

[transcript of 1898 letter from Gideon Ellis to his grandsons Ben and Mort]

Big Mining Deal

Gideon Ellis, who is at present at Colorado Springs, Colo. is trying to interest his two grandsons, Ben Phillips and Mort Dunlap, aged two and five years, respectively, in a big deal at Cripple Creek and writes the following to Ben, who has already made several successful land deals.

Benjamin C. Phillips, Esq: My Esteemed Grandson. Your grandma, Ida, Bob and myself are all well. It is four weeks since we left home and I assure you it seems much longer. Ben, my attention has been called to some business matters at this place and at the Cripple Creek mining camps to which I desire to call the attention of yourself and Mort Dunlap.

Now, this proposition which I am about to make to you is a perfectly feasible one, is only made after due consideration on my part and must be treated in the utmost secrecy by yourself and Mort. A mining claim at Cripple Creek has just come into market which can be bought for \$10,000, spot cash, in addition to which a crushing mill can be purchased for \$15,000 – a separate and distinct business from the first mentioned either one or both of which you may buy after your arrival here and personal examination of the same. I am fully aware of the fact that your parents, as well as Mort's, would oppose you in making an investment calling for so much ready cash, but let me say to you that your parents are getting old and their judgment is no longer good in business matters where discretion and judgment are needed. On this occasion let me admonish you to utterly ignore their pleadings and to tear yourselves asunder from the tyrannical grip of those who have so long held you in subjection. Time is money! Act at once! Don't be clams! The old people will, in the natural course of human events, be thrust upon you for support. Make sure that you will be ready for the occasion.

Now boys let me map out to you the manner in which you must proceed in order that you may not be detected. On receipt of this letter take it to the barn, read and digest its contents, then fold it up, being careful not to attract the attention of your people, place it in your hip pocket, act cool and composed: pull your coat-tail well down over the pocket, walk around the yard with your hands across your back, look up at the tree tops, pick a leaf occasionally from some of the smaller bushes, conveying the same to your mouth in an innocent and apparently thoughtless manner. Then casually step out to the walk, still meditating, cross the street and walk over to your Aunt Nell's.

Don't go inside the yard, for you know your old aunt is quick to scent anything. Stand by the gate until you can secretly signal Mort. It will then be proper for Mort and yourself to saunter down, say to John Courtland's. Sit down and acquaint Mort with the contents of this letter, after which, if satisfactory to both, step down to the bank, draw your stuff and stick it down in your jeans. As evening approaches say to your parents, in a dauntless and imperative sort of way, that you and Mort are going to Delmar to attend a dance at Cant's Hall.

Take the 7:30 train to Delmar, board the Colorado Special and you will be here the next day. I will be at the depot, but you must not recognize me, as the police are on! We will go to Cripple Creek in a private conveyance and let the old folks at home whistle. Bring "Cooney" and "Sport," also a good big Winchester, skinning knives, picks, drills, dirk knives, lots of tobacco, pipes, quinine, Dover's powders, and a few flasks of old peach brandy stuck down in your overcoat pockets would serve as ballast and might add materially to the gravity of the occasion. Put on your best togs, get heavy-soled, long-legged boots and each a light-colored stovepipe hat. People here may think that Dewey and Samson have come.

Yours in Secrecy
Gideon Ellis