

# Sleighton Farm School photographs

Collection ID: DN160

Accession #: 2010.33

Finding Aid prepared by Kelin Baldrige

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## **Summary Information**

<b>Repository</b>	Chester County History Center
<b>Creator</b>	unknown
<b>Title</b>	Sleighton Farm School photographs
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	1910-1913, 1955
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1908-1955
<b>Extent</b>	.2 linear feet
<b>Location note</b>	Chester County History Center Photo Archives
<b>Language</b>	eng
<b>Language of Materials note</b>	eng
<b>Abstract</b>	The Sleighton Farm School photographs date from the 1908-1955 and measure .2 linear feet. The photographs show students of the Sleighton Farm School, a reform school in Glen Mills, PA at work, events, and leisure, the faculty, including Martha Platt Falconer, and the school buildings.

## **Preferred Citation note**

[Identification of item], Sleighton Farm School photographs, DN160, Chester County History Center Photo Archives, West Chester, PA.

## **Historical Note**

The Sleighton Farm School was a reform school for girls in Glen Mills, PA.

The Sleighton Farm property was originally given to Henry Sleighton by William Penn. Other early owners of the property included George Baker, Alfred Darlington, and the Evans family. An 1833 barn built by John Worrall was maintained as a part of the Sleighton School campus. Ruins of barns and farm structures built by the Evans family were turned into the school's "sunken gardens." It appears that these gardens were used for theater productions and student events.

The Philadelphia House of Refuge was founded in 1926 in an effort from the Pennsylvania Prison Society to avoid putting children and young offenders in general prison. The establishment of the House of Refuge stemmed from the emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punishment of young offenders.

Children sentenced to the Philadelphia House of Refuge began their days at 5am, labored for five to six hours, and then had educational instruction for three to four hours. They were permitted only a brief period of play after dinner. The institution was not successful in rehabilitating delinquent children. In fact, the labor and punishments the children were forced to endure were harsh. In 1876, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives investigated abuse at the House of Reform. Despite finding that play was banned, meals were withheld, solitary confinement was implemented, lashings were given, and children were forced to work six-day weeks without pay while earning the institution thousands of dollars in profits, the institution was found not guilty of abuse.

In 1892, the Philadelphia House of Refuge moved to Thornbury Township in Delaware County and reopened under the name Glen Mills School in 1911. At this time, the Glen Mills School Girls' Department (which would become the Sleighton School in 1931 and will be referred to as such from here on) opened as well.

In 1906, Martha Platt Falconer (1862-1941) was appointed as the head of the girl's division of the Philadelphia House of Refuge. Frustrated and disappointed by the institution's harsh environment, she focused her work on reform. In 1909, Cope & Stewardson architects constructed the Sleighton Farm School campus. After the institution's move to Sleighton, and under Falconer's family-style leadership, the school became a bastion of prison reform.

The girls at the school lived in cottages. These cottages had various names over time, including Lucretia Mott, Campbell, Watson, Robinson, Lincoln, Dubois-Miller, and Harrison.

The girls at the school were delinquents committed to the school by the courts of Pennsylvania. The majority were sentenced for "incurability" which encompassed a wide array of offenses.

The Sleighton Farm School became co-ed again in 1975 and closed in 2001.

## **Scope and Contents and Arrangement note**

At the time of processing, this collection had previously been divided into *students*, *faculty*, and *buildings* series.

*Students* includes black and white photographs from 1910-1913 and the 1950s. They show students doing work, including agricultural, domestic, and academic work. They also include photographs of

students at various events, including May Day, a corn husking contest, “Around the World,” and a women’s parade. Finally, the *students* photographs show students participating in leisure activities.

*Faculty* consists of one folder of black and white photographs from 1913 and 1955. There are four photographs of Martha Platt Falconer and one photograph of unidentified women.

*Buildings* consists of one folder of black and white photographs that date from 1908-1913 and 1921. The photographs include interior and exterior photographs of several buildings, including two identified as Harrison Cottage and Farm House.

## **Administrative Information**

The Sleighton Farm School photographs were donated to the Chester County History Center by Janice Painter in 2010.

## **Controlled Access Headings**

Falconer, Martha P. (Martha Platt), 1862-1941

Prison reform

Reformatories

Glen Mills (Pa.)

Schools

Juvenile delinquents

## **Conditions Governing Access**

This collection is open for research use.

## **Collection Inventory**

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date	# of items
1	1	Students: agriculture	Circa 1910-1913	19
1	2	Students: class	1910	4
1	3	Students: corn husking contest	1912	4
1	4	Students: costume and theater	1913, 1916, 1928	23
1	5	Students: calendar celebration	1950s	12
1	6	Students: labor	1910, 1913	6
1	7	Students: leisure, indoors	1910	8
1	8	Students: leisure, outdoors	1910-1911	12
1	9	Students: May Day	Circa 1910-1913	2
1	10	Students: portraits (Florence Blonsky, Gladys Sprow, Josephine DeAngelo, Rose Meradd (?))	Circa 1910, circa 1950	6
1	11	Students: “Around the World”	1950s	8
1	12	Students: women’s parade	1913	12

1	13	Faculty (Martha Platt Falconer and unidentified)	1913, 1955	6
1	14	Campus buildings	1908-1913, 1921	26