

Letters Concerning Charles Russell

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A letter dated December 20, 1947, from J. E. Russell, the brother of Charles Silver Russell, to Otis Marston. J. E. Russell was an attorney-at-law.

My brother was a very powerful man, about 5'10½ inches and weighing, usually, about 180 lbs., he was born on a farm near Bunker Hill, Illinois, March 28, 1877, the son of John W. and Catherine M. Russell, he died in Phoenix, Arizona, February 8th, 1925. He was a mining engineer, worked in and had charge of mining operations in Colorado, California, Arizona and Mexico. He was never married. He began mining in California in 1897 near Placerville and continued mining remainder of his life, taking a course in mining engineering soon after his first mining experience.

It was while working in the mines near Telluride, Colorado, that he, Loper and Monett conceived the idea in making the trip down the Colorado River for prospecting purposes. However it was some 6 or 7 years after formulating the idea that they were able to put it into operation [in 1907]. They realized the dangers connected with such an expedition and so far as possible equipped themselves to meet such contingencies as they arose and the fact that my brother made three trips testifies to the fact that he knew the dangers to be encountered and how to meet them.

His last trip, being with the idea of making moving pictures, was against my advice, therefore, he did not give me much information regarding that trip, he did have a great many feet of wonderful pictures which were destroyed along with all his other data when his home in Mohave County burned.

The three boats they started with were named ARIZONA, NEVADA and UTAH. As I now remember, the UTAH was the boat that came through, it being the one my brother manned.

Being wet through day in and day out for several days at a time was one of the discomforts of the trip, however, none had COLDS during the entire trip, nor were any of the adventurers ill during that period, no casualties other than a few bruises, barked shins and skinned hands and fingers.



A letter dated January 23, 1948, from J. E. Russell, to Otis Marston

Dear Mr. Marston:

I am unable to recall much of the second trip my brother made down the canyons, other than that first I knew of the trip he was starting from Green River, Utah. Next he telephoned me from Flagstaff on his way back to Illinois to visit Mother for Xmas. I

remember there were two reasons why the trip ended just before Xmas and at Cataract Canyon, they had an accident, lost a good part of their equipment, weather conditions were against them, and Loper was ready to quit. My brother intended to pick up the trip later but did not do so [he did do so].

My brother told me a lot about the various rapids you mentioned, but my recollection is rather dim of any particulars. Many of the rapids they portaged around. I recall my brother commenting upon the fact that many of the rapids could not be run, and that the Kolb brothers' first trip was made by portaging their boats down the river instead of running most of the rapids.

For the second trip my brother was also investigating the possibilities of power to be generated in the Canyon, but that was only an incident to the trip and not its main purpose. He did discuss with me the feasibility of a dam above Lee's Ferry for power purposes and he had figured out cost and estimates, but no one could be interested at that time.

My brother was a man who said little, feared nothing and usually accomplished anything he made up his mind to do. While not a large man he had a powerful physique and was able to withstand most any hardship that came his way, his eyesight was unusually keen as were his perceptive powers, he could analyze a situation and have his results in a very few moments. While well educated he never boasted of the same, on the other hand rather gave off the impression that his education was limited.

I shall be glad to see you when you come this way.

Respectfully - J. E. Russell

A letter dated August 23, 1949 from J. E. Russell to Otis Marston :

Dear Mr. Marston:

Replying to your favor of the 19th will say that my brother, Charles S. Russell, suffered from a head injury he received in the mines, the effects of which did not develop until the last few months of his life, when he lost control of many of his nerves. This injury was of several years' standing. I had him in hospitals in St. Louis, South Pasadena and other places for treatment. It was in 1919 that I began to notice the effects of his injury and from which he died in 1925.

Bert Loper had no money to pay his portion of the expense of the river trip and brother Charles advanced Bert's portion and was never repaid. My brother advised me of this shortly after the trip and tried to get in touch with Loper without success. Reeder made an agreement with my brother relative to the river trip and Charles advanced him the full amount, at Hite, Utah, he deserted my brother and refused to repay one single cent. I tried to have some correspondence with him, but without success, he apparently was just a coward and a gyper. From all I was able to learn of Reeder, he was afraid to make the river trip and did

not have the honesty to be fair with the man who had advanced him moneys.

