

Biography of Jerome Frank

From *History of the 2100 Block Lafayette Street*, 1987

Jerome Frank was born in Kansas in September 1853. He lived at 2115 Lafayette between 1893 and 1900. His contributions to the state were immense, but most of his story has never been told. The information available for this report is fragmentary at best.

By 1900, he was a widower. His son, who served as auditor or agent for the Mears Short Line Railroads between 1912 and 1916, did not live with him. Where the son was in 1900 is unknown. Members of Frank's household included Nathan Gregg, Jr, Isa [Stearns] Gregg, Mable Stearns, and Ellen Stearns. The Stearns girls were listed in the census as his step-daughters. They were the granddaughters of Cameron Hunt, the third territorial governor of Colorado. How they became his step-daughters, or for that matter, why Nathan Gregg choose to live with his step-father-in-law for three years after his marriage is unknown.

Frank contributed to the development of the State of Colorado in at least three separate areas, electric lighting, mining, and railroads.

The first consumer of electricity in Alamosa turned on his lights on April 3, 1890. This feat was made possible by the Alamosa Electric Light and Power Company, which was organized by Jerome Frank. He continued to serve as president and manager of that company at least as late as 1895 when he was living on Lafayette Street.

In 1895 Thomas Wiswill and Jerome Frank were issued patents concerning the use of cyanide and sodium dioxide in the reduction of gold ores. From contemporary sources, the discovery was revolutionary, and led to the profitable processing of old mine tailings. The cost for treating tailings using the process was between 47 cents and \$3.50 per ton for the most refractory quartz ores. By 1897 his process was in use at the Young America Mine in Sierra County, California, the Harqua-Bals and Congress Mines in Arizona, the Golden Gate Mine at Mercur, Utah, the Arequa Mill at Cripple Creek, and at the DeLamar Mines in Nevada. Other mills were planned for Kittitas County Washington, Creede and Holy Cross, Colorado. In addition to owning the process for gold and silver extraction, Frank had extensive holdings in the Silverton area, although it is difficult to name the specific properties.

Jerome Frank's involvement in railroads in the state may go back even further than his involvement in mining. His relationship with Alexander Cameron Hunt, the territorial governor and associate of William Palmer in the building of railroads, is unclear. Hunt was the grandfather of the Stearns girls. His

involvement with various railroad projects in general, and Otto Mears in particular caused legal troubles. Railroaders were used to influencing legislative committees. In 1891, however, Representative C. B. Bowman accused Frank and others of trying to bribe CJ Chapman. On April 12, 1891, Mears, Walsen, Frank and others were indicted by the Grand Jury for attempting to bribe members of the Eighth General Assembly. Although verbiage flowed freely in the pages of the Rocky Mountain News, all were eventually exonerated. Frank was one of the incorporators of the Silverton Northern Railroad on September 20, 1895, with Otto Mears. Others involved with him who are of interest include Fred Walsen (who founded Walsenberg, and whose daughter married Alan Chamberlain), and Thomas Wiswell. He held various offices in the Mears Short Lines until 1929. He must have served as the railroads agent in Denver, as his office was the same as that of the railroad from at least 1909 to 1915.

The usual biographical information concerning a man of such importance is simply not available. Frank is not listed in San Juan Newspaper Index which includes only 1879-1887 thus far, and Allen Nossamann, who compiled the index has not heard of him. He is also not listed in the graves listing for San Juan County, nor is there a record of his burial at Crown Hill, Riverside, or Fairmont Cemeteries. We have been able to find no obituary, and have not been able to determine his date or place of death. Just enough information is available to document his importance to the early history of the state, and to tweak the curiosity of the historian.

Denver Directory Listings for Jerome Frank **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

1891	Frank Jerome no listing
1892	Frank Jerry mining 8-9 Opera House Blk r Brunswick Hotel
1893	Frank Jerome B mining r 2115 Lafayette
1894	Frank Jerome B mining r 2115 Lafayette
1895	Frank Jerome B vp American Cyanide Gold and Silver Recovery Co rms 2115 Lafayette
1896	Frank Jerome B vp American Cyanide Gold and Silver Recovery Co rms 2115 Lafayette
1898	Frank Jerome B vp American Cyanide Gold and Silver Recovery Co rms 2115 Lafayette
1899	Frank Jerome B treas American Cyanide Gold & Silver Recovery Co r 2115 Lafayette
1901	Frank Jerome B vp American Cyanide Gold and Silver Recovery Co rms 1458 Welton
1902	Frank Jerome B 37 Jacobson Bldg. rms. 1458 Welton
1903	Frank Jerome B mining 37 Jacobson Bldg. rms 1453 California
1904	Frank Jerome B mining 37 Jacobson Bldg.
1905	Frank Jerome B mining 37 Jacobson Bldg.
1906	Frank Jerome B mining 37 Jacobson Bldg.
1909	Frank Jerome mining 37 Jacobson Bldg.
1911	Frank Jerome B mining 37 Jacobson Bldg. r 1244 Corona
1913	Frank Jerome mining 409 Jacobson Bldg. r 1244 Corona
1915	Frank Jerome B mining 409 Jacobson Bldg. r 1244 Corona
1916	Frank Jerome B mining 409 Jacobson Bldg. r 1244 Corona
1917	Frank Jerome B mining 409 Jacobson Bldg. r 1244 Corona
1918	Frank Jerome B sec Silverton Northern R R Co r 1244 Corona
1919	Frank Jerome B sec Silverton Northern R R Co r 1244 Corona
1920	Frank Jerome mining 409 Jacobson Bldg. rms Brown Palace Hotel
1921	Frank Jerome not listed
1922	Frank Jerome not listed
1923	Frank Jerome no listing

