
IN SEARCH OF JAY COOKE

No. 1

April, 1996

Jay Who?

My Aunt, Laura Harding, died in August, 1994. As executor of her estate, I discovered, in her barn on Bayonet Farm in Holmdel, New Jersey, two large chests of personal effects, letters, photographs, clippings, records, bibles, etc., that had belonged to Jay Cooke and to his daughter and son-in-law C.D. Barney, with whom he had been living at the time of his death in 1905. I subsequently learned that the chests had been packed at the time of his death and kept by C.D. Barney; then at the time of *his* death transferred to one of his surviving daughters Emily Barney von Hiller; and then at her death to Laura's barn.

Browsing through this material, I became fascinated by what it conveyed of the life and times of this notable ancestor of ours, and I determined to learn more. Since, I have been reading everything I can get my hands on about him, visiting places with which he was associated and generally searching out Jay Cooke. My wife Biche (Anne) has not only tolerated but abetted this interest. Our visit to Sandusky and Gibraltar last summer was a real joy for both of us.

We have contacted institutions that have significant repositories of Jay Cooke material, or an interest in acquiring it, because it is apparent that some of the discovered material is rare and valuable and belongs in a place or places where it can be properly preserved and accessed by scholars. There is a continuing scholarly interest in Jay Cooke. In the words of the curator of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, "Jay Cooke is hot."

It occurred to me that this interest and these findings should be shared with Cooke's other descendants, and hence the idea for this newsletter. I have no very firm plan in mind, but the general purposes would be:

- To share my interest in Jay Cooke with his other descendants.
- To tap their knowledge of Cooke and Cooke sources -- perhaps in the form of material in their barns, attics and cellars, or as stories passed down through their families.
- To solicit their advice on the disposition of the "Bayonet Artifacts."
- To promote communication among members of the Cooke descendant family, who I find are often quite interested in cousins with whom they are out of touch.

In this first letter I will describe the Bayonet material, the institutions that might be candidates for their disposition and the main published sources of information about Jay Cooke. I am also enclosing a preliminary version of a chart of Jay Cooke descendants.

The Bayonet Material

The Gibraltar Records

In 1864, Cooke bought a small island in the harbor at Put-in-Bay, itself an island in Lake Erie near Sandusky. There Pitt Cooke, his brother, supervised the construction of a large stone summer house that still stands and is known as Cooke Castle. Cooke and his extended family spent several weeks there every spring and fall. In the summer, he invited members of the clergy for a couple of weeks of R and R at his expense. When Cooke died in 1905 the island passed to his daughter, Laura Cooke Barney, and from then until 1925 when it was sold it was mainly a summer retreat for the extended Barney family.

From the outset, it became the custom for some member of the family to write a record of each visit. At first, Cooke himself wrote most of the accounts; later the task was taken up by his son, Henry E. Cooke; and in the Barney years it was mostly Laura Barney.

Henry E. was an avid photographer, and he started the tradition of supplementing the text with candid photos of the goings-on. Towards the end of the Barney era, the photo trend took over and in the end the Gibraltar Records became a photo album.

The first four volumes of the Records were turned over to the buyer of Gibraltar, Julius Stone, a local industrialist. He in turn donated it to the Ohio State University, and Gibraltar has since been the site of the Stone Laboratory of Ohio State. The four Records volumes are in the Ohio State Library in Columbus. They were the principal source for a 1935 book by James Pollard, professor at Ohio State, called "Jay Cooke's Journal" (described further below.) In the introduction he thanks C.D. Barney for lending him volumes V and VI, which turned up at Bayonet Farm.

Volume V, 1889 - 1905

623 pages. Text interspersed with about 1000 candid photos. Both text and photos are principally contributed by Cooke's son Henry E. Cooke and are mostly in a humorous vein. A few entries by Jay Cooke.

Volume VI, 1906 - 1912

391 pages. Text interspersed with about 1000 photos. Contributors were mostly Laura Cooke Barney, Jay Cooke's daughter who inherited Gibraltar upon his death in 1905, and Henry E. Cooke, who appeared to alternate visits with the Barneys.

Volume VII, 1914 - 1920

230 pages. Mostly photos, some text by Laura Barney Cooke. The recorded visits were predominantly by Barneys. No record 1921-1925, leading up to the sale of Gibraltar in the latter year.

Gibraltar Autographs

In addition to the Records, visitors were encouraged to write comments and sign their names in a book of Autographs. There were two volumes, which Pollard

quoted from at length and which he also indicated he had borrowed from C.D. Barney.

"1865-1905"

Signatures and brief -- and not so brief -- comments by visitors. Many entries by Jay Cooke, who began writing here as his son took over the Records.

