



October is American Archives Month: Learn What the House Archives Does! Exhibits for our Museum and the State Capitol

One of the most exciting parts of our work in the Archives is crafting exhibits for the legislators, staff, and general public to see as they travel through the Capitol. In addition to our Museum located on the 6th floor of the Irvis Office Building, we have many cases throughout the Capitol Complex as well. Keep your eyes out for our mini exhibits in the Main Rotunda, the ground and 5th floors of the Irvis Office Building, as well as occasional special exhibitions in the East Wing Rotunda.



To craft our exhibits, we utilize our own unique collections as well as secure loans from other institutions including the National Park Service, county historical societies, and university archives collections.

Be sure to check out the cases regularly, as we update them all several times each year.

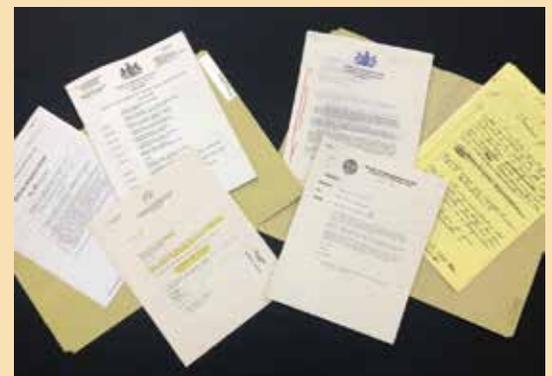


Above: Tour de 'Toona display in the Let's Play Ball exhibit highlighting House Members who were also athletes (items pictured are from the Representative Richard A. Geist (1979-2012) Collection.)

Assist Researchers

House Archives staff answer research requests we receive from House Members and staff, former Members, students, attorneys, government agencies, and the general public. We help answer questions about legislative history, genealogy, and general House history.

Some of the most common requests we receive are for the histories of various House Bills and Resolutions. To answer these requests, we rely on our collection of committee records, House Journals, public hearing transcripts, as well as any personal papers collections and news clippings that may also be available related to the legislation. Please reach out to us if you have any inquiries!

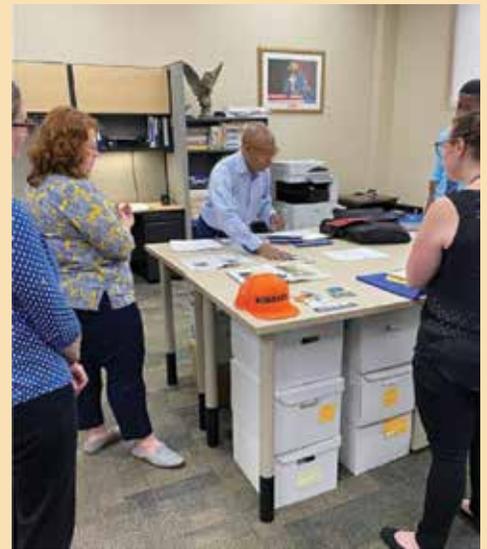


Above: agendas, memos, notes, correspondence, and more from the Special Committee to Investigate Food and Cheese Distribution of 1983-1984.

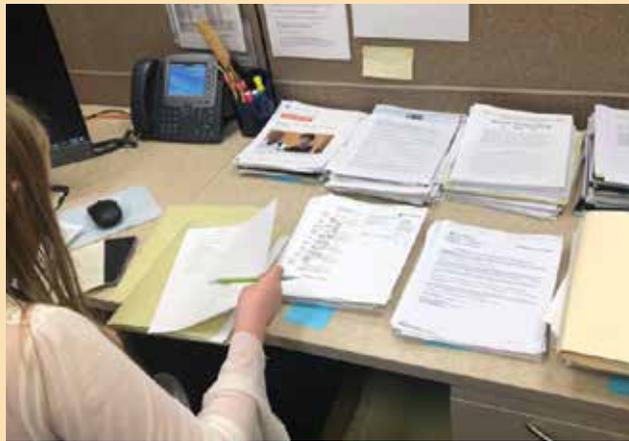
Process and Preserve Collections

The House Archives preserves and makes available the permanently valuable historical records created by its Members, committees, offices, and staff. We organize and maintain the materials in each collection for easy use by researchers. The majority of our collections are comprised of:

- **Committee Records:** contain minutes, voting histories, bill analyses, fiscal notes, bill summaries, and materials related to public hearings.
- **Personal Papers:** these are collections donated by former Members which can include campaign materials, legislative work, correspondence, press materials, photographs, awards, speeches, objects, and much more.
- **Digital and Media:** recordings of House session, interviews, and campaign ads, as well as countless photographs which we are in the process of making available online for researchers.



Above: The House Archives staff enjoys a visit and donation from former Representative Gordon J. Linton (1983-1993).



