

Information about Coppel's Probable Namesake, George Coppel

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Presented to Members of the Coppel Historical Society, April 10, 2010
(with subsequent research help starting in 2012 by Kathy Carpenter, resident of
Coppel, Texas, and Gloria Mozas, online researcher in New Jersey)

Revised, with additional information, on
May 11, 2010, March 22, 2012, April 21, 2012, and October 5, 2012

For about 48 years, I have been trying to find the person for whom Coppel was named. The only information available from old-timers in Coppel was that they heard that the town was named for the engineer of the railroad. I always suspected this was not true. A major new train depot would be named for someone more prominent than that. In 1988, I got my first hint about a possible connection. About a year ago, Nobel Fortson, a member of our Coppel Historical Society, used the internet to locate several old newspaper articles. Since then, I have located more information, and I'm sure there is more to come.

Once I knew of George Coppel's home in Tenafly, New Jersey, I contacted a member of the Tenafly Historic Preservation Commission, Paul Stefanowicz, who has written about the Coppells' residences in Tenafly. I am indebted to Mr. Stefanowicz for his many contributions to this document.



When I knew that George Coppel was a New York banker, I started looking for his photo. It took a year, but I finally found this picture, on April 4, 2010, in a book about important New York businesses and their executives. This book, *Notable New Yorkers of 1896-1899*, is in the archives of the New York Public Library and is now available online.

What We KNOW about the Name:

Fact	Source
Our town was officially named Gibbs in December of 1887, with W. O. Harrison the first postmaster.	Official instrument from National Archives about our post office.
The town's name was officially changed to Coppell on June 29, 1892.	Official instrument from National Archives about our post office.
Contrary to legend, there was not another town in Walker County named Gibbs which motivated the name change.	Official instrument from National Archives about our post office.
The St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company opened its line through Coppell on April 14, 1888.	Letter from the St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company.
There was a major depot in our town with the name "Coppell."	Photograph of the Coppell Depot.
George Coppell's name appeared as a member of the bondholder's committee (bankruptcy committee) for this railroad before it opened.	Master's thesis by Jacob Anderson, in the UT at Commerce library, 1939, Thesis No. 56.
George Coppell was a wealthy financier in a firm on Wall Street in New York City in the late 1800s. He was actively involved in railroad business, such as bankruptcies and mergers.	Obituary of George Coppell in the <i>New York Times</i> , April 20, 1901.

Assumption:

The railroad named its new depot after George Coppell, who had been instrumental in the reorganization of the railroad shortly before it opened through our town. So important were railroads in those days, and so important was the train to our residents, the town took on the name of the depot about two years after trains started running through.

Additional information:

There was another town named Coppell, in Canada. The area still exists, but it is not a town anymore, just a residential area. Unfortunately, the area is almost all French-speaking, and so communication about the place has been sparse. A letter from a nearby municipal office suggested that it was the railroad that influenced the creation of the original town and its name. One might speculate that George Coppell had business dealings with that railroad, also, but no evidence has been found.

What we KNOW about the man, George Coppell:

His background:

- George Coppell was born in 1838 in Liverpool, England. His parents were Richard and Elizabeth Thompson Coppell. They could trace their roots in England back to the fifteenth century. George immigrated to America when he was a young man, probably in 1859.
- He was Acting British Consul to the city of New Orleans during the Civil War, from 1861-1865.
- Most likely, George and his wife moved from New Orleans to New Jersey shortly after the Civil War but before 1867; his second daughter was born in Louisiana; therefore it is likely that his first daughter was also born there; but his third child, George, Jr., died at age four in 1867 in Claremont, New Jersey.
- In 1880, he became associated with the firm Maitland, Phelps & Company, one of the oldest firms on Wall Street, established in 1796. In addition to domestic financial work, primarily with railroads, the firm did business with foreign countries, especially Venezuela. The firm was located at 24 Exchange Place in New York City. In 1935, the firm, then located at 68 William Street, went bankrupt, although, apparently, its demise had as much to do with Herbert Coppell's death in 1932 as the depression; *The New York Evening Post* indicated that none of the firm's assets were tied up in inactive securities, so a speedy and complete liquidation of its assets was expected.
- George was made senior partner in 1886.
- In 1896, the firm changed its name to Maitland, Coppell & Company and stayed in business until the Great Depression.
- In 1887, George received his American citizenship.
- George died of a heart attack on April 19, 1901. His wife had predeceased him, and their estate was given to their children.

His career:

- George Coppell was extremely wealthy. He was probably wealthy when he immigrated from England to New Orleans since he was appointed to a high political office there and since he married a prominent New Orleans lady. In America, George made his money by benefitting from railroad mergers and bankruptcies. He was so wealthy he could own homes in New York City as well as summer homes in New Jersey; his estates were so large, servants lived in hours on the properties.
- He was director and trustee of many financial and industrial corporations, especially many railroads.
- He was heavily involved in the reorganization and development of many railroads, including the one that opened in 1888 through Coppell.

His family:

- George's wife was **Helen Hoffman Gillingham Coppell**, from New Orleans, born January 11, 1844. She married George on April 17, 1862. She died February 14, 1894 at age 51.

