

Henry K. Doll Correspondence with the Banner Mining and Milling Company, 1909-1923

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Doll, Henry K.;
Title	Henry K. Doll Correspondence with the Banner Mining and Milling Company
Dates	1909-1923 (inclusive) 1909 1923
Quantity	0.5 linear feet, (1 box)
Collection Number	MSS 253
Summary	Letters and other documents received by Henry K. Doll, of Scranton, Pennsylvania, from officers of the Banner Mining and Milling Company relating to his investment in and operations of the Banner Mine in Silver City, Idaho.
Repository	Boise State University Library, Special Collections and Archives Special Collections and Archives 1910 University Drive Boise ID 83725 Telephone: 208-426-3958 archives@boisestate.edu
Access Restrictions	Collection is available for research.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided, in part, by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities

Biographical Note

According to the 1920 United States Federal Census records, Henry K. Doll was born about 1871 in Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1888. The 1920 census also lists his occupation as blacksmith. His wife was named Carrie and his three children were Carrie, Mary, and Henrietta. Peter Steele, originally from Scranton, Pennsylvania, was born about 1866 according to the 1930 census. He died in Boise on January 2, 1938 and was buried at Morris Hill cemetery two days later. August Grete, who came from a local Silver City family, was born about 1861 to parents John and Mary. The 1900 U.S. census lists his wife Ella and son Lewis. Grete moved on to Portland, Oregon by 1920, and died on October 28, 1949 in Merced, California.

The earliest letter in the collection is dated to 1909. In his letters, Peter Steele wrote that in the early years the Banner operated with the aid of only three laborers and little equipment, including a compressor. August Grete supervised matters at the site in Silver City, while Peter Steele traveled about the Midwest. Steele tried to sell stocks and bonds to new investors in order to purchase more equipment and add more men to work in the mine until it began paying. He was unable to find much success in Minneapolis, Duluth, or Red Wing in Minnesota. Meanwhile, the power was cut off at the

mine for long time due to low funds. This did not dampen his optimism regarding the potential output of the mine, however.

With little luck in Minnesota, Peter Steele moved on to Wisconsin. He worked in Superior and Milwaukee with continued disappointment. Muncie, Indiana did not aid his work either, while more struggles found the Banner Mine in Silver City. In January 1915, the water supply for the mine froze up and slowed progress for a time. However the Banner pushed on, buying a nearby mine and adding another laborer to the payroll.

Steele returned to Silver City and aided with the labor in the mine. It is noted that August Grete ran the compressor, while a worker named Duggan ran the dirt out and Steele ran the machine drill. In 1915, Grete left for a job at a more prosperous mine, but this did not deter the Banner. Later on that year the mine hit a "good deal" of ore according to Steele's letters. The Banner was recovering about one ton of ore per day by 1916, Peter Steele stated. Also, Vice President F. S. Heer took over as secretary-treasurer around that time.

Unfortunately for the Banner Mining and Milling Company, more problems awaited them. In 1916, they hit water in the mine and on August 20, 1917, Steele wrote that, due to low funds, mining work stopped. The workers made \$3.50 per day and wanted more but Steele would not pay because he did not believe the mine could afford it. So, the men quit working. It seems that the men had already worked a great while without pay because they trusted in the potential output of the mine, with some taking out stock in the mine instead. The work stoppage apparently lasted the 1917-1918 winter. There is no mention of how the situation was resolved.

In 1918, the Banner Mine hit gold and quick silver, but it is not stated exactly how great the amount is. Throughout the letters written by Peter Steele, he repeats that they had a very difficult time making mill runs with the ore. Initially, Steele wanted to wait on a mill run until they could keep the mill running continuously but it doesn't appear that they were able to accomplish that.

Following a major flu pandemic that swept through Idaho in the winter of 1918-1919, a snow slide hit the Banner mine in spring 1919, destroying the mill and killing a mule. No one was injured in the slide, but it severely set back the mine's progress. Seven men worked at cleaning up the mine from the snow slide. Soon after that the letters trail off and the final document included in the collection is dated to 1923.

Content Description

This collection consists of approximately 80 handwritten letters and a few printed documents received by Henry K. Doll between 1909 and 1923 relating to the operation of the Banner Mine, a silver mine in Silver City, Idaho, operated by the Banner Mining and Milling Company of Silver City and Boise. Doll, who lived in Scranton, Pennsylvania, was an investor and stockholder in the mine. Most of the letters were written by Peter Steele, president and general manager, with a few more added by his wife, Marie, and by the mine's secretary-treasurer, August Grete. Doll and Steele seem to have been friends, because Steele's letters contain not only news of the mine but discussion of personal matters as well. Whether dealing with business or personal matters, the letters were written in a friendly conversational tone. Three photos, presumably of the mine but not explicitly labeled as such, are also included.

Use of the Collection

Preferred Citation

[item description], Henry K. Doll Correspondence with the Banner Mining and Milling Company, Box [number] Folder [number], Boise State University Special Collections and Archives.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

All of the letters to Henry K. Doll from Peter Steele, Marie Steele, and August Grete are interfiled in one chronological sequence in this collection.

Related Materials

The Banner Mining and Milling Co. Records are located at the Idaho State Historical Society.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box	Folder	
1	1	Biographical material
1	2	Report
1	3-14	Letters 1909-1923
1	15	Printed Forms
1	16	Miscellaneous
1	17-18	Envelopes
1	19	Photos

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