

Mark Twain and the Coal Question

Thomas J. Reigstad

SUNY BUFFALO STATE

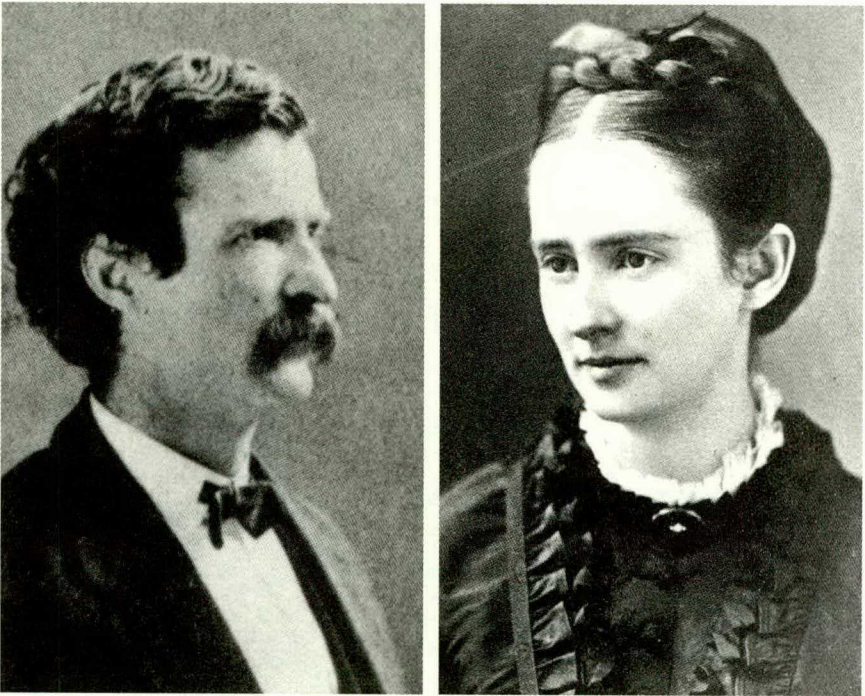
Mark Twain was thirty-three years old in 1869. Events of that year provide a benchmark to gauge Twain's lifelong ambivalence toward management and labor, capitalism and free enterprise. More often than not, Twain tossed aside his working class and mining credentials, and pledged his allegiance, publicly and privately, to corporate privilege—particularly when it related to the J. Langdon Coal Company.

He officially joined the Langdon family and became associated with its vast coal enterprises when he became engaged to Olivia on February 4, 1869. Three weeks later Twain found himself hanging out in New York City with his future father-in-law, Jervis Langdon, and even invited to sit in on the J. Langdon Coal Company annual meeting. Although he described the experience in humorous terms, Twain was dazzled by his confidential view of naked capitalism. In a suite at the luxurious 600-room St. Nicholas Hotel on Broadway, Twain listened to Jervis Langdon and his managers discuss ways to increase the coal company's profit margin.

There he met Eaton N. Frisbie from the Elmira headquarters and two high-ranking agents from the Buffalo branch office, George Dakin and John De La Fletcher Slee. Twain comically described the scene to Olivia. His letter began with a pun: "I could not get much of Mr. Langdon's company (except his Coal company)."¹ He then satirized the cutthroat nature of the big business world, referring to the attendees as "two or three suspicious looking pirates from other districts," "that dissolute Mr. Frisbie from Elmira and a notorious character by the name of Slee, from Buffalo." Twain's fascination with inside business machinations seems evident, as he confessed to Olivia: "The subject of coal is

very thrilling. I listened to it for an hour—till my blood curdled in my veins.”

Twain continued his tongue-in-cheek, hyperbolic commentary on the “thrilling” cold-hearted bottom line focus (“Business is business”) of J. Langdon & Co. by describing how Dakin’s request for a raise to support his wife and seven children was denied. Instead, Slee vowed to “cut down” the size of his family to fit his current wage. Dakin may indeed have been a pirate-like rough and tumble character among Langdon’s trusted managers. He had been sent to Buffalo by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad in 1861 to set up a yard at the foot of Erie Street between the mouth of Buffalo Creek and the Coit Slip on the Erie Basin from which coal could be carried farther up the Great Lakes by colliers.² For over twenty years, he was the J. Langdon & Co. agent supervising their valuable Buffalo waterfront coal yard under the

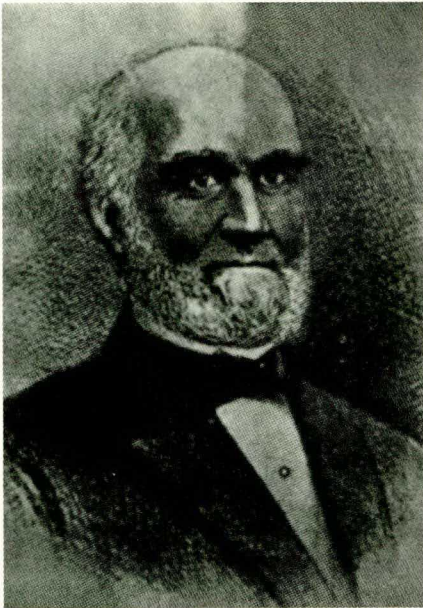


Studio portrait of Twain in Buffalo, NY, 1869 or 1870 (Courtesy of the Mark Twain Project, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley); Olivia Langdon (Courtesy of the Mark Twain Archive, Gannett-Tripp Library, Elmira College, Elmira, NY)

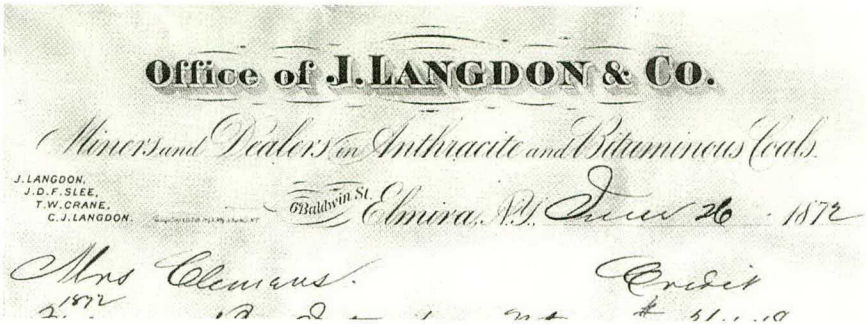
name of the Anthracite Coal Association. During the violent railroad strike of July 1877, Dakin's heavers struck for higher wages, formed a mob, and were dispersed by police.³

Twain wrote Olivia that he liked Slee "first-rate," and was invited to visit his home in Buffalo. Six months later, Twain moved to Buffalo to join the *Buffalo Express*, and became close with Slee. Slee played a pivotal role in arranging for the surprise Langdon wedding gift of a mansion to Twain and Olivia, and he and two other employees of the J. Langdon & Co. Buffalo branch office—Charles M. Underhill and John J. McWilliams—remained lifelong friends of Twain.⁴

Just one month after attending J. Langdon & Co.'s meeting in New York, Twain insinuated himself into the family business by appropriating company letterhead for his personal correspondence. While staying with the Langdons in Elmira from mid-March through April of 1869, he utilized sheets of their corporate stationery ("J. Langdon, Miner & Dealer in Anthracite & Bituminous Coal; Office No. 6 Baldwin Street, Elmira, N.Y.") to write two letters to

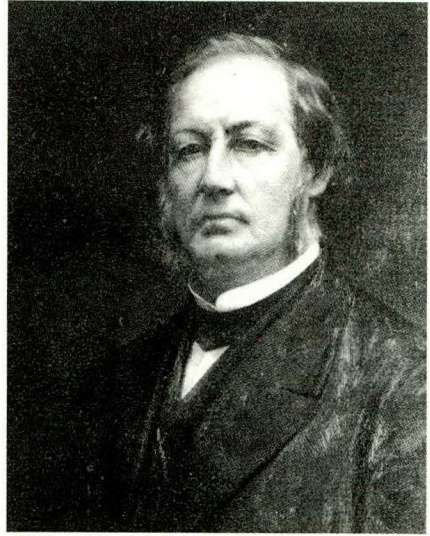


Left: George Dakin (Courtesy of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Local History Scrapbook). Right: John De La Fletcher Slee (Courtesy of Charles S. Underhill).



