Townsend, Joseph Brevitt, 1821-1896.

Joseph Brevitt Townsend papers supplement
1800-1920
(bulk dates 1840-1920)

Abstract: Joseph Brevitt Townsend (1821-1896) was a prominent Philadelphia lawyer who practiced estate law and acted as legal consultant to several commercial, insurance, and trust companies. The Joseph Brevitt Townsend papers supplement, spanning the dates 1800-1920, contains substantial additions to the original collection and documents the professional career of the Philadelphia lawyer. The supplement comprises 5.8 linear feet of legal and personal correspondence, wills and estate records, legal proceedings, legal account and receipt books, and other judicial and financial records.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 525s
Creator: Townsend, Joseph Brevitt, 1821-1896.
Title: Joseph Brevitt Townsend papers supplement
Inclusive Dates: 1800-1920
Bulk Dates: 1840-1920
Extent: 5.8 linear feet oversize removals (7 boxes)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 525s, Joseph Brevitt Townsend papers supplement, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Boxes 7-11: Shelved in SPEC MSS record center cartons; Box 12: Shelved in SPEC MSS record center cartons (6 inches); Box 13: Shelved in SPEC MSS oversize boxes (17 inches); Removals: Shelved in SPEC MSS oversize mapcases

Location: Special Collections, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/

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Processing: Processed and encoded by Dustin Frohlich, April 2014.

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Biographical Note

Joseph Brevitt Townsend

Joseph Brevitt Townsend (1821-1896) was a prominent Philadelphia lawyer who practiced estate law and also acted as legal consultant to several commercial, insurance, and trust companies. In addition to a successful legal career, he was involved in the management of many other city institutions including the Board of Guardians for the Poor, the Pennsylvania Hospital, Jefferson Medical College, and the Western Savings Fund Society of Philadelphia.

Joseph Brevitt Townsend was born in Baltimore County, Maryland, to Joseph and Sarah (Hickman) Townsend. The son of a saddler, Joseph Brevitt was educated mainly at the well-respected Bolmar's Academy in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Upon completion of his schooling, he apprenticed with prominent Philadelphia lawyer Eli Kirk Price. Townsend passed the bar in 1842 at the age of twenty-one and practiced law in Philadelphia for the duration of his career. Townsend’s private practice mainly focused on estate law but included commercial and insurance law as well. He served as legal consultant for several commercial, insurance, and trust companies.

Joseph Brevitt Townsend was married twice. His first marriage, to Mary E. Price, lasted only nine years, ended by Mary's death in 1856. J.B. and Mary Townsend had three children: Edward Shippen Burd (1849-1851); James Price (1851-1900); and Eleanor Holliday (1853-1894). Three years after Mary's death Townsend married Adaline (Ada) E. Barton. J.B. and Ada had three children: Joseph Brevitt, Jr. (b. 1861); John Barton (b. 1865); and Charles Cooper (1867-1914). Although Joseph Brevitt Townsend worked in Philadelphia, he and his family lived in the suburb of Overbrook. The four Townsend sons who survived into adulthood entered the law profession, and worked with their father at certain points in their careers. J.B. Townsend, Jr. graduated from the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1884, and was admitted to the bar in that same year. He then went into practice with his father, and they worked together until the death of J.B. Townsend, Sr. in 1896. In addition to his legal practice, Joseph Brevitt, Jr. was the solicitor for the Western Saving Fund Society of Philadelphia, and the director of both the Provident Trust Company, and the Provident Mutual Life Insurance Company, of Philadelphia. After the death of his father, Joseph Brevitt, Jr., was joined in his legal practice by his brothers James Price and Charles Cooper. The three brothers maintained their father's practice under the name Townsend, Elliot & Townsend. A fourth son, John Barton, pursued the study of law in his father's law office after he received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1884. In 1885 he became a clerk for the Provident Life and Trust Company. He remained with this company for the duration of his career, eventually becoming vice-president.

Eli K. Price

Eli Kirk Price (1797-1884) was a prominent lawyer and law reformer of Philadelphia and handled the most important estates in the city. He specialized in equity and real property law, and mentored J.B. Townsend in such law when he was preparing to enter the bar. In 1828 Eli Price, a Quaker, married fellow Friend Anna Embree and they had three children. He served in the State Senate from 1854 to 1856 and in these years was involved in the passage of legislation that allowed for Philadelphia's growth. He was also instrumental in
city improvement projects such as the creation of Fairmount Park in 1867. As a legal reformer, Eli K. Price focused on revising conveyance laws, particularly to protect women's property rights in marriage.

