

**The Female Society of Philadelphia for
the relief and employment of the poor
HC.Coll.1234**

Finding aid prepared by Elizabeth Peters

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Summary Information

Repository	Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections
Creator	Female Society for the Relief and Employment of the Poor.
Creator	Parrish, Anne, 1760-1800
Title	The Female Society of Philadelphia for the Relief and Employment of the Poor Records
Date	1795-1978
Extent	6.25 Linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The Female Society of Philadelphia for the Relief and Employment of the Poor was established in 1795 by Quaker Anne Parrish. The society's original mission was to provide relief and an opportunity for improvement in quality of life for women widowed by the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1793. The Female Society opened the House of Industry, where women were employed to sew and weave. The House of Industry was the Female Society's main focus until 1949, when new opportunities for women had begun to open, so the sewing room was closed. In its place the Friends House for Older People was established to provide work and a social gathering for elderly members of the community. This eventually became the Philadelphia Senior Center. The collection includes mostly administrative records, as well as pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and photographs from major gatherings and events. The charter from the Female Society's incorporation in 1815 is also included. The collection spans from the Female Society's founding in 1795 until 1978, although it is still in existence as of 2011.</p>

Preferred Citation note

Haverford College Library, Haverford, PA, Special Collections, Quaker Collection, Female Society of Philadelphia for the Relief and Employment of the Poor, Coll. No. 1234

Biographical/Historical note

The Female Society of Philadelphia for the Relief and Employment of the Poor was established in 1795 by Anne Parrish, a young Quaker woman who wished to address the issues of poverty which had become aggravated following the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1793. She founded the society with the help of twenty-three other Quaker women. The women began travelling around the city seeking those in need, especially the widows and children of Yellow Fever victims. At first, help was given in the form of food, clothing, or money for fuel. Soon, the Female Society decided that more permanent help was necessary, and it would be more productive to give the needy a way to earn their own money than to simply hand out the essentials. The Female Society established a House of Industry, which employed women to spin flax and wool. In 1799, to accommodate those workers with young children, a daycare center was opened at the House of Industry, possibly the first of its kind in the country. The Female Society was incorporated in 1815, and established a constitution and by-laws. The House of Industry reached its peak around 1854, when it employed 154 women and had 73 children in the nursery. In 1916, the Female Society joined the Philadelphia Society for the Instruction and Employment of the Poor to establish the Catharine Street House of Industry. By this time, more jobs had been made available to women elsewhere, so the majority of the Female Society's workers were elderly and in need of less physically strenuous occupations. In the Catharine Street House of Industry, the women sewed for hospitals and other charity organizations in exchange for small weekly wages and a hot meal every day. The sewing room was closed in 1949, and the Female Society established in its place the Friends House for Older Neighbors. In 1959, the Female Society established a new, larger organization called the Philadelphia Center for Older People, which included non-Quakers and men on its board. The Female Society maintained control of its endowment, and met twice a year to discuss reports from the Philadelphia Center for Older People. Today, the Philadelphia Center for Older People has evolved into the Philadelphia Senior Center. The Female Society supports this and other organizations through grants. The history of the Female Society appears on the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting website and is thus an organization under its care.

Scope and Contents note

The collection includes mostly administrative records, as well as pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and photographs from major gatherings and events. The charter from the Female Society's incorporation in 1815 is also included. The collection spans from the Female Society's founding in 1795 until 1978.

The administrative records include Minutes from 1795-1978, Treasurer's Books from 1795-1907, Resume of Accounts from 1845-1914, Investments from 1845-1933, Legacies from 1816, Subscribers' Names from 1812-1894, Donations from 1904-1914, Record of Particular Cases from 1828, Standing Committee Minutes from 1838-1891, records from the Committee of Admissions from 1868-1873, House of Industry

Weekly Reports from 1830-1919, Names of Scholars, Cooperation with other Societies, Time Books from 1935-1943, Payroll Books from 1947-1949, Monthly Reports from 1940-1947, Budgets and Monthly Reports, and records of Women's Savings from 1923-1949.

In addition, there are pamphlets, invitations, newspaper clippings, and some photographs from a reception held in 1889, the centennial celebration in 1895, and the sesquicentennial celebration. There is an account of Ann Parrish, silhouettes of Ann Parrish, a diagram of a quilt made by the women of the Female Society, and a notebook by Catherine W. Morris from 1802. There are also miscellaneous papers and pictures from throughout the Female Society's history.

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Charter, 1 Mo. 12, 1815 (1 Scroll)

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections

Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use note

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Custodial History note

The collection came with other records of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, ca. 1975.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Catharine Street House of Industry.
- Female Society for the Relief and Employment of the Poor.
- Friends House for Older Neighbors.
- House of Industry.
- Philadelphia Center for Older People.
- Philadelphia Senior Center.
- Philadelphia Society for the Instruction and Employment of the Poor.
- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. Indian Committee.

Subject(s)

- Yellow fever