

Record Title: *Assigned Estates*

Agency/Creator: *Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary*

Location: *Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1821-1942*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *42 cubic feet*

Description/History: *Assigned Estates were created by a voluntary legal process in which an assignor (debtor) temporarily transferred property to an assignee (third party) in order to settle debt through sales and reorganization according to Pennsylvania law.*

Scope & Content: *The process began when an indenture was created between the assignor and the assignee stipulating conditions, fees, etc. This indenture was generally recorded in "Miscellaneous Deeds." The Assigned Estates file may contain: petition for appraisers (a request to the court to appoint appraisers to value the assigned property), inventory of estate (the appraised value of the assignor's property), a bond (assignee's surety), account of assignee (the assignee's account of the disposition of the property placed in his control), and report of auditor (a review showing the amounts claimed by creditors and the amounts received by creditors). There may also be a proof of publication of notice if the property was to be sold at public sale. The proof of publication may contain a newspaper clipping describing the real estate and improvements in detail along with other personal property. These files may also give insight into land use patterns.*

Arrangement: *Arranged numerically by file number. 1821-1832 files are unnumbered and are arranged alphabetically by surname then chronologically by year of filing.*

Access: *Index to Assigned Estates 1821-1942. The index is arranged alphabetically by surname and is also available online at the CCA website.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Breou's Official Series of Farm Maps: Chester County*

Agency/Creator: *W. H. Kirke & Company (Publisher)*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society & Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1883*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *1 volume*

Description/History: *A subscription-based farm atlas published by private company.*

Scope & Content: *Each map plots an owner's parcel and includes information such as: owner's name, number of acres owned, house and barn locations on parcel, type of construction of improvements (such as brick, frame, or stone), roads, transportation networks, watercourses, mills, and some business establishments. Each map was certified by the Chester County Commissioners.*

Arrangement:

Access: *Index to township and borough page numbers located in volume.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Chester County Historic Sites Survey*

Agency/Creator: *Chester County Historical Society*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1979-1982*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *1.) Set of official U.S.G.S. Survey Maps (21 7.5 minute U.S.G.S. quadrangles plus 13 insets)
2.) Chester County Historic Sites Survey Architectural Forms (35 boxes)
3.) Photographic Component (900 sets of photo negatives & contact sheets)
4.) Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Forms (2 boxes)
5.) Survey Map Keys (2 boxes)*

Description/History: *The Survey was conducted between 1979 and 1982 to create a comprehensive inventory of Chester County's historic and cultural sites. Over 10,000 sites were identified. Each site is located by number on a U.S.G.S. map. Trained volunteers conducted the survey in each municipality recording observed information on each site.*

Scope & Content: *Information found on the standardized survey form may include: current use, condition, date stones, architectural features, names of owners. Photographs were taken of nearly all sites. Sites judged to be more significant were subject to more intense research. The standardized "Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form" was completed for these 900 plus properties. This form contains: a plot sketch, photography and detailed current and historical information concerning the building and property. A copy of National Register nominations emanating from the survey may also be found.*

Arrangement: *Each site was given a survey code number and grouped by municipality.*

Access: *Not indexed. Each site is located by survey number and physically noted on a U.S.G.S. map. The researcher must locate the subject property on the appropriate map. These maps, which typically show elevations and other natural features, may be difficult to read.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Churchman Papers*

Agency/Creator: *John Churchman (1753-1805)*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *18th Century (Copied by Gilbert Cope 1868)*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *1 volume*

Description/History: *John Churchman was a noted 18th Century surveyor and cartographer born in East Nottingham Township, Chester County. His work included a "Variation Chart or Magnetic Atlas" and an early map of the Delmarva Peninsula. He corresponded internationally and visited Copenhagen and St. Petersburg. These papers are part of his undated working papers concerning his surveying work done in Chester and Lancaster Counties. Gilbert Cope, genealogist and local historian, obtained access to these papers in 1868 and copied them. The location of the original papers is unknown.*

Scope & Content: *The Churchman Papers are an early surveyor's notebook and working papers. They contain notations on land patents and notes on various deeds and personal relationships. Various plot plans are illustrated with metes and bounds, owners' names, dates, bounding neighbors and subdivisions. There is extensive information on the Nottingham warrants and petitions concerning the territorial dispute between Pennsylvania and Maryland. There is also an alphabetical list of early land warrants.*

Arrangement: *No specific arrangement.*

Access: *Separate surname and place name indexes exist.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Deed Books*

Agency/Creator: *Recorder of Deeds*

Location: *Chester County Archives & Record Services*

Dates: *1681-1919*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *347 Volumes (1st - 14th Series)*

Description/History: *Deed Books contain copies of deeds and conveyances of land transactions recorded in Chester County.*

Scope & Content: *The typical entry will contain: the date of the instrument; names of the Grantor (seller) and Grantee (buyer); location, description and boundaries of the property; terms of the sale (price paid); official seals, signatures and attestations; date of recording. Deed Books may also include mortgages (1690-1773), Sheriff's Deeds, Letters of Attorney (1688-1774), Leases (1681-1821), Assignments (1681-1821), Bills of Sale (1681-1821), Deeds of Trust (1681-1821), Releases (1681-1821), Articles of Agreement (1681-1821) and Deeds of Water Rights.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording.*

