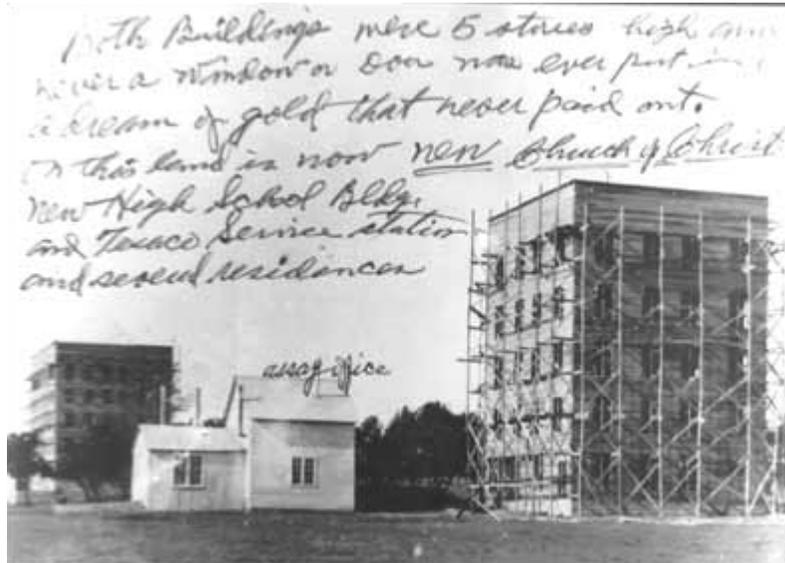


# Donation of the Month

**Object:** Circa 1905 Kruse gold mine photos  
**Catalog #:** 1985.36.1; N007173  
**Donor:** Lorene V. Stephens; Letitia Hitts



Was there ever gold in “them thar hills”? William H. Kruse thought so. In the 1890s Kruse claimed to have visions foretelling the future, including images of gold on his father’s farm in Rogers.

The story begins at a health spa near Kansas City, Missouri, in the late 1800s. Kruse’s father, Henry W. Kruse of LeSeur, Minnesota, met Captain C.W. Rogers, vice president and general manager of the Frisco Railroad, and namesake for the town of Rogers. When the elder Kruse complained of the harsh Minnesota winters, Captain Rogers suggested the family visit Rogers. In 1883 Kruse purchased an 80-acre farm bordered by Oak, Fifth, and Olrich Streets and Highway 71B (today the Junior High occupies a portion of the original farm and mine site).

Born in Ohio and raised in Rogers, William H. Kruse was working in Minnesota when his visions began. Fearing for his sanity, Kruse took up pen and paper during his visions in order to write whatever came to him. He claimed to have made quite a bit of money by being able to predict the price of steel and wheat. In later years he described how he had predicted many tragic events such as the assassination of President McKinley, the San Francisco earthquake, and the death of Britain’s Queen Victoria.

In 1899 he began having visions of a gold mine under a seedling apple tree on his father’s farm. The visions persisted so in 1902 Kruse traveled to Rogers to look for the tree himself, finding it hidden in some underbrush. Under the tree he found some ore, which assayers said contained very little gold. But Kruse had his own vision about how to test the ore. Not surprisingly, his tests showed that there was quite a bit of gold in the sample, up to a billion dollars’ worth at the site. With his mysterious visions, his promising test results, and his unshakable belief, Kruse convinced family members and a few local businessmen to invest in his mine.



October 18, 1905, was the mine's official opening day. Led by the Rogers Cornet Band playing "Silver Threads Among the Gold" and "In the Shade of the Apple Tree," Kruse, his workers, and a crowd of curious townspeople marched from downtown Rogers to the mine site. Digging commenced and lasted several days without striking the heavy vein of gold prophesied by Kruse. Eventually a load of rock and dirt was shipped north on the Frisco to be smelted, but reportedly was dumped in East Saint Louis when storage fees were not paid.

Assayers repeatedly told Kruse there was little of value in his mine, but his visions told him otherwise. From time to time he published the "Sunshine and Truth", a newspaper filled with his visions. The February 5, 1906, edition detailed the size and location of various shafts and how many sacks of gold were to be filled. He described how the area's new wealth would benefit Rogers, allowing it to build the New Jerusalem, including "Solomon's Temple, Noah's Ark, The Granaries of Joseph, The Tower of Babel, and The Pyramids of Egypt."

Kruse did build a 100-foot wood tower over the mine shaft. Illuminated with lanterns at night, the tower could be seen all over town. He also constructed several crude smelters and two five-story, lumber-framed buildings which apparently were never finished. Various accounts list one or more of the structures as having been blown down in high winds. Another casualty was L.M. Proctor & Company, one of the mine's chief backers. Years of financing an unprofitable mine forced it into bankruptcy in 1909.

Digging and smelting continued sporadically until 1925, when Kruse's death at age 65 ended the saga of the Rogers gold mine. All that is left of this grand venture are a few crumbling copies of the "Sunshine and Truth" and an image or two of the mine that never was.

Was there ever gold in Rogers? Trace amounts can be found in many of the areas' soils, but not enough to make such a venture commercially viable.

#### **CREDITS**

Sources of information for this article include: accounts in the "Sunshine and Truth" (February 5, 1906); Dorothy Mitchell's article, "The Rogers Gold Mine," in the "Ozarks Mountaineer" (May 1971); J. Dickson Black's article in the "Benton County Democrat" (December 15, 1976); and the Rogers Historical Museum's brochure, "Land of Opportunity: Exploiting the Natural Resources of Benton County" (1993).