Descriptive Summary

Creator: Ryan, John T.

Title: John T. Ryan Correspondence,

Date (inclusive): 1891 - 1934

Extent: 0.40 linear feet (1 archives box)

Abstract: The correspondence of John T. Ryan (1891-1934) documents the activities of a Tuolumne County, California, quartz and placer gold mine owner. The bulk of the correspondence deals with Ryan's attempts to find financial backers to help him develop the Ryan quartz and placer mines, a failed joint venture (1912-1913) with M.S. D'Albergaria of Oakland, California, and dealings with mining supply and equipment companies. Additionally, the correspondence reveals aspects of Ryan's personal life, including correspondence from friends and family, his attempts to get a female "pard" (companion) to venture to his out-of-the-way location in the hamlet of Confidence, California, as well as attempts to barter mining claims for personal items.


La Jolla, California 92093-0175

Collection number: MSS 0679

Language of Material: Collection materials in English

Access

Collection is open for research.

Acquisition Information

Not Available

Preferred Citation

John T. Ryan Correspondence, MSS 0679. Mandeville Special Collections Library, UCSD.

Publication Rights

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Biography

John T. Ryan (ca. 1855-1934) was a mine owner in Tuolumne County, California. Ryan was born in New Jersey, the eldest son of seven children, to Irish immigrants, Dennis and Susan Ryan. The family came to Sonora (the county seat of Tuolumne County located one hundred thirty-three miles east of San Francisco) around 1856, where Ryan's siblings were all born. Dennis Ryan operated Ryan's Saloon in the rough and tumble gold-mining town and the saloon was still under family ownership as late as 1913.

Ryan attempted to exploit the Ryan mines located thirteen miles east of Sonora in the tiny Sierra Nevada mountain hamlet of Confidence (elevation 4,200 feet). The early days of easy gold mining, when loose gold could literally be found on the surface of river beds, was long past. Therefore, Ryan engaged in hard-rock mining, digging and blasting deep shafts into the quartz rock that contained veins of gold. The rock was then brought to the surface and crushed. Finally, the gold had to be separated out by using moving water or leached out by using arsenic or mercury. This type of mining operation was expensive and explains why Ryan had to continually seek financial investors.

Although Ryan appeared to have remained close with siblings and friends, there is no evidence he was ever married and had children, and the date and whereabouts of his death are unknown. Additionally, there is no evidence that Ryan was able to successfully exploit his mines, but it is not clear if this is because of a lack of financing, or if the mines were simply not rich in ore (the quartz mine was never assessed at more than $100 value), or if the name he gave his home, "Never Hurry Land," was reflective of his work ethic. The correspondence does, however, document the difficulties in attempting to mine California gold long after the shimmer of the earlier and easier "gold rush" mining days had faded.

Scope and Content of Collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The John T. Ryan Correspondence reflects the life of a post-"Gold Rush" California mine owner as he struggled to exploit quartz and placer mines in Tuolumne County, California. The correspondence is arranged in two series: 1) CORRESPONDENCE, and 2) MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS.

SERIES 1: CORRESPONDENCE

The CORRESPONDENCE series documents Ryan's life as the owner of quartz and placer gold mines (the "Ryan Mine" and the "Mexican Mine") in the Sugar Pine Mining District in Tuolumne County, California during the period 1891-1934, with the bulk of correspondence covering the period from 1912-1916. The correspondence reflects Ryan's struggle to acquire
financing from potential investors willing to finance the necessary equipment to work the mines.