**Sources:**


Scope and Content Note

The Joseph Brevitt Townsend papers supplement, spanning the dates 1800-1920, contains substantial additions to the original collection and documents the professional career of the Philadelphia lawyer, Joseph Brevitt Townsend. The supplement comprises 5.8 linear feet of legal and personal correspondence, wills and estate records, legal proceedings, legal account and receipt books, and other judicial and financial records.

In tandem with the original collection, the supplement also exhibits the professional work of Eli K. Price (Townsend's mentor and later business partner), as well as the work of Townsend's four sons: James Price, Joseph Brevitt Jr., John Barton and Charles Cooper.

The supplement is arranged into three series: I. Correspondence, II. Legal documents, and III. Financial documents.

Series I. consists of legal and personal correspondence of Joseph Brevitt Townsend and various Philadelphia legal entities during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The majority of the correspondence concerns mortgages and the settlement of estates. These include letters relating to the estate of Confederate Brigadier General Alexander W. Reynolds (1817-1876), as well as Philadelphian Charles Picot, whose estate records may be found in the original collection. Other notable correspondence includes a letter to architect Horace Wells Sellers, (1857-1933), a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) committee that restored Independence and Congress Halls in the early twentieth century. James P. Townsend’s correspondence includes the last will and testament of William (W.G.) Malin who served as steward of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane in West Philadelphia (now the Kirkbride Center) from 1841-1883.

Series II. comprises documents divided into two subseries: estate records and legal documents. Series II.A. consists of inventories, appraisements, and settlements of estates. It also includes indentures, summonses, receipt books, wills, leases, charters, and affidavits. The materials document the proceedings of Townsend and Price in private practice and within the Pennsylvania court systems including, the Supreme Court Eastern District of Pennsylvania, the High Court of Justice-Chancery Division, and the Orphan’s Court of the City and County of Philadelphia. The series also includes the last wills and testaments of Joseph B. Townsend and his wife Ada E. Townsend.

Joseph Brevitt Townsend and Eli K. Price were the executors of the will of Philadelphia lawyer Edward Shippen Burd (1779-1848), whose estate records include various construction agreements for the Burd building (now demolished) on Ninth and Chestnut Streets. The Burd Building estate records include letters from prominent Philadelphia architect John McArthur, Jr. regarding the building’s use of marble. Other notable estate records include documents relating to Woodlands Cemetery which was purchased by Eli Kirk Price in 1840.

The series also includes the last will and testament of Francis Darley, who bequeathed an “original study of Victoria, Queen of England,” as well as other original works by his grandfather, artist Thomas Sully, to New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Series II.B. consists of general legal documents relating to the professional work of Eli K. Price, Joseph Brevitt Townsend, and his sons. Spanning 1800-1920, the subseries is arranged chronologically by decade, and contains contractual documents, checks, receipts, indentures, wills, and other judicial records.
documents are representative of the role of Eli Kirk Price, Townsend, and his sons in the settlement of land disputes, general mortgages and deeds of trust, conditions of sales, statements of payment, and exemplification of deeds. Documents relating to the Provident Life and Trust company, including its charter and bylaws, further demonstrate the work of the Townsend sons who managed many of the company’s affairs. This series also contains documents relating to the original deed to the Free Quaker Meeting House on Fifth and Arch Streets in Philadelphia.

Selected Search Terms

**Personal Names**

Townsend, Joseph Brevitt, 1821-1896.
Townsend, James Price, 1851-1900.
Townsend, Joseph Brevitt, Jr., b. 1861.
Townsend, J. Barton (John Barton), 1865-
Burd, Edward Shippen, 1779-1848.
Reynolds, Alexander Welch, 1817-1876.
Malin, W. G. (William Gunn)
Darley, F. T. S. (Francis Thomas Sully), 1833-1914.
McArthur, John, 1823-1890.

**Corporate Names**

Townsend, Elliot & Townsend.
Provident Life & Trust Company of Philadelphia.
Pennsylvania. Supreme Court.
Woodlands Cemetery (Philadelphia, Pa.)

