

Library Company of Philadelphia

**Doret Centennial 11423.F**

**DAVID DORET COLLECTION OF CENTENNIAL EPHEMERA**

1855-1882  
(bulk 1876)

2.42 linear feet, 1 box and 7 flat files  
circa 100 items

- Series I. Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia (1855-1882)
- Series II. Oversize Material (1873-1876)

August 2008

**Descriptive Summary****Repository**

Library Company of Philadelphia  
1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5698  
<http://www.librarycompany.org>

**Call Number**

Doret Centennial 11423.F

**Creator**

Doret, David, collector

**Title**

David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera

**Inclusive Dates**

1855-1882 (bulk 1876)

**Quantity**

circa 100 items; 2.42 linear feet (1 box plus 7 flat folders)

**Language of Materials**

Materials are primarily in English. Ten items are also in French, German, and/or Spanish.

**Abstract**

The David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera consists of approximately one hundred items relating to the Centennial Exhibition, held in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park in 1876 to celebrate America's one-hundredth anniversary of independence and to showcase the strengths of the country's industry, manufactures, agriculture, and art. The circulars, price lists, advertising cards, stationery, and pamphlets were primarily generated by the many companies that exhibited their goods at the fair. Other documents include guidebooks for visitors, maps, a Centennial Board of Finance letterhead, a Centennial award seal, and programs. The collection is arranged in two series: Series I, Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia; and Series II, Oversize Material.

**Administrative Information****Restrictions to Access**

The collection is open to researchers.

**Acquisition Information**

Gift of David Doret in 2006.

**Processing Information**

This collection was donated by David Doret, Philadelphia, PA, in one installment in 2006. The material was formerly housed in plastic sleeves in a 3-ring binder. The material was removed from the sleeves and transferred to archival folders. The original order in which the materials were donated was retained, except for seven oversized items that require separate flat housing and four pamphlets that have been housed with the collection of books and printed material. The collection was processed by Charlene Peacock in the summer of 2008 with a grant from the Samuel S. Fels Fund.

**Preferred Citation**

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## **Online Catalog Headings**

### **Subject Names**

- Centennial Exhibition (1876: Philadelphia, Pa.)
- Chickering & Sons
- Royal Baking Powder Company
- Singer Sewing Machine Company

### **Subject Topics**

- Centennial Exhibition (1876: Philadelphia, Pa.)
- Centennial Exhibition (1876: Philadelphia, Pa.) – Buildings
- Centennial Exhibition (1876: Philadelphia, Pa.) – Maps
- Clothing and dress
- Exhibitions – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia
- Fairmount Park (Philadelphia, Pa.)
- Food
- Guano
- House furnishings
- Kitchen utensils
- Machinery
- Metal-work
- Patent medicines
- Roofing
- Textile industry
- Tools

### **Subject Places**

- Philadelphia (Pa.)

### **Document Types**

- Advertisements
- Advertising cards
- Awards
- Broadsides
- Circulars
- Guidebooks – Philadelphia (Pa.)
- Maps – United States – Philadelphia (Pa.)
- Pamphlets
- Periodicals
- Pictorial lettersheets
- Price lists
- Programs
- Sales catalogs
- Stationery
- Tickets

### Related Collections

The Library Company of Philadelphia holds material relating to the Centennial Exhibition in multiple areas of its collection. The Centennial Ephemera Collection (1838.F) holds similar documents, but on a more extensive scale. It includes over 1,000 circulars, trade cards, broadsides, and other advertising ephemera generated by companies that exhibited at the fair. See also Centennial and World's Columbian Expositions, 1876, 1893, part of the McAllister Collection, (McA 5758.F, folder 1) for forty-six wood engravings that were cut from periodicals including *The Daily Graphic* and *Harper's Weekly*, and a few circular letters and programs.

The Library Company's collection of books and printed material contains official catalogues and proceedings, guidebooks, and published personal accounts relating to the Centennial fair and preceding planning activities. It also includes advertising pamphlets from participating businesses, as well as a few Centennial-related broadsides and playbills. Newspapers and periodicals contemporary to the era, such as *Harper's Weekly*, are also available. Most of these items are cataloged in WolfPAC, the Library Company's online catalog.

The Print and Photograph Department holds hundreds of items depicting the fair grounds, buildings, and exhibits. These materials include photographs by the Centennial Photographic Company (both loose and in an album), large lithographic bird's-eye views, engravings, certificates, cartes de visite, stereographs, maps, trade cards, a jigsaw puzzle, commemorative prints, a printed handkerchief, and an accordion-folded pictorial souvenir. Later 19th- and early 20th-century images of some of the buildings are also available. Several of these items are cataloged in WolfPAC and in ImPAC, the Library Company's online catalog for digital collections. Separate finding aids exist for the Centennial Photographic Company collection and the trade cards.

The Art and Artifacts Collection contains a bronze Centennial medal (Inv. #184) and commemorative scissors (Inv. #834).

Nearby repositories with Centennial Exhibition collections include the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia City Archives, and the Hagley Museum & Library.

## Historical Notes

In celebration of America's one-hundredth anniversary of independence, the Centennial Exhibition took place on more than 285 acres of land in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park May 10-November 10, 1876. Close to ten million visitors (9,910,966) went to the fair via railroad, steamboat, carriage, and on foot. Thirty-seven nations participated in the event, officially named the International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mine. The grounds contained five major buildings: the Main Exhibition Building, Memorial Hall (Art Gallery), Machinery Hall, Agricultural Hall, and Horticultural Hall. In addition to these buildings, approximately 250 smaller structures were constructed by states, countries, companies, and other Centennial bureaus that focused on particular displays or services. The United States Centennial Commission was the body appointed to plan the fair.

