

JOHN JEREMY PAPERS

A Special Collection in

The Archives and Library of

THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM

75 Stuyvesant Place, Staten Island, New York 10301

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NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS & RECORDS COMMISSION

Grant Number 79-124

PROVENANCE:

These papers were rescued from destruction by Edward C. Delavan after Mr. Crooke's death in 1911 and deposited with the Institute. They bear accession number 396.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

John Jeremy Crooke was born to modest wealth in Columbia County, New York, at Stuyvesant on the Hudson, on January 22, 1824. His mother was Anna (Neher) Crooke, born on March 5, 1799 in Red Hook, Dutchess County. His father Charles Crooke, a successful merchant, was born on June 18, 1794, in Rhineback, also Dutchess County. Charles Crooke's ancestry on this side of the Atlantic can be traced back to a John Crooke who came to America in 1670 from Oxfordshire, England, plied the copper trade and became a Trinity Church (NYC) Vestryman and Warden at the time of and subsequent to the church's incorporation. An 1839 family Bible extract belonging to Charles Crooke is in the collection and lists the birth records of the Charles Crooke family including all of their nine children. There are also notations on the deaths of various family records.

John Crooke bought land in 1857 from Edwin R. Bennett on Staten Island. He continued to purchase Staten Island property from 1863 to 1866, assembling a total of over 320 acres in the vicinity of Great Kills or Giffords. A part of his property, called Crooke's Point, has recently been incorporated into the Gateway National Recreation Area.

He was an engineer, physical and natural scientist, industrialist, miner, essayist, poet, businessman, photographer, and inventor. Patents for many of his inventions fueled the corporate enterprises which he set up. He located and bought many mines in Colorado-Ute, Ulay, Red Mountain, Engineer Mountain, North Star and Royal Tiger Lodes.

His illustrious example in the 1860's and thereafter helped to influence the life of a Staten Island neighbor: Nathaniel Lord Britton (1859-1934) was assisted in the collegiate pursuit of a career in geology. Much later, Dr. Britton was able to reciprocate as Director of the New York Botanical Garden, helping Crooke to sell some of his books for income purposes. Some years after Crooke's death Britton, in his capacity as board member of the Institute, established a fund for John C. Crooke in his memory.

In the closing years of Crooke's life he made contributions of his various scientific collections to Columbia University as his high school alma mater, the American Museum of Natural History, and the New York Botanical Garden.

At his death he was alone, except for a personal retainer. His funeral services were held in his home and he was buried in the family plot in Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery, Dutchess County, New York. His newspaper obituaries were short but an extensive memorial written by William T. Davis was printed in the Institute's *Proceedings* and has been inserted into the collection. Crooke died in 1911.

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

This 34 cubic-foot collection covers a period between 1861 and 1911 and includes a geographical area with the continental United States of New York City, New Jersey, Connecticut, Chicago, White Plains, Poughkeepsie, and Colorado; in Europe, there are references to London, Paris, Belgium, and Germany. The documents are entirely manuscript including business contracts and corporate records for Crooke's various businesses and manufactories: foil manufactories in Chicago, mines in Colorado and Nevada, and a head business office in New York City.

He successfully forged an empire out of Colorado silver and other minerals mines with far flung bases in New York, London, Chicago, St. Louis and Silverton, Colorado. He later lost it all through his own miscalculations of the winds of economic and political change in the late 1890s. He portrayed the image of the successful Victorian gentleman imbued with a sense of Christian charity, who supported his church and contributed to the support of various widows and families.

He was also deeply interested in botany, flora and fauna of everywhere he traveled and collected and made notations accordingly in his journals and letters.

The collection lends itself to editing by many sources: including publishing, theatrical drama, television production, and motion picture screen plays. These are suggested by the Renaissance nature of the interests evidenced by Crooke.

The collection has letters that suggest that his personality may have been as diverse as his talents and interests. He could be coldly objective and explode in a towering rage in his business dealings. And in the social realm, he could be a charming and affectionate person, able and willing to write essays, sonnets, or poems to express the sentiments he felt.

The letters express familial concern and are frequent, especially from his unmarried sister Julia, whose myriad comments on the family and the state of the family and world are revealing. She may have mirrored Crooke's own prejudices and bigotry about all of those who were not family.