**Topical Terms**

Estates (Law)--Pennsylvania.
Probate law and practice--Pennsylvania.
Probate courts--Pennsylvania.
Law--Pennsylvania.
Historic buildings--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

**Geographic Names**

Philadelphia (Pa.)--History--19th century.
Form/Genre Terms

Legal correspondence.

Personal correspondence.

Wills.

Estate inventories.

Correspondence.

Account books.

Checks (bank checks)

Deeds.

Judicial records.

Decisions.

Indentures.

Summons.

Charters.

Leases.

Affidavits.

Receipts (financial records)

Occupation

Lawyers.

Personal Contributors

Townsend, Joseph Brevitt, 1821-1896.

Townsend, James Price, 1851-1900.

Townsend, Joseph Brevitt, Jr., b. 1861.

Townsend, J. Barton (John Barton), 1865-.

Burd, Edward Shippen, 1779-1848.
Sellers, Horace Wells, 1857-1933.

**Corporate Contributors**

Townsend, Elliot & Townsend.

Provident Life & Trust Company of Philadelphia.

**Related Materials in this Repository**

MSS 525 Joseph Brevitt Townsend papers
MSS 281 Eli K. Price papers
MSS 379 Burd family papers
MSS 327 Biddle family papers
Arrangement

I. Correspondence

II. Legal documents
   A. Estates
   B. Legal documents

III. Financial documents
Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. Correspondence, 1854-1895

Series I. consists of legal and personal correspondence of Joseph Brevitt Townsend and various Philadelphia legal entities during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The majority of the correspondence concerns mortgages and the settlement of estates. These include letters relating to the estate of Confederate Brigadier General Alexander W. Reynolds (1817-1876), as well as Philadelphian Charles Picot, whose estate records may be found in the original collection. Other notable correspondence includes a letter to architect Horace Wells Sellers, (1857-1933), a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) committee that restored Independence and Congress Halls in the early twentieth century. James P. Townsend’s correspondence includes the last will and testament of William (W.G.) Malin who served as steward of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane in West Philadelphia (now the Kirkbride Center) from 1841-1883.

Subseries I.A. J.B. Townsend, 1854-1895

Austin, Arthur W., 1857 February 19 [Box 7 F1]
Letter from Arthur Austin supporting John Weiss Forney's prospective nomination to the United States Senate.

Rockefeller, William M., Wilbur F. Sadler, and J.B. Packer, 1864-1866 [Box 7 F2]
Correspondence relating to the defaulted mortgage case of Charles Wharton vs the American Philosophical Society.

Reynolds, General Alexander W., 1878 [Box 7 F3]
Correspondence relative to the settlement of Confederate Brigadier General Alexander W. Reynolds's estate.

Cambria Iron Works, circa 1871 [Box 7 F4]

Blakely, John, 1884-1893, undated [Box 7 F5]

General correspondence, 1860-1894 [Box 7 F6]
Includes a letter to Robert N. Simpers, executor of the will of Mary L. C. Biddle.

James. P. Townsend, 1854-1891 [Box 7 F7]

Sellers, Horace, letter to William T. Elliot, 1895 August 9 [Box 7 F8]

Series II. Legal documents, 1800-1920

Series II. comprises documents divided into two subseries: estate records and legal documents.
Subseries II.A. Estates, 1838-1914

Series II.A. consists of inventories, appraisements, and settlements of estates. It also includes indentures, summonses, receipt books, wills, leases, charters, and affidavits. The materials document the proceedings of Townsend and Price in private practice and within the Pennsylvania court systems including, the Supreme Court Eastern District of Pennsylvania, the High Court of Justice-Chancery Division, and the Orphan’s Court of the City and County of Philadelphia. The series also includes the last wills and testaments of Joseph B. Townsend and his wife Ada E. Townsend. Joseph Brevitt Townsend and Eli K. Price were the executors of the will of Philadelphia lawyer Edward Shippen Burd (1779-1848), whose estate records include various construction agreements for the Burd building (now demolished) on Ninth and Chestnut Streets. The Burd Building estate records include letters from prominent Philadelphia architect John McArthur, Jr. regarding the building’s use of marble. Other notable estate records include documents relating to Woodlands Cemetery which was purchased by Eli Kirk Price in 1840. The series also includes the last will and testament of Francis Darley, who bequeathed an “original study of Victoria, Queen of England,” as well as other original works by his grandfather, artist Thomas Sully, to New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Abbott, Rebecca F. (1 of 2), 1882-1887 [Box 7 F9]
Abbott, Rebecca F. (2 of 2), undated [Box 7 F10]
Baeder, Charles B. (1 of 4), 1889-1890 [Box 7 F11]
Baeder, Charles B. (2 of 4), 1889-1890 [Box 7 F12]
Baeder, Charles B. (3 of 4), 1886-1891 [Box 7 F12A]
Baeder, Charles B. (4 of 4), 1886-1891 [Box 7 F12B]
Bird, Benjamin, 1873-1878 [Box 7 F13]
Brintin, George, 1849-1886 [Box 7 F14]
Burd Building, 1862-1864 [Box 7 F15]
Burd Building, 1847-1862 [Box 7 F15A]
Clark, Sarah, 1869-1874 [Box 7 F16]
Darley, Francis (1 of 2), 1868-1913 [Box 7 F17]
Darley, Francis (2 of 2), 1913-1914 [Box 7 F18]
Donaghue, James, 1851-1860 [Box 7 F19]
Farnum, John , 1838-1859 [Box 7 F20]