Of significance is correspondence (1912-1913) with M.S. D'Albergaria of Oakland, California, who initially brokered a note signed by M.E. Starbuck and entered into a joint venture with Ryan. The agreement was an installment purchase whereby the mine's owner (Ryan) would continue to work the mine and would be paid the purchase price, over a period of years, from proceeds of the mine's production. D'Albergaria, living more than one hundred miles away, began to manage and equip the mine with Ryan directing day-to-day operations. D'Albergaria quickly became dissatisfied with Ryan's efforts, and even accused Ryan of submitting false expenses. The joint venture quickly deteriorated with recriminations on both sides. A diverse mixture of both the business and personal aspects of Ryan's life are reflected in other correspondence. This includes letters from friends, some of whom attempted to find investors for Ryan, family members including his brother, James, a hostler and tax assessor of Tuolumne County, and his sister, Susie, who still lived in Sonora. Also included is correspondence from women, including one who apparently responded to an advertisement to be a "pard" (an Americanism for a partner or companion) at Ryan's residence in the tiny hamlet of Confidence, and responses to Ryan's attempts to barter mining claims for such items as a motorcycle, a diamond ring, and a Winchester-Lee straight-pull sporting rifle.

SERIES 2: MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

The MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS series includes mining supply and equipment bills of lading; a mining notice (1912) evidencing Ryan's mine ownership, along with other Ryan family members; advertisements; bid requests for mining equipment; receipts, and a business card of a San Francisco gold dealer. In addition, the series contains a small printed map of the Sugar Pine Mining District which shows Ryan's mines; Tuolumne County tax notices; Ryan's brother James' campaign business card for the position of tax assessor of Tuolumne County (1914), and a fire insurance policy (1913) on the Ryan Saloon in the city of Sonora, still owned by the family's estate.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects
Ryan, John T.
Gold mines and mining -- California

CORRESPONDENCE

box 1, folder 1  Aiken, Albert C. 1910
Note
Typed letter, dated February 24, from a San Francisco attorney regarding arrangements for an examination of Ryan's mine.

box 1, folder 2  Anderson, Joseph F. 1934
Note
Correspondence from Ryan's friend and business associate who was an oil and gas producer in Texas. Includes a Western Union telegram, an envelope with an illustration of the Casa de Palmas Hotel in McAllen, Texas, and two photographs of Anderson annotated to Ryan.

box 1, folder 3  Arnold, M.B. (Mary) 1916
Note
Two handwritten letters, dated June 3 and 16, from a San Francisco widow and department store clerk, regarding whether Ryan had work for her, and if she might come to Confidence to be his "pard" (companion).

box 1, folder 4  Bailhache, John M. 1915
Note
Typewritten letter, dated March 2, regarding a proposition to buy Ryan's mine, from the president of the Baird-Bailhache Co., San Francisco dealers in fumeless gas heaters.
Bartholomew, George M. 1939

Note
Typewritten letter, dated July 9, expressing interest in Ryan's "Mexican Mine."

Chamberlain, L.L. 1905

Note
Typed note, dated March 14, from an Auburn, California, attorney inquiring whether Ryan knew of the whereabouts or death of Myles Conway, nicknamed "Jimmy Two Dogs," who had ownership in the "Nelly Bly," "King Fisher," and "Australian Queen" mines and whose sisters were searching for him.

Clark, N. & Sons 1901

Note
Handwritten memorandum and typed letter regarding Ryan's proposal to exchange three thousand shares of his mining stock for work on the "old green tunnel" mine and $350. Signed by G.D. Clark for the firm which manufactured vitrified iron stone, sewer pipe, chimney tops and pipe, fire brick, fire clay drains, and irrigating tile.

D'Albergaria, M.S. 1912

Note
Part 1. March - June. Includes correspondence regarding the business relationship between Ryan and Oakland-based D'Albergaria. Includes witnessed contracts regarding an installment sale interest in Ryan's mine, a handwritten "Title Bond to Mining Property," signed by Ryan, a typed version of the bond signed by M.E. Starbuck (from whom D'Albergaria bought the bond), and other correspondence regarding their joint venture.

D'Albergaria, M.S. 1912 - 1913

Note
Part 2. July, 1912 - March, 1913. Includes correspondence regarding supplies sent to Ryan, delays in payment, requests for itemized work hours from Ryan, and Ryan's handwritten record of hours written on the verso side of a three by five inch calendar pad. The correspondence documents the hopeful beginning and rapid demise of Ryan and D'Albergaria's joint venture relationship.

Department of the Interior. United States Indian Service 1913

Note
Handwritten letter, dated January 12, from Eleanor E. Tibbetts, USFM, replying to Ryan's inquiry to supply three hundred and twenty fence posts and the original January 10 printed advertisement soliciting bids.