Colorado Business Directory listings for Frank **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

1890 Frank & Bro., John jewelers
1891 Frank & Bro., John jeweler
1892 Frank, J. B. pres. and manager, Alamosa Electric Light and Power Co.
1892 Frank & Bro., John jewelers
1893 Frank, J. B. pres. and manager Alamosa Electric Light and Power Co.
1893 Frank, Simon jewelry
1895 Alamosa Electric Light and Power Co. J. B. Frank manager.
1895 Frank, Simon jewelry

References: (with annotations) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

References to American Cyanide Gold and Silver Recovery Co

Rocky Mountain News March 9, 1896

Mining Industry and Review March 17, 1898

Rocky Mountain News March 3, 1896

Leland, Feitz, "Alamosa: San Luis Valley's Big City"

"The first consumer of electricity in Alamosa turned his lights on April 3, 1890." No one in the state has the Alamosa Daily Courier for that date (even though there is a quote in the book from the Daily Courier) but Adams State College in Alamosa has copies of the Alamosa Independent Journal which would include 4/3/90 and it is not mentioned there.

Kaplan, Michael, "Otto Mears Paradoxical Pathfinder" p130

The author discusses Mear's attempt to influence the Colorado Legislature on railroad matters. Mear's normally packed the railroad committees of both houses with legislators sympathetic to his concerns. However, in 1891 Representative C. B. Bowman charged Mears with an attempted bribe." On February 3, 1891, a committee of the whole in the House heard a report from the investigating committee and decided that Bowman's charges had enough substance to warrant a grand jury investigation.. Accordingly, when the Arapahoe County grand jury met for its April session, it investigated Bowman's accusation. The grand jurors found, during the course of the hearings, significant evidence to bring incitement. On April 12, 1891, Otto Mears, Fred Walsen, Jerome B. Frank, Edwin Mitchell and A. M. Stevenson were indicted for bribery and attempted bribery of members of the Eighth General Assembly." See related articles RMN 4/14/91 and the Denver Republican 4/13/91. Mears, and presumably his coworkers, were later exonerated by a second grand jury.

"The Silverton Northern Railroad Company was organized by Mears in the late summer of 1895. Old time business associates Fred Walsen and Alexander Anderson were co-founders as were two Denver merchants, Jerome B. Frank and Thomas L. Wiswall. The company was incorporated on November 4, 1895. According to the charter the corporation had a 50 year life and could issue \$150,000 in capital stock." Of this stock 1494 shares went to Mears (through the purchase of The Silverton and Animas Forks Toll Road for use of the roadbed) and the other 6 shares went to the other stockholders.

Kushner, Ervan F., *Otto Mears: His Life and Times with notes on the Alfred Packer Case*, Jende-Hagan Bookcorp (The Platte Press: 541 Oak Street, Box 177: Fredrick , Colorado 80530), 1979, page 86

"On August 15, 1907, Mears bought a home in Silverton, taking the title in his wife's name, and the entire family moved there from Denver. He continued to maintain a business office at the Jacobson Building in Denver."

Lantis, DW, *The San Luis Valley, Colorado*, Dissertation Ohio State

University 1950. Contains a whole chapter on the 1890's but makes no mention of electric power or Frank. No index.

Morgan, DL and Hammond GP, *A guide to the manuscript collections of the Bancroft Library*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1963
No mention of Frank

Nossamann, Allen (Box 154 Silverton 81433) telephone communication.

He has created a manual index of the Silverton newspapers thru 1892 and is unaware of Jerome Frank or his son. He is also in charge of the San Juan County Historical Society).

Pelton, AR, *The San Luis Valley Illustrated*, with illustrations of its public buildings, summer resorts, etc. 1891 Reprinted by RB Campbell, Box 838, Alamosa 81101. Discusses J Frank jewelers and has a picture, but no mention of electricity or of Frank.

Peterson, Frieda 3705 NW 70th Oklahoma City 73116 compiled a cemetery list for Silverton which is also in *Western History* and which does not list Franks.

San Juan County Newspaper Index 1879- 1887 (only years for the index available in Denver) no listing of Jerome Frank.

Sloan, RE, Skowronski, CA, *The rainbow route; an illustrated history*, Sundance Publications Limited, Denver, 1975.

