

Library Company of Philadelphia

Centennial Ephemera 1838.F

CENTENNIAL EPHEMERA COLLECTION

circa 1876

6.1 linear feet, 11 boxes
circa 1,000 items

Volume 1
Volume 2
Volume 3
Volume 4
Volume 5
Volume 6

August 2008

Descriptive Summary

Repository

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

Call Number

Centennial Ephemera 1838.F

Creator

Smith, Horace J. (Horace John), 1832-1906, collector.

Title

Centennial Ephemera Collection

Inclusive Dates

circa 1876

Quantity

circa 1,000 items; 6.1 linear feet (11 boxes)

Language of Materials

Materials are primarily in English, but some items are in French, German, Spanish, and Dutch.

Abstract

The Centennial Ephemera Collection consists of approximately 1,000 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, advertising cards, broadsides, and sales catalogs were primarily generated by the many companies that exhibited their goods at the fair. Other documents include Centennial admission tickets, railroad timetables, and a program. The collection is arranged in six volumes.

Administrative Information**Restrictions to Access**

The collection is open to researchers.

Acquisition Information

Date of acquisition is 1877, but the immediate source of the material is unrecorded. Evidence suggests that Horace J. Smith (1832-1906) donated the bulk of the collection. Smith donated other Centennial-related material to the Library Company on other occasions in the 1870s.

Processing Information

The Centennial Ephemera Collection originally came into the Library Company in 1877 as six bound folio volumes¹. It is possible that some materials were added to the collection after acquisition. In the late 1980s the items were removed from scrapbooks (which were probably not the original 1877 bindings), inventoried at the item level, and arranged by accession number. This current finding aid was created by Charlene Peacock in the summer of 2008 with a grant from the Samuel S. Fels Fund.

Preferred Citation

This collection should be cited as: [indicate specific item or volume here], Centennial Ephemera Collection (1838.F), The Library Company of Philadelphia. For permission to publish materials or images in this collection, contact the Coordinator of Rights and Reproductions, Library Company of Philadelphia, 1314 Locust St., Philadelphia, PA 19107-5698. Please include complete citation(s) when making a request. See the Library Company's website, <http://www.librarycompany.org/>, for further information.

¹ The Library Company's folio accession book contains an undated entry for acquisition 1838.F: "Cards, Circulars &c. Cent. Exhibition, Phil 1876, 6 [vols]." Also, the published *Bulletin of the Library Company of Philadelphia* for January 1878 (covering books added from July 1, 1877 to January 1, 1878) lists 1838.F as "Centennial Exhibition; Circulars, etc., 6 vols., Phila. 1876."

Online Catalog Headings

Subject Names

Smith, Horace J. (Horace John), 1832-1906
Centennial Exhibition (1876: Philadelphia, Pa.)

Subject Topics

Centennial Exhibition (1876: Philadelphia, Pa.)
Centennial Exhibition (1876: Philadelphia, Pa.) – Buildings
Book industries and trade
Clothing and dress
Exhibitions – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia
Fairmount Park (Philadelphia, Pa.)
Fertilizers
Food
House furnishings
Household appliances
Hygiene products
Implements, utensils, etc.
Interior decoration
Kitchen utensils
Machinery
Masonry
Metal-work
Paint
Patent medicines
Petroleum
Scientific apparatus and instruments
Textile industry
Tobacco
Tools
Writing – Materials and instruments

Subject Places

Philadelphia (Pa.)

Document Types

Advertisements
Advertising cards
Broad­sides
Circulars
Guidebooks – Philadelphia (Pa.)
Price lists
Programs
Sales catalogs
Samples
Tickets

Related Collections

The Library Company of Philadelphia holds material relating to the Centennial Exhibition in multiple areas of its collection. The David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera (11423.F) holds similar, but fewer, documents. It includes approximately one hundred circulars, trade cards, stationery, and other advertising ephemera. 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 Artifact Collection contains a bronze Centennial medal (Inv. #184) and commemorative scissors (Inv. #834).

Extensive information about Horace J. Smith is available in the Smith Family Papers at the Library Company of Philadelphia. This collection includes business account books and records, newspaper clippings, correspondence, legal papers, certificates, and biographical and genealogical information.

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.

Provenance Note

Horace J. Smith (1832-1906) is believed to have been the collector of many of the items in the Centennial Ephemera Collection. No accession record exists that specifically links him to the collection, but other evidence² proves that he gave Centennial-related material to the Library Company, of which his brother Lloyd P. Smith was librarian, on multiple occasions. Furthermore, manuscript notations on items in this collection (see (3)1838.F.74, (4)1838.F.61, and (4)1838.F.129) match handwriting samples definitely by Horace in other collections, particularly the Smith Family Papers, Library Company of Philadelphia.

