

**Weiss family of Weissport,  
Pennsylvania papers, 1777-1916  
ANSP.Coll.216**

**Finding aid prepared by Garrett Boos**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia

2011.01.11

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia
<b>Creator</b>	Weiss, Jacob, 1750-1839
<b>Title</b>	Weiss family of Weissport, Pennsylvania papers
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1777-1916
<b>Extent</b>	0.75 Linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The Weiss family was prominent in the coal business in eastern Pennsylvania during the late 1700s and 1800s. The Weiss family collection dates from 1777 to 1916 and documents, most fully, Jacob Weiss (1750-1839), Francis White (1773-1845), and Francis White (1819-1888). The papers include diaries, geological and surveying notebooks, maps and observations; personalia and biographical notes; transcribed documents, portraits, scrapbooks, business journals, daybooks, mercantile records and account books as well as correspondence of many members of the family.</p>

### Preferred Citation note

[Description and date of item], [Box/folder number], Coll. 216, Weiss family of Weissport, Pennsylvania papers, 1777-1916, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

## Biographical/Historical note

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The Weiss family was prominent in the coal business in eastern Pennsylvania during the late 1700s and the 1800s. Colonel Jacob Weiss (1750-1839) was born in Philadelphia, the son of a German immigrant who was passionate about the causes of the American Revolution. Not surprisingly, Jacob Weiss volunteered for service in the Continental Army, first in a company of Philadelphia volunteers, then as deputy quartermaster-general, and finally as assistant deputy quartermaster-general at Easton, Pennsylvania, a post he served from 1780 until the end of the war in 1783.

Following the war, Weiss purchased land on the Lehigh River, at the time known as Gnadenhutten and later called Weissport, and became involved in farming, the lumber business, science, geology, and eventually, the coal business. Weiss, along with Charles Cist and Michael Hillegas, formed the Lehigh Coal-Mine Company, the first company for mining and marketing anthracite coal. This company was not particularly successful, however, when the Lehigh Coal and Navigation purchased the company, "coal was sent to market in sufficient quantities and at prices which at length attracted the attention of the public," (Mathews, pp. 777-780). At the time of his death on January 9, 1839 at the age of 89, Weiss was remembered as "a man of liberal education, strong mind, remarkable memory and generous disposition," (Mathews, pp. 777-780). His son, Francis Weiss (1773-1845), was a surveyor and businessman, while his grandson, Francis Weiss (1819-1888), followed him in the coal business, joining "the engineers' corps of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company, beginning as an axe man and working his way up until he had charge of the corps," ( *Portrait*, pp. 205-206). He was also involved with surveying the Lehigh and Morriss Canals and the Lehigh Valley Railroad, building the Gravity Railroad, mining, and owning and serving as president of the Alton (or Alden) Coal Company. He died on February 14, 1889.

### Bibliography:

Mathews, Alfred and Austin N. Hungerford. *The History of the Counties of Lehigh & Carbon, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: 1884.

*Portrait and Biographical Record of Lehigh, Northampton and Carbon Counties, Pennsylvania. Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens of the Counties, Together with Biographies and Portraits of all the Presidents of the United States*. Chicago: Chapman Publishing Co., 1894.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The Weiss family collection dates from 1777 to 1916. The papers include diaries, geological and surveying notebooks, maps and observations; personalia and biographical notes; transcribed documents,

portraits, scrapbooks, business journals, daybooks, mercantile records and account books as well as correspondence of many members of the family. Highlighting the collection is a record book of 1781, of supplies prepared and handled by Jacob Weiss (1750-1839), while serving as Deputy Quartermaster in the Revolutionary War, and notebooks giving prices of labor and supplies recorded on his estate at Gnadenhutten from 1777 to 1786. Most of the documents and correspondence refer to Jacob Weiss, his son, Francis Weiss (1773-1845), and his nephew, Francis Weiss (1819-1888).

Some of the correspondents in this collection are John A. Boyer, Charles Cist, Pastor Fisher, John Hunsicker, John Woolf Jordan, the Lehigh & Susquehanna Railroad, Luzerne County Petitioners, Peter Nothstein, Asa Packer, Jacob Sallade, Rebecca Weiss Smaltz, the United States Army (Continental Army) from 1778 to 1783, Francis Weiss (1773-1845), Frank Weiss, and Harrison Wright. Researchers should note that this is not a complete list.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Information**

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia 2011.01.11

### **Conditions Governing Access note**

This collection is open for research use.

### **Conditions Governing Use note**

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia with requests for copying and for authorization to publish, quote or reproduce the material.

### **Custodial History note**

This material was collected by Mrs. Rebecca Weiss Smaltz and donated by her granddaughters, Miss Rebecca G. Smaltz and Mrs. Eleanor Smaltz Williamson, through the efforts of Mary Effie James, a Research Associate of the library of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, January 29, 1959.

### **Processing Information note**

The creation of the electronic guide for this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

Finding aid entered into the Archivists' Toolkit by Garrett Boos.

## Related Materials

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### Related Archival Materials note

Historical Society of Pennsylvania: Weiss family papers, 1733-1862, bulk: 1733, 1780-1835, 1862.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Corporate Name(s)

- Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company.

### Genre(s)

- Biographies
- Business records
- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Family papers
- Scrapbooks

### Geographic Name(s)

- Lehigh Valley (Pa.)
- Weissport (Pa.)

### Personal Name(s)

- Weiss, Francis, 1773-1845
- Weiss, Jacob, 1750-1839

**Subject(s)**

- Coal mines and mining
- Geology
- United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783

## Collection Inventory

"American Accountant," "Report of the State Geologist" 1793, 1840

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	1	1

Survey, Newspapers, pamphlets (miscellaneous) 1795, 1797, 1810, 1916

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	1	2

"Geology of the coal formations" undated

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	1	3

Engineering notes and pencil sketches (undated); Pertaining to coal trade (1873); Observations and thoughts (1871) 1871, 1873, undated

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
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Text	1	4
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Diary of Francis Weiss (autographed) - geometrical problems, poems, etc. (1838); original photo engraving block (undated) 1838, undated

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	1	5

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Steel engraving plates - portrait (Francis Weiss); Steel engraving plate (Colonel Jacob Weiss) undated

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	1	6

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Silhouette cutout of Francis Weiss (son of Jacob) (undated); and diary of Francis Weiss, general information (1862) 1862, undated

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	1	7

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Biographical and personal circa 1817-1903

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	1	9

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## Biographical and personal circa 1870-1904

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	1	8

## Scrapbook 1795-1810

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	2	1

## Family tree and genealogical papers circa 1776-1850

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	2	2

## Miscellaneous geological notes and maps; engraved portrait of Francis Weiss undated

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	2	3

## Family tree and genealogical papers miscellaneous 1874, 1888, undated

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	2	4

Correspondence, miscellaneous, obituary notices circa 1836-1845

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	2	5

"Business Journal" Book of employ (Jacob Weiss) 1785-1786

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	2	6

Record of supplies (Jacob Weiss) 1777-1780

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	2	7

Francis Weiss expense account booklet 1854-1858

	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
Text	2	8