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# IN SEARCH OF JAY COOKE

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No. 2

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## Jim Who?

You may have wondered what became of me after the promise of the first newsletter in April, 1996. Well, the short answer is that I got busy with other matters. But that did not stop the pursuit of "Cookery" entirely: Biche and I have visited Sandusky and Gibraltar two more times, and I have traveled to Columbus once, to visit the Ohio State and Ohio Historical Society libraries. On each visit we have been enthusiastically received: There is a lasting interest in Jay Cooke and his times in his native state.

## Hayes Library Donations

You will recall that we were considering what to do with the Cooke material from Laura's barn. I recommended that the bulk of it should be donated to the Hayes Library in Fremont, Ohio, near Sandusky because "Hayes has the right location, the right focus and the right facilities to house this material."

Those of you that expressed views agreed with this plan. Accordingly, on our visit in the summer of 1996 we brought out the three volumes of Gibraltar Records and two volumes of Autographs. That fall, the bulk of the remaining material was donated.

The donation was a big event in the life of the library. I am enclosing a copy of their newsletter, which also contains an excellent summary of Cooke's life. If you find yourself in the vicinity of Sandusky (near Cleveland) I would strongly recommend a visit to the Library, and to the outstanding Hayes mansion also on the Hayes Presidential Center property.

Still to be donated is some material for Harvard and some for the Pennsylvania Historical Society. I still have a bunch of miscellaneous clippings and several hundred letters -- mostly personal -- that I intend to study in the years ahead.

## The Gibraltar Records

You may recall that Ohio State has the first four volumes of the records and Hayes now has the last three. Nan Card of Hayes took on the project of microfilming all the volumes, and now each institution has a complete set on film.

While in Columbus in October of last year, I got to spend a day with the OSU volumes through the courtesy of Dr. Raimond Goerler, the head of the University Archives. While Pollard in his *The Journal of Jay Cooke, or the Gibraltar Records, 1865-1905* excerpted most of the entries by Cooke himself, there are

many interesting passages by other visitors. The volumes, which are in excellent condition, are much slimmer than the volumes now at Hayes, because the introduction of photographs by Henry E. only started in 1884.

To recapitulate, here is a description of the entire Gibraltar Record series:

Volume I, 1865 - 1867 (At Ohio State)

220 pages. All text, densely written. Besides the Jay Cooke entries covering his visits with his family -- generally at the beginning and end of summer -- there are interesting entries by ministers of various denominations, who were invited, all expenses paid, during the middle of the summer.

Volume II, 1867 - 1870 (At Ohio State)

400 pages. All text. About half by visiting ministers.

Volume III, 1870 - 1872 (At Ohio State)

220 pages. All text. About half by visiting ministers.

Volume IV, 1872 - 1888 (At Ohio State)

300 pages. All text. There are no entries from 1873 to 1880, during the period following Jay Cooke's bankruptcy, when Gibraltar stood empty and for sale. In 1880, with the restoration of his finances through his connection with the Horn Silver Mine, he was able to buy the property back from the Estate and family visits resumed. However, by now the extended family was large, and the ministerial visits ended. In August, 1884, Jay's sons Jay, Jr. and Henry E. began taking and inserting the extraordinary photographs that were to be a major feature of the later volumes. This volume contains about 150 photos from the '84 to '88 visits.

Volume V, 1889 - 1905 (At Hayes)

606 pages. Text interspersed with 805 candid photos. Both text and photos are principally contributed by Henry E. Cooke and are mostly in a humorous vein. A few entries by Jay Cooke.

Volume VI, 1906 - 1912 (At Hayes)

394 pages. Text interspersed with about 910 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 (At Hayes)

251 pages. Mostly photos (642), 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.

While the people in the photos are usually not explicitly identified, the accompanying text gives many clues. Brenda Young, a volunteer from Fremont attending Bowling Green State University, spent several months systematically identifying the people in all of the photographs, and Hayes is creating a database of these identifications. When Biche and I visited last summer we were amazed at her ability to accurately identify family members in pictures she had not seen before. In one picture of the "Barney Tribe" arriving at Gibraltar in 1886, she corrected our reversal of Dorothea and Kitty Barney.

