

Birthday Wishes and Heartfelt Thanks (1935)

*John Q. Barrett**

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On February 13, 1892, Robert Houghwout Jackson was born in the family farmhouse in Spring Creek Township, Warren County, Pennsylvania, in the same room where his father had been born thirty years earlier.

Robert Jackson lived in Spring Creek until he was five or six years old. Then his parents moved the family to Frewsburg, New York, about thirty miles to the northeast. Robert attended the public school there. He became friends with fellow students, and sometimes also with their families. One of his good friends as he grew up was a classmate, Elizabeth A. Gibson. Robert also was close to her mother, Elizabeth J. (Laughlin) Gibson. Indeed, although Jackson had a mother of his own, loved her dearly, and called her that, he called Mrs. Gibson “mother” as well.

In the years following their 1909 graduation from Frewsburg High School, Robert and Elizabeth each ended up living and working in Jamestown, New York. Elizabeth never married. She attended business college in Jamestown, became a local businesswoman, and was active in her Catholic church and other community organizations.¹ Robert married and became the father of two children. Elizabeth got to know his family—they all were friends. Jackson studied law, became a lawyer, and in time became

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Thanks to Sonny Anderson of Youngsville, Pennsylvania, for spotting and purchasing Jackson-related materials at a Jamestown house sale in 2009, determining that they had belonged to Elizabeth Gibson, and donating them to the Fenton History Center in Jamestown, where they are archived; to the late J. Lynne Myers of Spring Creek, PA, for assisting Mr. Anderson; and to former director Joni Blackman and her colleagues at the Fenton for their fine work.

For an archive of selected Jackson List posts, many of which include document images or photographs, visit <http://thejacksonlist.com>. This essay is posted there as a PDF file with “live” hyperlinks.

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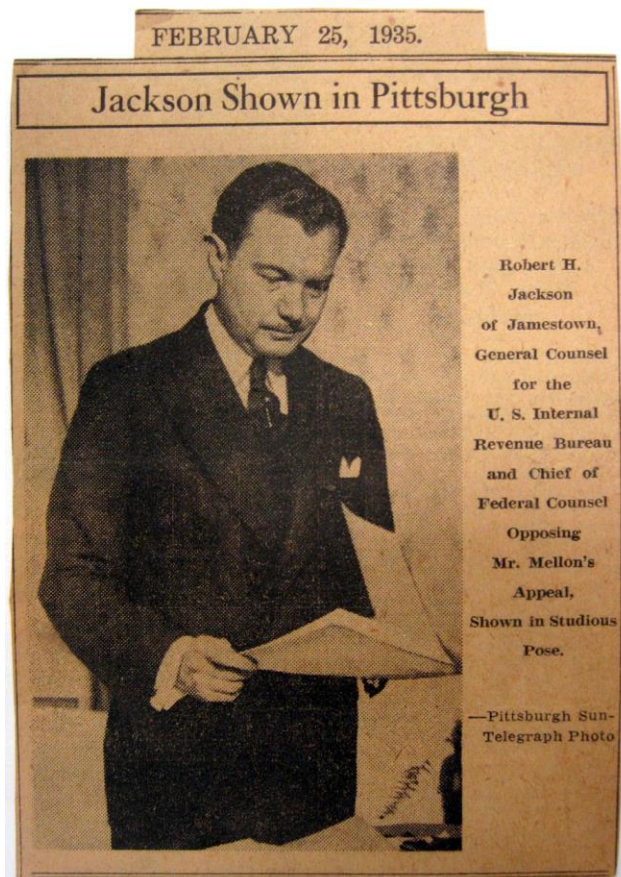
¹ See *Obituaries: Elizabeth A. Gibson*, JAMESTOWN POST-JOURNAL WEEKENDER, Nov. 29, 1980, at 2. Miss Gibson graduated from Jamestown Business College, became president of Curtis Machine Corporation, and later, until her retirement shortly before her death at age 87, was office manager at DeSantis Lincoln-Mercury. See *id.*

Jamestown's leading lawyer and a significant lawyer in New York State and nationally.

In 1934, Robert Jackson became, by presidential appointment and United States Senate confirmation, Assistant General Counsel of the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Internal Revenue. He, his wife Irene, and their teenaged children moved to Washington, D.C.

