



Biography of Charles F. Haanel & the Haanel Family

In St. Louis--History of the Fourth City (S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., St. Louis, 1909) by Walter B. Stevens, this is what was written about Charles F. Haanel:

Charles F. Haanel is largely associated with the business interests of the city, being affiliated with a number of enterprises of acknowledged financial worth. Beside being president of the Continental Commercial Company he is also president of the [Sacramento Valley Improvement Company](#) and president of the Mexico Gold & Silver Mining Company. Mr. Haanel is in every sense of the word a self-made man, having risen in the commercial world to his present station of worth and prominence by the utilization of his own natural resources.

Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 22, 1866, he is the son of Hugo and Emeline (Fox) Haanel, who removed with him to St. Louis when he was in early childhood. He initiated himself into the business world as an office boy for the National Enameling & Stamping Company. For this company he worked for a period of fifteen years.

Finally he resigned his position with this firm and being ambitious to rise higher in the financial world, he conceived the idea of organizing a company for the purpose of promoting an enterprise. At that time, the vicinity of Tehuantepec, Mexico was reputed as being especially adapted to the growth of sugar and coffee. He succeeded in convincing a number of capitalists of the feasibility of taking up land in that section of the country and working a plantation. The land was purchased and the company organized to engage in the raising of sugar and coffee. Of this company he was made president.

The plantation was successful from the beginning and soon became an enterprise of considerable financial worth. This was organized in 1898 and in 1905 Mr. Haanel

organized the Continental Commercial Company, which was consolidated with the other company and also absorbed six additional companies. It is now operating under the name of the Continental Commercial Company with Mr. Haanel as president. It is capitalized for two million five hundred thousand dollars, and is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

Mr. Haanel has by no means confined his efforts to these lines, however, but has extended his labors to other enterprises with which he is associated in a prominent capacity. He was one of the organizers of the Sacramento Valley Improvement Company and from the beginning has been its president. Since its inception the company has enjoyed an era of prosperity and now owns and controls the largest Tokay vineyards in the world. He is likewise president of the Mexico Gold & Silver Mining Company, a company of some importance in developing the rich mineral resources of the southern republic.

In 1885 Mr. Haanel was united in marriage with Miss Esther M. Smith. Sixteen years later he was left a widower with one son and two daughters, and in July, 1908, he was married to Miss Margaret Nicholson of St. Louis, a daughter of W. A. Nicholson.

While Mr. Haanel is a Republican, his pressing business interests have given him no time to take an active interest in politics beyond that of casting his vote and using his influence for the election of the candidates of the party in whose principles he firmly believes.

He is a member of Keystone lodge, a thirty-second degree Mason and a Shriner. He is also affiliated with the Missouri Athletic Club.

He is a man of mature judgment, capable of taking a calm survey of life and correctly valuing its opportunities, its possibilities, its demands and obligations. He has wisely sought success along the lines of least resistance and yet when difficulties and obstacles have confronted him he has displayed a force of character that has enabled him to overcome them and continue on the pathway to prosperity. Many a man whose life is one of untiring industry does not win success for he lacks the complement to industry a laudable ambition which prompts the individual to reach out into other fields and eagerly grasp the opportunities that are presented. In these qualities Mr. Haanel is richly endowed and has thus attained his present enviable position in financial circles.

Other than this piece written in 1909, very little is known about Charles F. Haanel. Even though he wrote many books, nothing was written about him. Letters written to him about his most famous book, The Master Key System, have been collected, but they all praise the book and say nothing about the man who wrote it.

Mr. Haanel died on November 27, 1949 at the age of 83. He was buried in Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis.

During his life, Mr. Haanel earned and received many degrees, including hon. Ph.D., College National Electronic Institute; Metaphysics, Psy. D., College of Divine Metaphysics; and M.D., Universal College of Duplex, India.

Mr. Haanel was also affiliated with many groups, including Fellow London College of Psychotherapy; member Authors League of America; American Society of Psychical Research; member of the Society of Rosicrucians; the American Suggestive Therapeutical Association; Science League of America; Pi Gamma Mu Fraternity; Master Mason, Keystone Lodge No. 243, A.F. & A.M.; created a Noble in Moolah Temple.

Napoleon Hill, the author of [*Think & Grow Rich*](#), was massively influenced by Haanel's most famous work. Here is a transcription of a letter that Hill wrote to Haanel about *The Master Key System*:

April 21, 1919.
Mr. Charles F. Haanel,
St. Louis, Mo.

My dear Mr. Haanel:

You probably know, from the editorial in the January issue of the Golden Rule, copy of which my Secretary sent to you, that I began twenty-two years ago as a coal miner at a dollar a day.

I have just been retained by a ten million dollar corporation at a salary of \$105,200.00 a year, for a portion of my time only, it having been agreed that I shall continue as editor of the Hill's Golden Rule.

I believe in giving credit where it is due, therefore I believe I ought to inform you that my present success and the success which has followed my work as President of the Napoleon Hill Institute is due largely to the principles laid down in The Master-Key System.

You are doing a good work by helping people to realize that nothing is impossible of accomplishment which a man can create in his imagination. Surely my own experience proves this.

I shall cooperate with you in getting your course into the hands of the many who so greatly need your message.

Cordially and sincerely,
Napoleon Hill,
Editor, The Golden Rule
Chicago, Illinois