Access: *Grantor Index and Grantee Index. Both indexes are arranged alphabetically by the initial letter of the Grantor/Grantee's last name, thereafter by the initial letter of the first name, and thereafter chronologically by date of recording. Index only contains entries for deeds. See Miscellaneous Deed Book Grantor and Grantee indexes for other legal instruments recorded in deed books prior to 1821. A separate fully searchable index exists for 1681-1802 which includes all instruments recorded. This index is also available online at the CCA website.*

Finding Aids: *Abstracts are available for deeds recorded from 1681 to 1765.*

Record Title: *Deed Books*

Agency/Creator: *Recorder of Deeds*

Location: *Chester County Recorder of Deeds*

Dates: *1919-1985*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *(15th - 65th Series)*

Description/History: *Deed Books contain copies of deeds and conveyances of land transactions recorded in Chester County.*

Scope & Content: *The typical entry will contain: the date of the instrument, name of the Grantor (seller) and Grantee (buyer), location, description and boundaries of the property, terms of the sale (price paid); official seals, signatures and attestations and date of recording.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording.*

Access: *Grantor Index and Grantee Indexes (1688-1960, 1940-1959, 1960-1985). Indexes are arranged alphabetically by the initial letter of the Grantor/Grantee's last name, thereafter by the initial letter of the first name, and thereafter chronologically by date of recording.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Deeds and Related Land Records Collection*

Agency/Creator: *Various*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1681-Present*

Bulk Years:

Extent:

Description/History: *Miscellaneous land records collected by or donated to the Chester County Historical Society.*

Scope & Content: *Recorded and unrecorded original deeds, warrants, mortgages, patents and various other records relating to land transactions. For a fuller description of what a deed or mortgage record contains please see their respective series descriptions under the Chester County Archives and the Recorder of Deeds. This collection is important for its unrecorded examples. Many early land transactions were never officially recorded.*

Arrangement: *The records are filed in three separate collections. The first collection is arranged and identified by the township in which the real estate is located. Within each township box, deeds are filed alphabetically by grantor's last name. The second collection consists of deeds assigned specific reference numbers and arranged numerically. The third collection is filed in the "Township" boxes and is not indexed.*

Access: *A grantor and grantee index has been prepared for the first collection of deeds. The index has been arranged alphabetically by grantor's or grantee's name. The index is not complete. The second collection can be accessed through the manuscript card catalogue located in the main reading room by name. No index or inventory exists for the third collection. A manual search in the "Township" box is required.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Ephemera Collection*

Agency/Creator: *Chester County Historical Society*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1800s to present*

Bulk Years: *1900 to present*

Extent: *184 boxes*

Description/History: *Miscellaneous printed and handwritten items collected by or donated to the Chester County Historical Society.*

Scope & Content: *This collection contains miscellaneous ephemera relating to Chester County and its townships and boroughs. Such items as auction broadsides (many illustrated), house tours, historical brochures, general advertisements, pamphlets and event programs may be found. The collection is divided into subject categories such as: business houses, cemeteries, churches, dwellings, history, institutions, lands, maps, military, natural history, organizations, politics, post offices, private schools, public offices, public schools, public works, streets, transportation, and views.*

Arrangement: *The collection is grouped by municipality and is arranged within by prescribed subject heading.*

Access: *Not indexed. Access is through name of municipality and subject heading.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: 1.) *Property Atlas of Chester County 1933, 1934 (Volumes 1 & 2 of 4)*
2.) *Property Atlas of the Main Line, Penna 1950*

Agency/Creator: *Franklin Survey Company*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society & Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1933-1934, 1950*

Bulk Years:

Extent:

Description/History: *The Franklin Survey company prepared this series of bound local property atlases. Only Volumes 1 and 2 were completed for the 1933-1934 atlas, therefore not all townships are represented.*

Scope & Content: *Volume 1 published in 1933 contains the following municipalities: Downingtown, Malvern, West Chester, Birmingham, Charlestown, Easttown, East Bradford, East Caln, East Goshen, East Whiteland, Schuylkill, Thornbury, Tredyffrin, Westtown, West Goshen, West Whiteland, Willistown and Newtown (Delaware County). Volume 2 published in 1934 contains the following municipalities: East Pikeland, West Pikeland, East Vincent, West Vincent, East Coventry, North Coventry, South Coventry, Warwick, East Nantmeal, West Nantmeal, Upper Uwchlan, East Brandywine, Wallace, West Brandywine, Caln and Valley. Each atlas contains detailed maps illustrating individual plot plans with approximate house locations and number of acres, including owner's name. Physical features such as streams, ponds, roads and political boundaries are also identified.*

The 1950 "Property Atlas of the Main Line" also contains detailed maps in the locality of the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Each map contains plot plans of most parcels with owner's name, house location, and political features. This edition is limited to eastern Chester County. The following municipalities are included: Phoenixville, Malvern, Charlestown, Easttown, East Goshen, East Whiteland, Schuylkill, Tredyffrin, West Goshen, West Whiteland, Willistown, and Newtown (Delaware County).

