

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Archives

Fall 2024



Funeral Directors of the House: Serving Community in Life and Death

Members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives have come from a wide variety of educational and occupational backgrounds. The expertise these professionals bring to the table allows for valuable input on potential legislation related to their fields. In this issue, we are highlighting Members who have worked as funeral directors. Funeral directors are best known for ensuring services run smoothly for families who have lost a loved one. However, they also fill an important role as a community resource in challenging times.

William A. Allmond, Philadelphia County, 1937-1942

Allmond graduated from the Philadelphia Training School for Embalmers in 1901. Upon his graduation, he worked as a funeral director — a profession practiced by both his father and brother as well. In 1913 he opened his own business and quickly made headlines as the first Black undertaker in Philadelphia to conduct an “automobile funeral,” where the hearse and mourners’ vehicles were all automobiles. In addition to running his business, Allmond was active in local politics and served three terms in the House. While in office, he sponsored legislation that called for criminalizing discrimination based on race, creed, or color in civil service appointments and hiring practices.

The location of Allmond’s funeral home is included in the Christian Street Black Doctors Row Historic District. This designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission celebrates the prominent Black doctors, pastors, architects, small business owners, and politicians who lived and worked in the area in the early 20th century.



Philadelphia Tribune, November 8, 1913



Philadelphia Tribune, January 17, 1925

Funeral Directors Continued



Harry A. Readshaw III
Allegheny County
1995-2020

Readshaw is a third generation funeral director who grew up in a home that also housed the family's funeral business. He attended Duquesne University and the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science. After his service in the United States Marines, Readshaw followed in his grandfather's and father's footsteps as the owner and operator of Readshaw Funeral Home.

In his Oral History with the House Archives, Readshaw said of his transition from running his business to serving in the House, "In the funeral business you're available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and to tell you the truth, that's the same amount of days and hours you have to be available when you're a legislator. So I was used to all that...Because you're there to help. You're used to helping."



Freeman Hankins
Philadelphia County
PA House: 1961-1967
PA Senate: 1967-1988

Hankins graduated from Dolan's College of Embalming in Philadelphia in 1945. Hankins served in the U.S. Army during WWII and attended Temple University before opening his funeral business.

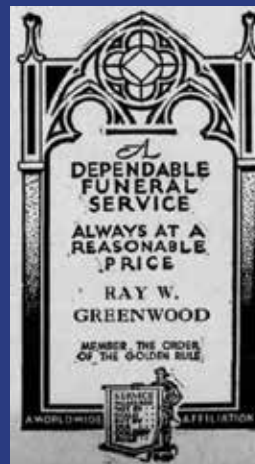
Hankins' obituary notes he was not only remembered for his years of community service, but also for generosity in his business dealings— often extending credit to families who could not afford immediate payment for funeral services.

Source (Obit): *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 2, 1989



Ray W. Greenwood
Wyoming County
1941-1956

Greenwood graduated from Williston Seminary in Massachusetts and the Renouard's College of Embalming in New York. In addition to his many years of public service as a coroner, sheriff, and House Member, he operated a dual funeral home and furniture business.



We have just one Glider left, the price of it was \$28.50. If you are the first one here and it hasn't already been sold it's yours for \$19.80. It's a beauty.

Well made, good looking maple Book Cases are \$13.50.

Another shipment of these good Inner Spring Mattresses at \$13.50 has just come in. We can guarantee these mattresses absolutely. The construction is right.

The hardest problem you fellows have that are not married is to find a girl attractive enough to please you, and dumb enough to marry you.

Source: *Tunkhannock New Age*, September 2, 1937

Greenwood ran side by side ads for both his funeral and furniture businesses in weekly ads that were sprinkled with humorous quips.

Did You Know?

The first crematory in the United States was in Washington County, Pennsylvania. Dr. Francis LeMoyné, fearing water contamination from embalming chemicals, built the two room crematory based off a model presented at the Vienna Exposition in 1873. Joseph Henry Louis Charles was the first person to be cremated in the new facility on December 6, 1876. The practice of cremation was met with many critics at the time. However, today it is an increasingly popular choice.

