



### Historical Biographies Project Update

The House Archives Historical Biographical Directory provides biographical and bibliographical information about Representatives who served in the PA House. The Archives is currently researching Members who served between 1840 and 1858. So far we have over 7,000 full bios online! There are over 35 different political party platforms that Members served on. The information we gather on former Members includes their birth/death years and locations, education, military service, careers, and public offices held prior to House service, as well as any jobs or public offices held afterwards.

Right: Researchers can look through our collection of biographies by sorting Members according to county, political party, session year, and even by a keyword search. For example, a search of the keyword “dentist” will show a list of past Members who worked as dentists in addition to their House service.

The screenshot shows a search form with the following fields: Name (First, Middle, Last), Born (YYYY), Died (YYYY), Gender (dropdown), Leadership Position (dropdown), Served in (Year, District, County dropdown), Party (dropdown), and Keyword (text input). The 'Keyword' field is highlighted with a red oval and contains the text 'Dentist'. There are 'SEARCH' and 'RESET' buttons at the bottom.



Use this QR code to access House Biographies!

Name	Position	Session	Party	County	District
 HALLUSKA, EDWARD J.		1061-1064	D	Cambria	73
 WELLS II, JAY R.		1071-1074	R	Allegheny	40
 KING JR., THOMAS W.		1061-1068*	R	Butler	0
 HALDENSHELD, GEORGE K.		1059-1970	R	Allegheny	043

# Historical Biographies Continued

In addition to biographies of current and former House Members, the Archives has also completed biographies for all of the former Chief Clerks of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. These can be accessed from the same search page as the Member biographies.



## Chief Clerk Feature: Alexander Ramsey

Alexander Ramsey was born in Hummelstown, Pennsylvania in 1815 and studied law. After beginning his legal career and serving as the secretary for the Pennsylvania Electoral College, Ramsey was elected Chief Clerk, serving from January 7, 1841 to January 6, 1842. Following his short tenure, he was elected to the 28th and 29th U.S. Congresses. In 1849, Ramsey was appointed the first governor of the Minnesota Territory and relocated there with his young family. After Minnesota was granted statehood in 1858, Ramsey was elected governor, serving from 1860 to 1863. He was also elected to the United States Senate, serving from 1863 to 1875 and served as Secretary of War under President Rutherford B. Hayes. Ramsey died in 1903.

## STATE'S GRAND OLD MAN DIES

Alexander Ramsey, War Governor of Minnesota,  
Who Answered First Lincoln's Plea for Troops,  
Responds to Last Call and Joins the Majority

Source: Minnesota Historical Society. <https://www.mnhs.org/ramseyhouse/learn/alexander-ramsey>

*The Saint Paul Globe, Saint Paul, Minnesota, April 23, 1903*

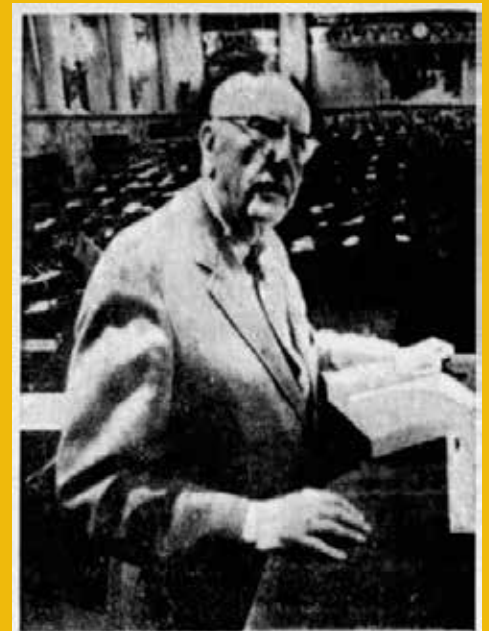
## Other Persons of Note

The Members of the House of Representatives are supported by many staff persons both on and off the House Floor. The House Archives has created comprehensive lists of those who have served in other official offices that work to ensure House Members have what they need to do the job they are elected to do. Lists of past Parliamentarians, Secretaries of the House, Doorkeepers of the House, Sergeant at Arms, Postmasters of the House, and Chaplains of the House can all be accessed on the House Historical Biographies page. Some of these positions have been eliminated / replaced by other offices over time, but others remain in service to the House.