Adhering to precedents set by other international expositions in Paris, London, New York, and Vienna, the Centennial Exhibition featured a system for evaluating goods and giving awards. Judges from the United States and abroad were assigned to one of twenty-eight groupings of products. The judges submitted reports on their impressions of the products to the Centennial Commission, which decided the final award. No "1st Place" or "Gold" medal was bestowed. Rather, all award recipients received a bronze medal of equal value. The distinctive, award-winning merits of the products were only explained in written reports published by the Centennial Commission.

The Centennial Exhibition reflected a growing consumer and leisure culture of the mid-late 19th century. Never before had consumers been able to view so many practical and luxurious commodities from so many countries in one place. Manufacturers, dealers, and exhibitors of tens of thousands of products competed for the attention of prospective buyers by handing out printed circulars, trade cards, catalogs, and other advertising ephemera. The surviving documents generated by the exhibitors provide a sense of the extensive scope, size, and impact of the event.

## Collection Overview

The David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera consists primarily of advertising ephemera generated by the many companies that exhibited their goods at the fair. It is arranged in two series: Series I, Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia; and Series II, Oversize Material.

Series I, Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia (1855-1882) contains 1 box (.42 linear feet) of advertising ephemera, including circulars, advertising cards, stationery, and guidebooks. It also contains a manuscript letter on Centennial Board of Finance letterhead and accompanying postmarked envelope addressed to James Booth. Other items of interest include a paper embossed seal in the design of the official medal "awarded by [U]nited States [C]entennial Commission" and examples of admission tickets. Several of the items contain illustrations, such as views of the Centennial buildings, and depictions of products.

Circulars comprise the majority of the collection. The materials advertised cover a diverse range of goods and services, including washboards, ironing tables, saws, springs, sewing machines, mills, mowers, reapers, horse shoes, and hotel accommodations. Examples of advertisements from foreign companies demonstrate the international nature of the fair, despite the great focus on American products. Countries represented include Belgium, Russia, Great Britain, Holland, Austria, France, Germany, and Spain.

The history of the Centennial as an event is furthermore covered by admission tickets, Centennial Board of Finance letterhead and envelope (with manuscript), images of the buildings, guidebooks, a map, and a broadside from the Office of the Hotel and Boarding-House Association. A few concert programs provide a glimpse into the types of entertainment that surrounded the Centennial celebration.

Approximately fifteen of the advertisements include manuscript annotations of dates (e.g. "11.2.76" and "Nov 9/76"), possibly made by Centennial visitors to record dates of attendance at the fair. A concert program for Seibert Hall [11423.F.21] contains a lengthy manuscript annotation on the verso.

Series II, Oversize Material (1873-1876) (2 linear feet) contains seven flat files that have been housed with other collections due to size.

Six flat files are housed with the Rose and Leon Doret Collection of Business Ephemera [11392.F]. They include *The Colosseum Programme* (periodical), an article about the Singer Sewing Machine Building (with a detailed map of Centennial grounds on the verso), a broadside for the Royal Baking Powder Company, and advertisements for sectional mills and textiles. One item is a Spanish-language price list for saws, machines, and tools.

One flat file [11423.F.93], a Spanish-language advertisement for porcelain and china goods, is housed with Library Company broadsides, call number 2# Am 1876 Pickman.

Two of the items in Series II include manuscript annotations of dates, possibly made by a visitor to the Centennial who recorded his/her dates of attendance on the fliers he/she collected.

### **Item-level Inventories**

An item-level inventory/box list of the David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera, arranged by accession number, is available at the repository. A second item-level inventory sorted by subject is available on the Library Company's website, <http://www.librarycompany.org>, and at the repository. Each item has been labeled with one of the nine general subject areas below:

Chemical Manufactures (Chemical)

Includes chemical works and products, such as guano, and glass industry products.  
(6 items)

Clothing and Textiles (Clothing)

Includes items worn on the body, such as suiting and furs. This category also includes textile products, fabrics, and cloths from the linen, lace, and silk industries. (6 items)

Food and Beverage (Food)

Includes ingredients for preparing food (e.g. baking powder), as well as fruit, beef, and pickled foods. (6 items)

Health and Personal Products (Health)

Primarily patent medicines, including a French product for deaf people. (3 items)

Household Furnishings, Appliances, and Utensils (Household)

Includes furniture and interior decorations such as chairs, pianos, and porcelain. Also included are kitchen utensils, such as sifters, as well as cleaning and laundry items, such as washboards (washing machines are listed under "Machinery and Metalwork").  
(12 items)

Machinery and Metalwork (Machinery)

Includes both simple and complex machines such as mowers, mills, sewing machines, washing machines, and mechanical parts. Types of metalwork include iron and silver. There are several advertisements for the United States Soapstone Furnace Company.  
(27 items)

Masonry and Building Materials (Masonry)

Includes one item for roofing felt. (1 item)

Miscellaneous

Examples of products in this category include aquarium tanks, minerals, and plants. Types of services include hotel accommodations and railroad transportation. Also under Miscellaneous is Centennial-related information (e.g. tickets, maps, and programs). (37 items)

Tools and Instruments (Tools)

Includes handtools (e.g. files) and agricultural implements (e.g. hoes). (5 items)