

The Pennsylvania State Archives

The Pennsylvania State Archives is an important resource for anyone interested in Pennsylvania's past. Created in 1903 as the Division of Public Records in the State Library of Pennsylvania, it was combined in 1945 with The State Museum of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical Commission to form the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC). Officially designated as the State Archives Division within PHMC, the primary function of the Archives is to acquire, preserve, and make available for study the permanently valuable public records of the Commonwealth, with particular attention to the records of state government. The State Archives also collects private papers relevant to Pennsylvania history.

Included among Archives' holdings are documents and manuscripts; reels of microfilm of county deeds, wills, mortgages, estate papers, and assessment books; and special collection items such as photographic prints and negatives, maps, postcards, posters, audio recordings, and motion picture films.

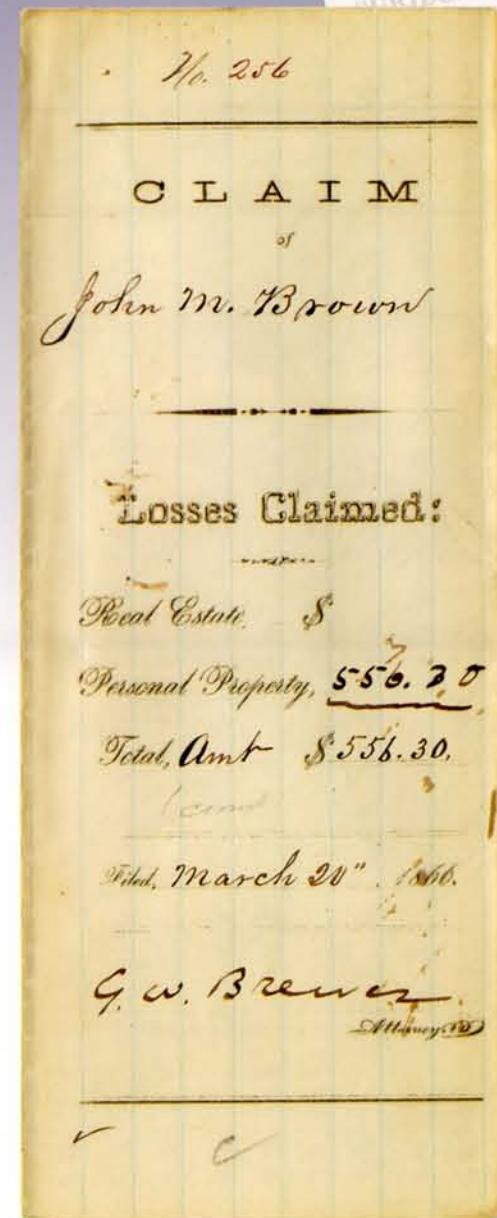
Pennsylvania State Archives
350 North Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-0090
717-783-3281
ra-statearchives@state.pa.us

 Pennsylvania
Historical & Museum
Commission

Edward G. Rendell, Governor
Wayne Spilove, Chairman
Barbara Franco, Executive Director
David Haury, State Archivist

www.phmc.state.pa.us

Identifying and Recovering Pennsylvania's Public Records



What makes this Civil War Damage Claim a public record? **Look inside!**

Help Preserve Our Heritage

Records created by state, county, and municipal governments are done so with public funds and belong to all Pennsylvanians. They are the foundation of Pennsylvania's heritage: documenting lives, laws, wars, judgments, and other important events which constitute our legacy. They verify and corroborate the actions of our government.

