



*Dearest Jane... Love L
Jane Bush and her love letters from Habana*
A far-from-garden-variety couple from Long Island's Gold Coast

Introduction

In 2003, the Oyster Bay Historical Society obtained a significant collection of letters from Luis Francke to Jane Bush de Lamoutte documenting their courtship from 1907 until their marriage in London in 1911. These letters help introduce the lives of a far-from-garden-variety family from Long Island's Gold Coast and form the basis of the Society's winter exhibition: Dearest Jane... Love L: Jane Bush de Lamoutte Francke and her love letters from Habana.

Jane Bush was a rural Indiana girl educated in Paris and married, at the age of 18, to Alexander de Lamoutte in her sister's apartment on West 39th Street in New York. Sometime after the birth of her second child, she separated from Mr. de Lamoutte and soon began her courtship by mail with Luis Francke whose family served in Cuba's Sweden's Embassy. Francke maintained a colonial-era townhouse in Habana and operated a sugar plantation and refinery in Matanzas.



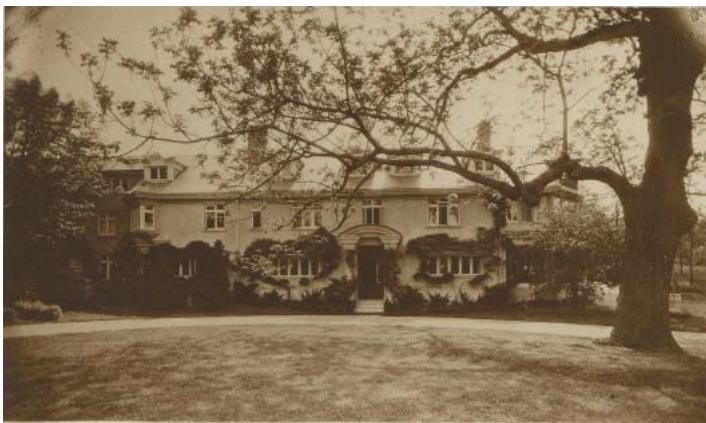
*Jane Bush De Lamoutte Francke Luis Francke
Shortly after their September 1911 London wedding*

*Jane Bush, Richmond, Indiana
ca 1895*



*Francke Townhouse, Habana Vieja, Cuba
Before 1930*





Glenby, Brookville, Long Island
ca 1924



Garden wall at Ferncote, Brookville, Long Island
1940s

Jane Francke with gardener and daughter Ada
ca 1924



After their wedding, the Franckes established a home on their Long Island estate Glenby in Upper Brookville, where she maintained a magnificent garden and could indulge her love of ornithology. On her husband's death in 1938, she moved across her estate to Ferncote, a cottage where she made her home until her death in 1953. During these years, she became extensively involved with the Garden Club of America and with the early development of the American conservation movement, traveling with Louis Bromfield and Vice President Henry Wallace to promote conservation activities under the aegis of the United States Interior Department.

Today, volunteers at the Jane Francke Bird Sanctuary, on the grounds of her former estate, maintain the legacy of her commitment to open space throughout the country and on Long Island.



Francke Sanctuary, Brookville, Long Island
2009

Family & Courtship

Jane Bush's marriage to Alexandre de Lamoutte was noted in the New York Times (21 January 1897, where she is identified by her middle name Leora). Only one photograph of the married couple remains extant (*below*), and both the date and location of the image are unknown. They had two children, Ada (1902) and Luis (1905), before separating sometime after their son's birth.



