

Otto Jung's Bible

In August 2015 CCHG received a request for help in tracing the provenance of an 1827 French edition of the New Testament. An inscription on the inner cover suggests that it had been owned by Otto Jung since 1852 and the label of a Paris bookshop is at the back. Inside the book, where presumably it has been for a century, is a used and opened envelope posted from Lorne and addressed to Otto Jung at 1 Rathdown Street, Carlton. On the back of the envelope is a message in French, dated 1915. Not all of it is legible but the gist is very clear.

“I am making a present of the books of the new testament to my beloved Paggie who is the only one of the children in the Laver families who has studied the French language (except her brother Lol). I advise Paggie and also Lol to read the book sometimes to improve their French ... in order to know the religious events at the beginning of the Christian religion.”

Born in Mayence (Mainz), Germany, Otto Jung and his brother Adolphus were 23 and 25 respectively when they arrived in Victoria on the *Ganges* in June 1853. They appear to have tried their luck as miners but by 1857 were wholesale wine and spirit merchants (Jung & Opperheim) in Castlemaine. By the end of the decade both had been naturalised. Otto served as a Justice of the Peace and was prominent in local politics. On his large property at Chinaman's Creek he became a successful vigneron, winning many prizes both locally and internationally. In 1877 he left the area to travel to Europe to visit relatives, tour the major capitals and attend the Paris International Exhibition of 1878, where his wines were entered in competitions.^{1 2 3 4 5}

At Chinaman's Creek Otto had become a close friend of the neighbouring Laver family, Jonas, who had migrated from Somerset in 1846, his wife Mary Ann *nee* Fry whom he married in 1854, and their seven sons. Four other children had not survived infancy. When Jonas died in 1880, his sons ranged in age from 22 to 6 years and Otto Jung became the guardian of the younger boys. It is not clear whether this was a formal or informal arrangement. William Adolphus, fourth of the surviving sons, was a promising violinist. A visiting German musician, August Wilhelmj, heard him play and offered to train him in Europe. After some hesitation Mary Ann took up the offer and she and William, then 16, and the two youngest boys, Rudolph and Ralph, sailed on the *Chimborazo II* in March 1882, together with an adult brother, Arthur. In this undertaking Mary Ann certainly had the support of Otto Jung, now a wealthy man and apparently still in Europe.

William began his studies at the Hoch Conservatorium in Frankfurt, but in 1885 was devastated by the death of his mother. However, again with Jung's support, he remained in Germany, continued his studies and was in 1887 offered a conducting post at Nottingham, England. He refused this on hearing that a Chair of Music was to be established at the University of Melbourne. Still only 22, he began lobbying for the position and returned home in 1889. Jung continued to support the younger Laver boys. Rudolph, born in 1872, remained in Germany after the others returned home and in 1893 Jung helped Ralph, the youngest and only six when his father died, establish Laver Bros. in Collingwood, a greengrocery and then preserving factory.^{6 7}

When he was unsuccessful in his attempt to secure the Chair of Music, which went to G W L Marshall-Hall, William Laver established himself as a private teacher of piano. In 1895, when he was acting professor during Marshall Hall's study leave, he oversaw the opening of the university's Conservatorium of Music in the Queen's Coffee Palace at 1 Rathdown Street, Carlton. This very grand building was commenced in 1888 but unfinished for many years. This was, of course the address on the envelope Jung used for his note. Jung paid the rent for the Conservatorium's first term. After Marshall-Hall's removal from his post, Laver again made a bid for the Chair but was not successful until he became the third incumbent after Marshall-Hall's death in 1915.

In 1894 William Laver had married Agnes Grant MacIntyre Robertson. Their children were Laurence Otto, born 1895 and presumably the Lol of Jung's note, Violet Agnes MacIntyre (1896) who must be Paggie, Grant (1898) and Gavin (1899). Lol and Paggie would have been 20 and 19 respectively in 1915 when Jung wrote his note. He appears to have been living in the Queen's Coffee Palace since at least 1903 and perhaps earlier, given his connection to the building through Laver. A financial disaster and a white elephant, by 1900 it was offering apartments for long-term guests rather than operating, as it was first intended, as a temperance hotel. Jung was 85 in 1915 and may have been divesting himself of some of his possessions. It is likely that this French New Testament had travelled with him from Europe more than sixty years before.⁸

An interesting detail is that when Otto Jung died in 1916 death notices in the *Age* and *Argus* recorded only his name, age and residence in the "Queen's Buildings". There is no reference to the Laver family to whom he had been so good a friend over so many years or to any family members or other mourners.⁹

Margaret Rich
Carlton Community History Group
August 2015

¹ Mount Alexander Mail, 28 October 1859, page 4

² NAA:A712 1857/B7503 and NAA: A712 1859/J1191

³ A Justice of the Peace (JP) is a volunteer who provides document witnessing and certification services to the community.

⁴ The Age, 23 October 1870, page 3

⁵ Mount Alexander Mail, 30 October 1877, page 2

⁶ Detailed accounts of the extended Laver family are provided in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* online

⁷ Years later, in the fevered anti-German atmosphere of the World War 1 years, a short-lived Melbourne publication described Jung as Laver's uncle and raised questions about the loyalty of the professor whose brother Rudolph had been interned in Germany. *Graphic of Australia*, 7 April 1916, page 1

⁸ The Age, 29 August 1903, page 4 has an account of the accommodation offered at the Queen's Coffee Palace

⁹ The Age, 10 June 1916, page 5 and The Argus, 10 June 1916, page 13