

The year 1859 saw Würdemann establishing self-regulating tide-gauges on the Gulf coast of Florida: at the Tortugas, Charlotte Harbor, Egmont Key, and Tampa Bay. These were kept in order and attended by Würdemann, "who devoted to them his usual care and attention." Very satisfactory results were obtained for all of these stations, run simultaneously.

Death came to Würdemann at the age of 42, at his home in the village of Swedesboro, New Jersey. For years he had suffered from pulmonary phthisis—a familial affection, it would appear, for his oldest brother and a sister had died of it at an early age. At a meeting of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, a resolution of regret was adopted at his passing, "whose collection of specimens from the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and especially of the birds of Florida...have proved of great importance in increasing our knowledge of the natural history of the southern part of the United States."

Joseph Pitty Couthouy (1808-64) in Texas

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One of the most interesting and appealing members of the scientific staff of the Wilkes Exploring Expedition around the world (1838-42) was Joseph P. Couthouy. The biographers, however, have dealt badly with him. Neither *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, nor the curiously selective *Dictionary of American Biography* give a sketch of his life. Nor is there one in that omnium-gatherum, the Lippincott-Thomas biographical dictionary (which can hardly be called selective, judging from some inclusions). Fragmentary accounts of him are given in various notes on the work of the Wilkes expedition; and we have early been dependent on Bouvé's¹ (1880) and Dall's² (1888) biographies, scanty as they are of facts.

In recent years, however, we have Bartlett's³ account of

¹T. T. Bouvé, Boston Society of Natural History, *Anniversary Memoirs*, 1880, 134-35.

²W. H. Dall, Biological Society of Washington, *Proceedings* 4:108-111, *portr.*, 1888. This paucity of biographical material may be explained, perhaps, as a partial result of the enmity toward Couthouy of Captain Charles Wilkes of the Expedition; and the controversy that arose between James Dwight Dana, also of the Expedition, and Couthouy (regarding the alleged plagiarism by Couthouy of Dana's ideas as to the thermal distribution of corals): *Amer. J. Sci.* 45:130, 145, 1843; *ibid.* 46:378-89, 1843; *ibid.* 46:129-36, 1943; *ibid.* 46:129-36, 1843; *ibid.* 46:1-9, 10 ff [Appendix], 1844).

³H. H. Bartlett, American Philosophical Society, *Proceedings* 82:650-55, 1940.

the work of the scientific specialists of the Expedition, and Johnson's⁴ brief but very useful paper. Johnson summarizes Couthouy's life (so far as it is known), together with a list of his published papers on mollusca, and a list of species described, together with type localities.

I shall not do more here than add to what has been given in previous papers, correct some printed errors, and give some facts of Couthouy's life which have escaped all previous biographers; and which in 1946 were unknown even to his surviving descendants. I have also included, in a compact chronology, the chief data of his career, and his Boston and New York residences over the years, as shown in city directories.

Joseph Pitty Couthouy, born in Boston, was the son of Captain Joseph Couthouy of the American merchant marine, and his wife, Susannah Couthouy. The father died, some time between 1828 and 1830, and the mother in 1832 or 1833. On 9 March, 1832, J. P. Couthouy married Mary Greenwood Wild, and to them were born *four* children: William (*not* Joseph P., as Dall states), Josephine, Mary Greenwood, and Helen Greenwood. William (who was frail in health) lived for some years at Easton, Pa., and died there; Josephine married Frederick C. Stimpson, professor of physics and chemistry (1871-74) at the University of Kansas; Mary Greenwood married George Clapp, a New York dramatic critic; and Helen Greenwood married George Carlington Powers, a merchant of Boston.⁵

Joseph Pitty Couthouy, after some years at the Boston Latin School (1820+), followed the sea, as sailor or supercargo on his father's ship. After 1835 he was captain of his own ship, and sailed the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific, and may have been engaged in the China trade. Certain it is, that he was in the Caribbean and on the eastern and western coasts of South America before he joined the Wilkes expedition in 1838. He early became interested in natural history; and just before leaving on the Expedition, he divided his very rich collection of mollusks between the Boston Society of Natural History and the Harvard Natural History Society (about 800 species to each). He had joined the Boston Society of Natural History in 1836 (*aet.* 28), and

⁴R. L. Johnson, *Museum Comparative Zoology, Occasional Papers on Mollusks* 1:33-40, *portr.*, 1946.

