

**SMITH-TRAHERN MANSION RESTORATION COLLECTION,
1947-1989**

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INTRODUCTION

The Smith-Trahern Mansion Restoration Collection was donated by Sharon Duncan. The collection contains approximately 58 items arranged into 1 box. Access to this collection may be permitted for the purposes of personal and scholarly research. The Montgomery County Archives requires that the following credit line be used in all publications to identify that the image or document used is from its holdings: *Courtesy of the Montgomery County Archives*. Specific citation of where the image or document is located (collection, box, folder, etc.) should be made in an acknowledgements section, footnote, or bibliography.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

In 2014, Sharon Duncan donated this collection to the Montgomery County Archives. This collection includes letters, documents and photographs that pertain to the 1980s restoration of the Smith-Trahern Mansion. Built in 1858 by Christopher Smith, the mansion was home to the Smith family until it was sold in 1919. After this time it served primarily as a rental property until it was purchased by the City of Clarksville in 1936 with the intention of turning it into a hospital, but that plan never materialized. Joseph and Margaret Trahern later purchased the home in 1947. Having fallen into disrepair by that time, the Traherns worked to restore the house, and spent many years living there before it passed to another party.

In 1983 the City of Clarksville purchased the property a second time for use as a community center. The Montgomery County Extension Homemakers, a community program originating with the University of Tennessee, reached out to the city to use the house for classes and demonstrations. During the effort to clean-up the property for use some of the members of the club took an interest in restoring the home. Sharon Duncan appears to have taken the lead on the project, contacting former property owners and residents for information on the history of the home and guidance for restoring it to close to original condition. A large portion of the collection consists of correspondence between Duncan and Joseph B. Trahern, the son of Joseph and Margaret. Trahern provided Duncan with information on the property, his family, and other previous residents to help with the restoration efforts. This included pictures of the property when his parents first purchased it and it was in need of restoration, along with pictures of his family living the mansion. As a part of the restoration process, the Montgomery County Historical Society prepared an application to add the Smith-Trahern Mansion to the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1988 the application was approved. Today the home is still used as a community center, run by the Family and Community Educators of Montgomery County, and is available for tours and event rentals.

CONTAINER LIST

Folder 1

1. Letter--Invitation to the “Chip off the Block” Party to celebrate the Home of the Extension Homemakers’ and the restoration of the house.

Folder 2

1. Letter--Sharon Duncan to Joseph B. Trahern, January 31, 1986.
 - Duncan requests assistance from Trahern with the restoration of the mansion, asking for pictures or blueprints of the house and landscaping.
2. Letter--Sharon Duncan to Joseph B. Trahern, February 5, 1986.
 - Duncan thanks Trahern for his help and notifies him that the project is moving forward. She also asks him questions about a marbling paint effect on the walls.
3. Letter--Sharon Duncan to Joseph B. Trahern, March 12, 1986.
 - Duncan requests more information on the possibility of a tunnel in the basement and previous renters that lived in the house. She also invites Trahern to “Homecoming ’86 week.”
4. Letter--Sharon Duncan to Joseph B. Trahern, April 16, 1986.
 - Duncan thanks Trahern for pictures of the house from his parents’ previous renovation.

Folder 3

1. Letter--Sharon Duncan to Hamilton County Chamber of Commerce, Cincinnati, Ohio, February 12, 1986.
 - Duncan requests information on a furniture maker named Mitchell and Ramblesberg that were based in that area. The company was used by the Smiths extensively to furnish the original house.
2. Letter--Sharon Duncan to Mr. and Mrs. Mobley, April 16, 1986
 - Duncan thanks the Mobleys for sharing their memories of the property.

Folder 4

1. Letter--Joseph B. Trahern to Sharon Duncan, February 2, 1986.
 - Trahern agrees to help with the restoration process by providing information and photographs.
2. Letter--Joseph B. Trahern to Sharon Duncan, March 23, 1986.

- Trahern answers Duncan's questions about marbling effect on the walls and a possible tunnel in the basement. He also includes the names of former tenants.
3. Letter--Joseph B. Trahern to Sharon Duncan, April 6, 1986.
 - In the letter Trahern provides context for photographs of the house that he sent with the letter. Based on his descriptions, these photographs do not appear to be any of the ones included in this collection.
 4. Letter--Joseph B. Trahern to Sharon Duncan, April 7, 1986.
 - In the letter Trahern provides context for photographs that he sent with the letter. Based on his descriptions, these photographs do not appear to be any of the ones included in this collection.
 5. Letter--Joseph B. Trahern to Sharon Duncan, July 23, 1988.
 - Trahern thanks Duncan for the update on the restoration progress and promises to send a picture of his parents when he has a chance to find one.
 6. Letter--Joseph B. Trahern to Sharon Duncan, October 20, 1988.
 - Trahern provides context for the photographs of his family that he included in the letter. These are the photographs found in Folders 10-11.
 7. Letter--Joseph B. Trahern to Sharon Duncan, May 23, 1989.
 - This letter concerns a questionnaire that Trahern's parents created for Lacy Lockert, a former resident of the property, which provides information on the early state of the house along with a map of the grounds. The letter includes a copy of the questionnaire and map and a transcription of the notes on the map.
 8. Letter--Joseph B. Trahern to Sharon Duncan, June 13, 1989
 - Trahern sent the original of the Lockert questionnaire and map along with this letter (the original is not a part of this collection). Trahern mentions that he included photographs of his parents which do not appear to be included with the materials donated.

