



The Historical  
Society of  
Pennsylvania

Collection 2185

**Johnson family business papers**

**Creator: Johnson family**

**1818 – 1921**

**3 boxes, 1.2 linear feet**

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**Processing Completed:** November 2009  
**Restrictions:** None

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### Abstract

Lawrence Johnson, a printer, left England and settled in Philadelphia in 1823, where he co-founded a type and stereotype foundry. His children carried on his legacy of entrepreneurship and made the Johnson family one of the most prosperous in the history of elite families in the region. This collection documents the Johnson family's financial activities across three generations. The material consists entirely of business records such as deeds, wills, mortgages, banking accounts and financial statements, and legal documents.

### Background note

Lawrence Johnson [I] (1801-1860) learned the printing and stereotype business in his native England and came to the United States in the 1820s, settling in Philadelphia in 1823, where he partnered with Jedidiah Howe and began a prosperous type and stereotype foundry. Lawrence became a prominent Philadelphia citizen and acquired a great fortune as a participant in many business ventures and enterprises. He married Mary Winder of Lower Makefield, Bucks County in 1837; she gave birth to ten children, as follows:

- Edward Winder Johnson (born 1838)
- Anna Rebecca Johnson (born 1839)
- Mary Ella Johnson (born 1841)
- Caroline Fletcher Johnson (born 1843)
- Howard Lawrence Johnson (born 1845)
- Russell Hampden Johnson (born 1847)
- Lawrence Johnson (born 1849)
- Walter Richards Johnson (1851-1897)
- Robert Winder Johnson (1854-1910)
- Alfred Clayton Johnson (1856-1928)

Lawrence [I] also had a daughter from his previous marriage to Sarah Murray in 1825, who died in 1834. In 1851 Lawrence [I] purchased the Landsdown farm in Bucks County where the family spent summers. Many of the children were born there. After

Johnson died in 1860, his partners in the foundry business renamed it in his honor, Johnson Type Foundry. His children inherited the estate and took charge of most of the family's financial affairs.

Russell Johnson (1847-1934) received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, resided in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, and practiced medicine for many years. He even served as the physician for the Pennsylvania Institute of the Deaf. While not a businessman by trade, he took over much of the internal family affairs after R. Winder's death.

Lawrence Johnson [III] (1849-1905), a merchant by training, established Lawrence Johnson and Company in 1870. It became one of Philadelphia's leading trading houses. He became a prominent and respected merchant, both locally and internationally.

R. Winder Johnson (1854-1910) followed his brother to the "counting house" in 1877, became a member in 1879 and, in 1905, with Lawrence's sudden death, became the senior member of Lawrence Johnson and Company. He too was a prosperous, sociable, and prominent citizen, much the same as Lawrence. He died suddenly in 1910 as the result of an automobile accident. He was well-respected in Philadelphia's business community and became the trustee and executor for many estates: the Thornton Trust (after the death of Margareta Winder), Lawrence Johnson (both elder and younger), Walter Johnson, and Margareta Winder. Russell took over as trustee of the Lawrence Johnson (the elder) estate after R. Winder's death and was joined by William Millikin.

Walter Johnson (1851-1897), while not part of their father's trading company, invested heavily in real estate and new enterprises and purchased shares in several shipping schooners. He married his cousin Mary Rebecca Winder, and their son, Winder Lawrence, died as a young adult, leaving a two-year-old under the trusteeship of R. Winder.

Alfred Johnson (1856-1928) was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1880, but left the United States in the 1890s to act as consul at Stuttgart and vice-consul general at Dresden. He married Countess Toni von Baudissin and passed over his shares in the Johnson family ventures to R. Winder. He died in Germany in 1928.

The Johnson brothers of Philadelphia—R. Winder, Walter, Lawrence, and Russell—remained closely knit throughout their lives, frequently invested in each other's businesses, and acted as executors for each other's estates. They were also closely involved with the Winder family, as R. Winder acted as trustee for the Thornton Trust, Samuel Thornton being the father of Margareta Winder, mother of Mary Rebecca Winder, Walter Johnson's wife.

Lawrence Johnson Morris (1870-1949), Mary Ella Johnson's son, was also employed by Lawrence Johnson and Company and in 1905 became a partner. He apparently showed the same knack for business as his uncles, as he too had a share in managing the various Johnson affairs, particularly after the death of R. Winder and later Russell.