- They had nine children, eight of whom survived to adulthood:
 - **Elizabeth Cordelia** - born April 9, 1864; died November 15, 1923, at age 59. Since her younger sister Helen was born in New Orleans five years later, Elizabeth was probably also born in New Orleans. Elizabeth died at her home in Tenafly, New Jersey and her funeral service was held in the Church of the Atonement in Tenafly.
 - **Helen Gillingham** - born October 15, 1865 in New Orleans; died December 18, 1936.
 - **George, Jr.** - born October 7, 1867; died August 8, 1872, at age 4.
 - **Mary** - born October 29, 1869; died April 22, 1937. She married Edward H. Booth in 1899 and, later, Oliver DeLancey Coster.
 - **Arthur** – twin with Edyth, born April 10, 1872, in Claremont, New Jersey; died in 1934, at age 62 in Portland, Maine, where he was visiting his daughter, Mary. At the time of his death, he resided at 48 E. Sixty-sixth Street, NYC. He married Mary Bowers in 1899, and they had three daughters: Susan Twining (identified at the time of Arthur’s death as Mrs. Richard Morris of Ridgefield), Mrs. William A. Rothman (Helen Coppell Rothman) of Chatham, NY, and Mary B. Coppell of NY. His wife Mary Bowers Coppell died at the age of 83 years in the Brookside Convalescent Home; her home at the time was 112 East Seventy-fourth Street, NYC. At the time of her death, she had six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Arthur graduated from Princeton in 1894. At first he worked as a clerk in his father’s firm, Maitland, Coppell & Co., and he was made a partner in 1896, and he stayed with the firm until his death (the firm went bankrupt three years later). In 1892, his address was 16 East 10th Street, New York City.
 - **Edyth** – twin with Arthur, born April 10, 1872, probably in Claremont, New Jersey; died August 13, 1941. at age 69 at her home in Cedarhurst, Long Island. She married William Allen Wardner and, later, Lawrence Bogert Elliman, Sr., in 1902, in Grace Episcopal Church, also where her funeral was held. Lawrence was president of the NY real estate firm Pease & Elliman. They had the following children: Mrs. Edyth Elliman Talmage, and Lawrence B. Elliman, Jr. Her sister was Mrs. Walter Alexander of NY. Lawrence Elliman remarried Madelaine Chauncey Lynch in 1944.
 - **Herbert** - born March 10, 1874; died in 1931, at age 57. He married Georgie E. Meyers on July 22, 1897. Georgie had a son by a previous marriage, George Myers Church. Georgie died July 5, 1933, at her home in East Hampton, New York.
 - **Florence** - born November 18, 1875 died April 26, 1940. She married Louis Haight.
 - **Grace** - born October 24, 1878; died December 25, 1945. In 1904, she married Walter Alexander, and their children were Walter Alexander and George Alexander. Later she married Edward L. White. At the time of her sister Florence’s wedding, Grace lived at 5 West Forty-fourth Street, in New York City.
- Arthur Coppell became an employee of his father’s firm in about 1895, after his graduation from Princeton, and a partner in 1896.
- Herbert Coppell also became a partner in the firm, in 1899. He was educated at St. John’s School in Ossining, New York, and he graduated from Harvard in 1896.

- Herbert was a long-time senior warden of the church of Atonement in Tenafly, New Jersey where his funeral was held.
- Herbert played the aristocrat. He had a carriage that took his family out, with a footman who blew a brass horn to announce their departure and arrival.
- Arthur Coppell and his wife Mary Stewart Bowers, the daughter of a well-known New York City attorney, had a son who died in infancy in 1900, and they had a daughter on December 31, 1901, Susan Bowers Coppell, named after her grandmother.
- Edyth was one of the founders of the New York Colony Club.
- Grace married Walter Alexander in The Towers, her father's second mansion in Tenafly, New Jersey.
- Arthur, a quiet, unassuming man, gave thousands of dollars to charities, especially hospitals. He was president of the Women's Hotel Company, a philanthropic institution. He was actively opposed to Prohibition, and in 1919 he was a director of the Association Opposed to National Prohibition.
- Helen, in 1917, was appointed a Canteen Worker of the National War Work Council of the YMCA for service with the American expeditionary forces in France and England, and she visited both those countries.
- When Mary married Oliver DeLancey Coster, her black dog, Pommie, attended the wedding, wearing a white satin bow. He was carried into the church by one of the chauffeurs.
- When Mary married Edward H. Booth, her father George presented her with a home in Tenafly, New Jersey.



Arthur Coppell



Arthur Coppell



*Elizabeth Coppell
Connors*



*Helen Hoffman
Gillingham Coppell*



*Robert Douglas
Connors*



*Arthur Coppell, on the extreme right, at
St. John's School in Sing Sing, New York.*

The family homes:

- When George and his wife moved from New Orleans, they took up residence in Jersey City, New Jersey, in an area known as Claremont. His first son, George, Jr., who died when he was four years old, and his twins Edyth and Arthur were born in Jersey City.
- George Coppell's main home was at 40 Fifth Avenue, New York City. On his death certificate, it was listed as his residence. Earlier, in 1894, when his wife Helen died, her obituary listed her residence as 16 East 10th Street, New York City, which is where her son Arthur lived in 1892, when he was eighteen years old, therefore suggesting that George Coppell's family lived in different homes in New York City, despite the fact that he owned the Fifth Avenue home throughout his life.
- In the late 1870s, George built his first summer mansion in Tenafly, New Jersey, called Birchwood Knole, on a lot 45 acres in size. It was west of Engle Street at Inness Road and east of Dean Drive, just south of Westervelt Avenue.
- He gave this home to his son Herbert as a wedding gift, and George and his wife, in 1883, moved into an existing mansion called The Towers, on a 5-acre lot, one block north of Birchwood Knole, on the southeast corner of Engle Street and East Clinton Avenue.
- Eventually Herbert and his wife became unhappy with Birchwood Knole. In 1911, they made it 200 feet longer, containing 68 rooms.
- In 1925, Herbert and his wife demolished the second Birchwood Knole and built Cotswold, a bit farther southwest on the property. In 1935, after Herbert's death in 1932 and after the Coppell families had lost much of their fortune in the depression, Cotswold was sold for \$20,000 and was divided into cooperative apartments. Glenn Miller's wife was living there when his plane disappeared over the English Channel during World War II. The neighborhood in Tenafly is still called Cotswold, and a fountain still stands there that originally stood behind the original Birchwood Knole.
- Arthur Coppell's in-town home was at 127 East Fifty-seventh Street, New York. He built another home in New Jersey down the road from The Towers and across from Birchwood Knole.
- Two stone pillars and iron gates still stand at the intersection of Inness Road and Engle Street, where the entrance to the first mansions was located.
- Similar stone pillars and gates were located in front of The Towers.
- The Coppells owned three estates on Tenafly's Engle Street; a sister-in-law of Herbert had an estate there, also.
- There is a Coppell Road, just across Engle Street from the original entrance to Birchwood Knole and present Cotswold. Arthur Coppell's mansion was on a large estate that bordered that road.
- Elizabeth, when she left The Towers, built a mansion farther north on other Coppell property, and she named it Wildwood. There was a brook that ran across the property, and she dammed it up to make a small lake. The dam is still in the backyard of Alice Rigney, a co-author of an Arcadia book on Tenafly.

- By the mid-1930s, all the Coppells had died or had moved back to New York City and had sold their Tenaflly properties. The depression had severely hurt their fortunes.
- The Coppells had many servants, including gardeners, maids, butlers, laundresses, and drivers, most of whom lived on the estate in their own houses. John McNamara, whose family photos appear in the Arcadia book about Tenaflly, New Jersey, is at present in his seventies and lives in New Jersey. His great-grandfather was a driver for the Coppells around 1900. His grandfather, Tom Faley, worked for Herbert Coppell as a gardener from the early 1900s until Birchwood Knole was torn down to build Cotswald. Faley's family home still stands on what was the Birchwood Knole estate.



40 Fifth Avenue in NYC, the site of George Coppel's home throughout his life. Photo made in 2012.



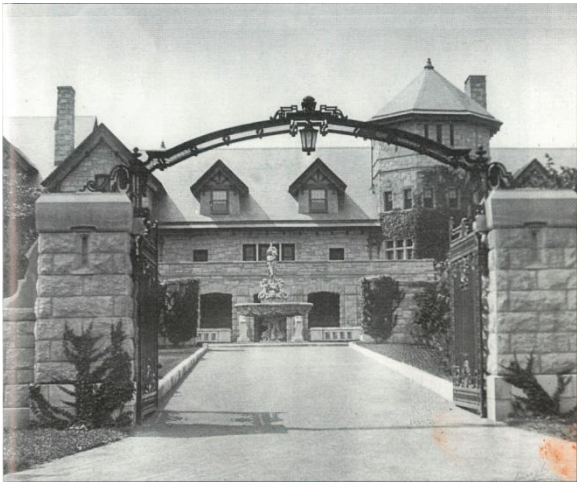
25 Exchange Place, the first location of Maitland, Coppel & Co. Photo made in 2012.



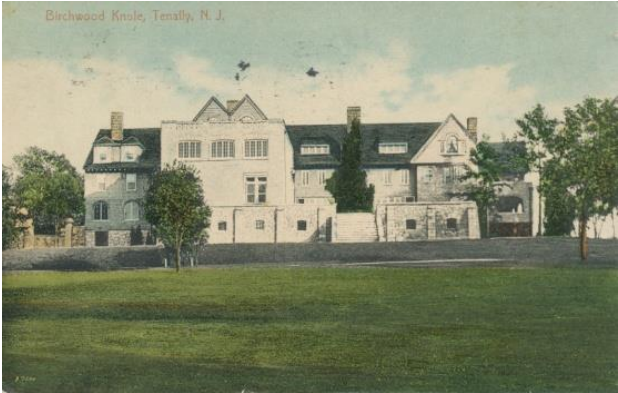
Grace Episcopal Church, now Church of the Immaculate Conception, where George and his wife attended. Photo made in 2012.



The "Coppel Windows," which George donated to Grace Church in memory of his wife and son in 1896. Photo made in 2012.