Folder 5

1. Letter--R. Helen Myers to the Smith-Trahern Mansion, July 25, 1989.
 - Myers writes to the overseers of the mansion with memories of living at the house and information on family and friends that lived nearby. Includes notecard with Myers address and a list of relatives.

Folder 6

1. Committee Papers--Address list of descendants/former residents of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, n.d.

2. Committee Papers--Historical notes for Sharon Duncan (originally in an envelope). The first part talks about Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, Mr. Trahern's secretary who was married at the home. The second part talks about Dorothy Childs, who lived at the house in 1918 when she was 6 years old, n.d.
3. Committee Papers--Notes of dimensions and prices of material/hardware for the restoration.

Folder 7

1. Newspaper Clipping--*Leaf-Chronicle*, photograph w/ caption of Jerry Harrison working on the restoration of the house, March 14, 1986.
2. Newspaper Clipping--*Leaf-Chronicle*, "Craftsmen Toil At Trahern House," n.d.
3. Newspaper Clipping--*Leaf-Chronicle*, "Renovations to Switch Mansion's Color Schemes."

Photographs

All photographs are stored in the Archives Photograph Collection.

1. Photograph--Exterior shot of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, partial front and side view. Taken by Pat Henry Cross, c. 1947.
2. Photograph--Exterior shot of the front of the Smith-Trahern Mansion with overgrown landscaping. Taken by Pat Henry Cross, c. 1947.
3. Photograph--Exterior shot of the Smith-Trahern Mansion from a distance. A white picket fence is visible in the foreground. Taken by Pat Henry Cross, c. 1947.
4. Photograph--Exterior shot of the Smith-Trahern Mansion from a distance. A white picket fence is visible in the foreground. Taken by Pat Henry Cross, c. 1947.
5. Photograph--Exterior shot of the Smith-Trahern Mansion from a distance. A white picket fence is visible in the foreground. Taken by Pat Henry Cross, c. 1947.
6. Photograph--Exterior shot of the Smith-Trahern Mansion from a distance. View is obscured by trees. Taken by Pat Henry Cross, c. 1947.
7. Photograph--Joseph and Margaret Trahern in the back courtyard for the Smith-Trahern Mansion with their dogs, c. 1959-1960.
8. Photograph--Joseph and Margaret Trahern in the back courtyard for the Smith-Trahern Mansion with their dogs, c. 1959-1960.
9. Photograph--Joseph and Margaret Trahern in the back courtyard for the Smith-Trahern Mansion with their dogs, c. 1959-1960.
10. Photograph--Joseph and Margaret Trahern on the sidewalk along the beach in Nice, France. Taken by Marjorie Trahern, 1963.
11. Photograph--Joseph and Margaret Trahern standing in the street in Nice, France. Taken by Marjorie Trahern, 1963.

12. Photograph--Marjorie Trahern holding Sarah Trahern (wife and daughter of Joseph B. Trahern) while standing next to a fireplace in the Smith-Trahern Mansion. Margaret is next to them with her back to the camera, c. 1964-1965.
13. Photograph--A dinner party at the Smith-Trahern Mansion. Seated left to right is Marjorie Trahern, Richard Hawkins; Margaret Trahern, Sarah Trahern, Sarah Elizabeth Hawkins, and Joseph Trahern. There is an unnamed waiter attending to the table in the picture, c. 1964-1965
14. Photograph--(L to R) Sarah Trahern, Joseph B. Trahern (possibly), Margaret Trahern, and Joseph Trahern gathered in front of a Christmas tree at the mansion, c. 1964-1965.
15. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, spiral staircase, possibly c. mid-1980s.
16. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, utility room with a sink, possibly c. mid-1980s.
17. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, bathroom with damaged walls, possibly c. mid-1980s.
18. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, empty room with pink floral wallpaper, possibly c. mid-1980s.
19. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, empty room with pink floral wallpaper, possibly c. mid-1980s.
20. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, empty room with pink and green floral wallpaper, possibly c. mid-1980s.
21. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, empty room with pink and green floral wallpaper, possibly c. mid-1980s.
22. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, possible utility/laundry room, possibly c. mid-1980s.
23. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, bathroom with gold floral wallpaper and blue tiles, possibly c. mid-1980s.
24. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, chandelier hanging above spiral staircase, possibly c. mid-1980s.
25. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, bathroom with gold floral wallpaper and blue tiles, possibly c. mid-1980s.
26. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, main entryway with chandelier, possibly c. mid-1980s.
27. Photograph--Interior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, chandelier, possibly c. mid-1980s.
28. Photograph--Exterior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, back of the house and courtyard, possibly c. mid-1980s.
29. Photograph--Exterior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, back of the house and driveway, possibly c. mid-1980s.

30. Photograph--Exterior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, outbuilding on the property, possibly c. mid-1980s.
31. Photograph--Exterior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, outbuilding with a carport on the property, possibly c. mid-1980s.
32. Photograph--Exterior of the Smith-Trahern Mansion, front of the mansion, possibly c. mid-1980s.
33. Photograph--Painting of Christopher H. Smith, in a cardboard frame, n.d.