

# *Working Collaboratively to Preserve and Share Pennsylvania's Disability Records: The Pennsylvania State Archives Perspective*

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Pennsylvania State Archives

#SAA19 #s506



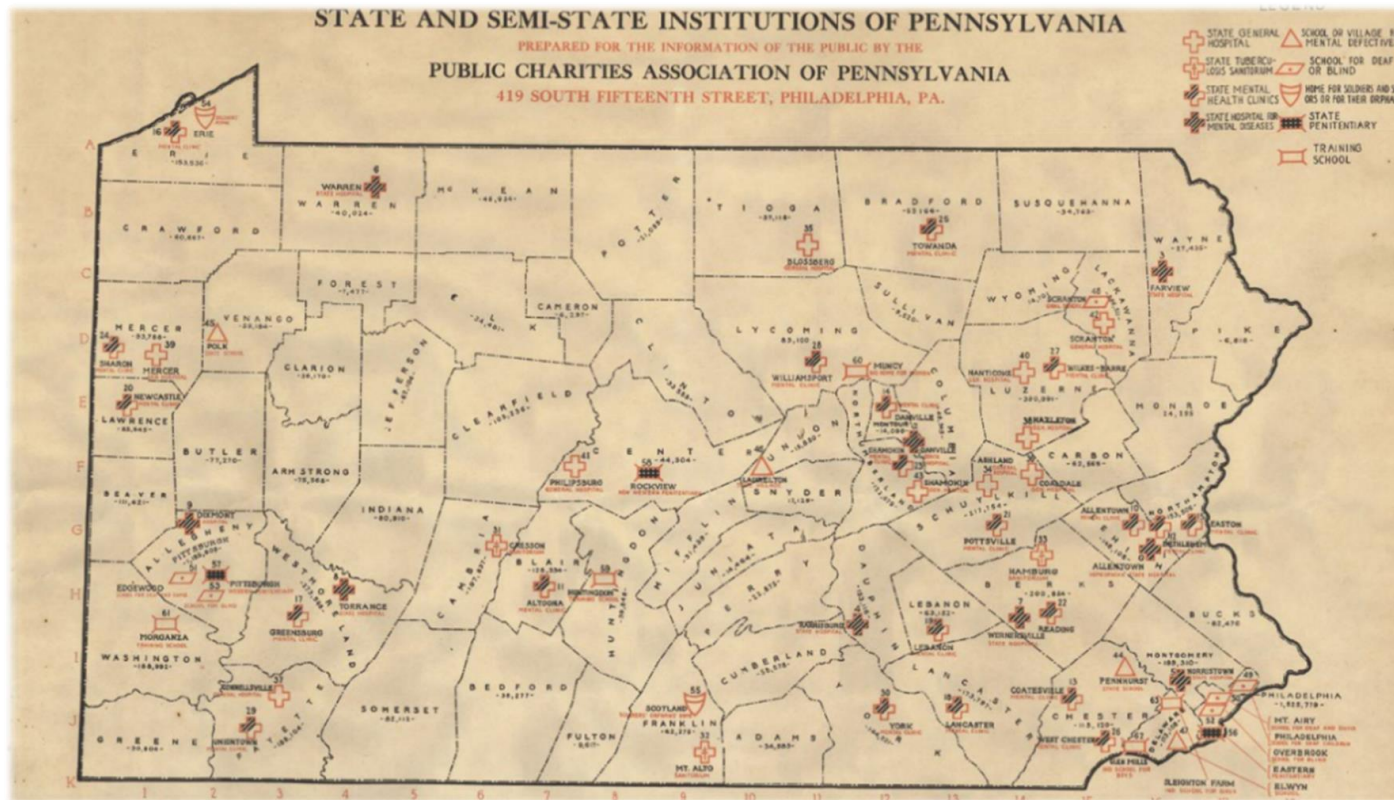
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# The Situation

Issue: PA State Archives is the legally designated repository for many records related to the history of disability in the state, but we have limited collecting, access, and outreach capabilities.