Fullerton, Wilaminna , 1891-1893 [Box 7 F21]

Gilpin, John , 1860-1874 [Box 7 F22]

Hoopes, Thomas P. , 1870-1875 [Box 7 F23]

Ingham, Benjamin , 1874, undated [Box 7 F24]

The estate records of Benjamin Ingham bear the seal of the United States Consulate at Huddersfield, Fork, England, and at Nice in France, dated 1874.

Kirkbridge, Ann W. , 1858-1883 [Box 7 F25]

McClellan, Dr. George , 1904, undated [Box 7 F26]

Massey, Robert V. (1 of 2) , 1863-1905 [Box 7 F27]

Massey, Robert V. (2 of 2) , 1863-1904 [Box 8 F28]

Messchert, Mathew Huizinga (1 of 2) , 1849-1901 [Box 8 F29]

Messchert, Mathew Huizinga (2 of 2) , 1895 December 9 [Box 8 F30]

Morrell, Daniel J. , 1884 November 18 [Box 8 F31]

Morris, Deborah , 1856-1859 [Box 8 F32]

Morris, Rebecca , circa 1872 [Box 8 F33]

Newman, John B. , 1869-1880 [Box 8 F34]

Phillips, Calvin , 1855-1872 [Box 8 F35]

Phoenix Iron Co. , 1855-1863 [Box 8 F36]

This folder includes a copy of the charter and bylaws of the Phoenix Iron Company, which was incorporated in 1855 and manufactured cannons for the Union Army during the American Civil War. Joseph Brevitt Townsend represented the company in an 1868 tax case.

Phoenix Iron Co. , 1857-1864 [Box 8 F37]

Picot, Charles , 1843-1858 [Box 8 F38]

Randolph, Nathaniel , 1879-1903 [Box 8 F39]
Shade, Peter , 1848-1854, undated [Box 8 F40]

Shade, Peter , 1812, undated [Box 8 F41]

Simpson, William , 1874-1892 [Box 8 F42]

Skelly, Thomas , 1909-1912 [Box 8 F43]

Stotesbury, V. Shannon (1 of 2) , 1873-1877 [Box 8 F44]

Stotesbury, V. Shannon (2 of 2) , 1873-1875 [Box 8 F45]

Tasker , 1880 [Box 8 F46]

Townsend, Joseph Brevitt , 1842-1912 [Box 8 F46A]

Wister, Richard (1 of 3) , 1884-1889 [Box 8 F47]

The estate records of Richard Wister include an 1885 tax assessment of an area between Twelfth and Broad Streets at Girard (then known as the Twentieth Ward). Wister’s records also include Philadelphia real estate and stocks catalogs by auctioneers Davis and Harvey circa 1887.

