

Launcelot Granger: Get Out of Jail Free?

The prisoner's name was Launcelot Granger. Sometimes he went by Launcelot G. Livingston, and sometimes by Gideon Granger. He claimed to be a member of a prominent New York City family, a Yale graduate, and a veteran of the Rough Riders. Whatever the name or connections, he was convicted of forging a check for \$50 by the good folks in Silver Bow County in 1900, and sentenced by the Honorable Judge Clancy to spend five years in prison.

While in Deer Lodge, it is surmised that he joined forces with another convicted forger, a man by the name of James Manning. Manning was released first, and is believed to have been provided a petition by Granger to send off in the mail. This petition was addressed to Governor Joseph K. Toole, requesting clemency for Granger. The signatures on the petition included 102 prominent names from business and civic leaders of New York City. To go along with that document were letters urging acceptance of the petition. One was signed with the most prominent name of all – that of a recent Governor of New York, and the new Vice-President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt.

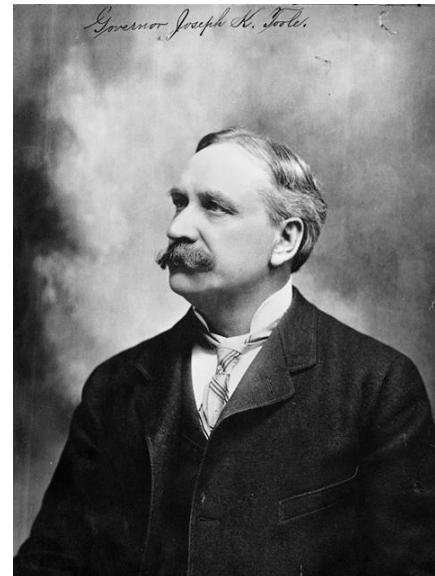
The petition arrived safely in Butte at the office of Granger's attorney in the spring of 1901. His attorney, C.M. Parr, was duly impressed by the document until he noted the postmark, which was from Chicago rather than New York City. He informed the Governor that he thought it might be a fake. Governor Toole did some checking with several of the signatories, who said they had not signed any such petition. Parr received more letters supporting the petition, all of which turned out to be forged, possibly by Granger or Manning, and mailed by someone on the outside.

Unfortunately for Granger, and rather ironically for a forger, the final blow was due to bad handwriting. Whoever addressed the envelope for the letter that was supposedly from Roosevelt left it too illegible to get to Governor Toole, so the post office returned it to the theoretical sender, Theodore Roosevelt, now President after McKinley's death. Roosevelt sent his own letter to Governor Toole denouncing the support letter as a forgery.

The brash Granger served out his term in Deer Lodge.

Sources:

Billings Times, "Montana Criminal Forged Name of President to Petition Asking His Pardon from State Prison" October 21, 1937



Governor Joseph K. Toole
Montana Historical Society photo

Link:

Same article as it appeared in the *Big Timber Pioneer*:

<http://montananewspapers.org/lccn/sn84036123/1937-10-21/ed-1/seq-7.pdf> Retrieved 6/28/2018.

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