

Summary Information

Title: Mildred Clower Somerville Collection

Collection number: PH53

Creator: Attributed to Lizzie Austerberry Clower

Collection dates: 1898 – 1904

Extent: 44 silver gelatin reference prints and 44 dry plate negatives measuring 4 x 5 inches.

Language:

The material in this collection is in English.

Repository:

Chester County Historical Society

225 N. High St.

West Chester, PA 19380

Date Published:

2010

Author:

Pamela Powell, photo archivist

History

This collection was given to CCHS in 1962 by Mildred Clower Somerville the year after her mother's death. F. Elizabeth "Lizzie" Austerberry Clower, 1873-1961, was the daughter of Joseph H. Austerberry of Oldham England and Mary Riley Austerberry¹. She was born in Trooper, Montgomery County but lived with her grandmother Elizabeth Riley in Fisherville after the death of her father in 1883².

Elizabeth Austerberry Clower's grandparents, James and Elizabeth Riley came to the United States from Manchester England just after their marriage in 1847³. James Riley 1818-1901, who was a weaver by trade, began working at Fisherville Mill and later conducted a store in Fisherville, raising eight⁴ children. At the time of his death, James Riley was living in Norristown Montgomery County⁵. He was buried in East Brandywine Baptist Cemetery.

¹ Obituary, Mrs. John L. Clower, Daily Local News, West Chester, PA 26 September 1961.

² See glass plate negatives #2 and #14.

³ Obituary, James Riley, Daily Local News, West Chester, PA 2 July 1901.

⁴ 1850 & 1880 United States Federal Census. E. Brandywine Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania

⁵ Death notice, James Riley, Daily Local News, West Chester, PA 2 July 1901.

Lizzie Austerberry married John L. Clower, 1871- 1959, in 1896⁶. John Clower was the son of Mary F. Williams and Thomas Maxwell Clower, who was the president of Beaver Mills (also known as Bondsville Mills) in E. Brandywine Township⁷. John Clower learned the weaving trade under his father's guidance.

At the time of his marriage, John Clower was a keeper and instructor of weaving at Chester County Prison⁸, earning \$65 per month⁹. The couple set up housekeeping on W. Market St. in West Chester, PA. They had one daughter, Mary Mildred born in 1901.

When Clower began his employment in West Chester, Joseph James served as the warden of Chester County Prison. His wife Sarah and daughter Mabel were friends with the Clower family. Mabel James began her employment as prison clerk in 1895 and continued in that role for 43 years.¹⁰

John Clower during his career, served as Chester County Prison Warden for 20 years. He was County Treasurer from 1926-1929 and Deputy Treasurer from 1929-1938. He then returned to be Assistant Warden at the prison until his retirement in 1952.

Clower was active in community life as a member of First West Chester Fire Company served as its treasurer for 50 years. He also served the office of treasurer for West Chester Lodge of the Elks, Chester County Republicans and the local lodge of the Masons.

John and Lizzie Clower were married for 63 years. Their last residence in West Chester was at 425 Price St. Their daughter Mildred became an English Teacher at West Chester High School. After her marriage to Oliver T. Somerville, Deputy Attorney General of the State of New Jersey, she lived in Rutherford, NJ¹¹.

Collection Scope and Content Note

Collection of 44 glass plate negatives record the family life of Lizzie Austerberry Clower and John L. Clower cover the early period of their marriage between 1898 and 1904. Included are views of the Beaver (Bondsville) Woolen Mill in E. Brandywine Township, home of Grandmother Riley in Fisherville, Riley family graves at East Brandywine Baptist Church and the iron bridge in Bondsville.

⁶ Daily Local News, West Chester, PA 28 May 1946.

⁷ Obituary Maxwell Clower, Coatesville Times, Coatesville, PA 30 January 1926.

⁸ Obituary, John L. Clower, Daily Local News, West Chester, PA 24 December 1959.

⁹ Daily Local News, West Chester, PA 12 November 1895.

¹⁰ Obituary Miss Mabel H. James, Daily Local News, West Chester, PA 12 December 1938.

¹¹ Daily Local News 16 April 1945.

Candid portraits of family members were taken in a parlor decorated with clocks, china, textiles and a piano. Those pictured are John L. Clower, Lizzie Austerberry Clower, Mildred Clower, Lillian Clower Philips and Riley family members. Mildred Clower is pictured as a child surrounded by dolls and toys under a Christmas tree.

Views of West Chester include Fame and First West Chester Fire Companies decorated for West Chester's Centennial in 1899, views during the Sleet Storm of 1902, Everhart Park and pictures taken of family on the steps and in the courtyard of Chester County Prison.

Other subjects include Cope's Bridge, Dorlan's Mill dam in Upper Uwchlan Twp. and a steam locomotive at Frazer.

