlimited free general admission, benefits of DHS memberships include invitations to members-only programs and discounts on museum store purchases and special event tickets. All members also receive complimentary subscriptions to the *Delaware History Journal*, Delaware's journal of scholarship since 1946, and our magazine, *Making History*.

And don't forget, a DHS membership makes a great gift!
Visit dehistory.org/membership to learn more!



Later he began collecting Wilmington. He collected Wilmington photography, African Americana, Wilmington-made watches, and other commemorative objects. Mr. Davis recognized that these insignificant things would add up to a big history, so he carefully searched for well-preserved examples and meticulously sorted and stored his collection. Our children and grandchildren will thank him for his efforts.

His work is stored in hundreds of boxes at the Delaware Historical Society (DHS). Mr. Davis donated the collection and helped oversee the first phase of an exhibition featuring its highlights in late 2019. That preliminary phase of the exhibition only scratched the collection's surface, of course. There was just too much material. More was to come, but the outbreak of Covid-19 temporarily suspended the subsequent phases.

Unfortunately, Mr. Davis died in 2021 before the exhibition was complete. But from that opening in late 2019, he got a small glimpse of the public's reaction. He could see visitors marvel at the scope of the collection and appreciate the care he took in pulling it all together.

The uncertainty of the public health scene makes it questionable when the full exhibition will be open to the public. Researchers can always arrange to view the collection by appointment at the DHS Research Library. But the good news is that the exhibition, called *Collecting Wilmington: Place, Perspective & Memory*, will be available as a digital exhibition by the end of this year.

This digital version will be like having the whole history of Wilmington in a common virtual attic. And it will be waiting for us to explore and wonder.

Small "h" history will touch us once again.

Our guest writer, John Sweeney, is a member of the Board of Trustees for the Delaware Historical Society. He is the former editorial editor at *The News Journal*.



Space for Empathy:

The Case for a New Tour, Part II

by Brenton Grom

Back in March, *The Guardian* published an explainer piece on “goblin mode,” a lifestyle trend roughly defined as “slobbing out and giving up.” The topic has since ricocheted around English-language journalism.

Whether you’re validated or repulsed by other people’s tales of bingeing reality TV, eating weird and unbalanced meals, or letting grooming go by the wayside, the goblin vibe is more than a buzzword. It’s a symptom of the world we’re living in, a world that sometimes pushes us to the edges of our mental wellbeing.

“My ability to slip into goblin mode predates the pandemic,” writes Natasha Radmehr in *The Sunday Times*, “and is usually a sign that I’ve driven myself to exhaustion.” But of course, COVID-19 has brought exasperation to new heights.

The World Health Organization reports a 25% jump in depression and anxiety globally since 2020, and the “Great Resignation” has seen record numbers of people leave the workforce, citing burnout and family priorities. Communities of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, women, and young people have all been disproportionately affected.

Before we talk museums or history, just let that sink in.

International research suggests that people visit museums not to learn, per se, but to enhance their sense of wellbeing. What are we doing to recognize and meet that basic need?

At the Read House, whether you come for a tour, a drink, or yoga in the garden, the rule is that it should leave you renewed, not fatigued. I wrote last fall in this magazine about our newly revamped interior tour and its focus on labor. But does anyone in 2022 even have the bandwidth to care?

These days, our tours start with something deceptively simple: looking and feeling. According to neuroscientists, sensory experiences that inspire awe can help us transcend our psychological and physical limitations and even find peace with our own mortality. In other words: space, place, and physicality all matter.

The Read House & Gardens is a place of wonder. Sunlight floods the rooms through enormous windows that look out over the Delaware River. Fragrant peonies color the evening atmosphere. Long identified as one of the most beautiful homes in America, this was also once one of its largest, at 14,000 square feet. But as a frequent visitor once remarked, it’s “not so large that you couldn’t imagine living there.”



Photo by Sarah Robertson



Imagination is the heart of the Read House. It guided Philip and Lydia Laird in the 1920s, as they mixed historic preservation with whimsy to create a backdrop for their social life. And although they may not always say so, curators, historians, and archaeologists have leaned heavily on it over the past 47 years of DHS stewardship.

