

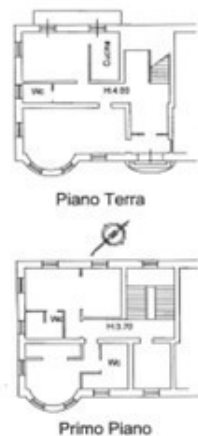
Franklin Torrey (1830-1912): An American in Italy Jeffrey Begeal

Franklin Torrey was born into one of the oldest families of European ancestry in New England. He was descended from Captain William Torrey, who had immigrated from Combe St Nicholas Somerset, England in the early 1640s and had settled in Scituate, Massachusetts. The family was industrious and built their wealth around trade. Franklin's parents were David Torrey (1787-1877) and Vesta Howard (1790-1866). The couple had eight children, and the father invested in building a ship and engaging in the trans-Atlantic trade. Two of Franklin's brothers, Charles Torrey (1825-1905) and Everett Torrey (1828-1911) would join in a partnership with Edwin Bowker (1824-1901) to form one of the largest marble firms in Boston during the 19th Century.



Everett Torrey Sarah Lincoln Spinney Franklin Torrey

Most of Franklin's adult life was spent working in the business known as Bowker, Torrey and Company which was founded as early as 1853. The senior business partner was Edwin Bowker of Waltham, Massachusetts had various real estate holdings in both Waltham and Boston and who engaged in several businesses, owning at one time a sawmill and a livery stable. Franklin was eager to join the partnership because he needed to support his wife, Sarah Lincoln Spinney, whom he married May 24, 1855. She and Franklin would travel to Leghorn (Livorno), Italy and establish a residence and workshop there, and they also owned a small house in Carrara. In their later years, they would have two residences in Florence. The Torrey House in Carrara has been restored. The interior marble staircase and the tiled ceiling are part of the original design.



Original marble staircase Floor Plan Original frescoed ceiling

The overall design of the Torrey House as stated from the sale's website: CARRARA - HOUSE " TORREY-FRANKLIN " - Studio Bergamaschi Immobiliare in Lunigiana

In the central area, convenient to services but reserved; WE SELL important and spacious APARTMENT in a historic building, in the nineteenth century seat of the American embassy and later home of the American Torrey-Franklin family. The house of about 300sqm, finely restored, is on two floors, served by a large and spectacular marble staircase, original frescoed ceilings, inlaid marble floors and parquet in the sleeping area. TERRACE overlooking the Carrione stream. On the GROUND FLOOR it is divided into: entrance room, stairway room, hallway, large living

room with bow window, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and storage room in the mezzanine. On the FIRST FLOOR: master bedroom with bow window and exclusive bathroom, double bedroom with study and private bathroom, study / bedroom.

The place in Leghorn associated with the Bowker, Torrey & Company was at Via degli Scali Corso 1, the first floor of the building. There is no extant photograph of the exterior or interior of the building itself. The area was severely damaged by Allied bombardment of the city of Livorno in World War II. Today the area is known as the Via della Madonna along the picturesque canal. In the 19th Century, it was a great location for storing the marble from Carrara and loading it onto ships bound for America. A railroad from Carrara to the sea would later facilitate the massive exportation of marble.

Italian researcher, Matteo Giunti, was able to discover a few records about Franklin Torrey during Torrey's days in Leghorn from the Livorno Chamber of Commerce archives. From the file in the Antiche Ditte, which dealt with companies before 1900, there was a document dated September 18, 1866, for the liquidation of the company signed by Franklin Torrey. In a city guide of Leghorn in 1872, Franklin was listed as a merchant of raw materials. He did have an official role in the Livorno Chamber of Commerce himself and resigned around 1890-91. Bowker, Torrey and Company did a successful business exporting marble from Leghorn to Boston. In 1874 alone, Boston newspapers reported virtually every ship carrying marble for the Bowker, Torrey and Company. It was the Gilded Age in America, and Carrara marble was in high demand. What is clear is that Franklin Torrey was a successful businessman in Italy.

