

# The Coppel Papers

- On 11/29/23, I went to New Orleans to view The Coppel Papers which is a collection of 59 letters, telegrams and articles pertaining to:
  - George Coppel's time there after his arrival in the late 1850s
  - communications as Acting British Consul and effort to become Consul
  - telegrams with his new employer Maitland, Phelps & Company in New York
  - newspaper articles about his many railroads
  - dozens of obituaries which appeared in newspapers across the country after his death on April 19th, 1901, at the age of 64 years old.
  - The documents have been presented on separate pages on the website:
    - 1857 – 1866
    - 1867 – 1902
    - Obituaries
    - Folio
- Who was George Coppel?
  - Born in Liverpool, England in 1837.
  - Immigrated to New Orleans in 1857.
  - Was the British Acting Consul during the Civil War.
  - Moved to New York after the War and joined the banking firm of Maitland, Phelps & Co.
  - He was a bond holder in the St. Louis, Arkansas & Texas Railroad which was built through Gibbs in 1888. A train depot with his name on it was built in 1890, and the town changed its name to Coppel in 1892.
  - He was enormously rich and had mansions in Tenafly, NJ.
  - His sons worked for his firm. Herbert Coppel financed the Algoma Railroad built from Sault-St-Marie to Hearst, Ontario with a train depot named Coppel.

Pete Wilson speculated that “George Copell 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.” The Coppell Papers reveal that was not the case. In comparison to the Titanic which sank 55 years after he immigrated, was he more like Jack Dawson or Cal Hockley?



Ocean Steamship - 1857



Titanic - 1912



George Coppell

The fact that he first worked at a bank and then as an assistant to the British Consul suggests that he was not from the upper class and appointed to the position, but was more like Jack Dawson who was not from wealth but had tremendous ambition as described in his obituary.



Jack Dawson



Cal Hockley



Helen Hoffman Gillingham

Helen Hoffman Gillingham was the only daughter of wealthy upper class New Orleans parents. Rose DeWitt Bukater was the daughter of wealthy Philadelphia parents. Her widowed mother wanted her to marry into wealth to maintain their upper-class status.



Rose DeWitt Bukater

## Timeline

1837: George Coppell born in Liverpool, England

1857: George emigrates from Liverpool, England to New Orleans

1859: George Coppell obtains employment at the old established English banking house of A. & J. Dinistown & co.

1860: George Coppell becomes the assistant of William Muir, Esq., the British Consul in New Orleans.

1861, April 12th: The Civil War starts.

1862, March 14: George Coppell and Helen Hoffman Gillingham are married.

1862, March 19: George Coppell becomes British Acting-Consul.

1862, May 1: Union forces take control of New Orleans.

1862-1865: Interactions with:

- Major General Ben Butler,
- Richard Lyons, British Ambassador,
- Lord John Russell, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and British Prime Minister.

1864, April 19: Elizabeth Cordelia Coppel is born.

1864, March 22: George Coppell sends letter asking to be appointed Consul.

1864, May 23: Denis Donohoe, the Consul from Buffalo, N.Y. is appointed instead of George Coppell.

1864, July 7: George Coppell asks to be relieved.

1864, December 29: Denis Donohoe says he is leaving Buffalo but never arrives in New Orleans. George Coppell continues to be Acting Consul.

1865, April 9: George & Helen Coppell depart New Orleans for New York.

1865, May 9: They depart New York for Liverpool.

1865, May 26: The Civil War ends.

1865, June 17: They depart Liverpool for their trip to Belgium, Germany & France.

1866, June 27: First telegraph from Maitland, Phelps & Co. offering job as corresponding clerk.

1866, June 29: Letter to Royal Phelps stating that he has knowledge of the French languages but is not sufficiently acquainted with it to correspond in it.

1866, August 16: Telegraph to Maitland, Phelps stating he will be leaving on August 18<sup>th</sup>.