ARRANGEMENT:

When the collection was originally deposited with the Institute in 1911, it was in large deteriorating trunks with most of the content tied in bundles. The materials were moved several times and otherwise not touched until the late 1960s. At that time, the trunks had totally deteriorated—the bottoms had fallen out—and the bundles were distributed over the closet floor when the trunks were lifted because their condition was not realized. The bundles were restored in boxes and, with the help of several volunteers, attempts were made to record each bundle.

Two sets of listings were made according to bundle contents. Originally the bundles were kept together as they had been tied and each bundle given an alphabetical description: A to Z, and AA to DD. The letters were read by volunteers, identification assigned, and lists of abstracts were made according to each bundle. Business papers had originally been separated from family letters and this was continued.

Therefore, under the National Historical Publications & Records Commission Grant, all the groups have been kept in this form with the exception of the N group which was withdrawn and rearranged by source. It is now classified under Family and Personal Letters and under Correspondence. Letters which had not been subjected to this earlier treatment have been arranged chronologically.

All oversized materials have been unfolded and placed either in print boxes or in map cases. Crooke's journals and diaries were arranged as a part of the grant.

The negatives and photographs taken by Crooke have been stored and inventoried as are a number of artifacts.

RELATED MATERIALS:

Through CTA funding, an index of the various personal names associated with corporate enterprises has been partially recorded on catalog cards. The business connections ranged from tinfoil for tobacco to the extraction and processing of iron, silver, gold, copper and lead.

The original abstracts of letters filed under alphabetical identifications are also available for consultation.

The photographs were cataloged under a New York State Council on the Arts grant in 1968 and can be located through the Institute's Union Catalog.

Please consult the Davis Collection (26.wtD) for letters to Davis from Crooke and also Mr. Davis' own mementos.

Richard Boulton Dickenson

July 3, 1980

DESCRIPTION OF CONTENTS AND SCOPE OF COLLECTION

CROOKE Collection: John Jeremy Crooke (JJC) born January 22, 1824
died April 11, 1911
(87y2m20d)

Engineer, Physical and Natural Scientist, Industrialist, Miner, Essayist, Poet, Businessman,
Photographer, Inventor

Foreword

The following box lists have been compiled with funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

When the Crooke Collection was originally deposited with the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences by Edward Delevan Jr. in 1912, it was in large deteriorating trunks with most of the contents tied in bundles. When the collection was first being arranged the rationale for each bundle was not clear; therefore, rather than disturb what may have been a purposeful arrangement by JJC himself, the arrangement was not disturbed and they became the basis of the subsequent classifications—such as A through DD, Business Papers, post-1900 letters—given to the collection by indefatigable volunteers over the past 15 years.

Under the NHPRC Grant, the N group was withdrawn and rearranged by source. It is now classified under Family and Personal Letters and Correspondence. Additionally, all oversized materials were extracted from their previous place, spread out and either placed in print boxes or in a map case drawer especially provided for the Crooke Collection. JJC's journals and diaries were arranged as a part of the NHPRC grant, but not the glass negatives and a number of artifacts (e.g. account books, check books, shares book, wallets, purses).

Attempting, at this time, to shape a new order or arrangement on this extensive and variegated collection would have been too wasteful of time and inconsiderate of the previous arrangement and indexing by card files that dedicated volunteers had given to this collection. The most feasible solution to this dilemma was to retain as much of the former order as possible and at such time as an editor of the papers can be found, a totally new arrangement can then be imposed on the collection. The collection lends itself to editing by many sources, including publishing interests, theatrical drama, television production, and motion picture screenplay. These settings are suggested by the Renaissance nature of the interests evidence by this one man—John Jeremy Crooke, a little known 19th century American titan who bestrode the arenas of Industry, Science, Technology, Commerce and Culture. He successfully forged an empire out of Colorado silver and other minerals mines with far flung bases in New York, London, Chicago, St. Louis and Silverton, Colorado, later losing it all through his own miscalculations of the winds of economic and political change in the late 1890's. While at his apogee he was able to portray the image of the successful Victorian gentleman imbued with a sense of Christian charity, who supported his church (Episcopalian: Church of the Holy Comforter), and contributing to the support of various widows and families. By birth and by breeding, he was a blue blood with connections to a host of notable and influential Hudson River Valley and New York City families (e.g. Livingston, Beekman, Jay, Astor, Fish, Roosevelt, Rutgers, Van Rensselaer, DePeyster, Hamilton, Schuyler, Stuyvesant), and by

dint of application of his own considerable talents he furthered these ties to his far flung national and international business interests. He never married but he cherished the memory of and extolled the virtues of family among his brothers and sisters and their families.