*J. Langdon & Co. letterhead,
1872 (Courtesy of the Mark Twain
Project, The Bancroft Library,
University of California, Berkeley)*

*Jervis Langdon (Courtesy
of the Mark Twain Archive,
Gannett-Tripp Library,
Elmira College, Elmira, NY)*



his mentor in Cleveland, Mary Mason Fairbanks. Throughout the summer, during other brief stays with the Langdons, he again used coal company stationery, presumably because it lent him gravitas, for letters to the *New York Tribune's* Whitelaw Reid, his lecture agent James Redpath, and his publisher Elisha Bliss, Jr. In October, at the beginning of a lecture hiatus from his *Express* duties while visiting his future in-laws, Twain once again borrowed official J. Langdon & Co. letterhead to write a letter to Vice President Schuyler Colfax. This spree in 1869 initiated a habit for several years of Twain helping himself to J. Langdon & Co. stationery for his private correspondence.

The family business that Twain was marrying into, and which he was so eager to be affiliated with, was already well established by 1869, and continued to thrive.

Jervis Langdon had come to Elmira in 1845 and decided to specialize in Pennsylvania coal: hard coal, or stone coal, also known as anthracite, which

was clean and smokeless, the preferred fuel in American cities. Pennsylvania anthracite coal dominated urban markets in the late 1800s as a valuable domestic fuel for heating and cooking, as well as a powerful source of energy for blacksmiths, bakers, brewers and manufacturers. Most of the early J. Langdon & Co. collieries were in the Shamokin district of Pennsylvania's anthracite coal belt, located along the Great Shamokin Path, an old Native American trail. The Shamokin coal region, in east central Pennsylvania was at first serviced by the Reading Railroad "to shop coal to market." This rich coal area was conveniently situated fewer than 130 miles due south of Langdon's Elmira headquarters.⁵

Two of their biggest and most profitable collieries—contracted with Cochran, Peale & Co. from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Bird, Douty & John of Big Mountain—were managed for Langdon by Alexander Fulton. Fulton, a former member of the state legislature from Indiana County, eventually helped secure coal along the route of Cornelius Vanderbilt's railroad. Soon, Jervis Langdon became one of the first coal dealers in the United States to engage in



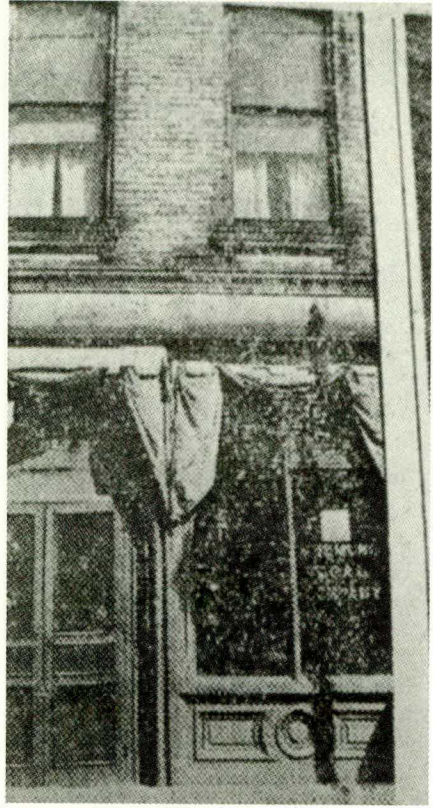
Water and Baldwin Streets, Elmira, NY, 1890s. J. Langdon & Co. is at building with second awning on right (Courtesy of the Chemung County Historical Society)

the mining, handling and forwarding of coal. An unfortunate legacy of J. Langdon & Co.'s presence in Shamokin is that, to this day, the former job site of J. Langdon and Company, Inc. is still listed by the state of Pennsylvania as a workplace asbestos exposure site.⁶

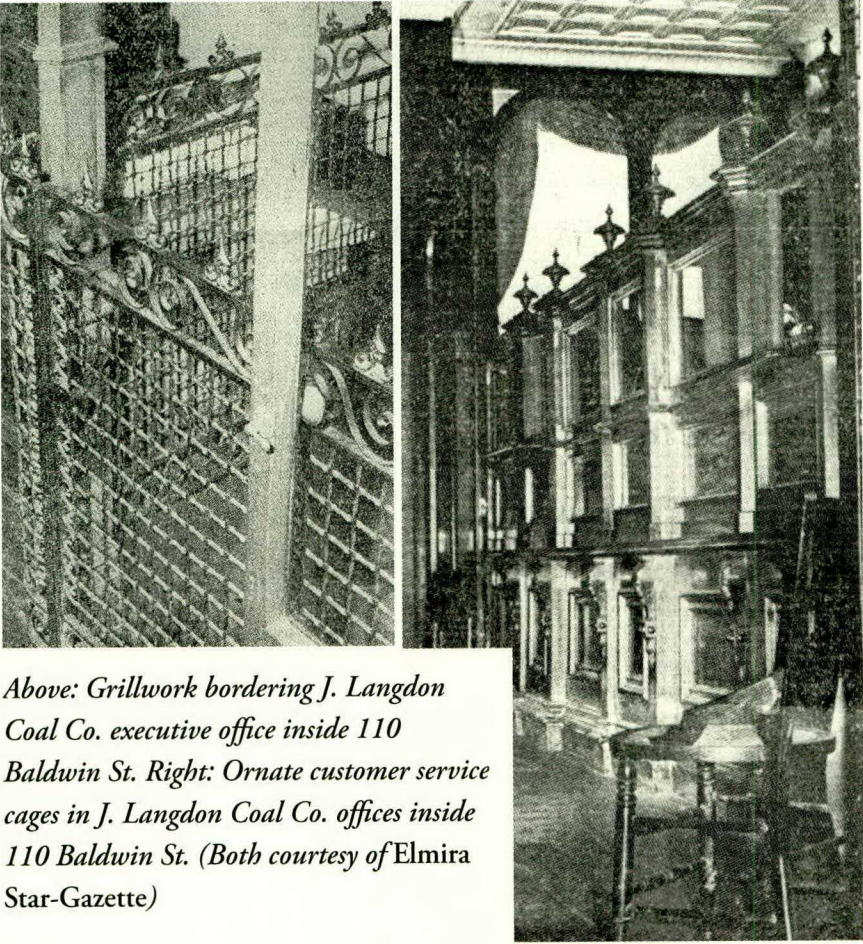
In 1856 J. Langdon & Co. (initially known as Audenried, Remington, Langdon & Co.) was one of just three coal dealers in Elmira. From 1860-1864 they operated as J. Langdon & Company in partnership with Samuel W. Branard as coal and iron dealers with an office at 44 Fifth Street at the corner of Hatch in Elmira. By 1865 J. Langdon & Co. had severed ties with Branard and rented space at 6 Baldwin Street, near Water Street. In 1873, they bought the building, and the address was renumbered as 110 Baldwin Street. That space was occupied by J. Langdon & Co. or their later iteration, Chemung Coal Company, until it closed in November of 1946, at which time the *Elmira Sunday Telegram* described

the office as "the quaintest place of business in Elmira, a Dickensian establishment that has the atmosphere of 19th century London, an office unchanged since the Langdons equipped it in 1873."

The Elmira headquarters of J. Langdon & Co. at 110 Baldwin Street featured a well-appointed interior of black walnut trim, a grand fireplace, polished walnut desks and chairs, tin-plated ceiling, and Langdon family portraits adorning the walls. On the left there were additional desks, and dark woodwork framed a long, high counter at which clerks sat on three-foot-high stools. To the right



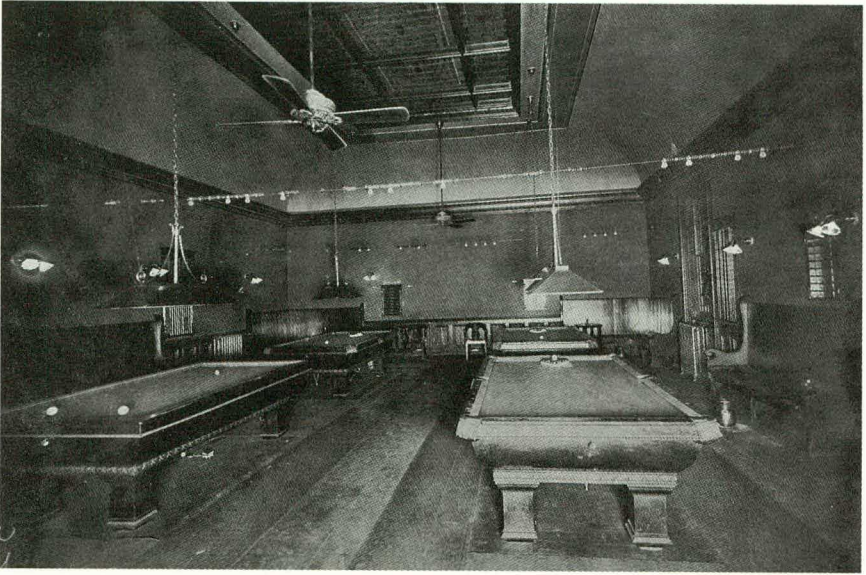
Entrance to 110 Baldwin St. in 19th century. Sign for "J. Langdon Coal Company" slightly visible in lower right street level window. (Courtesy of Elmira Star-Gazette)