Wiswall, TL, *The Rising Tide of Cyanide Gold*" #73 H. M. Booth Mining Process Booklets and Catalog (file at the Colorado Historical Society).

This a pamphlet to promote the business of The American Cyanide Gold and Recovery Co. T. L. Wiswall is the General Manager and Jerome B. Frank is the treasurer (also listed as President of Alamosa Electric Light and Power Co.) The pamphlet describes the Wiswall-Frank Dioxide-Cyanide process for recovery of gold and silver in refractory ores and tailings.

There follows a list of pertinent patents for dissolving the precious metals and then precipitating the metals. August 14, 1894 E. D. Kendall, Brooklyn, NY "Method for treating gold or silver ores.. "This patent covers the use of dioxide of sodium in combination with cyanide of potassium or any suitable cyanide. Its action extracts the precious metals into solution. November 5, 1895, Thomas L. Wiswall and Jerome B. Frank of Denver, Colorado. "Apparatus for recovery of precious metals from their solutions," April 2, 1895, "Receptacles for Recovering Precious Metals from Solutions." February 25, 1896, "Process of Recovering Precious Metals from Solutions."

Wiswall also says that their process is referred to though not by name in an article of the cyanide process in the "Engineering Magazine"(January 1898) The excerpt that follows talks about a process where refractory ores are successfully treated and from 80 to 95% of the gold values are saved at relatively low costs. However the article warns that this type of process requires a special knowledge and expertise to be set up and used. From this Wiswall builds a case for letting The American Cyanide Gold and Silver Recovery Co. set up its process for mining companies. His case is built on an explanation of the process and testimonials.

"The great and recommending features of the cyanide process are its simplicity and economy. The process equipment is very inexpensive, and can be attached to an ordinary quartz mill. The most refractory ores or tailings can be treated for from \$1.00 to \$3.50 per ton. One of our mills is treating tailings at the small cost of 47 cents per ton. This includes milling and cost of cyanide treatment. No expensive or complicated machinery is a connecting part of the adoption of this process, as is so generally the case with other processes."

Cyanide mills on dumps; where the process will make money hand over hand. The Denver Republican April 28, 1897 p8

The importance of the cyanide process in the reduction of ores is illustrated by the fact that there are now five cyanide mills at work upon the tailings of old mines some of the dumps being from 15 to 20 years old.

The Young America Mine in Sierra County, California, has now an American cyanide mill in operation upon its tailings and is treating 100 tons per day, the tailings averaging \$3.00 per ton, at an expense for treatment of 47 cents per ton.

The Bodie Mining Company at Bodie, Cal., is operating a 100 ton mill upon tailings; the Gold Standard, also at Bodie, also has a 100 ton mill treating its tailings, both these mills using the McArthur-Forest process.

The Congress and Harqua-Bals mines of Arizona each have a 100-ton American cyanide mill at work upon its tailings.

The American Cyanide Company recently closed a contract for the construction of a 100-ton mill upon the Golden Gate mine at Mercur, Utah, owned by Capt De Lamar.

The Arequa mill, Cripple Creek district, using the American process is being built as rapidly as possible. The machinery is all on the ground and it is expected that the mill will be ready for business not later than July 1.

The cyanide mill at the De Lamar mines in Nevada has a capacity of 225 tons per day. It has been so successful that Capt De Lamar has purchased the machinery necessary to double its

capacity. When the addition is made to the mill it will be the largest cyanide mill in the United States.

Successful cyanide; The patents unassailable-the process a money-maker-notable examples-the work of the year. Rocky Mountain News January 1, 1897.

This is a rather long article discussing the Wiswell-Frank precipitation process as practiced by the American Cyanide Gold and Silver Recovery Company.

This is believed to be a significantly new process. Whereas cyanide has been used for years, no one has ever before combined it with sodium dioxide. In fact sodium dioxide has never before had a known use.

Mills are in use or purchased for the Spanish Mill of Bingham, Mercur district in Utah, Nevada, Kittitas County, Washington,, Creede, Holy Cross and Cripple Creek, Colorado.

Wiswell is considered the father of the cyanide process, and was the manager of the McArthur-Forrest(sic) process until teaming up with Frank.

The company has testing works in Denver where leading college trained chemists are trained to operate the process on complex ores from the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Indicted (sic), Rocky Mountain News April 14, 1891

"Prominent men and legislators under the ban of the law; An outward semblance to decency is insisted upon; Five hundred dollars alleged to have been offered by the wily agent of the Rio Grande;...Secret of the failure of the Colorado Central bill regulating rates;...Jerry Frank indicted on the charge of "offering to bribe a member of the legislative assembly. "It is charged that Jerry Frank said to Clarence J Chapman that if he would vote for the election of James W Hanna for the office of speaker he would give him \$500 in money as a reward therefore."

This is a rather long winded article detailing that Mears and associates are busy bribing legislators.

Folks and Fortunes, Saga of the San Luis Valley in *Colorado* November 1949.

Discusses the steam generating plant of 1902 but nothing before.