

# **Brandywine Valley oral history interviewees' photographs**

225

**Finding aid prepared by Angela Schad, 2017..**

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Last updated on July 10, 2017.

Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Hagley Museum and Library: Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department
<b>Creator</b>	Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation.
<b>Title</b>	Brandywine Valley oral history interviewees' photographs
<b>Call number</b>	225
<b>Date</b>	circa 1859-1958, bulk 1890-1920
<b>Extent</b>	0.83 linear feet
<b>General Physical Description note</b>	213 photographic prints : b&w ; 8 x 10 in. or smaller, some duplicates ; 22 photographic prints : b&w ; stereographs ; 4 photographic reproductions : b&w ; 8 x 10 in. or smaller ; 1 photographic print : cyanotype ; 2 x 3 in. ; 1 photocopy.
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	Hagley Museum staff conducted a series oral history interviews between 1954 and 1990, speaking primarily with individuals who had worked at the DuPont Company powder yards on Brandywine Creek during the yards' final decades of operation or who had lived near the yards as spouses or children of DuPont Co. workers. Some of the individuals who were interviewed donated, lent for copying, or provided information on the photographs in this collection. The images primarily depict the worker communities which surrounded the E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company powder yards on Brandywine Creek or the powder yards themselves.

## Biography/History

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Hagley Museum staff conducted a series of oral history interviews between 1954 and 1990. The staff primarily spoke with individuals who had worked at the DuPont Company powder yards on Brandywine Creek during the yards' final decades of operation or who had lived near the yards as spouses or children of DuPont Co. workers. The interviews addressed the time period from approximately 1900 to 1960. The interviews were conducted to support the museum's programs and interpretation as well as to collect and preserve first-hand accounts of work and daily life in New Castle County, Delaware and Chester County, Pennsylvania in the first decades of the twentieth century. Some of the individuals who were interviewed donated, lent for copying, or provided information on images in Hagley Library's collections.

E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company was established in 1802 by Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours (1739-1817) and his son Éleuthère Irénée du Pont (1771-1834). The du Ponts purchased the Eleutherian Mills site on the banks of Brandywine Creek just north of Wilmington, Delaware. In 1813, E.I. du Pont expanded downstream by purchasing what became Hagley Yards. During wartime the company was a major supplier for the United States government. During peacetime, the company marketed their product towards sportsmen and hunters. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the powder-making operation on the Brandywine expanded as the company acquired many buildings that had begun as other industrial sites. At one time, the Brandywine works comprised four main yards: Eleutherian Mills (also known as Upper Yard), Upper Hagley Yard, Lower Hagley Yard, and Lower Yard, which was located on the eventual site of the DuPont Co. Experimental Station.

By the early twentieth century, the company had begun to shift its focus away from gunpowder production and towards chemistry innovations. In 1903, DuPont Co. established an experimental laboratory in the Rokeby Mill building downstream from Hagley Yard, and, after that building burned down in 1906, moved its facilities across the river to form the Experimental Station. The company closed the Brandywine powder yards in 1921, having remained open for the course of the First World War, and in 1926 the company formally dissolved its entire powder production unit.

The industrial villages along Brandywine Creek grew up in tandem with the powder mills and other nearby mills, and they were populated largely by Irish, French, and Italian immigrants and their descendants. By the 1890s, several distinguishable neighborhoods existed near the powder yards. On the west bank of Brandywine Creek, these included Wagoner's Row, the Upper Banks, Free Park, Squirrel Run, and Henry Clay (which encompassed Breck's Lane, Creek Road or Main Street, and Rising Sun Lane). On the east bank, there was Chicken Alley, Duck Street, Charles's Banks, and Walker's Banks.

The community supported several stores, saloons, and churches. Churches included Christ Church Christiana Hundred, St. Joseph's-on-the Brandywine Roman Catholic Church, Green Hill Presbyterian Church, and Mount Salem Methodist Church. Local schools included the Brandywine Manufacturers' Sunday School, which began in 1817 and operated as a nonsectarian school for the community until 1856, when it became an Episcopal church school serving nearby Christ Church. Other schools included the "Yellow Schoolhouse" on Barley Mill Road, a small school on Rising Sun Lane, and, beginning in 1893, the Alexis I. du Pont School.

The community was served by the Wilmington and Northern Railroad and, beginning in 1907, trolley service in Henry Clay was provided by the Peoples Railway. In the 1890s, the Breck's Mill building in Henry Clay became known as the Hagley Community House and was a community focal point, serving as a recreation center and social hall. The Eleutherian Mills residence on company property likewise served for a time as a DuPont Co. employees' clubhouse and was converted into military barracks during the First World War. The villages largely diminished with the closing of the powder yards.

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## Scope and Contents

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The more than 180 discrete images in this collection primarily depict the worker communities which surrounded the E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company powder yards on Brandywine Creek or the powder yards themselves in the final decades of the yards' operation.