Above: Grillwork bordering J. Langdon Coal Co. executive office inside 110 Baldwin St. Right: Ornate customer service cages in J. Langdon Coal Co. offices inside 110 Baldwin St. (Both courtesy of Elmira Star-Gazette)

was an executive inner sanctum, with a large round wooden table, surrounded by grillwork. Toward the rear were bank-sized vaults. Another wall was lined with six ornately carved customer service “cages.”⁷

On the corner of Water and Baldwin streets, across from the J. Langdon & Co. headquarters, sat the Rathbun House, Elmira’s elite hotel. In the summer of 1874, Twain recommended that his Hannibal friend Will Bowen stay at the Rathbun if he visited Twain in the city. Twain wrote that after Bowen checks in, he should walk across to the J. Langdon & Co. coal office to ask for directions to Quarry Farm, Twain’s vacation address with the Langdon family.⁸ The billiards room (later named the Mayfair Room) at the Rathbun was a favorite destination of Twain. One can imagine him refilling his personal supply of



Rathbun House billiards room (Courtesy of the Chemung County Historical Society)

J. Langdon & Co. stationery at his in-laws' coal office, then hustling across Baldwin Street for an afternoon of billiards.⁹

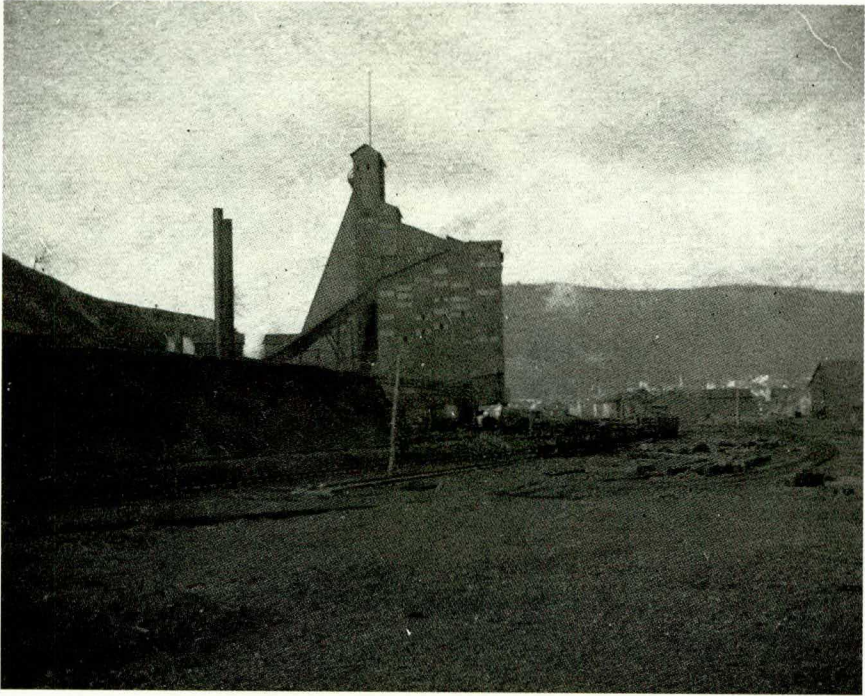
In 1861 Theodore W. Crane, who had married Jervis's adopted daughter Susan, joined the company in Elmira as a partner. Also in 1861 Langdon formed the Anthracite Coal Association to market coal to Buffalo at less expense. It consisted of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Co.; the Pittston & Elmira Coal Company; and the J. Langdon Coal Company. In the summer of 1863 production halted for a few weeks due to the Confederate Army invasion of Pennsylvania. But by 1867, the demand for coal was surging, and J. Langdon & Co. purchased the lease of the Big Mountain colliery, made many improvements, and continued buying out competitors.

The year 1870 was huge for J. Langdon & Company. That year they first handled coal by chutes in Buffalo, with a trestle and a New York Central Railroad spur at their strategically located coal yard at the Lake Erie Basin. Across many years, J. Langdon & Co. brought over two million tons of coal to Buffalo for delivery eastward by canal or rail, or westward by freighter over the Great Lakes to Chicago and beyond.

Another J. Langdon & Co. corporate move in 1870 included opening the McIntyre Coal Company in the Lycoming County coal basin of northeastern Pennsylvania at Ralston, a few miles north of Williamsport. Coal mining had taken place there on a small scale, but J. Langdon & Co. was the first to open a major operation, built on a steep—45 degree angle, long—2,300 feet—inclined plane, along which coal was lowered from the mine in cars on cables to the railroad in the valley below. For sixteen years, the McIntyre mine supplied annually 200,00 tons of coal for consumption as fuel coal in New York and Canada. Also in 1870, Langdon started a partnership with Cornelius Vanderbilt to provide fuel coal for his New York Central Railroad steam locomotives.

On May 1, 1870, with Jervis Langdon gravely ill, the company was restructured into four partners: Jervis still as principal, his only son Charles Jervis "Charley" Langdon, his son-in-law Crane, and Slee. Charley, Crane and Slee were each to earn ten percent of company profits, with Slee being paid a \$4,000 annual salary, Crane making \$3,000 a year, and Charley starting out at \$1,500 for the first two years, with a raise to \$2,000 for another two years. For eight years after that, Charley would be guaranteed a \$3,000 yearly salary. Jervis described these arrangements in a May 30th letter to Charley in which he also beseeched his son to return to Elmira from a trip abroad as quickly as possible.¹⁰ After Jervis Langdon died in August of 1870, the partnership was expanded to include his widow and his daughter Olivia.

In a reminiscence dictated to Albert Bigelow Paine on February 23, 1906, Twain rather audaciously took credit for personally bailing the company out of financial straits during this leadership transition period. He recalls a crisis shortly after Jervis Langdon's death that revealed—in Twain's memory—the utter incompetence of Charley, Slee and Crane. According to Twain, J. Langdon faced a \$50,000 debt that had to be repaid immediately. With Slee's abilities "unknown," Crane "too timid for larger work" than chief clerk, and Charley merely a twenty-one-year old "boy" spoiled by his mother, Twain supposedly stepped in to save the day. As he remembers it, Twain was designated by the inexperienced "young firm" to examine the balance sheets in the library of the Langdon mansion in Elmira with a trusted family friend and former Langdon business partner, Henry W. Sage. Together they hatched a plan to enlist John Arnot of Elmira's Chemung Canal Bank to temporarily make good on a loan



J. Langdon & Co., Pennsylvania coal mining site (Courtesy of the Mark Twain Archive, Gannett-Tripp Library, Elmira College, Elmira, NY)

note that would bail J. Langdon & Co. out of the financial jam. In his own mind, then, Twain was the financial hero and wizard of this episode, praised by Sage as “having a clear business head on his shoulders.”¹¹ If Twain’s self-aggrandizing attitude toward the family business was known at all by the J. Langdon & Co. inner circle, it must have rankled them at times.

After the McIntyre mine was exhausted and shut down, the J. Langdon & Co. mine and company town of 300 households, a church, store and school were abandoned. Soon thereafter, Charley Langdon, operating as J. Langdon & Co., opened another coal mine in richer fields 100 miles west at Clearfield, Pennsylvania, again with two third-generation Vanderbilts, William K. and Cornelius, supplying rail shipment. Charley became president of the Clearfield Bituminous Coal Co. and it grew to be the largest coal producer in western Pennsylvania, with 58 individual mines. Twain was a stockholder, investing “a substantial sum in Langdon’s new enterprise in Central Pennsylvania.”¹²

Old-timers recall a six-day visit Twain made in 1886 to the first Clearfield headquarters in Peale, Pennsylvania (now, a ghost town). As an investor he didn't tour the operation. Rather, Twain spent the six days sitting on the office floor, propped against the coal stove, reading and smoking.¹³

Back to Twain's fateful, formative, year of 1869. As he was attending the February corporate retreat at the St. Nicholas Hotel and being wowed by Jervis Langdon as coal mogul, a piece he wrote for the March *Packard's Monthly: The Young Men's Magazine*, eviscerating shipping and railroad robber baron Cornelius "Commodore" Vanderbilt, hit the newsstands. His "Open Letter to Commodore Vanderbilt" essentially calls Vanderbilt an evil tycoon. Twain portrays him as greedy, soulless, lacking in charity, and undeserving of public accolades. A "J.B." reacted to Twain's attack on Vanderbilt in the next issue, criticizing Twain's "flippant sentences" and closing with this stinger: "It would take a number of Twains to make one good sized COMMODORE VANDERBILT." Twain did not reply publicly, but in a letter to Mary Fairbanks he dismissed J.B.'s rebuke as "able bosh" by a "small fry" not worthy of response.¹⁴

