

# Donation of the Month

Object: "Coin" Harvey family letters  
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Donor: Museum Purchase



Our grins were wider than the Cheshire Cat's. Our glee was greater than a child's on Christmas morn. Why? In our hands were a bundle of letters from "Coin" Harvey and his family.

William Hope "Coin" Harvey had a long and varied career as a lawyer, free-silver advocate, political candidate, author, promoter, and resort builder. In the first decade or so of the 20th century, Harvey's resort at Monte Ne, five miles southeast of Rogers, offered vacationers huge hotels, grand entertainments sporting amenities, and a lagoon complete with a Venetian gondola and gondolier. Although Harvey died in 1936, his impact on the area continues today. Whenever Beaver Lake's water level is down, folks descend upon Monte Ne to view the amphitheater and other structures normally buried under water.

So imagine our surprise and delight when we received an email from a man in Washington, DC. He had bought a bunch of documents at an estate sale and wondered if we might be interested in purchasing some of them — they were from "some guy" named Harvey at Monte Ne. (Imagine our grins!) We settled on a fair price and waited.

When the letters finally arrived, we couldn't help ourselves. (Imagine our glee!) We ripped open the package and dove into the pile of yellowed papers and envelopes. Carefully, so as not to damage the brittle letters, we read bits and pieces of the past. It was clear that trouble was brewing, both in Harvey's business life and personal life.

While we haven't had a chance to decipher all the faded, spidery handwriting of the letters, we did transcribe one letter that may be the best of the lot. Harvey wrote it to his son Tom on Monte Ne Railway Company stationery on July 30, 1908.

*Dear Tom.*

*I rec yr [received your] letter & will send the check for \$50. to Anna the 1st of the month. & will keep it up if I can. If I stop sending it will be because I can't get it. & to send it endangers the permanency[?] of something going. I have no objection to a suit & divorce with the court fixing the amt [amount] of alimony*

*but have no idea in my present condition that he wd [would] fix it at \$50. per month. I have not yet paid all my taxes & am threatened with forfeiture of all my charters – I have defaulted on interest. It takes my salary at the bank to pay interest, mainly on yesterday's[?] debts. & I am getting nothing from the Club Co. – it hasn't got it. I put in se\_\_\_\_\_ here as a necessity & then stopped. The Club Co. has no money & over drawn. The season is a failure – we now have only 5 guests in the house & the season promises to close at a loss. I was at the Bentonville \_\_\_\_\_ hotel the other night & they had 2 guests. Am told there is no one at the Electric Spr[ings]. Sam Leath was here 3 days ago from Eureka & says E Spr[ings] is sweating blood – all the hotels losing money & that his livery stable will lose \$6000 for the year & will make an a\_\_\_\_\_.* I tried to write you a cheerful letter last time but you came back at me pretty hard.

*My impression is that during the time I was liberal to my family they acquired the idea that I was made to serve them & that any thing I had they could take & that it was not a part of their duty to help me but that I was a family horse for them to ride. It is what drove me from home. I enclose you an order on Harry[?] for an investigation of the estate. Get at a complete statement. On a return of prosperity we ought to sell it with Fawy[?] & Clate[?] consenting. Harry[?] says it can't be done, but I think it can legally.*

*Affc [Affectionately]  
WH [William Harvey]*

*You have not sent me the share of bank stock.*

Letters like these are valuable in so many ways. They give us personal insights into a family and a time that people of today don't remember and that newspapers of the day didn't report. Many of the difficulties mentioned in the letter — the divorce, the family's estrangement, the financial losses at the resort — have been hinted at through the years but never documented by the people involved.

We'll also be able to use these letters when the Museum researches and writes its book about "Coin" Harvey and Monte Ne. Projected to be completed in 2003 or 2004, the book will be an indepth look at this fascinating man and the fabulous resort he built. Along with information from oral histories and newspaper accounts, we plan to add lots of wonderful photos that have been donated or loaned to the Museum through the years. And now we'll be able to include excerpts from some of the Harvey family letters as well.

Now you can understand why we're so pleased with ourselves, can't you?