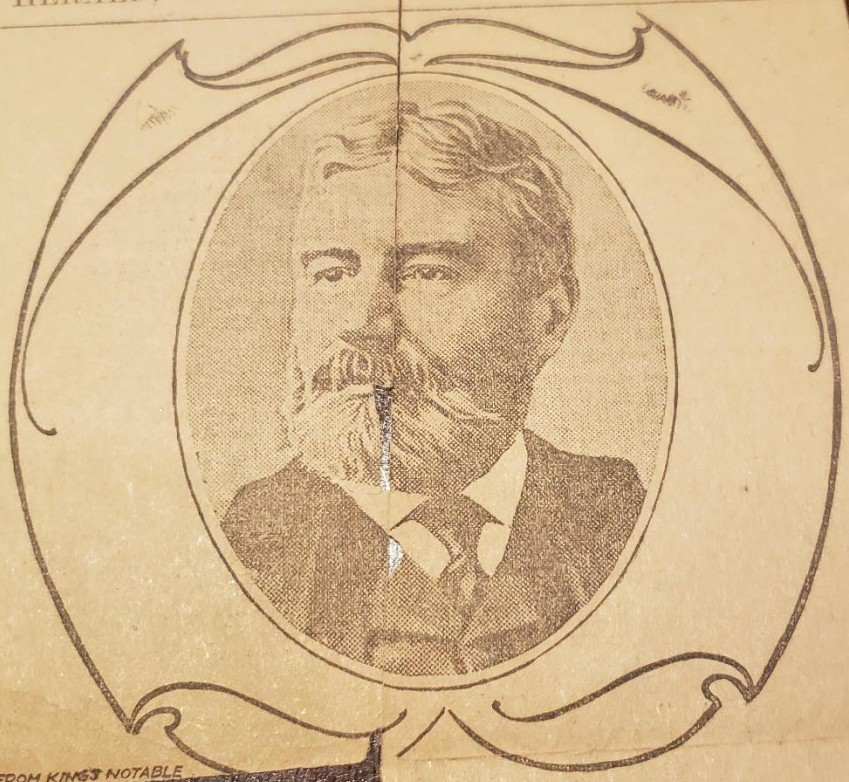
1884, June 30: Royal Phelps dies. Firm later changes name to Maitland, Coppell & Co.

1894, February 11: Helen Hoffman Gillingham Coppell dies.

1895, December 22: Coppell Window in Grace Chapel is built.

1901, April 19: George Coppell dies.

HERALD, SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1901.



FROM KING'S NOTABLE

COPPELL  
WHO DIED YESTERDAY.

# Railroads in Minnesota, Part II

Assembled by

**Lawrence A. Martin**



George Coppel (1837-1901) was born in England, emigrated to the United States when young, resided in New York City, New York, married Helen Hoffman Gillingham (1844-1894,) the daughter of Harper Gillingham and Elizabeth Gillingham, in 1862, became associated with Maitland, Phelps & Company in 1871, became a senior member of Maitland, Coppel & Company in 1886, was

- chairman of the board of directors of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad,
- chairman of the reorganization committee of the Norfolk & Western Railroad,
- chairman of the reorganization committee of the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railroad,
- chairman of the reorganization committee of the Wisconsin Central Railroad,
- member of the board of directors of the Metropolitan Trust Company,
- member of the board of directors of the Mercantile Trust Company,
- member of the board of directors of the Atlantic Mutual Insurance Company,
- member of the board of directors of the Rapid Transit Subway Construction Company,
- vice president of the United States Guaranty Company,
- member of the board of directors of the Securities Company,
- member of the board of directors of the Western Union Telegraph Company,
- member of the board of directors of the Audit Company,
- member of the board of directors of the American Car & Foundry Company,
- vice president of the McKenna Steel Working Company,
- president of the Railroad Equipment Company,
- associated with the St. Louis & Southwestern Texas Railroad/Cotton Belt Railroad,
- member of the Metropolitan Company,
- member of the Church Club,
- member of the Reform Club,
- member of the City Club,
- member of the Downtown Association.

He died in New York City, New York.