

J.W. Barre's Letter to Horace Kephart
May 22, 1898

Hunter Library MSS12-05_01_0_00

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For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English
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Introduction to the Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography were prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English at Western Carolina University. The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

1. Conduct appropriate, effective, and ethical scholarship
 - a. Effectively find and use advanced research tools (handbooks, databases, guides, bibliographies, etc.) appropriate to a subject.
 - Students will be able to use a wide variety of such tools and evaluate those tools.
 - b. Find appropriate advanced research (print and electronic scholarship) and apply that research to specific disciplinary questions or issues.
 - Students will be able to find a variety of scholarship, evaluate both the appropriateness and rigor of that scholarship, and incorporate that scholarship correctly and effectively.
 - c. Develop accurate bibliographies and reference citations.
 - Students will be able to annotate, abstract, and cite materials following standard MLA format.
2. Understand the process by which the texts we use are made available.
 - Students will be able to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is presented as submitted by the students. While these students take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are always possible. As these students learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires checking of sources and corroboration by authoritative sources.

It is hoped that the transcription and annotation of WCU Special Collections materials will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, and other patrons and users of WCU's Special Collections materials.

Introduction

This edition is created from the manuscript of J.W. Barre's letter to Horace Kephart on May 22, 1898. Barre's letter is a very short response to a letter from Kephart. He mentions that he had missed seeing Kephart in his visit to St. Louis the week prior, but he did meet Mr. Nelson, who is likely Thomas F. Nelson, one of the men mentioned in Kephart's advertisement for putting together a group of sharpshooters. Barre expresses interest in the organization but also concern for the cost of attending meetings and practice, and he closes the letter with a request for accommodations.

J.W. Barre remains somewhat unknown, but one likely identification is James W. Barre, who was born in 1863 in New York. He spent most of his life in Louisiana, Missouri, working for Remington U.M.C. Company and traveling for work. His work with the company may have been prompted by the metallic shells he invented. Barre and his family moved to Avoyelles, Louisiana, in the 1920s. He died at his residence at the age of 72.

The letter's recipient, Horace Sowers Kephart, was born on September 8, 1862, in East Salem, Pennsylvania. He and his family moved to Jefferson, Iowa, when Kephart was five years old due to his father's new position at Western College, where Horace Kephart attended at the age of 13. In 1876, he enrolled at Lebanon Valley College and then to Boston University. At Boston, he spent the majority of his time in the Boston Public Library, which sparked an interest in librarianship. A year later, in 1880, he enrolled in graduate classes at Cornell University, studying political science and history. For financial support during this time, Kephart took a position at the university library as an assistant. He met Laura White Mack, his future wife, in 1884 at Cornell, though she was not a student. The two married in 1887, after he returned from working with Willard Fiske in Italy and accepted a position in Yale College's library. The couple spent three years in New Haven, Connecticut, before moving to St. Louis, Missouri in 1890 to work as director of the Mercantile Library.

During the decade Kephart spent here, the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, and Kephart began recruiting men for a company of sharpshooters to prepare for an emergency deployment. The company never truly formed, as the war only lasted eight months. The sharpshooters did rekindle Kephart's writing interest. He published in various magazines as well as his own books, such as *Our Southern Highlanders* and *The Book of Camping and Woodcraft; A Guidebook for Those Who Travel in the Wilderness*. Kephart resigned from his position at St. Louis Mercantile library due to his health and focused on his writing. He moved to North Carolina in 1904 to continue pursuing his interest in and writing about nature. He was an effective advocate for environmental conservation and contributed in the institution of the Appalachian Trail. His time spent in western North Carolina and his dedicated literature of the area became one of the largest motivators for the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Presently, Kephart continues to remain one of the most influential regional writers.

Manuscript Description

Barre's letter is written on one sheet of paper that is hardy and about the same thickness as notebook paper. The paper itself is slightly shy of 8 inches (width) by 10 inches (height) and mostly smooth to the touch, though there is a little texture. On the back of the letter, there is a darker square in the upper right hand corner, about 2¼ inches by 2¼ inches. The paper has two miniscule tears—one on the bottom left at 1/16 inch and one on the middle left at 3/8 inch. Ink smudges are present in a few places on the bottom half of the letter. The letter is folded in half horizontally and in thirds vertically to fit into an envelope.

Editorial Statement

This transcription of J.W. Barre's letter to Horace Kephart is a diplomatic edition, meaning it portrays the text as it appears in the witness. All line breaks, spellings, punctuation, and other marks are preserved in the transcription. The placement of the heading and greeting also attempt to replicate those from the manuscript. The transcription follows the original letter page by page in order to minimize confusion and to easily allow the reader to follow the narrative, enhancing the reader's experience. Footnotes are used rather than endnotes in combination with the page-by-page format so the reader can quickly access background information without losing the context or the place in the letter. The single-spaced layout of the edition is for aesthetic purposes and allows for more information in a smaller amount of space.

Barre's letter lacks articles throughout his letter and misuses commas. He also splits the word "organization" between lines, using a hyphen. The notable feature in Barre's letter and style of writing is the phrasing he uses in the first sentence. "Your favor 18th inst. to hand" is a phrase used a lot during the Civil War era, but if J.W. Barre is James W. Barre, he would have been around 35 years old, not old enough to have been in the Civil War.

Louisiana, Mo. 5.22.98

Mr. Horace Kephart
St. Louis,

Dear Sir,

Your favor 18th inst.¹
to hand. Regret I missed seeing you
last week.² I met your friend Mr.
Nelson, who kindly explained situation.³
I am in touch with your organiza-
tion, and please enroll me as
candidate for membership in your
company.⁴ The only difficulty, is expense
attending meetings and practice work.
Any arrangements you make
kindly let me know, as I want
to keep posted,

Wishing you success.

Yours truly

J. W. Barre⁵

¹ inst. = instance. "Your favor 18th instance to hand" is a formal phrase referring to a prior communication (the 18th). This phrase was common during the Civil War and indicates that Barre may have been an older man at this time.

² J.W. Barre appeared to be a traveler for work, as shown by a Homestead Record matching his handwriting in 1905 for Alberta, Canada, stating the reason for abandonment as "unable to close up business matters." He was likely in St. Louis for business the week prior to this letter.

³ Possibly Thomas F. Nelson (See newspaper clipping in HL MSS12-05 04 35 009).
Situation = Cuban War and the organization of a company of Sharpshooters.

⁴ The organization being referred to here is Kephart's Sharpshooters.

⁵ Possibly James W. Barre (1863-1935), who worked for the Remington U.M.C. Company in Missouri.

Works Cited

Ancestry Library. Ancestry, 2019. *ProQuest*, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com>.

Barre, J.W. Letter to Horace Kephart. 22 May 1898. Box 1. MSS12-05 Horace Kephart Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

“Declaration of Abandonment – 988365.” *Alberta, Canada, Homestead Records*, 14 February 1905.

“James W. Barre.” *Weekly Town Talk*, 2 March 1935, p. 5.

“Remington Arms Co. Company History.” *Rifle Basix*, 2019.
<https://www.riflebasix.com/blog/remington-arms-company-history>.