

**The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary
Columbia University in the City of New York**

Union Theological Seminary Archives 1

Finding Aid for

John Crosby Brown Papers, [18??] - 1909

Finding Aid prepared by: Daniel Sokolow, July, 1995; updated by Ruth Tonkiss Cameron, 2012

Summary Information

Creator: John Crosby Brown, 1838 - 1909
Title: John Crosby Brown Papers
Dates: 1876-1909
Abstract: The bulk of this collection consists of correspondence belonging to J. C. Brown who was New York banker and Union Theological Seminary Board member, 1866-1909. He influenced the support of Charles A. Briggs by the board during Brigg's heresy trials.
Size: 11 Boxes; 4.75 linear feet
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Email: burkearchives@library.columbia.edu

Administrative Information

- Provenance:** The bulk of the correspondence was transferred from the C.C. Hall archival collection between 1986 and 1995. The Pali manuscript donated in circa 1911 by Mrs. J. C. Brown was added to the collection in 2012.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to burkearchives@library.columbia.edu or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. [Burke Library staff](#) is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item, J. C. Brown Papers, UTS box #, folder#, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

John Crosby Brown was born in New York City on May 22, 1838, the son of James Brown and Eliza Maria Coe. James Brown was a well known banker, founder of the family company Brown Brothers & Co., and a great supporter of Union Theological Seminary. His interest in Union grew following the death of several of his children when the steamship *Arctic* sank in 1854. James Brown's generosity was most obvious in an 1873 donation of \$300,000, which helped establish several professorships.

John Crosby Brown was educated privately as a child, and graduated from Columbia University in 1859. He had intended to enter the ministry, but the loss of the family on the *Arctic* obliged him to join the family business instead. He traveled following graduation, and then began his work at different branches of the family business. He became a partner at the main office in New York in 1864. In the financial world, Brown drew the admiration of men like J.P. Morgan for his honesty. In addition to his work at Brown Brothers, he was also involved with the boards of several other corporations, including several railroads.

Brown married Mary Elizabeth Adams in the early 1860's. This brought Brown closer to Union Theological Seminary, as his father-in-law William Adams was also connected to the Seminary and became its president in 1873. The Browns made their home in New York on East 37 street, and had six children; William Adams (1865), Eliza Coe (1868), Mary Magoun (1869), James Crosby (1872), Thatcher Magoun (1876), and Amy Brighthurst (1899). William Adams Brown was to continue the family's involvement with Union Theological Seminary; he became a professor and taught for over thirty years. The Browns also established a summer home in Brighthurst, New Jersey, where they built a sprawling forty acre estate on Orange Mountain. Their social circle in New Jersey included civil war general and governor of New Jersey George McClellan, and Theodore Roosevelt's sister and brother-in-law.

In his personal life, Brown had many interests. He served on the Board of education of New York City, and was a trustee of Columbia University. Brown also participated in numerous other

organizations, including the Presbyterian Hospital and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The association with the Museum began when his wife donated a large and well-kept collection of musical instruments, a collection that still bears her name. He went on to become the treasurer of the museum.

Brown's direct involvement with Union began in 1866 when he joined the Board of Directors. He became vice-president of the Board in 1883, and president in 1897. During his tenure Brown was involved in the great controversies affecting Union, including the heresy cases against Charles A. Briggs and Arthur C. McGiffert. He was also instrumental in many of the great advances made by Union over the forty years that he served. He donated a good deal of money to the Seminary, and he successfully encouraged others to give as well. The Board, under Brown's leadership and with the help of faculty president C. C. Hall, convinced board vice-president D. Willis James to make the major donation in what would become the Morningside campus of UTS.

J. C. Brown, like President Hall, would not live long enough to see the development of their dream for the Seminary. While he was able to attend the laying of the cornerstone of the new campus in November 1908, he died the following June. His legacy at UTS continued, however, in two important ways. One of his six children, William Adams Brown, was to carry on a long and distinguished career as a professor at Union for more than thirty years. In addition, the tower built in 1928 that dominates the skyline over the Seminary was named the Brown Tower in his honor.

Bibliography

- Brown, John Crosby. *A Hundred Years of Merchant Banking*. New York: Privately Printed, 1909.
- Brown, William Adams. *A Teacher and his Times: A Story of Two Worlds*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940.
- Hall, Basil D. *The Life of Charles Cuthbert Hall: One Among a Thousand*. New York: Carlton Press, 1965.
- Handy, Robert T. *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. New York: James T. White & Co., 1916.