Our tour guides today won't lecture you. They'll give you space to notice things and invite you into a conversation.

In the kitchen and front parlor, they'll probably laugh alongside you at all of our 1990s fake food. But as you smirk, you'll realize something: curatorial choices are products of their time, not timeless decrees. Our predecessors 30 years ago imagined how these rooms might have looked during the Read years and staged them as if the family had just stepped out. It now seems trite, but in the 1990s it resonated with people.

If you keep looking and chatting in the parlors, you'll likely draw conclusions about George Read II's world based on his own architectural choices. Once you notice how large the mantels and doors feel next to your human frame, it won't surprise you that he paid six times the usual cost of doorknobs to have these ones silver-plated. The process took his exasperated locksmith in Philadelphia several tries.

Likewise, it's hard to visit Read's ultra-high-tech kitchen and not imagine Jannet or Nancy, free African American women who cooked there. In the 1980s, DHS restored the roasting oven and parts of the plumbing system that were cutting-edge designs in 1803. But a closer look reveals how frustrating they must have been to use. The pump system kept freezing in winter, and if you didn't regulate the little oven vents, you'd burn your food or even destroy the oven.

Within a decade, Read abandoned those designs. But the cooks surely knew better from the start.

Read House tours start with empathy for our visitors. The opportunity to become grounded in the space often then turns into empathy for the complicated lives of others. Imagination helps us to feel whole, and it's also helping us discover the perspectives and people who have never before been celebrated in Read House lore.

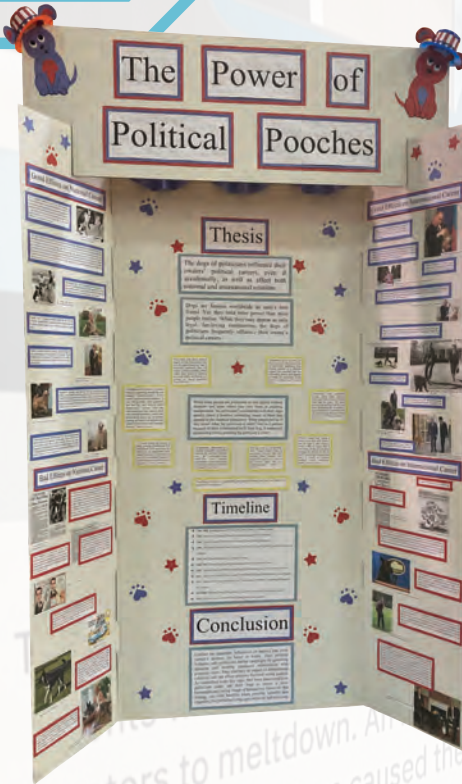
Vijay Nunna (photographer) and Camille N'Diaye (model) reimagined the kitchen through contemporary eyes.



NATIONAL HISTORY DAY IN DELAWARE 2022

Debate & Diplomacy in History

SUCCESSSES, FAILURES, CONSEQUENCES



Students Develop Key Skills through National History Day in Delaware, Sponsored by the Delaware Historical Society

National History Day in Delaware (NHD DE) is an annual educational program for students in grades 6-12 challenging them to conduct scholarly research and then create projects in the form of dramatic performances, imaginative exhibits, multimedia documentaries, research papers, or interactive websites. This year's contest took place at Newark High School on Saturday, April 30. The theme was Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences.