The collection has letters that suggest that his personality may have been as diverse as were his talents. He could be coldly objective and explode in a towering rage in his business dealings; and in his social realm he could be a charming and affectionate person able and willing to write essays, sonnets or poems to express the sentiments he felt.

Included in the collection are a large number of letters from his family members, including his father, Charles, his brothers Lewis, Robert and Henry, and especially his unmarried sister, Julia. Julia Livingston Crooke wrote frequently to her brother and gave myriad comments on the family and the state of the world. She may have mirrored JJC's prejudices about all of those who were not family. Particularly singled out for criticism were Yankees, Jews, Blacks and Irishmen. American Indians were looked down upon by JJC, as well as southerners during the Civil War.

BIOGRAPHY:

John Jeremy Crooke was born to modest wealth in Columbia County, New York at Stuyvesant on the Hudson, on January 22, 1824. His mother was Anna (Neher) Crooke, born March 5, 1799, at Red Hook, Dutchess County. His father, Charles Crooke, a successful merchant, was born on June 18, 1794 in Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, New York. Charles Crooke's ancestry on this side of the Atlantic can be traced back to a John Crooke who came to America in 1670 from Oxfordshire, England, plied the copper trade and became a Trinity Church (N.Y.C.) Vestryman and Warden at the time of and subsequent to the church's incorporation.

An 1839 family Bible extract, belonging to Charles Crooke, is in the collection and lists the birth records of the Charles Crooke family, including all of their nine children. There are also notations on the deaths of various family records.

The original collection began with an 1861 letter from JJC to a certain "William Henry" or "Bill" and ends with a 1910 letter from his widowed youngest sister, Margaret Doughty.

Staten Island

In 1857, JJC had bought land in Staten Island from Edwin R. Bennett. He continued to purchase Staten Island property from 1863 to 1866, assembling a total of over 320 acres in the vicinity of Great Kill or Giffords. A part of his property, called Crooke's Point, has recently been incorporated into the Gateway National Recreation Area.

Inventions and Businesses

The patents for the numerous inventions that fueled many of the corporate enterprises are in the collection, divided between grey boxes and oversize boxes. The documents regarding the many corporate enterprises JJC undertook with his brother's in N.Y.C., Chicago, Colorado, and abroad are in the forms of business letters, corporate minutes, financial and legal records and stock shares. Related to this are deeds and maps for the Colorado mines—Ute, Ulay, Red Mountain, Engineer Mountain, North Star and Royal Tiger Lodes. Through CETA funding, an index of the various

personal names associated with these corporate enterprises has been partially recorded on 3x5 cards. The business connections ranged from tinfoil for tobacco to the extraction and processing of iron, silver, copper and lead.

Winter of Life

JJC's illustrious example in the 1860's and thereafter helped to influence the life of a Staten Island neighbor. Nathaniel Lord Britton (1859-1934) was assisted in the collegiate pursuit of a career in genealogy. Much later Mr. Britton, having retained his friendship with JJC, was able to reciprocate as Director of the N.Y. Botanical Garden by helping JJC to sell some of his books for income purposes. Some years after JJC's death Mr. Britton, in his capacity of board member of the S.I. Institute of Arts and Sciences, established a fund for John J. Crooke in his memory.

In the closing years of JJC's life, he made contributions of various scientific collections to Columbia University as his high school alma mater, the American Museum of Natural History and the N.Y. Botanical Garden.

At his death he was alone, except for a personal retainer. His funeral services were held in his home and he was buried in the family plot in Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery, Dutchess County, N.Y. His newspaper obituary was a short but extensive one, written by William T. Davis and printed in the *Proceedings* of the Staten Island Association of Arts and Sciences. This 1911 article has been inserted into the collection.

SCOPE

The collection covers a period of 50 years (1861-1911) and includes a geographical area within the U.S.A. of New York City (particularly Lower Manhattan and Staten Island), New Jersey, Connecticut, Chicago, White Plains, Poughkeepsie, and Colorado. In Europe, there are references to London, Paris, Belgium and Germany within the 18 cubic foot boxes, 2 print boxes and 1 oversize map drawer.