## Scope & content

The Johnson family papers contain many documents relating to the family's financial affairs and estates like bonds, mortgages, deeds, accounts, receipts, correspondence, wills, and legal papers. Nearly every member of the family is mentioned in at least one document in the collection even though the collection is limited to the files belonging Lawrence Johnson senior's sons and grandsons. They were principally the overseers of the family's financial records. The correspondence elucidates many of the intra-family relationships as it relates to their inheritances and estates; connections to other business partners are also revealed.

The collection is arranged by family member. Box One holds the papers of Lawrence Johnson (senior), Mary Winder Johnson, Margaretta Winder, Louisa P. Johnson, and Lawrence Johnson (junior). The relationship of the Johnson family to the Winder family is acknowledged here through marriage records. The most informative documents are the correspondence and wills. In particular, they reveal the specifics of inheritances, who was to manage which estate, and marriage and birth records. Lawrence Johnson (junior) managed many of the family estates, thus the majority of the records contained here are listed under his name, a total of eleven folders.

Walter Johnson's papers are most prominent in Box Two, with many of the files pertaining to the estates that he managed and his other financial affairs. The only other family member records collected here are R. Winder Johnson's legal documents and Bucks County Trust account records.

Papers of Russell Johnson, Anna Johnson Mead, Winder L. Johnson, Edward Johnson, Millicent Gaw Johnson Lennig, Lawrence Johnson Morris, and other miscellaneous files are contained in Box Three. Similar kinds of documents are contained here as in Box One and Two with deeds, wills, receipts, and assorted financial and legal papers.

## **Related materials**

At the Historical Society of Pennsylvania:  
Morris family papers, Collection 2000B.

## **References**

Johnson, Robert Winder, Sr. and Lawrence Johnson Morris. *The Johnson Family*. Philadelphia, PA. 1934. [call number Fa 929.2 J67i 1934]

## **Subjects**

Estate planning (Philadelphia, Pa.)  
Merchants--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--Finance, Personal.

Johnson, Edward (1838-1874).  
Johnson, Lawrence (1801-1860).  
Johnson, Lawrence (1849-1905).  
Johnson, Louisa Philler Gaw.  
Johnson, Mary Winder.  
Johnson, R. Winder (1854-1910).  
Johnson, Russell (1847-1934).  
Johnson, Winder Lawrence (1877-1902).  
Lennig, Millicent Gaw Johnson (d. 1919).  
Mead, Anna Johnson.  
Morris, Lawrence Johnson (1870-1949).  
Winder, Margaretta (d. 1908).

Lawrence Johnson and Company.

## **Administrative Information**

### **Restrictions**

The collection is open for research.

### **Acquisition information**

Gift of Lawrence Johnson, Jr., 1993.

Accession number: 1993:741

### **Preferred citation**

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Johnson family business papers (Collection 2185), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

### **Processing note**

When the collection was reprocessed in 2009, materials listed under the names of Anna R. Mead, Mary E. Morris, Caroline F. Taylor, Russell H. Johnson, Laura J. Wylie, and Samuel Wylie were not found.

## Box and folder listing

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Lawrence Johnson [I] – Wills	1857/1858, 1860	3 items	1	1
Lawrence Johnson [I] – Correspondence	1833, 1853	2 items	1	2
Lawrence Johnson [I] – Miscellaneous	1846, 1860	2 items	1	3
Mary Winder Johnson – Correspondence: Estate	1860 – 1864, undated	49 items	1	4
Mary Winder Johnson – Accounts/Receipts	1862 - 1886	14 items	1	5
Mary Winder Johnson – Legal Documents	1860 – 1864, n.d.	5 items	1	6
Margaretta Winder – Correspondence: The Trust Company of North America	1908 – 1909	13 items	1	7
Margaretta Winder – Correspondence: Bucks County Trust Company	1908 – 1909	8 items	1	8
Margaretta Winder – Correspondence, Legal Documents, & Receipts: Trust of Samuel Y. Thornton and Margaretta T. Winder	1902 – 1909	19 items	1	9
Louisa P. Johnson - Miscellaneous	1905, 1918 – 1919	5 items	1	10
Lawrence Johnson [II] – Miscellaneous Estate Records	1879, 1905 – 1919	13 items	1	11
Lawrence Johnson [II] – Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities: Estate holdings reports	1906 – 1913	18 items	1	12
Lawrence Johnson [II] - Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities: Securities held	1907 – 1913	10 items	1	13
Lawrence Johnson [II] – Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities: Correspondence and receipts	1906 – 1911	31 items	1	14
Lawrence Johnson [II] - Wills	1873 – 1904	3 items	1	15