Solution: Establish collaborative relationships with other archives, advocacy groups, and government agencies. Leverage them to fill in gaps in our collections and institutional abilities.

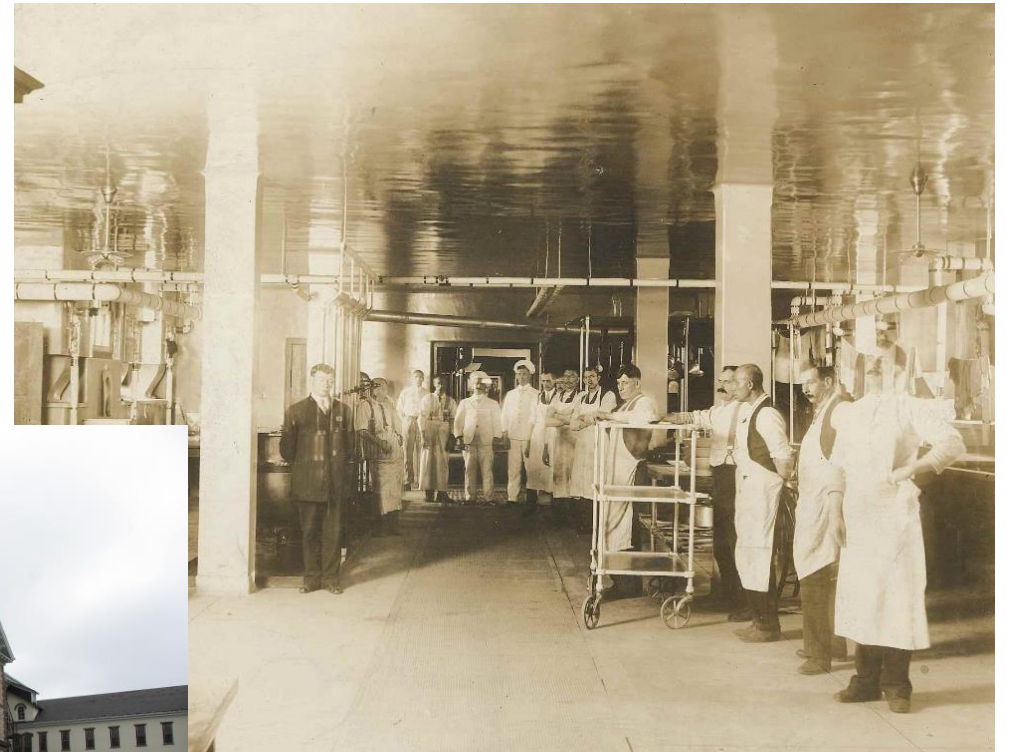
# Challenges for the State Archives



- Legally obligated to collect, but only within bounds of retention schedule
- Small accessioning and processing staff
- Geographic spread of records
- No outreach or promotion
- Legal restrictions on access



# Importance of State-Run Institutions to Disability History



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# Our Situation Before Collaboration

- Kept advocates “at arms length”
- Lack of trust for anyone we thought might be trying to collect records we should have
- Many barriers to access, discouraging for research or projects
- Minimal and reactive collecting policy focused on administrative records

# Culture Change, More Open to Collaborating

- Leadership more willing to work with outside groups
- Collaboration function moved from collections management to accessioning/outreach
- Began seriously collecting a larger volume of records and needed help collecting and providing meaningful access
- Hosted meeting with all stakeholders- Early 2017



# Collaborating with: Government Agencies

## PA Department of Human Services

Helps us with our small staff size, geographic spread of collections

- Buy-in and support of Office of Developmental Programs leadership
- Personal visits to all facilities
- Staff worries about losing control of their historical record and that records would be used to demonize the institution
- Personal/emotional connection to records
- Staff help finding alienated records
- Success became a pilot for collecting records from 23 state hospitals and state centers (277 cubic feet)



