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TO: R. S. Stevens
FROM: H. T. Lemist

Osage Coal and Mining Company,
OF MISSOURI.

H. T. LEMIST,
Superintendent.

Sedalia, Mo. Oct. 8th 187 5

R. S. Stevens, Esq.
President, Osage Coal & Mining Co.
Hannibal, Mo.
Dear Sir:-

Since conferring with Mr. Mirick this A. M. in regard to the sale of 14 cars coal at Parsons, referred to in your communication to him, I have thought best to explain the case to you fully in writing.

As you are aware, early in the summer I commenced decreasing our product at Oswego, as, owing to the depth of stripping at those Mines, the coal was considered too expensive and at the same time began prospecting near Chetopa, in the hope of finding coal nearer the track and not so expensive to strip and raise.

For a long time our prospecting was quite unsatisfactory, as whenever coal was found, of a quality suitable for Engine use, it was at too great a depth to admit of cheap mining.

In July, and just before I was obliged to go East with my wife we found a place just south of the State Line and within a reasonable distance from the track, where the prospect was good. I told Mr. Fox, Mining Supt., to prospect it thoroughly during my absence and if the coal proved good to put men at work.

On my return, his report being favorable, we commenced work, and being obliged to begin close <?> the crop, in order to properly drain the pits, the first coal uncovered was quite soft and ?crumbling. We were short of coal at Fort Scott and McAlister (*sic*) as so many of our men were sick, our work at Oswego was closed out, and as the <?> Co. was pushing us for

¹FROM: Book of letters to R.S.S., July 1875 to April 1876.

fuel, we were obliged <?> put in this soft coal. On the receipt of the first three cars at Parsons, Mr. Sheldon notified me it was unfit for use. I went to Parsons at once, saw him and Messrs. Cushing and Small told them, we had twelve or fourteen more cars which we should have to get out of our way, before we could give them any better coal from Chetopa, and asked them, if by mixing with Ft. Scott Coal, they could <?> make it answer. Messrs. Cushing and Small said they thought they could and would try it. I ordered the coal sent forward.

Some days later Mr. Fox was taken quite sick and was obliged to return to his home in Illinois and I took his place at McAlister. While there I received dispatch "No. One" from Mr. Sheldon and a few moments later "No. Two." Matters were in very bad shape at McAlister, most of the men sick and unruly. I could not leave them for three or four days, as had no one to send, as Mr. Schilling was very busy at Clayton pushing forward the work there. ?__posing from Mr. Sheldon dispatches that wanted the cars unloaded at once and without giving the matter proper reflection, I telegraphed him, "<?> throw away coal and unload cars," intending to go <?> at the earliest possible moment, & if the coal was not of any value to dispose of it.

Early the next morning I received dispatch "No. Three." I, having confidence in Mr. Small's judgement regarding value of coal, and thinking of Mr. Sheldon, closed the sale. That the coal really was of no use & that it would hardly pay the cost of unloading, I gave the matter no further immediate attention, & was much surprised, when on my return here some days later, I found that the coal had been sold for about Two hundred dollars.

I have since ascertained that Mr. Small had no hand in the sale of the coal whatever, and that Mr. Sheldon made the sale himself to Mr. Carr.

While I do not believe that Mr. Sheldon derived any pecuniary profit from the transaction, still it is amazing that one of his years and experience in handling coal should have made such a bargain.

At the same time I feel that I am very much to blame in the matter for the wording of my message. It was done without due consideration, from the fact that I was much perplexed and worried with the matters at McAlister; but it was fully my intention at the time to go to Parsons as soon as possible and dispose of the coal.

No one can possibly regret this occurrence as much as myself for I feel that it is the only serious error, which has occurred under my management, since I have been in your employ.

I am very respectfully yours,

H. T. Lemist

Supt.

NOTE: The attached note is marked "1" in blue pencil:

Parsons
H. T. Lemist

The State line Coal is Coming so bad that we cannot use it at all. I have gotten orders not to ship any more of it and we have 15 cars loading here that we cannot unload as it is not fit to put in engines.

S. F. Sheldon

NOTE: The attached note is marked "2" in blue pencil:

H. T. Lemist

We are holding the 15 Cars ~~Coal~~ Condemned. Coal subject to your orders.

S. F. Sheldon

NOTE: The attached note is marked "3" in blue pencil:

Parsons
H. T. Lemist

Small has sold the Condemned Coal for twenty five Dollars buyer to unload all the Coal. I think this is best could be done with it.

S. F. Sheldon