Selected Search Terms

Corporate names:

Austerberry Family
Bondsville Mill (E. Brandywine Township, PA)
Brandywine Creek
Chester County Prison (West Chester, PA)
Clower, John
Clower, Lizzie Austerberry
Clower, Mildred
Clower, T. Maxwell
Cope's Bridge (Chester County, PA)
Dorlan's Mill (Upper Uwchlan, PA)
East Brandywine Baptist Cemetery (Chester County, PA)
Everhart Park (West Chester, PA)
Philips, Lillian Clower
Riley, Elizabeth
Riley, James, 1813-1901
Riley, James, 1852-

Topics:

Boating
Bridges – Pennsylvania, E. Brandywine Twp.
Bridges – Pennsylvania, E. Bradford Twp.?
Cemeteries – Pennsylvania, E. Brandywine Twp.
Centennial Celebrations – Pennsylvania, West Chester
Children
Christmas Trees – Pennsylvania, Chester County
Dams – Pennsylvania, Upper Uwchlan Twp.
Dolls
Dwellings – Pennsylvania, Downingtown
Dwellings – Pennsylvania, E. Brandywine Twp.
Dwellings – Pennsylvania, West Chester
Fire Departments – Pennsylvania, West Chester

Fishing
Horses
Ice Industry – Pennsylvania, Upper Uwchlan
Ice Storms – Pennsylvania, West Chester
Interiors
Mills – Pennsylvania, Chester County
Parades – Pennsylvania, West Chester
Parks – Pennsylvania, West Chester
Parlors
Pianos
Prisons – Pennsylvania, West Chester
Railroads – Pennsylvania, Frazer
Roads – Pennsylvania, E. Brandywine Twp.
Streets – Pennsylvania, West Chester
Textile Industry – Pennsylvania, E. Brandywine Twp.
Toys
Winter

Geographic Names

Bondsville, PA
Chester County, PA
Downingtown, PA
E. Brandywine Township, PA
Fisherville, PA
Frazer, PA
Upper Uwchlan Township, PA
West Chester, PA

Forms

Dry plate negatives, 1890-1910
Silver gelatin photographs, 1890-1910

Personal Contributors

Clower, F. Elizabeth Austerberry, attr.

Arrangement

The negatives were assigned numbers by a Winterthur student in 1977. The reference prints were groups for ease of retrieval by the photo archivist in 2010.

Access and Use

Access Restrictions: Patrons are welcome to view the reference prints in CCHS library reading room during library hours. Glass plate negatives can be viewed by special arrangement with the Photo Archivist on the light table in the Photo Archives office. Call 610-692-4800 for an appointment.

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by Mildred Clower Somerville in 1962. The reference prints were made from the original glass plate negatives by volunteer Mary Painter in CCHS darkroom in 2009. The photographs were printed on Ilford paper using Dektol and Kodak chemistry with a thorough wash.

Preferred Citation

Mildred Clower Somerville Collection, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA

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Series Descriptions

File 1: Bondsville and Fisherville, E. Brandywine Township, 1898-1900

7 silver gelatin photographs of Bondsville woolen Mill, home of James & Elizabeth Riley on Bondsville Road in Fisherville, iron bridge in Bondsville, views along road from Fisherville to Bondsville.

Glass plate negative #2, 19, 32, 34, 36, 37, 41

File 2: Christmas, 1904 & 1905

4 silver gelatin photographs of a little girl, Mildred Clower, with a Christmas tree and her dolls, dollhouse, teddy bear, books, tea set and other toys.

Glass plate negatives: 22, 24, 25, 44

File 3: Cope's Bridge, August 28, 1904

2 silver gelatin photographs of Cope's Bridge on the Brandywine, E. & W. Bradford Townships.

Glass plate negatives: 7, 8

File 4: Dorlan's Mill, Upper Uwchlan Township, 1899

3 silver gelatin photographs of the ice house, people boating and the dam breast at Dorlan's Mill

Glass plate negatives: 1, 18, 21

File 5: Family Graves, May 14, 1901

3 silver gelatin photographs of family grave stones of the family of Lizzie Austerberry Clower, wife of John L. Clower. Shown are graves of Maggie (1859-1878) and E. Alice (1855-1878) the children of James and Elizabeth Riley (grandparents of Lizzie Austerberry Clower) in East Brandywine Baptist Cemetery. Also shown are headstones of Joseph H. Austerberry (1847-1883), Mary J.(1876-1880) and James R. Austerberry (1882-1885), cemetery is not identified, the negative envelope was labeled "Graves – Jefferson." These are the graves of Lizzie

Austerberry Clower's father and two siblings. A Headstone next to Joseph Austerberry's is blank.

Glass plate negatives: 14, 15, 43

File 6: Family, Homes and House interiors, 1898-1904

14 silver gelatin photographs of the Somerville family in interior settings. Pictured are: Ida, John L. Clower, Lizzie Austerberry Clower, Lillian Clower Philips, Mildred Clower as an infant, Father [T. Maxwell Clower] and Grandmother [Elizabeth Riley], Uncle James [possibly James Riley born 1852 son of James and Elizabeth Riley]. Furniture, piano, wallpaper, draperies, lamps, pictures, clocks, china and home decorations are recorded. In one view John Clower is wearing a fireman's uniform. Lillian Clower Philips (Mrs. Josiah Philis) is shown outdoors with her home in Downingtown, PA.