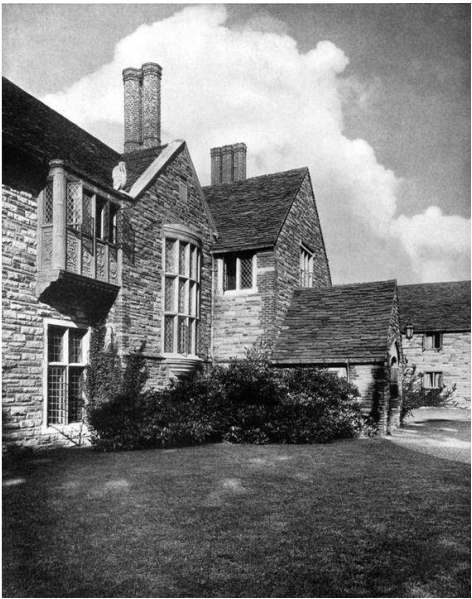
George Coppel's first summer mansion in Tenafly, NJ, called Birchwood Knole.



Birchwood Knole after Herbert expanded it to 68 rooms, before it was demolished in 1925.



The Towers, George Coppel's second Tenafly mansion.



Cotswald, built by Herbert Coppel, converted to apartments in 1935, still standing.

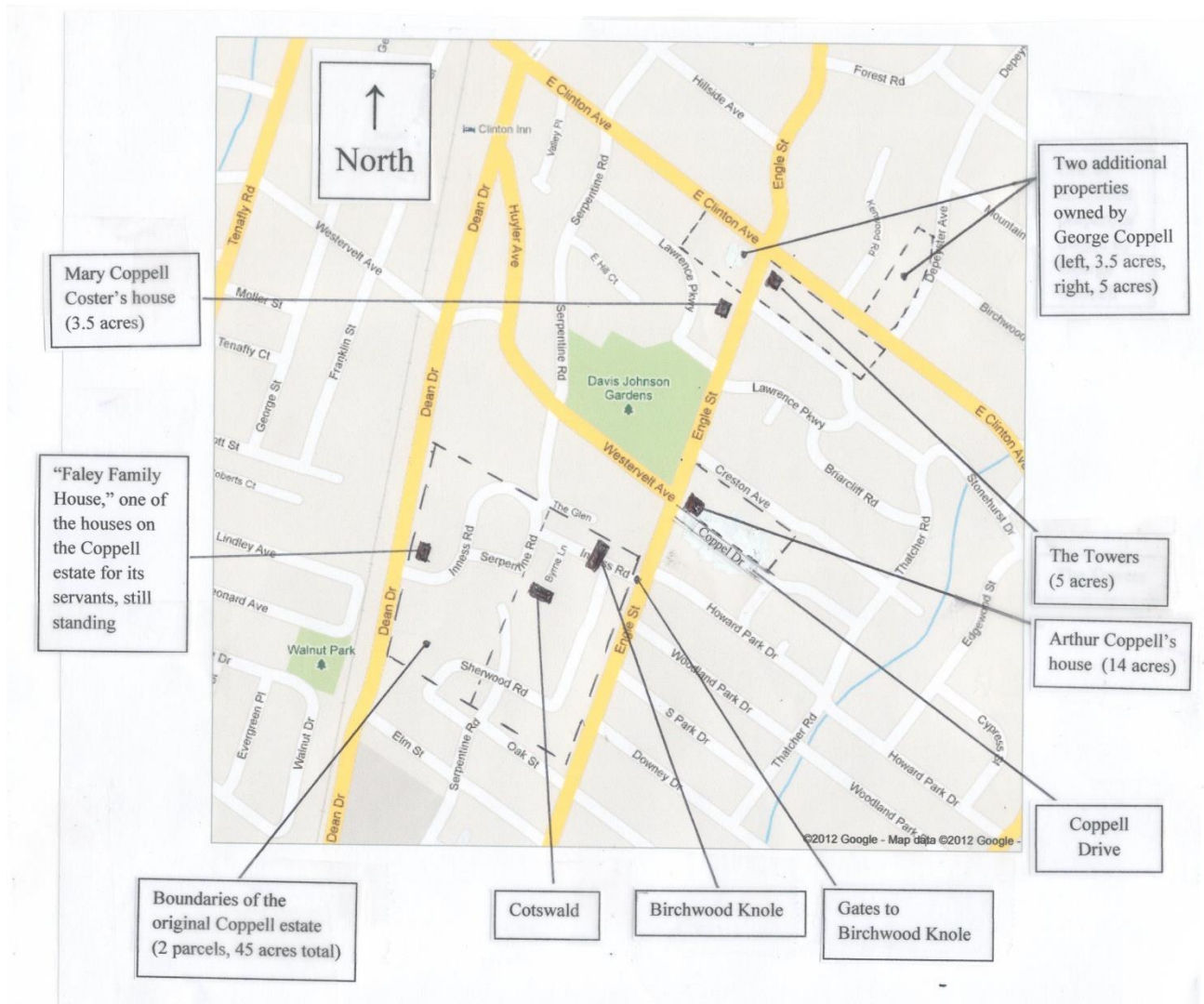


The fountain now in front of Cotswald, which originally stood behind Birchwood Knole. Photo made in 2012.