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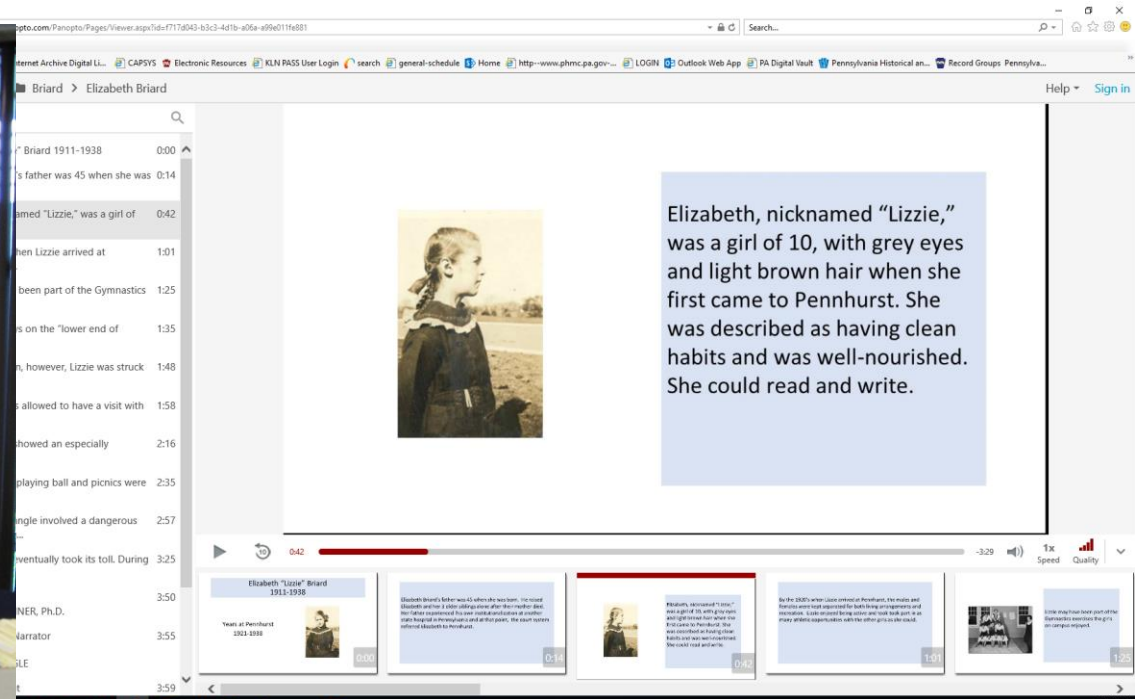
# Collaborating With: Advocacy Groups

## Pennhurst Memorial and Preservation Alliance

Helps us with our limited outreach functions, improving our institutional reputation

- Initial hesitancy to work with us because of our reputation (government bureaucracy, red tape, lack of interest in disability history)
- Tour and visit of State Archives
- “Lives Remembered” Project
- Scholar in Residence Program
- Assistance in locating and directing genealogists, family members, and researchers to archives collections

# Collaborating With: Advocacy Groups Pennhurst Memorial and Preservation Alliance



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# Collaborating with: Other Archives

## Heinz History Center

Helps us with limits to our collecting abilities, promoting disability history

- Polk Center Receipt (1903-1914)- important collection but not within our collecting scope
- Success working one-on-one with Heinz staff
- Continued partnership finding best home for new collections



ESTABLISHED 1869.

CABLE ADDRESS

"HEINZ"

Folio 142 V

H. J. HEINZ COMPANY 22/5524

MAIN PLANT & GENERAL OFFICES, PITTSBURGH, PA.

H SEE GUARANTEE ON OTHER SIDE

TERMS:

30 DAYS NET,  
1% CASH 10 DAYS

ACCOUNTS NOT  
REMITTED WHEN  
DUE SUBJECT TO  
SIGHT DRAFT  
WITH EXCHANGE

SOLD TO State Institution Feeble Minded,

McEwen- Salesman

Polk, Pa.