Arrangement: *Arranged numerically by plat number in each volume.*

Access: *Regional map index available in each volume. Each individual map is identified by number. There is an alphabetical index of street names with the corresponding map number.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *The Gilbert Cope Collection*

Agency/Creator: *Gilbert Cope*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1887-1918*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *2,479 Photographs*

Description/History: *Gilbert Cope, a local Chester County author and genealogist, photographed many people, places, dwellings and historic documents throughout Chester County in connection with his historical research.*

Scope & Content: *The collection has a particular concentration of West Chester subjects. The collection includes the original glass plate negatives and an accompanying positive print. Each image contains the photograph's identification by number and subject.*

Arrangement: *The collection is arranged chronologically and numbered by photograph.*

Access: *Electronic database arranged by subject.*

Finding Aids: *The Gilbert Cope Collection With Annotated Inventory And Index*

Record Title: *Historic American Building Survey (HABS)*

Agency/Creator: *U. S. Department of Interior*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1958 Survey*

Bulk Years:

Extent:

Description/History: *Beginning in the 1930s the United States government began this architectural survey to document the nation's historic structures. Chester County structures were included. The surveys at CCHS are copies of what was submitted to the national survey.*

Scope & Content: *The survey typically included exterior photographs of each building and views of other architecturally significant or interesting building elements. Such elements might include: doors, chimney breasts, built in cupboard hardware, etc. Private homes were included in the survey, but the number of structures surveyed is very limited.*

Arrangement: *Arranged by township.*

Access: *Not indexed.*

Finding Aids: *The survey is also available online at the Library of Congress's American Memory website (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>). To display Chester County surveys perform a search on "HABS Chester County" in "Search Collections."*

Record Title: *Historic District Files*

Agency/Creator: *Chester County Planning Commission, Heritage Preservation Coordinator*

Location: *Chester County Archives*

Dates: *1980s-Present*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *20 file drawers*

Description/History: *The Heritage Preservation Coordinator maintains files of selective National Historic Districts, Chester County Historic Districts, or nominations thereof. A National Historic District is a designation granted to a specific geographic area of historic interest meeting the criteria established by the United States Secretary of the Interior. The nomination and registration of a district require documentation of historic resources including dwelling houses.*

Scope & Content: *The Historic District files include: East Whiteland Township, New London Historic District, Glenmore Historic District, Rockey Hill Historic District (East Goshen), Parkesburg Historic District, Oxford Historic District, West Chester Historic District, Phoenixville Historic District, Downingtown Historic District, East Bradford Township, Coatesville Historic District. Each file varies in its level of documented resources. Most files contain documentation of specific dwellings and other structures. Documentation may include: photographs, deed runs, probate records, relevant copies of newspaper clippings, copies of Chester County Historic Site Survey or Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey forms, a letter certifying a site as a "County Historic Resource." Each file also contains general historical information relating to the subject district. Government studies may also be included such as traffic studies and/or road construction proposals prepared by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.*

Arrangement: *Filed by historic district. Each district is arranged by subject subheading such as: administration, township history, or specific property heading. For some districts properties are arranged by tax parcel number or street address.*

Access: *Not indexed.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *1860 Kennedy Map*

Agency/Creator: *T. J. Kennedy (Publisher) & John E. Gillette*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1860*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *1 map*

Description/History:

Scope & Content: *This large map depicts townships and borough boundaries, roads, transportation networks, water courses and some other physical features. Prominent Chester County structures are illustrated. The map also contains the names of contemporary property owners located on the map. Specific parcel boundaries are not plotted.*

Arrangement:

Access: *Not indexed.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: Lien Index

Agency/Creator: Surveyor General's Office

Location: Chester County Archives and Record Services

Dates: 1869 (warrants referenced are from 1700-1858)

Bulk Years:

Extent: 1 volume

Description/History: An index to liens placed on properties that had not completed the patent process. A patent was a grant made by Pennsylvania to an individual conveying fee simple title to public (unseated) lands. For sundry reasons, some individuals did not complete the process; the original warrants referenced date to 1700.

Scope & Content: Entries may contain the following: Name of warrantee, date of warrant, quantity (of land) applied for, township or location, quantity (of land) returned, quantity (of land) unpatented, rate percent of interest and when it begins, where account is found, amount paid on account, when paid, amount due, fees and aggregate amount due as of June 1, 1868.

Arrangement: Alphabetical by last name initial, then grouped by what steps in the patent process were completed.

Access: Not indexed.