Biographical Note

Horace John Smith was born in Philadelphia December 9, 1832 to John Jay and Rachel Pearsall Smith. He married Margaret Longstreth circa 1857. They had four children: Albanus L. (b. 1859), Mary B.L. (b. 1863), Wilson L. (b. 1867), and Margaret L. (b. 1872). He was involved in the china and porcelain trade with the firm Wright, Smith, & Pearsall, and in the oil and petroleum industry with Wright, Smith and Co. An economic panic in 1857 and then the start of the Civil War halted his business endeavors. During the Civil War he worked for the United States Sanitary Commission nursing both Union and Confederate soldiers in the field hospitals. After the war he leased a tract of land (near George's Hill in the Hestonville area of Philadelphia) from his father-in-law, William W. Longstreth, on which he managed a stock farm.

Smith served on the Advisory Committee of the Bureau of Agriculture under the United States Centennial Commission. He helped organize the Agricultural Exhibit, which displayed native and cultivated plants and crops, agricultural machinery, farm implements, farming methods, fruits, and trees. Smith served as a Live Stock Attendant during the months of September and October, 1876 when the Bureau of Agriculture presented a special exhibition of livestock including horses, cattle, sheep, swine, and dogs. Also, on October 19, 1876, he was a judge of a special Centennial Tournament, an event which tested the horsemanship of "knights" from several states. As a result of his professional work, many of the items in the Centennial Ephemera Collection bearing his manuscript notations relate to agriculture.

After the Centennial Exhibition, Smith turned his attention to raising awareness of the need for a veterinary school in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania, his alma mater. He felt strongly that animal care could be improved if medical students undertook an additional year of veterinary studies. The university's board of trustees resolved in 1878 to establish a veterinary professorship, and the department was finally endowed in 1882.

In the early 1880s Smith traveled to California and published many brief travel accounts in newspapers. Around 1883 he embarked on a trip to Europe, which would become his home until his death. He was involved in many organizations, including the George Institute, the Pennsylvania Board of Agriculture, and the National Agricultural Congress. He was also involved in promoting temperance. Smith died in Birmingham, England on May 19, 1906. He was buried in West Laurel Hill Cemetery, a site he helped his father establish and of which he was comptroller in the 1870s.

² See Library Company of Philadelphia Directors Minutes, vol. 8.

Page 45 (January 4, 1877 meeting) lists "Reports, books, &c., relating to Centennial Exhibition [from] Horace J. Smith" as one of the recent donations received.

Page 79 (July 5, 1877 meeting) records Horace J. Smith as the donor of "5. Centennial Pamphlets."

Historical Note

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.

Members of the United States Centennial Commission (the body appointed to organize the fair) devised an elaborate classification scheme of Departments and Classes in order to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and understanding of progress through the study of objects. Within the five main buildings, displays were grouped together by country and class of product. Thus, a visitor interested in Silk and Silk Fabrics (Classes 242-249) could compare not only various products from manufacturers in the United States, but also compare France's silk products against each other and against those of the United States.

In order to navigate the overwhelming spaces (the Main Exhibition Building, for example, stretched 1,880 feet in length) and the sheer number of displays (more than 30,000 businesses exhibited), visitors could use published catalogs that listed the classifications along with the building in which they were displayed, and in varying detail the location of an exhibitor within the building. Specific locations (mostly supplied for U.S. exhibitors) entailed a letter and number code, such that a display located at T.47 in the Main Exhibition Building was located in the 20th (T is the 20th letter in the alphabet) range of columns from the north end of the building and the 47th column from the west end. (The inscriptions in the hand of Horace J. Smith found in the Centennial Ephemera Collection refer to these coded locations.)

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 Centennial Ephemera Collection consists of advertising ephemera generated by the thousands of companies that exhibited their goods and services at the fair. It is organized in six volumes, all of which are arranged by accession number. The order of the original scrapbooks compiled by the collector, Horace J. Smith, cannot be discerned.

Volumes 1, 4, 5, and 6 each contain two boxes (.83 linear feet) of similar materials – primarily circulars, price lists, sales catalogs, and pamphlets. Particular items of interest include a Pennsylvania Railroad timetable (vol. 4), a circular for Charles A. Pillsbury & Co. (vol. 5), and a program printed by Thomas Edison's Electrical Pen & Duplicating Press (vol. 5). These volumes also hold advertisements for several international businesses, and for services such as hotel accommodations and steam boat transportation.

Volume 2 contains two boxes (1.74 linear feet) primarily of larger broadsides, circulars, and sales catalogs. It also includes a railroad timetable, a concert program, and promotional materials for the states of Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Kansas. Oversize materials from the other volumes are also housed here.

Volume 3 contains one box (1 linear foot) of trade cards, within which is an envelope holding seven oversize trade cards. Advertising cards for Charles W. Spurr's Papered Wood Hangings, Dennison & Co.'s Shipping Tags, and Harrison Bros. & Co.'s Ready Mixed Paints utilize samples of their products to help deliver an effective message. Another advertisement, for the Meriden Cutlery Company, uses images of elephants to tout their "Patent Ivory" Handle Table Cutlery. The firm E. & T. Fairbanks & Co. employs the "1776 vs. 1876" comparison strategy in their colorful card for Fairbanks' Standard Scales. Volume 3 also contains examples of admission tickets to the Centennial Exhibition.