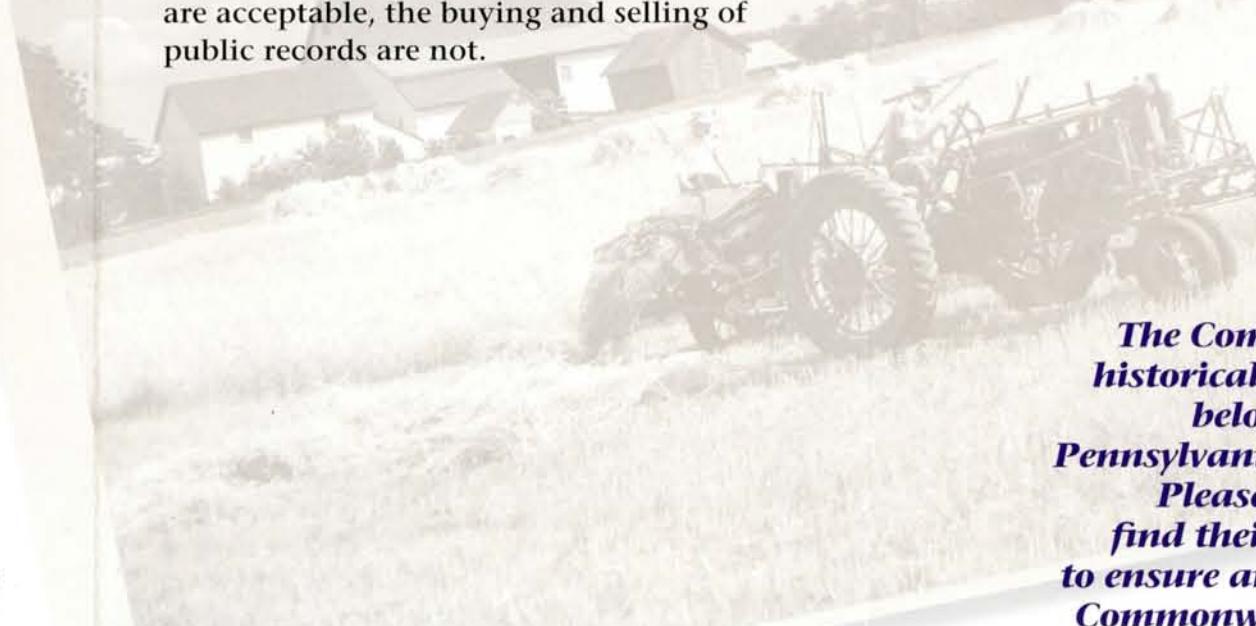
The disappearance of public records into private hands, unknowingly or maliciously, deprives everyone access to their history. It disrupts government accountability and unfairly makes useful historical resources unobtainable.

Sometimes these are sold by private individuals and through on-line auctions, rather than remaining in public ownership. While the buying and selling of records of private individuals and institutions are acceptable, the buying and selling of public records are not.

COLLECTION NO. *Photo 1*
NEGATIVE NO. *20*
DATE *6/7/01*
NOTES: *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of State
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Montgomery
Moreland Avenue
Harvest Time*

The Pennsylvania Administrative Code of 1929 and the Pennsylvania History Code assign responsibility for the designation, management, and preservation of state and local public records of permanent or historical value to the State Archives. Deeply ingrained within these two regulations is the intent that public records can only legally be in the custody of the governmental agency that created them, or legal custody can be transferred to the State Archives.

To ensure that Pennsylvania's documentary heritage is preserved and made available to all citizens, the State Archives needs your help to safely and securely return any misplaced, lost, or stolen public records to their agency or office of origin or to the Pennsylvania State Archives.



The Commonwealth's historical public records belong in the Pennsylvania State Archives. Please help them find their way "home" to ensure and safeguard the Commonwealth's memory.

What defines a public record

In Pennsylvania, a state government record is defined as:

Any recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that documents a transaction or activity of an agency, and that is created, received, or retained pursuant to law or in connection with a transaction, business, or activity of the agency.

**Management Directive 210.
Records Management**

Government or public records do not have to be old to be historically significant.



Storage in the Pennsylvania State Archives tower

Public records can include certificates, charts, drawings, electronic documents, forms, legal documents, letters, maps, memos, motion picture films, photographs, plans, posters, and countless other documents created or acquired and kept by the governor, department heads, the Pennsylvania General Assembly, state employees, and contractors as part of their official jobs.

Simply because a document originated as a government record does not always mean it is a public record. Government agencies routinely create documents that are dispersed to the public. In these cases, the outgoing items become the property of the recipient. These can include birth certificates, drivers licenses, state certifications, correspondence, and other records.



Civil War damage claim from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, bearing the state seal, from the State Archives Record Group 2, Records of the Department of Auditor General.

Identifying Public Records

- Look for marks such as the state seal, coat of arms, letterhead, stamps, symbols, addresses, file numbers, or information that otherwise indicate the document was generated, received, or filed by a governmental office.
- Look for materials addressed to government officials, employees, agencies, government staff, and courts, specifically incoming correspondence.
- Look for areas that have been cut away or trimmed to remove information indicative of Commonwealth ownership history.
- Even erasure of file codes or address lines can be a clue.
- Look for master or office copies of materials such as photographic negatives, signed linen architectural drawings, or office copies of outgoing correspondence.
- If in question, look for an explanation and written proof of the provenance including the name, contact information, and dates of ownership for the document's previous owners.

