

BAN
Papers of the Bancroft Family
1715-1984

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

The Bancrofts were a well-known Quaker family with Lancashire roots in the textile industries. A central figure was Elizabeth Wood (1777-1845). Her sister Martha (1788-1830) married the mill owner Jacob Bright of Rochdale and their son was John Bright (1811-1889), statesman, whose daughter Helen (1840-1927) was to marry the shoe maker William Stephens Clark (1839-1925) and to remove to Street, Somerset. Another brother John (1781-1848) had already settled in the USA.

Elizabeth married John Bancroft (1774-1852) in 1800 and had a large family of 13 children. They lived initially in Salford where their eldest John (1802-1882) was apprenticed to his father in the family chairmaking firm. Joseph Bancroft (1803-1874) was the second son and apprenticed to his uncle John Bright in his cotton mill in Rochdale. When the business foundered, the family moved to Garthgynan Farm, North Wales where they tried farming unsuccessfully.

John and Elizabeth Bancroft subsequently moved to the USA, where Elizabeth had spent some time in the Quaker communities prior to her marriage and where her brother John Wood had settled in Wilmington. John and Elizabeth's son John Bancroft junior had moved to Philadelphia in 1821 to set up a tallow chandler business. His parents and siblings joined him in 1822 (except Joseph Bancroft remained in Rochdale to complete his apprenticeship). In 1824 Joseph arrived in Wilmington, where the family had removed to set up a woollen/flannel mill. This business was later run by Joseph's brother Samuel later took this over although it failed in 1843.

Joseph took up a job as superintendent of William Young's cotton mill at Rockland on the Brandywine River. Having married Sarah Poole (1804-1896), daughter of William Poole and Sarah Sharpless, in 1829, two years later he purchased land to set up a cotton mill at Rockford nearby, with the help of Thomas Janvier. The business survived the great river flood of 1839 and a larger mill was built in 1847.

Joseph and Sarah had two sons, William Poole Bancroft (1835-1928) and Samuel Bancroft (1840-1915). Previously in charge of wages and accounts, William was made foreman of the mill in 1854. Sustaining large losses in 1857, the firm moved into finishing during the 1850s, and Samuel was put in charge of this in 1859. Dyeing was developed during the 1860s. Prior to their father Joseph's death in 1874, the two brothers set up a partnership in 1865 which lasted until 1889. At this point, an incorporation was set up, following a dispute between William and Samuel regarding a patent. William became vice-president and Samuel was president, posts which they retained until 1915.

In 1876, William Poole Bancroft married Emma Middleton Cooper (1848-1929), daughter of James and Lucy Middleton Cooper of New Jersey. They had four daughters, with the two youngest dying in infancy (Margaret 1884-1896 and Caroline 1888-1890). Sarah Bancroft (1877-1973) was the eldest daughter. She met Roger Clark (1871-1961) on his trip to the United States, which included a visit to

Wilmington, Delaware, to see his distant cousins related through the Rochdale Bright and Bancroft connections. Roger Clark was the second child and son of William Stephens Clark (WSC, 1839-1925) and Helen Priestman Bright Clark (HPBC, 1840-1927). Roger and Sarah married in the USA in 1900 and had the following children: (William) Bancroft Clark (1902-1993), Priscilla Bright Clark, later Johnson (1906-1993), Hadwen Priestman Clark (1908-1924), Stephen Clark (1913-2011), Nathan Middleton Clark (1916-2011), Eleanor Clark later Robertson (1919-2009) and Mary Priestman Clark later Lovell (1922-).