⁵*George Francis Powers to S.W.G., 11Je1946.* (The late Mr. Powers was a grandson of Joseph P. Couthouy.)

read his first papers on mollusks before the Society in 1836 (5 October) and 1838 (17 January, 30 June, and 1 August).⁶ On 18 August, 1838, he sailed from Newport News, Va., on the Wilkes expedition.

The facts of his connection with that expedition are well known: the itinerary; how he was detached at Honolulu and came home to work on his collections; and other details which Dall has told well. For a number of years he followed again the sea; and then (from about 1843 to 1846) engaged in merchandising in New York. He then returned to Boston, and city directories "place" him there over the years 1846 to 1851, inclusive. About 1851 business took him to Brownsville, Texas, where he lived, certainly from the records, at least from 17 April to 7 December, 1851; and surely earlier and later than these documented terminal dates. His family remained in Boston, as may be seen in the appended chronology.

It was while he lived at Brownsville, "cashier of the bank there," that Couthouy took an active part in the organization of the Brownsville Protestant Episcopal "Church of the Advent." (The Couthouy family in Boston had been members of Dr. [later, Bishop] William Crosswell's "Church of the Advent"; and some of Joseph P. Couthouy's children, and those of his brother, John P. Couthouy, had been baptized there as late as 1848).⁷ The identification of Joseph Pitty Couthouy with Brownsville, and the "Church of the Advent" there is complete; as DuBose Murphy⁸ states "...The Church of the Advent [St. Paul's Church], Brownsville....first minister, the Rev. William Passmore...from North Carolina...came in 1851...found four communicants in Brownsville, one man and three women. The layman, Mr. Joseph P. Conthony [*sic*] of Boston, Massachusetts, had taken the lead in organizing the group and securing the appointment of Mr. Passmore by the Board of Missions. Brownsville had then about 500 population." Mrs. Harbert Davenport⁹ of Brownsville has also added the detailed infor-

⁶Meisel, vol. 2, 1926 (consult *index*).

⁷Rev. Whitney Hale (rector, Church of the Advent, Boston) to S.W.G., 14S1946.

⁸Dubose Murphy, *A Short History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Texas*, 1935, p. 25.

⁹Mrs. Harbert Davenport to S.W.G., Oct., 1941; 1Ja1946. In the church books of the Church of the Advent, Brownsville, Rev. William Passmore's chirography made his "u's" look like "n's", and *vice versa*; hence in all transcriptions of data from the entries involving Couthouy, the name appears as "Conthony." The identification is complete, however, in "Mr. J. P. Conthony of Boston," and his part in the naming of the Brownsville church after the one in Boston of which the Couthouy family long were members.

mation below, abstracted from the records of the church: "The Church of the Advent, Brownsville, this week, 17th day of April [1851], being the Thursday in Passion Week—a meeting of those desirous of establishing the Protestant Episcopal Church in Brownsville, assembled themselves at the Bank Building¹⁰ in Brownsville at the call of Jos. P. Couthouy, Esq.—at that time the cashier of the bank." He was the first named of the congregation. On Easter Monday, 21 April, 1851, the vestry met and organized. At this meeting Joseph P. Couthouy and John Rhea, Esq., were elected delegates to the Diocesan convention to be held in Galveston on Thursday, 1 May, 1851; they attended, and the records show that John S. Rhea and Joseph P. Couthouy took their seats. Joseph P. Couthouy was sponsor for Grace Duncan in baptism at Brownsville, 7 December, 1851.¹¹ How long Couthouy remained in Brownsville, I cannot say; for the town records of 1850 and 1851 are silent regarding him.¹² Rev. William Passmore refers in his church records to the loss in church membership from the 1853 yellow fever epidemic in Brownsville; but the church records give no further information of Couthouy.¹³

