

A Guide to the  
**GEOFFREY COOKE COLLECTION on the CLINTON B. FISK FAMILY,**  
**1832—1941**

Fisk University Archives

Processed by  
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## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Clinton Bowen Fisk was born on December 8, 1828 in New York, New York, to Benjamin Bigford Fisk and Lydia Aldrich. As an infant, he moved to Clinton, Lenawee County, Michigan in 1830 with his parents. At fifteen years of age, Fisk moved to Albion, Michigan, to attend the Wesleyan Seminary. Despite his preparation for eventual matriculation at the University of Michigan, his plans were derailed as continued inflammation of his eyes forced doctors to prevent his extensive travel. Reluctantly, he became engaged in affairs of business with particular focus on the merchant, milling and banking industries. Fisk married Janette Crippen in 1850, daughter of L. D. Crippen, principal partner in the business firm for which Fisk worked. He remained in Michigan until 1858 and then assumed the post of western financial manager for Aetna Insurance, St. Louis Missouri.

At the time of the Civil War, Fisk was an eager and early volunteer. He was principally responsible for establishing the 33<sup>rd</sup> Missouri Volunteers Regiment, affectionately referred to as the "Merchants Regiment," and became its commanding Colonel. The recruitment efforts of Fisk resulted in the creation of a full-scale brigade wherein he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. As the Civil War progressed into the spring and summer of 1863, Fisk's troops played a substantial role in Mississippi campaigns in Yazoo City and the besieging of Vicksburg. Ultimately, the Missouri capital was saved from capture as a result of its defense by the Fisk-led troops in 1864. Such leadership received considerable recognition through further promotions. He was appointed by the Governor of Missouri to Major General of the entire state's militia in 1864, and subsequently to the equivalent post at the federal level, Major General of the United States Volunteers by President Abraham Lincoln.

General Fisk's leadership was deemed so vital to the efforts of the United States government that his attempted resignation from military service in 1865 was refused. Instead, he was mandated to become the assistant commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands in Nashville, Tennessee. With portions of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, and the entire states of Kentucky and Tennessee under his direct jurisdiction, Fisk's new post would prove to be forever linked with transforming the social climate of the postwar Deep South. As a valued assistant to John Ogden, Erastus Milo Cravath and Edward P. Smith, all agents of the American Missionary Association, Fisk became a founder and the namesake for the Fisk School and eventual Fisk University in 1866.

After retiring from the army, Fisk became vice president and treasurer of the Missouri Pacific and Atlantic and Pacific Railway Companies, 1866—1876. Beginning in 1876 and continuing through to 1890, Fisk's flair for business was put to use through banking, mining and land speculation endeavors. Fisk was president of the New York Accident Insurance Company. In 1873, he was appointed by president Ulysses S. Grant as a member of the Indian Commission and served as the chairman of the board until 1890. Additionally, Fisk served as president of many boards including Drew Theological Seminary, Dickinson College, Carlisle College, the University of Pennsylvania, Albion College, the University of Michigan, and Fisk. General Fisk also functioned as a vice president for the Evangelical Alliance, a trustee of the American Missionary Association, and a manager of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. As an uncompromising prohibitionist, Fisk abandoned the Republican Party and in 1886 ran

unsuccessfully under that party's banner as a New Jersey gubernatorial candidate. He was the Prohibition Party's nominee for president in 1888. Fisk died on July 9, 1890.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The Geoffrey Cooke Collection on the Clinton B. Fisk Family contains fifteen folders in one box, and consists of four series: **Correspondence; Records; Writings;** and **Miscellaneous**. This collection spans the years 1832–1941, and documents correspondence of General Fisk's wife Janette Crippen-Fisk and daughter, Mary Fisk Park; his appointment as Department of Interior Commissioner of Indian Territory in 1873; land transactions by his father and mother; and published and unpublished biographical writings on General Fisk and his wife.

### **Series I: Correspondence**

The **Correspondence** series consist of two subseries: **Mrs. Clinton B. Fisk** and his daughter **Mary Fisk-Park**. One of the two letters written to Mrs. Fisk is from James M. King, general secretary of the National League in 1890, just three months after General Fisk's death; the other is unidentified. The remaining four letters are to Fisk's daughter Mary Fisk Park, the wife of Dr. Edgar V. Park. Fisk University information is documented by letters from the religious director and from the director of publicity and finance. In addition, **Mary Fisk-Park's** correspondence includes a letter from the editor of the *Christian Advocate* regarding the increased interests in General Fisk, and a letter from her very young daughter Mary Edith Park.

### **Series II: Records**

The **Records** series consist of four subseries: **Appointment Certification; Financial; Land Deeds;** and **Wills**. Researchers interested in official documentation on the governmental appointments of General Fisk, and land deeds from his mother Lydia and father Benjamin, will find this series most useful.

### **Series III: Writings**

The **Writings** series is comprised of two subseries: **Published** and **Unpublished**. The four folders in this series include biographical profiles and give additional data on General Fisk and his mother Janette Crippen-Fisk.

### **Series IV: Miscellaneous**

The **Miscellaneous** series contains one folder that fell outside the previously established series—a clipping documenting the philanthropic contributions of General Fisk's granddaughter Mary Edith Park.

## **BOX LIST**

### **Box**

### **Folder**

#### **Series I: Correspondence**

##### **Subseries I: Fisk, Mrs. Clinton B.**

1

1 King, James M., 1890

2 Unidentified

##### **Subseries II: Park, Mary Fisk**

3 Baker, Paul E., 1928

4 Brummitt, Dan B., 1938

5 Gilbert, Ethel B., 1929

6 Park, Mary Edith, 1888

#### **Series II: Records**

##### **Subseries I: Appointment Certification**

7 Department of Interior Commission of Indian Territory, 1873

##### **Subseries II: Financial**

8 State, County and School Taxes, 1875

##### **Subseries III: Land Deeds**

9 Fisk, Lydia, 1834

##### **Subseries IV: Wills**

10 Fisk, Benjamin B., 1832

#### **Series III: Writings**

##### **Subseries I: Published**

11 Foster, John, O., "Our Standard Bearer," 1888

##### **Subseries II: Unpublished**

12 Park, Mary Fisk, "A Brief Resume of the Life of Janette Crippen-Fisk," 1941

13 Shaw, A.F., "Opening Chapel Talk," 1928

14 Unidentified Biographical Sketches of Clinton B. Fisk, n.d.

#### **Series IV: Miscellaneous**

15 Clippings, n.d.