

Guide to the Ralph Kessler scrapbooks, 1980-1998

Summary Information

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| Collection No.: | MS 2022-053 |
| Title: | Ralph Kessler scrapbooks |
| Inclusive Dates: | 1980-1998 |
| Author: | Carolyn Friedrich & Margaret Deitzer, revised by Nancy Martin |
| Repository: | Peters Township Public Library Archives 616 East McMurray Road McMurray, PA 15317 |
| Creator: | Ralph Kessler |
| Extent: | 2 boxes (0.5 linear feet) |
| Language of materials: | All materials are in English. |
| Abstract: | Three scrapbooks compiled by Peters Township resident Ralph Kessler in the 1980s and 1990s. The scrapbooks include original photographs, copies of older photographs, ephemera, and brief local history narratives. |

Biography/History

Ralph Kessler moved to Peters Township, Washington County, Pennsylvania with his wife Margo in 1971. Kessler taught German in the Mt. Lebanon School District from 1971 until his retirement in 2003. Kessler's interest in local history led him to travel Route 19 in New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, photographing buildings, monuments, and local landmarks. Peters Township was one of the Pennsylvanian towns he photographed.

Scope and Content Note

The scrapbooks include photographs of houses, farms, schools, churches, and businesses taken by Ralph Kessler throughout Peters Township, Washington County, Pennsylvania. Most of the photographs were taken in the 1980s and 1990s and bear identifying information added by Kessler. Some of the photographs are modern copies made by Kessler of older photographs depicting township landmarks.

The scrapbooks also contain slides, newspaper clippings, ephemera (such as postmarked envelopes), and information on local history collected by Kessler.

Kessler arranged the photographs and accompanying material into three scrapbooks. The first scrapbook contains photographs, articles, and ephemera relating to McMurray. The second scrapbook documents the Bower Hill, Hackett, Turkeyfoot, and Venetia neighborhoods. The third scrapbook contains photographs, articles and ephemera relating to the Thompsonville, Pleasant Valley, and Donaldson's Crossroads areas of Peters Township.

The scrapbooks were disassembled by the archivist for preservation purposes, but their original arrangement was maintained.

Arrangement

The scrapbooks are arranged in 3 series that reflect the original arrangement of the scrapbooks:

- Series I. McMurray scrapbook, 1980-1998
- Series II. Bower Hill, Hackett, Turkeyfoot, and Venetia scrapbook, 1981-1994
- Series III. Thompsonville, Pleasant Valley, and Donaldson's Crossroads scrapbook, 1980-1991

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions:

No restrictions on access.

Acquisition Information:

The scrapbooks were donated to the Archives by Ralph Kessler on November 4, 2020.

Accruals Note:

No further accruals are expected.

Preferred Citation:

Peters Township Public Library Archives, MS 2022-053 Ralph Kessler scrapbooks

Processing Information:

The scrapbooks were disassembled and their contents arranged and described by Carolyn Friedrich and Margaret Dietzer in December 2023. Nancy Martin revised the description in November 2025.

Copyright/Conditions Governing Use:

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Contents List

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|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Series I. | McMurray scrapbook, 1980-1998 |
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Series Extent: 1 folder

Series Scope and Content Note: Series consists of scrapbook pages containing photographs of the McMurray area of Peters Township taken between 1980 and 1998. The series also includes copies of historical photographs of the area, dating from as early as 1897. Many of the photographs bear identifying information added by Kessler.

Some of the photographs from the 1980s and 1990s are of the intersection of Valley Brook and East McMurray roads. Subjects include the McMurray house, the McMurray Supply Company building, the McMurray Dairy Bar, the former McMurray Telephone Company building, the former McMurray homestead at 607 East McMurray Road, the brick Peters Township High School on East McMurray Road that became the Middle School, the former McMurray boy scout cabin, and the construction work to widen the intersection. Historical subjects of the same area include the McMurray general store, the McMurray mill and stable, and Ike Simpson's blacksmith shop.

The scrapbook also contains photographs of buildings on Thomas Road including the Simmons, Long, and Lutz farms and the J. M. McMurray farm at 191 Johnston Road. Copies of historical photos include ones of Hervey McMurray's farm on Thomas Road.

The scrapbook also contains a few documents including a No trespassing sign created by the Peters Township Protective Association, a newspaper article about the construction of the new Peters Township middle school, and a one-page history of “Indian Peter”.

Series II. Bower Hill, Hackett, Turkeyfoot, and Venetia scrapbook, 1981-1994

Series Extent: 1 folder

Series Scope and Content Note: Series consists of scrapbook pages containing photographs of the Bower Hill, Hackett, Turkeyfoot, and Venetia areas of Peters Township taken between 1981 and 1994. The series also includes copies of historical photographs of the four areas, the earliest of which date from the early 1900s. Many of the photographs bear identifying information added by Kessler.

The subjects of the Bower Hill photographs include the one-room Bower Hill School, the 1904 Peters Township high school, and the firehouse at the corner of Sugar Camp and Bebout roads. The subjects of the Hackett photographs include the Hackett Club and the School family’s house on Venetia Road. The subjects of the Turkeyfoot photographs include Peters Creek Presbyterian Church, Peters Creek Christian Cemetery, the Townsend house, Trax Farm, and the Froebe farm. The subjects of the Venetia photographs include the Country Store, Wright’s Chapel, Wright’s United Methodist Church, the Enoch Wright house, the Venetia post office, the frame Venetia School, the brick Venetia School, Swagler’s Mill, and McConnaughey’s Store.

The scrapbook also includes a series of slides of historic buildings and locations throughout Peters Township, photocopies of pages of books detailing the history of specific areas of the township, and postmarked envelopes.

Series III. Thompsonville, Pleasant Valley, and Donaldson’s Crossroads scrapbook, 1980-1991

Series Extent: 1 folder

Series Scope and Content Note: Series consists of scrapbook pages containing photographs of the Thompsonville, McMurray, Pleasant Valley and Donaldson’s Crossroads areas of Peters Township taken between 1980 and 1991. The series also includes copies of historical photographs of the three areas, the earliest of which date from 1912. Many of the photographs bear identifying information added by Kessler.

The Thompsonville section of the scrapbook contains photographs taken on Camp Lane and Old Washington, Thompsonville, and Valley Brook roads. The subjects of the Thompsonville photographs include the Round Hotel, the former Thompsonville post office and school, and assorted houses. The subjects of the Pleasant Valley photographs include the Olde Southern Restaurant and Saloon, Gordon's Furniture, the Locust Grove Motel, teacher Esther Baird's house, and the Pleasant Valley Veterinary Clinic, formerly the Pleasant Valley School. The subjects of the Donaldson's Crossroads photographs include the Donaldson farmhouse, the former Hollywood restaurant, Vitte's Hardware, Cattaneo's Shop 'n' Save supermarket, and the McDowell farm.

The scrapbook also includes copies of historical photographs of the Sprowls and Hickson service station that once occupied the northeast corner of Donaldson's Crossroads, copies of newspaper articles relating to Peters Township, and postmarked envelopes.