*Jane Bush de Lamoutte with her son Luis
1905*



*With daughter Ada
1902*

FRANCKE HIJOS & Co.
HABANA

Thursday. 6. Am

Dearest,

I woke up at daylight
and could not stay in bed. The
events that are to follow are going
to be distressing and stirring—my
mind is made up to it, so the
more I think. the clearer is my

After separating from de Lamoutte, Jane began her courtship with Luis Francke—a courtship often conducted by letter, as the two were frequently separated by Luis's business concerns or by complications in Jane's difficult divorce. Luis suffered such separations deeply:

It does not seem possible that it is only a few hours since you left me at the ferry. — I stood there and watched you and the children walk away from me and though it gave me pain and made me desolate and lonely at your departure, I could not help feeling proud of your appearance... this afternoon and evening I have been absolutely lost and have been wandering round in a circle, like a ship without a rudder... — good night, sweetheart. I love you so deeply that you must feel its protecting and caressing influence even at the great distance that we are separated.

Luis, Jane, Ada



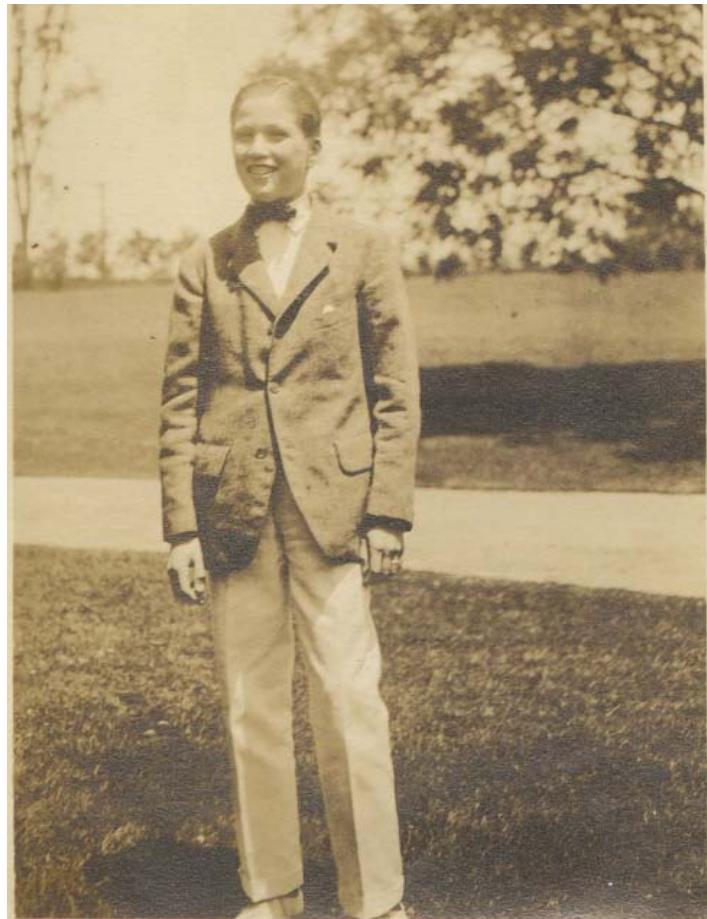
Luis Francke and Jane with her sisters Ada and Bessy

Luis, on his mount



Dearest,

I must congratulate you on your ideas about Ada – they are most wise and thoughtful and just what the child needs to have her mind formed in the right direction. – The manners and ideas of a child are just so important as her physical health and if they are not given proper bringing up it makes them most unattractive and a source of great unhappiness to themselves. – I hope her good looks will continue to improve, but if she lives a century she will not be able to compare with her mother. This is an unbiased opinion! – one that I have reached after much and tender observation. Your words of cheer come as myrtle balm and are much needed. The weather continues unsettled and it is impossible to calculate or foresee events with the elements so very uncertain. The crux of the situation will be reached in the next thirty days and I must prejudge it accurately – after that, I can leave, as the details and the filling in, the office here can do it without me.... A few days more and we shall be together again, happy and prosperous with the future clear and bright as a sunrise after the rain and with all the bloom of love to guide us. Best Love.



Courtship & Marriage



Easter Sunday 1911
7 A.M.

