



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Lawrence Chase Townley Association records

1880-1890

MssCol NYGB 18237

Summary

Creator: Lawrence-Chase-Towneley Association

Title: Lawrence Chase Townley Association records

Date: 1880-1890

Size: .4 linear feet (1 box)

Abstract: Records consist primarily of genealogical notes, both loose and in notebooks, on many English noble families. Miscellaneous legal documents, correspondence, and essays concern claims made by U.S. and Canadian citizens on land in Great Britain, and other legal, genealogical, and Association matters are also included.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Lawrence Chase Townley Association records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History

Lawrence-Chase-Towneley Associations, now considered fraudulent, were formed in the United States and Canada in the mid and late 1800s. Members of the Lawrence, Chase, and Towneley families were approached with a story about a family estate in England originally belonging to Sir Richard Towneley to which they were entitled, and invited to subscribe to a fund for the prosecution of its rightful claim to that estate. While a Towneley estate did exist in England, there were no absent heirs, and therefore no claim to be made by American or Canadian Towneley descendants.

After the death of Colonel John Towneley, last of Richard's male line of descent, the British Parliament devised the Towneley Estates Act, which divided the estate among seven heirs. Several of the Lawrence-Chase-Towneley associations sought to challenge the distribution. A High Court solicitor named Howell Thomas took their case, but the court dismissed the action as frivolous, as it was based on the fraudulent genealogies created by the Association. Though a book, *The Lawrence, Chase, Towneley Estate: The Mystery Solved*, was published in 1888 to debunk the myth of the Towneley estate, the Associations continued their activities until after the First World War.

Scope and Content Note

Records consist primarily of genealogical notes, both loose and in notebooks, on many English noble families. Miscellaneous legal documents, correspondence, and essays concern claims made by U.S. and Canadian citizens on land in Great Britain, and other legal, genealogical, and Association matters are also included.

Key Terms

Geographic Names

England -- Genealogy

Toronto (Ont.) -- Genealogy

Subjects

Families -- England -- Lancashire

Genealogy -- Societies, etc

Real property -- England -- Lancashire

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Genealogies

Names

Lawrence-Chase-Towneley Association

Chase family

Lawrence family

Townley family