Manuscript letters (1865-1910)	= 2,169
Print letters (1865-1910)	= 94
Business contracts, correspondence, and corporate records (1865-1910)	= 1,009 Mss.
Financial and legal records (1865-1909)	= 187 manuscripts
Patents and property records manuscripts	= 113
Journals	= 10
Personal finances, maps and drawings	= 164
Letters (1902-1909)	= 446 manuscripts

Special letters (1868-1912)	= 196 manuscripts
Manuscripts-oversize (1864-1903)	= 48
Print oversize (1864-1903)	= 54

JOHN JEREMY CROOKE PAPERS

Box Inventories:

Box 1/32	Folders A-F	Letters	1866-1903
Box 2/32	Folders G-L	Letters	1886-1910
Box 3/32	Folders M-O	Letters	1867-1904
Box 4/32	Folders P-R	Letters	1861-1911
Box 5/32	Folders S-W	Letters	1866-1910
Box 6/32	Folders X-BB	Letters	1864-1907
Box 7/32	Folders DD	Letters	1868-1911
Box 8/32		Business contracts and correspondence	1865-1899
Box 9/32		Business letters: A-G	1867-1910
Box 10/32		Business letters: G-N Business records: C-G	1867-1904 1855-1903

Box 11/32	Business and corporate records: J&L; A-F	1867-1903
	Business and corporate records: North Star Mining	1871-1900
	Other mining companies: Gold & Silver White Pine Bullion, Ute and Ulay, Crooke Mining & Smelting	1869-1892
Box 12/32	Financial and legal papers: "A"- "G"	1860-1897
Box 13/32	Patents and Property Records	1866-1901
Box 14/32	Journals	1865-1888
Box 15/32	Personal finances, extracts, drawings, maps & papers	1868-1910
Box 16/32	Letters	1902-1909
Box 17/32	Letters	1905-1907
Box 18/32	Special letters and papers	1868-1914
Box 19/32	Envelopes	
Box 20/32	Indexes-Letter Finding Aids	
Box 21/32	Glass negatives 999-06-999-152	c. 1866-1870
Box 22/32	Glass negatives 999-153-999-187	c. 1866-1870
Box 23/32	Glass negatives 999-188-999-229	c. 1866-1870
Box 24/32	Glass negatives 999-230-999-240	c. 1866-1870

Box 25/32	Glass negatives 999-241-999- un-numbered	c. 1866-1870
Box 26/32	Photographic prints 999-06- 999-121	c. 1866-1870
Box 27/32	Photographic prints 999-122- 999-169	c. 1866-1870
Box 28/32	Photographic prints 999-170- 999-229	c. 1866-1870
Box 29/32	Photographic prints 999-230- 999-254	c. 1866-1870
Box 30/32	Artifacts	
Print Box 31/32	Oversized materials	1864-1903
Print Box 32/32	Oversized materials	1854-1883
Map Case III d. 8	Oversized materials	1884-1889

JOHN JEREMY CROOKE PAPERS
John J. Crooke Estate:

Staten Islander, May 13, 1911 (Only the gist is given.)

(Legal notice) Julia L. Crooke, Margaret L. Doughty, William H. Crooke, Charles C. Emott, Laura Slade, Edmund Schaefer, Frederick Huston and William Best, the heirs and next of kin and persons interested in the estate of the late John J. Crooke.

They are to appear before the Surrogate of Richmond County at Richmond July 12, 1911 at 10:30 a.m. to attend the probate of the last will and testament of John J. Crooke, deceased and to show cause why Letters of Administration should not be granted to James L. Devlin, the petitioner, or to some other proper person.

Staten Islander, July 22, 1911 (p. 2, col. 6)

(Legal notice) To: George B. Kinkead, Cornelia D. Kinkead, Margaret Guilford, Enoch Rogers and Robert Knight, Jr., and heirs and next of kin, creditors and persons interested in the estate of John J. Crooke, deceased.

Since probate has been made of the last will and testament of John J. Crooke, deceased, and since James L. Devlin of Richmond County has lately applied to have Letters of Administration granted to the public administrator of Richmond County,

the above persons are to appear before the Surrogate of Richmond County, September 11, 1911 at 10:30 a.m. to show cause why Letters of Administration should not be granted to the public administrator.