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Lunatics & Habitual Drunkards*

Agency/Creator: *Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary*

Location: *Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1790-1829*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *1 cubic foot*

Description/History: *Files relating to the judicial process by which an individual was determined to be mentally incompetent to handle business and daily affairs.*

Scope & Content: *The files may contain a petition (usually from a relative) to a judge to issue a commission to inquire into a person's alleged incompetency. The petition contains the name, age, residence, and a behavioral description of the alleged lunatic; name, signature, and relationship of the petitioner; filing date; other relevant supporting statements. If the court agreed, a writ of "lunatico inquirendo" was issued to have three men formally examine the alleged lunatic and convene an inquest of twelve men to make a determination under oath. Papers relating to the inquisition noted the alleged lunatic's age, length of incompetency, reasons for lunacy, frequency of lucid intervals, amount of goods and property belonging to lunatic, and names of immediate family. Related recorded testimony may also be included. The file will also include the court's confirmation of the findings, and names of those appointed by the court to a committee (guardians) to manage the lunatic's estate. The file may contain surety bonds and accounts of income and expenses relating to the lunatic's estate. Detailed accounts may contain records relating to expenses of real estate improvements such as new construction or renovation. Later papers relating to declaring the person competent may also be within the file.*

Arrangement: *Filed alphabetically by surname.*

Access: *Lunatics & Habitual Drunkards 1790-1839 Index. Indexed alphabetically by surname.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *MEA System*

Agency/Creator: *Department of Assessment*

Location: *Department of Assessment*

Dates:

Bulk Years:

Extent: *Electronic Database*

Description/History: *This electronic database system contains current information on the various tax parcels located in Chester County. Tax parcels are defined real estate holdings which may be subject to local real estate taxes. A tax parcel may include real estate described in one deed, or the combination of two or more deeds.*

Scope & Content: *The MEA System presents information about a tax parcel in a standardized form. Information includes: tax parcel (U.P.I.) number, deed book or record book reference (most recent transaction), owner occupied zone code (local zoning district), lot size (square feet), acreage, topography, land use, U. S. Census tract, latitude and longitude, utilities, sale history, owner's name and mailing address.*

Arrangement:

Access: *Accessible by tax parcel (U.P.I.) number, owner's name and/or property address.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Mechanics Claims For Liens*

Agency/Creator: *Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary*

Location: *Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1825-1900*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *5 cubic feet*

Description/History: *Claims filed by mechanics (workmen) to insure the recovery of costs incurred in construction and renovation work in Chester County.*

Scope & Content: *Files may include: Names of party claimant (and signature) and owner or contractor of building; amount claimed (itemized to show amounts and costs of material, plus labor); description, type, and location of building (including owners of adjoining property); dates material furnished and labor performed; date of claim; filing date of claim, number assigned to claim (if numbered), which corresponds to Mechanics' Lien docket.*

Arrangement: *1825-1835: Chronologically by date (month, day, year) claim filed. 1836-1900: Numerically corresponding to Mechanics' Lien docket; numbers are assigned chronologically in filing order.*

Access: *Mechanics' Liens Index 1825-1868. Indexed alphabetically by name of building owner and alphabetically by mechanic. After 1868 entries are recorded in Mechanics' Lien Dockets. Index to 1825-1868 liens is also available on the CCA website.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Mechanics' Lien Dockets*

Agency/Creator: *Court of Common Pleas/Prothonotary*

Location: *Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1836-1904*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *7 volumes*

Description/History: *Mechanics' Lien dockets contain a creditor's recording of a lien against a debtor's real estate for services and/or materials provided but unpaid for. A lien is the right to take and hold or sell the property of a debtor as security or payment for a debt.*

Scope & Content: *Information found in the docket may date the construction or improvement of a structure and describe it in detail. The docket may record "the Uniform Contract" or "Stipulation Contract" describing the rights and responsibilities of the contracting parties. The docket may also record tax liens against real estate by municipalities, school districts, or the County for unpaid real estate taxes. The docket may note in the margin if the claim has been satisfied. Entries may contain: Name of plaintiff (claimant, mechanic) and defendant (owner of building, contractor), amount of claim, type of work performed, dates material furnished, township or borough of mechanic, date claim filed, description and location of building, owners of adjoining property, number assigned to claim, date and signature of claimant upon receiving satisfaction of the claim.*

Arrangement: *Chronologically by date claim was filed.*

Access: *Each docket contains an index that is alphabetical by surname of owners and contractors. Index also includes name of claimant, amount claimed, date of entry, page number or entry, date claim satisfied.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Miscellaneous Deed Books*

Agency/Creator: *Recorder of Deeds*

Location: *Chester County Archives & Record Services*

Dates: *1821-1890*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *23 Volumes*

Description/History: *Miscellaneous Deed Books contain a variety of private transactions of which parties require official documentation.*

Scope & Content: *The series may contain: leases, assignments (the transfer of claim, right, or interest in a property), bills of sale (transfer of ownership of personal property), deeds of trust (transfer of legal responsibility), releases (the relinquishment of a right, title, or claim of property to another), receipts (written acknowledgment that a specified article, sum of money, or delivery of merchandise has been received), articles of agreement (to bind by articles set forth in a contract), and deeds of water rights (to give control of water flow and maintenance). These transactions were recorded in Deed Books prior to 1821.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording.*

