

Hanchette & Lawton Case Files on the Copper Miners' Strike MS-854

Finding aid prepared by Daniel Michelson

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections

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Summary Information

Repository	Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections
Creator	Hanchette & Lawton.
Title	Hanchette & Lawton Case Files on the Copper Miners' Strike
Date [inclusive]	1913-1915
Extent	0.68 cubic feet 1 manuscript box (legal size), 1/2 manuscript box (legal size)
Language	English
Language of Material	English
Mixed materials [Box]	1-2
Abstract	<p>The Copper Miners' Strike of 1913-1914 in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula was marred by several acts of violence, notably the Italian Hall disaster and the Seeberville shootings. Swaby L. Lawton of the law firm Hanchette & Lawton represented the Quincy Mining Company during the strike and the Copper Range Company during the appeals against the conviction of deputies for the Seeberville shootings. This collection consists of the files of the law firm Hanchette & Lawton of Hancock regarding the Copper Miners' Strike of 1913-1914. Swaby L. Lawton corresponded extensively with Quincy Mining Company President W. R. Todd on the strategy that they should pursue during the congressional hearings. The collection also includes files on the attempted evictions of striking Quincy Mining Company employees and Lawton's work on the Seeberville shooting case.</p>

Preferred Citation

MS-854, Hanchette & Lawton Case Files on the Copper Miners' Strike, Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Houghton, Michigan.

Biography

The Copper Miners' Strike of 1913-1914 in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula was marred by several acts of violence, notably the Italian Hall disaster and the Seeberville shootings. Swaby L. Lawton of the law firm Hanchette & Lawton represented the Quincy Mining Company during the strike and the Copper Range Company during the appeals against the conviction of deputies for the Seeberville shootings.

Swaby Latham Lawton, brother of Charles Latham Lawton, general manager of the Quincy Mining Company, was the son of Charles DeWitt Lawton. Swaby graduated from the University of Michigan Law School in 1896 and in 1902 entered into partnership with Charles D. Hanchette, forming the law firm of Hanchette & Lawton which eventually became one of the prominent firms in Houghton County, Michigan.

In July 1913, locals of the Western Federation of Miners called a general strike against all mines in the Michigan Copper Country. Lasting into 1914, the strike polarized the community and led to a congressional investigation into the conditions of mine workers.

During the strike, the Quincy Mining Company attempted to evict striking workers from company-owned housing. The company hired Hanchette & Lawton to represent them in the ensuing court battle. The firm also acted as the company's representative in the congressional investigation.

Seeberville was a suburb of Painesdale, home of the Copper Range Company's Champion Mine. The incident began as a group of miners returned to their boardinghouse in Seeberville after collecting their strike benefits from the Western Federation of Miners office. Two men, John Kalan and John Stimac, broke from the others and took a short cut down a path that had been designated off-limits. The men were confronted by a watchman, Humphrey Quick, but refused to turn back and continued to their boardinghouse. This altercation prompted the formation of a small posse to arrest them. During the confrontation at the boardinghouse, deputies fired on the house, killing Steven Putrich and Alois Tijan. The deputies were tried and convicted of manslaughter in *People v. Cooper, et al.*

Following the Seeberville convictions, the Copper Range Company hired Lawton to handle the appeals for a new trial. The failure to gain a new trial led to an, also unsuccessful, attempt to convince Governor Ferris to pardon the men.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

This collection consists of the files of the law firm Hanchette & Lawton of Hancock regarding Michigan's Copper Miners' Strike of 1913-1914. Swaby L. Lawton corresponded extensively with Quincy Mining Company President W. R. Todd on the strategy that they should pursue during the congressional hearings.

The collection also includes files on the attempted evictions of striking Quincy Mining Company employees and Lawton's work on the Seeberville shooting case.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two series:

Series I: General Files, 1913-1914 Series II: People v. Cooper, et al Files, 1913-1915

Folders are arranged alphabetically.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections Apr 2013

Access

Available for use in the Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections.

Conditions Governing Use

Various copying restrictions apply. Guidelines are available from Michigan Technological University Archives & Copper Country Historical Collections.

Acquisition

The collection was donated by Daniel and Mark Wisti in 2006.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

MS-001, Quincy Mining Company Collection
MS-080, Copper Range Company Records
MS-400, Quincy Mining Company Photograph Collection
MS-785, Lawton Family Collection
MS-824, Copper Miners' Strike Photograph Collection
RG 89-465, Houghton County Circuit Court Records

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Champion Copper Company.
- Copper Range Company.
- Hanchette & Lawton.
- Quincy Mining Company.
- United States. Congress. House. (Committee on Mines and Mining)

Genre(s)

- Case files
- Correspondence
- Drawings (Visual works)
- Legal documents
- Photographs

Geographic Name(s)

- Hancock (Mich.)
- Seeberville (Mich.)

