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## FINDING AID

### **EDWIN OWEN LEWIS PAPERS 1927-1972 AND UNDATED (bulk dates: 1941-1957)**

National Park Service

Catalog Number: INDE 53515

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## ***HISTORY***

Edwin Owen Lewis was born on July 12, 1879 in Richmond, Virginia, the son of Louis and Elizabeth Jane (Owen) Lewis. He attended public schools in Richmond and went to the Virginia Institute and Richmond College. When Lewis was fifteen years old he started work as a typesetter for a newspaper in Richmond. His rapid efficiency and skill as a typesetter enabled him to find a new position when he moved to Philadelphia in 1896. Lewis had been impressed with the modern typesetting machines of Philadelphia's local newspapers when he stopped in the city in 1895, en route to a Presbyterian youth conference in Boston. In Philadelphia, Lewis worked for the *Philadelphia Press*, the *Public Ledger*, and *The North American*. While working in Philadelphia, Lewis retained his connections in Richmond, sending money back home to his family and doing occasional sports reporting for the Richmond papers.

While working as a typesetter, Lewis attended the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania. He attended classes in the old courthouse behind Congress Hall during the day and continued his typesetting work throughout the night. In spite of the grueling schedule, Lewis obtained his LL.B. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1902. After being admitted to the bar in June of that year, Lewis entered into his own private practice.

Lewis had a keen interest in politics, and shortly after finishing law school became involved with local politics in his ward. The Democratic Party nominated him to run as a State Senator representing West Philadelphia, Germantown, and Chestnut Hill. Though he lost the race to the Republican candidate, the experience propelled Lewis into the public eye, and he served in a variety of offices for the Democratic Party.

In 1905, Lewis left the Democratic Party to serve as campaign manager of a new independent party known as the City Party. Despite the party's initial failures in the Republican-dominated city, Lewis won a seat on the City Council in 1907, representing the 27th Ward. His term lasted two years, and with the election of reform mayor Rudolph Blankenburg in 1911, Lewis assumed the first of many appointive posts in the city government when he became Assistant City Solicitor as well as Chief of the Road Bureau. During this period, Lewis was involved with the progressive reforms in the Beaux Arts city planning of large boulevards that necessitated the condemnation of thousands of properties. When the Republicans regained control of the city in 1916, Lewis returned to private practice. He continued to serve on the city's Board of Recreation, to which he had been appointed in 1911. Though approached several times, Lewis refused to reenter politics until 1923, when the Republic Party presented him with an uncontested judgeship on the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas.

Lewis' career as a judge on the Court of Common Pleas, Number 2, was long. He was reelected three times and became the president judge of the court in 1953. During his service on the bench, he heard a number of important cases involving police corruption and organized crime.

In 1953 he ruled on a case against racial discrimination at public swimming pools. His most notable achievement was the institution of the non-jury trial system, a system which saved the city a considerable amount of money. Upon his retirement in 1957, Judge Lewis returned to private practice with the firm of Norris, Lex, Hart and Ross. He also volunteered as a public defender in the Court of Quarter Sessions.

Throughout his career, Judge Lewis maintained an interest in the preservation of Independence Hall. Since the 1920s, he had been active in a number of patriotic and hereditary societies in Philadelphia. It was his involvement with the Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the Revolution that inspired Lewis to begin a campaign to preserve Independence Hall. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he appointed a committee of the Sons to look into the protection of several historic sites in Philadelphia. The main task of the committee was to devise strategies to protect these buildings from bombing. After several months of investigations by the committee and its chairman, David Knickerbacker Boyd, it soon became apparent that the resources of the Sons would not be sufficient to accomplish their goals. The Sons, wishing to remain nonpartisan, did not want to play a leading role in the political maneuvers necessary to protect Philadelphia's historic sites. As a result of this preference, Judge Lewis and D. Knickerbacker Boyd gathered together many of the committee and subcommittee members and held a public meeting in May of 1942 to form the Independence Hall Association.

As president of the Independence Hall Association, Judge Lewis led the efforts to make Independence Hall a part of the National Park system. This thirty-year project involved the redevelopment of Philadelphia's historical eighteenth century neighborhood into a national historical park. Lewis initially concentrated on the transfer of ownership of Independence Hall from the City of Philadelphia to the federal government. Though the outbreak of World War II initially delayed the process, Congress passed a law in late 1945 which created the Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission to evaluate the possibility of creating a national park in Philadelphia. Judge Lewis served as chairman of the Commission. In 1948 the Commission submitted its report to Congress. The report was quickly approved and that same year the President signed into law the creation of Independence National Historical Park.