Readily recognized signatures include:

E.W.Clark (1865)
Salmon P. Chase (1865)
John Sherman (1865)
William Tecumseh Sherman (1866)
Benjamin F. Butler (1867)
Rutherford B. Hayes (1869)
Lucy Hayes (1869)
J. Haseltine Carstairs (1898)

"1905-1925"

Mostly just signatures of visitors. Barneys predominate. Except: William H. Taft (1908)

Ogontz Records

These records concern his mansion in Cheltenham Hills near Philadelphia which was started as the Civil War was ending and was occupied in 1866. It was one of the most opulent mansions of its time -- a time when the expression "rich as Jay Cooke" gained currency. He only occupied it for six years: In 1873 the bankruptcy of his firm led to the loss of all his properties, including Ogontz and Gibraltar. He regained his fortune in 1879 as the result of his involvement with the Horn Silver Mine, and repurchased both properties, but by that time he was widowed and the Ogontz furnishings had all been sold. In 1883 he leased the mansion for a nominal sum to a girls' school and supported it with characteristic largesse. Following his death, the School purchased the house and occupied it until 1916, when it was torn down.

"Visitors at Ogontz, 1866-1873"

The entries are by Dorothea Elizabeth Allen Cooke, Jay Cooke's wife, until her untimely death in 1871. Thereafter, their daughter Laura appears to be the author.

Records of Ogontz, 1866-1867

In Jay Cooke's hand. Administrative and accounting detail.

"Wages and Receipts," Jay Cooke, 1867-1873"

Packet of plans and sketches of Ogontz, including ironwork and plan of the first floor.

Manuscripts

Typescript of the handwritten portion of Jay Cooke's Memoir, with editing notations by him.

In 1894 when he was 73 Jay Cooke began a Memoir. The first third he wrote out himself; the second two thirds he dictated to Elizabeth Butler, his granddaughter. The Memoir -- the original is at Harvard -- was never published, but was quoted from extensively by his two biographers (see below).

Handwritten manuscript of the 1900 speech to the Firelands Historical Society. Cooke was a reluctant public speaker, but in 1900 he was persuaded to speak about his life and accomplishments to the local historical society in Sandusky. It was a big event, and the Society copyrighted the speech and sold copies for twenty cents a piece. Larson, in her 1936 biography, mentions borrowing the original from C.D. Barney.

Manuscript of Oberholzer Biography of Jay Cooke
Mostly typed with hand corrections.

Typescript of Oberholzer Biography of Jay Cooke

Letters

There are hundreds of letters, all in a jumble. I have only begun to sort them out, much less read more than a few of them. Some of the categories are:

- sympathy letters to Mrs. C.D. Barney (re death of Jay Cooke)
- personal letters Jay to Elizabeth (his wife)
- personal letters Elizabeth to Jay
- some correspondence with Salmon Chase
- some correspondence with his brother Henry
- correspondence with newspaper editors on issues of the day

Clippings

Many clippings saved by Jay Cooke about things that interested him.

Clippings about Jay Cooke collected by C.D. Barney over the years.

"In Memoriam, Jay Cooke, February 16, 1905"

Album filled with clippings of news accounts of Jay Cooke's death

Gibraltar Receipts

"For 29 successive years she would bundle up her receipted bills -- a package some 6 inches thick & forward to Phila for me to audit -- It is a fact that I never opened or in any way examined her bills or accounts -- I knew she was more economical than I & had my interests fully at heart." - Jay Cooke, Autographs, 1893, upon the death of Anna C. McMeens ("Aunty Mac"). Here is a generous sample of those receipts.

Books

The bulk of the contents of the chests consists of books from the library of Jay Cooke or the Barneys. Most have dedications in the flyleaf that indicate who

they are from and to. They reflect a wide range of interests, and include religious tracts, novels, poetry, etc. Notable among them are:

Fourteen Bibles, many from the students of his Sunday School classes. There is a Cooke family Bible and a Barney family Bible, each with a section recording births, deaths and marriages.

"Josephus" In German. Illustrated with woodcuts. 1590.

Pretty good condition with some bookworm holes.

Letter tucked into book says:

"My Dear Mr. Cooke,

It gives me great pleasure to present you with a very old copy of Josephus--it has just arrived from Europe--and with it wish you a very merry Christmas.

Sincerely,
Jacob Loeb"

Jacob Loeb was a neighbor in Cheltenham Hills (Ogontz).

"Society Silhouettes," by Laura Cooke Barker, Helman Taylor Company, Cleveland, 1898

Flyleaf: "To Mary E. Cooke with the love of her sister Laura Cooke Barker."

Both were the daughters of Pitt Cooke, Jay's brother.

"Twenty-Five Hymns from the Hymnal Set to New Tunes", by Rev. Henry E. Cooke, George W. Jacobs & Co., Phila, 1906.

The dedication reads:

"In loving memory of one whose life was in itself a hymn of noble truths; whose character was resonant with ever-changing and ever-beautiful harmonies, supporting melodies of strong and majestic purpose.