I read of Loper's death in the local newspaper. I never knew him personally, only by talking with my brother.

In addition to one of the boats, Loper got away with quite a little equipment my brother had paid for, including a six-shooter my brother prized very highly.

Very Respectfully Yours, J. E. Russell

Marston wrote to Charlie Russell's sister, Mrs. Nell Miller, in Kirkwood, Missouri, September of 1949. She responded:

Dear Mr. Marston:

Your letter of September 3rd received. It has aroused my curiosity as to why you are trying to obtain this information. Perhaps you are writing a thesis, a book, or just interested. The name, Bert Loper, seems very familiar to me and he probably was the man who went with brother Charles on his first trip. I do not know very much about this trip, myself, as I was just a youngster when he made his first trip.

There were many letters and clippings and pictures. At the present time I do not know where they are. When my mother died her things were not taken care of, her sister having rented the house furnished and many of her things were destroyed. At that time I did not value these things and they probably were destroyed. I do have a box of pictures in the attic of my house which were taken on the first trip and I shall try to find them on my next trip home, which will be some time in the next week or two. I shall be glad to get all the information for you that I can.

Why my brother never married I do not know. He received his elementary education at a country school called "Pleasant Hill" near Bunker Hill, Illinois. I think he then attended at school in Bunker Hill which was run by a private party and finished up at the St. Louis Business College in St. Louis. We considered him our smartest brother and he had a beautiful handwriting, which was the envy of us all.

When he made or tried to make the second trip through the Canyon he had so much bad luck, losing both camera, food, etc., that the man with him became so angry because he would not abandon the trip that he hit him over the head and left him for dead. How long he lay there he does not know, but he finally came to and got help. From that time he began to lose his mental faculties and became worse from year to year.

We finally brought him home to our mother, who cared for him until her death in 1920. We then put him into a sanitarium somewhere in California, my brother kept him for a while and then put him in a sanitarium in Arizona. There he died, but I do not remember the date. It must have been about the year 1924, but I may be wrong about that. One never realizes how valuable old letters and clippings might be until it is too late. I

was never very good at saving things and accumulating a lot of things I considered no good. My brother should be in a better position to give you more details than I. I was the youngest of the family and my brothers were out West from the time I was a little girl.

I shall be glad to try to find anything I can and let you have it just as soon as I can.

I had an opportunity to visit the Grand Canyon about 3 years ago, which was the first time I had been West. I was so very disappointed when I reached there and found that my brother's boat was no longer on exhibit there. I wanted so very badly to see it.

I do not know the names of the men who participated in the river trips, but I am sure my brother could tell you. An account of his first trip, too, used to be at the Grand Canyon, but we could not find it.

I hope to hear from you further about this. I, too, would like to have more information about it. You will hear from me in a short time.

Marston wrote to J. E. Russell to verify the story of Charles Russell's sister. In November of 1949, J. E. wrote back as follows:

My brother, Charles Silver Russell, procured his mining education the hard way, began working in the mines in 1898, soon thereafter he took a correspondence course from the International Correspondence School and later took another course from another school, I do not remember the name, all while he was working in the mines. In Colorado he worked around Telluride, in Arizona at Octave, Jerome, Kirkland, Tombstone, in Mexico near Magdalena, Socavon, and Mazatlan. In Mexico he was a general manager, at Tombstone shaft foreman, at Octave mine foreman, at Kirkland superintendent.

Charles Silver Russell was born March 28, 1877, on a farm about 2.5 miles south of Bunker Hill, Illinois.

My brother communicated with me from El Tovar in 1907 and asked that I send some of his funds, which I was keeping for him, to Needles, California, to be there when he arrived.

Yes, Charles mentioned about one of his men hitting him over the head on the expedition in 1914, I do not recall whom.

Loper's fondness for gambling accounted for fact that he ran out of funds, my brother was financing the expedition, the others not contributing any finances.

My brother went to district school in Illinois, then to the Bunker Hill Military Academy, and finished at the Bryant and Stratten Business College in St. Louis, Missouri.

If I can be of further service, command me.

Very Respectfully Yours
J. E. Russell