MUSHROOMS ARE ON THE MIC
Mushroom Industry, Hagley Museum Collaborate on Oral History of PA Mushroom Industry

Avondale, PA, October 15, 2019 – Kennett Square, PA, is known as the “Mushroom Capital of the World,” and the Hagley Museum is providing first-hand accounts of how the area became so synonymous with mushrooms.

Through its digital services, the Hagley Museum has created an oral history collection of mushroom growers that brings together interviews with individuals whose experiences capture the many different kinds of work and knowledge involved in mushroom cultivation, harvesting, packing, distribution, and marketing, and how those processes have changed over time.

“The vast majority of the mushroom farms in Chester County are multi-generation family farms. When it comes to the history of our industry, we have an embarrassment of riches and we’re lucky that so many of our pioneers are still available to share how they began their businesses, the innovations in the industry, and how the mushroom industry has contributed to the communities,” explained Rachel Roberts, President, American Mushroom Institute.

The oral histories and interviews coincide with National Mushroom Month, designated by both the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, where mushrooms are highlighted, and consumers are encouraged to learn more about Pennsylvania’s number one cash crop.

“At Hagley, we document the unfolding history of business, technology, and society,” explained Benjamin Spohn, Oral History Program Manager, Hagley Museum. “Oral interviews really help us get to the heart of how these things play off of each other to create our present moment.”

He added, “The fact that this is a story within our area is great too. I always view it as a plus when our collecting efforts can document a local story. In some ways it felt like we were building on continuity within our collections-- we have oral histories with people who worked in the powder mills on our site, some of whom moved into the mushroom business in the 1920s. Through this project I had the chance to meet some of their descendants who still work in mushrooms nearly 100 years later.”
Those farms and individuals included in the histories include:
Pete Alonzo, Pietro Industries
Jim Angelucci, Phillips Mushroom Farms
Clint and Rosa Blackwell, C. J. Mushroom Co.
Tyler Blackwell and Carla McKinney, C. J. Mushroom Co.
Charles and Jane Brosius, Marlboro Mushrooms
John and Sara Cordivano, Cordivano Brothers
Tina Ellor, Phillips Mushroom Farms
Gale and Robert “Bear” Ferranto, Bona Foods
Emidio and Barbara Frezzo, Emidio Frezzo Jr Inc
Dominic Manfredini, Keystone Mushrooms and Lambert Spawn.
Artie Needham, Needham Mushroom Farms
Don Needham, Fastrak Express
Donald and Marshall Phillips, Phillips Mushroom Farms
Sonny Pizzini, L. Pizzini & Son
Keith Silfee, Full Circle Mushroom Compost
John B. Swayne III, Stones Throw Farm

The complete list of interviews can be found at https://digital.hagley.org/2018219.

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**About AMI**

The American Mushroom Institute (AMI), headquartered in Avondale, Pennsylvania, is a national voluntary trade association representing the growers, processors and marketers of cultivated mushrooms in the United States and industry suppliers worldwide. For more information, visit www.americanmushroom.org.