Dillon, J.P. 1917

Note
Handwritten letter, dated July 20, responding to Ryan's advertisement in the San Francisco EXAMINER, to sell one hundred and sixty acres of land near Confidence, CA. Includes handwritten envelope with San Francisco postmark and annotation of receipt at Confidence, CA eight days later.

Dolan, D.J., Wrecking and Construction Company 1915

Note
Typewritten letter, dated October 7, regarding Ryan's bid request for second-hand corrugated, galvanized iron.
Gray, Charles H. 1914
Note
Handwritten letter, dated August 21, replying to Ryan's inquiry to Gray's San Francisco EXAMINER advertisement to sell a Winchester-Lee straight-pull sporting rifle. Includes a printed illustration of the rifle.

Greene, A. 1912
Note
Handwritten note, dated November 6, from an old Sonora mine owner and friend of Ryan's, denying he told anyone that "there was nothing in the bottom of [Ryan's] shaft," and sending his good wishes. [See D'Albergaria letter of October 31, 1912 writing, "Your old friend, Mr. Green, also says there is nothing at the bottom of that shaft."]

Hughes, Nathaniel G. 1915 - 1916
Note
Handwritten and typed letters regarding a possible purchase of Ryan's interest in the "Mexican Mine."

Lee, John 1905
Note
Handwritten note, dated August 18, from a San Francisco wool dealer, replying to Ryan that although his proposition seemed fair, Mr. Lee and his associates had other plans. Includes Lee's personalized stationery and envelope.

Link, F.W. 1912
Note
Handwritten letter, dated January 25, from a friend of Joseph Otterson [see Otterson correspondence] who had some interest in a deal regarding Ryan's mine. Written on the stationery of the "Golden Chariot - Jamestown Mining Co.," with envelope stamped, "Return to California Beer Hall, PO Box 708 - Telephone 1422, Goldfield, Nevada."

Mines Equipment Company 1919
Note
Typewritten letter, dated May 14, responding to Ryan's inquiry regarding smelting furnaces, signed by Reinhold Hesse, president and general manager. Includes the company's business card.

Otterson, Joseph 1911 - 1912
Note
Four handwritten letters, dated November 1911 to February 1912, from Tenopah and Goldfield, Nevada and Mono County, CA, as Ryan's friend, Otterson, tries to broker a deal for Ryan's quartz and placer mines. [See Link, F.W. correspondence.]

Porter, F.A. 1913
Note
Handwritten letter, dated February 20, responding to Ryan's offer to exchange a mining claim for a motorcycle, which the Stockton, CA, man declined to do.
box 1, folder 21  Reed, A. 1912
Note
Handwritten letter, dated January 10, responding to Ryan's offer to trade a gold mine for a diamond ring. Mr. Reed declined because he was already wealthy and in the process of giving his wealth away to charity but told Ryan he would accept $400 for the ring. Includes an envelope with stamp advertising the future 1915 World's Panama Pacific Exposition to be held in San Francisco.

box 1, folder 22  Risley, W.S. 1901
Note
Handwritten letter, dated May 31, relaying information on a business proposition Ryan was proposing to N. Clark and Sons, San Francisco. [See also N. Clark & Sons correspondence.] Includes a follow-up letter dated October 6.

box 1, folder 23  Ryan, Bill, Connie & Charley [possibly relatives] 1909
Note
Handwritten note, dated March 8, describing desperate circumstances and asking for money and for Ryan to sell fence posts that have been made. The party appears to have spent a long, harsh winter at Ryan's mine property and describes food and tobacco shortages.

box 1, folder 24  Ryan, James (brother) 1911
Note
Handwritten letter, dated July 26, enclosing a letter from their sister, Susie, written July 22, containing a message for John about a cancelled land transaction.

box 1, folder 25  Standard Gas Engine Company 1914
Note
Typed letter, dated December 17, from a San Francisco company, responding to Ryan's request for a bid for a stationary hoist and shaft to be used for pumping water at the mine.

