



SPRING HILL HISTORIC HOME

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SITE

OHRAB Interim Report 2023

The Rotch-Wales Papers of Spring Hill Historic Home contain the diaries, correspondence, business receipts and ledgers, memoirs, poetry, and more of Thomas (1767-1823) and Charity Rotch (1766-1824), as well as three generations of the Wales family beginning with Arvine Wales I (1785-1854) through Horatio and Irene McLain Wales (1880-1973). These holdings offer a unique and detailed view of 19th century Ohio and America through the perspectives of these family members involved in abolitionist/anti-slavery affairs, agriculture, government, and law, and beyond. A portion of the Rotch-Wales Papers were gifted to Massillon Public Library in 1963 by Irene McLain Wales when Spring Hill was auctioned because she was unaware of what would become of the site and its contents. The collection held at Spring Hill is partially organized into document boxes, but some archival material is still stored in subpar conditions (furniture drawers, banker boxes, etc.) The part of the collection that was organized by subject matter into archival boxes in the past poses several preservation issues. A large majority of the folders were tested and are acidic, needing to be replaced for enhanced preservation. Photographs are loosely stored in the folders against each other, causing some sticking and displacement within the boxes. Interleaving paper hadn't been used between documents, leaving no barrier for acid transfer. Some of the folders are too full, causing bulges and damage to the documents, and more fragile/vulnerable documents do not have any added layer of protection. Box labels are falling off, missing, or were intended to be only temporary and left unfinished. While the physical collection is available to and is used by researchers, more work needs to be done in organizing, labeling, and creating a finding aid for the collection to be more useful for requests. A college intern, partially funded by the grant, will help this project to be completed.

Funding: \$1,659.05

Estimated percentage of project completed:

Roughly 9 cubic feet of archives have been inventoried and processed as of August 1, 2023 between staff, intern and volunteers, with another two legal boxes in progress. These boxes have primarily consisted of correspondence between family members, friends, and business individuals between the 1810s to 1950s. We are also processing donations from Wales family members/descendants that include copies of institutional documents, historical newspaper clippings, and Wales family photographs dating as far

back as the Civil War. These photographs are being reviewed to identify which we do not currently have scans of. Once inventory is complete soon, the focus can be replacing acidic materials and adding protective materials to vulnerable documents and photographs.

Summary of expenses:

All acid-free archival supplies have been ordered as stated on the budget form submitted with the proposal, plus with an additional discount through Gaylord Archival we were able to order additional quantities of supplies; including interleaving paper, letter and legal folders, photo envelopes and sleeves, box labels, tissue paper, and more. The order totaled \$1,312.44 and all supplies have been received. The intern has completed 40 out of 75 hours totaling \$520.00. A portion of the intern's stipend is grant-funded, while the rest is cash match by our organization.

Amount of staff and volunteer time spent on the project:

Thus far, our staff member has dedicated 19 hours to the project, which includes working with the intern, inventorying boxes, and writing the interim report. Volunteers have only contributed about 5 hours thus far, due to our main archive volunteers traveling during the month of June, but we anticipate volunteer hours to increase during the second half of the project. Our intern is partially grant-funded and has completed 40 hours at the time of this report. We have had a new volunteer begin helping with the project in July, and will continue through the fall. Both staff and volunteer hours will constitute matching funds toward the grant.

Is the project on track to be completed by December 31st?

Currently, this project is anticipated to be completed by the December 31st date.

Examples of publicity on the project:

This project has been publicized through our institutional e-newsletter, social media posts, and the local media. No media publications have published the story yet, but we anticipate coverage after the project has been completed and will prioritize inviting reporters on-site for photographs.



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From the Director's Desk

Preservation Funding



Spring Hill was awarded \$1,660 from the [Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board](#)'s Re-grants Program, funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission of the National Archives and Records Administration. Spring Hill will utilize these funds to purchase the necessary and adequate archival-quality supplies to enhance the conditions and organization of our Rotch-Wales records that range from the late 1700s to mid-1900s. The grant will also partially fund hiring a student intern to conduct the bulk of the project that involves reorganizing and rehousing documents and photographs in our collection, and assisting in final steps in getting scans of the Rotch-Wales collection uploaded online for public access.



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Archive Project Progress



Our intern, Grace of Malone University began the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Review Board-funded archive project in May. So far, nearly five full archive boxes have been inventoried and organized with acid-free materials to support the long-term preservation of historical documents and photographs with new file folders, interleaving paper, photo sleeves, and more.

The inventoried collections have consisted predominantly of correspondence and photographs of the Wales family and their friends; including Eliza Weimer Wales (1839-1914), Arvine C. Wales (1827-1882) and their children, Helen Wales Skinner (1868-1956), Arvine Wales III (1869-1935), and Horatio Wales (1880-1952) and spouses.



Image (left): Arvine Wales (third gen.) and Helen "Nellie" Wales in the J.R. Haring photography studio in Massillon, circa 1875. Donation of Lea Chase Frey.



It is our long-term goal to ensure that all collections are digitized for their safe-keeping and accessibility to the public for



Spring Hill Historic Home

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This spring, Spring Hill Historic Home received a grant from the [Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board - OHRAB](#) to reorganize, inventory, and improve the storage of our Rotch-Wales Papers for their long-term preservation and accessibility to the public. The funds enabled us to order acid-free archival supplies like folders, photo envelopes, etc. and hire a college intern to assist with the project.

So far, our intern Grace from Malone University has inventoried several boxes of correspondence dating between the 1810s and 1950s to members of the Wales family, from the first generation to the third generation. Our Site Manager has inventoried boxes donated by family members, including this photo donated by Lea Chase Frey of Arvine Wales III and Helen Wales circa 1875.

Interested in volunteering with this project or other historic home collections? Send us a message - We also have a collections committee that meets regularly to tackle projects!