With the park established in law, Lewis was appointed the head of the Independence National Historical Park Advisory Commission, which was tasked with overseeing the implementation and creation of the park. While he had been working with the federal government to create the park, Lewis had also successfully lobbied the governor of Pennsylvania to support the creation of a three-block mall to the north of Independence Hall. The governor committed the state to purchase and demolish the buildings on the site of the mall.

For most of the 1950s, Judge Lewis actively lobbied both Congress and the State Legislature for funding for the park. Lewis was particularly adept at wooing politicians for his cause, hosting a number of dinners and special events for legislators. His most lasting contribution, however, was in planning the park. Lewis' vision of a Williamsburg-like park, divorced from the modern city and filled with open space, became a reality through his own relentless efforts and the work of many other dedicated individuals.

Judge Lewis was involved in a number of institutions, societies, associations, and clubs in Philadelphia. He was a member of the American Philosophical Society, director and president of The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, president of the School of Design for Women (later the Moore College of Art), trustee of the Pennsylvania Museum and School for Industrial Art, director of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, president general of the General Society of the Sons of the Revolution, governor general of the Society of Colonial Wars, president of the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, and vestryman of Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in Overbrook.

Edwin O. Lewis married Eleanor A. Lord in 1905 and they had two daughters. He remarried in 1943 to Agnes Almy Morris. He died on September 18, 1974.

## ***SCOPE AND CONTENT***

### INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK EDWIN OWEN LEWIS PAPERS 1927-1972 AND UNDATED (bulk dates: 1941-1957)

<i>CATALOG NUMBER</i>	INDE 53515
<i>VOLUME</i>	6.5 LF
<i>DESCRIPTION</i>	<p>The Edwin Owen Lewis Papers document Judge Lewis' essential role in the creation of Independence National Historical Park and in the redevelopment of Philadelphia's Old City neighborhood. The records reflect his involvement with numerous organizations in Philadelphia, as well as his contact with politicians and government officials on the local, state, and federal level. The bulk of the collection is composed of correspondence, but also contains meeting minutes and agendas, newspaper clippings, brochures and programs from various events, as well as memorabilia.</p> <p>The collection spans the period 1927-1972, with the bulk of the material dating from 1941-1957.</p>
<i>ORGANIZATION</i>	<p>This collection is organized into seven series: Series I: Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the Revolution, Committee on the Preservation of Historic Buildings, Series II: Independence Hall Association, Series III: Mixed Correspondence, Series IV: Mixed Events, Series V: Related Committees and Organizations, Series VI: Certificates and Memorabilia, and Series VII: Newspaper Clippings.</p>
<i>RESTRICTIONS</i>	NO
<i>ASSOCIATED MATERIALS</i>	<p>Independence National Historical Park Archives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Independence Hall Association Records</li><li>- Isidor Ostroff Papers</li></ul> <p>American Philosophical Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Edwin O. Lewis Papers</li></ul>

***HIERARCHY***

- I. SERIES I: PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY OF THE SONS OF THE REVOLUTION,  
COMMITTEE ON THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS, 1941-1942
- II. SERIES II: INDEPENDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION, 1942-1968
- III. SERIES III: MIXED CORRESPONDENCE, 1927-1968, undated
- IV. SERIES IV: MIXED EVENTS, 1948-1955, undated
- V. SERIES V: RELATED COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS, 1943-1957, undated
- VI. SERIES VI: CERTIFICATES AND MEMORABILIA, 1937-1972, undated
- VII. SERIES VII: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, 1945-1957, undated

## ***SERIES DESCRIPTIONS***

### ***I. SERIES I: PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY OF THE SONS OF THE REVOLUTION, COMMITTEE ON THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS, 1941-1942***

This series is arranged chronologically.

This series contains correspondence related to the Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the Revolution, Committee on the Preservation of Historic Buildings, and the efforts of its members to raise awareness for the preservation of historic buildings in the city. The material includes correspondence from within and without the organization, and includes meeting minutes and agendas. Much of the correspondence was conducted between Lewis and Chairman of the Committee David Knickerbacker Boyd.

### ***II. SERIES II: INDEPENDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION, 1942-1968***

This series is arranged alphabetically, and thereunder chronologically.

This series documents Lewis' involvement with the Independence Hall Association and the organization's campaign to create a national park in Philadelphia. The materials include meeting minutes from the various committees and sub-committees, as well as meeting minutes and agendas for the entire organization. There is also a sequence of correspondence from officers of the association.

### ***III. SERIES III: MIXED CORRESPONDENCE, 1927-1957, undated***

This series is organized into two groups, one arranged chronologically and the other arranged alphabetically.