Personal Name(s)

- Lawton, Swaby L., 1872-1948
- Todd, William Rogers, 1837-1924

Subject(s)

- Company towns--Michigan--Upper Peninsula
- Copper Miners' Strike, Mich., 1913-1914
- Copper miners--Crimes against--20th century--Michigan
- Copper mines and mining--Employees
- Industrial housing--Michigan--Keweenaw Peninsula

Series I: General Files

Collection Inventory

Series I: General Files 1913-1914

Scope and Content Summary

This series contains correspondence and legal documents relating to the Copper Miners' Strike. This includes extensive correspondence between S. L. Lawton and Quincy Mining Company President W. R. Todd on the strategy to pursue during the U. S. Congressional investigation. There is also material related to the Quincy Mining Company's attempt to evict strikers from company-owned housing.

	Box	Folder
Ferris, Woodbridge (Governor): Correspondence Nov 1913-Jan 1914	1	1
General Correspondence Aug 1913-Nov 1914	1	2
Injunction Notice Oct 1913	1	3
Kirchner, Otto (Quincy Mining Company Counsel): Correspondence Oct 1913-Sep 1914	1	4
Lawton, Charles L. (Quincy Mining Company General Manager): Correspondence Feb, Sep 1914	1	5
Quincy Mining Company Evictions: Appeal to Michigan Supreme Court 1913, undated	1	6

Series I: General Files

Quincy Mining Company Evictions: Correspondence Nov 1913-Apr 1914	1	7
Quincy Mining Company Evictions: Notes circa 1914	1	8
Quincy Mining Company Evictions: Notice to Tenant of Damages for Failure to Vacate Nov 1913	1	9
Quincy Mining Company Evictions: Settlement Mar 1914	1	10
Quincy Mining Company Evictions: Summary Proceedings in Quincy Mining Company vs. Oscar Pelto, et al 1913	1	11
Quincy Mining Company Evictions: Synopsis of Events circa 1914	1	12
Taylor, Edward T. (U. S. Representative): Correspondence Mar-Oct 1914	1	13
Todd, W. Parsons (Quincy Mining Company Vice-President): Correspondence Feb-Sep 1914	1	14
Todd, W. R. (Quincy Mining Company President): Correspondence Oct, Dec 1913	1	15
Todd, W. R. (Quincy Mining Company President): Correspondence Jan 1914	1	16
Todd, W. R. (Quincy Mining Company President): Correspondence Feb 2-14, 1914	1	17

Series II: People v. Cooper, et al Files

Todd, W. R. (Quincy Mining Company President): Correspondence Feb 15-28, 1914	1	18
Todd, W. R. (Quincy Mining Company President): Correspondence Mar 1914	1	19
Todd, W. R. (Quincy Mining Company President): Correspondence Apr-Oct 1914	1	20

Series II: *People v. Cooper, et al* Files 1913-1915**Collection Scope and Content Summary**

This series consists of legal documents and notes relating to the unsuccessful appeal in *People v. Cooper, et al.* Some of the material is from the initial trial, including crime scene photographs and drawings, as well as witness testimony.

	Box	Folder
Appeals for Clemency to Governor Ferris 1915	1	21
Brief and Argument of People on Motion to Set Aside Order Granting New Trial 1915	1	22
Chronology of Time Spent on Seeberville Cases Jan-Aug 1915	1	23
Correspondence regarding Witnesses for the Prosecution Mar 1915	1	24
Cross-Examinations of Arthur Davis, William Groff, and Edwin Polkinghorne by Nichols undated	1	25

Series II: People v. Cooper, et al Files

Exhibits: Drawings (mostly in DigArch) undated	1	26
Exhibits: Photographs (mostly in DigArch) undated	1	27
Exhibits: Warrants for the Arrest of John Kolnan and John Stimac Aug 15, 1913	2	1
Findings of the Court on Motion for New Trial Dec 1914	2	2
Journal Entries Pertaining to Motion for New Trial Apr 1915	2	3
List of Prospective Jurors and Plans for Survey 1915	2	4
Notes 1915	2	5
Opinion Denying Motion to Vacate Order Granting New Trial Apr 1915	2	6
Statement of Circuit Court Judge undated	2	7
Statement of Henry James Feb 18, 1915	2	8
Statements of Law Applying to Case 1915	2	9
Summary of Coroner's Inquest 1915	2	10
Summary of Testimonies 1915	2	11

Series II: People v. Cooper, et al Files

Testimony of Jacob Briski, Joshua Cooper, Josephine Grubosich, Harry James, Slavak Kaln, Anton Markovich, John Pintar, Edwin Polkinghorne, Joe Putrich, Humphrey Quick, T. J. Raleigh, and Albert Tijan undated	2	12
Testimony of Albert Tijan and Josephine Grubetich undated	2	13