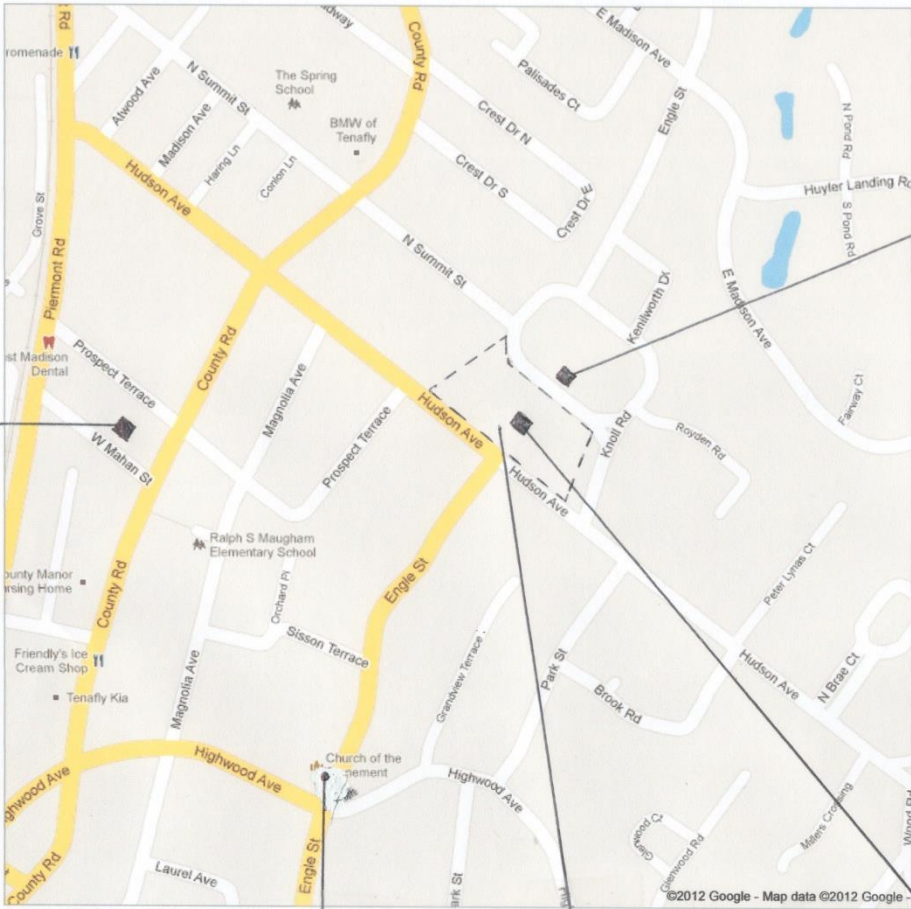
The gates located at the original entrance to Birchwood Knole. Photo made in 2012.



Maps of present-day Tenafly, New Jersey, showing locations related to George Coppell's family



Home of Paul Stefanowicz, co-author of the Arcadia book on Tenafly, New Jersey, and authority on Coppel properties



Home of Alice Rigney, co-author of the Arcadia book on Tenafly, New Jersey. In her backyard is the dam that Elizabeth Coppel Connors built to form a small lake for her home,

Church of the Atonement, location of Herbert Coppel's funeral

Property owned by George Coppel. When Elizabeth Coppel was forced to leave The Towers, she took the middle of this land for her home.

Wildwood, the home of Elizabeth Coppel Connors; demolished in the 1950s.

The family's social standing:

- All of the Coppell family were socially prominent.
- George Coppell entertained in his Tenafly mansion.
- Grace was married in the Tenafly mansion.
- He gave a coming-out reception for his youngest daughter at his home on Fifth Avenue.
- George was an acquaintance of Jay Gould, probably through their dealings in railroads.
- In 1894, George donated money to Grace Church, now church of the Immaculate Conception, 44 East 14th Street, New York City, to purchase a harp, in memory of his deceased wife Helen. An inscription on the harp said, "Given to Grace Church in memory of Helen Hoffman Coppell, Ascension Day, 1894."
- In 1896, George contributed funds to install stained glass windows in Grace Church in memory of his deceased wife and his first son, George, Jr., who died at age four. The windows, five panels depicting the saints, were called The Coppell Windows. The inscription on a scroll on the windows says, "In memory of George, son of George and Helen H. Coppell, August 8, MDCCCLXXII" (1872). Another inscription at the base of the windows says, "To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Helen Hoffman Coppell, February 14, MDCCCXCIV" (1894).
- In 1903, George's children donated funds to Grace Church to purchase choir furniture in memory of their parents.
- George undoubtedly made acquaintance with other prominent Tenafly residents involved in railroads, including Charles Sisson and J. Hull Browning, and it may not be a coincidence that George's property was so close to theirs.
- George was in attendance for important railroad conventions organized by financier J. P. Morgan.
- George was a member of several clubs for the wealthy, including the Metropolitan Club.
- About a year and three months before his death, George became a member of the Jekyll Island Club, a very exclusive social organization off the coast of Georgia that provided resort amenities for its members, including the Astors, Vanderbilts, and Rockefellers. George was elected to exclusive membership with the support of two prominent figures: H. E. Howland and Frederic Baker. George's obituary reported that he had traveled to "the south" to recover from an illness that had lasted over a year and that he had returned to New York shortly before his death in 1901. That trip was to Jekyll Island, although George may have traveled to other places after his stay on the island because most guests to Jekyll Island stayed only through "the season," which ended in March. George was away from New York City for over a year. The register at Jekyll Island reveals that he arrived on February 1, 1900, with his daughter Florence, another lady whose name is not clearly written on the register, and two servants. Two friends (Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bearnau?) visited them on March 19. The only example of George's signature found to date is on this registration book.