Source: <https://theamateurguide.com/>



Image Source: atlasobscura.com

Representative Samuel Frank and his ‘Cranberry Crusade’



Samuel Frank, Lehigh County, 1955-1956; 1959-1960; 1965-1973

In 1959, Arthur Fleming, U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, initiated a national panic when he announced cranberry crops in the United States were contaminated with a cancer-causing herbicide. These claims were quickly walked back — one would have to eat thousands of pounds of the berries to suffer any ill effects — but the announcement came just weeks before the Thanksgiving holiday and caused turmoil for the cranberry industry during their busiest season.

Cranberry Resolutions Introduced at Harrisburg!

The Morning Call, Allentown, Pennsylvania, March 8, 1959

Coincidentally, in February of 1959, Representative Samuel Frank introduced House Resolution 32, known as the “Cranberry Crusade.” The resolution recommended “restaurants serve larger portions of cranberries... in order to enhance the nutritive value of their meals and to satisfy the desire of the patrons for this desirable delicacy.” He introduced this legislation before the ill-timed federal announcement — likely due to the promotion of the health benefits of cranberries by Allentown newspaper The Morning Call since 1954!

During House Session on November 19, 1959, Frank was asked to stand for interrogation regarding his resolution, which had languished in the Rules Committee. In an effort to address the misinformation and promote the nutritious value of cranberries, Frank assured his colleague that he was serious about his resolution and that there was no need to fear consumption of cranberries. Sadly for cranberry lovers, the legislation did not find success.

**F.D.A. Rushes Cranberry Tests
To Clear Crop For Thanksgiving**
WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted rush tests today to find out what part of the 1959 cranberry crop is safe for housewives to serve for Thanksgiving dinner.

Left: The Sentinel, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, November 11, 1959



Representative Thomas J. Foerster of Allegheny County, 1959-1968, interrogated Frank regarding his resolution.

Right: House Journal, November 19, 1959

PERMISSION TO ADDRESS HOUSE

Mr. FOERSTER asked and obtained unanimous consent to address the House.

Mr. Speaker, the great holiday of Thanksgiving is just around the corner. I know many of us are in a quandary about what to do about one of our traditional Thanksgiving day dishes, cranberries.

Dr. Fleming of the United States Public Health Service has been going around the country pointing out the dangers in some of our cranberry crops. I have just learned that many of us, including myself, will be afraid to eat any cranberries on Thanksgiving, but now I see we have an expert in the House, one of our colleagues, Mr. Frank from Lehigh, who, I noticed in the House history of February 25, 1959, introduced a resolution called the “Cranberry Crusade.”

This resolution states that he urges all restaurants serve larger portions of cranberries for their nutritive value.

I would like at this time to interrogate the gentleman from Lehigh, Mr. Frank, my expert on cranberries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Lehigh, Mr. Frank, permit himself to be interrogated?

Mr. FRANK. I shall, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. FOERSTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to know how we are going to determine the fitness of these cranberries for consumption. Are we going to use some sort of a filter tip like the thinking man’s cigarette?

Mr. FRANK. I would like to tell you, if you say you want to see some specimens, I happen to be a specimen. I have been eating cranberries for years. What I have here is not just cranberries, either.

Mr. FOERSTER. Mr. Speaker, is that a recommendation or a condemnation?

Mr. FRANK. A good recommendation.

Mr. FOERSTER. Mr. Speaker, is the gentleman at this time making any effort to amend this resolution which is now in the Committee on Rules to rule out the possibility of contaminated cranberries?

Mr. FRANK. No, I am not. After all, that is more of a Federal proposition than of the state of Pennsylvania.

Mr. FOERSTER. Are you still serious about your resolution? Are you still trying to get it out of the Committee on Rules?

