INTRODUCTION:

John Francis Campion, son of M.B. and Helen (Fehan) Campion, was born on December 17, 1849 on Prince Edward Island, Canada. In 1862 the Campion family moved to California; however, John and his brother George were sent back to Prince Edward Island to receive their formal education at Prince of Wales College at Charlottetown. While enrolled at the college John and George decided to enlist in the United States navy. Both boys ran away from school and attempted to enlist. George who was only fifteen at the time was rejected. John was accepted and appointed assistant quartermaster. He served as assistant quartermaster for the U.S. dispatch boat, the Dolphin, during the Civil War.

At the close of the civil strife John returned to California to visit with his parents who were living in Sacramento at the time. Following his visit John headed for the mountains, thus beginning his career as miner, prospector, and mine owner. He struck it rich at the White Pine silver mine; however, in time, his luck ran out and he lost the five thousand dollars he had accumulated. Refusing to become disillusioned by this first loss, Campion headed to Nevada where he successfully developed and sold mines. He slowly accumulated a new fortune at Eureka, and later at Pioche. In partnership with his father and brother, Campion formed the Pioche Phoenix Mining Company. His years at Pioche were not easy ones. Although the mine consistently produced silver, Campion found himself in a constant battle to retain possession of the mine. In the end the strife was settled by the courts who awarded Campion the rightful owner.

In 1879, after disposing of his Nevada interests, Campion headed for the Colorado Rockies. He arrived in Leadville at the height of the silver boom. His successes in Nevada paved the way for his successes in Colorado. He bought, developed, and sold numerous properties. Among the mines he owned were the Bison, Reindeer, Stag, Elk, and Ibex (also known as the Little Jonny) mines.
Campion's business interests were far-reaching. He was the general manager of the Ibex Mining Company, president of the Wapiti Mining Company, the Big Horn Mining and Cattle Company, and the Northwestern Terminal Company, vice president of the Seventeenth Street Building Company of Denver, the Denver National Bank, and the Denver, Northwestern and Pacific Railway Company, and a director of the Carbonate National Bank of Leadville.

Campion extended his energy and efforts beyond the business world to civic activities. He was an avid supporter and leading organizer of the Colorado Museum of Natural History, serving as its president for a number of years. He was also a patron of the arts, serving as president of the Municipal Art League.

Clearly, Campion's story is a true success story. His successes went beyond developing the rich mineral resources of Nevada and Colorado to developing the rich cultural resources of the West. He deservedly received the admiration and respect of his fellow Coloradans.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The collection contains correspondence pertaining to the Elk Mining Company, New England Gold and Silver Mining Company, Smuggler Consolidated Mining Company, Ibex Mining Company, Stag Mining Company, Caribou Mining Company, and Reindeer Mining Company (1884-1917), business papers, mining records, and legal documents pertaining to the various mining companies (1893-1905), and a typescript copy of an article from the Illustrated Rocky Mountain Globe, Vol 7, No. 37, 8/23/1900, entitled "John F. Campion - Another Millionaire Credited to Leadville's Account."

The records found in the collection provide useful information on Campion and his business activities. They reflect his importance as a mining entrepreneur during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

PROVENANCE:

Roughly one hundred pieces of correspondence (4/28/1897-6/15/1911) were donated to the Colorado Historical Society by David F. Pate in September 1984. The remaining material found in this collection appears to have been donated to the Society at an earlier date. There is no record of the donor's name.
INVENTORY: JOHN F. CAMPION COLLECTION (Cont.)

FF 1: Correspondence, 10/13/1884-9/26/1899
FF 2: Correspondence, 3/12/1900-12/19/1902
FF 3: Correspondence, 3/31/1903-11/13/1905
FF 4: Correspondence, 4/12/1906-12/29/1908
FF 5: Correspondence, 1/5/1909-12/31/1909
FF 6: Correspondence, 1/21/1910-12/1/1910
FF 7: Correspondence, 5/3/1911-10/20/1917
FF 8: Correspondence, incomplete and no date
FF 9: Correspondence: Letterpress book, 4/7/1890-10/5/1891
FF 10: Articles of Incorporation: Rocky Mountain Mines and Cyclorama Company, 8/1892
FF 11: Agreements: C.N. Inddy and John F. Campion, 3/13/1885; F.F. Mead & Company and John F. Campion, 10/31/1895
FF 12: Location Certificate, Lake County, Colorado, 12/27/1893
FF 13: Legal document: Case of John F. Campion as Citizen, Juror and ?, 5/1902
FF 14: Legal documents