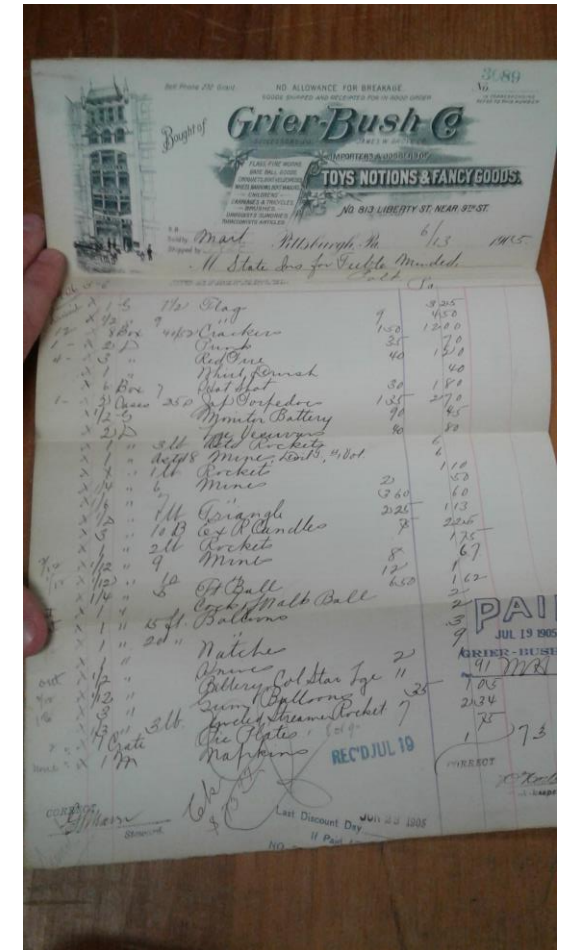
NO PKGS.	NO DOZ	SIZE	PRICE		
2		Bbls. Heinz Apple Butter 599#	07½	44	93
		339-41 341-40			
1		37# Pail Heinz Mince Meat	11	4	07
2½	2	Giant Horse Radish,	90	1	80
6¢	6	24oz. Queen Olives,	5 00	30	00
				80	80
		Less 5¢ doz. 8 doz.		40	80 40
				34	
		F.O.B.Pgh.			
		By 2 doz. Horse Radish frozen in transit			1 50
				CORRECT	\$78 70
		J. H. Kunkler			
		Steward			Book-keeper.

In full of the above account.

\$78 70

NOTE.—The above receipt must be dated and signed by the party in whose favor this voucher is made, or, when signed by another party, the authority for so doing must in all cases accompany it. Do not detach bills. Sign this voucher and return as soon as possible to J. M. MURDOCH, Sup'l., Polk, Pa.

Thank you





# Goals moving forward

- Engage more individuals in the disability community and be a better partner to them
- Locate and collect all inactive state institution records
- Emphasis on records of individuals
- Collaboratively promote collections and their interrelationships with other repositories
- Invite more advocacy groups to State Archives to encourage research and other projects
- New State Archives mental health records access policy- get feedback from collaborators and help spreading the word



# Most important lessons learned

- Trust is the most important part of any collaborative relationship. Period.
- Collaborations begin before projects and last long after they're finished. Its not just about "getting down to business"
- Starting out small, even 1-1, can lead to more meaningful results.
- Remember that you represent your entire government/organization and that reputation can impact your relationships.
- Empower staff to pursue relationships independently.
- Support collaborative partners with your existing programs if you don't have resources to dedicate to new projects.



# What was important to collaborators?

- Personal enthusiasm
- Making a “commitment to involving us” in this work
- Understanding different motives of advocates (different organizations *and* different individuals)
- Encouraging them to share/publish their work
- Be a sounding board for advocates’ projects and ideas
- Make sure they know “we trust you, we want you to be here”
- Social time is important



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