A GUIDE TO COLLECTIONS

AMERICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY

HAGLEY MUSEUM AND LIBRARY
The study of American women has revolutionized the practice of history and our view of America's past. The development of women's history was inspired by the reemergence of feminism and the advent of the new social history in the 1960s and 1970s. Historians initially focused on women's contributions to society and the obstacles encountered by women. Recently women's history has grown more complex as it has sought to address the effects of gender, class, and race. The prodigious results of this research have encouraged historians to reconceptualize their understanding of our country's heritage, from domestic life to work to politics, and to reformulate basic questions about our modern era.

Hagley Museum and Library's research collections can be used to examine key subjects in American women's history, including women's roles within the family economy, gender and the workplace, domesticity, the culture of consumption, philanthropy, and participation in political reform movements. In a three-year review of its holdings, Hagley identified material pertaining to women in one-quarter of its manuscript collections, as well as considerable documentation in printed and pictorial materials. Hagley Archivist Lynn Catanese has prepared a complete guide to these holdings, published by Greenwood Press (1997). This brochure provides a concise survey of pertinent research collections. We invite the attention of women's historians to our collections and to the grants available to assist visiting scholars.

*Machine operators cutting explosive nitrocellulose, E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., World War I*
FEMALE DOMESTICITY

Women's diaries, correspondence, account books, and scrapbooks in Hagley's manuscript collections document aspects of female domesticity, especially for the nineteenth century. Inter-generational relationships (particularly those between mothers and daughters) are described in correspondence between Elizabeth Smith (1787-1861) and her daughter, Joanna Smith du Pont (1815-1876), du Pont and her daughter Eleuthera du Pont Bradford (1848-1906), and Bradford and her daughter Eleuthera Bradford du Pont (1873-1953). Discussion of household administration and employment of domestic servants can be found in the papers of Victorine du Pont Bauduy (1792-1861), Eleuthera du Pont Smith (1806-1876), Mary Allen Evans (1816-1861), Margareta Lammot du Pont (1807-1898), and Isabel Caldwell Masters (d. 1841). Bauduy's papers also document her work as superintendent of the Brandywine Manufacturers' Sunday School. Nineteenth-century courting rituals are portrayed in the letters of Margareta du Pont Coleman (1862-1938), Gabrielle Shubrick Crofton (1835-1894), and Elise Simons du Pont (1849-1919).

Many other subjects pertaining to domesticity can be researched in Hagley's collections, including gender roles, the importance of religion in everyday life, and child rearing. The correspondence and diaries of Sophie Du Pont (1810-1888) show her wide-ranging interests in politics, religion, literature, and health. Correspondence between Josephine du Pont (1770-1837) and Margaret Izard Manigault (1768-1824) details daily life and contains information on social rituals, fashion, entertainment, upper class attitudes, child rearing, travel, and literature.

LEISURE AND PHILANTHROPY

The papers of the du Pont women who came of age during the Gilded Age and early twentieth century describe a broad range of leisure and philanthropic activities. Louise du Pont Crowninshield (1877-1958) was a founding trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a vice-chairman of its board. Crowninshield's papers document the worlds of collecting and historic preservation, one of the few acceptable outlets for creative expression open to upper class women during the 1920s and 1930s. Additionally, her letters discuss the heyday of New York elite society in the late 1890s and contain descriptions of debutante balls, parties, sporting events, and summers at exclusive resorts. The correspondence, financial records, and diaries of Alice Belin du Pont (1872-1944) document her activities and interests which included philanthropy, travel, shopping, and horticulture. Her college scrapbook and photographs depict the scholastic and social life of a Bryn Mawr College graduate (class of 1892).

Eleuthera Bradford du Pont
and son Henry Belin du Pont, ca 1902

Playing lawn tennis,
Wilmington, Del.
Many of the corporate archives and personal papers held by Hagley contain information on women who worked in industry, offices, retail stores, domestic service, and agriculture. The collections clearly document sex-segregated labor markets, and show how ideas about gender influenced both male supervisors and female workers. These records identify occupations open to women and frequently include employment applications containing information on ethnicity, marital status, family size, and employment experience. The papers of E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, E.C. Beestem & Son (rug manufacturers), Joseph Bancroft & Sons (textiles), and the S.S. White Dental Manufacturing Company are particularly helpful in this regard.

Some Hagley collections also describe the careers of female entrepreneurs. Lukens Steel’s records reveal the pivotal role of Rebecca Lukens (the first known American woman to own and operate an iron works) in the firm between 1825 and 1847. Personal papers, including her autobiography and some correspondence, supplement the corporate records. Financial records document the small businesses operated by Ann Talley, an 1840s milliner; Edith McConnell, a caterer active from the 1920s to the 1950s in Wilmington, Delaware; and Elizabeth Paschall, a Philadelphia shopkeeper in the 1740s-1760s. The correspondence of twentieth century inventors Nora Edwards and Mary Hallock Greenewalt reflects their efforts to patent and sell their devices.

Machine Shop,
Lukens Steel Company,
World War II
The Hagley Museum and Library’s research collections thoroughly describe the development of America’s consumer culture. Records of general stores, merchants, and artisans, and personal papers of middle and upper class families show expenditures for household and personal goods and services that reflect the local nature of nineteenth-century consumption. Corporate advertising department records from firms such as DuPont, Sun Oil, Quaker Lace, and RCA illuminate the rise of advertising and national marketing campaigns. Frequently these advertisements illustrate the use of gendered appeals to sell products. The records of Strawbridge & Clothier, a quintessential Philadelphia palace of consumption, reflect the role of department stores as purveyors to a primarily female audience. The Joseph E. Seagram & Sons and Avon Products, Inc., corporate archives, which open to researchers in 1999, will add considerably to Hagley’s holdings on consumer culture.

Trade catalogs—a promotional device used by manufacturing, wholesale, and retail firms—reveal much about ethnic, sexual, class, and racial attitudes and illustrate changing gender roles. Hagley’s collection of more than 25,000 trade catalogs describes products manufactured, distributed, and sold primarily in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Hagley also holds more than 2,500 trade cards distributed in the 1880s and 1890s primarily aimed at a female audience. Household goods such as patent medicines, thread, sewing machines, soaps and cleansers, food products, and heating and cooking stoves are extensively represented in this collection.

Trade card for Wheeler and Wilson sewing machine, 1888
Hagley's collections also describe women's organizational activities devoted to religion, social reform, and politics. The journal of Elizabeth Webb (1663-1726) and writings about Sarah Morris (1703-1775), both Quaker ministers, reflect the freedom and authority women had within their religion. The Charles Lukens Huston papers show his family's active involvement in organizations affiliated with the Presbyterian church, particularly the work of Ruth Huston (1899-1982), a church missionary in Kentucky. Correspondence in the John McShain papers between Sister Pauline Mary McShain (b. 1928) and her parents include descriptions of life in a convent, her career as an educator, and her activities in America, Nigeria, and the Vatican as a member of the Catholic Church's Society of the Holy Child Jesus. Information about women's experiences in the Democratic party can be found in the papers of John J. Raskob, chairman of the Democratic National Committee from 1928-1932. Alice Belin du Pont's papers and the records of the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform document women's efforts to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment. The National Association of Manufacturers' records describe its efforts to draw women's clubs into a conservative, pro-business coalition after World War II.