Does the presence of a Pennsylvania seal or letterhead **ALWAYS** indicate state ownership?

NO. Not all materials with state identification, such as letterhead or a seal, are public records. If correspondence was sent from a state agency to an individual, that record is the property of the recipient.

Do Commonwealth government agencies dispose of records?

YES. Some types of records have no long-term value, such as turnpike toll tickets or cancelled payment checks. Government entities in Pennsylvania are required to follow strict procedures when disposing of records. State law requires that the destruction of records shall occur only through adherence to approved retention schedules (indicating how long a record must be kept) and the disposition of records that have been discarded legally will be well documented and easily identified from those schedules. Any undocumented claim of disposition may be considered suspicious.

What happens if I find public records?

If you encounter records that you suspect belong at the Pennsylvania State Archives, please contact the Archives as soon as possible at **ra-statearchives@state.pa.us** or call (717) 783-3281.

State archivists familiar with public records can help to identify ownership.

The Archives will then help coordinate the return of any alienated records. If you have a question, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Also, visit our Web site at www.phmc.state.pa.us and click on "State Archives."

The Pennsylvania State Archives

Learn the clues so you can help recover missing public records.

Correspondence addressed to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, County of Philadelphia. This letter was attached to a World War II Veterans Compensation Application, State Archives Record Group 19.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA

RE: TAYLOR, Robert E.
(Deceased)

I, Eleanor Taylor, living at 31 North 37th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, legal widow of the above named deceased veteran, do hereby state that the following facts are true and correct.

That my husband left me three days after his discharge from the Army (February 18, 1944) telling me that he was going out of town to get a job. At the end of two months I learned that he was living at 809 Palco Street, Philadelphia, with a young girl named Florence. I asked him to come back to our home and he returned for two days. He left then to go to Princeton and I did not hear from him again for a month. He was employed at Jackie's Cafe, Preston and Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, and returned to our home again. He stayed only three hours. He sent money (\$15 weekly) to me from that time until three weeks before his death.

I have been ill for five years and am not employable. I have applied for Veterans Administration benefits but my claim is still pending.

I visited my husband at the U. S. Naval Hospital a week before his death. I was not notified of his death and learned that "Florence" made arrangements for his burial without my knowledge.

I believe I am the only person entitled to his benefits. I feel as well that I should have been notified of his death by the hospital and allowed to make burial arrangements.

February 28, 1950

Eleanor Taylor
(Mrs.) Eleanor Taylor
31 N. 37th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

SWORN AND SUBSCRIBED BEFORE ME THIS 28TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 1950.

Katherine Schewung
NOTARY PUBLIC
My Commission Expires January 7, 1962

REMARKS RELATIVE TO MEASUREMENTS

Height, Incl.	1 m. 60.8	Head, length	19.8	L. Foot,	25.1	Circle, Chest		Age, 75 years
Eng. Height	5 ft 3 1/2 in	" width	15.1	L. Mid. F.	10.1	Parish, Z. State		
Outs. A.	1 m. 60	Cheek,	14.2	L. Lit. F.	8	Color of Left Eye		
Trunk,	84.9	Ear length	7	L. Fore A.	43.4	Pecul. Country		
Curv.,		Eye width				Born in		

A 8047

DESCRITIVE.

Frontal	Width, Med.	Ridge	Rect	Border, Reg.	Complexion, Tan
Base	Base	Base	Wax	Base	Base
Width, Med.	Width, Med.	Root, wax	Root, wax	Base	Base
Pecul.	Pecul.	Reg.	Reg.	Reg.	Reg.

Measured at Eastern State Penitentiary, PHILADELPHIA Date: May 18, 1905 By: *John D. Neary*

LIBRARY BUREAU 3010

Eastern State Penitentiary inmate description, 1905, Eastern State Penitentiary. State Archives Record Group 15, Department of Justice, Bureau of Corrections, Press Office History File.

