

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~thegrove/gillott.html>

Joseph Gillott Pen Maker

The Grove was purchased by Joseph Gillott (1799-1873) in 1853, as second home, being close to London.

Joseph Gillott, steel pen maker and art patron, the son of a workman in the cutlery trade, was born at Sheffield 11th October 1799, and commenced life as a working cutler, soon becoming a 'noted hand' at forging and grinding knife blades.

In 1821, no longer finding any work in his native place, he removed to Birmingham, where his employment was in the 'light steel toy trade,' the technical name for the manufacture of steel buckles, chains, and other works and ornaments of that kind.

About 1830 his attention was called to the manufacture of steel pens. Such pens were then laboriously cut with shears out of the steel, and trimmed and fashioned with a file. He adapted the 'press' to the making of pens. With much ingenuity and unflagging perseverance he experimented on different qualities of steel and the various ways of preparing it for use.

One of his chief troubles was the extreme hardness of the pens. This he obviated by cutting side slits in addition to the center slit, which had been solely in use up to that period. To this was afterwards added the cross grinding of the points; and these two processes imparted an elasticity to the pen, making it in this respect nearly equal to a quill.

For some years he kept his method of working secret, fashioning his pens with his own hand, assisted by a woman, his first pens being 'blued' in a frying pan over a garret fire. At first he worked for others, selling his pens for a shilling each to a firm of stationers called Beilby & Knott. His business rapidly increased. It was at first established in Bread Street, Birmingham, then removed to Church Street, then to 59 Newhall Street, and finally to his great works in Graham Street, Newhall Hill, in 1859.

The simplicity, accuracy, and readiness of the machinery employed enabled him to produce steel pens in large quantities, and as he sold them at high prices he rapidly made a fortune. He ultimately employed 450 persons, who produced upwards of five tons per week, and the price was reduced from one shilling each to 4 pence a gross.

From his earliest years as an employer he spared no cost or pains to benefit his workpeople to the utmost of his power. His works afforded all convenience and comfort to the persons employed. He established a benevolent society among the workpeople, to which he subscribed liberally. He seldom changed his managers, and never had a dispute with his 'hands'.

An extract from 'Personal Recollections of Birmingham and Birmingham Men' by E. Edwards published in 1877 states : Soon after he had purchased the beautiful estate at Stanmore, near Harrow-on-the-Hill, which he loved so much, and where, in company with his old friend, Pettitt, the artist, he spent so much time in his latter years, he resolved to adorn the grounds with the rarest and most beautiful shrubs and trees obtainable. The trustees of the Jephson Gardens, at Leamington, about this time, advertised for sale some surplus plants of rare kinds, and Mr. Gillott paid the gardens a visit. He selected a number of costly specimens, when his eye fell on a tree of surpassing beauty. He inquired its price, and was told that it was not for sale. He was not a man to be easily baffled, and he still tried to make a bargain. He was at length told that an offer of 50 pounds had already been made for the tree, and refused. His reply was characteristic: "Well, I've made up my mind to have that tree, and I'll give 100 pounds for it. This offer, with the amount of those I have selected, will make my morning's purchases come to three or four hundred pounds. If I don't have this tree, I won't have any." He had it, and it still adorns the magnificent lawn at Stanmore (1877). See Tulip Tree.

As soon as he had money to spare he began to buy pictures. The collection constantly grew both in quality and size, until at last his house in the Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, and his residence at Stanmore, near London, were crowded with gems of English art.

The great strength of the collection lay in Turner's and Etty's, the last-named artist being a special friend of the collector. He appreciated Turner's talents before they had been generally recognized, and purchased his paintings when others doubted. The collection was also very rich in examples of Linnell, Naclise, Mulready, David Roberts, Prout, and other English artists. Here can be seen two paintings by Joseph Turner once owned by Joseph Gillott.

After the Joseph Gillott's death his collection of paintings were sold for 173,310 pounds. Webster's 'Roast Pig', a picture painted on commission, for which Joseph Gillott gave 700 guineas, realized 3,550 guineas. His collection of violins, on which he much prided himself, was also disposed of, producing 4,000 pounds.

For many years Joseph Gillott's face was familiar at the Birmingham Theatre, where he attended nearly every evening, and then adjourned to the Hen and Chickens Hotel to smoke his 'churchwarden' and converse with his friends. Until about ten days before his death failing eyesight was the only sign he gave of old age.

On the day after Christmas day 1872 he entertained as usual some of his children and their friends; the next morning he was attacked by a complication of pleurisy and bronchitis, and died at Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 5th January 1873.

He married Miss Mitchell, a sister of John and William Mitchell, the steel pen makers. On 16th March 1873 his personality was sworn under 250,000 pounds.

The 1861 Census entry for The Grove states:-

The Grove
Jane Simpson Servant aged 19 Housemaid
Elizabeth James Servant aged 19 Kitchen Maid
Fredrick Franklin Servant aged 29 Butler
Eliza Sharp Servant aged 39 House Keeper

Coach House & Stables With Room Above
(Unoccupied)

The Lodge
John Farmer Head aged 48 Gardener Domestic
Mary Farmer Wife aged 46 -
John Farmer Son aged 18 Gardener Domestic
William Farmer Son aged 15 Scholar
Lewis Farmer Son aged 12 Scholar
George Farmer Son aged 10 Scholar
Fredrick Farmer Son aged 7 Scholar

Grove Farm 128 acres
(Unoccupied)

The 1871 Census entry for The Grove states:-

The Grove
Eliza Sharp Servant aged 49 House Keeper

Jane Simpson Servant aged 29 House Maid
Moly Ann Sharp Servant aged 27 House Maid

Grove Lodge No.1
Henry Hitchcock Head aged 54 Labourer
Jane Hitchcock Wife aged 59 -
Lucy Hitchcock Daughter aged 28 Dressmaker

Grove Lodge No.2
Henry Bowter Head aged 41 Gardener
Sarah Bowter Wife aged 38 -
Eliza Bowter Daughter aged 10 Scholar
Edward Bowter Son aged 1 -

As there is no mention of a second Gate/Lodge house prior to the 1871 Census, it can be assumed that, what is now known as the 'West Lodge' was built between 1861 and 1871. In fact we can narrow this date down to between 1861 and 1865, as the lodge can be seen on the first Ordinance Survey map of 1865.

Just around the corner to Westbourne Road, Edgbaston is a road named Stanmore Road, this road, I believe, was named due to Joseph Gillott owning The Grove at Stanmore.

Take a tour around Joseph Gillott's Pen Factory.

The Edware Recorder states that The Grove was sold in 1873 upon the death of it's owner Joseph Gillott, although in the introduction written in the book Eliza Brightwen The Life and Thoughts of a Naturalist it states that The Grove was purchased in June 1872.