Darling,

I have been awake some time thinking of you and on this morning of Christ's resurrection, it is appropriate that we give thanks for our own. The sun is shining brightly in my window, after the rain, the grass is coming up and turning green as it comes, the fresh stirring pulse of nature awaking to honor Easter, goddess of Spring, is to be seen and felt everywhere. If you were only here we too could do our share and go to the service at St. Bartholomew's. Church is the solace of the unfortunate...

Who knows that it has not been ordained for our own good to prepare us for something better, to be made worthy of it by trial and tribulation & would it not be abasing not to ring true and to be proved lacking in endurance & courage. Best Love. L.



Married.	
BRINSMANDE—HICKOX—James B. Brinsmade of New York City was married on Sept. 16 to Miss Margery G. Hickox at the bride's home in Toledo, Ohio.	
FRANCKE—BUSH DE LAMOUTTE—Parish Church of St. Marylebone, London, England, Sept. 18, 1911. Jane Bush de Lamoutte to Luis J. Francke.	
POND—MONTELL—Sept. 16, 1911, St. Luke's Church, Montclair, N. J., by Archdeacon Carter, Margaret Bartow, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Monteil, to William Adams Pond, son of Mr. and Mrs. Warren Pond of Montclair.	
ROUNDY—CROMIEN—Monday, Sept. 18, at the Rectory of St. Charles Borromeo, Aghua Veronica Cromien to Francis Bucknam Roundy.	
Brooklyn.	
BURN—SNYDER—Sept. 16, Hazel I. Snyder to Edward Burn.	
Long Island.	
TULLIS—MILNE—Sept. 14, Astoria, Beatrice Milnes to James D. Tullis.	
New Jersey.	
CHRISTIANSON—CHRISTIANSEN—Sept. 14, Trenton, Henrietta Christiansen to Holger Christianson.	
KRAUS—HECHT—Sept. 14, Jersey City, Julia Hecht to Daniel Kraus.	
O'CONNELL—MATT—Sept. 17, Newark, Ella S. Matt to P. A. O'Connell.	
POND—MONTELL—Sept. 16, Montclair, Margaret B. Monteil to William A. Pond.	

