

Library Company of Philadelphia

McA 10089.F

SALT RIVER EPHEMERA COLLECTION

1852-1872

1.88 linear feet, 2 boxes

Series I. United States Presidential Elections (1852-1868)
Series II. Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Elections (1860-1872)
Series III. Philadelphia Mayoral Elections (1858-1868)
Series IV. Unidentified Elections (1862-1868)

May 2006

Descriptive Summary**Repository**

Library Company of Philadelphia

Call Number

McA 10089.F

Creator

McAllister, John A. (1822-1896)

Title

Salt River Ephemera Collection

Inclusive Dates

1852-1872

Quantity

1.88 linear feet (2 boxes)

Language of Materials

Materials are in English.

Abstract

The Salt River Ephemera Collection holds printed material in the form of small tickets, palm cards, handbills, and broadsheets, with caricatures of politicians from national, state-wide, and local elections. The ephemera was primarily produced and circulated in Philadelphia.

Administrative Information**Restrictions to Access**

The collection is open to researchers.

Acquisition Information

Gift of John A. McAllister; forms part of the McAllister Collection.

Processing Information

The Salt River Ephemera Collection was formerly housed in various folio albums that had been created after the McAllister Collection arrived at the Library Company. The material was removed from the albums, arranged and described in 2006, under grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the William Penn Foundation. The collection was processed by Sandra Markham. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this finding aid do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Preferred Citation

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Online Catalog Headings**Subject Names**

Democratic Party (U.S.)--Caricatures and cartoons.
Republican Party (U.S.: 1854-)--Caricatures and cartoons.
Belmont, August, 1813-1890--Caricatures and cartoons.
Beecher, Henry Ward, 1813-1887--Caricatures and cartoons.
Buchanan, James, 1791-1868--Caricatures and cartoons.
Breckinridge, John C. (John Cabell), 1821-1875--Caricatures and cartoons.
Colfax, Schuyler, 1823-1885--Caricatures and cartoons.
Davis, Jefferson, 1808-1889--Caricatures and cartoons.
Douglas, Stephen Arnold, 1813-1861--Caricatures and cartoons.
Everett, Edward, 1794-1865--Caricatures and cartoons.
Frémont, John Charles, 1813-1890--Caricatures and cartoons.
Forrest, Nathan Bedford, 1821-1877--Caricatures and cartoons.
Grant, Ulysses S. (Ulysses Simpson), 1822-1885--Caricatures and cartoons.
Greeley, Horace, 1811-1872--Caricatures and cartoons.
Hampton, Wade, 1818-1902--Caricatures and cartoons.
Johnson, Andrew, 1808-1875--Caricatures and cartoons.
Lee, Robert E. (Robert Edward), 1807-1870--Caricatures and cartoons.
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865--Caricatures and cartoons.
McClellan, George Brinton, 1826-1885--Caricatures and cartoons.
Seward, William Henry, 1801-1872--Caricatures and cartoons.
Seymour, Horatio, 1810-1886--Caricatures and cartoons.
Vallandigham, Clement L. (Clement Laird), 1820-1871--Caricatures and cartoons.
Wise, Henry A. (Henry Alexander), 1806-1876--Caricatures and cartoons.
Pierce, Franklin, 1804-1869--Caricatures and cartoons.
Fillmore, Millard, 1800-1874--Caricatures and cartoons.
Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866--Caricatures and cartoons.
Hale, John P. (John Parker), 1806-1873--Caricatures and cartoons.
Geary, John White, 1819-1873--Caricatures and cartoons.
McMichael, Morton, 1807-1879--Caricatures and cartoons.
Fox, Daniel M. (Daniel Miller), b. 1809--Caricatures and cartoons.
Henry, Alexander, 1823-1883--Caricatures and cartoons.
Curtin, Andrew Gregg, 1815-1894--Caricatures and cartoons.
Buckalew, Charles Rollin, 1821-1899--Caricatures and cartoons.
Foster, Henry D. (Henry Donnel), 1808-1880--Caricatures and cartoons.
Woodward, George W. (George Washington), 1809-1875--Caricatures and cartoons.
Clymer, Hiester, 1827-1884--Caricatures and cartoons.
Vaux, Richard, 1816-1895--Caricatures and cartoons.
Tyndale, Hector, 1821-1880--Caricatures and cartoons.
Robbins, John, 1809-1899--Caricatures and cartoons.

Packer, Asa, 1805-1879--Caricatures and cartoons.

Subject Topics

Political cartoons, 1850-1860.
 Political cartoons, 1860-1870.
 Political cartoons, 1870-1880.
 Presidents --United States --Election.
 Presidential elections --United States.
 Elections --Pennsylvania --Philadelphia.
 Governors --Pennsylvania --Election.
 Mayors --Pennsylvania --Philadelphia--Election.
 African Americans --Caricatures and cartoons.
 Reconstruction (U.S. history, 1865-1877).
 United States --Race relations.