Lawrence Johnson [II] – Legal Documents	1905 – 1919	18 items	1	16
Lawrence Johnson [II] – Joint property with R. Winder	1894 – 1911	6 items	1	17
Lawrence Johnson [II] - Correspondence	1886	1 item	1	18
Lawrence Johnson [II] – John B. Camel Jr. & Co.	1849, undated	4 items	1	19
Lawrence Johnson [II] – The Woodland Cemetery Co.	1851 – 1903	3 items	1	20
Lawrence Johns [II] – Deed and Bond & Mortgage Documents	1873 – 1878	3 items	1	21
R. Winder Johnson – Legal Documents	1899 – 1911	7 items	2	1
R. Winder Johnson – Bucks County Trust Acct.	1909	8 items	2	2
R. Winder Johnson – Correspondence and Receipts	1885 – 1910	30 items	2	3
Walter Johnson – Wills	1893	4 items	2	4
Walter Johnson – Legal Documents	1884 – 1893	6 items	2	5
Walter Johnson – Cemetery plot deed	1883	1 item	2	6
Walter Johnson – Johnson vs. Bunting	1894 – 1900	10 items	2	7
Walter Johnson – Receipts/Accounts	1880 – 1902, undated	42 items	2	8
Walter Johnson – East Penn Traction Company	1896 – 1899, undated	10 items	2	9
Walter Johnson – Frank Leedom	1895 – 1897, undated	10 items	2	10
Walter Johnson – Hernia Company	1896 – 1897, undated	8 items	2	11
Walter Johnson – Schooner Susie H. Davidson	1885 – 1897	6 items	2	12
Walter Johnson – Schooner Van Lear Black	1897 – 1908	11 items	2	13
Walter Johnson – Schooner William B. Wood	1883 – 1889	5 items	2	14
Walter Johnson – John Snook (real estate)	1895 – 1900	7 items	2	15
Walter Johnson – Henry Summers	1889 – 1897, undated	13 items	2	16
Walter Johnson – William St. Clair lease	1895	3 items	2	17



Walter Johnson – Correspondence w/ Frederick Christine	1894 – 1896	4 items	2	18
Walter Johnson – Correspondence w/ Engle G. Smith and receipts	1893 – 1902	8 items	2	19
Walter Johnson – Account w/ Forrest C. Smith	1897, undated	4 items	2	20
Walter Johnson – Correspondence w/ Robert Wardell and receipts	1892, 1899	12 items	2	21
Walter Johnson – Correspondence with and estate documents of Thomas Willard	1896 – 1898, undated	24 items	2	22
Walter Johnson – Inventory accounts	1888 – 1910	6 items	2	23
Walter Johnson – Income accounts	1899 – 1901	6 items	2	24
Walter Johnson - Miscellaneous	1885 – 1911	8 items	2	25
Walter Johnson – Waterview Farm Accounts	1897 – 1898	12 items	2	26
Russell Johnson – Real estate	1877 – 1906	14 items	3	1
Russell Johnson – Property at 3729 Lancaster Ave	1875 – 1887	11 items	3	2
Russell Johnson – John Polk, mortgage	1883 – 1891	11 items	3	3
Russell Johnson – Lawrence Johnson estate (trust account)	1865 – 1910	23 items	3	4
Russell Johnson – Legal documents	1879 – 1919	8 items	3	5
Russell Johnson – Miscellaneous	1863 – 1891, undated	12 items	3	6
Anna Johnson Mead – Wills	1910, 1912	3 items	3	7
Winder L. Johnson – Legal documents	1897 – 1911	7 items	3	8
Winder L. Johnson – Miscellaneous	1896 – 1911	12 items	3	9
Edward Johnson – Will	1860	1 item	3	10
Millicent Gaw Johnson Lennig – Correspondence	1904 – 1919	4 items	3	11
Lawrence Johnson Morris – Correspondence regarding property	1911 – 1921	11 items	3	12
T. Alston	1909	1 item	3	13
Smook Farm – Account Records	1897, 1898	2 items	3	14

Barnes and Lofland - Advertisements	1902	2 items	3	15
Miscellaneous – Deeds and Account Documents	1818 – 1884	8 items	3	16