Regardless of age, records can be historically significant. This report from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) belongs to State Archives Record Group 66, Department of Environmental

Note the "Disapproved Penna State Board of Censors" stamp. The movie, Zabawka, was filed by Pol-Ton film company with the Pennsylvania Motion Picture Board of Censors in 1941. This image was disapproved for use in advertising as it showed characters in an evocative embrace. State Archives Record Group 22, Department of Education, Board of Censors.

"An Act to explain and amend an Act entitled 'An Act for the gradual abolition of Slavery.'" Note the ribbon, official seal, and the line "Be it enacted by the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania . . ." in addition to the content. This record, dated from 1788, is part of State Archives Record Group 26.

*An Act to explain and amend
an Act entitled "An Act for the gradual
abolition of Slavery."*

For preventing many evils and abuses arising from ill disposed Persons availing themselves of certain defects in the act for the gradual Abolition of Slavery passed on the first day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty.

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met, and by the Authority of the same. That the exception contained in the tenth section of the aforesaid Act relative to domestic Slaves attending upon Persons passing through or sojourning in this State and not becoming resident therein, shall not be deemed

The stamp and handwritten filing number identify this as a government record. From Record Group 19, Department of Military Affairs, Office of Adjutant General, World War I Veteran's Service and Compensation File.



ZABAWKA - Directed by M. WASZYNSKI

Note the recipient, the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Another document from State Archives Record Group 26 shows state agency correspondence regarding civil defense.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
June 21, 1955

FORM 80-801
200M-1-81

SUBJECT: CRITIQUE -- June 15, 1955 - Alert.

TO: Hon. James A. Mangan
Secretary of the Commonwealth

FROM: Joseph A. Reilly, Director
Bureau of Legislation *par*

1. Designated areas of State Department contain too great opportunity for flying glass.
2. Requirements from general observation.
 - a. Education and detailed instructions are necessary.
 - b. Leadership should be organized and continuous.
 - c. "Time to take cover" should be stressed.
 - d. Better "designated shelter areas" should be prepared.
 - e. Safety practices should be encouraged.

3. Recommendation:

- a. Survey of existing shelter areas to determine adequacy and safety. Present shelter in Department of Commonwealth unsafe.

DISASTER UPDATE
JANUARY 31, 1996
8:00 AM

PA NATIONAL GUARD - 1400 TROOPS DEPLOYED AT HEIGHT OF DISASTER
(28 ON STATE ACTIVE DUTY NOW)

MEALS SERVED BY RED CROSS - 88,052

PA NATIONAL GUARD - 1400 TROOPS DEPLOYED AT HEIGHT OF DISASTER
(28 ON STATE ACTIVE DUTY NOW)

500+ MISSIONS OVERALL
(12 ON-GOING - 2 DDC/ARMORY SUPPORT,
9 WATER TRAILER MISSIONS,
1 SECURITY, WYOMING COUNTY)

DISASTER DECLARATION STATUS:

BLIZZARD:
AS A RESULT OF THE HISTORIC BLIZZARD OF JANUARY 7, 1996, THE GOVERNOR DECLARED, ON JANUARY 12, 1996, A DISASTER EMERGENCY FOR 47 COUNTIES, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 7, 1996.

FOUR COUNTIES WERE ADDED TO THE LIST ON JANUARY 12, 1996.

THE PRESIDENT DECLARED PENNSYLVANIA A DISASTER STATE ON JANUARY 13, 1996.

ON JANUARY 20, THE GOVERNOR ADDED SEVEN MORE COUNTIES
TO THE LIST, BRINGING THE TOTAL TO 52 COUNTIES.

APPLICATION
190 J 6 X
APPROVED
Residence: Donovan, (Surname)
121 West First Ave (Street and house number)
Conshohocken, (Town or city)
Montgomery, (County)
Pennsylvania 19420 (State)
*Enlisted * R. A. * N. G. * E. R. C. *Inducted at Co B 312 MG Bn to Dec. 13/17
Place of birth: Conshohocken, Pa
Organizations served in, with dates of assignments and transfers: Co K 30 Inf to Disch.
Grades, with date of appointment: Pvt 1st
Engagements:
Aisne: Chateau-Thierry; Champagne- Marne; Aisne- Vesle; Meuse-Argonne
Wounded in action (degree and date): severely
Served overseas from Apr 2/19 to Mar 10/19, from
*Honorable discharged on demobilization.
In view of occupation he was, on date of discharge, reported
Remarks:
(If separated for other cause)