

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives Archives

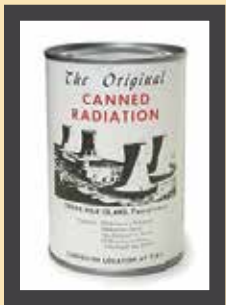
Winter 2024



Looking Back: PA House Response to Three Mile Island

The House Archives has opened its new 2024 exhibit, “Accident at Three Mile Island: Pennsylvania House of Representatives’ Response to Disaster.” March 2024 is the 45th anniversary of the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island. The exhibit highlights the events leading up to and following the accident, how local Representatives responded to constituents, and more about how the event has been remembered locally and nationally since 1979.

The cornerstone of the exhibit is the 1979-1980 Special Committee to Examine Matters Related to the Nuclear Accident at Three Mile Island collection. The committee’s goal was to evaluate Pennsylvania’s emergency preparedness and civil defense programs, which many felt did not respond appropriately to the meltdown. The committee worked to determine better methods of coordination between federal, state, and local governments in the event of another accident. The committee held approximately 20 public hearings and gathered testimony from scientists, government officials, and concerned citizens.



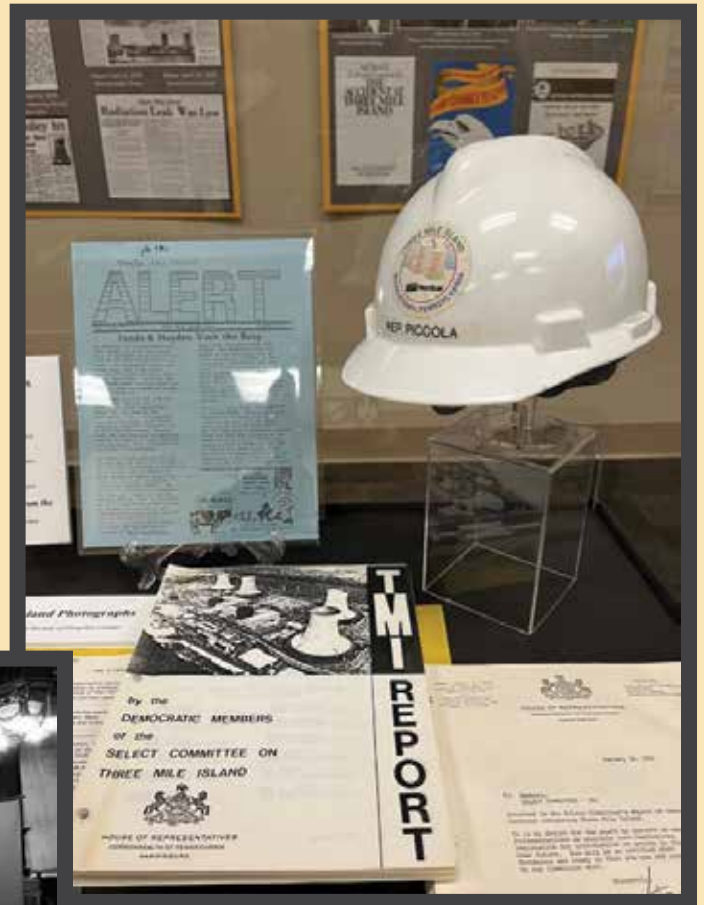
Above: Novelty items such as “canned radiation” and comical bumper stickers were available for sale in the area following the incident.

The committee’s final report included many recommendations for how future disasters could be better handled, including measures such as implementing a training program for personnel expected to assist in the event of a nuclear emergency.



Above: Special Committee receives testimony regarding the meltdown.

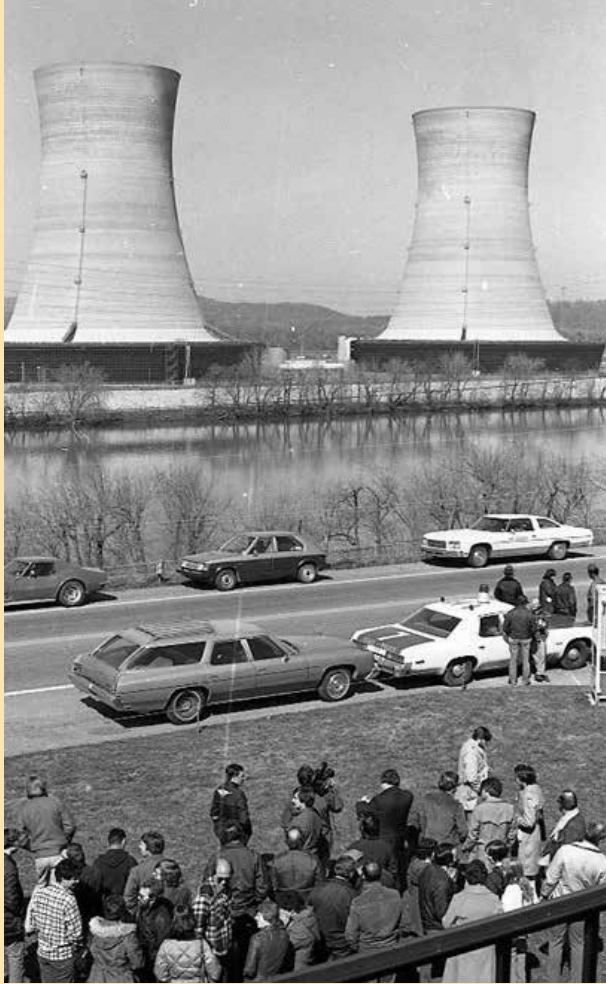
Photo source: Historical Society of Dauphin County



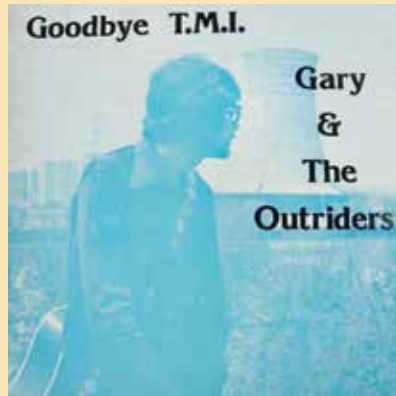
Above: Hard hat used by Representative Piccola on a tour of TMI, an ALERT newsletter, and final report from the Special Committee.