This of course raises the issue of how to give a wider distribution to the material in these records. One possibility would be to publish some or all of the material on CD-ROM, a computer medium that can be practical for the limited distribution of a large volume of text and photographs. In October, I went to Aspen, Colorado to explore this possibility with Nick De Wolf, a Cooke descendant (Barney branch) and computer expert. We did some trial scanning of a duplicate record of the 1886 visit, a document lent to me by Henry E.'s grandson, also a Henry E. It looks quite promising, and we will continue to work on the project and other possibilities of reproduction with the people at Hayes.

## **Cooke Castle Restoration**

Jay Cooke acquired Gibraltar Island in 1864, as the Civil War was ending, with the intention of using it as a summer residence. His father and brother, Pitt, supervised the construction of the stone house which still stands and is known as Cooke's Castle. In correspondence from Eleutheros during the construction, he told his son:

"It will be a glorious resort and a truly appropriate retreat for you from the dust & cares & business and -- constructed from imperishable materials. It will stand for ages & thus be always valuable.....I begin to admire the taste and wisdom, which have led you my dear Jay, to consecrate so large a portion of your means to the construction of an imperishable edifice, which, it is hoped, will form an additional incentive to your more frequent visits to your cherished birthplace, and which, defying the storms that lash its rock-bound shores, is destined to stand for Ages, a proud memorial of your love of Home, and public spirit."

And in fact it is still standing and in remarkably good shape.

In 1925, the Barneys sold Gibraltar to Julius Stone, a Columbus industrialist and Trustee of Ohio State, who donated it to the Ohio State University. Ever since, it has been the site of the Franz Theodore Stone Laboratory, named after Stone's father. Besides the original Castle, the Barney Cottage, built in 1907 to help house the burgeoning Barney family, still stands.

Ohio State has added several buildings to the site, including a lab building and a dormitory. The Castle was used for many years as a men's dorm, but was

shuttered fifteen ten years ago when the plumbing and electrical systems gave out. Recently, the University has decided to restore the Castle for "adaptive re-use" as a library for the Lab and a place to house small conferences and visiting V.I.P.s. An architectural firm has been hired and the work is scheduled to begin in Spring, 1998.

On my Columbus visit a year ago I met with John Kleberg, the Ohio State official who is spearheading the project. I expressed a strong interest on behalf of Jay Cooke's descendants, and asked how Cooke's descendants might help. It turns out that OSU funds should take care of the basic refurbishing of the exterior and interior, but that private funds would be necessary if the project included refurbishing the interior in the style of Cooke's day. I volunteered to help raise funds for this aspect of the restoration.

The restoration will be done in stages and will stretch over several years. Don't send any money yet...

## **Cooke Descendant's Reunion at Gibraltar**

Biche and I have now visited Gibraltar on three successive summers and have been cordially welcomed by the Manager, John Hageman, and -- last summer -- by Jeff Reutter, the Director of the Stone Lab and several other organizations dedicated to preservation and enhancement of the Lake Erie ecosystem. They have invited the descendants of Jay Cooke to hold a reunion at Gibraltar next fall after the close of summer classes. Preliminary information about the reunion is enclosed. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about Jay Cooke and his time, meet fellow descendants, learn about the important work of the Stone Lab - and have a good time.

## **Updated Chart of Jay Cooke Descendants**

Attached is an updated descendant chart. Several of you sent me updates and corrections, and I am aware of three births:

Rebecca Dinsley Cooke Story, June 26, 1996 (Barney)

Isabel Marie Nixon, December 13, 1996 (Jay, Jr.)

Charles Barney Harding Michie, August 29, 1997 (Barney)

Surely there have been more births. Please keep me updated.

## **Notes**

I received many notes of interest and appreciation in response to the first newsletter. I enjoy hearing from you all, and am encouraged to continue with the Search and with the newsletter.

James Harding

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