

Sidney Granger Cooke

Cashier of the Bank of Herington and first City Attorney

Born: June 18, 1846 in New York

Died: August 15, 1926 in Leavenworth, KS

Sidney Granger Cooke, youngest son of Horace Nelson Cooke and Jane Forman Cooke, was born in Fulton, Oswego County, New York on June 18, 1846. At the outbreak of the Civil War, his two older brothers enlisted in the Union army while Sidney remained at home in Fulton working for a carpenter. At the age of 15, young Sidney Cooke ran away from home and enlisted in the Army. His father objected, however, and brought Sidney back home to Fulton. The following year, Sidney again insisted that at 16 years old, he was old enough to fight and his father reluctantly gave his son permission to enlist. So in 1862, at the age of 16, he enlisted in the Union Army and was a private in Company E, 147th New York Volunteer Infantry at the time he fought at the battle of Gettysburg in the Civil War. He survived Gettysburg with only an injury to his thumb from an exploding shell which killed a fellow soldier. He was, however, seriously injured in 1864 at the Battle of the Wilderness when he was struck by a bullet in the back of his head.



Sidney G. Cooke was reported by newspapers as the only man who ever sneezed a bullet out of his head. The story of the sneezed bullet is as follows:

During the Civil War, Mr. Cooke was badly wounded in May of 1864 in the battle of the Wilderness at Spotsylvania, VA by a Confederate bullet which penetrated his brain. He was left for dead where he fell and his name was subsequently recorded with those who gave their lives in the conflict. After nightfall however, Charles M. Jones, a Confederate soldier crept about the battlefield in search of a brother supposed to have been killed in the fight. The rebel soldier noticed a rifle still grasped in the hands of a supposed dead Union soldier in the brush. When he approached the supposed dead soldier, Cooke groaned. Cooke was given a few drops of whiskey from the Confederate's flask and somewhat revived. The rebel soldier carried Cooke as a prisoner into his own camp where his wounds were dressed and he

improved rapidly. However, no attempt was made to remove the bullet from his head. After three weeks, Cooke was sent to the prison in Andersonville, Georgia. After about seven months, a prisoner exchange arrangement was made for Cooke and he was transferred to a parole camp at Anapolis, Maryland. Cooke rejoined his forces and noted that the bullet in his head did not bother him at all. However one day while marching with his unit, he contracted what he perceived to be a severe cold. He was plagued with sneezing fits for about 10 days. Finally, with one of these sneezes came the bullet that had been in his head for a year. Charles Jones, the rebel soldier who rescued Cooke, became a prosperous Lawyer in Greensboro, North Carolina after the war. These two men remained friends throughout the years and corresponded frequently.

Cooke mustered out of the US army as a 2nd Lieutenant on February 7, 1865. After the war, Sidney Cooke returned to his home in New York. He studied law at the University of Rochester in New York and graduated from the university in 1872. After graduating from Law School, he was joined a grain firm in Chicago where he remained employed until 1886.

Sidney G. Cooke married to Helen Maria Thornton of Sodus, New York and they were the parents of 2 daughters: Carina Antoinette and Helen May; and 3 sons: Thornton, Chester, and Sidney K. The oldest son, Thornton, graduated from the University of Kansas in 1893. Thornton worked as assistant cashier and cashier of the Bank of Herington, and served as mayor of Herington from 1899-1900. Thornton Cooke also founded the Columbia National Bank and became a successful banker in Kansas City.

Sidney G. Cooke came to Herington in late 1886 and, in cooperation with M.D. Herington, served as cashier of the Bank of Herington. The Cooke family also incorporated the Tampa State Bank in 1901. Sidney served on the first town council of Herington and was the city's first City Attorney. In 1887, he built a home at 421 South "C" Street in Herington, one of the earliest remaining homes in Herington. This house still stands today.

Cooke was the Democratic nominee in 1892 for the Kansas House of Representatives, District 05 but lost in the general election to Populist Party candidate John Davis.

On July 3, 1894, Sidney G. Cooke was nominated at the Kansas Democratic State Convention as candidate for Lieutenant Governor, running mate with David Overmeyer, candidate for Governor. Overmeyer and Cooke ultimately lost the race to Governor Edmund Nedham Morrill (D) and James Armstrong Troutman (R).

While living in Herington, Sidney G. Cooke served as a member of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disable Volunteer Soldiers (N.H.D.V.S.) in Leavenworth, KS from 1894 – 1904. In 1904 he submitted his resignation as Manager of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers to accept the appointment as Governor of the Western Branch of the N.H.D.V.S. in Leavenworth. Cooke and his family left Herington and moved into the Governor's mansion at the veteran's home in Leavenworth, KS where he served in the capacity of Governor of the Disabled Volunteer Soldier's home until his retirement in 1925.

On June 24, 1917, three disgruntled Spanish-American War veterans attempted to assassinate Cooke by blowing up his house while he and his family were at home. They placed dynamite at one corner of Cooke's mansion home in Leavenworth and set off the explosives. The resulting explosion destroyed three rooms of the mansion home with flying debris injuring Cooke, his wife, daughter and son-in-law.

Lieutenant Cooke also served as the Commander of the "Officers of the Commandery of the State of Kansas" in the [Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States](#), an organization comprised of Civil War officers pledging allegiance to the Union and vowing to protect against threats to the national government.

Sidney Granger Cooke died suddenly on August 15, 1926 in Leavenworth, KS and is buried in the Leavenworth National Cemetery alongside his wife, Helen Thornton Cooke.



Sidney Granger Cooke and Helen Maria (Thornton) Cooke

Leavenworth National Cemetery, Leavenworth, KS