Access: *Grantor and Grantee Index. Both indexes are arranged alphabetically by the initial letter of the Grantor/Grantee's last name, thereafter by the initial letter of the first name, and thereafter chronologically by date of recording. Includes entries of instruments recorded in Deed Books prior to 1821.*

Finding Aids: *Abstracts exists for Deed Books from 1688-1765 including all miscellaneous instruments recorded during that time period.*

Record Title: *Miscellaneous Deed Books*

Agency/Creator: *Recorder of Deeds*

Location: *Recorder of Deeds*

Dates: *1890-1985*

Bulk Years: *Complete on microfilm*

Extent:

Description/History: *Miscellaneous Deed Books contain a variety of private and public transactions of which parties required official documentation.*

Scope & Content: *The series may contain: leases, assignments (the transfer of claim, right, or interest in a property), bills of sale (transfer of ownership of personal property), deeds of trust (transfer of legal responsibility), releases (the relinquishment of a right, title, or claim of property to another), receipts (written acknowledgment that a specified article, sum of money, or delivery of merchandise has been received), articles of agreement (to bind by articles set forth in a contract, and deeds of water rights (to give control of water flow and maintenance). More recent Miscellaneous Deeds record legal covenants such as PA Act 515 or PA Act 319 which grant certain property tax advantages for defined agricultural lands in return for certain restrictions, conservation easements (conveyance of certain property rights and limitations of potential land development), public utility rights of way, condemnations, and other miscellaneous legal instruments.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording.*

Access: *Grantor and Grantee Indexes (1688-1890, 1891-1914, 1915-1935, 1936-1951, 1952-1959, 1960-). The indexes are arranged roughly alphabetically using the first three letters of the Grantor or Grantee's last name. Common last names such as "Smith" are grouped together (or set out) on a separate page of the index. Within each three letter grouping, each entry is listed chronologically by date of recording.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Miscellaneous Photographs Collection*

Agency/Creator: *Chester County Historical Society*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1860s to 1960s*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *Over 10,000 photographs with ongoing acquisitions added in.*

Description/History: *The Chester County Historical Society has acquired this large collection of Chester County related photographs over the years from various donors.*

Scope & Content: *The photographs depict an array of Chester County people, places, things and events. The collection includes many Chester County dwellings as well as barns and other outbuildings.*

Arrangement: *Photographs are grouped by township and are arranged within each township by subject headings. Such headings could include categories such as dwellings, business houses, churches, public works, etc.*

Access: *Miscellaneous Photograph Collection Index. Photographs are indexed by subject heading and conversely by township. Since labels were made at acquisition, the labels will not represent historical or contemporary owner's names. Addresses are seldom known.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Mortgage Books*

Agency/Creator: *Recorder of Deeds*

Location: *Chester County Archives & Record Services*

Dates: *1773-1948*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *349 Volumes (1st - 14th Series)*

Description/History: *Mortgage Books record copies of mortgages, assignments of mortgages (transfers), and satisfactions of mortgages.*

Scope & Content: *The typical entry contains: date of the instrument, name of the Mortgagor (borrower) and the Mortgagee (lender), amount of mortgage, term of settlement (interest rate, time span, etc.), location and property description, and date of recording. Subsequent recording in the margin may contain: letters of attorney, satisfaction of mortgage, details and attestations. Mortgages prior to 1773 are recorded in Deed Books.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording*

Access: *Mortgagor (borrower) and Mortgagee (lender) Index. The indexes are arranged alphabetically by the initial of the Mortgagor/Mortgagee's last name. Entries are then arranged alphabetically by the initial of the Mortgagor/Mortgagee's first name. Each combination of initials is then listed by date of recording. A separate searchable index for mortgages recorded in Deed Books prior to 1773 can be found in the Archives Reading Room. Pre-1773 mortgages are included in the online index to Deed Books available on the CCA website.*

Finding Aids: *Abstracts of mortgages recorded in Deed Books are available for 1681-1765.*

Record Title: *Mortgage Books*

Agency/Creator: *Recorder of Deeds*

Location: *Recorder of Deeds*

Dates: *1948-1985*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent:

Description/History: *Mortgage Books record copies of mortgages, assignments of mortgages (transfers), and satisfactions of mortgages.*

Scope & Content: *The typical entry contains: date of the instrument, names of the Mortgagor (borrower) and the Mortgagee (lender), amount of mortgage, term of settlement (interest rate, time span, etc.), location and property description, and date of recording. Subsequent recording in the margin may contain: letters of attorney, satisfaction of mortgage, details and attestations.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording*

Access: *Mortgagor (borrower) and Mortgagee (lender) Index (1688-1920, 1921-1959). The indexes are arranged alphabetically by the Mortgagor/Mortgagee's last name initial. Each letter initial is arranged alphabetically by Mortgagor/Mortgagee's first name initial. Each combination of initials is then listed by date of recording. Mortgagor Index (1960-1976). This index is arranged roughly alphabetically using the first three letters of the Mortgagor's last name. Common last names such as "Smith" are grouped together (or set out) on a separate page of the index. Within each three letter grouping, each entry is listed chronologically by date of recording. Mortgagor Index (1977-1985). Indexed alphabetically by Mortgagor's name.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *National Register of Historic Places Files*