Sarah's sister Lucy Bancroft (1880-1969) met Oxford Quaker Henry Tregelles Gillett (1870-1955) at a Quaker summer school in Bakewell, and they married in 1908 at her parent's US home with Roger Clark as the best man. The couple subsequently settled in Oxford, initially at Charlbury Road, then 111 Banbury Road and Upland Park Road. (In 1909, Sarah's sister in law Margaret Clark 1878-1962 married Henry's first cousin the banker Arthur Bevington Gillett 1875-1954. The couple lived almost opposite at 102 Banbury, with the children of the two families growing up as close as brothers and sisters). Henry was a doctor, born in Banbury as the son of Charles and Gertrude Tregelles Gillett and training at Barts with early jobs in Edinburgh. His younger sister Richenda qualified as a doctor in 1902. Henry became mayor of Oxford in 1938 and was active in local politics. The couple were instrumental in setting up the new St Giles Meeting House and as founders of Oxfam. Lucy was also Clerk to Witney Monthly Meeting 1941-48. Lucy and Henry had 5 children and their two sons were also doctors (James Cooper Gillett 1910-2000, Agnes Gillett 1911-1998, Jenepher Gillett 1915-1938; Esther Gillett 1917-1998 and Roger Gillett 1922-2010). Lucy remained in Oxford with her sister in law Mabel following Henry's death. In 1968 she moved to Street to an annexe in the Roger and Sarah Bancroft Clark family home of Whitenights, but died shortly afterwards during a visit to one of her children in Salford.

William's brother Samuel had married his fourth cousin Mary Askew Richardson (1847-1935) in 1865 and they had a daughter Elizabeth (1871-1957, later Bird) and a son Joseph (1875-1936). Only one grandchild of Samuel and Mary survived, Samuel Bancroft Bird (1898-1987), representing the entire American branch of the family. His son Henry L Bird was born in c 1927.

As the two surviving heirs of William Poole Bancroft, Lucy and Sarah inherited most if not all his stock in the company. Sarah's son Stephen Clark was appointed as a director of the company in 1943 to represent the interests of the English shareholders. The company was eventually sold to Indian Head Mills in 1961, with the support of the Clark family.

EXTENT

17 large boxes

ARRANGEMENT

Arranged in the order given by Somerset Record Office during microfilming, 1990s.

ARCHIVAL HISTORY

See green WN 'non-book list', 1984. This includes a brief typescript listing of the Bancroft archives (including those not listed by MBG) contained within the Whitenights Papers.

Martin Bancroft Gillett's arrangement and list of the 'Bancroft Records' was made in 1972, prior to microfilming.

DESCRIPTION

Correspondence (in rough chronological order):