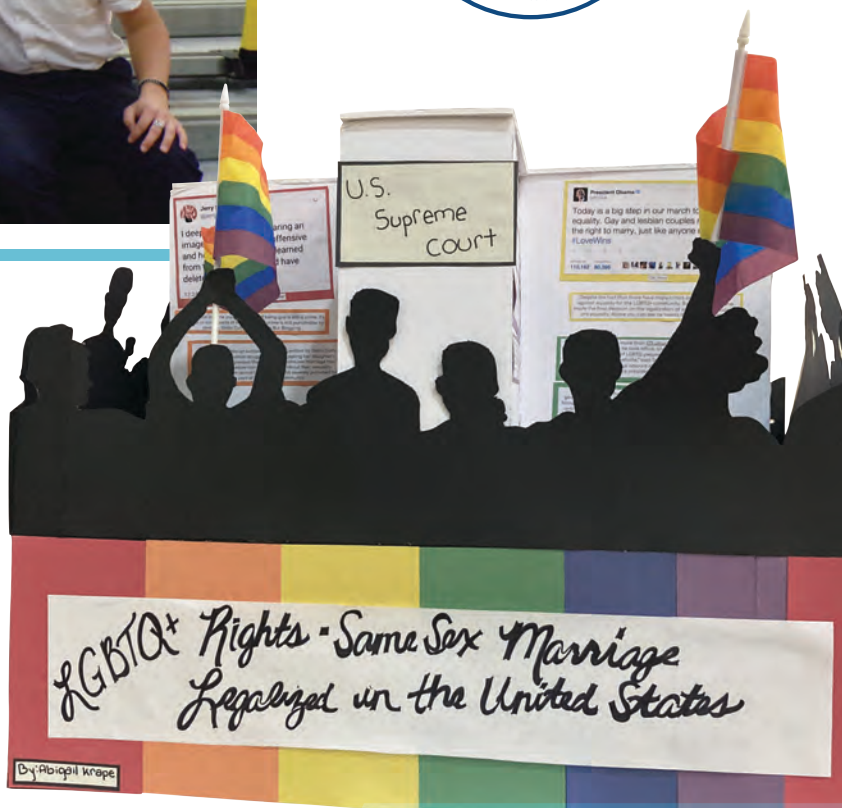


National History Day in Delaware 2022 sticker designed by Ava Skye Barton, a junior at Cab Calloway School of the Arts.

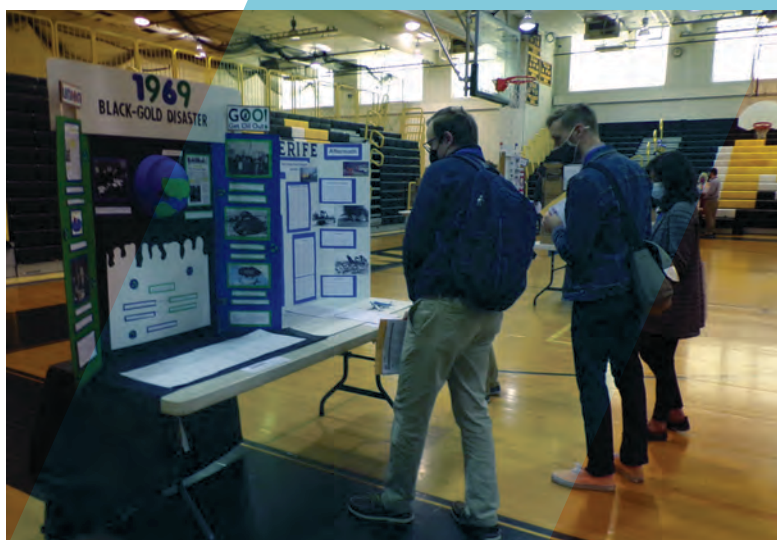




NHD DE is an opportunity for students to develop their research, critical thinking, and problem solving skills, boosting self-esteem and confidence. It encourages them to form a deeper connection to history offering them the chance to interpret history like a historian. DHS has sponsored NHD DE for over 25 years.



To learn more about National History Day in Delaware, visit dehistory.org/learn/national-history-day



SAVE THE DATE!

JUNE 15TH - 18TH

Wilmington celebrates the life & musical legacy of hometown jazz trumpeter Clifford Brown with the 35th Annual Clifford Brown Jazz Festival. cliffordbrownjazzfest.org

Before & during the festival, stop by the Delaware Historical Society to see an eclectic collection of Clifford Brown materials, donated to the Society by Paul Preston Davis. Memorabilia includes original vinyl albums & covers (artwork in their own right); an original pencil drawing by artist Ben Pearce for Mayor James Baker's book *Genuine American Music*; a copy of Nick Catalano's book *Clifford Brown & of Steven Leech's essay Secret City of Jazz*. Even hear a recording of Brown's nationally televised appearance on the *Soupy Sales Show*, a popular TV venue in the 1950's & 60's. For an appointment to see Clifford Brown memorabilia, contact Ed Richi at 302-295-2387 or erichi@dehistory.org.



SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE
35TH ANNUAL CLIFFORD BROWN JAZZ FESTIVAL

Brown (1930-1956) grew up on Wilmington's East Side at 1013 Poplar Street, just south of a bronze statue & park later created in his honor. He rose to international prominence in the mid 1950's as a gifted jazz trumpeter, composer & performer. With the help of his Howard High School teacher, Boysie Lowrey, he was discovered basically by chance by Dizzy Gillespie who called him up on stage out of a crowd gathered at the Odds Fellows Temple at 12th & Orange. He then began his commercial career in nearby Philadelphia clubs. "Brownie" heralded what would later become modern jazz with a dazzling & nuanced improvisation method of trumpet playing. We owe much of the spirit of jazz music featured in 1960s & 70s TV shows & films to Brown & his contemporaries. He died tragically in a car accident in late June, 1956, on the PA Turnpike while driving to his next gig in Chicago. He was just 25 yrs old. Nevertheless, his unique talent & affable personal qualities were so remarkable as to inspire later generations of jazz artists such as Gerald Chavis <https://geraldchavismusic.com/> as well as a large festival in his honor every June in Wilmington. Clifford Brown is interred next to fellow Wilmington Jazz legend Lem Winchester in Mt. Zion Cemetery near Cab Calloway School for the Arts.

by Ed Richi



WE CARE WHAT YOU THINK!

The Delaware Historical Society will soon embark on the development of a new strategic plan. We will email you a survey in the coming weeks to solicit your opinion on a variety of topics. We value your input and ask you to keep an eye on your inbox for the survey. Thank you!

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Stephen Kingsberry
Chair, Board of Trustees

History is the study of change over time. According to writer and philosopher George Santayana, “Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.” In 1939, a troubled leader threatened to take over another country. Hitler’s invasion of Poland in September 1939 drove Great Britain and France to declare war on Germany. On December 7, 1941, following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States was forced to become engaged in the second World War. Just as we helped Europe in WWII, we are helping Ukraine today.

In WWII, because of racial bias and discrimination, Black Americans were relegated to non-fighting jobs. Before the Tuskegee Airmen, no African American had been allowed to become a military pilot. In 1941, the War Department and the Army Air Corps, constituted the first all-Black flying unit, the 99th Pursuit Squadron. The 99th Squadron were the first black pilots to be deployed overseas. The all-Black military pilots were trained, in part, at Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama. Of the 922 pilots, five were Haitians from the Haitian Air Force, one was from Trinidad and Tobago and one was an Hispanic airman born in the Dominican Republic.

During World War II, Black Americans in the United States were subjected to Jim Crow laws and, as a result, the military was racially segregated. Despite being skilled and expertly prepared, the Tuskegee Airmen were subjected to racial discrimination, both within and outside of the U.S. Army.

One of those hero pilots was Littleton Mitchell from Milford, Delaware. Mitchell was a Tuskegee fighter in WWII and upon retirement, led the

Delaware Branches of the NAACP as President for over 30 years. He also became the first Black teacher of white children in Delaware City. Mitchell served on the Delaware Humanities Council from 1991 to 1997. In 1993, the University of Delaware awarded Mitchell its Medal of Merit for sustained community service. He was also awarded the Delaware Bar Association’s 2004 Liberty Bell Award for community service. His wife, Jane Mitchell, became one of Delaware’s first African American nurses. For many years she served as the Director of Nursing at the Delaware State Hospital and, along with her husband, led efforts to desegregate the state’s hospitals. She was also an accomplished artist with a painting on display in the Mitchell Center. The Jane and Littleton Mitchell Center for African American Heritage was named in their honor. Help us to honor their legacy and continue to map the history of the State of Delaware.

THANK YOU

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, 2021 to April 30, 2022.

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