Regarding Couthouy's later connection (1854-56) with the "Boston Relief & Submarine Company," and their attempted recovery of bullion and specie from foundered Spanish ships and galleons, W. H. Dall has the following to say, which also has been copied by Johnson: "In 1854 he [Couthouy] took command of an expedition to the Bay of Cumaná [Venezuela], where he spent three years in the unsuccessful search for the wreck of a Spanish treasure ship, the *San Pedro*, lost there early in the century." Here again some modification and correction is in order. This company appears to have been incorporated in 1854; and a

¹⁰Illustrative of the gaps in our knowledge of some of the early towns of Texas, is this note from Harbert Davenport, lawyer and historian, dated 24N1945, regarding the bank with which Couthouy was connected in Brownsville, in 1851: "I do not like to admit that you have 'stumped' me; but your card is the first, and so far the only, intimation I have ever had that there was a bank in Brownsville in 1851. I do not find that such a bank received a special legislative charter, and the date mentioned is antecedent to the Stillman-Belden-King-Kenedy syndicate, which conducted the greater portion of Brownsville's business preceding the Civil War. The 'counting houses' maintained by Stillman and Belden, and perhaps by other Brownsville merchants, undoubtedly conducted something of a banking business; but nowhere in the accessible literature of the period have I found that either of their establishments was considered, primarily, a bank. Logic tells me that your information that your friend Couthouy was 'cashier of the bank' must have a factual foundation, but so far I have no hint as to the actual facts upon which it is based. I shall keep trying." As nothing further in our correspondence brought forward such data, I conclude that he was unsuccessful. He was, of course, acquainted with Rev. Wm. Passmore's church record here quoted.

¹¹Rev. William T. Sherwood, *rector*, to S.W.G., 2N1941.

¹²Mrs. Harbert Davenport to S.W.G., 1Ja1946.

¹³*Ibidem*.

15-page circular of the company, dated in November of 1854 shows as a frontispiece, "Spanish Ship-of-the-Line 'San Pedro Alcantara,' as she now lies in 60 Feet of Water, in the Bay of Cumaná, Venezuela, S.A." Couthouy is not listed as an officer of the company in the circular. The 1856 *Report* (covering operations of the year 1855) lists Couthouy as a member of the board of directors, and Clerk of the company. There is much information on varied activities, including the investigation by Couthouy of the pearl fisheries on the coast of Ecuador, and of a Spanish galleon, the *Leocadia*, loaded with specie, which had been wrecked at Point Santa Elena on that coast. He is not mentioned, however, in the account of the San Pedro expedition to Venezuela that year in the *Silver Key*, under the command of Captain Darius Clark. This report of activities in 1855 (submitted to the stockholders at their annual meeting by the president, S. Benton Thompson, on 12 March, 1856) has this as an addendum: "The latest advices [1856] from Captain Couthouy, commanding the expedition to the 'San Pedro,' announces its arrival on the coast of Venezuela, officers and crew all well, and about to commence operations on that valuable wreck....The expedition is undoubtedly now at work on the 'San Pedro,' and profitable results are confidently anticipated." Since no copies are available in American libraries of any later reports than those mentioned,¹⁴ I cannot say anything of further operations. Couthouy's ship, if I have correct information, was the brig *Monagel*; which Johnson says was wrecked off Cape Cod on its return journey, and officers and crew rescued only with great difficulty.

"Those who knew Couthouy," says William Healey Dall in his 1888 memoir, "describe him as active and enthusiastic, with reminders of his French ancestry in his physiognomy and manner; of middle height, dark complexion, and more trim in his dress and refined in his ways than would have been expected from one who had always followed the sea. One friend says of him: 'As brave and gallant a soul as ever

¹⁴The Baker Library of the Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration has a copy of the 1854 *Act of Incorporation and By-Laws*, as well as the November, 1854 Circular (also in the Public Library of the City of Boston); copies of the 1856 *Report* (covering operations of the year 1855) are in the Boston Athenaeum, The Public Library of the City of Boston, Harvard, the New York Public Library, and the Library of Congress; copies of the 1857 *Report* (covering operations for the year 1856) are in the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress. Mr. Paul North Rice, chief of the reference department of the New York Public Library, suggested (20N1945) that the 1858 *Report* must have given an account of Couthouy's final activities with the Boston Relief & Submarine Company; but the Library of Congress Union Catalogue indicates the whereabouts of only those publications mentioned above.