Several items within each volume contain manuscript notations by Horace J. Smith noting the location of the business on the Centennial grounds, for example "main aisle 26.a" or "E.67.Mach[inery]." A pamphlet for Professor Ward's Natural Science Establishment [(4)1838.F.129] contains Smith's signature.

The Centennial Exhibition hosted more than 30,000 companies from the United States, Austria, Britain, Canada, Cuba, Holland, France, Germany, Russia, Spain, and other countries. Therefore, visitors were presented with an overwhelming number of commodities. The range of goods and services advertised in the Centennial Ephemera Collection reflects this diversity and vastness. One can find circulars for bulbs and plants imported from Holland, axle grease, wines, water pumps, potato diggers, boots and shoes, and piano fortes all in the same box.

While the diversity of products being advertised is immense, commonalities among the collection materials highlight certain themes and methods of advertising. To catch a prospective consumer's eye, many businesses used illustrations to show an image of their product or their factory. From hog scalders to gold pen tips, these images enhance the message of the printed text. Some businesses used images of Centennial buildings to associate themselves with the international fair, while others used eagles and American flags to participate in the patriotic fervor surrounding the event. To address the Centennial theme of progress, some companies showed a comparison between the "old" way of doing things in 1776 and the "new" way of 1876.

The use of colored paper, colored ink, and distinctive typefaces further enhanced the visual appeal of some advertisements. If a particular business had won an award at a previous international or national competition, the honor was usually displayed boldly on the

advertisement. Three items in Volume 6 provide examples of how businesses attempted to make their printed advertisements serve a practical purpose for the consumer. The Haskins Steam Engine Co. provided a palm-sized expense account form for the Centennial visitor; M. G. Bisbee (Piano and Organ Rooms) supplied visitors with a pocket shopping list and calendar; and the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railway presented to attendees a Centennial Diary. Companies also employed tools and techniques such as patent claims, testimonials, and lists of people willing to serve as references. The Centennial Ephemera Collection, therefore, would be useful to researchers in the history of advertising, graphic design, printing, and consumer products.

Item-level Inventories

An item-level inventory of the Centennial Ephemera Collection, 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 eleven general subject areas below:

Chemical Manufactures and Substances (Chemical)

Includes chemical works and products, such as fertilizers & manures, paint, oils, grease, asbestos, and other substances (e.g. blacking). Glass works (e.g. for chemists) are also categorized here. (54 items)

Clothing and Textiles (Clothing)

Includes items worn on the body, such as coats, shoes, gloves, pants, and jewelry. This category also includes textile products, fabrics, and cloths from the felting, rope, rug, carpet, and silk industries. (67 items)

Food and Beverage (Food)

Includes ingredients for preparing food (e.g. butter and yeast), beverages (e.g. wine), as well as fruit, grain, and condiments. Some food product advertisements contain recipes. (108 items)

Health and Personal Products (Health)

Includes patent medicines and personal hygiene products (e.g. soaps, colognes, and perfumes). (17 items)

Household Furnishings, Appliances, and Utensils (Household)

Includes furniture and interior decorations from chairs, tables, and mirrors to pianos, birdcages, and floor and wall coverings. Also included are kitchen utensils, such as parers, graters, and pots and pans, as well as laundry items such as washboards and irons (washing machines and clothes wringers are listed under "Machinery and Metalwork"). Other household goods include heating items, such as fireplace grates, and cleaning items, such as stove and furniture polish. (127 items)

Machinery and Metalwork (Machinery)

Includes both simple and complex machines, such as plows, food processing machines, sewing machines, washing machines, and mechanical parts. Types of metalwork include brass, copper, iron, silver, nail, and wire. This category also includes hardware, such as nuts and bolts, and machinists' tools. Some advertisements are for metalworkers and machinists. (301 items)

Masonry and Building Materials (Masonry)

Includes stonework (e.g. monuments and mantels), as well as clay, granite, terra cotta, and slate products and materials (e.g. bricks). Cement is also included in this category. (29 items)

Miscellaneous

Includes products and services for which only a few advertisements exist or that do not neatly fall under one of the above subject areas. Examples of products in this category include firearms, fences, and umbrellas. Types of services include railroad timetables and hotel accommodations. Also under Miscellaneous are brochures for individual states and countries and Centennial-related information (e.g. tickets and programs). (170 items)

Publishing, Printing, and Writing Materials (Publishing)

This category covers the book industry and related trades, including publishers and bookbinders. Printing presses are listed here, as are stationers and stationery products (e.g. ink, paper, and pens). (37 items)

Tobacco

Includes tobacco and related products, such as cigars, snuff, and pipes, as well as tobacco factories. (22 items)

Tools and Instruments (Tools)

Includes handtools (e.g. scissors), agricultural implements (e.g. shovels), and medical and dental apparatus (e.g. syringes). Other specialized instruments are filed here, as well as items like scales. (62 items)