

George B. Johnson, Esq. Letterbooks, 1908-1918

Manuscript Collection 186

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Chester County Historical Society
West Chester, PA 19380
2010

Summary Information:

Collection Title: George B. Johnson Letterbooks

Collection Numbers: Ms. 186

Dates of Collection: 1908-1918

Box Numbers: 7 boxes, 13 folders

Repository: Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA 19380

Language: English

Biography:

George Brinton Johnson was born to parents Benjamin D. and Elizabeth Coale Johnson of Chester County on February 8, 1858. He is one of at least four children; his siblings consist of sisters Lydia Coale Sharpless, inventor of the Sharpless Bread Mixer, and Mrs. J. Johnson Sidwell, and brother Richard H. Johnson. He attended Chester County public schools and Westtown Friends Boarding School. On May 29, 1889, Johnson married Mary Cooke and the couple had daughter Marjorie in 1894. Marjorie had one child, Richard Standish Good.

An attorney, in 1880 Johnson was admitted to the Chester County and Philadelphia County bars. In September 1880, Johnson opened the first law office in West Grove. He practiced in State, Federal, and U.S. Supreme Courts. He worked for political reforms and establishing a non-partisan judiciary. Johnson was a member to the Society of Friends, the American Bar Association, and a lifelong Republican.

After a brief illness Johnson passed away in November 1948 at age 91. His wife had died several years before, and his daughter died on December 24, 1964 in her 70th year.

Resources Used:

CCHS Newspaper Clippings File

Collection Scope and Content Summary:

The collection consists of 13 letterbooks containing legal letters from George B. Johnson to his clients, other lawyers, and debtors. Most letters involve helping clients retrieve money from their debtors; however there are several political letters and business letters concerning the Sharpless Bread Mixer are included. Johnson deals with wills, mortgages, estates, divorces, debts, deeds, and leases. Many letters concern Shriver, Bartlett, and Co., Strawbridge & Clothier, International Harvester Co. of America, the Sharpless Bread Co., and the Darlington estate. The dates of the letters range from October 24, 1908 through January 12, 1918.

Collection Arrangement:

Chronological

Collection Content:

Box 1

Folder 1: October 24, 1908- July 7, 1909

- Volume has an index. Several letters concern the fight against the annexation of Valley View by the Coatesville borough. Several letters concern the patent of the Sharpless Bread Mixer.

Folder 2: July 7, 1909- May 6, 1910

- Volume has an index. Several letters, many to Wm. Meade Fletcher, Esq., concern the Pennsylvania Railroad and its "railroad grab."

Box 2

Folder 3: May 7, 1910- March 25, 1911

- Volume has an index. A letter reveals that Johnson could be hired annually at a \$10 fee. Several political letters are included concerning the Keystone Party and Judge Lindsay's book *The Beast*.

Folder 4: March 25, 1911- January 23, 1912

- Volume has an index. Contains letters concerning the history of saloon and eating house licenses in the county.

Box 3

Folder 5: January 23, 1912- November 15, 1912

- Volume has an index. Volume contains letters concerning a lease and land conflict between Guthrie and the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Folder 6: November 15, 1912- August 4, 1913

- Volume has an index. Contains letters concerning the bread mixer patents of Sharpless Bread, Co. Also contains letters about the liquor law and the Octoraro Hotel's violations of the law.

Box 4

Folder 7: August 6, 1913- May 9, 1914

- Volume has an index. Contains several letters about the embezzlement from the Darlington estate.

Folder 8: May 11, 1914- December 14, 1914

- Volume has an index. Includes a letter outlining the restrictions placed upon minors working, especially in quarries. Includes several letters concerning the Sharpless Bread Co. and the bread mixer.

Box 5

Folder 9: December 14, 1914- July 11, 1915

- Volume does not include an index. Includes several letters concerning a young mail clerk with the railroad who was arrested while believing that he was able to travel for free.

Folder 10: July 10, 1915- February 16, 1916

- Volume has an index. Several letters concern the Brandywine Celebration. Mentions in a letter that President Poincare of France wanted a tree from the Brandywine Battlefield where Lafayette was wounded and the tree was sent to him.

Box 6

Folder 11: February 17, 1916- September 13, 1916

- Volume has an index. A letter concerns Mrs. John T. Chambers' moving picture royalties.

Folder 12: September 14, 1916- April 21, 1917

- Volume has an index. Johnson has a case that falls under the Workmen's Compensation Act. Several letters are written to Johnson's family members about their parent's estate and money distribution.

Box 7

Folder 13: April 21, 1917- January 12, 1918

- Volume has an index. Johnson writes a letter to A. Bruce Bielaski, Esq. of Chief Bureau of Investigations, Department of Justice about a book in the West Chester Public Library entitled *The Vampire of the Continent* by Count E. Reventlow and translated by Chatterton-Hill (German spy). Johnson writes that the book raises support for the German war effort and if investigators follow the books trail back to New York they will uncover enemies of the United States.