Glass plate negatives: 3, 5, 6, 16, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 40

File 7: West Chester, 1899-1902

11 silver gelatin photographs of view of West Chester including Fame Fire Co. and First West Chester Fire Company decorated for West Chester's Centennial in 1899; Firemen on parade during the Centennial; views during the sleet storm of 1902 showing W. Market St., Virginia Ave, and W. Miner St. ; John and Lizzie Clower with baby posed in Chester County Prison yard and Uncle James with baby posed on prison steps; Ida with Lizzie Clower posed at Everhart's Grove; and a horse "Good Naaman" on Market St.

Glass plate negatives: 4, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 20, 23, 38, 39

File 8: Miscellaneous

2 silver gelatin photographs showing a steam locomotive in Frazer and an unidentified old mill wheel.

Glass plate negatives: 12, 42

Glass Plate Negative Inventory

1. Ice House- Dorlan [Dorlan's Mill, Upper Uwchlan Twp., PA]
2. Home of Grandparents and I 7/8/1900 [Home of James & Elizabeth Riley, on Bondsville Rd. below the intersection of Fisherville Rd., E. Brandywine Twp., PA]
3. Ida and I in Parlor
4. Horse – "Good Naaman"
5. John in Parlor [John L. Clower]
6. Lizzie in Parlor [Elizabeth Austerberry Clower]
7. Cope's Bridge 8/28/1904
8. Cope's Bridge 8/28/1904
9. Ida and Lizzie standing down by Everharts Grove 2/20/1901 [Everhart Park, West Chester, PA]
10. West Chester House [First West Chester Fire Co., N. Church St. decorated for West Chester Centennial, 1899.]

11. John, Lizzie and Baby in Jail Yard 11/2/1902. [Yard of the Chester County Prison, West Chester, PA where John was employed.]
12. Old Water Wheel
13. Mr. James and baby on Jail steps, May 1902. [John James holds Mildred Clower (lster Somerville) on the steps of the Chester County Prison, West Chester, PA. James was the Warden of Chester County Prison and the employer of the baby's father, John Clower.]
14. Graves – Jefferson
15. Graves at E. Brandywine [Brandywine Baptist Cemetery]
16. Parlor with window, 1899?
17. Snow scene one Market Street [West Chester, PA]
18. Boating at Dorlan's [Dorlan's Mill, Upper Uwchlan Twp., PA]
19. Bondsville Bridge [E. Brandywine Twp., PA]
20. Sleet Scene Miner St. [West Chester, PA, sleet storm of 1902]
21. Dam at Dorlan's – Gert and Mother 1899. [Dorlan's Mill, Upper Uwchlan Twp., PA. Pictured are: Gertrude (Mrs. Walter Hunt) and her mother, Mary F. Williams Clower.]
22. Mildred and Christmas Tree [Mildred Clower Somerville]
23. Snow Scene – Virginia Ave. 2/23/1902 (negative broken) [West Chester, PA, sleet storm of 1902.]
24. Christmas Tree, 1905
26. Lizzie in front of Lil's House 3/16/1900. [Lillian Clower (Mrs. Josiah Philips) daughter of T. Maxwell Clower and Mary Williams Clower, lived in Downingtown, PA.]
27. Lil at Home [Lillian Clower (Mrs. Josiah Philips)]
28. Lil standing up [Lillian Clower (Mrs. Josiah Philips)]
29. Mildred Clower taken in parlor without clothes [shown as a baby wearing a diaper]
30. Mildred Clower 11/29/1904 3 years old.
31. Father in Parlor 1898. [Possibly T. Maxwell Clower]
32. Home at Bondsville, 1898.
33. Grandmother, Lizzie, Mildred in Parlor, Nov. 1904. [Possibly Elizabeth Riley, grandmother of "Lizzie" Elizabeth Clower.]
34. Hyacinths – assorted colors. Bondsville Mill, April 1898.
35. Grandfather and Uncle James [Possibly James Riley (1813-1901), grandfather of "Lizzie" Elizabeth Clower, and his son James Riley, born 1852.]
36. House at Fisherville, 1898. [Home of James & Elizabeth Riley, on Bondsville Rd. below the intersection of Fisherville Rd., E. Brandywine Twp., PA]
37. House at Fisherville – Willie 5/15/1901 [ditto]
38. Firemen [on parade in West Chester, PA]
39. West Chester Fame Fire Co. West Chester Centennial picture [Fame decorated for Centennial, 1899.]
40. John with Fireman's clothes (negative chipped) [Note: John Clower was a member of First West Chester Fire Co.]
41. Road from Fish to Bond 5/15/1901 [Fisherville to Bondsville, E. Brandywine Twp., PA]
42. Frazer [Railroad locomotive]
43. Lot in Graveyard 5/14/1901 [Riley graves at East Brandywine Baptist Church]
44. Christmas Tree 1904.

