



returns, assessments, and rates (or duplicates). These kinds of records can illuminate the economic lives of individuals within a larger community. Researcher Jack Marietta compiled a database of these records, contained on a floppy disk available to those interested. The Guide to these records, which are available on microfilm, contains photocopies of the applicable laws preceding each series of records.

**Tax Indexes for Chester County, 1693-1730, 1740, 1750, 1765, 1775, 1785, 1799, 1805, 1814:** indexes contain nine tax lists from Chester County between 1693 and 1799; they are also available on diskette, have been microfilmed, and are also contained in 3-ring binders on site. All but the 1693 tax list, which is at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, are at the Chester County Archives. They are indexed by name of taxpayer; other information includes township of property, assessed value of property, and taxpayer status (i.e., tenant, landlord, freeman, etc.)

**Chester County Tavern Petitions, 1700-1800:** In 3-ring binder on site, indexed by name of petitioner and by township. Information includes petitioner's name, date, township, tavern name, and volume/page number of record.

**Court of Common Pleas Mechanics Lien Docket Index, 1825-58:** Photocopy of actual docket recording claims by workers against their employers for unpaid wages. Information includes owner or contractor, claimants, amount in dispute, date of entry, township, remarks, page reference. The page citation refers to more detailed accounts of the job worked on, and often describes construction types, materials included, and descriptions of buildings.

**Court of Common Pleas Assigned Estates, 1820-42 (ca. 42 cubic feet):** Extremely rich and interesting collection of records related to pre-bankruptcy financial settlements of debtors and creditors. Records include inventories and accounts of personal property that was sold as a way to satisfy creditors without filing for bankruptcy. Records inform economic lives of people in earlier stages of life than those typically represented in probate inventories, and those who are actively engaged in business but in the throes of going under. The records are indexed by name, but will soon be searchable through an in-house database by business type as well. Other information includes: file number, township, dates, and business.

**Chester County Poor House Records Indexes:** important source for research on the economic conditions of the poor and the situations that resulted in their turning to the poor house. Records relating to children describe master-apprentice situations and inform work on nineteenth-century children's labor. Comprised of:

**1.) Records of the Directors (1798-1936),** including admissions books giving inmates' ages, names, and circumstances bringing them to the poorhouse, inmates' personal histories and accounts; superintendent's book recording disbursements and accounts including wages, funeral expenses, medicine, printing costs, etc., receipts for payments, and a book of farm accounts; minute books of the Directors; miscellaneous record books including accounts with other Chester County poor houses.

**2.) Apprenticed Children (1800-1825),** arranged alphabetically by the child's last name; information includes admission number, age when apprenticed, date of admission, master, trade, township, "comments" section (incl. descriptions of race), and reasons master may have returned child, such as physical handicap.

**Index to Chester County Court of Quarter Sessions Criminal Records, 1681-1857:** Covers all criminal court cases in the quarter sessions dockets and indictment papers, except capital cases. Arranged alphabetically by name of defendant, contains docket number, month and year of court term, and charge. Economy and society-related subjects include: challenges to tavern licenses grantees, levies, taxes, payments, convenient roads, unpaid levies, neglected bridges and highways, horse stealing, tippling houses, larceny, stealing, breaking and entering, receiving stolen goods, debts, forgery, retailing without a license, hawking and peddling without a license, disputes over payments, gambling houses, stealing banknotes, counterfeiting.

See: Lynn Ann Catanese, comp. *Guide to Records of the Court of Common Pleas, Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1681-1900*. West Chester, PA: Chester County Historical Society, 1987; and Lynn Ann Catanese, comp. *Guide to Records of the Court of Quarter Sessions, Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1681-1969*. West Chester, PA: Chester County Historical Society, 1989.

See, for example, Jack D. Marietta's "The Distribution of Wealth in Eighteenth-Century America: Nine Chester County Tax Lists, 1693-1799." *Pennsylvania History* 62.4 (Fall 1995): 532-45.

1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107 215-546-3181 Fax 215-546-5167  
Site contents copyright © 2005 The Library Company of Philadelphia. All Rights Reserved.  
Nicole Scalessa, IT Manager, [nscalessa@librarycompany.org](mailto:nscalessa@librarycompany.org)