George Coppell }
Misses H. & D. Coppell } New York
2 Servants

Signature of George Coppell, from the register of the Jekyll Island Club, February 1, 1900

His demeanor:

A printed comment at his death: “In private life Mr. Coppell was much beloved. Of a genial disposition, kindly and considerate in manner, liberal in his tastes, he made friends readily – and kept them, too. His loss will be sincerely and widely mourned.”

His family’s scuttlebutt:

- Elizabeth Coppell eloped with her estate manager/chauffeur Robert Douglas Connors in 1914; she was 50 years old; he was 32 years old. It was such a scandal, *The New York Times* had a story on it.
- As a result of this marriage, Elizabeth’s brothers, Arthur and Herbert, tried to turn her out of The Towers, saying she had forfeited her right to live there by marrying Connors. However, Elizabeth was allowed back in shortly thereafter and the legal matter was settled when she sold her interest in the property. Eventually, probably after her divorce from Connors, she took over part of other Coppell property, and built her mansion, known as Wildwood.
- Robert Connors was a working man and obviously not a member of the Coppells’ circle; at the time he married Elizabeth, he owned a garage and drove a taxi in Tenafly. Despite the facts that he was a veteran and that his name appears on a World War I memorial in downtown Tenafly, he was not welcomed into the family. He announced that he and Elizabeth did not need The Towers because they were building a \$40,000 mansion on the Palisades in New York. Elizabeth was estranged from her brothers.
- Robert bought out the Tenafly Auto Service, which ran taxi cabs, shortly after the marriage, and he announced that not a penny of the Coppell fortune would be used to build his business.
- Elizabeth and Robert divorced in 1919. Local rumor said that Elizabeth accused Robert of an affair with Helen May Oakley, a milliner in Tenafly. Robert asserted that his only dealings with Miss Oakley were business-related because he was the administrator of Miss Oakley’s father’s estate. Elizabeth sued for custody of Robert’s daughter by a former marriage, Hope Douglas Connors, saying that the daughter had been adopted by her.

Items of interest involving George Coppell during and before the Civil War:

- In 1859, George Coppell was one of eleven members of Louisiana’s C.C.C.C. (apparently a cricket club) that was invited to play against the Pelican C. C.
- In 1862, George Coppell wrote a letter to General Butler and apologized for remarks in a previous letter that Butler perceived as offensive. Butler had thrown doubt on George’s official position and had temporarily suspended communication with him. Butler replied that he accepted the apology and recognized George as the official Acting Counsel of Great Britain to New Orleans.
- George filed a lawsuit against H. F. Hall and B. L. Mann, saying that they did not deliver cotton which George had purchased. The defendants maintained that their contract with George was made during the Civil War in New Orleans, which was part of the Confederacy, and therefore it was invalid.

Events involving George Coppel as a banker/board member of railroads:

- On March 2, 1886, *The Dallas Morning News* reported that George Coppel was on the purchasing committee at the sale of The Texas and St. Louis Railroad. The railroad was built as a narrow gauge railroad to carry cotton freights from Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas. It ran from Cairo, Missouri, to Texarkana, Texas. It was not making much profit even though the owners had infused cash. Foreclosure took place, and after bidding, the sale price was \$7,401,000. The buyers were a committee of the first owners.
- In July of 1886, Coppel was on the purchasing committee at the foreclosure of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad which paid \$15,000,000 for the company. The move was known as the “Coppel Reorganization.”
- On June 22, 1889, George Coppel had resigned from the board of the St. Louis, Arkansas, and Texas Railroad.
- On October 15, 1890, Coppel, identified as the manager of the D.& R.G. (Denver and Rio Grande Railroad?), arrived in New York from London to have a conference with the railroad magnates. Rumors were suggesting that the D. & R.G. had secured an option to buy out D.& R.G. Western. The article reporting this event suggested that George Coppel’s railroad, along with Gould’s company and a Santa Fe company, might be consolidating to build lines in western Colorado. Another article from the next day reported that Coppel, chairman of the board of directors of the Rio Grande, had arrived in Denver from New York. accompanied by President of the Railroad Jeffrey, to attend the annual business meeting. There was controversy over who would become head of the railroad.
- Coppel is elected one of the directors of the Rio Grande (Railroad?) on October 22, 1891.
- On October 18, 1894, Coppel was on the board of directors of the Denver Union Water Company, which was formed to consolidate two warring water companies.
- On October 15, 1895, Coppel was elected to the board of the Denver Consolidated Gas Company and was also elected its vice-president.
- On July 8, 1896, Coppel was on the bondholders’ committee which purchased the Norfolk and Western Railroad for \$3 million.
- In January of 1898, Coppel was chairman of the reorganization committee of the New Wisconsin Central Railway.
- In February of 1900, George Coppel was one of the directors of the Rapid Transit Subway Construction Company of New York, which built the first subway system in New York City.