The worker communities' images contain photographs of powdermen, other workers, and their families. These include images of local music groups, the Meadowbrook Club Fife and Drum Corps and Alfred I. du Pont's orchestra. Many images depict the villages of Henry Clay and Walker's Banks, including photographs taken from nearby Rockford Tower. Some of these photographs show floods or ice jams on Brandywine Creek. Others show workers' houses; businesses in Henry Clay, Delaware, including Sam Frizzell's store, Toy Tavern, and Breck's Lane cooper shop; and railroad tracks, road construction for a streetcar line, and New Bridge Station near Rising Sun Lane. There are also photographs of Rockford Park, including of the construction of Rockford Tower. Others depict churches and schools including the Brandywine Manufacturers' Sunday School, St. Joseph's-on-the Brandywine Roman Catholic Church, and students at Alexis I. du Pont School. There is also a photograph of houses in the Upper Banks community after the 1890 explosion at Eleutherian Mills powder yard. Also included is a copy of a ticket to the 1893 second annual ladies reception of the Brandywine Club and a map of Squirrel Run village based on a hand-drawn map by former resident Elizabeth Beacom.

Other photographs in the collection relate to the DuPont Company Brandywine powder yards or Experimental Station. The powder yard photographs depict the the following buildings: New Machine Shop, Machine Shop office, Graining house, rolling mills, Birkenhead mill, the Cannon house near Christ Church, and the saltpeter refinery at Eleutherian Mills. Also appearing in these images are the Hagley entrance gate, Blacksmith Shop gate, Hagley dam, Upper Yard dam, the Lower Yard, a graining mill explosion at Eleutherian Mills, a coal car in Hagley Yard, and a traction engine designed by Alfred I. du Pont. Powder yard workers also appear in the photographs, including foundry yard workers, farm workers, and others. The Experimental Station photographs depict the ballistics laboratory, powder testing area, and the station as seen from nearby Rockford Tower.

Of the images in the collection that do not depict the worker communities or powder yards, many depict scenes of Brandywine Creek, of which many were taken by Wilmington photographer Joseph A. Maybin. Also included are images associated with Alfred Irénée du Pont (1864-1935), and they depict a farewell party; powdermen outings; du Pont with powdermen at Cherry Island, Maryland or Ball's Neck, Virginia; and a female worker with oysters at the Ball's Neck, Virginia, estate of Jessie Dew Ball du Pont. There are

also photographs of unidentified quarries and quarry workers, horse-drawn gunpowder wagons, Hagley workmen and a bartender in a Wilmington tavern, powdermen at a Club House near Thompson's Bridge, unidentified female workers, and the Edwin Zeuner family, who lived in Wilmington, Delaware.

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## **Arrangement**

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The collection is arranged alphabetically by name of the individual who donated, loaned, or contributed notes on the images.

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## **Administrative Information**

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Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department  
Finding aid prepared by Angela Schad, 2017..

### **Provenance**

Transfer from Hagley File, 2017 (Accession 1969.001).

Transfer from a set of Brandywine Valley stereo photographs (Accession 1970.134).

### **Processing Notes**

The materials in this collection are items transferred from the former Hagley File subject photograph file (Accession 1969.001) maintained by the former Hagley Museum & Library Pictorial Collections Department. They are images that were identified by Hagley Staff as being donated or loaned by individuals interviewed for the collection, Oral histories on work and daily life in the Brandywine Valley (Accession 1970.370). Additional images were included in the transfer which contained notes provided by the one of these individuals interviewed, although the images themselves did not necessarily originate with the individual.

Additional items identified as being donated by individuals interviewed were transferred from a set of Brandywine Valley stereo photographs (Accession 1970.134).

### **Existence and Location of Copies**

This collection is available in the Hagley Digital Archives.

## **Related Materials**

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### **Related Material**

Oral histories on work and daily life in the Brandywine Valley (Accession 1970.370), Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

Hagley File (Accession 1969.001), Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

DuPont Company Brandywine powder yards and neighboring worker communities' photographs (Accession 2017.226), Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department, Hagley Museum and Library.

## Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
<b>Bader, Edward L., 1887-1912. .</b> <b>Scope and Contents note</b> Includes: St. Joseph's-on-the Brandywine Roman Catholic Church Sunday school group (Gentieu photograph Hagley ID: 701307A), Hagley entrance gate next to New Machine Shop, Blacksmith Shop gate (Gentieu photograph Hagley ID: 701112), Experimental Station ballistics laboratory, Experimental Station shop, election day at Fleming's Corner (Gentieu photograph Hagley ID: 701319), New Machine Shop interior (Gentieu photograph Hagley ID: 701012), traction engine designed by Alfred I. du Pont (Gentieu photograph Hagley ID: 701008), images of powder workmen's farewell at Nemours.	1	1
<b>Beacom, Elizabeth, 1870-1920. .</b> <b>Scope and Contents note</b> Includes: Graining house; Henry Clay village ice jam, high water, and construction on Creek Road in preparation for Peoples Railway trolley; map of Squirrel Run village; rolling mill; Meadowbrook Club Fife and Drum Corps.	1	2
<b>Becker, Chandler, circa 1923. .</b> <b>Scope and Contents note</b> Includes: Saltpeter refinery at Eleutherian Mills (Macklem photograph Hagley IDs: 1968010_001_02_15, 1968010_001_02_17)	1	3