"The composer dedicates these tunes to his father, Jay Cooke."

There are over seventy copies, and although the tunes were published the year after his father's death, perhaps the proud father -- and investor -- had placed a large order.... In any case, there are enough copies for each Henry E. descendant to have one.

Photographs

Cardboard box of Jay Cooke photos

Photo album "Jay Cooke, August 10, 1885"

Pictures of Ogontz (House in Philadelphia)

Cardboard box of photos

Album of baby pictures.

Package containing two portrait photos of Jay Cooke

Formal photos of Jay Cooke, Robert Showalter, Dr. E.W. Showalter. 6 copies.

Photo of bust of Chief Ogontz

Family photo, Sandusky

Personal Effects

Items such as:

Box of gloves

Box of eyeglasses and cases

Pair of shoes

Pair of slippers

J.E. Caldwell desk clock with fancy base

Business Documents

Miscellaneous documents such as:

"Report of the President and Directors of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company to the Shareholders, September 27, 1876"

Several maps of the territories through which the Northern Pacific was to pass.

Notebook recording handwritten business agreements.

"The Horn Silver Mine", a report, March 1879

Institutions Interested in Jay Cooke Material

Much of the Bayonet material, particularly the Gibraltar documents and the letters, are important records both for the light they shed on Jay Cooke, an important Civil War era figure, and for their description of life in the second half of the nineteenth century. While they are in quite good shape considering the casual way they have been packed and stored, they need careful attention if they are to be preserved for future generations.

With this in mind Biche and I have corresponded with likely institutions, visited several of them and sought the advice of knowledgeable persons. Here are our findings and recommendations:

Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA

At Cooke's death, probably at his bequest, the bulk of his business records and correspondence went here. The "extensive collection" occupying sixty archive-feet of space contains most of his correspondence

before 1873, posters, circulars, clippings and a miscellany of other material. This is the mother lode of Jay Cooke material.

I wrote to the curator enclosing a description of the Bayonet material. Receiving no reply, I called several times before getting through. Then the reply was mostly a listing of what they did not want...However, I did learn that there is a project afoot to microfilm the entire collection so that it can be shared with other institutions. It was in this connection that I learned that "Jay Cooke is hot".

Baker Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

These papers were discovered by a Mr. Eaton, who was connected to the Library, on a visit to Jay Cooke, Jr. in 1925. After consulting with C.D. Barney and J. Horace Harding, Cooke donated the papers to Harvard in 1926.

There are forty archive-feet of documents, a miscellany dating from the 1830's but principally from the period after 1873. There are many business agreements and documents pertaining to the Northern Pacific Railroad. There are a few boxes of letters, mostly from ministers grateful for his donations, and there is the original of his Memoir.

Biche and I visited the Library, which is a high-powered operation. The bulk of their collection is stored in an unnamed suburban climate-controlled underground vault. They went out of their way to show us anything we wished to see, and expressed a keen interest in all the business material, in the original of the 1900 speech and in the typescript of the memoir.

Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN

They have a "vast quantity" of material pertaining to Cooke and the Northern Pacific Railroad and this "substantially lessens our interest in the individual items you have listed." In effect, they hoped we would give it to somebody else.

The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

We have corresponded and they have confirmed that they have the first four volumes of the Gibraltar Records that came to the University at the time they acquired Gibraltar. Further, the Records are housed in a "spacious new environment that is ideal for preservation and for research.." They are keen to get the remaining three volumes and the two-volume Autographs.

Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH

They have eleven archive-feet of Jay Cooke material, including correspondence between the Cooke family and Anna McMeens, the Gibraltar household manager and family friend, and business records of the bankruptcy and the Cookes' western land interests.

They would very much like to enhance their collection with selected original materials, and were willing to travel East to inspect it.

Follett House Museum, Sandusky, OH

This is a nifty local museum housed in a Greek Revival townhouse built in 1834. The collection and display are primarily known as the work of Helen Hansen, recently retired, who is a complete authority on everything to do with Sandusky history. It has no formal archive of Jay Cooke material, nor archival facilities, but aspires to become "a major research center/manuscript repository." One would have to wait and see....

Biche and I visited last summer and highly recommend the museum. I am told that they are currently mounting an exhibit of Gibraltar photographs borrowed from Hayes Library (see below).

Firelands Historical Society, Norwalk, OH

Norwalk is only a few miles from Sandusky. "Firelands" is the name given to that part of Ohio which was set aside after the Revolution to compensate the "fire sufferers" of Connecticut -- people in the towns punished by the British for helping the colonists' cause.

The Society has a museum very worth visiting -- it includes a peace treaty signed by Chief Ogontz -- and a small library with books about the area. The library houses all the back issues of the Firelands Pioneer, which reports on the Society meetings and is a rich source of local history. This is the publication that reported Cooke's 1900 speech. Many of the back issues can be purchased.

Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library, Fremont, OH

Hayes was a contemporary of Cooke and a frequent visitor to Gibraltar. He was Governor of Ohio and a one term U.S. President. He built a beautiful Victorian mansion in Fremont, a few miles from Sandusky, and after his presidency he and his descendants built a substantial library to house his presidential papers. The property, known as Spiegel Grove, is now operated by the Ohio Historical Society as the Hayes Presidential Center, and both the house and library are open to the public.

The library is "the first presidential library in the United States, with 75,000 volumes and over 3,100 linear feet of manuscript and photographic material pertaining to the Gilded Age [roughly the period between the Civil War and First World War] and local history."

Biche and I visited last summer, and were most impressed. The library already has the Eleutheros Cooke family papers (Jay's father) and Charles E. Frohman, a noted local historian, left his entire archive to Hayes, including outstanding Gibraltar photographs. The facilities are first rate, and the staff was friendly, knowledgeable and very interested.

In fact, Hayes is interested in obtaining *all* the Bayonet material. I have attached their letter at the end of the Newsletter.

Our Recommendations

We are very much pre-disposed to donating all -- or at least most -- of the Bayonet material to Hayes. We had a reservation about the Gibraltar Records and Autographs, since the other volumes are at Ohio State, but we expressed

these reservations to both parties and they reached an amicable agreement (see the Hayes letter.) In effect, Hayes would get the Bayonet volumes and each would copy their volumes for the other. Hayes has the right location, the right focus and the right facilities to house this material. Further, both Helen Hansen, mentioned above, and Roger Long, local historian and expert on Cooke and Gibraltar, strongly recommend Hayes.

The only exceptions to giving all the material to Hayes might be:

- Harvard should have the edited typescript of the Jay Cooke memoir, to go with their original.
- Perhaps Pennsylvania should have the material pertaining to the Ogontz mansion, if they deign to accept it...
- The Cooke and Barney family Bibles should be retained by descendants.
- Multiple copies of items, such as Rev. Henry E.'s hymns, could be retained by descendants.

A Jay Cooke Bibliography

In case you would like to read up, here are three books entirely about Jay Cooke. They are available in many libraries.

Ellis Paxton Oberholzer, *Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1907) Two volumes.

It appears that Oberholzer started work on material that Cooke set aside for him before he died, which enabled him to complete the work only two years later. It is comprehensive up through the Civil War, sketchy thereafter. There are quite a few good illustrations. The tone is admiring and non-critical, and it appears that he relied almost exclusively on the material that Cooke made available to him.

Henrietta Larson, *Jay Cooke, Private Banker* (Cambridge, 1936)

Larson was a professor at Harvard Business School writing with the perspective of thirty years distance. She was the first to use the Baker Library material, and put more emphasis on the years after the Civil War. She is not uncritical of Cooke, and has insightful comments on his character and motivation. Best, she sees him in the context of his times and is able to highlight the extraordinary nature of his accomplishments.

James E. Pollard, *The Journal of Jay Cooke, or the Gibraltar Records, 1865-1905* (Columbus, 1935)

Pollard was a professor at Ohio State and the book is based on the Gibraltar Records that the University acquired in 1925, plus the volumes lent to him by C.D. Barney, volumes now among the Bayonet materials. The first part is a good summary of Cooke's life and work, with an emphasis on Gibraltar. The remaining parts quote extensively from the Records with many annotations. It's quite interesting, but there's an awful lot of detail about how many fish were caught, etc.

Chart of Jay Cooke Descendants

I had no idea what I was getting into when I decided it would be useful to chart Jay Cooke's descendants. It has taken countless phone calls and sleuthing to compile the attached chart, and although I have uncovered over 350 Jay Cooke descendants I realize that there are still more out there -- mostly in the incredibly fecund Butler branch. Enough, already, you Butlers!

Now that I see what I have wrought I'm not sure what to do with it. But here it is for your edification and future reference. There are gaps, and I promise to issue a more complete version with a future letter. I am also collecting addresses, and perhaps we might eventually want to share these too -- with permission, of course, from those affected.

Future Topics

Here are some of the things I might write about in future editions of the newsletter:

- Report of our visit to Gibraltar
- The project to restore Cooke Castle
- A report on the content of the Bayonet letters
- What exactly did Jay Cooke do that is reflected in the phrase "financed the Civil War?"
- What do we know about Chief Ogontz?
- What was Jay Cooke really like?

Feedback, Please

- Please write (or phone) me with your views on the disposition of the Bayonet material.
- Please tell me about any Jay Cooke material that you have.
- With respect to the future of this newsletter, I welcome your advice and suggestions.
- Would you be interested in hearing more, or has your interest in Jay Cooke been -- shall we say -- more than satisfied already?

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