box 1, folder 26  Street, Frank W. 1918
Note
Handwritten letter, dated December 4, from an Oakland attorney informing Ryan that samples from his mines are satisfactory but that he is awaiting a further report.

box 1, folder 27  Union Gas Engine Company 1914 - 1915
Note
Typed letter, dated December 17, from a San Francisco and Oakland company, replying to Ryan's request for a bid on a combined hoist and pumping outfit. Includes a follow-up note dated April 6, 1915.

box 1, folder 28  Unidentified letter 1915
Note
Handwritten letter, dated February 26, to, "My Dear Dear Boy," from "Sweetheart Love," written from Judith Gap, Montana, recalling when she was at Confidence and was "Ryan's girl."

box 1, folder 29  Unidentified note
Note
Undated, handwritten note from "Nina," who is pleased to receive Ryan's card from "Never Hurry Land," but is anxious because an unidentified "he" doesn't like her to receive correspondence from Ryan.
MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

box 1, folder 30  
**Bill of Lading 1912**  
Note  
Printed form from the Hercules Works, dated July 3, showing delivery, via the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad, of two cases of Hercules high explosive powder and two kegs of black powder.

box 1, folder 31  
**Bill of Lading 1912**  
Note  
Printed form, dated July 5, showing delivery from E.I. Dupont De Nemours Powder Co., via the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, of blasting caps and fuses.

box 1, folder 32  
**ENGINEERING AND MINING JOURNAL 1916**  
Note  
Printed advertisement and solicitation letter, dated January 24, regarding a “floatation” process being promoted by this New York City publication.

box 1, folder 33  
**Fire Insurance policy 1913**  
Note  
Includes a policy evidencing fire protection from May 31, for one year, on Ryan's Saloon, at 434 Washington Street, Sonora, CA, by the Concordia Fire Insurance Company of Milwaukee. Also includes a handwritten note from A.B. Overholser, resident agent for the Pennsylvania Fire Insurance Co., Pacific Coast Department.

box 1, folder 34  
**Office of the Surveyor General, State of California 1891**  
Note  
Letter, dated September 10, from Theo Richert, surveyor general and registrar of the state land office, officially confirming to Ryan the details of a purchase of land.

box 1, folder 35  
**Map**  
Note  
Undated. Includes small printed map showing the Green, Jumper, Old Gold, and Appendix Mines of the Sugar Pine Mining District, Tuolumne County. Also shows the Ryan quartz and placer mines. Annotated on verso, "On map the two locations scratched out are [R. Filalarty] No. 1 - and [Filalarty] No. 2. The lower one is [R. Filalarty] No. 2.,” explaining annotated marks on map.

box 1, folder 36, oversize FB47302  
**Mining Notice 1912**  
Note  
Handwritten evidence of ownership of one of Ryan’s mines with recorder’s stamp of August 2.

box 1, folder 37  
**Receipt 1912**  
Note  
Typed and printed receipt, dated July 8, showing purchase of two kegs of standard #5 Dupont FF kegs (black powder explosive).

box 1, folder 38  
**Reichling, A.H**  
Note  
Undated business card of a bullion, gold dust, quartz specimens, and platinum dealer, with a handwritten annotation on verso, "Nugget weight 1.44 ounces, 900 fine.”
box 1, folder 39  
**Ryan, J.B. 1914**  
*Note*  
Campaign business card of Ryan’s brother, Jim, the incumbent and then current candidate for assessor of Tuolumne County, for a primary election to be held on August 25.

box 1, folder 40  
**Tax Notice - Office of the County Assessor - Tuolumne County, California 1911**  
*Note*  
Printed form with handwritten assessment of the value of the Ryan quartz mine at $100 by assessor J.B. Ryan (John’s brother) and tax notice dated March 25.

box 1, folder 41  
**Tax Notice - Office of the County Assessor - Tuolumne County, California 1917**  
*Note*  
Printed form titled, "Notice of Assessment of Personal Property," dated March 1, assessing the Ryan quartz mine at a $100 value by assessor, E.H. McMahon.