

East Bradford Worldly Goods VII

Imagine purchasing 800 acres in East Bradford Township — extending north/south from Strasburg Road to Route 842, and east/west from the Borough line (at Bradford Avenue) almost to the East Branch of Brandywine Creek. This 800 acre tract was purchased by Joseph and Martha Townsend in 1727. The Townsends and their descendants built many fine homes on this tract, several of which continue to serve as residences today. This article focuses on the home and the Worldly Goods of Joseph and Martha's son, John Townsend, who was born around 1716 and died in 1803.

In 1741 John Townsend married Joanna England of West Nottingham (near the Pennsylvania/Maryland border). The marriage is documented in Quaker records relating to the East Nottingham Meeting House, as well as the blanket chest pictured below. In the center of the blanket chest you will see the date 1741, and above the date, the initials "J^T" between the rearing horses. (For a clearer image of the blanket chest, go to <https://www.eastbradford.org/government/boards-commissions/historical-commission/worldly-goods/>).



In the 18th century, initials identifying a married couple were arranged much like today's monogram — with the first letter of the shared last name raised in the center, and the first letter of the couple's first names placed on either side. However, in the eighteenth century, an "I" was often used instead of a "J." Thus, the blanket chest is marked "J^T" for John and Johanna Townsend. The blanket chest became a part of the Winterthur Museum's collection after Gertrude Townsend Hershey sold it to Henry Francis du Pont.

John Townsend moved his new bride to his parent's land in East

Courtesy, Winterthur Museum, Blanket Chest, 1741, Nottingham, PA, Black Walnut, Chestnut, Tulip poplar, Sumac, Holly, Maple, Brass, Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, 1957.1108

Bradford Township. In 1744/45 they formalized their move by purchasing the southeastern corner of his parents' 800 acre tract. John and Joanna Townsend then built the stone house pictured here, which continues to serve as a residence on West Market Street. The datestone on the western wall shows the 1746 date of construction (see inset). One can easily envision the initials "J^T" obscured by whitewash in the ample space above the date.

According to a family register, Joanna Townsend died at their "ancient dwelling" in 1786 and John died in 1803. In his 1798 will, John Townsend gave "all my Plantation whereon I now dwell, Containing by Survey, One Hundred & Fifty Six Acres" to his son,

Joseph Townsend. Joseph Townsend never occupied the home because he moved to Baltimore in the 1780's. In 1818 and 1824, Joseph Townsend advertised a private sale of his father's plantation containing about 160 acres of prime land with "ancient" buildings. The property was not sold, however, until after Joseph Townsend's death in 1841. This is the same Joseph Townsend who walked amongst the Crown Forces on September 11, 1777, and wrote an account of that day. More on that in a future Worldly Goods Article.



"John Townsend House". Inset: 1746 datestone. Historic Resource #108. 2018 photographs by Jean Renshaw