

SCOPE
Banners and Flags
Chester County Historical Society

CATEGORY: COMMUNICATION ARTIFACT

CLASSIFICATION: CEREMONIAL ARTIFACT

OBJECT NAME: BANNER
FLAG

SIZE: 270 (61 banners, 209 flags)

DATE RANGE: 1814 to 2002; the vast majority date from the end of the 1800s to the mid-1900s

MANUFACTURERS: Most are not marked with manufacturer's names.
Those that are include:
American Ensign
Annin & Co.
Balfour (C, L), Meehan & Co., Philadelphia
Boardman & Co.
Bull Dog Bunting
Dettras Flag Products
Grinnell Litho Co., NY
Hershey
Horstmann Uniform Co., Philadelphia
Matrix Products
Schloss Manufacturing Co.

Individual makers:
William and Thomas M. Howard
Abigail Jackson
F. Vanderherchen
Ella Lighthizer

SUBJECTS: The widest range of subjects is found in the large banners, primarily silk with painted or printed information highlighted by metallic trim and tassels. Some of the most important relate to West Chester organizations and political campaigns. They are the largest known group representing West Chester organizations active from the mid-1800s through the early 1900s. Several outstanding banners of painted and embroidered silk and velvet were made by chapters of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, including those in Coatesville and West Chester. In addition, more than thirty banners fabricated of cotton and felt document West Chester's centennial and sesquicentennial celebrations. Chester County schools and fire companies are widely represented. Not included in this survey are printed cloth broadsides that depict the county's vanishing agricultural past with their images and advertisements of local farm products. These items fall under advertising and will be reviewed separately.

There are also three important large political banners that are part of the Society's published political memorabilia collection. These rare surviving banners document the campaigns of Henry Clay and William Henry Harrison. They have central oval paintings surrounded by slogans, all placed on a silk backing.

American and some state flags number 209. Many tags on these objects indicate local and county provenance associated with people, places and events. Some outstanding examples include flags flown during the Civil War, important small-scale early silk political flags used during the mid-nineteenth century campaigns of William Henry Harrison and Henry Clay. Of particular note is an extremely rare flag that documents Abraham Lincoln's first campaign in 1860.