

Frank Blase collection on North Penn History

43

**Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Michael
Gubicza through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden
Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.**

Last updated on March 21, 2013.

Historical Society of Montgomery County

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	5
Controlled Access Headings.....	5

Summary Information

Repository	Historical Society of Montgomery County
Creator	Blase, Francis
Title	Frank Blase collection on North Penn History
Call number	43
Date [bulk]	1930-1997
Date [inclusive]	1884-1997
Extent	10 linear feet
General Physical Description note	2 drawers and 4 boxes
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Francis "Frank" Blase Jr. (1938-1999) was a Pennsylvania resident who was devoted to local and coal mining history. He was a member of the Lansdale Historical Society (Montgomery County, Pa.) and founded the North Penn Historical Library (Montgomery County, Pa.) and the Research Library for Coal Mining (Pottsville, Pa.). The Frank Blase collection on North Penn History, 1884-1997, consists almost entirely of newspaper clippings, with a few original photographs (circa 1900-1915), handwritten notes, and pamphlets. The collection focuses on the North Penn region of Montgomery County (near Lansdale, Pa.); parts of Philadelphia, Berks, Bucks, Montgomery, Lehigh, and Lancaster counties in Pennsylvania are also covered in the collection.</p>

Biography/History

"Francis "Frank" Blase Jr., 61, of West Rockhill Township, retired owner of a sign company who devoted himself to regional history, died [in 1999] of cancer at the Rockhill Mennonite Community's Skilled Nursing Unit in West Rockhill.

"Following an interest in commercial and industrial arts he had developed in high school, Mr. Blase worked for a local furniture-restoration company and then for a sign-manufacturing firm. In 1957, he founded Blase Sign Co., of which he was owner-operator until retiring in 1991.

"As a member and former president of the Lansdale Historical Society, he founded the North Penn Historical Library and was librarian until his death. He also founded the Research Library for Coal Mining, in Pottsville, and wrote a weekly "Coal Company Histories" series for the *Pottsville Republican* for several years. He also wrote *Heebner & Sons, Pioneers of Farm Machinery in America*, a book on the firm and the Lansdale area...

"Perhaps because the history of coal country is dominated by struggle and poverty, he found that the people of the region were not big talkers. But an old mining engineer led him to Reading Anthracite Co. in Pottsville, and from boxes tucked away on dusty shelves, and from vaults and warehouses untouched for a half century, he found property deeds dating to the 1740s and employment records for about 100,000 miners, dating to the 1870s. He had, in fact, discovered the resources for the coal-mining museum.

"Mr. Blase, a native of Ashland in Schuylkill County, attended Ashland High School through ninth grade and graduated from the former North Wales High School in 1955. He completed a blacksmith course at Philadelphia College of Art, focusing on reproduction of hardware for furniture. He served in the Pennsylvania National Guard. Mr. Blase resided in Hatfield Township and North Wales for many years before moving to West Rockhill in 1970."

Bibliography:

Quoted text from: Drill, Herb. "Francis 'Frank' Blase Jr., 61; Devoted To Coal Country's History." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 25, 1999. Accessed March 16, 2012. http://articles.philly.com/1999-08-25/news/25483248_1_coal-mining-museum-coal-mining-reading-anthracite

Scope and Contents

This collection is made up almost entirely of newspaper clippings, with a few original photographs (circa 1900-1915), handwritten notes, and pamphlets included. The collection focuses on the North Penn region of Montgomery County (near Lansdale, Pa.); parts of Philadelphia, Berks, Bucks, Montgomery, Lehigh,

and Lancaster counties in Pennsylvania are also covered in the collection. The clippings are organized into folders by location, and sometimes by subject.

Administrative Information

Historical Society of Montgomery County

Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Michael Gubicza through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.

Sponsor

This preliminary finding aid was created as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories. The HCI-PSAR project was made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Access Restrictions

Contact Historical Society of Montgomery County for information about accessing this collection.

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Berks County (Pa.)
- Bucks County (Pa.)
- Lancaster County (Pa.)
- Lehigh County (Pa.)
- Montgomery County (Pa.)
- Philadelphia (Pa.)

Subject(s)

- Local history