In August of 1869 when Twain joined the *Buffalo Express* as co-owner and managing editor, he did not let up on Vanderbilt. Twain seems to have been totally unaware of the coal/transportation business connection between Cornelius Vanderbilt and Jervis Langdon. Barely a week into his *Express* job, Twain took aim at Vanderbilt in his "People and Things" column. Two "People and Things" news briefs mock Vanderbilt's recent marriage to a much younger woman. One brief reads: "Commodore Vanderbilt has just been married in Canada. The frisky young couple have adjourned to Saratoga for the honeymoon."¹⁵ The other is an anti-Vanderbilt parody of "The House that Jack Built," one line of which is: "the man that married the maiden all forlorn."¹⁶ It's hard to blame Twain for exploiting comic material here. Vanderbilt's first wife, his cousin, who bore 13 children, had died in 1868. On August 21, 1869, Vanderbilt, 75, signed a pre-nuptial agreement and married *another* cousin, a mere 45 years his junior, a 30-year-old whose first name was Frank.¹⁷

Twain's use of the *Express* to deride Vanderbilt continued in an August 23 story, "Uncriminal Victims," on illegal imprisonment practices that discriminate against the poor. Twain writes that Vanderbilt would never suffer from such mistreatment, even though "in this country we have a pleasant fiction that

we are all equal—that we are all Vanderbilts, or all common sailors, just as you choose.” Twain kept on impugning Vanderbilt’s integrity—his vanity, his consorting with low life gamblers and brawlers, his failure to repay debts—in four more “People and Things” briefs through the third week of September 1869.¹⁸ Then the attacks came to an abrupt halt. Quite possibly, he got a message from Elmira to cease and desist. In laying off Vanderbilt permanently, Twain avoided a potentially awkward situation five months later when Jervis Langdon prevailed upon his business partner Vanderbilt to provide a privately chartered New York Central Railroad director’s car on February 3, 1870, to transport Twain, his new bride, Langdon family members and friends, from Elmira to Buffalo.

Then there was the “Coal Question” of 1869 in Western New York.¹⁹ All summer Buffalonians kept a wary eye on the increasing coal rates charged by the Anthracite Coal Association, which had reached an exorbitant \$10.50 per ton. By July, citizens mobilized in protest, and all three major newspapers, *The Express*, *The Daily Courier*, and *The Commercial Advertiser*, united in joint outrage at the monopoly’s stranglehold. *The Express* was the most stridently anti-monopoly. In a five-week period from late July through August *The Express* printed twenty-two stories on the coal question. Their opening salvo on July 22 spoke out against the “greedy extortion of the great coal mining corporations of Pennsylvania.”²⁰ Another *Express* story, signed anonymously as XENOS, commented on the “cold-blooded, hard-hearted monsters” who ran the coal monopoly.²¹ Yet another *Express* piece, this time authored by the nom de plume VETO, condemned the “remorselessness” of coal monopolies for overcharging customers by at least two dollars per ton.²² Not to be outdone by other identity-less contributors, “HONESTY” accused the monopolies of “putting a fraudulent thumb” on their own coal scales, and insisting that coal be weighed more fairly on public city scales.²³

A series of reports on public rallies covered grassroots efforts by a collective called the Citizens Mutual Coal Mining, Purchasing and Sale Company intent on petitioning state legislators for fair coal prices, lobbying for the break-up of rail and coal mine ownership collusion, and seeking less expensive coal dealers in Canada. On August 3rd, the *Express* came dangerously close to targeting the J. Langdon & Co. operation specifically, reporting that the coal collective

had singled out George Dakin, Jervis Langdon's agent at the Anthracite Coal Association of Buffalo, as "anything but a friend of the people."²⁴

Amid this anti-monopoly furor, Twain arrived at *The Express* on August 16th. Within four days he engineered a sudden editorial about-face. Perhaps the story that most motivated him to act appeared in the Wednesday morning, August 18, *Niagara Falls Gazette* harshly criticizing the Anthracite Coal Association and Jervis Langdon: "The cause of the trouble was not a combination of companies, but a control of the avenues to Buffalo by Mr. Langdon of Elmira, so that the Queen City of the Lakes is under control of an inferior city on the banks of the Chemung. No one but Mr. Langdon can get coal over the roads to Elmira." The story further points a finger at "the criminal rapacity of the forestaller of the market, Mr. Langdon."²⁵

Twain wasted no time in using his editorial bully pulpit to reverse *The Express's* anti-coal monopoly stance and to shield Jervis Langdon. Two days after the *Gazette* ripped into Langdon's iron hand on coal prices, Twain wrote an unsigned editorial, "The Monopoly Speaks," and on the same page printed a letter by Slee promoting the benevolent intentions of the Anthracite Coal Association. Twain shilled for Langdon's monopoly as a vital voice to cool down the overheated rhetoric of the "exciting coal question." He scolded Buffalo readers for only heeding the "people's side" of the issue, and urged them to read Slee's companion piece as an "authoritative" statement by a "gentleman of unimpeachable character." Twain closed his pro-monopoly appeal that protesters consider arguments on both sides by framing it in a steamboat pilot metaphor derived from one of his former careers: "We always invite failure when we act upon deficient knowledge. Simply knowing how to turn a throttle valve does not make a man competent to run a steam engine safely."²⁶

As for Slee, his letter in the *Buffalo Express*, sent from the office of the Anthracite Coal Association to the editor (presumably, Twain), humbly tried to set the record straight. First, Slee took a veiled swipe at the slew of recent anonymous anti-monopoly *Express* contributors: ". . . I have hesitated to [respond to anti-monopoly misinformation] . . . because I was not willing to make any such statements over an assumed name, and yet did not seek the sometimes questionable notoriety of a newspaper correspondent." Slee goes on to say that attacks on Jervis Langdon have been unfair, that Langdon does *not* control

1869. COAL. 1869

ANTHRACITE COAL CO.,
 FOOT OF GENESEE ST.

will sell until further notice these celebrated coals at the following prices per ton of 2000 lbs, delivered in any part of the old city limits, outside of which a small charge will be made for cartage:

	Ton	½Ton	¼Ton
Lump.....	\$9 40	4 80	2 50
Grate	9 40	4 80	2 50
Egg	10 00	5 10	2 65
Stove	10 50	5 35	2 75
Chestnut.....	9 75	5 00	2 60

Terms strictly Cash when ordered.
 GEORGE DAKIN, Agent.
 Buffalo, Nov. 1, 1869.

coal from the Pennsylvania region, that the Anthracite Coal Association is actually *saving* local coal customers two dollars per ton, and that everyone who knows Langdon “ranks him as one of the most liberal-minded and high-toned business gentlemen in the State.” He signed off as “J.D.F. SLEE. General Salesman.”²⁷

Anthracite Coal Association advertisement
 (Buffalo Express, November 27, 1869)

This marked the end of the fierce editorial campaign

by the *Buffalo Express* to expose the injustices of the coal cartel.

Instead, the *Express* only ran a couple of puff pieces for the rest of 1869. One week after Twain’s editorial, the *Express* printed a fawning squib congratulating Jervis Langdon’s “liberal donation so graciously tendered of fifty tons of hard coal” to Buffalo General Hospital, from a man whom “the citizens of Buffalo will honor for his charity to this city.”²⁸ Then, in December when the Anthracite Coal Association finally buckled and dropped their price to \$8.40 per ton, the *Express* published a note of gratitude praising their “very liberal terms.”²⁹ During this period Twain continued to abuse his position as *Express* editor by intercepting and destroying ads for cheap coal submitted by Buffalo businessman George A. Deuther (whom Twain referred to as one of those “anti-monopoly thieves”), a leader of the citizen’s anti-monopoly movement. Meanwhile, the rival Buffalo *Courier* and the *Commercial Advertiser* routinely printed Deuther’s ads. Twain also censored and rejected Deuther’s anti-monopoly reports.³⁰ All this in defense of J. Langdon & Co.’s interests.

If Twain thought the sudden radical change in the *Express* stance toward the coal monopoly would escape attention, he was wrong. On September 1, the *Courier* published a blurb: “A change seems to have come over the tone of the Express in reference to the coal monopoly. A very short time ago, it was engaged in an honorable rivalry with us to be foremost in the effort to

confer the benefit of cheap coal on the people, and bring down the present high prices of fuel. The recent silence seems ominous. What is the reason for it?"³¹ Savvy Buffalo readers were aware of Twain's financial and familial ties to Jervis Langdon.

