

INVENTORY
NATHANIEL SHEPARD KEITH COLLECTION

No. 355

THE COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Introduction

Nathaniel Shepard Keith was born in Boston, 14 July 1838. He was educated in Dover, N. H., and in New York City. He graduated from New York University in 1859 with a degree in medicine. He did not take up private practice, preferring to devote his energies to mining and metallurgy.*

Keith joined the "rush" to Pike's Peak in 1860. He remained in Colorado nine years, engaging in mining principally at Black Hawk and Georgetown.

Dr. Keith later won recognition for his applications of electricity to metallurgy. His many inventions constituted important advances in the reduction and refining of precious metals and other minerals. Keith's centrifugal electrical amalgamating machine was widely used in the processing of gold and silver ores.

In the 1880s, Keith served on Thomas A. Edison's advisory staff. Keith's knowledge of electro-magnetism and electro-dynamics aided Edison and his colleagues in developing many of their initial inventions.

In 1884, Keith relocated to San Francisco, where he erected the city's first electric plant. For a period of about ten years he manufactured electrical machinery for the mining industry. He was also one of the founders of the Electrical World, the leading journal of the electrical industry.

Keith lived in England from 1893 to 1897. He continued experiments in electro-metallurgy, and was widely acclaimed for his contributions to the advancement of mining.

The collection contains correspondence (1863, 1883, 1935), marriage certificate (1861), specifications and drawings of inventions, obituaries, and a typescript of a newspaper article concerning Mrs. Keith's visit to Georgetown in 1920. The correspondence includes a letter from Keith to his wife, written from Black Hawk in 1863 and a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Keith to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Swan. The letters discuss the journey to Colorado, Keith's mill, and the process of "desulpherizing" ores. Inventions for which information may be found in this collection include a pulverizer, a hydraulic ash expeller, and drum-shaped grinders.

*Information taken from obituary, Philadelphia Public Ledger 28 January 1925; J. McKen Cattell, ed., The Directory of American Men of Science (1921).

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- 1 Letter, Sheppy to My Dear Wife, Black Hawk Point, C. T., 25 July 1863. Original + typescript copy, 3pp.
- 2 Letter, Shepard and Anna to Fether and Mother, Black Hawk Point, C. T., 24 August 1863. Original + typescripts, 3pp. (2 copies)
- 3 Letter, George A. Petz to N. S. Keith, Philadelphia, 6 March 1882; Claude L. Roth to Mr. Wilson, Philadelphia, 3 May 1935.
- 4 N. S. Keith, "Centrifugal Force in Operating Drum-Shaped Grinders," n. d., typescript, 4pp.
- 5 List of patents, photographs, and personal papers, Keith's possessions in Mr. Schamberg's office, Bullitt Bldg., Philadelphia, 4pp.
- 6 Article from Georgetown newspaper, 20 August 1920, concerning Mrs. Keith's visit to the community, typescript, 2pp.
- 7 Keith's Pulverizer: Description of invention; patent application filed 24 February 1921, and two drawings.
- 8 Keith's Hydraulic Ash Expeller, drawing, 1 May 1923.
- 9 List of Keith's stock holdings in various companies, ca. 1920.
- 10 Biographical sketches: Directory of American Men of Science (1921); Philadelphia Public Ledger, 28 January 1925, original + copy; unidentified clipping; Journal of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, February 1925.
- 11 Marriage Certificate, N. S. Keith and Anna Tale Swan, New York City, 11 March 1861, Geo. Alex. Petz, Pastor, Pilgrim Baptist Church.
- 12 Business cards: N. S. Keith, pres., Metals Recovery Co., Philadelphia; and Nathaniel Shepard Keith & Company, Nickel Platers, New York City.
- 13 Envelope of gold leaf