

Benjamin F. Teller
President: 1896-1904

Benjamin Franklin Teller, nephew of David Teller, was born in Philadelphia, July 22, 1853. He attended public schools and graduated from the Boys' Central High School received his MA and for a short time attended the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania. Later he went into real estate business, founding the firm of Benjamin F. Teller & Brother.



Over the years, Teller grew his real estate business from a humble small office to the largest at the time in the history of Philadelphia. In 1893, the firm employed over 50 clerks, had for rental or sale 6000 houses in Philadelphia and the suburbs, and had over \$3,000,000 in revenues.

Prior to becoming President of RS, Teller served as its treasurer from 1884-1896 under his uncle's presidency.

Benjamin F. Teller was known for his scrupulous fidelity and uncommon ability. He was one of the most active workers in the Philadelphia Jewish community:

- He was secretary of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum for over 15 years.
- He was secretary of the Hebrew Charity Ball Association for over 17 years.
- He was treasurer of the Jewish Maternity Association.
- In April 1887, he became the first president of the Jewish Exponent Publishing Company

In addition, Teller was a member of the Mercantile Club, a primarily German Jewish business and professional club, and served as its treasurer for many years.

Mr. Teller was married Jennie Silberman, daughter Simon Silberman, a Congregation Keneseth Israel president.

Teller died at Frankfort-on-the-Main on July 15, 1904 at the age of 50. Having been in poor health, he had sailed the prior month with his wife and daughter to "take the cure" at Carlsbad.

A few days earlier, RS Rabbi Henry Berkowitz had delivered a significant paper defining Reform Judaism as "an honest effort to square the new life of the people with the old religion in differentiating the permanent from the transitory element."

In 1905, Teller's widow gave \$50,000 to RS under the wishes of her husband expressed in a will inoperative under Pennsylvania law. The funds were used to open a new Hebrew school building, The Benjamin F. Teller Memorial School House.

Written by Chip Ellis