

TITLE: Hayden-Hart Murder Trial Collection

DATE RANGE: 1933 – 1935

CALL NUMBER: Y-MS 68

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1 linear foot (1 box)

PROVENANCE: Unknown.

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CREDIT LINE: Hayden-Hart Murder Trial Collection, Y-MS 68, Yuma County Library District

PROCESSED BY: Benjamin Findley, August 2014

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Louis Douglass, Willard Doughty, and Dan O’Connell met in New York City in 1933. All three were out of work and looking for a way to make money. Douglass, a former soldier discharged once for desertion and a second time for dementia and previously charged with theft in Arizona and California, convinced his two compatriots to accompany him to Arizona where his brother and wife owned the Good Hope Mine. During their travels, they were implicated in several robberies although no charges were made.

Upon arrival in Bouse, Arizona, they set up camp next to the home of Jack Hayden an old miner. Douglass had reportedly met Hayden on previous trips to Arizona and he gave them permission to stay on his property. Another prospector, Ralph Hart, had also set up camp near the Hayden home. On February 7th Douglass had a confrontation with Hayden who subsequently was shot in the back of the head by Douglass.

A short time later Douglass had a confrontation with Hart in which he shot Hart in the back and once in the face with a shotgun. Doughty and O’Connell subsequently buried the bodies and looted and ransacked Hayden’s home. Douglass, Doughty and O’Connell quickly left the area for Phoenix where they sold the car and a number of stolen items for travel fare to return to New York City. On February 9th a search was begun for the missing Hayden and Hart. Hayden’s body was found on February 12th. Hart’s remains were quickly located the next day. With the discovery of the bodies, New York police were informed to hold the three men for questioning. Doughty and O’Connell were arrested on the 16th soon after their arrival. Douglass who had split off from the others and was arrested on the 18th.

The trial for the murder of miners Hayden and Hart was held in Yuma County Superior Court, September 1933. Originally scheduled to take place in May, the defendants

requested that it be pushed back in order to allow time for the collection of evidence. During this time the defendants also requested a severance to allow each defendant to be tried separately. Lou Douglass was the first to face trial on September 18th, 1933. The defendant admitted to killing both men, but pleaded innocent on the grounds of self-defense and was rejected. A subsequent plea of insanity was struck down due to hearsay. The jury declared Douglass guilty of first degree murder.

Willard Doughty was the second defendant to be tried. While he claimed to be only a bystander, the prosecution presented enough evidence contradicting his claim and the jury returned a verdict of guilty for second degree murder. Dan O’Connell was the final defendant to be tried. The original charge of murder was dropped due to lack of solid evidence. O’Connell was subsequently tried for accessory after the fact and was found guilty. Douglass was sentenced to execution which he attempted to appeal, but was rejected. Doughty was sentenced to 25 to 50 years in prison, which he attempted to repeal but failed. O’Connell was sentenced to serve 2 to 5 years in prison.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: This collection contains materials related to the trials of Louis Douglass, Willard Doughty, and Dan O’Connell for the murders of miners Jack Hayden and Hart. The materials largely consist of assorted documents acquired or produced in the process of the trials including warrants, subpoenas, witness interviews, interrogations, and letters. Photographs taken of the victims bodies, and the car used by the defendants are also included in this collection. This collection also contains a number of nitrate negatives of letters passed between the defendants while in custody. Due to the storage requirements of nitrate film, these negatives are stored separately in the conservation lab freezer at the Arizona Historical Society Museum in Tempe, Arizona.

CONTAINER LIST:

| Box | Folder | Title | Dates |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 1 | Correspondence 1 of 2 | 1933 |
| | 2 | Correspondence 2 of 2 | 1934-35 |
| | 3 | Court Documents, Doughty | 1933 – 2003 |
| | 4 | Court Documents, Douglass | 1933 |
| | 5 | Court Documents, O’Connell | 1933 |
| | 6 | Court Documents, Various | 1933 |
| | 7 | Appeals, Doughty | 1933 – 1934 |
| | 8 | Appeals, Douglass | 1933 – 1935 |
| | 9 | Photographs | 1933 |
| | 10 | News Clippings | 1933, 2003 |
| | 11 | Testimonies, Defendants | 1933 |
| | 12 | Testimonies, Various | 1933 |
| Freezer | | Negatives | 1933 |