Collection Scope and Content Note

Most of John Crosby Brown's correspondence was originally located among the papers of C. C. Hall. To avoid compounding earlier confusion, UTS Archives in 1995 decided to leave the correspondence between Brown and Hall within the C. C. Hall collection.

The correspondence which was unrelated to C. C. Hall can now be found in the J. C. Brown collection. See also the Charles Cuthbert Hall Collection finding aid.

- **Series I: Correspondence, 1876 – 1909, 1 Box, 0.5 linear feet, 1876 - 1909**
The collection consists of a single series of correspondence arranged alphabetically by correspondent. Also included is a program from the J. C. Brown memorial service. Numbers following the dates, e.g. (9) indicate the number of letters within the folder.

- **Series 2: General, 1 Box, 1.75 linear feet, [18??]**

After the death of her husband, Mrs. J. Crosby Brown mailed 8 palm leaves of Pali manuscript to Miss Hudson a “librarian of Union Seminary.” This was added to Brown’s archival collection in 2004 when the sealed postal packet was first opened. The leaves are written in Pali script.

Contents list**Series I: Correspondence****Series Box Folder Contents**

1	1	1	Alexander, H. M. - 1892 (1)
1	1	2	Bliss, Howard E. - 1904 (1)
1	1	3	Briggs, Charles A. - 1890 - 1907 (9)
1	1	4	Butler, Charles - 1890 - 1896 (21)
1	1	5	Dana, S. W. - 1891 - (1)
1	1	6	Day, Henry - 1890 - 1892 (9)
1	1	7	Delano, Eugene - 1891 (1)
1	1	8	Dey, John - 1892 - 1895 (3)
1	1	9	Dickey, Charles - 1891 (7)
1	1	10	Dodge, William E. - 1890 - 1894 (12)
1	1	11	Fagnani, Charles - 1901 (2)
1	1	12	Fisher, George P. - 1892 (2)
1	1	13	Gillett, Charles R. - 1892 - 1907 (15)
1	1	14	Hall, Thomas C. - 1897 (2)
1	1	15	Hastings, Thomas S. - (1891?) (1)
1	1	16	Hoppin, William W. - 1891 (1)
1	1	17	Hume, R. A. - 1904 (1)
1	1	18	Iverson, D. B. - 1900 (1)
1	1	19	Kingsley, E. M. - 1884 - 1901 (55)
1	1	20	Kissam, Charles T. - 1898 - 1904 (48)
1	1	21	Knox, George W. - 1905 (1)
1	1	22	Lampman, Lewis - (1899?) (1)
1	1	23	Ludlow, James M. - 1891 (1)
1	1	24	McAlpin, D. H. - 1892 (1)
1	1	25	McGiffert, Arthur C. - 1898 - 1900 (4)
1	1	26	Montgomery, Robert H. - 1905 (1)
1	1	27	Moore, Edward C. - 1892 (1)
1	1	28	Moore, W. E. - 1891 - 1894 (4)
1	1	29	Nash, S. P. - 1892 (1)
1	1	30	Niebuhr, George - 1893 (3)
1	1	31	Noyes, Daniel R. - 1891 - 1895 (14)
1	1	32	Ogden, Robert C. - 1904 - 1905 (6)
1	1	33	Parkhurst, C. H. - 1890 - 1899 (17)
1	1	34	Prentiss, George L. - 1876 - 1900 (23)
1	1	35	Roberts, Charles - 1903 (2)
1	1	36	Roberts, William H. - 1887 (1)
1	1	37	Schaff, David S. - 1897 (1)
1	1	38	Scribner, Charles - 1892 (1)
1	1	39	Service, R. J. - 1893 (1)
1	1	40	Shaw, John B. - 1892 - 1899 (3)
1	1	41	Smith, Gerrit - 1906 (1)
1	1	42	Smith, W. Merle - 1899 - 1903 (7)

Series I: Correspondence (Cont'd)

Series Box Folder Contents

1	1	43	Southard, George H. - 1901 (1)
1	1	44	Sprague, Edward P. - 1894 (2)
1	1	45	Stoddard, Charles A. - 1892 (1)
1	1	46	Whitaker, William F. - 1894 - 1896 (2)
1	1	47	White, Erskine N. - 1891 - 1892 (7)
1	1	48	Events - Memorial Service for Brown - 1909

Series 2: General, [18??]

2	1	[FRAGILE] Palm leaf manuscript in Pali script, 8 leaves, [18??]
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