

Information Sheet

R Cantwell, Harry J., 1859-1917.
677 Collection, 1898-1950 (bulk 1915-1918).
Forty folders.

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

These are the papers of an attorney and developer of mineral properties in southeastern Missouri and Oklahoma. Most of the collection concerns title work and exploration of tracts near Irondale and Palmer in Washington County, Missouri.

Harry J. Cantwell was born in Sonman, Pennsylvania on 3 February 1859. After working in the operating and construction departments of various railroads, he studied law. In 1885, Cantwell was admitted to the bar in Mississippi County, Missouri, and was briefly the city attorney of Charleston, Missouri. He then entered Washington University in St. Louis, graduating in 1888. About the same time, he married Catherine Cornelius, daughter of a prominent St. Louis attorney. Cantwell practiced professionally with Albert N. Edwards before devoting himself to mining investments in southeastern Missouri. He was, successively, associated with the Central Lead Company, National Lead Company, Columbia Lead Company, and Catherine Lead Company operating in St. Francois and Madison counties. In 1900, he organized the St. Francois Town-Site and Mining Company, which platted and sold lots in the town of Cantwell, named after him.

By the period represented by this collection, Cantwell owned or controlled 20,000 acres of mineral properties near Palmer in Washington County. In 1915, Cantwell & O. H. Bilharz formed a company to undertake development of the Eaton-Eversole and Yeargain tracts about three miles southwest of Irondale (9000 acres), and the Cantwell and Parole Mining Company tracts at Palmer (20,000 acres), southwest of Potosi. Other parcels in St. Francois and Crawford counties brought the aggregate to about 31,207 acres. The properties had been test-drilled by the Renault Lead Company in 1899, and "Guggenheim interests" in 1906-1907. Cantwell and Bilharz commenced legal work to clear land titles, defined ore bodies by core-drilling, and corresponded with various investors and mining companies. Unnamed "New York interests," represented by attorney W. H. Page, joined the project around 1916 and continued legal work and exploratory drilling with a view to developing ore bodies for production or selling the properties to established mining companies. In 1917, restructuring and recapitalization occurred with the organization of the "Missouri Lead Pool" or "Syndicate." Old and new interests, including investors in New York and St. Louis, contributed an additional \$100,000 to continue exploratory drilling in Washington County. Harry J. Cantwell died in August 1917. Mrs. Cantwell died in 1918, after which a Mr. Keene handled the estate. The "Cantwell Project," as it was known, continued through at least December 1918.

The Cantwell collection consists of primarily of materials concerning his development activities in Washington County and southeastern Missouri. Folders 1-2 contain the only personal material in the collection, including printed reports of law cases in which Cantwell was involved as counsel. Folders 3-34 contain correspondence, reports, maps, and plats by geologists Sydney H. Ball, O. M. Bilharz, Arthur Thacher, and H. A. Wheeler, title searches by the Smith-Bleeck-Forester Land and Abstract Company, prospect drill records by the H. R. Ameling Prospecting Company, progress reports on the Cantwell Project, and legal matters by W. H. Page and William

H. Blythe. The most complete chronology of the Cantwell Project is in folder 12. Folders 35-40 pertain to Cantwell's mining interests in Ottawa County, Oklahoma, and Eagle County, Colorado.

The collection covers only the last phase of Cantwell's career in the mineral industries of southeastern Missouri. However, it offers a valuable glimpse into the problems associated with locating and defining ore bodies, clearing titles to land, obtaining rights to mineral deposits, and attracting investors to long-term development projects.

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Shelf List

These are the papers of an attorney and developer of mineral properties in southeastern Missouri and Oklahoma. Most of the collection concerns title work and exploration of tracts near Irondale and Palmer in Washington County, Missouri.

