

Barre History Collection

**Twing Family
Collection, 1807-1985
BHC 256**

Introduction

This collection contains papers, documents, and photographs related to the Twing/Thwing family of Barre, Vermont. The collection was probably formed from the gifts of several different donors. For example, the original gristmill deed was donated to the BHS by Harvey Averill in 1955 (acc. no. 65.1956) while other papers were found in the cornerstone of the Thwing Mill when it was torn down in 1961 and donated to the Barre Historical Society by Arthur G. Anderson (acc. no. 61.1528).

Biographical Note

The genealogical origins of this family begin in 13th century England. Another source picks up the story with Benjamin Thwing, a 1635 immigrant to Boston. James Thwing, 3rd great grandson of Benjamin, settled in Williamstown and Barre, Vermont, he is the father of Joshua Thwing.

Joshua Twing provides the genealogical foundation for the collection. Born in 1784 in Massachusetts, he came to Barre, Vermont, with his parents at age eleven. He built a foundry and grist mill in the northerly part of Barre, labeled on some maps as Twingville. He grew his business; it eventually became Smith, Whitcomb, and Cook, and ultimately the Hill Martin Corporation. Joshua married Judith French in 1814, the couple had six children. Joshua and Judith were buried in Barre's Elmwood Cemetery on Washington Street.

One problem encountered when researching the Thwing family name concerns the spelling. Some sources show "Thwing" while others have "Twing." The Beers Atlas shows a section of Barre as "Twingsville." Different researchers have used either spelling; both appear in the vital records.

Scope and Content

The collection is focused on two topics: the genealogy of Joshua Thwing and some of his descendants and the historic Thwing Grist Mill located on North Main Street in Barre, Vermont.

Genealogical information in the collection contains handwritten notes and family stories as well as typed transcriptions of various other sources. As one example, an unidentified family member hand-copied portions of the book, "The Twing Family in England," to present a historical snapshot of the family's ancient heritage, dating back to 1231 A.D. While there does not seem to be a central theme for the genealogical data, most information centers on Joshua Twing (1784-1865), a prominent Barre businessman, and other family members who lived in the central Vermont area.

Photographs in the collection primarily consist of portraits of members of the Twing/Thwing family and the related Potter family. In particular, many images relate to the family of James Thwing (1817-1895) and his wife, Eliza Peck Thwing (1819-1863). One of their daughters, Luthera Thwing, married Lewis Peck Potter. Other portraits are of Joshua Twing (1784-1865) and his wife, Judith French Twing (died 1864). There are copies of two oil paintings by John Johnston also included with the photographs; these feature family members from an earlier generation, James Twing (1733-1789) and his wife, Martha (Clap) Thwing (1738-1805).

Other miscellaneous items include a letter written to James Twing while on the road in Wisconsin from his father (John Twing) and his wife, dated 6 July 1856. Based on the letter, James Twing could have been selling liniment for Doctor Bigelow.

The rest of the collection focuses on the former Twing Gristmill. Several documents relate to research done in an effort to add the site to the National Register of Historic Places, including descriptions, photographs of important architectural details of the building, and a full report prepared by Karen L. Kiemnec with photos and recommendations for preservation of several features. The collection also includes an original deed transferring ownership of the site from Frederick Brewster to Joshua Thwing on 23 November 1807.

Newspaper clippings in the collection related to both family members (especially obituaries) and the Twing Gristmill as well as to the manufacturing firm of Smith, Whitcomb, and Cook, later was located at the mill site.

Related Collections

- Katz, Sandra L., "Dearest of Geniuses: a Life of Theodate Pope Riddle/Sandra L. Katz," Windsor, CT, 2003 [Riddle is a descendant of Judith French Twing] Call no.: 920 R431k
- Twing, Walter Eliot, "Twing: A Genealogical, Biographical, and Historical Account of the Family," Boston, 1883. Call no.: *929.2 T428b
- Framed Civil War Commission (Barre Historical Society accession no. 61.883), with BHC framed items

Inventory

I. Family

BHC 256:01 Genealogy
02 Letters
03 Photographs

II. Gristmill

04 National Historic Registry - Twing Gristmill
05 Twing Gristmill Report by Karen Kiemnec
06 Original Gristmill Deed
07 Newspaper Clippings

Dwight Harrington
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