Gravesites of the family:

Many members of the Coppel family are buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, in the Bronx, New York City, (Pine 123, Lot 9895-99):

Helen Coppel, 1894

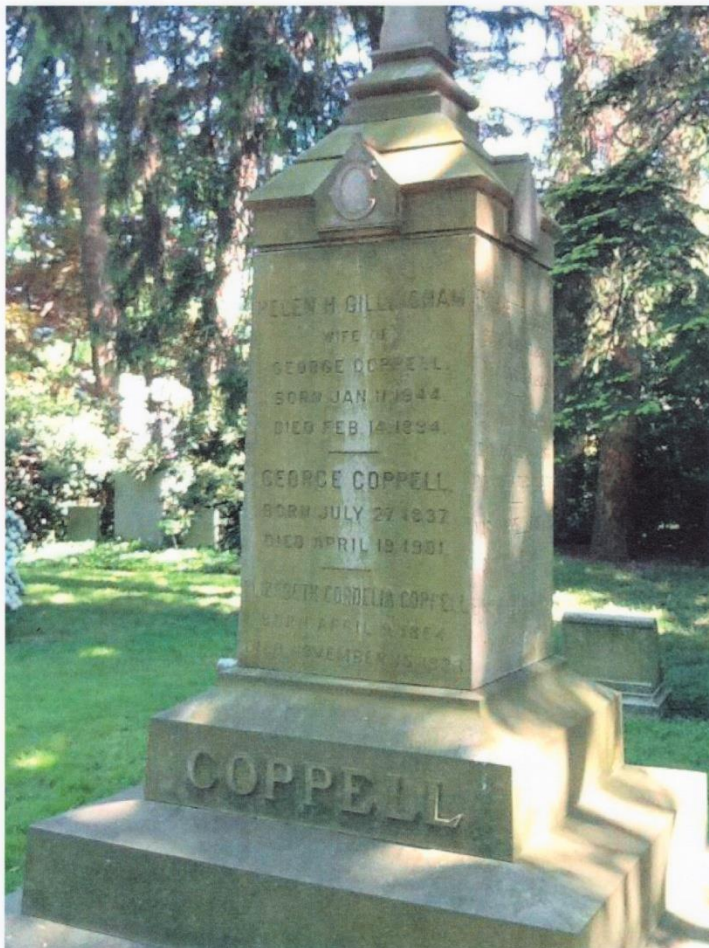
George Coppel, Jr., 1872

Infant son of Arthur and Mary B. Coppel, 1900

George Coppel, 1901

Edgar H. Booth, 1904
Walter Alexander, 1909 (husband of Grace Coppell)
Elizabeth Coppell Connors, 1923
Arthur Coppell, 1934
Helen Gillingham Coppell, 1936
Mary Coppell Coster, 1937
Florence Coppell Haight, 1940
Edyth Coppell Elliman, 1941
Louis Haight, 1944
Grace Coppell Alexander, 1945
Oliver DeLancey Coster, 1947
Lawrence Bogert Elliman, 1954
Mary B. Coppell, 1960
Mary Bowers Coppell, 1964
Norman L. Hope, 1991

All of George Coppell's children are buried in Woodlawn except Herbert. He and his wife Georgie are buried in the Brookside Cemetery in Englewood, New Jersey.



One of the markers at the site of Coppell family graves in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York City. Photo made in 2012.

Facts that connect a relative of the Coppell family to Texas:

In 1903 George S. Myers owned land in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas. (Specifically, it was lot 3 of Oak Cliff, recorded in Dallas County deed records Volume 131, page 147; the lot was located on Anthony Street between Tenth Street and Noah Street in Oak Cliff.) George Myers' daughter, Georgie Myers Church gave birth to a son, George Myers Church, born on August 21, 1891, in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1897, after her first husband died, Georgie Myers married Herbert Coppell in New York, and George Myers Church became Herbert's stepson. Because George Myers Church would have been six years old at the time his mother married Herbert, it is entirely possible that he lived with his mother and stepfather in New York for some period. He and his wife Neta McClure Church lived at 300 Park Avenue in New York City in 1921, but by 1922, they had moved to live in the Fort Worth Club in Fort Worth, Texas, where he died in 1946. The Fort Worth Club was an exclusive club for people like Amon Carter, so George probably had considerable wealth. He was the executor of his mother's estate when she was buried in Brookside Cemetery in Englewood, New Jersey, next to her husband Herbert Coppell. At the time, George's address was listed as 1104 Trinity Life Building, Fort Worth, Texas. His occupation was oil operator. He died in Cook's Hospital in Fort Worth; he was not buried in Fort Worth, but his body was "removed" to San Antonio, Texas, by Robertson-Mueller-Harper, Inc., the undertaking company.

Pronunciation of the Coppell name:

Old-timers living in the town of Coppell always pronounced Coppell as COP-PELL, with equal emphasis on both syllables. Based on the birthdate of the oldest life-long resident who confirmed this pronunciation (Jewel "Jack" Kirkland, born in 1902), and noting that she affirmed that everyone she knew pronounced it that way, it can be assumed that this was the accepted pronunciation of the town's name from its beginning in 1890. There is no certainty, however, that this was the pronunciation of the Coppell family name, because "Coppell" came to the town from a sign placed on its new railroad depot.

Newcomers starting to come to Coppell starting in the 1960s often pronounced the name ca-PELL, with emphasis on the second syllable, and this makes sense since the word contains two *p*'s and two *l*'s. But to this day, the old pronunciation is still the most prevalent.