Folders 1-2: Miscellaneous material, 1906-1950

F. 01: Printed court records of cases involving Harry J. Cantwell, 1906-1914

F. 02: Lucius Cantwell, 1926-1950

Folders 3-34: Southeastern Missouri mining projects, 1898-1918

F. 03: Correspondence, April 1915—April 1916

F. 04: Correspondence, May—July 1916

F. 05: Correspondence, August—December 1916

F. 06: Correspondence, January—March 1917

F. 07: Correspondence, April—July 1917

F. 08: Correspondence, August 1917—1938; n.d.

F. 09: Miscellaneous reports on lead mining in southeast Missouri, 1898-1916

F. 10: Report by O. M. Bilharz, 1915

F. 11: Cantwell Project, chronology, 1915

F. 12: Cantwell Project, miscellaneous memoranda, 1915-1918

F. 13: Cantwell newspaper clippings, 1915-1918

F. 14: Cantwell project maps, ca. 1915-1918

F. 15: Cantwell project maps, ca. 1915-1918 [four are **OVERSIZE**]

F. 16: Cantwell project agreements, options, etc., ca. 1915-1917

F. 17: Cantwell project, agreements, options, etc., 1917

F. 18: Cantwell project, drilling reports of Ameling Prospecting Co., 1915-1916

F. 19: Cantwell project, field notes of Ameling Prospecting Co., 1917-1918

F. 20: Cantwell lands at Palmer, 1916

F. 21: Parole—Palmer escrow agreement, 1917

F. 22: Missouri Lead Pool, subscription agreement, 1917

F. 23: Options on lead tracts in Washington County, 1917-1918

F. 24: Washington County lawsuit, 1917

F. 25: Washington County maps and plats, ca. 1916-1917

F. 26: Title abstracts, Washington County, 1915

F. 27: Title abstracts, Washington County, 1916

F. 28: Title abstracts, Big River, Washington County, 1915-1918

F. 29: Title abstracts, Washington County, 1917

- F. 30: Title abstracts, Washington County, 1918
- F. 31: Drill records, Washington County, Mo., 1916-1918
- F. 32: Irondale drill holes, 1917-1919
- F. 33: Fredericktown drill reports, 1916
- F. 34: Schulte Mining Company, 1916

Folders 35-40: Colorado and Oklahoma mining properties, 1914-1917

- F. 35: Eagle County, Colo., Cliff Mining Co.
- F. 36: Ottawa County, Okla., mining leases and miscellaneous materials, 1914-1916
- F. 37: Ottawa County, Okla., Church-Mabon Mining Co., 1916-1917
- F. 38: Ottawa County, Okla., McConnell Zinc Mines Co., 1916-1917
- F. 39: Ottawa County, Okla., drill records and blueprints, ca. 1916-1917
- F. 40: Ottawa County, Okla., Stoskopf property, 1917

r715

12 October 1998

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Index Cards

Abstracts of title—Missouri—Washington County.
American Smelting & Refining Company.
Baker Lead Company.
Ball, Sydney H.
Beatty, Chester A.
Benoist, E. H.
Big River Lead Company.
Bilharz, O. M.
Blythe, William H.
Boston Elvins Lead Company.
Cantwell, Lucius.
Cantwell, Harry J., 1859-1917.
Catherine Lead Company.
Church-Mabon Mining Company.
Cliff Mining Company.
Cobalt mines and mining—Missouri—Madison County.
Concrete Investment Company.
Crawford County Colonization Company.
D'Arcy, Edward.
Desloge Lead Company.
Eagle County (Colo.).
Eversole, Edward Thompson, 1866-1916.
Finlay, J. R.
Gilman Mining Company.
Guess, H. A.
Guggenheim, .
Guggenheim, S. R.
H. R. Ameling Prospecting Company.
Hammond, John Hays.
Ingalls, W. R.
Irondale (Mo.).

Irondale Farming & Cattle Company.
Jenney, W. P.
Kirby, Edmond B.
Lead industry and trade—Missouri.
Loeb, William.
Mackley, A. P.
Madison County (Mo.).
Mateer, T. J.
Mellen, D. C.
Miami (Okla.).
Mine La Motte (Mo.).
Mine La Motte Company.
Mines and mineral resources—Colorado.
Mines and mineral resources—Missouri—Madison County.
Mines and mineral resources—Missouri—Saint Francois County.
Mines and mineral resources—Missouri—Washington County.
Mines and mineral resources—Oklahoma—Ottawa County.
Missouri and Pennsylvania Lead Company.
Missouri Cobalt Company.
Missouri Exploration & Land Company.
Missouri Farm Colonies Company.
National Lead Company.
Ottawa County (Okla.).
Ozark Exploration Company.
Page, William H.
Palmer (Mo.).
Pantaleoni, Guido.
Parole Mining & Mercantile Company.
Perin, Charles P.
Pierce, T. M.
Pioneer Lead Company.
Potosi Lead Barytes & Mercantile Company.
Ryan, Thomas F.
Saint Francois County (Mo.).
Schmalz, Walter.
Schulte Mining Company.
Southeast Missouri Lead Company.
St. Joseph Lead Company.
Thacher, Arthur.
Vreeland, H. H.
Washington County (Mo.).
Weld, Minot.
Wheeler, H. A.
Whitney, Harry Payne.
Yeatman, Pope.
Yeargain, Devereaux.
Zinc industry and trade—Oklahoma—Ottawa County