The two children of Franklin and Sarah Torrey were born at Leghorn:



Charles Franklin Torrey (1858-1927) Sarah Vesta Herminie Torrey (1856-1922)

Both pictures taken in May 1863, Leghorn Italy. Courtesy of Norwell Historical Society.

Sarah Vesta Herminie Torrey (1856-1922) grew up in Italy and toured Europe. She married well and became a Boston socialite and a patroness of the arts. A brief biographical sketch claimed rightly that: She was born at Livorno in Tuscany, Italy, to American parents. She met her husband, Edward Julius Berwind (1848-1936) in London while he was doing business there with her brother, Charles Torrey. (Americanaristocracy.com). Her husband, Edward Berwind, would form one of the largest coal mining businesses in the world, building the Berwind-White Corporation in financial partnership with J P Morgan. They purchased The Elms mansion and created a remarkable Gilded Age home.



Edward Julis Berwind Sarah Vesta Herminie Torrey
Americanaristocracy.com Americanaristocracy.com



The Elms, the Berwind mansion in New Port, Rhode Island that was furnished with marble from the Bowker, Torrey & Company.



Interior view of The Elms: The Elms | Newport Mansions

Charles Franklin Torrey (1858-1927) also had an accurate but brief biological sketch at the website: Americaaristocracy.com. Born at Livorno in Tuscany, Italy, to American parents. He graduated in law from Trinity College, Cambridge. In London, he became the managing agent for the Atlantic Transport Line organized by his close friend Bernard N. Baker and financed by his soon-to-be brother-in-law, Edward Berwind. He sat on several boards and was Commissioner of Taxes for the City of London. He was Chairman of Frederick Leyland & Co., and of the London General Shipowner's Society. When his brother-in-law, Edward Berwind, died, aside from Berwind's unmarried sister, Julia, the other principal beneficiary of his immense estate (valued at some \$34 million) was Charles' wife, Margaret. Margaret grew up at her family's ancestral home, Heacham Hall in Norfolk, and the Torreys kept a weekend house, Mill House, on the estate, otherwise living in London. When Charles died, his obituary recalled that he, "possessed a distinctive manner of extreme courtesy". He and Margaret were the parents of 3-sons: Gerald, Eustace, and Eric.

The Torrey residence in Florence, where Franklin and Sarah spent most of their retirement was located at Piazza degli Zuavi, changed to 7 and 8 Piazza Vittorio Veneto. The building has been subdivided into two units and underwent renovations, but the exterior is very similar to when the Torreys occupied the house. By 1910, the Torrey's had moved to a newly constructed residence at Viale Mazzini 26, possibly because the previous home was connected with the Bowker, Torrey and Company. The business was in receivership in 1910 with an American judge determining the company's assets among the heirs of Edwin Bowker and Charles Torrey, the two senior members who had founded the marble firm.



Torrey house at Piazza degli Zuavi, front and side view.

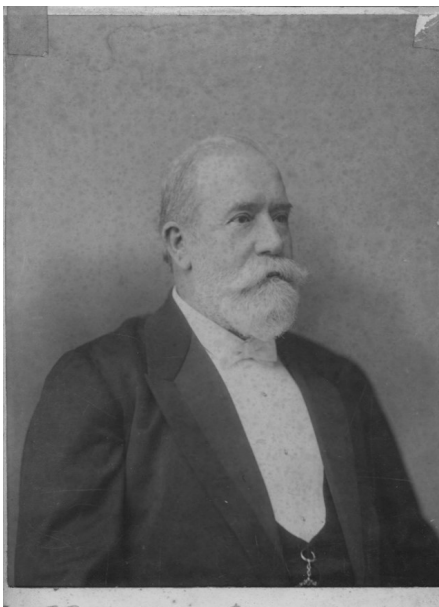


Back view of the Torrey house at Piazza degli Zuavi.