J. Langdon & Co. had already faced criticism in 1867 by their hometown newspaper, *The Advertiser*, over controlling coal prices. Jervis Langdon responded to the claim with a published rebuttal three days later.³² Even ten years after the Buffalo dust-up of 1869, as J. Langdon & Co. was dissolving the Anthracite Coal Association, they were still publicly disputing charges of monopolism, this time accusations of collusion with the Northern Central Railroad to ensure high prices. Over the decades, J. Langdon & Co. managed to survive the taint of monopoly as well as other hazards—financial panics, mine floods, fires and explosions, railroad worker and miner strikes—that faced the disaster-prone coal industry.

Ironically, from September of 1869 to January of 1870, Twain wrote seven stories for the *Express* praising the courageous, adventurous California '49er gold miners who were being honored in the east. He described his own fortunes and misfortunes in the 1860s as a gold and silver miner, and a pocket miner, in California and Nevada. Yet, despite identifying with his fellow miners and reminiscing fondly of those hard days out west, Twain once again adopted the Langdon coal company party line in the spring of 1870 when he learned that workers in the Pennsylvania coal mines were threatening to strike. His March 8 *Express* story, "More Wisdom," is an anti-labor tract describing the unionists in the Shamokin, Pennsylvania, mines as obstructionists and as "mob terrorists" who aligned themselves with the murderous Molly Maguires. Twain self-righteously writes that the mine owners and corporate interests had God on their side, invoking Psalms on their behalf, and implying that newlyempowered miners would only create chaos and unleash the gates of Hell: ". . . should the Pennsylvania legislature take the only step now left it to take for the 'protection' of those persecuted lambs, the miners, and make them absolute, joint and equal owners with the present nominal proprietors of the collieries, it is fair to presume that the millennium of peace and order in that Pandemonium would be greatly hastened."³³

Twain's bachelorhood and early months of marriage while working at the

Buffalo Express display the complex and often contradictory position he took toward the coal industry. Twain's equivocation—on one hand supporting victimized coal consumers and low-paid coal miners, while on the other embracing the entrepreneurship of millionaire coal tycoons like his father-in-law—reflects his lifelong tug between his personal allegiances toward the working class he was born into and the privileged class he aspired to.

Even his close friend, William Dean Howells, faulted Twain for not siding with labor during the coal strike of 1902.³⁴ Nor did Twain support the mine owners. As a detractor of Theodore Roosevelt, he may have seethed at the President's intervention in helping to end the five-month strike. But, in waffling on the 1902 labor-management coal question, Twain only elected to squeeze comedic exposure out of an episode that put 50,000 miners temporarily out of work and hiked consumer coal prices to an astronomical \$20 a ton. Written during this 1902 coal crisis, Twain's satirical, well-publicized, letter to Secretary of the Treasury Leslie M. Shaw rejected over-priced coal by placing an order for fueling his comfortable Riverdale, New York, mansion with 45 tons of government bonds to stoke his furnace, 12 tons of greenbacks for cooking, and eight barrels of postage stamps for kindling.³⁵ The letter was published in the October 22 *The New York Times*. The *New York Evening World* sent a reporter to Twain's house for an interview printed later that day. The *World* interview is full of one-liners, including Twain's rather insensitive joke that the reporter, a Harlem apartment dweller, was lucky because his landlord paid for his heat.³⁶

Twain's ambivalent attitude toward coal mining did not stop him from using the subject in his fiction writing. In April of 1873 while in Hartford composing the final chapters of *The Gilded Age*, Twain wrote Olivia in Elmira asking her to check with J. Langdon & Co. officials—her brother Charley, Crane, Slee, and Alexander Fulton—to see if a stream of water typically flows when a coal vein is discovered. He remembered that happening in silver mining, but he wanted to verify it for coal, too.³⁷ The description appears in the penultimate Chapter 62 when Philip Sterling triumphantly picks into a rich, seven-foot thick vein of coal.

Later that year, the Panic of 1873, a global financial crisis, demonstrated to Twain and Olivia the hazard of relying on their stipends from J. Langdon & Co. profits. Short on cash and vacationing in London, the couple wondered

if the family coal business had been compromised by the Panic and, if so, whether Twain would have to generate revenue for paying debts and funding a trip to Paris by lecturing throughout Great Britain. A worried Olivia wrote her mother in Elmira asking if the coal firm was “cramped,” saying that she was “very anxious to get word from home about financial affairs.”³⁸ According to Dixon Wecter, a financial statement that Charley had provided Olivia earlier that month—September—in 1873 showed that “her interest in the Langdon coal company comprised \$80,000 out of her estate of roughly a quarter of a million dollars.”³⁹

These risks and other occasional downturns may have caused Twain to sometimes question his allegiance to the Langdon family business. For example, with the Clearfield expansion in the 1880's, Charley and Twain wondered if J. Langdon & Co. had over-extended. Charley had invested with Andrew Carnegie and the Vanderbilts to create a new railroad, the Beech Creek in central Pennsylvania, to give New York Central managers access to their own source of coal for locomotives and freight. Charley admitted that he was conscious of running the risk of being “mixed again.”⁴⁰ The year of 1886 acquired the label “the year of the great uprising in labor.” That year there were more than 1,400 strikes involving 500,000 laborers.⁴¹ A long coal strike throughout Pennsylvania brought operations to a halt, but it ended with many workers getting lower wages instead of the ten-cent raise they wanted. J. Langdon & Co. emerged unscathed.

In 1887 a cash-strapped Twain wrote to Charles Webster: “We are still paying in money to J. Langdon & Co. on the great coal mine purchase of three years ago, and must continue to do so, or at any rate live out of dividends until 13 months hence.”⁴² Then, in 1899, 50-year-old Charley, suffering from depression, rheumatism and the burden of navigating the family's coal empire through three decades of economic crises, miraculously dodged a bullet. With J. Langdon & Co. almost \$700,000 in debt, it was somehow not only made solvent by the Pennsylvania Railroad, but was given a handsome amount of railroad stock to disperse to Langdon coal partners, which included Olivia.⁴³

Around this time there was a curious unpublished, untitled, manuscript that Twain wrote in 1887. In letter form, Twain bitterly accuses Andrew Langdon, Olivia's first cousin, of being a miserly, cold-hearted hypocritical



Andrew Langdon (Courtesy of The Buffalo History Museum)

capitalist from Buffalo. The letter is addressed to “Andrew Langdon, Coal Dealer, Buffalo, New York,” and is written by the “Recording Angel.” It charges Langdon with being an evil coal magnate who publicly prays for a mild winter that would reduce heating bills for poor residents, but who privately hopes for freezing weather so he can hike coal costs and reap maximum profits. Twain (as Recording Angel) writes that Langdon wielded “the greedy grip of the meanest white man that ever lived on the face of the earth.”⁴⁴ Oddly, Twain used a similar phrase seventeen years earlier in Buffalo when jokingly using his new-born baby Langdon’s persona in a November 1870 letter criticizing the attending physician as “the meanest looking white man I ever saw.”⁴⁵ In fact, Twain may have been

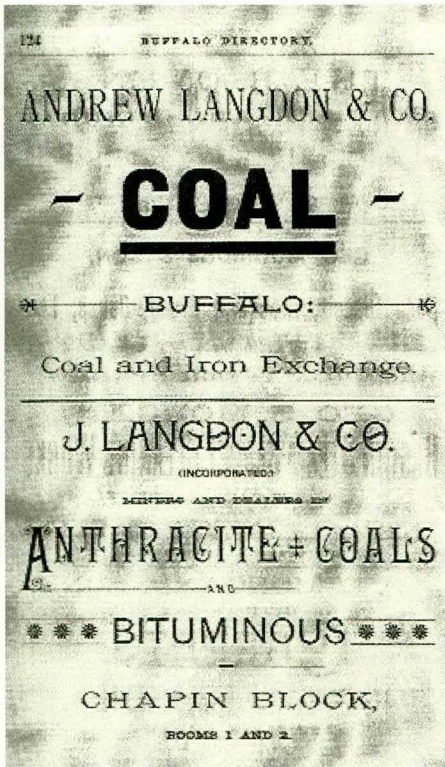
on to something, if inadvertently. Langdon made his wealth in coal, retired young, and became a civic leader, but was known to have the capacity to be a bit stubborn. After admiring a bronze reproduction of Michelangelo’s Carrara marble statue of David at the 1900 Paris Exposition, he bought it and insisted that it be installed at a scenic grassy perch in Buffalo’s Delaware Park, at a spot blocking a carriage trail. His demand contradicted park architect Frederick Law Olmsted’s wishes of banning statuary in his Buffalo parks system. Including its base, the 25-foot-high statue of David was erected at the West Bluff Concourse, presented by Andrew Langdon in 1905, and is still there today. Also, Andrew Langdon, as Commissioner of Parks, fired the beloved parks manager, William McMillan (a move he later regretted).⁴⁶

The Andrew Langdon/Recording Angel letter was not likely to be read by anyone but Twain during his lifetime, certainly not by Olivia. Bernard DeVoto prepared it for publication in the February 1946 *Harper's* as "Letter from the Recording Angel." In his brief introduction, DeVoto speculated that Twain may have targeted Langdon after making an August 1887 notebook entry expressing jealousy at recent profits earned by a J. Langdon & Co. colliery.⁴⁷ But the J. Langdon and Andrew Langdon coal firms were separate entities. Besides, Andrew Langdon and his Buffalo partner had just both retired, having sold their coal brokerage business to the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad for a whopping \$550,000.⁴⁸ Later in DeVoto's *Harper's* introduction to "Letter from the Recording Angel," DeVoto misidentified Langdon as Olivia's uncle. Dixon Wecter perpetuated the "uncle" miscue, compounding it by inaccurately

claiming that Andrew Langdon was the "head of the lucrative [J. Langdon] office."⁴⁹

In 1962, first planned for release in 1939, Twain's piece was published in *Letters from the Earth*, edited by DeVoto with a preface by Henry Nash Smith. For some reason, either DeVoto or Smith changed Langdon's name to Abner Scofield—perhaps under pressure from Clara Clemens in an effort to censor internal family name-calling and, therefore protect the Twain brand. And the letter was retitled "Letter to the Earth."