Mr. FRANK. I would like to get it out of the Committee on Rules.

Mr. FOERSTER. Are you going to introduce a discharge resolution to that effect, so we can eat our cranberries on Thanksgiving?

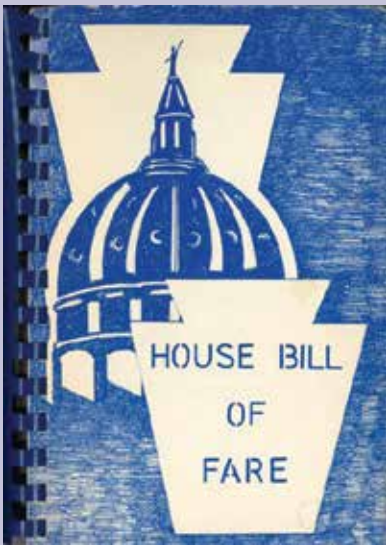
Mr. FRANK. I have more lawyers around giving me advice than I can hear.

Mr. FOERSTER. Mr. Speaker, I notice that part of the resolution in urging restaurants to serve larger portions of cranberries is to enhance the nutritive value of the meals. Now are you still serious about this resolution?

Mr. FRANK. I am very serious about that resolution. After all, we have had cranberries for a good many years. All of a sudden the Federal government wakes up and tells us that cranberries are contagious and would develop into cancer. You could contact some of the greatest doctors in the world and they will tell you that cancer does not start from cranberries.

Mr. FOERSTER. I thank the gentleman, Mr. Speaker.

Cooking with the House: Connecting with the Public Through Food

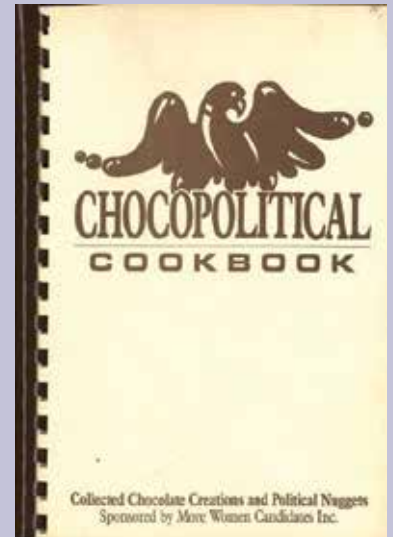


The House Archives has many unique and interesting items, but these cookbooks featuring recipes from Pennsylvania State lawmakers and staff are some of the most fun. Used as fundraising efforts, these two books from the 1980s provide an unusual glimpse into the tastes of the Members, as well as food trends of the time.

If you would like to see more delicious recipes including Matt Ryan's Famous Chicken Salad and John Perzel's Flounder Franchise—stop by 628 Irvis Office Building and have a look!

House Bill of Fare, 1985, House Republican Campaign Committee

Elaine F. Farmer, Allegheny County, 1987-1996



Chocopolitical Cookbook, 1988, More Women Candidates, Inc.



Art Hershey, Chester and Lancaster Counties, 1983-2008

Art Hershey's Pork Bar-B-Que

- 1 bottle (10 oz) ketchup
- 1 cup wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp mustard
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- Onion salt to taste
- Several drops Tabasco sauce
- 1 small can tomato paste
- 2 beef bouillon cubes dissolved in 2 cup boiling water

Mix ingredients and simmer together for 15 minutes. Pour over 4 cups chopped pork (cooked). Heat together and serve with sandwich rolls. Serves 12.

Elaine F. Farmer's Majority "Whip" Cake

- 1 cup white sugar
- 3/4 cup water
- 1 scant cup Miracle Whip
- 2 cups sifted flour
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tbsp. cocoa
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- Nuts (if desired)

Mix together: sugar, water, and Miracle Whip. In separate bowl, mix together: flour, baking soda, cocoa, vanilla, and nuts, then add to first mixture.

Bake in greased /floured pan for 30 minutes in 350 degree oven.



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