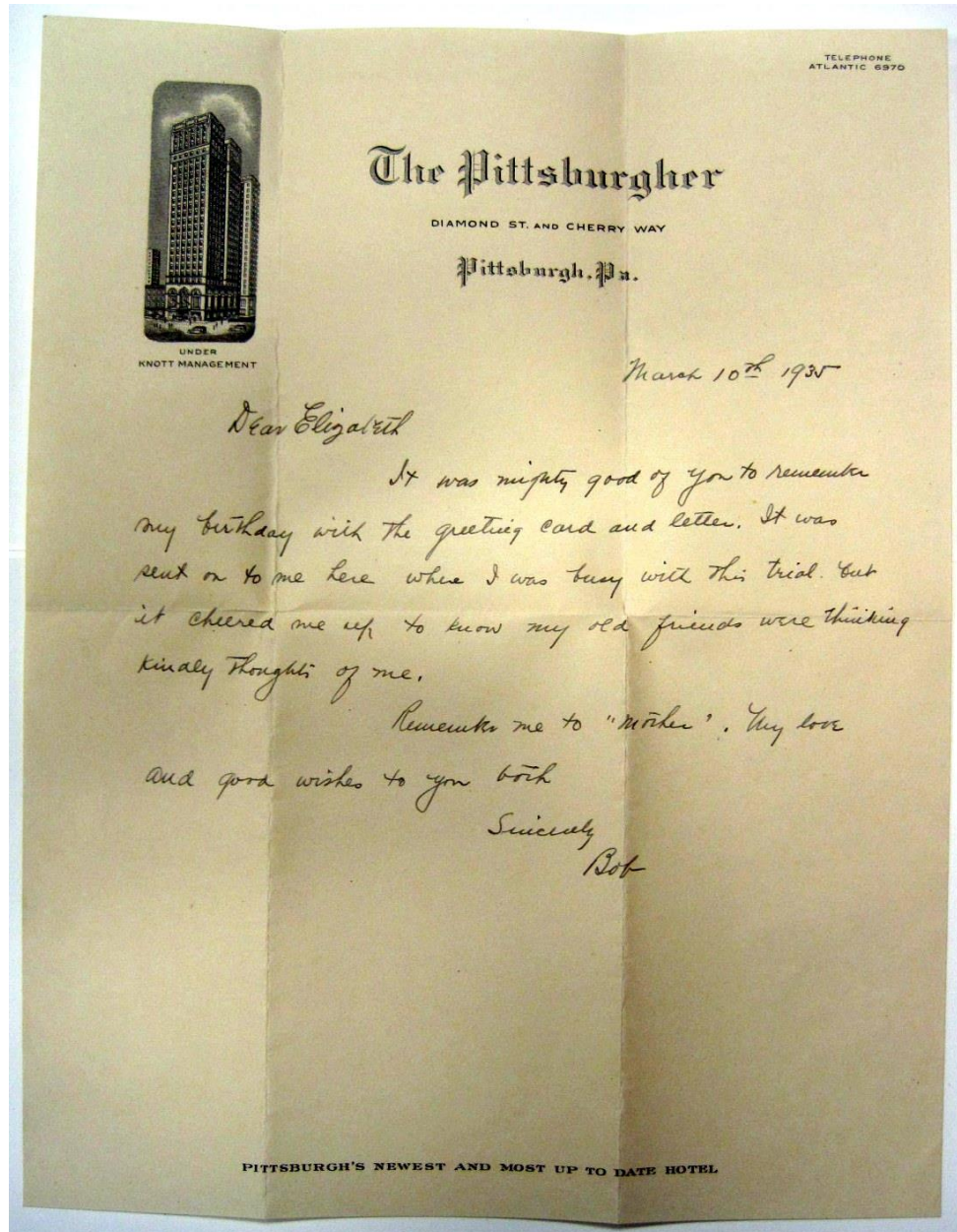
The next year, in February 1935, Elizabeth Gibson remembered Robert's birthday (his 43rd). She sent him a birthday card and a letter.

Jackson did not reply immediately—he was busy. In winter and spring of 1935, he was living temporarily in a Pittsburgh hotel. He was prosecuting former Treasury Secretary Andrew W. Mellon before the Board of Tax Appeals for evasion and fraud. It was a high-stakes, national newspaper headlines case.



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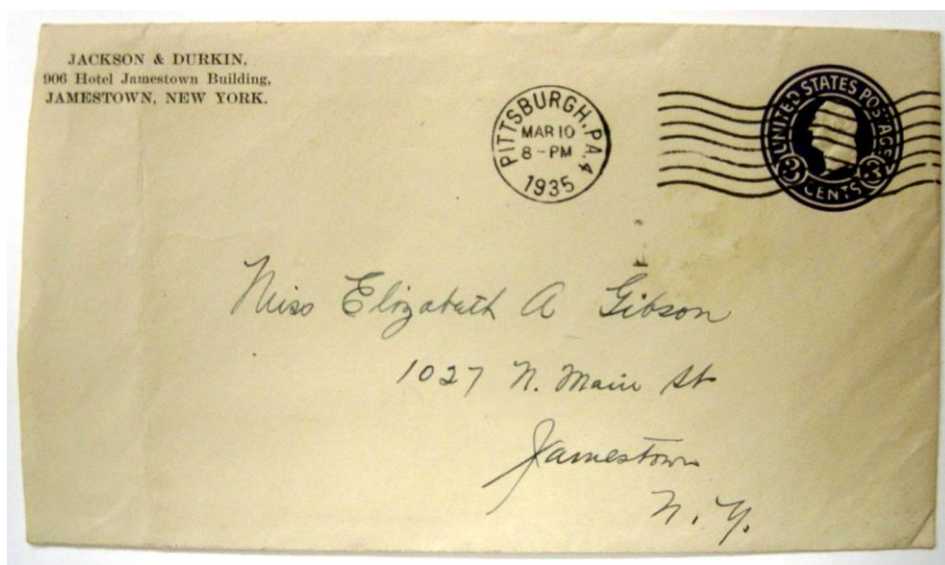
About a month later, on Sunday (a non-trial day) March 10, Jackson was sick with a cold. He spent the day in his hotel bed. But he felt well enough to do some writing. Using hotel stationery, he wrote to Elizabeth.²



² This letter and other papers and photographs that once belonged to Elizabeth Gibson, including the three items pictured in this post, are archived at the Fenton History Center, Jamestown, NY. See *supra* note *.

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Using an envelope from his former law firm, he mailed it to her in Jamestown.



I wish that we had Elizabeth Gibson's 1935 birthday card and letter to her friend Bob Jackson. But it is sweet and also revealing, I think, to have his reply.