No matter how one interprets it, "Letter from the Recording Angel" does not seem to represent any strong sentiments by Twain either against wealthy coal tycoons or in favor of needy coal customers. Rather, it appears to be a vitriolic outpouring



J. Langdon & Co. and Andrew Langdon coal company ads (1888 Buffalo City Directory)

based on a personal grudge.

For years, the animosity toward Andrew Langdon in Twain’s letter continued to mystify scholars. The two men were born within five months of each other. Twain first met Langdon in August of 1869 when a retinue of Langdon family and friends, and Twain, took a three-day pleasure trip from Elmira to Niagara Falls. According to the register of the Cataract House in Niagara Falls, Twain stayed in room 32 and Andrew Langdon just down the hall in room 26. In the early 1900s, they exchanged a few cordial letters, with Langdon complimenting a speech by Twain and inquiring after Olivia’s health, and Twain thanking

CATARACT HOUSE.		
NAME	RESIDENCE	ROOM
Geo. Ross & wife	Roseton NY	108
Mr. Nellie Ross	" "	108
Master Frank de Ross	" "	108
W. W. Morgan	Roseton NY	108
Mr. John B. Morgan	Buff	108
Geo. H. Clark	Wata.	181
J. Langdon wife & daughter	Elmira	31, 33
Dr. Henry Charles Wood	"	24
A. Langdon	New York	26
Mark Twain	Elmira	32
J. Langdon	"	34
Henry P. Cooper wife	New York	18
John Beach & wife	Albany Oregon	✓
J. B. H. Lark	Chicago	127
G. W. Austin	New York	130
William Lawson	England	132
J. S. H. Lark	"	133
A. L. Lark	New York	134
Dr. Horiston's daughter	Saratoga's Pa	125
Miss Boyan	Leam	125
A. W. Horiston	Washington College	125
Mr. West	Waco, Tex	

Register for the Cataract House Hotel, August 4, 1869 (Courtesy of the Local History Department, Niagara Falls, NY, Public Library)

Langdon for an invitation to stay with them in Buffalo and apologizing for not being home when Langdon called. What could have accounted for the private loathing that Twain felt a need to spill out?

One theory was advanced by Langdon’s grandson, also named Andrew Langdon. The grandson conjectured that Twain’s hostility was due to a snub when (and if) Andrew Langdon had been asked to invest in Twain’s money pit—the Paige typesetter invention in the late 1880s. Paul Baender viewed that explanation for Twain’s caustic language as “plausible.” But it was not substantiated.⁵⁰

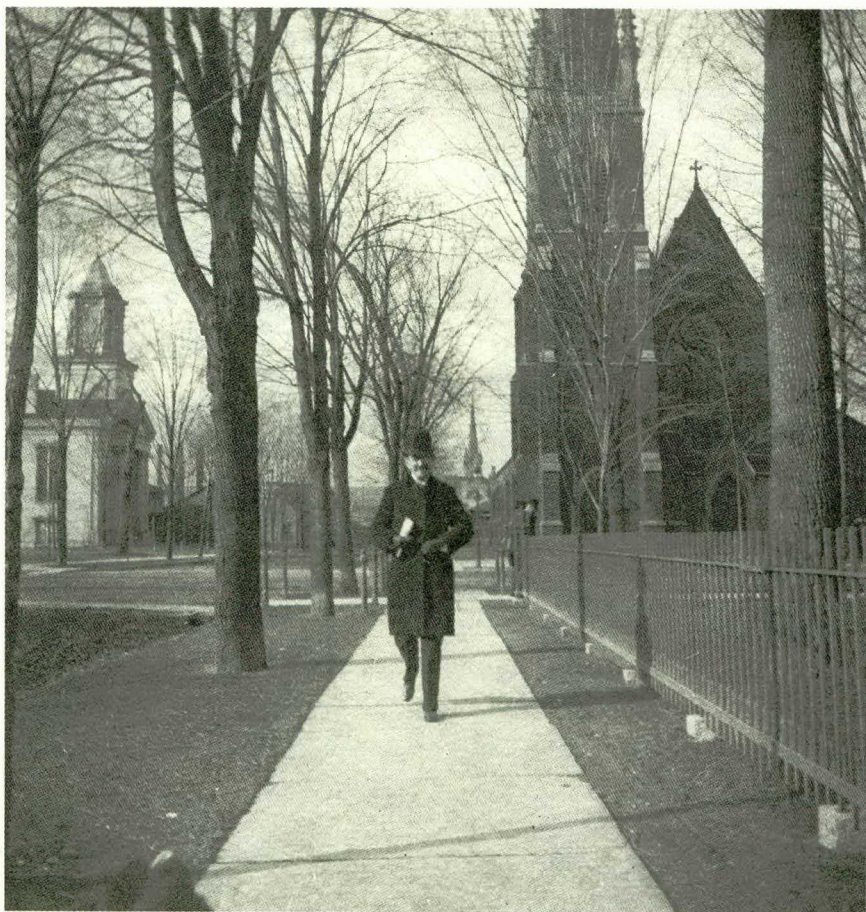
Then, in the early 21st century, Barbara Schmidt solved the puzzle. She found that Louisa Mussina Baird, whose first cousin was married to Andrew Langdon, had begged Langdon in the late 1870s for money to pay her family's travel expenses westward and for the purchase of Texas farmland. When Andrew Langdon said no, she wrote Olivia (since they both had first cousins who were married to each other). Olivia kindly assisted her distant, distant, "relative." But her act of charity obviously ate at Twain, in light of Andrew Langdon's initial refusal to help his own wife's cousin, and because in 1881 Andrew had the nerve to ask Twain and Olivia to chip in *again* for Louisa in another time of need.⁵¹ This episode appears to be the true source for Twain's souring on Andrew Langdon and aiming his wrath at him in "Letter from the Recording Angel." So, Twain's vindictiveness was not coal-related.

In an intricate case of "three degrees of separation," Andrew Langdon and Twain were also bound together with Jervis Langdon and another prominent Pennsylvania coal business family, the Albrights. According to a J. Langdon & Co. ledger of income and bills payable for 1859, Jervis Langdon was transacting commerce in bituminous coal with Joseph J. Albright, a successful coal agent for the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company of Scranton, Pennsylvania.⁵² In 1871, in his early 30s, Andrew Langdon entered the wholesale coal business with Albright's son, John J. Albright in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. In 1872, John Joseph Albright married Andrew Langdon's sister Hattie. In 1873 Andrew Langdon and John Joseph Albright moved their families to Washington, D.C., where the businessmen became agents for the Reading Coal and Iron Company. In the early 1880s, Langdon and Albright moved again, to Buffalo, where under a new double partnership, they marketed all the Reading coal going westward from Buffalo and handled the company's anthracite sold in Canada and Western New York.⁵³

Presumably, at a Langdon family function in the early 1870s, Twain met John J. Albright's father. He felt comfortable writing the elder Albright an engaging letter from Elmira on July 17, 1874. Twain's personal letter to Joseph J. Albright was linked to a publicity stunt he had concocted with Phineas T. Barnum to capitalize on America's fascination with the spectacular comet, Coy Coggia, whose brilliance was lighting up summer night skies. In a joint venture, Twain and Barnum purported to have "chartered" the comet for a

pleasure trip to Mars and the constellations at the reasonable rate of \$2 per every 50,000,000 miles. Twain announced the zany excursion proposition in the *New York Herald* on July 6, 1874.⁵⁴ Twain's comical July 17 letter to Albright, Sr., guaranteed him a complimentary round-trip ticket on the comet as a special offer to rival coal dealers, so that competition with his wife's family coal business might be eliminated.⁵⁵