This series contains Lewis' correspondence on a variety of subjects. His correspondence includes both incoming and outgoing letters, as well as many telegrams and telephone messages. Due to the interrelated nature of much of Lewis' work, most of his correspondence was organized into a general chronological file. He did, however, keep correspondence related to specific subjects together, and this organization has been maintained.

### ***IV. SERIES IV: MIXED EVENTS, 1948-1954, undated***

This series is arranged alphabetically, and thereunder chronologically.

This series contains documentation related to several events of public boosterism, many of them intended to raise both local and national interest in the preservation of Independence Hall and the creation of Independence National Historical Park. In addition to

correspondence and handwritten notes, this series also contains printed programs and brochures advertising and commemorating events.

V. *SERIES V: RELATED COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS, 1945-1957, undated*

This series is arranged alphabetically, and thereunder chronologically.

This series contains documentation related to Lewis' involvement in a number of organizations in Philadelphia, including the American Philosophical Society, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, the Joint State Government Commission, the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings, and most notably, the Independence National Historical Park Advisory Committee and the Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission. There is also documentation related to Lewis' campaign with the United Nations Council to establish Philadelphia as the new home for the United Nations. The material in this series is composed primarily of correspondence, much of it relating to coordinating meetings and conveying meeting minutes and agendas from the various boards.

VI. *SERIES VI: CERTIFICATES AND MEMORABILIA, 1937-1972, undated*

This series is arranged alphabetically.

This series contains awards, certificates, and memorabilia presented to Lewis in commemoration for his volunteer efforts with such organizations as the Independence National Historical Park Advisory Commission, the Joint State Government Commission, and the Pennsylvania Constitution Commemoration Committee. The oversize materials in this series have been removed to the museum collection for preservation purposes.

VII. *SERIES VII: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, 1949-1957, undated*

This series is arranged alphabetically.

This series contains newspaper clippings related to Lewis' work with Independence Hall and the Old City neighborhood in Philadelphia. It also includes newspaper clippings related to Lewis' political career and his efforts to have Philadelphia serve as the site for the United Nations.

## ***CONTAINER LIST***

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- Folder 15: National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings, 1951
- Folder 16: National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings, 1952-1955
- Folder 17: National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, January-August 1951
- Folder 18: National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, September-December 1951
- Folder 19: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission meetings, 1946-March 1947
- Folder 20: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission meetings, April-December 1947
- Folder 21: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission reports, 1946
- Folder 22: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission reports, 1947
- Folder 23: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission reports, 1948
- Folder 24: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission reports, final – Draft, undated
- Folder 25: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission reports, final – Photographs, undated
- Folder 26: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission reports, final – Publication, 1947-1948
- Folder 27: Philadelphia National Shrines Park Commission reports, final – Research notes, 1947
- Folder 28: Simon, Grant, 1943-1950
- Folder 29: United Nations Council, February-March 1945
- Folder 30: United Nations Council, March 1945
- Folder 31: United Nations Council, March 1945
- Folder 32: United Nations Council, April 1945
- Folder 33: United Nations Council, May 1945-1947
- Folder 34: United Nations Council brochures, undated
- Folder 35: United Nations Council membership, 1945

SERIES VI: CERTIFICATES AND MEMORABILIA, 1937-1972, undated

Note: The following items in Folder 36 have been removed to the Museum Collection

Folder 36: Oversize items:

- Independence Hall Bell Ringers Association, undated
- Independence National Historical Park Advisory Commission Appointment Certificate, 1972
- Joint State Government Commission Citation, 1949
- Newspaper magazine on city planning in Philadelphia, undated
- The Pennsylvania Constitution Commemoration Committee Participation Certificate, 1937-1938

Folder 37: Senate of Pennsylvania Resolution of Thanks, 1951 (1 of 4)

Folder 38: Senate of Pennsylvania Resolution of Thanks, 1951 (2 of 4)

Folder 39: Senate of Pennsylvania Resolution of Thanks, 1951 (3 of 4)

Folder 40: Senate of Pennsylvania Resolution of Thanks, 1951 (4 of 4)

SERIES VII: NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, 1945-1957, undated

Folder 41: Biographical information, 1953-1955

Folder 42: City planning, undated

Folder 43: City politics, 1956

Folder 44: Independence Hall, 1953-1957

Folder 45: Independence Mall buildings, 1953-1955

Folder 46: Independence Mall, Pennsylvania State, 1949-1955 (1 of 2)

Folder 47: Independence Mall, Pennsylvania State, 1949-1955 (2 of 2)

Folder 48: Independence Mall, underground garage, 1953-1957

Folder 49: Independence National Historical Park, 1953-1956

Folder 50: Old City Project, 1953-1955

Folder 51: United Nations site selection, 1945