Glenby & Ferncote

Sunday

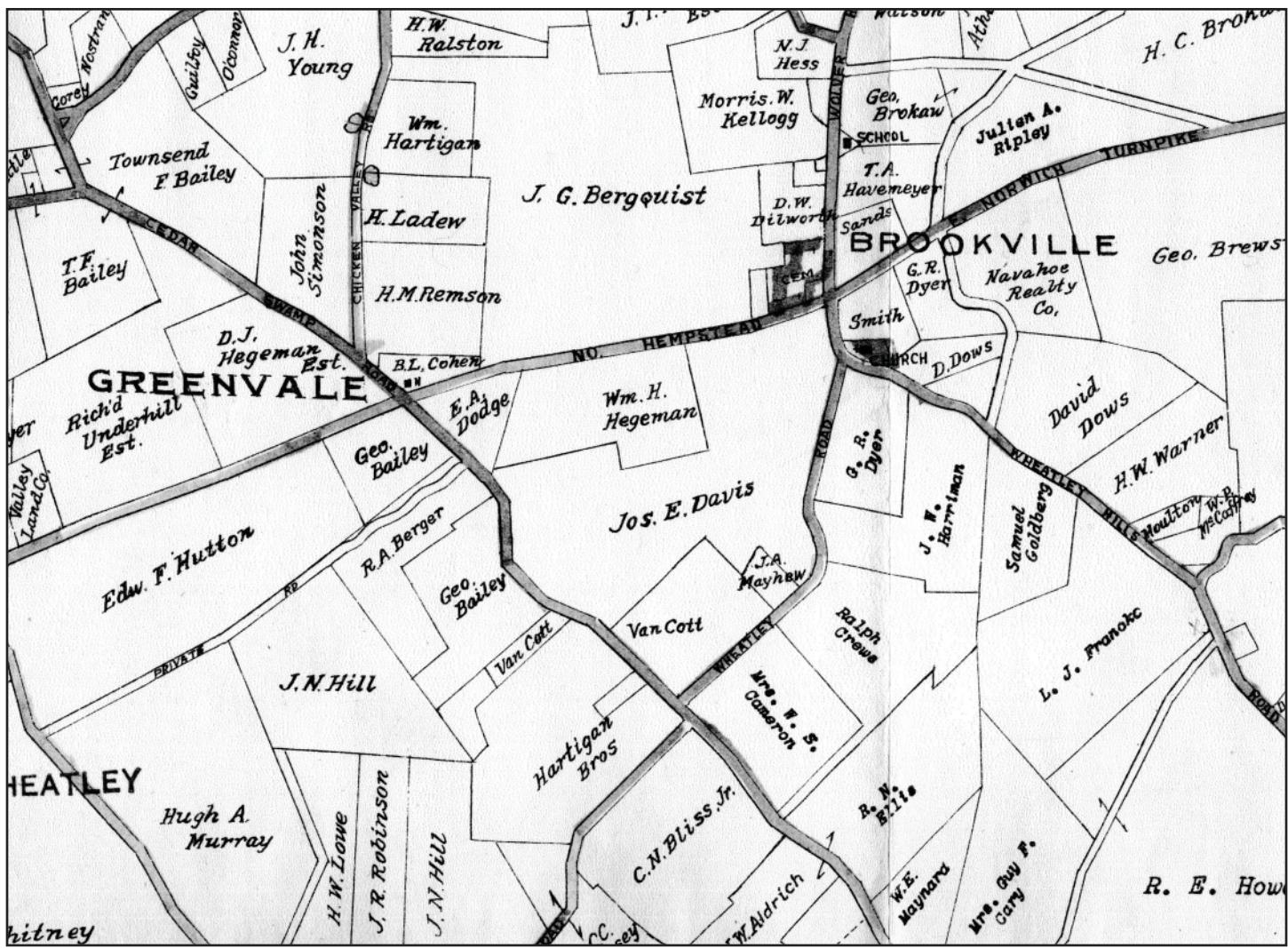
Darling Jane,

...the superintendent insisted on walking me over the place [Glenby], my knee being stiff I did not cherish it, but walk I must. I am glad I did, as he showed me a big pond eight feet deep which he made by draining rain water. It was filled with duck & geese and with a ripple on the surface gave the effect of a Swiss lake in miniature. Had it been banked with flowers & shrubs, with a walk & iron seats under trees..., the charm would have been complete. [?] gave me a rose and it made me happy with the thought of other roses that I have in mind. Best Love, L.



*Glenby: Brookville, Long Island
ca 1924*

Map of Nassau County (detail), ca. 1923, showing
Francke property at lower right





Ferncote interior, with Luis Francke's annotation on verso.

Glenby's front drive



I have built-in book shelves
~~above~~ ^{above} & violin in the
~~above~~ above. On the other side
in the bed room is a big
closet with drawers and
shelves.