## Parliamentarian Feature: S. Edward Moore

S. Edward Moore began working for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1909 as a page boy. By 1931, Moore had risen to the position of Parliamentarian. He served in that capacity until 1968 (minus two sessions where Thomas R. Balaban held the position). Moore explained the importance of the position upon his retirement saying parliamentary law is "a common sense code of procedure, designed so that the majority may work its will and at the same time protect the right of the minority to be heard on all questions. This system is the very foundation of our democratic form of government."

Source: *Simpson's Leader-Times, Kittanning, Pennsylvania, January, 12, 1959*



Source: *Standard-Speaker, Hazleton, Pennsylvania, January 31, 1972*

# Caring for Unusual Items

The House Archives' collections contain a wide range of materials. While the majority of the collections are document based, we also have many unique items that Members and staff have donated. Some of these items require a bit of extra care before placing them in our collections. Some items require special housing to protect them from deteriorating and potentially causing damage to other items — such as removing the ink cartridge from an old pen. Other artifacts require perishable elements to be removed so they do not damage the rest of the object. Below are a few items in our collections that received some additional care before being placed with other items.



Left: 1. A balloon for Representative Harry Bittle is kept flat, wrapped in acid free tissue paper and stored in a mylar sleeve to prevent it from sticking to any other items as it ages



Right: 2. Matches are removed from match books before being stored with paper; 3. Flower seeds were removed from Senator Pat Vance's creative campaign effort.



Left: Aspirin was removed from unsuccessful House candidate “Russ” Houk’s clever handout.

Right: A letter to Speaker H. William DeWeese from his uncle after his election to the House in 1976 with a breath mint, penny, and swatch of fabric taped to the bottom. The letter jests that he enclosed “a Listerine lozenge for all the babies you will be kissing” and “a small donation to your campaign fund.” This letter is housed separate from other correspondence in its own acid free folder so it can be monitored for deterioration.

## Did you know?

The Archives stores most non-paper items separately from document collections to ensure objects that can potentially “off gas” do not harm any papers or photographs that are near them. Off gassing is the process in which manufactured objects release airborne chemicals. For example, varnishes and glue used to adhere metal plates to wooden plaques can release chemical fumes as they break down. These chemicals could be absorbed by paper items and cause them to discolor and even have a bad smell.

Right: A wooden plaque with metal plate from the Personal Papers of Representative Lita Cohen is housed in a separate box from her paper based materials.



## House Archives Internship: Lauren Pash

My name is Lauren Pash and I am a current intern at the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Archives. I am a graduate student at Simmons University studying Library and Information Science with a concentration in Archives Management and History. Through this internship I am gaining vital hands-on experience working in a professional archive processing collections, digitizing records, and performing research.

I have processed two collections, which allowed me to hone in on my appraisal skills and determine what is and is not relevant to a collection. Once I processed the collections, I created finding aids on ArchivesSpace so that archivists and patrons will be able to search what materials are in each collection. I have scanned film negatives, contact sheets, and photographs of former Members in order to obtain images to send to committees and individuals that request them. I have been able to improve my research skills as well by working on biographies of former House Members from Philadelphia during the 1840s.

My current project is going through a previously processed Personal Paper Collection to digitize items and create metadata of the records. This collection, Papers of Representative Peter Zug, has materials including correspondence to give retired teachers more premiums, changing ownership of township roads, and giving funds to the State Library for their rare books and special collections. I am excited for this project in particular because I will learn how to digitize audio/visual materials which is something I am highly interested in as it is a skill set that is in high demand at the moment in the archives field. I will be using the items I digitize for the exhibit I create in a few weeks which will be my first experience in curating my own exhibit!



*Above: Lauren encapsulates a newspaper to keep the fragile paper free from dust and tears.*



*Left: Lauren assessing the papers of Rep. Zug and scanning the documents that will be uploaded to our website.*