TMI Collaboration

The House Archives has many paper-based records related to Three Mile Island including reports, correspondence from concerned citizens, media reports, as well as oral histories where Members shared their experiences during that time. However, in crafting this exhibit, the Archives wanted to also highlight the social impact the incident had on the region. To accomplish this, we partnered with neighboring archival institutions from Dickinson College, Penn State Harrisburg, and the Historical Society of Dauphin County.



Left: These images and many others that are incorporated into the exhibit belong to the Historical Society of Dauphin County. They show the media attention the incident drew — as well as the uncertainty people initially had about what the meltdown's effects would be on people living in the area.



Left/above: Penn State Harrisburg loaned the Archives several pieces of whimsical ephemera including a cookbook from a local woman's club, bumper stickers, pins, and even albums recorded by local artists reflecting on the incident.



Left: Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections loaned t-shirts, activity books for young people, and this board game which a local young person created.

House Archives Throughout the Capitol Complex!

In addition to our main exhibit space on the sixth floor of the Irvis Office Building, the House Archives has several additional display cases throughout the PA Capitol. Highlights include three cases dedicated to former Speakers of the House. Two are permanent displays honoring Speakers Matthew J. Ryan and K. Leroy Irvis, and a third is annually rotated featuring different Speakers. Currently, Speaker Kenneth B. Lee is featured on the ground floor of the Irvis Office Building. The Archives also has cases in the East Wing Rotunda, the Main Rotunda, and the fifth floor of the Irvis Office Building.



Below: A case spotlighting Speaker Ryan on display in the Ryan Office Building. Included are photographs, campaign materials, and other materials from his time in office.



Right/Below: A case featuring Speaker Lee. This case includes several rare images donated by Lee's family.



Above: "Everything But the Kitchen Sink" — These cases are on display on the fifth floor of the Irvis Office Building. They highlight some of the more unique items the Archives has collected. Included: a campaign fishing lure, a telegram, a bobblehead, and rarely seen photographs.

Can't make it to Harrisburg? No problem!

Check out our digital exhibits featured on our website! The House Archives recently launched three new digital exhibits: Black History Month, Celebrating Women of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, and Roles of the House.

Visit: <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/pennsylvania-house-of-representatives-archives> or scan the QR code to the right!



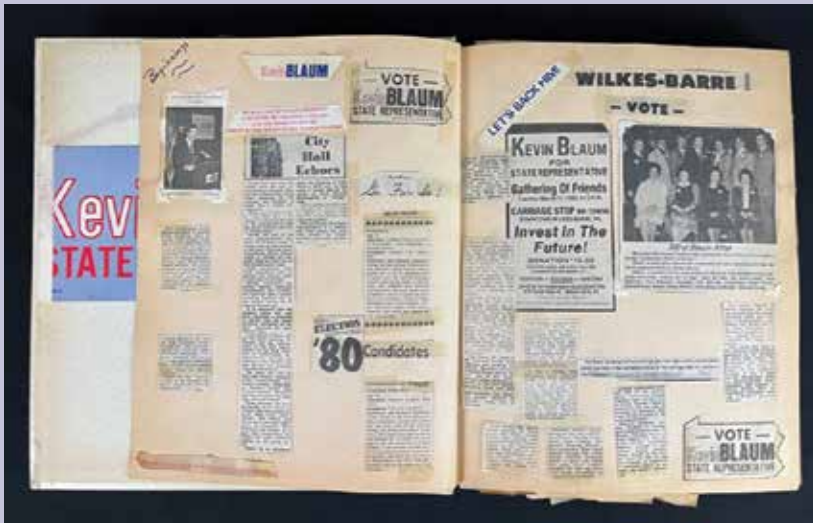
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Caring for Scrapbooks

The House Archives regularly receives scrapbooks from former Members which contain news clippings, campaign materials, photographs, and more that were collected during their time in office. While these scrapbooks are a valuable resource in understanding how lawmakers spent their time and what was important to them, they can be difficult to care for. Many scrapbooks include newspaper, which will discolor pages and stain other materials they touch. Scrapbooks are also often assembled with glue and tape, which break down over time. Below are a few ways we care for scrapbooks in our collection which you can use at home.

- Leaf in acid-free paper to protect pages from discoloration and sticky spots where tape or glue may be deteriorating.
- Use Mylar sleeves for delicate or damaged pages (Mylar is a polyester film which protects paper materials from light, dust, and tears). This can be purchased at many craft stores and online.
- Store scrapbooks flat! It is tempting to store them upright on a shelf like a book; however, the weight of the materials can expedite deterioration over time.
- Keep an eye out for rust if your scrapbook is in a three-ring binder.
- Consider paper corners instead of taping or gluing directly on your photos and other materials.

Below: Scrapbook from Rep. Kevin Blaum. This scrapbook is still in very nice condition — and many pages use paper corners (right) around clippings so articles can be easily removed if needed. To slow the newsprint's deterioration, we store this book with acid-free paper between pages.



Below: Scrapbook from Rep. James B. Kelly III. The Archives regularly monitors this book for any signs of deterioration, and has digitized it so researchers can view the book in its entirety online.