Agency/Creator: *Chester County Planning Commission, Heritage Preservation Coordinator*

Location: *Chester County Planning Commission, Heritage Preservation Coordinator*

Dates:

Bulk Years:

Extent: *4 file drawers*

Description/History: *The Heritage Preservation Coordinator has gathered these files relating to the National Register of Historic Places.*

Scope & Content: *Each individual file contains information relevant to a specific historic site. The individual file may contain: a Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form, a historic narrative, a letter of acceptance from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, construction details and architectural drawings, photographs, and the National Register Application Form.*

Arrangement: *Arranged by municipality. Within each municipality each file is identified by historic name.*

Access:

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Newspaper Clippings Collection - Townships and Boroughs*

Agency/Creator: *Chester County Historical Society*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1810 -1970s*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *80 file drawers*

Description/History: *This systematic selection of newspaper clippings relates to items of historical interest concerning the County's townships and boroughs. The collection was started around 1938 using old and current newspapers.*

Scope & Content: *The collection is subdivided into several sections such as: business houses, cemeteries, churches, history, institutions, lands, maps, military, natural history, organizations, politics, post offices, private schools, public officers, public schools, public works, streets, transportation, and views. The "land" section is of particular interest to property researchers. The types of clippings that may be found under "land" are: real estate sales notices, advertisements for public and private sales, reports of real estate transactions, and reports of fires and other calamities.*

Arrangement: *Clippings are grouped by township or borough and are arranged within each municipality by prescribed headings and then organized chronologically by date of publication.*

Access: *Not indexed. See above.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Original Road Papers*

Agency/Creator: *Court of Quarter Sessions/Clerk of Courts*

Location: *Chester County Archives & Record Services*

Dates: *1692-2006*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *118 cubic feet*

Description/History: *Papers relating to the laying out, opening, and vacation of roads in the county.*

Scope & Content: *Types of papers may include, for the laying out of a road: petition, bond, order to viewers, notice, constable's affirmation, report of viewers, draft, petitions to court for road damages, order to viewers for road damages. The early papers reveal little information other than the names of the petitioners and the proposed location. In the late 18th century drafts (maps) begin to appear with the metes and bounds of the proposed road, names of contiguous landowners, physical landmarks (springs, marshes, woodlands, etc), and some depicted structures (houses, barns, mills, etc). Types of papers may include, for the vacation (removal from public use) of a road: petition, bond, order for viewers, notice, constable's affirmation, report of viewers, draft.*

Arrangement: *Chronologically by court term.*

Access: *Road and Bridge Index (1686-1985) arranged alphabetically by name of township or borough where road is located; within township or borough chronologically. Descriptions relate to contemporary landmarks and land owners, making roads difficult to identify; modern road names are rarely included. Road index 1983-2006 arranged alphabetically by township; within township or borough alphabetically by road name; within road name chronologically by date of recording.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Decedent Files & Estate Files*

Agency/Creator: *Orphans' Court*

Location: *Chester County Archives & Record Services*

Dates: *1714-1923*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *331.5 cubic feet*

Description/History: *Files relating to the settlement of a decedent's estate, including the division or sale of real estate, confirmation and auditing of accounts, and the guardianship of minor children.*

Scope & Content: *These files may contain petitions for partition or division of land, order of sale to pay debts, estate valuations, settlement and/or auditing of accounts, return of sale of land, notices, petition for dower, petition for sale of land, petition for valuation, copy of estate inventory and account. These files may contain the following information about the deceased: date of death, location of residence and property, names of family members, listing and description of property, how land and property was divided among heirs or sold, value of property and appointment of guardians for minor children (1882-1923; 1714-1881 guardianship records are found in Minors' Estate Files). Some files contain plots if land was divided or sold.*

Arrangement: *1714-1881: Arranged alphabetically by first letter of surname, then chronologically by year of filing. 1882-1923: Arranged numerically by file number.*

Access: *1714-1881 indexed alphabetically by name of decedent. A separate index for 1882-1923 is also indexed alphabetically by name of decedent. Both indexes are also available online on the CCA website.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Plan Books*

Agency/Creator: *Recorder of Deeds*

Location: *Recorder of Deed's Office*

Dates: *1906-Present*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *18,804 Plans*

Description/History: *Plan Books contain official plan copies of land subdivisions or developments. These can include everything from the typical residential subdivision to a commercial enterprise such as a shopping center to railroad or pipeline rights of way.*

Scope & Content: *Plans typically identify the landowner, location, plan dates and date of recording; they were prepared by a surveyor or engineer and show the metes and bounds of the specific property. Plans may depict existing roads, contiguous property owners, rights of way, utility easements, or other legal encumbrances. Existing structures and other geographic information may also be included on the plan. The amount of detail is dependent on the time period the plan was prepared, the local ordinance requirements at the time of preparation, or the discretion of the surveyor or owner. Early plans may be quite detailed. Plans recorded before 1906 are rare but may be recorded in Deed Books or Miscellaneous Deed Books.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording.*