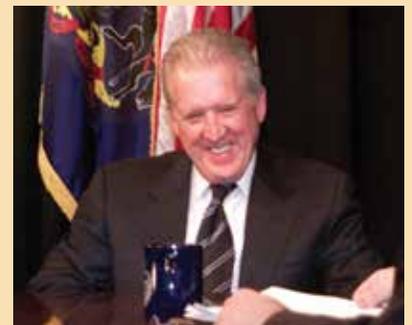
Left: The House Archives intern Calley Palicia, processing the recently donated collection of Representative Harry A. Readshaw (1995-2020).

Biographical Research and Oral Histories

These efforts provide valuable information for potential researchers and are easily made available on our website at: <https://archives.house.state.pa.us/>

Our Biographical Database currently has over 6,000 biographies of House Members. We are currently researching Members who served in the House in the 1840s and 1850s, and are continually adding new information. We use a variety of sources including Newspapers.com, Ancestry.com, county history publications, and many other online resources and physical collections to conduct research.

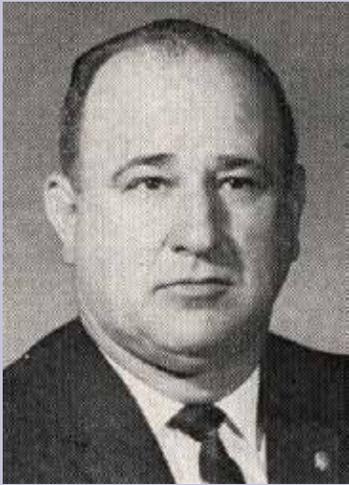
We have over 160 interviews with former Members in our Oral History collection. Each interview follows a biographical format, beginning with the subject's family background, education, and pre-House work experience. The interviews also include questions related to each Member's campaigns, legislative career highlights, and insights into Representatives' post-House careers. Additionally, the Oral Histories are a wonderful complement to the Archives personal papers collections and committee records.



Above: Former Speaker Robert W. O'Donnell (1974-1993) having a good time reflecting on his distinguished legislative career.

Attention Former Members! If you have not yet participated in our Oral History Project, please consider doing one soon. Your stories are incredibly valuable. Interviews are easily done both in the studio here in the Capitol or via Zoom. Call us at 717-783-3866 to schedule yours today!

Eightieth Anniversary: Rep. James Woodrow “Woody” Cooley at Pearl Harbor



James Woodrow “Woody” Cooley was born December 7, 1916, in Fayette County, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Fairchance High School and the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science.

Cooley enlisted in the United States Army in April 1941, and eventually attained the rank of sergeant. After basic training, Cooley was stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. During the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, which happened to be Cooley’s 25th birthday, he served in the 750th AAA (Anti-Aircraft Artillery) Gun Battalion. Following the attack, Cooley remained stationed in Hawaii until March 1945. At the end of his time in the Army, he received a commendation for his “meritorious and outstanding service.”

Following the war, Cooley returned to Fayette County and was a proprietor of the Wagner-Cooley Funeral Home. He served in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1961 to 1964.

Cooley is the only Member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives known to have been present during the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, if you know of any other Member who was also present, please let us know!

Mr. and Mrs. Emerson Cooley of Fairchance, parents of Corporal Woodrow Cooley, who was among those in Honolulu at the time of the attack by Japanese troops, are waiting anxiously for news of their son.

The Evening Standard, *Uniontown, Pennsylvania, December 8, 1941*



SERIAL NUMBER 1944	1. NAME (Print) J. Woodrow Cooley <small>(First) (Middle) (Last)</small>	ORDER NUMBER 185
2. ADDRESS (Print) 9 Maple St., Fairchance, Fayette, Pa. <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>		
3. TELEPHONE 432	4. AGE IN YEARS 23 DATE OF BIRTH 12-7-1916 <small>(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)</small>	5. PLACE OF BIRTH Fairchance, Pa. <small>(Town or county) (State or country)</small>
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Laura D. Cooley <small>(Mr., Mrs., Miss) (First) (Middle) (Last)</small>		6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.
8. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON 9 Maple St., Fairchance, Fayette, Pa. <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>		9. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON Mother
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Sharp Funeral Home		
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Church St., Fairchance, Fayette, Pa. <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. FORM 1 <small>(over)</small>	16-37105	J. Woodrow Cooley <small>(Registrant's signature)</small>

James W. Cooley's World War II draft card.

The Morning Herald *Uniontown, Pennsylvania, December 8, 1941*

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September 11, 2001

Remembering Those We Lost, Honoring the Heroes Who Served

In commemoration of the 20th anniversary of September 11th, the House Archives worked in conjunction with the National Park Service and the Flight 93 Memorial to craft an exhibit featuring never-before-seen objects and photographs.

Tributes, memorials, items from first responders, and objects related to the investigation are some of the key features of the exhibit. Also highlighted are some of the responses of the Members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and Pennsylvania State Senate.



Above: cases including tributes left at the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.



Above: images of the Joint Session held by the PA House and Senate, photographs and objects from the Flight 93 crash site investigation, as well as items left in tribute. Flight 93 objects and images courtesy of the National Park Service and the Flight 93 Memorial.