Wister, Richard (2 of 3) , 1883-1885 [Box 8 F48]

Wister, Richard (3 of 3) , 1884-1888 [Box 8 F49]

Wood, Charles and George (1 of 2) , 1865-1887 [Box 8 F50]

Wood, Charles and George (2 of 2) , 1865-1887 [Box 8 F50A]

Woodlands Cemetery , 1845-1870 [Box 8 F51]

**Subseries II.B. Legal documents , 1800-1920**

Series II.B. consists of general legal documents relating to the professional work of Eli K. Price, Joseph Brevitt Townsend, and his sons. Spanning 1800-1920, the subseries is arranged chronologically by decade, and contains contractual documents, checks, receipts, indentures, wills, and other judicial records. These documents are representative of the role of Eli Kirk Price, Townsend, and his sons in the settlement of land disputes, general mortgages and deeds of trust, conditions of sales, statements of payment, and exemplification of deeds. Documents relating to the Provident Life and Trust company, including its charter and bylaws, further demonstrate the work of the Townsend sons who managed many of the company’s affairs. This series also contains documents relating to the original deed to the Free Quaker Meeting House on Fifth and Arch Streets in Philadelphia.

Legal documents , 1800-1820 [Box 9 F52]
Legal documents, 1830-1839 [Box 9 F53]

Legal documents, 1840-1849 [Box 9 F54]

Legal documents, 1850-1859 [Box 9 F55]

Legal documents, 1850-1859 [Box 9 F56]

Legal documents, 1850-1859 [Box 9 F57]

Legal documents, 1850-1859 [Box 9 F58]

Legal documents, 1850-1859 [Box 9 F59]

Legal documents, 1860-1869 [Box 9 F60]

Legal documents, 1860-1869 [Box 9 F61]

Legal documents, 1860-1869 [Box 9 F62]

Legal documents, 1860-1869 [Box 9 F63]

Legal documents, 1860-1869 [Box 9 F64]

Legal documents, 1860-1869 [Box 9 F65]

Legal documents, 1860-1869 [Box 9 F66]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 9 F67]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 9 F68]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F69]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F70]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F71]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F72]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F73]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F74]

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F75]
Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F76]

This folder contains a typed letter to Nicholas Biddle (sender unknown) referencing his home at Andalusia and encouraging him to "stave off payment" in a settlement.

Legal documents, 1870-1879 [Box 10 F77]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F78]

This folder contains documents relating to the original deed to the Free Quaker Meeting House on Fifth and Arch streets in Philadelphia. It also contains a letter to addressed to "Biddle," presumably Nicholas.

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F79]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F80]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F81]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F82]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F83]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F84]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F85]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 10 F86]

Legal documents, 1880-1889 [Box 11 F87]

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F88]

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F89]

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F90]

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F91]

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F92]

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F93]

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F94]

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F95]
Series II. Subseries II.B.

Legal documents, 1890-1899 [Box 11 F96]

Legal documents, 1900-1908 [Box 11 F97]

Legal documents, 1900-1910 [Box 11 F98]

Legal documents, 1900-1909 [Box 11 F99]

Legal documents, 1910-1920 [Box 11 F100]

Legal documents, 1910-1920 [Box 11 F101]

James Townsend deed, 1875 [Box 11 F102]

Provident Life and Trust Co. of Philadelphia bylaws and charter, 1865 [Box 11 F103]

Series III. Financial documents, 1840-1915


James P. Townsend account book, 1887-1889 [Box 11 F104]

Charles C. Townsend account book, 1894-1898 [Box 11 F105]

Townsend, Eliott, and Townsend account book, 1913-1915 [Box 11 F106]

R. W. Morris estate account book, 1871-1872 [Box 11 F107]


Thomas Graham estate account book, 1873-1874 [Box 11 F108]

Sarah B. Stevens account book, 1874 [Box 11 F109]

Estate of Benjamin Wilson account ledger, 1845-1878 [Box 11 F110]


J. B. Townsend, 1840-1903

Account book, 1844-1853 [Box 11 F112]
Series III.

Account book, 1853-1857 [Box 11 F113]
Account book for "Western Bank with J. B. Townsend of the Woodland Cemetery."

Account book, 1859-1860 [Box 11 F114]

Account book, 1881-1892 [Box 11 F115]

Account ledger, 1887-1904 [Box 12 F116]

Chickering Piano bill, 1855 November 15 [Box 12 F117]

Miscellaneous legal and financial documents, circa 1900 [Box 12 F118]

Miscellaneous legal and financial documents, 1850-1917 [Box 12 F119]

Checks, 1840-1860 [Box 12 F120]

Checks, 1840-1860 [Box 12 F121]

Checks, 1875-1901 [Box 12 F122]

Receipt book, 1896-1903 [Box 13 F123]

Day planner, 1855 [Box 12 F124]

Miscellaneous financial materials, 1827-1887 [Box 12 F125]