Access: *Index to Plan Books #1-66 (1906-1981). The index is grouped alphabetically by the first initial of the plan name. The manner of listing is not always consistent; the plan may be listed alphabetically by owner's first name ("John Smith"), alphabetically by owner's last name ("Smith John"), or by name of the subdivision ("Penn Chase"). The official name of the plan controls the initial grouping. Each alphabetical initial is then entered into the index chronologically by date of recording.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Real Estate Multiple Listings Cards*

Agency/Creator:

Location:

Dates: *1950s-1987*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *44 card file boxes*

Description/History: *A local real estate agent donated these file cards used to create the multiple listing real estate sales book produced for the Board of Realtors.*

Scope & Content: *Each listing is recorded on a separate file card. Each file card may contain the following information: owner's name, address, sale price, dwelling description, number and types of rooms, fireplaces, age, lot size, assessment and listing broker, and a photograph. Listings in the following Chester County municipalities are included: Charlestown, East Brandywine, East Goshen, Easttown, East Vincent, East Whiteland, Malvern, Parkesburg, Pennsbury, Schuylkill, Thornbury, Tredyffrin, Uwchlan, Warwick, West Pikeland, West Vincent, West Whiteland, and Willistown.*

Arrangement: *File cards are grouped by municipality and arranged within each municipality alphabetically by street name then numerically by house number.*

Access: *Not indexed.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Real Estate Sales Books*

Agency/Creator: *Sheriff's Office*

Location: *Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1881-1974*

Bulk Years: *1881-1890, 1894-1919, 1923-1974*

Extent: *34 volumes*

Description/History: *Real Estate Sales Books were used by the sheriff to record a court ordered sale of real estate*

Scope & Content: *Each entry may provide: the plaintiff's (creditor) name, the defendant's (property owner) name, the purchaser's name, the sheriff's name, the court term and conditions of sale, location and description of real estate, date and amount of sale, official signature of purchaser, and newspaper clipping of sale advertisement. The advertisement may contain a description of the property, including details concerning building improvements and structures.*

Arrangement: *Grouped by volume by sheriff, there under entered in by court term.*

Access: *No index. Knowledge of the date of sale or court term is necessary to access this information.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Record Books*

Agency/Creator: *Recorder of Deeds*

Location: *Recorder of Deeds*

Dates: *1985 - Present*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent:

Description/History: *On July 1, 1985 the Chester County Recorder of Deeds began a new official record series by combining all documents previously recorded in Deed Books, Miscellaneous Deed Books, and Mortgage Books into one series.*

Scope & Content: *Record Books contain all real estate property deeds recorded in Chester County plus numerous other legal instruments pertaining to real estate transactions. For a fuller description please see the series descriptions for Deed Books, Mortgage Books, and Miscellaneous Deed Books.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording*

Access: *Grantor and Grantee Indexes. Indexed alphabetically by name. Electronic index exists for more current records.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Reid - Gordon Title Search Collection*

Agency/Creator: *Arthur P. Reid Company*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *late 1800s-1964*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *164 boxes*

Description/History: *These are the working files from a leading Chester County title abstract company. The files were donated to the Society by an heir to a Miss Gordon, an employee of the company, who obtained the files when the company ceased operations. Arthur P. Reid Company was one of the leading title abstract companies in Chester County during its years of operation. The company researched deeds throughout Chester County to identify any liens or encumbrances against real property. This ensured a clear title or transparency in real estate transactions.*

Scope & Content: *Each file contains a chain of title. The depth of research varies with each property. Many of the Reid-Gordon title searches take the chain of ownership of Chester County properties back to the patent. Deeds, sheriff's deeds, mortgages, subdivisions, easements, copies of wills or probates usually are fully researched and cited. Plot plans are often included.*

Arrangement: *Arranged numerically by reference number assigned to each title search.*

Access: *The Reid-Gordon files are accompanied by copies of the 1883 Breou's Official Series of Farm Maps. Each township map has been marked with the title search reference number inscribed on the location of the subject property.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*

Agency/Creator: *Sanborn Map Company, Inc.*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society*

Dates: *1886-1950*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *Microfilm and bound volumes*

Description/History: *The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps are a continuing series of detailed maps of selected urban areas.*

Scope & Content: *The maps depict streets and building types (with emphasis on commercial and public structures) for selected areas. The maps are accompanied by a color key which identifies building details such as: wall thickness, windows, shutters, stables, and construction type (frame, brick, stone, iron, etc). The microfilm series was done in black and white making use of a color key problematic. Some property owners are identified. The maps with details are scaled so building dimensions can be determined. The following towns are included in this series: Avondale, Berwyn, Coatesville, Downingtown, Kennett Square, Malvern, Oxford, Paoli, Parkesburg, Phoenixville, Spring City, West Chester, and West Grove. Original bound copies also exist for: Coatesville 1909, 1928; Downingtown 1903, Kennett Square 1914, Oxford 1900, 1914; Phoenixville 1886, 1894, 1900; Spring City 1902, 1909, and West Chester 1902, 1909.*