In 1885 J. Langdon & Co. reached its zenith with Charley Langdon when it incorporated. During its twenty years of incorporation, from 1885 to 1905, it put into the market nearly nine million tons of anthracite coal, and its sales

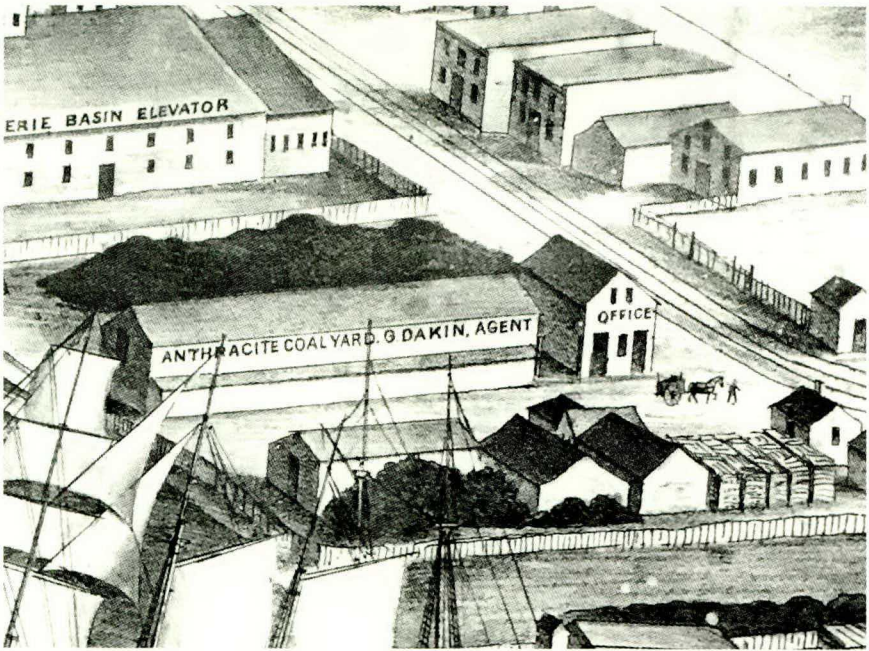


Charley Langdon in Elmira, c. 1890 (Courtesy of the Mark Twain Archive, Gannett-Tripp Library, Elmira College, Elmira, NY)

reached \$3 million per year. When J. Langdon & Co., Inc. dissolved on January 1, 1905, all of its assets were distributed to stockholders.⁵⁶ After Olivia's death in 1904, Twain inherited her one-third partnership of J. Langdon & Co. However, J. Langdon & Co. continued, in conjunction with Chemung Coal Co., at the 110 Baldwin Street office, with Charley as president, his son Jervis as vice president, W.L. Sampson as treasurer, and H.K. Fuhrman as secretary, until Charley retired around 1911.

Under young Jervis Langdon's leadership, J. Langdon & Co. and Chemung Coal carried on, specializing in blue coal, limestone and wood. In the early 1920s Jervis attended director's meetings in New York City on behalf of J. Langdon & Co.'s interests in the Shamokin Coal Company. In 1924 he sold the Neilson mine in the Shamokin region for \$600,000. J. Langdon & Co. was listed in the Elmira City Directory for the last time in 1937, after which only the Chemung Coal Co., under Jervis and Eleanor Langdon, was still entered at the 110 Baldwin Street address. After a 73-year run there, Jervis Langdon moved what was left of the corporate offices in 1946 to the Realty Building in Elmira. All iterations of Chemung Coal Co. and J. Langdon & Co. seem to have ceased around 1952. In its nearly 100 years of existence, Langdon Coal never bought a display ad in the Elmira City Directory—even though their competitors did—a testament to the high esteem of their business reputation in the community.

One more look at Twain's 1869 experience in Buffalo brings this coal inquiry full circle. When the Langdon family and friends were touring Niagara Falls in August of 1869, Twain and Jervis Langdon, Sr., took a brief twenty-mile train trip south to Buffalo so that Jervis could inspect the *Buffalo Express* books and show Twain the J. Langdon & Co. coal yard. After Olivia's death in 1904, Twain—as her executor—inherited her partnership in J. Langdon & Co. and he co-owned the old Buffalo coal yard property for the final six years of his life, along with Charley Langdon and a third party. J. Langdon & Co. no longer had a footprint in Buffalo, but still owned the valuable waterfront land, which Charley hoped to sell for perhaps as much as \$500,000. From 1904 to 1910, Twain collected one third of the rent by tenants, but he also had to pay his share of city and county property taxes. For each of those six years, he finished in the red.⁵⁷



1863 drawing of J. Langdon & Co./Anthracite Coal Association waterfront coal yard and slip in Buffalo (Courtesy of Chuck LaChiusa)

In May of 1910, one month after Twain died, Charley sold the coal yard plot. It is tempting to consider Charley's timing as deliberate—that Twain, despite championing the J. Langdon & Co.'s cause in print, was nonetheless regarded as an outlier and a cipher, and after Olivia's death, his potential profiteering from the sale of the Buffalo J. Langdon & Company real estate was delayed intentionally.

Author Acknowledgment:

In 1992, not long after completing a Researcher-in-Residence opportunity at Quarry Farm awarded by the Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies, I had two telephone phone conversations with Jervis Langdon, Jr., the great grandson of Twain's father-in-law, and a great-nephew of Twain. Mr. Langdon, who died in 2004 at the age of 99, was very interested in my work investigating the J. Langdon & Co. coal office and waterfront yard in Buffalo, New York. He encouraged me to "do justice" to the untold history of J.

Langdon & Co. and to Twain's relationship with it. This article is an attempt to follow up on Mr. Langdon's inspiration. This essay is also an extension of a presentation that I gave at The Eighth International Conference on the State of Mark Twain Studies at Elmira College on August 4, 2017.

Notes

- 1 SLC to OLL, 27 February 1869, *Mark Twain's Letters*, Volume 3: 1869, eds. Victor Fischer and Michael B. Frank (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 114–116.
- 2 Dunn, Edward T. *A History of Railroads in Western New York*, 2nd edition (Buffalo, NY: Canisius College Press, 2000), p. 81.
- 3 Dunn, p. 68.
- 4 See *Scribblin' for a Livin': Mark Twain's Pivotal Period in Buffalo*, Expanded Edition by this present author (Buffalo, NY: NFB Publishing), pp. 115–117, and "Twain's Langdon-Appointed Guardian Angels in Buffalo: 'Mac,' 'Fletch,' and 'Dombrowski,'" also by this author, *Mark Twain Society Bulletin* (July 1989), pp. 1, 3–8.
- 5 The author has found several sources invaluable for attempting to thoroughly reconstruct, for the first time, the long history of the J. Langdon Coal Company. The two chief sources are: "Jervis Langdon: Christian Businessman," by Herbert A. Wisbey, Jr. (lecture, Quarry Farm, Elmira, NY: March 22, 1989); "Jervis Langdon, Mark Twain's Father-in-Law," by Jervis Langdon, Jr. (unpublished and undated manuscript: Chemung County Historical Museum, Langdon Family Estate carton). An indispensable summary of The Anthracite Coal Association in Buffalo was provided in a *Buffalo Express* story, "The Anthracite Coal Association," January 13, 1877. Other sources extremely helpful in filling in background about J. Langdon & Co., The Anthracite Coal Association, and the history of the Pennsylvania coal industry are: *History of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania*, ed. John F. Meginness (Chicago, IL: Brown, Runk, & Co., 1892); *History of the Great Lakes*, Volume II, by John B. Mansfield (Chicago, IL: J.H. Beers & Co., 1899); *A History of Buffalo*, by J.N. Larned (New York: The Progress of the Empire State Company, 1911); *Coal and Coal Trade Journal*, particularly volumes 35 and 43; *St. Clair: A Nineteenth-Century Coal Town's Experience with a Disaster-prone Industry*, by Anthony F.C. Wallace (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); *Fueling the Gilded Age: Railroads, Miners, and Disorder in Pennsylvania Coal Country*, by Andrew B. Arnold (New York: New York University Press, 2014);
- 6 See this website, <https://www.mesotheleoma.com/states/pennsylvania>.
- 7 *Elmira Sunday Telegram*, "Langdon Co. Moving After 73 Years," September 29, 1946.
- 8 SLC to William Bowen, 26 June 1874, *Mark Twain's Letters*, Volume 6: 1874–1875, eds. Michael B. Frank and Harriet Elinor Smith (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), p. 168.
- 9 "Elmira History: Early Hotels in the City," by Diane Janowski (*Elmira Star Gazette*, August 8, 2014). The Rathbun closed on August 1, 1941, was known for its luxurious dining hall, popular and well-stocked bar, and expansive billiards room.

- 10 Jervis Langdon to Charles Langdon, 30 May 1870, Appendix ix of "Jervis Langdon, Mark Twain's Father-in-Law," by Jervis Langdon, Jr. (unpublished and undated manuscript: Chemung County History Museum, Langdon Family Estate carton).
- 11 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Volume 1, ed. Elinor Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 376–378.
- 12 Andrew A. Arnold, *Fueling the Gilded Age*, p. 103.
- 13 H.B. Douglas, *New York Central Lines Magazine* (1921), p. 27.
- 14 "Open Letter to Commodore Vanderbilt," by Mark Twain, *Packard's Monthly*, March 1869, pp. 89–91; "An Open Letter to Mark Twain," by J.B., *Packard's Monthly*, April 1869, pp. 120–121; SLC to Mary Fairbanks, 24 March 1869, Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks, ed. Dixon Wecter (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1949), pp. 86–87.
- 15 "People and Things," *Buffalo Express*, August 24, 1869.
- 16 "People and Things," *Buffalo Express*, September 25, 1869.
- 17 When Vanderbilt married Frank Armstrong Crawford in London, Ontario, Canada, on August 21, 1869, only two people attended the ceremony. One of them was Buffalo's James Tillinghast, assistant to the president of New York Central Railroad, who later was tasked by Vanderbilt—as a favor to Jervis Langdon—to arrange for the exclusive private train car to take Twain, Olivia and wedding guests from Elmira to Buffalo in February of 1870.
- 18 Once at the Express, Twain was actually continuing an anti-Vanderbilt editorial policy. Earlier in the summer of 1869, Express editorials had already assailed "Vanderbiltism," i.e., his railroad monopolies. In a "People and Things" item of August 24, Twain cited a rumor that gangster and gambler John Morrissey had held Vanderbilt hostage until he repaid a debt of 40 cents, and in another on September 24 that Vanderbilt had dined with Morrissey and Jem Mace (a roughneck saloon keeper), while slighting William Varly, also known as Reddy the Blacksmith, a thug, murderer and member of the Bowery Boys gang. In a September 10 "People and Things" entry, Twain reported that Vanderbilt had erected a bronze monument "in his own honor."
- 19 *Buffalo Express* headline writers alone used this phrase to title five stories in August 1869.
- 20 "The Coal Monopoly," *Buffalo Express*, July 22, 1869.
- 21 "The Coal Question," by XENOS, *Buffalo Express*, August 16, 1869.
- 22 "Notes for the People: The Coal Question Again," by VETO, *Buffalo Express*, August 16, 1869.
- 23 "Public Scales for Coal," by HONESTY, *Buffalo Express*, August 12, 1869.
- 24 "Cheap Coal," *Buffalo Express*, August 3, 1869.
- 25 "The Coal Question," *Niagara Falls Gazette*, August 18, 1869. Apparently, *Gazette* editors were enamored of this stock headline, too.
- 26 "The 'Monopoly' Speaks," *Buffalo Express*, August 20, 1869.
- 27 "The Coal Question. Statement of the Agent of the Anthracite Companies," by J.D.F. Slee, *Buffalo Express*, August 20, 1869.
- 28 "A Liberal Gift to the General Hospital," *Buffalo Express*, August 27, 1869.

- 29 "Coal," *Buffalo Express*, December 1, 1869.
- 30 SLC to OLL, 3 September 1869, *Mark Twain's Letters*, Volume 3: 1869.
- 31 "Change in the Express," *Buffalo Courier*, September 1, 1869.
- 32 "The Coal Monopoly," *Elmira Daily Advertiser*, March 2, 1867; "Messieurs. Editors," *Elmira Daily Advertiser*, March 4, 1867.
- 33 "More Wisdom," by Mark Twain, *Buffalo Express*, March 9, 1870.
- 34 Howells, William Dean. *My Mark Twain* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1910), p. 81. The intensely loyal Howells writes that while Twain favored workers in general, ". . . when we were all so troubled by the great coal strike in Pennsylvania; in considering that he seemed to be for the time doubtful of the justice of the working-man's cause."
- 35 "A Substitute for Coal," *The Retail Coalman*, May 1918, p. 65.
- 36 "Mark Twain's Joke," *New York Times*, October 22, 1902; "Harlem Flat for Mr. Twain," *New York Evening World*, October 22, 1902.
- 37 SLC to OLC, 25 and 26 April 1873, *Mark Twain's Letters*, Volume 5: 1872–1873, eds. Lin Salamo and Harriet Elinor Smith (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 354–355.
- 38 *Mark Twain's Letters*, Volume 5: 1872–1873, pp. 443–444.
- 39 Twain, Mark. *Report from Paradise*, ed. Dixon Wecter (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), p. xxv.
- 40 Arnold, *Fueling the Gilded Age*, pp. 103–104.
- 41 Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper, 2003), p. 273.
- 42 *Mark Twain's Letters to His Publishers*, ed. Hamlin Hill (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), p. 221.
- 43 Zachs, Richard. *Chasing the Last Laugh: Mark Twain's Raucous and Redemptive Round-the-World Comedy Tour* (New York: Doubleday, 2016), pp. 310, 381–382.
- 44 Twain, Mark. *Report from Paradise*, p. 94.
- 45 SLC to Eunice Ford, 11 November 1870, *Mark Twain's Letters*, Volume 4: 1870–1871, p. 232.
- 46 Kowsky, Francis F. *The Best Planned City in the World* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), pp. 75–76.
- 47 The entry that DeVoto alludes to reads: "JL & Co have been paying out money on the new colliery right along for 3 ½ years now (Aug. '87) & will continue to do it 3 or 4 now." In *Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals*, Volume III (1883–1891), eds. Robert Pack Browning, Michael B. Frank and Lin Salamo (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), p. 317.
- 48 Goldman, Mark. *Albright: The Life and Times of John J. Albright* (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Heritage Press, 2017), pp. 17–27.
- 49 Twain, Mark. *Report from Paradise*. Wecter makes these erroneous assertions on page xxv. Andrew Langdon suffered the same "uncle" mislabeling by two other scholars: George H. Brownell in his "Some Remarks on the 'Letter from the Recording Angel'" (*The Twainian*, March–April 1945), p. 3; and Charles A. Brady's book review of *Report from Paradise* (*Buffalo Evening News*, September 6, 1952). Book critic and Canisius

- College English professor Brady had some fun with Twain's branding Andrew Langdon as the "meanest white man that ever lived on the face of the earth." Brady wrote: "As Mark Twain might have put it in one of his mellower moments, that takes in a lot of territory, even for a Buffalonian." Brownell refers to Twain's inexplicable attack on Langdon in "Recording Angel" as "a weird affair."
- 50 *The Works of Mark Twain: What is Man? And Other Philosophical Writings*, ed. Paul Baender (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 538–539.
- 51 "Livy, Will You Buy Me a Home in Texas," by Barbara Schmidt (www.twainquotes.com/TexasLand.html, updated July 2017). Barbara Schmidt and the author communicated about this matter through several e-mails in July and August of 2017.
- 52 The J. Langdon & Co. journals from 1859 to 1861 were catalogued in 2017 and are housed in the archives of the Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies. The "J. J. Albright" ledger entry is dated May 16, 1859.
- 53 "Harriet Langdon Albright, Olivia Clemens's Buffalo Cousin," by Tom Reigstad (*Mark Twain Society Bulletin*, January 1992), pp. 1–3.
- 54 Twain, Mark. "A Curious Pleasure Excursion," *New York Herald* (July 6, 1874).
- 55 SLC to Joseph J. Albright, *Mark Twain's Letters*, Volume 6: 1874–1875, eds. Robert Pack Browning, Richard Bucci, Victor Fischer, and Kenneth M. Sanderson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), p. 191.
- 56 "J. Langdon & Co. to be Dissolved," *Coal Trade Journal*, October 12, 1904, p. 733.
- 57 For example, in 1905, Twain had to pay Charley \$271.06 for his share of the city of Buffalo tax on the coal yard plot, while collecting just \$110.84 in rent from a tenant using the property. (Charles Langdon to SLC, 31 July 1905; Charles Langdon to SLC 9 October 1905; Mark Twain Project microfilm, available at the Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies).

257



Hartford, Oct. 11.

Dear Bay:

The list is at hand.

Thank you.

You can lecture me on Saturdays if you have the opportunity. Some times one of those idle days is hard to put in.

Mark.

Twain writes to his lecture agent that Saturdays could be added to his schedule, which led to his encounter with "Sociable Jimmy."
(Collection of Kevin Mac Donnell)

Copyright of Mark Twain Journal is the property of Mark Twain Circular and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.