Rebecca Hearn, the great-granddaughter of Arthur Coppell, says that she always heard that the family name was pronounced COP-pull, with emphasis on the first syllable. The last known descendant of the Coppell family who bore the name, Mary Bowers Coppell, was buried in the Coppell family area of Woodlawn Cemetery in 1964, but at present, nothing is known about her except that she was 55 years old and died in Beacon, New York. If any living relatives of hers are found, it might be assumed that their pronunciation of the family name has come down all the way from George Coppell.

Coppells in England:

The Coppell name is still somewhat common in England. Steve Coppell, a prominent figure in soccer circles in England, visited Coppell, Texas, in 2009, hoping to discover ties to his family. He said that

his family has mentioned that one of its members, a John Coppell, went to America in the late 1800s and returned to England with an American wife. However, to date, no connection to the George Coppell family has been found. It is likely, however, that any persons in England who spell their names with a *c* and two *l*'s, particularly near Liverpool where George originated, are related to our George Coppell.

This is a copy of the page from Jacob Anderson's 1939 Master's thesis which shows the first occurrence of George Coppel's name associated with the railroad that opened in 1888 through our town. This document was first discovered in 1988 in the archives of present University of Texas at Commerce.

56

of the skeptical attitude of Fordyce, a new company was formed under this plan.⁴⁵

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Ibid.

Sale
of the
property


The properties were sold by a special Master to a Bondholders Committee consisting of William Mertens, George Coppel, U. S. Wolff, M. Gernsheim, and J. W. Paramore. The sales were approved by the court on March 2, 1886, for the Missouri and Arkansas companies, and on January 2, 1886, for the Texas company. The property of both organizations were surrendered to the two new companies on May 1, 1886.⁴⁶

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Corporate History of the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad Company, Interstate Commerce Commission Report, Financial Docket No. 11040, March 10, 1937.

This date then marks the end of the struggles of the old Texas and St. Louis. Despite the short period of its life, many "firsts" in the history of the Cotton Belt can be attributed to this company. It built more mileage than any of its predecessors or followers, it instituted cheap transportation in the Southwest, and it proved once and for all the superiority of the broader gauge to the narrow gauge. The land development program of the present company was established at this time to encourage the

This is a copy of the letter from Washington, D.C. which certifies that there was no other Gibbs nearby, that Gibbs was the first official name of our town, and that it changed to Coppell.

National Archives
 Washington, DC 20408

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Date: **AUG 12 1988**
Reply to: **Judicial, Fiscal, and Social Branch (NNFJ-E) 88/4339**
Attn of:
Subject: **Post offices at Coppell and Gibbs, TX**
To: **Wheeler Wilson, Jr.
214 Samuel Blvd., #3-H
Coppell, TX 75019**

A reply to your inquiry will be found in the paragraphs checked below or on the reverse side.

1. See reverse of this page for information and/or an offer of copies of records. Payment for copies should be made in advance by check or money order in the manner specified and mailed to the Cashier, National Archives Trust Fund Board, P. O. Box 100793, Atlanta, GA 30384.

2. Later information can be obtained from the United States Postal Service, Washington, DC 20260.


3. The postal records in the National Archives show that the Coppell, Dallas County, Texas post office was established as Gibbs on December 22, 1887, with William O. Harrison appointed as the first postmaster. The name changed to Coppell on June 29, 1892. The postal records do not contain any reference to a post office named Gibbs in Walker County, Texas during the period 1789 - 1971.

4. Requests for information about mail clerks and rural carriers should be addressed to National Personnel Records Center, Civilian Personnel Records, 111 Winnebago Street, St. Louis, MO 63118.

5. The postal records do not contain personal or genealogical information about postmasters, postal employees, or information on the origins of post office names.



6. The enclosed pamphlet(s) about genealogical sources may be helpful.
National Archives and Records Administration

This is a copy of the letter from the railroad company, stating that our railroad opened in 1888 and that no records exist which give details about the name Coppel.




Southern Pacific

Transportation Company

St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company



624 Scott St. • Kansas City, Kansas 66105 • (913) 621-8712

JAMES W. JOHNSON
PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER

July 8, 1988

Mr. Wheelice Wilson, Jr.
214 Samuel Blvd. #3-H
Coppell, Texas 75019

Dear Mr. Wilson:

I am well aware of Coppell, Texas, having visited the home of the "Coppell Cowboys" numerous times over the past 18 years. We of Cotton Belt are also most appreciative of the importance of the community to our rail system, as the Coppell Industrial Park, which we developed, is one of the Southern Pacific/St. Louis Southwestern Railway system's most successful.

The St. Louis, Arkansas & Texas Railroad Co. opened its line from Commerce to Fort Worth, via the area where Coppell now is, on April 14, 1888. The SLA&T was a forerunner of the St. Louis Southwestern Railway Co., which came into existence on Jan. 12, 1891. Unfortunately, no record exists of anyone named Coppel or why or for whom the community was named. I scoured every available source and found no reference whatsoever. And the records go back to 1877. But records back then were very sparse, and frequently disappeared in mergers and bankruptcies, which were common occurrences in the days of railroad construction.

I wish I could be of more help, but I cannot recreate what was never recorded or otherwise lost over the decades.

Sincerely,