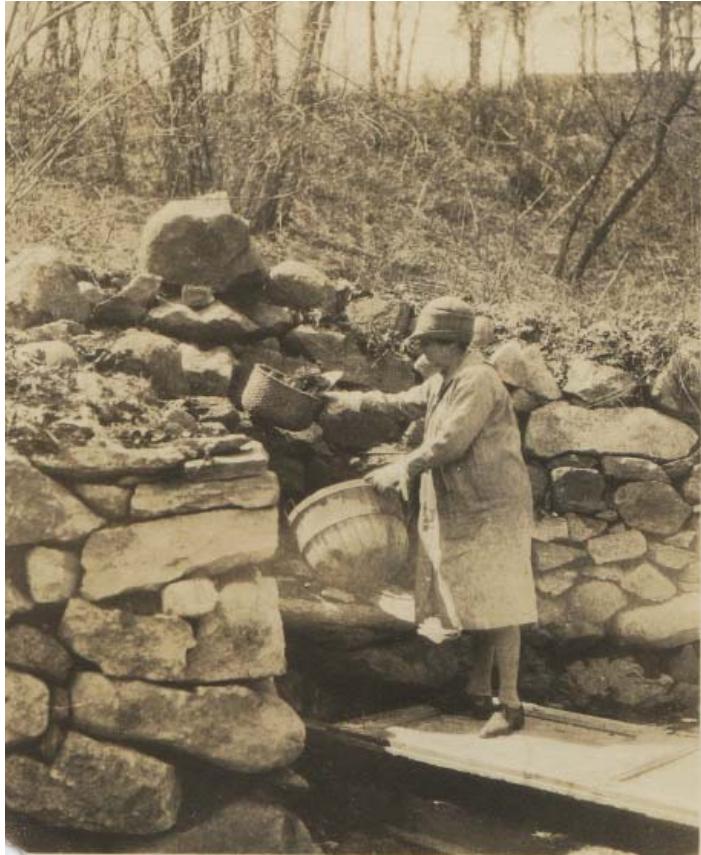


Ferncote and drive

Gardening & Conservation

Jane Francke during construction of garden wall at Ferncote, 1924 (below)

Jane Francke and Mrs. Henry P Davison, Jr., at Flower Show in Oyster Bay, Long Island



Grounds at Glenby

*Louis Bromfield and Henry Wallace
Friends of the Land ca 1944*



BUY WAR SAVINGS STAMPS

Thursday, April 6, 1944

washington Pays Tribute to Mrs. Fletcher Reed Andrews;
Friends of the Land Gets a Big Boost at Luncheon Here



Hugh Bennett, Louis Bromfield,
and Jane Francke
Friends of the Land ca 1944



Cuba: Francke Plantation

[FRANCKE HIJOS & Ca.
HABANA]

Havana April 9th 1916.

Dear Louis,

... Well, I am going to a big sugar estate of 12000 acres & machinery & 1500 men & oxen & sugar cane waving in the air, just the way we go to Glenby on Sunday, only now I am the manager instead of mother. I know mother could manage it better so very soon I think I will turn it over to her and then we shall have two Glenbys...



Friday

...I want you to come to New York. I shall be there only a short time before I go to Cuba and we must have it together...Goodbye, dearest. If I do not get another letter from you soon I shall bolt by the next steamer. Waking or sleeping you are ever uppermost in my thoughts and are more necessary and more a part of me; somehow I can't realize that I have ever existed without you. Best Love, L.



Habana Townhouse

Saturday

...Y'day I went on board the "Hovia," she is a fine yacht and the people are very pleasant. -- They invited me to breakfast but I pleaded business and the ceremonies were concluded. -- They are leaving Monday; delighted with Havana and its quaint setting, as they expressed it...

I need you very much to take care of me, with the ice bag and to read to me, up in our room in the tower, surrounded by clouds, the real and those of our imagination, evolved by the blessed union of two souls long kept apart by circumstances. --

Love, L.



Ellen Curtis, granddaughter of Jane Bush Francke and donor of the letters forming the basis of this exhibition, visited the Habana home of Luis Francke during her trip to Cuba in 2002:

Sometime before my mother, Ada Fracke Whitaker, died in January, 1991, she gave me a large manila envelope marked Cuba. Over the years I had heard tell that my grandfather, Luis J. Francke, had had a sugar plantation and house in Havana sometime before 1930. There were references by my mother to the fact that their parents had had a gay life during the "season" and that all the best silver was taken back and forth. Neither my mother nor her brother, Luis J. Francke, Jr., were ever taken to Cuba!

There were a great many photographs of the plantation and the house in Havana, which looked magical to me, especially beautiful inner courtyard with graceful arches on three sides, the fourth side features a huge wooden door wide enough for carriages to enter.

Finally, travel to Cuba is possible ...





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