trod a deck, and a lively and always entertaining companion.' ”

CHRONOLOGY OF JOSEPH PITY COUTHOUY (1808-64)

- 1808 Born in Boston, at (?39 or ?57) Prince Street, son of Captain Joseph and Susannah Couthouy. [Captain Couthouy, in Boston directories: 1809, 1810 at 57 Prince St.; 1816, 1818, 1820 and 1828, at Friend Street; 1821-1827, at 7 Friend St.; 1828, at 19 Friend St.; Captain Joseph Couthouy d. 1828 at 19 Friend St.?] 1820 Joseph Pitty Couthouy entered Boston Latin School, *aet.* 12. 1830 Susannah Couthouy, *widow*, res. Boston, 19 Friend St. 1832 Joseph Pitty Couthouy married Mary Greenwood Wild, 9 March. Resided (with his mother) in Boston, 19 Friend St., 1832; mother resided 1833 at same address. Mother died in 1833? Children of J. P. & Mary (Wild) Couthouy: William, Josephine, Mary Greenwood, Helen Greenwood. No Boston addresses for J.P.C. in 1833, 1834. 1835 "Captain" J. P. Couthouy resided Boston, 6 Sheafe St. 1836 Resided Boston, 3 Barton St. Became member of the Boston Society of Natural History ("BSNH"). Read his first paper (5 Oct.). 1837 Resided Boston, on Commercial St., nr. Hall; so in directory for 1837, 1838, 1839. 1838 Sailed with Wilkes Expedition, as conchologist, 18 August. 1840 Detached from expedition at Honolulu, by Wilkes, "for disobedience of orders." Returned to his profession as Master in the merchant marine, and visited South America and the Pacific. Not included (1840) in Boston directory. 1841 Attended meetings of BSNH on 2Ja, 7J, 15S, 17N. 1842 Attended meetings of BSNH on 5Ja, 19Ja. 1843 Residence New York City, 186 Prince St., 1843-45, in business at 341 Broadway, "lamps and furnishings," part of time under firm name of "Couthouy & Nevers," 1843-46. 1846 Residence Boston, 6 Auburn, 1846-49; no longer listed in New York. 1849 Boston directory also gives residence at 81 Brighton, 1849-51. 1851 Residence Boston, 81 Brighton. (But at Brownsville, Tex., at least from 17Ap to 7D; cashier of bank at Brownsville and Senior Warden of Church of the Advent [P.E.], and delegate to the Diocesan Convention at Galveston, 1My.) 1852 Residence (*Mrs.* J. P. Couthouy) Boston, 81 Brighton, 1852-53. 1853 Residence (*Mrs.* J. P. Couthouy), Boston, 4 Acorn. 1854 Residence Boston, 4 Acorn, 1854, 1855, 1856-62. Couthouy an incorporator of the Boston Relief & Submarine Company; took command of expedition to the Bay of Cumaná (Venezuela), and "spent 3 years in unsuccessful attempt to raise cargo of sunken Spanish treasure ship, the *San Pedro*, lost early in the 1800's." [*but see Text*] 1857 Residence, Boston, 4 Acorn; in business at 11 Kilby. 1861 Apptd. acting volunteer Lieutenant, USN (26Ag); ordered to command Bark *Kingfisher* (31Ag). 1862 Ordered to command U. S. S. *Columbia* (31D), which was wrecked, and Couthouy made prisoner 14Ja63?; exchanged after 3-mo. imprisonment at Salisbury, N.C., in 1863. 1863 Ordered to Mississippi Squadron to command monitor *Osage* (29My), but transferred to U.S.Str. *Chillicothe*. Residence given as Boston? 1864 Wounded, and died (4Ap), off Grand Ecore, Louisiana, killed by a Confederate sharpshooter. [No residence given at Boston for year 1864.]