

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY

OTTAWA, KANSAS

June 3rd 1936

Mr William W. Speer
H.C. Speer & Sons
38 South Dearborn St
Chicago, Illinois.
Dear Mr. Speer:-

Your kind letter of a few days ago was very interesting to me and I should have answered it some days ago but I was going to see my father in Iowa which I did on Decoration day. He was not able to answer some questions which I had hoped he might but I find that he is failing in his ability to muster facts. He is now 80 years old.

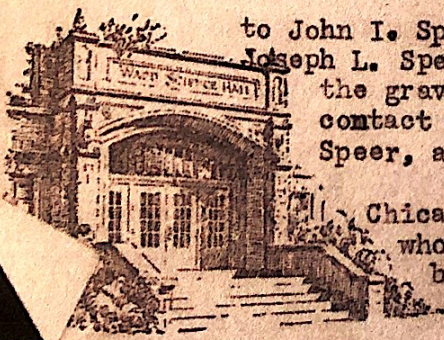
Your genealogy gave your great grand father as Joshua Speer. He was a brother of my great grandfather, John A. Speer of Leesville, where my father was born. I have it from older men of our family that there were seven brothers, presumably to me now, the sons of Aaron Jr. So far I have trace of the following. Joshua, John A., Joseph, and Andrew. Do you know the names of the others?

Within the last year I came into possession of a packet of very old letters, the personal correspondence of my father's uncle, Austin G. Speer. He was a son of John A. Speer who married Mary Flynn in Leesville and ran a store there. Among those letters are some from my grandfather to Austin G. and many from your grand father William Shepard Speer to Austin G. They were cousins. Among other very interesting ones is one from your grandfather, ~~James~~ Henry Clay, to his brother Charles A. It was sent by Charles A., enclosed in its original package, stamp and all, to Austin G. In it your father urged Charles to choose his life work wisely and well. One from your grandfather to Austin G., said that he (Wm. S.) was much pleased with the progress his sons had made in their school work when he returned from Zanzibar where he was U.S. Consul in 1863. At the time he wrote that letter he said "Henry Clay is now ciphering well in the square root". Which I think must be gratifying to you as I understand you are the author of several school text books on school arithmetic. I go as often as I can into the office of the St Supt of Public instruction in Topeka, as to a sort of shrine to look at the picture of your father on the walls there, strikingly like my own father. My father was a public school teacher in Kansas at the time your father was Supt of Schools, but never knew the St Supt was any relative of his. Father only spent a few years in Kansas then returned to Iowa, taught school, married, raised his family and still lives there. I read the other day in St Louis the dedication leaf in your grand father's book "The Law of Success" where he dedicates it to his daughter Mrs Mary McGinley and her children, to his sons Henry, Clay, Charles A., Alex C. and Jacob C. and their children.

Can you tell me of the families of Charles A., Alex C. and Jacob C. Speer? Who and where are they? Also the family of your aunt Mrs Mary McGinley, who and where are they? If you can give me any or full information I shall appreciate it.

Can you tell me what relation your grandfather was to John I. Speer the pioneer editor of Lawrence and his brother Judge Joseph L. Speer who was first Lieut Governor of Kansas? I have visited the graves of both these men and have their data. Also have some contact with Charles Sperrof Denver who says he is a son of David F. Speer, a borther of John and Joseph.

Wood Neff, General Manager of the Northwestern Ry in Chicago is a grandson of John I. Speer, son of his daughter Mary who married Elwood Neff and died while a young woman. Wood Neff's brother William Neff lives at Sanlacito, Calif.



Can you, by any chance tell me ought of Robert D. Speer, last known of at Keithsburg, Ill? He was a brother of my grandfather and Augtin G. Last we heard of him was in 1874 at Keithsburg. He was a Civil war soldier. Austin G. was a soldier of Mexican and Civil war, 50th Indiana Infantry. A man who was a grandson of the woman uncle Austin married late in life, now living at Yates Center, Ks., had these letters and gave them to me. They are a prized possession to me. This woman uncle Austin married was Mrs Faler, the woman who kept your father and his brothers for some time in Leesville. They moved to Yates Center, Ks and Mr Faler died there. Then Uncle Austin married his widow. Your grandfather visited them there. I learned more about them because Mrs Faler was an aunt of an old school teacher of mine, Prof. J.F. Holiday who now lives near Deming N.Mex. Uncle Austin's grave is there near Yates Center at old Kalida cemetery. None of us ever knew where he died until last summer when I found his grave as if by miracle. I wish your father would communicate with me as I think he knows a lot of things I would like to know.

Charles Speer of Denver says his father David F. and so John I and Joseph L. were cousins of Robrt W. Speer, former famous Mayor of Denver. I think he could not have been a first cousin for I have Robert W.'s line clear back to Ayrshire, Scotland. John Speer of Ayrshire was a Covenanteer preacher in the days of the Clarerhouse persecutions in the 17th century. He brought his flock over to Co. Antrim, Ireland and from him comes all the Speer lines from Co. Antrim. The line of Robert W. and that of John I and Joseph L. do not quite correspond as their emigration to America did not take place at the right times. Be that as it may, they were closely related, probably second cousins. If so they are related to the famous Presbyterian Missionary, Robert E. Speer of N.Y. The late Dr. William Speer AM.BD. a pioneer ~~in~~ missionary to China told Robert E. Speer of N.Y. he had traced his line to this same Speer of Ayrshire.

Specifically, I would like to get trace of your uncles and your aunt and their families. I have written your father but as yet had no reply.

My only interest in this work is the interest in the noble name of Speer. I shall not at any time try to market my information but shall gladly share anything I may find, with you when it is in more complete form so as to be published in some sort of way. As yet it is too fragmentary to be put into permanent form. I shall keep your correspondence and gladly share known information. There is a family of Leesville Speers at Frederick, Kans. Joseph Speer there is a son of Andrew G., son of Joseph who is a brother of your ~~father~~ Joshua and my John A. I know from correspondence that an Andrew J. Speer moved from Leesville, Ind to Winterset, Ia the same year that my grandfather (also Andrew J) moved to Wayne Co., Iowa. I have contact with them and will get information from there. He was a cousin of my grandfather, both Andrew Jackson. He was known as Big Jack and my grandfather as Little Jack. I know that the family had kin folks in Tennessee and that one Andrew G. Speer moved from Tennessee to Texas with his family in 1826. Some of that family are prominent in Texas, notably Judge Ocie Speer of Dallas and Robert E. Speer once Postmaster at Fort Worth.

You may be interested to know that the Georgia line of Speers have produced Sidney Lanier the poet, and Corra Harris the authoress. It was a surprise to me when I found that there were as many Speers on the Confederate side as on the Union side. Judge Emory Speer and Thomas Jefferson Speer both of Macon Georgia, were in the U.S. Congress, the session after the war was over, poor fellows, they suffered terribly. They lost their all and went to Washington D.D. to take their medicine afterward. Corra Harris' autobiography tells that story. Margaret Hill McCarter's book "A Wall of Men" tells the story of how the Lawrence men stemmed the tide of Slavery in Kansas, John I Speer

(Grand of Gauland Sch)