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**Campbell, Joseph M., circa 1912. .**

1

4

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Maxwell family

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**Cheney, Catherine, 1870-1910. .**

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**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Brandywine Manufacturers' Sunday School, Cheney house near Hagley.

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**Devenney, 1880-1928. .**

1

6

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Pete Ferraro at Montchanin Blacksmith Shop, Birkenhead mill, Experimental Station aerial view and view from Rockford Tower, Henry Clay village view from Rockford tower, Benjamin Devenney and George Biddle at New Bridge on Rising Sun Lane.

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**Doremus, Thomas E., 1909 August 4. .**

1

7

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Graining mill explosion at Eleutherian Mills

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**Fahs, Clarence A., 1870-1920. .**

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8

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Brandywine Creek from Van Buren Street Bridge, women and children in Brandywine Park, Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad bridge at the Augustine Cut off, Hagley dam, dam on Brandywine Creek near Clayton Street, Hagley Yard entrance gate and New Machine Shop, New Machine Shop, Machine Shop office, a Brandywine quarry, Hagley foundry yard workers, railroad tracks near workers' homes in Henry Clay village.

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**Flanigan, William, 1880-1920. .**

1

9

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: William Flanigan with packing house car ( photograph Hagley ID: 701100); coal car in Hagley Yard; horse drawn gunpowder wagon in Deadwood, South Dakota; horse drawn gunpowder wagon; Powdermen's Outing with Alfred I. du Pont; Meadowbrook Club Fife and Drum Corps.

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**Hazzard, Katherine Kindbeiter, circa 1890. .**

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10

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Katherine Farren.

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**Krauss, John E., 1911. .**

1

11

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Alfred I. du Pont's farewell party.

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**Lattomus, Faith Betty, 1906-1916. .**

1

12

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Breck's Mill and Walker's Mill on Brandywine Creek; William Betty family at Wagoner's Row; DuPont farm workers; William G. Betty with dog, "Baby"; William Grimshaw Betty and Mrs. Betty; children of DuPont workers.

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**Lee, Harry E., 1910-1919. .**

1

13

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: DuPont Experimental station testing area for powder and general view.

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**Mathewson, F.L. "Les", circa 1859-1863, circa 1880-1921. .**

2

1-3

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Cannon house near Christ Church; cooper shop on Breck's Lane; Samuel Moore, cooper; Upper Yard dam at Eleutherian Mills; Hagley Centennial Gates; Brandywine Creek flood; Alfred I. du Pont with workers at Cherry Island, Maryland; Henry Clay village, Breck's Lane, Walker's Mill and Walker's Banks images; views from Rockford Tower; Alfred I. du Pont's residence, Swamp Hall; New Bridge Station; Sam Frizzell's store; Rockford Tower during and after construction; Rockford Park; rolling mills in Hagley Yard; DuPont Lower Yard; Hagley workmen and bartender in tavern; DuPont Co. employees; Alfred I. du Pont's orchestra; Alfred I. du Pont and DuPont employees eating oysters at Ball's Neck, Virginia; Gilbert Mathewson reading a newspaper; powdermen at Club House near Thompson's Bridge; laboring gang in Hagley Yard; ticket to second annual ladies reception of the Brandywine Club; Mary Ellen with a bowl of oysters

at Ball's Neck, Virginia, estate of Jessie Dew Ball du Pont; unidentified female workers.

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**Pyle, Robert E., 1860-1920. .**

2

4

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: views of Brandywine Creek, including 21 by photographer Joseph A. Maybin; rolling mills in DuPont Lower Yard; bridges near Brandywine Park.

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**Rhoads, J. Edgar, 1958. .**

2

5

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: snow scene in Brandywine area near Hagley.

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**Shields, Daniel, 1890 October. .**

2

6

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: Upper Banks after Eleutherian Mills explosion.

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**Toomey, Joseph, circa 1890, circa 1941. .**

2

7

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes: St. Joseph's-on-the Brandywine Roman Catholic Church interior and exterior views; quarry workers near Montchanin, Delaware.

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<b>Toy, Richard, circa 1900. .</b>	2	8
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>		
Includes: Toy Tavern in Henry Clay, Delaware.		

<b>Zeuner, Edwin, circa 1910-1940. .</b>	2	9
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>		
Includes: DuPont Co. employees at Hagley Yard or Wilmington Shops, Edwin Zeuner family.		