The Torrey's retired to Florence in their advanced years and were social leaders of the American Community in the city. Here are the last photographs of them in Florence.



Sarah Lincoln Spinney Torrey in an Edwardian era gown.
Courtesy of of Norwell Historical Society.



Franklin Torrey in his final years in Florence.
Courtesy of of Norwell Historical Society..

Although there are some brief biographical sketches of Franklin Torrey, the information can be a bit exaggerated. He has a brief biographical sketch from the website, Americanaristocracy.com:

In 1856, Messrs Bowker, Torrey & Co., of Boston, Massachusetts, were recognized as the leading marble-workers and proprietors of perhaps the largest marble works in the United States. They owned one of the best marble quarries in Carrara (sic), Italy, from where they shipped about 1,800 tons annually. Franklin Torrey was then the junior partner (his brother Charles was the firm's senior partner with Edwin Bowker) and a "sculptor of much promise". He established himself at Carrara and "many of the firm's best monuments are now modelled by him and executed under his direction". He was described as a "pioneer of American Florence" in Italy. He was the American Consul at Florence and vice President of the Navy League. He was also the moving spirit in building St. James, the beautiful Episcopal Church that since 1908 has served the American colony in Florence. Franklin and his wife had one son and one daughter. Most of these points can be corroborated by the historical record. The National Archives, however, have no mention of Franklin Torrey as an American Consul in Carrara, Florence, Genoa, or Leghorn, all places mentioned in Boston and New York newspapers upon his death in 1912! Franklin was the junior partner in the Bowker, Torrey

and Company and handled most of the export of the Carrara marble through the port at Leghorn. Claiming he was a “sculptor of much promise” is hard to verify as there are only two known works of his extant: his family’s funeral monument in Massachusetts and the Sharpshooters monument on the Gettysburg battlefield in Pennsylvania. Franklin was active in Leghorn society and knew many people in both the American and British naval and mercantile fleets. The Torreys were active in retirement in the American community in Florence, and he did arrange for the marble and stone to complete St James Episcopal church there. The one sculpture that is extant and attributed to Franklin Torrey is the 2nd Company Massachusetts Sharp Shooters monument. He designed and completed the piece in Leghorn and had it shipped to Boston. It was then packed and placed on a train for its installation on the Battlefield of Gettysburg as part of the memorial cemetery.



Monument to the 2nd Company Massachusetts Sharp Shooters at Gettysburg by Franklin Torrey.

Franklin Torrey as a “promising sculptor” did several funeral monuments. Although he designed and crafted four statues for his parents’ memorial, they have been stolen over the years and there are no extant pictures.



David Torrey family monument designed and crafted by Franklin Torrey in Norwell, Massachusetts.

It was through his work with the Bowker, Torrey and Company that Franklin Torrey earned his successful reputation as a businessman. He managed to buy a quarry in Carrara for his company that provided some of the best quality

export marble. His last contribution to his company and his craft was completing the St James Episcopal church in Florence. The St James Episcopal church, Florence, Italy was constructed from 1908-1912. The church archives record its history on their website: Our church was the last work of an English architect prominent in the Gothic Revival movement of the late nineteenth century. The land was purchased in 1907 for \$12,822. Church construction, the organ, and other furnishings totaled \$66,556. More than half of the total funds were contributed by Edward Francis Searles. J. Pierpont Morgan donated \$10,000 after church representatives approached him, encouraged by his generosity to the Episcopal Church in Rome and his purchase of land for the Episcopal church of St. Paul's Within the Walls. After examining the architect's plans, Morgan found the building plans "inadequate" and requested more elaborate plans. When these were produced, so was his gift. (St James website)



(St James website: St. James Episcopal Church, Florence, Italy - an American Church)

Carrara marble covers the graves of both Frank and Sarah Torrey in the Allori Cemetery in Florence. In 2008, the graves had been overrun with English Ivy. The author of this article cut some away to take a photograph of their tombs