

The Burke Library Archives  
Union Theological Seminary

Finding Aid for

**John Crosby Brown Papers, 1876 - 1909**

Finding Aid prepared by: Daniel Sokolow, July, 1995

**Summary Information**

Creator: John Crosby Brown, 1838 - 1909  
Title: John Crosby Brown Papers  
Inclusive dates: 1876-1909  
Abstract: The bulk of this collection consists of correspondence of J. C Brown, Board member of UTS. Additional correspondence between Brown and C. C. Hall will be found in the Hall papers.

Size: 1 box; 0.5 linear feet  
Storage: Onsite storage  
Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
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**Administrative Information**

Provenance:

Access restrictions: The collection is unrestricted.

Copyright:

Preferred Citation: item, folder number/title, box number, J. C. Brown Papers, UTS Collection, The Burke Library Archives, Union Theological Seminary

**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, 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 the collection was located among the papers of C. C. Hall. To avoid compounding earlier confusion, UTS Archives decided to leave the correspondence between Brown and Hall within the C. C. Hall collection. The correspondence unrelated to C. C. Hall was moved into the J. C. Brown collection. *See also the Charles Cuthbert Hall Collection finding aid.*

#### Series I: Correspondence, 1876 – 1909, 1 Box, .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 indicate the number of letters within the folder

Series I: Correspondence, 1876 – 1909

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)

Series I: Correspondence, 1876 – 1909 (Cont'd)

Series	Box	Folder	Contents
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)
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