William Satterthwaite, Pennsylvania, 1735-1798; William Poole to Benjamin Ferris, 1821-1830, with typescripts; Rebecca Bancroft to Joseph Bancroft, 1823-1859; Samuel Bancroft to family members, 1823-1892; Robert and Esther Crosland to Bancroft family (John Bancroft), 1825-1830; Margaret Wood to Joseph Bancroft, 1826-1928; Margaret Wood to Margaret Bancroft, Esther Bancroft and Rebecca Bancroft, 1827-1857; Margaret Bancroft to Joseph Bancroft, 1828-1859; Sophie Bright to Esther Bancroft; Thomas Bright to Esther, Rebecca and Margaret Bancroft, 1832-1838; Edward Bancroft to his parents, 1835-1844; Thomas Bright to Joseph Bancroft, and also to Rebecca, Margaret and Esther Bancroft, 1838-1850; Margaret Wood to Joseph and Sarah Bancroft, 1840-1859; William Poole Bancroft (WBC) to parents, daughters and English relations, 1845-1924; Elizabeth Bancroft and her son George Bancroft to Joseph Bancroft, 1847; Letters from various correspondents to Emma Cooper Bancroft (ECB), 1849-1890; Joseph Bancroft to his family, 1851-1863; Margaret Lucas to Joseph Bancroft, 1854-1873; Miscellaneous correspondence to Samuel Bancroft and Sarah Bancroft, 1854-1874; Lucy M Tatum to ECB, also including letter to Caroline M Reeves, 1855-1872; Jane Crosland and 'M.P.G.' to Sarah Poole Bancroft, 1858-1875; Lydia C Biddle to her sister Emma Cooper Bancroft, 1858-1888; Margaret Wood to Joseph Bancroft and Sarah Bancroft; letter from Jane Crosland giving account of the last illness of Margaret Wood, 1859-1860; Sarah M Griscom to ECB, 1864-1895; Caroline M Cooper to ECB, Lucy Bancroft and 'Uncle Mark', 1864-1907; Miscellaneous papers and correspondence of ECB, 1870-1921; WPB to his wife Emma, 1872-1902; Joseph Bancroft to WPB, 1874; Martha Mellon to Joseph Bancroft, 1874; Lydia Biddle to her aunt Emma Cooper Bancroft, 1875-1902; Sarah Poole Bancroft, Rockford and others to ECB, 1876-1902; Mary Taylor Reeves Foulkes and ECB, 1876-1924; Lydia Griscom and Lydia M Stephens to ECB, 1877-1902; Sarah Eavenson and Caroline M Reeves to ECB, 1877-1906; Miscellaneous papers and correspondence, mainly relating to WBC and Sarah Bancroft, 1880-1931; Letters between ECB and WPB, 1884-1913; Lucy Bancroft Gillett to her mother ECB, 1885-1908; Letters to ECB on her 40th birthday, 1888; Margaret Bancroft to ECB, 1890-1893; Sarah Bancroft, Lucy Bancroft and Margaret Bancroft to their mother ECB, 1891; Sarah Bancroft and Lucy Bancroft to their mother ECB on a trip to the West Indies, 1892; Sarah Bancroft to her mother ECB, 1897; WBC and ECB, 1897-1927; Sarah Bancroft Clark (SBC) to Lucy Griscom, 1898-1902; SBC to her sister Lucy Bancroft Gillett (LBG), 1898-1927; SBC to her mother ECB, 1898-1928; Priscilla Bright McLaren to ECB and WPB, 1899-1906; Helen Priestman Bright Clark and William Stephens Clark to ECB, 1899-1927; Esther Bright Clothier and Samuel Thompson Clothier to ECB, 1901-1927; WPB to SBC and her husband Roger Clark, 1902-1924; Esther Bright Clothier to [sister in law] LBG, 1902-1925; [William] Bancroft Clark to his grandmother ECB, c 1907-1928;

Charlotte Berry
6 Jan 2012

Rev, 17 Jan 2012, 27 Jan 2012, 31 Jan 2012, 26 Jul 2012 and 30 Oct 2014

Letter book of WPB (also used as a journal), 1908-1924; LBG and Henry Tregelles Gillett to mother ECB, 1909-1921; Priscilla Bright Clark to her grandmother ECB, 1909-1926; Hadwen Clark to his grandmother ECB, 1913-1923; James Gillett to his grandmother ECB, 1914-1926; Agnes Gillet, Jenepher Gillett and Esther Gillett to their grandmother ECB, c 1916-c 1924; Nathan Clark to his grandmother ECB, c 1920-c 1925; Letters to ECB, referring to illness and death of Hadwen Clark, from English Clark relations, 1923-1924; Stephen Clark to his grandmother ECB, 1923-1926; Eleanor Clark to her grandmother ECB, c 1926-c 1928; Mary Clark to her grandmother ECB, 1926-1928; Letters between Roger Clark and Stanley Yarnell and Sue Yarnell, 1936-1972; Correspondence of the Bancroft and Clark families, including relating to Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, and to Pendle Hill School, 1942; Correspondence relating to the William Shipley chest at Pendle Hill School, 1946-1947; Letters of SBC and Sellers Bancroft, concerning Sellers and Bancroft family history, 1965-1971

Other family papers:

Account by Benjamin Ferris of voyage to America of Ann Tatnall etc, 1715, c 1830-c 1870; Poole family certificates and genealogy, 1754-1893; Notebook 'Book with account of John Wood (William's great grandfather) written by his daughter Elizabeth (Wood) Bancroft' (with genealogical notes 1802-1807), c 1802-c 1810; Diary of Rebecca Bancroft of her voyage from Liverpool to Philadelphia, 1822, with typescript, some family correspondence and ephemera, 1819-1874; Typescript accounts relating to estate of Joseph Bancroft, with typescript life chronology, biographical sketch, papers relating to estate of SPB and of Esther Bancroft, and 1840 notebook of verses entitled 'Abolitioneries and Quakereries' being 'remarks on some of the members of the Pennsylvania state anti slavery society, 1840-1897; Diary of ECB, 1866, 1898, 1899; copy of New Testament, 1909; Volume of observations on books read [by WPB], 1873-1878; Various wedding invitations, anniversary notices relating to the Bancroft family, 1872-1911; Diary of journey to Canada etc, Sarah Bancroft, 1894; Valentine to Lucy Bancroft, 1893, and letter from Mary Griscom to Lucy Bancroft, 1896, with invitations for wedding of Lucy Bancroft and Henry Gillett, 1908; Children's poems and prayers, anon, c 1910-c 1920; Papers relating to trust of SBC and LBG, 1929-1970

ACCESS CONDITIONS

Access to the collection is arranged via advance appointment only. Access to some collections may be restricted due to Data Protection or other restrictions. Please check with the Archivist.

REPRODUCTION CONDITIONS

Usual Alfred Gillett Trust regulations apply. Permission from the Trust and/or owner of a collection is usually required before publication. Copying of some items may be possible on a case by case basis – please check with the Archivist.

COPIES

A microfilm of part of the collection is available at the Somerset Record Office, Taunton, and was made during 1991 (10 reels, A\AGM/1/1-4/21).

LANGUAGE

English

FINDING AIDS

Various paper lists of the Bancroft Archives are available. Martin Gillett listed the papers very briefly in 1972 in order to arrange the papers into a suitable order for microfilming. A preliminary listing was compiled by F Coole in 1984 as part of a record of 'items other than books from Whitenights belonging to SBC Heirs lent to Museum and Archives, May 1984'. Adam Green, Somerset Record Office, listed 19 boxes prior to microfilming in Apr 1992 (A\AGM/1-6), which included descriptions of the entire collection, not merely the portions microfilmed. Parts of this list were extended by Martin Gillett from 1995-1998 and were made available at the AGT in Aug 2009.

The box list is not yet available on the Access database. A list of the microfilmed items is available on the online website of the Somerset Record Office (A\AGM).

RELATED UNITS OF DESCRIPTION

Other papers relating to Sarah Bancroft Clark and to her parents and siblings are held by the Alfred Gillett Trust: see the Whitenight Papers (WN). Papers relating to Joseph Bancroft and Sons Co and also to William Poole Bancroft are held in the papers of William Bancroft Clark (BC).

A microfilm of part of the collection is available at the Somerset Record Office, Taunton, and was made during 1991 (10 reels, A\AGM/1/1-4/21).

Papers relating to Henry T Gillett are held at the Friends Library, London (Temp Mss 126).

A substantial collection of family and business papers relating to the American Bancrofts (mainly Samuel Bancroft jr) was deposited with the Delaware Historical Society, USA, by Samuel Bancroft Bird in 1969 as the 'Bird-Bancroft Collection'. A small collection of papers, 1822-1954, relating to Joseph Bancroft and Sons Co is also held there (list available online).

Other papers relating to the Woodlawn Trustees, Joseph Bancroft and Sons Co and to John Bancroft's textile mills are available at the Hagley Library (formerly the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library), Wilmington. Papers relating to the pre-Raphaelite art collection of Samuel Bancroft are held at the Delaware Art Museum. Papers of William Poole Bancroft are held privately by the Woodlawn Trustees, Wilmington. Five account books relating to Samuel Bancroft and Joseph Bancroft and Sons are held at Special Collections, University of Delaware (MS 96, item 67). Papers relating to Joseph Bancroft are held at the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College (RG5/007).

PUBLICATION NOTE

It is not known to what extent this collection has been used in published research.