Document Types

Ephemera
 Tickets

Related Collections

Additional Salt River material was cataloged in the Library Company's Print and Photograph Department, and can be located through WolfPAC, the library's online catalogue. Other examples of Salt River ephemera are held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, American Antiquarian Society, Library of Congress, and in Lancaster County Historical Society's Political Campaigns and Elections Collection (MG-94).

Historical Notes

The origin of the term "Salt River," in relation to politics, is not clear. It appears in Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1894) described as: "A defeated political party is said to be rowed up Salt River, and those who attempt to uphold the party have the task of rowing up this ungracious stream." References to the term appear in print as early as the 1830s, and "A Correct Chart of Salt River," a cartoon map published in 1849 and attributed to Washington *Union* editor Thomas Ritchie (1778-1854), showed the course of the river as it flowed from Lake Oblivion into the Ohio River.

In reality, there is a Salt River which rises in Kentucky and joins the Ohio River at West Point, Kentucky, twenty miles south of Louisville. One theory of the term's origin comes from a legend of a politician who was traveling up the Ohio on his way to deliver a campaign speech at Louisville, and was guided instead up the Salt River by a river pilot working for the opposing party, thereby missing his appointment.

Whatever the source, the political term “Salt River” appeared in print from the 1830s through the 1870s, and was especially popular on ephemera circulated after an election. Many of the pieces were issued on colored card stock in formats that resembled actual boat or railroad passes, with related transportation motifs incorporated in their design; others resemble the handbills and broadsheet newspapers circulating at the time. Generally, there are devices to identify the politicians being skewered – either through caricature (exaggerated but recognizable physiques), conversation (in balloon quotes), or visual puns and wordplay (a drawing of a fox to represent Philadelphia mayor Daniel Fox, or a riverboat that has been “Pack[er]ed” for Pennsylvania governor Asa Packer) – though often the humor, like the campaign slogans and political cronies featured, was distinctly of the period and the subtexts are not always obvious to modern readers.

The Salt River genre was especially popular in Philadelphia but it is not known how widespread its use was elsewhere. Letters in John A. McAllister’s papers show that he attempted to find examples to add to his collection, but two of his peers, librarian/collector John Russell Bartlett in Providence, RI, and antiquarian bookseller J.K. Wiggin in Boston, to whom he had sent samples, wrote to say that they had not seen anything like it in their cities.

Collection Overview

The collection is arranged in four series: I, United States Presidential Elections (1852-1868); II, Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Elections (1860-1872); III, Philadelphia Mayoral Elections (1858-1868); and IV, Unidentified Elections (1862-1868). The material is filed chronologically within each category. The collection holds print pieces from national presidential, Pennsylvania gubernatorial, and Philadelphia mayoral races, as well as material that can not be directly attributed to any one politician or election.

Box two holds a selection of oversize material from several campaigns. Produced to resemble large handbills or daily broadsheets complete with mastheads, there are single issues of these titles for these years: “Salt River Express” (1858, 1859, 1860, 1868, and undated); “The Salt River Mare’s Nest” (1867); “Extra Salt River Gazette” (1868); “The Philadelphia Post,” extra edition (1871); “Balloon [sic] Ascension, Greeley & Brown” (1872); “Salt River Tribune” (1872); and these undated titles: “The Boomerang,” “Salt River Ticket and Programme,” “Salt River Pictorial,” and “Salt River Telegraph.”

Box Folder

		SERIES I. UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS	1852-1868
		Arranged chronologically	
1	1	Franklin Pierce v. Millard Fillmore, Winfield Scott, and John Hale	1852
	2	James Buchanan v. John C. Fremont	1856
	3	Abraham Lincoln v. Stephen Douglas and John Breckinridge	1860
	4	Abraham Lincoln v. George B. McClellan	1864
	5	Ulysses S. Grant v. Horatio Seymour	1868
		SERIES II. PENNSYLVANIA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS	1860-1872
		Arranged chronologically	
	6	Andrew Curtin v. Henry D. Foster	1860
	7	Andrew Curtin v. George W. Woodward	1863
	8	Andrew Curtin v. Heister Clymer	1866
	9	John White Geary v. Charles R. Buckalew	1872
		SERIES III. PHILADELPHIA MAYORAL ELECTIONS	1858-1868
		Arranged chronologically	
	10	Alexander Henry v. Richard Vaux	1858
	11	Alexander Henry v. John Robbins	1860
	12	Daniel Fox v. Hector Tyndale	1868
		SERIES IV. UNIDENTIFIED ELECTIONS	1862-1868
	13	Daniel Fox [campaign(s) unidentified]	1862-1868
	14	Miscellaneous	undated
2	15	OVERSIZE MATERIAL	1858-1872