Arrangement: *Arranged alphabetically by name of town or city. Within each town or city the series of maps is arranged chronologically.*

Access: *Not indexed.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Sheriff's Deed Books*

Agency/Creator: *Court of Common Pleas*

Location: *Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1773-1904*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *14 volumes*

Description/History: *Sheriff's Deed Books record property sales that arose from a civil action taken to recover debt or unpaid county taxes.*

Scope & Content: *Sheriff's Deeds contain: name of the sheriff; date of execution (public sale of the real estate), the name of the Grantee (buyer); the consideration (amount paid); the names of the plaintiff (creditor) and the defendant (debtor); a general description of the real estate, including acreage and bounding neighbors. These deeds may also provide the name of the County Treasurer if the property was seized due to unpaid county taxes. More information regarding the civil case may be found in Court of Common Pleas Appearance and Execution Papers.*

Arrangement: *Chronological by date of recording.*

Access: *Grantee Index exists for 1773-1904. The indexes are arranged alphabetically by Grantee's (buyer) last name initial. Each initial is then arranged alphabetically by Grantee's first name initial. One will find groupings of various initial combinations recorded chronologically. Indexes from 1773-1893 will record the Sheriff's name as Grantor. The 1893-1904 index will provide the name of the original owner.*

Finding Aids: *An electronic index exists for the years 1773-1840 and is searchable on the original owner's name.*

Record Title: *Tavern License Papers*

Agency/Creator: *Court of Quarter Sessions/Clerk of Courts*

Location: *Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1700-1923*

Bulk Years: *Missing Years (1701-1705, 1887, 1890, 1912, 1919, 1920)*

Extent: *26.5 cubic feet*

Description/History: *Tavern petitions were presented to the Court of Quarter Sessions in order to obtain a license for the sale of spirits, alcohol, accommodations, and/or food. Licenses were also required for eating houses, temperance houses and distilleries.*

Scope & Content: *Petitions contain the name of the proprietor (petitioner), location, date and kind of establishment. Petitions in the late 19th century may contain physical descriptions of buildings to be used in the operation. Petitions may also contain the formal name of the establishment and the names of local residents supporting the petition. The file may also include a remonstrance, a petition against the license. Bonds, fees and court decisions may also be found.*

Arrangement: *Chronologically by year.*

Access: *1700-1923 electronic index exists. Fully searchable by petitions, location and/or tavern name. The index is also available online on the CCA website.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *White Card Public System*

Agency/Creator: *Department of Assessment*

Location: *Department of Assessment*

Dates: *1970s-Present*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *Electronic Database*

Description/History: *This electronic database system contains current information on the various tax parcels located in Chester County. Tax parcels are defined real estate holdings which may be subject to local real estate taxes. A tax parcel may include real estate described in one deed, or the combination of two or more deeds.*

Scope & Content: *The White Card Public System presents information about a tax parcel in a standardized form. Information included: names of property owners, owner's mailing address, enrollment status in PA Act 319 or 515, tax parcel number (U.P.I.), municipality (location of property), last property deed recorded and deed reference, consideration (amount paid), property description (dwelling, pool, barn, relationship to public roads, etc.), number of acres, and history groups (list of recent property transactions and conveyances as related to the parcel).*

Arrangement:

Access: *Accessible by tax parcel (U.P.I.) number.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Wills and Administrations*

Agency/Creator: *Register of Wills*

Location: *Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1714-1923*

Bulk Years: *Complete*

Extent: *396.5 cubic feet*

Description/History: *Files relating to the settlement of a decedent's estate.*

Scope & Content: *If an individual died leaving a valid will, the original will will be found in the file. If the individual died without a will (intestate), a bond of administration was filed. The administration of the estate may include the filing of an inventory, listing the appraised value of the decedent's personal property. Real estate was not usually included in the inventory until the late nineteenth century. The executors or administrators may have filed one or more accounts of the estate. The accounts will list all assets coming into their hands including income, gains on sales, etc., as well as all expenses and debts owed or paid by the estate. The file may also include: a renunciation from an heir or executor who does not wish to settle the estate, a vendue list listing all the personal property sold during the settlement of the estate, miscellaneous receipts documenting debts paid out of the estate during settlement, and documents relating to any Register's Court proceedings (usually occurs when a will is contested).*

Arrangement: *Arranged numerically by file number.*

Access: *Wills & Administration Index 1714-1923: Indexed alphabetically by surname. The index is also available online on the CCA website.*

Finding Aids:

Record Title: *Atlas of Chester Co., Pennsylvania from Actual Surveys by H. F. Bridgens, A. R. Witmer and Others*

Agency/Creator: *A.R. Witmer (Publisher)*

Location: *Chester County Historical Society & Chester County Archives and Record Services*

Dates: *1873*

Bulk Years:

Extent: *1 volume*

Description/History:

Scope & Content: *Each map shows owner's name, approximate location of parcels and building locations, water courses, roads and railroads.*

Arrangement:

Access: *Index to township and borough page numbers located in volume*

Finding Aids: