

Louis Janin

Louis Janin was born 7 November 1837 in New Orleans, Orleans, Louisiana. He was the third of six sons of Louis Alexander Janin and Juliette Augusta Covington. His father was a noted land lawyer¹ and his mother was the daughter of a military general.²

The family was living on the “left side of the Mississippi River”, in St Bernard Parish, New Orleans, in 1840.³ The 1850 census finds Louis and his three brothers in a boarding school in New Haven, Connecticut⁴, being prepared for Yale University by Timothy Dwight. He entered Yale in 1854 but he and his brother Henry left school early and traveled to Europe in 1856 to study languages in Dresden⁵ and receive mining training at the insistence of their father.⁶ They toured much of eastern Europe. He attended the Mining Academy at Freiberg until 1860. They traveled through Austria, Hungary, Transylvania and other places, visiting mines,⁷ then studied briefly at the Ecole des Mines in Paris.⁸

Louis had returned to New Orleans in 1861, and in April went to California with his brother Henry, where Louis took over the Enriqueta mine. In November 1861, they worked in several places before moving to Nevada, where Louis was the metallurgist of the “Mexican Mill” until October 1863. He then left for San Francisco with a four-month tour through Sonora, Mexico, and Arizona. In 1864, he took charge of the Gould & Curry Mill at Virginia City, Nevada, and became superintendent in 1865.⁹ It was in Arizona that he experienced an attack of Apache Indians while part of the exploring party of Colonel Butterworth. He behaved with cool and intelligent courage.¹⁰

Louis made his first real mark on the profession at the Comstock Lode, where he applied his scientific training to improving the extraction of silver from formerly-discarded tailings.¹¹ He had learned this training while at Freiberg and attempted to apply it to mines in America and Mexico. It did not prove any better than local methods, so he turned his attention toward the problem of reprocessing amalgamation waste heaps.¹²

Louis was a private in Company 2 of the socially prestigious¹³ Washington Artillery of New Orleans (Confederate).¹⁴ He was a prisoner of war at his surrender in May 1865 in Citronella, Alabama; he was paroled May 1865 at Meridian, Mississippi.¹⁵

Louis married Elizabeth Pamela Marshall in December 1865 in Virginia City, Storey, Nevada. They had three sons.¹⁶ By 1870, the family had moved to Jefferson, Colorado Territory, where Louis was

¹ *Donaldsonville Chief* [Louisiana], 16 January 1875, p. 1.

² *Times-Democrat*, 5 December 1889, p. 3.

³ United States Census, 1840.

⁴ United States Census, 1850.

⁵ *Yale's Confederates: A Biographical Dictionary*, by Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, 2008, p. 109.

⁶ *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol 9, p. 609.

⁷ *First, or Septennial Meeting of the Class of Fifty-Eight; Yale College*, 1865, p. 130.

⁸ *Yale's Confederates: A Biographical Dictionary*, by Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, 2008, p. 109.

⁹ *First, or Septennial Meeting of the Class of Fifty-Eight; Yale College*, 1865, p. 130; *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers*, 1915, Vol 49, p. 831.

¹⁰ *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers*, 1915, Vol 49, p. 831.

¹¹ *Inventory of the Louis Janin Papers, 1859-1914*.

¹² *Freiberg and the Frontier: Louis Janin, German Engineering, and 'Civilisation' in the American West*.

¹³ *Yale's Confederates: A Biographical Dictionary*, by Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, 2008, p. 109.

¹⁴ *US Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865; US Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865; U S Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865*.

¹⁵ *US Civil War Prisoner of War Records, 1861-1865; All Louisiana Confederate Soldiers*.

¹⁶ *Familysearch.org*

working as a farm laborer for the Brown family.¹⁷ But in 1873, they were living in Alameda, California and Louis was listed on the voter lists as a mining engineer.¹⁸ He worked as a mining expert from British Columbia to Mexico and in other foreign countries, including Japan.¹⁹

About 1876, a Mr. Shepard brought some ore samples from Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory, to merchant Hyman Jacobs, who sent them to Charles Hoffman in San Jose, California. Charles, accompanied by Professor Louis Janin, came to Pioche, Nevada, and Jacobs took them to Silver Reef. Samples were assayed by A. H. Emanuel, but they ran so high that Hoffman and the professor thought they had been salted, so they arranged to re-assay the samples themselves. Emanuel walked out and they took possession of the assay office. Their results practically checked with Emanuel's assays.²⁰

Louis served as president of the Harrisburg Silver Mining Company and as trustee for the Leeds Mining Company in 1878.²¹ His theory on the geology of the area described Buckeye Reef as a down-faulted block of White Reef. In a later rebuttal, Louis wavered and claimed he had not given the problem enough thought.²² He experimented on the applicability of the cyanide process on silver ores from various mines, including the Christy Mine in Silver Reef. He was able to attain an extraction rate of 80% with those ores.²³

Louis lived in Oakland, Alameda, California, with his wife and three sons²⁴ from 1880 to 1888.²⁵ Louis bought a premium five-acre site on University Avenue, where it crossed the creek at the bridge, and his brother Henry bought a lot nearby.²⁶ Louis' wife Lizzie was socially active in Oakland, with a generous contribution to the modern art exhibition in 1881.²⁷ His wife served as an officer in the Ladies Relief Society of Oakland,²⁸ and hosted and attended afternoon teas for large groups of ladies.²⁹ His son Eugene and friend organized an entertainment by the Boys' Standard Minstrel Troupe at their home, for the benefit of the free kindergarten.³⁰ In 1888, they enlarged their home on Webster Street at the cost of \$3,500.³¹

Louis was designated as commissioner to test and examine weight and fineness of coins reserved at several mints during 1886.³² He was selected by the governor as a delegate to the mining congress in Denver.³³ He was also a member of the Pacific-Union Club of San Francisco³⁴ and was selected as delegate for the Miners' Association of the City and County of San Francisco to the annual

¹⁷ United States Census, 1870.

¹⁸ California Voter Registers, 1866-1898.

¹⁹ Yale's Confederates: A Biographical Dictionary, by Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, 2008, p. 109; Inventory of the Louis Janin Papers, 1859-1914.

²⁰ Utah State Historical Society, Vol 5, No 1, pp. 79-80.

²¹ US Annual Mining Review and Stock Ledger, 1879, p. 212.

²² Silver, Sinners and Saints, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, pp. 55, 57.

²³ The Metallurgy of Gold, by Manuel Eissler, 1900, p. 554.

²⁴ United States Census, 1880.

²⁵ California Voter Registers, 1866-1898.

²⁶ *Oakland Tribune*, 18 March 1875, p. 3.

²⁷ *Record-Union* [Sacramento], 7 May 1881, p. 3.

²⁸ *Oakland Tribune*, 6 May 1887, p. 3.

²⁹ *Oakland Tribune*, 2 March 1889, p. 7; 16 May 1888, p. 1.

³⁰ *Oakland Tribune*, 27 April 1888, p. 1.

³¹ *Oakland Tribune*, 14 January 1888, p. 8.

³² *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 January 1887, p. 8.

³³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 November 1891, p. 5.

³⁴ The San Francisco Blue Book & Pacific Coast Elite Directory, 1892.

convention.³⁵ He was a judge at the state fair in 1898, with competition in rock-drilling and mineral displays.³⁶

By 1890, they owned a ranch named Rancho Marceline³⁷ (or Marselino³⁸) near Gaviota, Santa Barbara, California.³⁹ During the next decade, Louis (now referred to as “professor”) provided expert testimony as a geologist and mining engineer in court cases involving mining companies and disputed properties. One case involved \$825,000,⁴⁰ another in Montana, involved the great Anaconda copper mine.⁴¹

In 1891, Louis and his brother Alexis (also a mining engineer) made a test run for their new mining process for the leading men of the Comstock mines, located in western Utah Territory (now Nevada). The chemical process and updating of the mechanical manipulation of the ore hoped to provide a higher percent of silver.⁴² Unfortunately, the process proved no better than the common process already being used. It is important to note, however, that no one but the Janins were experimenting and testing new processes.⁴³

In 1896, Louis hired a young graduate from Stanford as an office boy, then quickly promoted him to an engineering position. This was the first real job for Herbert N. Hoover.⁴⁴ Louis recommended him for his next mining job in the gold fields of Australia. Of course, Hoover was elected president of the United States in 1928.⁴⁵ In 1899, Louis and his son, also a mining engineer, visited a group of eminent mining men in Salt Lake City, and gave his attention to the mining camps of Utah for several days.⁴⁶

Louis donated over 100 books on metallurgy to the University of California library in 1897.⁴⁷ The next year, he donated an additional 73 volumes on chemical and metallurgical subjects.⁴⁸ In 1905, he was appointed to the State Mining Bureau.⁴⁹ In 1909, he was manager of the famous Gould and Curry mine, living in Virginia City, Nevada, but he and his wife still visited their ranch in California often.⁵⁰

³⁵ *San Francisco Call*, 30 October 1896, p. 7.

³⁶ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 February 1898, p. 8; *San Francisco Call*, 24 February 1898, p. 7.

³⁷ *San Francisco Call*, 26 December 1897, p. 28.

³⁸ *Yale’s Confederates: A Biographical Dictionary*, by Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, 2008, p. 109.

³⁹ *Oakland Tribune*, 30 June 1891, p. 4; 4 August 1890, p. 4; *Yale’s Confederates: A Biographical Dictionary*, by Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, 2008, p. 109.

⁴⁰ *San Francisco Call*, 5 February 1896, p. 7.

⁴¹ *San Francisco Call*, 17 September 1899, p. 12; 15 June 1901, p. 9; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3 May 1901, p. 5; 11 January 1891, p. 18; 17 December 1895, p. 16; 8 June 1897, p. 12; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 October 1899, p. 6.

⁴² *Salt Lake Tribune*, 22 November 1891, p. 15.

⁴³ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 December 1891, p. 10.

⁴⁴ *El Paso Evening Post*, 20 February 1928, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Museum.

⁴⁶ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 October 1899, p. 6.

⁴⁷ *San Francisco Call*, 22 December 1897, p. 12.

⁴⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 September 1898, p. 7.

⁴⁹ California State Roster, 1909 Government and Military Records; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 November 1905, pp. 3; *San Francisco Call*, 24 November 1905, p. 14.

⁵⁰ *Oakland Tribune*, 20 November 1909, p. 7.

Near the end of his life, Louis and Lizzie had marital troubles and he lived alone.⁵¹ Lizzie died in 1909⁵² and Louis carried on with his work in spite of partial blindness and some physical disability.⁵³ He died 6 March 1914 in Santa Barbara, California⁵⁴, of heart disease after an illness of ten days.⁵⁵

Louis was an internationally known civil engineer⁵⁶ who wrote as a young man, "I hope to get rich, have three children, live happily, and go to Heaven when I die. My business will always be connected with the mining interests on the Pacific Coast."⁵⁷ He was known as being "responsible, reliable, and dutiful" and advised his brothers about money and employment. He was "recognized as a man of brilliant and worldly wisdom" and was known for his "courage and coolness".⁵⁸



Louis Janin (Image from Transactions of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers, 1915, Vol 49, p. 831).

⁵¹ Dictionary of American Biography, Vol 9, p. 609.

⁵² California Death Index, 1905-1943.

⁵³ Inventory of the Louis Janin Papers, 1859-1914; Transactions of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers, 1915, Vol 49, p. 831.

⁵⁴ California Death Index, 1905-1939.

⁵⁵ Transactions of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers, 1915, Vol 49, p. 831.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Yale's Confederates: A Biographical Dictionary, by Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, 2008, p. 109.

⁵⁸ We Grew Up Together: Brothers and Sisters in Nineteenth-century America, by Annette Atkins, 2001, p. 61.



Gould & Curry checks with revenue stamps and signed by Louis Janin as Superintendent (Image from http://bid.holabirdamericana.com/No-Tricks-Just-Treats_as34271_p9)