

HORACE KEPHART LETTER TO CHARLES HENRY HULL

October 8, 1892

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ENGL 618: Research Methods in English Instructor

General Editor: Dr. Brian Gastle

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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

The letter in this edition was sent by Horace Kephart to Charles Henry Hull, a friend of the Kephart family's, on October 8, 1892. Kephart sent this letter from St. Louis, as he had moved there with his wife Laura shortly before he sent the letter. Kephart starts the letter by congratulating Hull on being appointed as an assistant professor of Political Economy at Cornell University. Hull was also an assistant librarian at Cornell University from 1889-1891, which may explain his friendship with Kephart and the names that are mentioned later in the letter, since they were librarians at Cornell University together.

One of the topics of the letter is the World's Fair of 1893, which was called the World's Columbian Exposition to commemorate Columbus's discoveries 400 years prior. The World's Fair was held in Chicago, and the American Library Association (ALA) held its fifteenth general meeting, for the very first time, in Chicago that same year from July 13-22. They also had an exhibit in the Government Building at the Fair, and multiple sessions took place in different buildings of the Exposition.

Chicago's World's Fair was meant to be different from all the previous World's Fairs that took place in prior cities, as Chicago was determined to prove itself among the big cities. Chicago was not considered as prestigious as the other larger cities of the time, so it was a challenge for Chicago to host the World's Fair and distinguish itself. The 1893 World's Fair also paid special attention to women's voices and representation at a time when the world was still progressing on this issue. For example, 150 women from the A.L.A participated in the exposition and there was a Women's Building Library.

In this letter, Kephart discusses a dilemma they faced to form a committee to work with other libraries in Italy and Germany. He states that he does not want anything to do with the fair, yet ultimately he participates in it and his name is mentioned multiple times in the sessions summaries. Many names related to the World's Columbian Exposition are mentioned in the letter, including Mary Cutler Fairchild, Justin Winsor and Melvil Dewey, who were all part of the A.L.A community.

In the second part of the letter, Kephart mentions two friends: Edwin Woodruff and Willard Fiske. These friends worked at Cornell University as librarians, and it seems from the letter that he has not heard from them for a while. Moreover, Kephart describes St. Louis where he and his wife were living after he had accepted to be the head of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association. Kephart, kidding, describes the place as "barbarous", but, for him, this was the reason to feel comfortable, as his expertise was well-needed. Kephart also expresses his admiration with the people of St. Louis, as he describes them as "warm-hearted." St. Louis witnessed a surge of immigrants in the late 1890s and experienced rapid growth, and this is something Kephart noticed and mentioned in his letter.

The last part gives the letter special importance and significance, since this letter constitutes a turning point in Kephart's life, and drastic changes take place in his life. Kephart informs Hull of his plan to leave his profession, as he woke up one day, realizing he is thirty years old. Kephart expresses "a lack of enthusiasm" for Librarianship because, as he sees it, the profession does not offer many opportunities for distinction for "a stripling of thirty." He goes on to discuss a book he plans to write, which would be his first book, *Pennsylvania's Part in the Winning of the West*.

### **Editorial Statement**

The letter is written in a neat handwriting. The letter is also well-preserved at the special collection of the Hunter Library at Western Carolina University, and almost in a pristine condition.

This transcription is a diplomatic edition and follows the spelling, punctuation and as much as possible the layout of the original letter. The transcription also attempts to reflect all the different elements of the letter in a certain manner and using certain symbols that may be different from the original ones, and are explained as follows:

- The transcription takes spacing into consideration, as some sentences are preceded with extra spacing.
- The circled numbers on the right corner of the transcription are half circles on the original letter, but this symbol is the closest to the original.
- In some sentences in the original letter, Horace Kephart uses a symbol close to the ampersand "&" and this is what I opted for in the transcription.
- In the second page of the letter, Kephart inserts the word "expected" in a sentence using an arrow, and it will be underlined in the transcription.
- There are certain other words that are also underlined in the transcription, but this is because they are underlined in the letter as well.
- The original letter contains a word that was crossed completely, so I used the symbol "■" to reflect that.

In the footnotes, all the information about the American Library Association members or events at the 1893 World's Fair comes from the papers and proceedings of the eleventh, twelfth and fifteenth general meetings of the American Library Association. For the information about Charles Hull, Willard Fiske and Edwin Woodruff, it comes from Cornell University website.

## TRANSCRIPTION

MS Page One

St. Louis, Mo. Oct. 8, 1892

Dear Chas, -<sup>1</sup>

I have heard that you are installed at Cornell as a teacher of Pol. Econ., and if the news be true I want to congratulate Cornell through her new representative. The very interesting letter rec'd from you something like a year ago passed from hand to hand until it got lost, and with it went your address. I have found the fact unpleasant company when I woke up at night to think over my sins, and hope that when my conscience serves me another such a trick I may be able to bluff it a little by retorting: Well, I've written to Charlie Hull at last, so you may blot that out!

Sometime last July I rec'd word from Miss Cutler, chairman of the World's Fair Committee of the A.L.A that I was expected to get the cooperation of Italian Libraries in the A.L.A exhibit.<sup>2</sup> The names of the other members of our committee were appended, among them yours for Germany, but no indication of a chairman. I wrote for instructions, but was favored with not so much as a line. Finally I got tired of waiting, and wrote to Winsor (whose name headed the committee), and got a reply this a.m., stating that he had been made chairman of such a committee without his knowledge, had never heard who the other members were, and had

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<sup>1</sup> "Chas" refers to Charles Henry Hull worked as an assistant librarian at Cornell University (1889- 1892), and after receiving a degree of Doctor of Philosophy, he returned to be appointed Assistant Professor of Political Economy in 1893.

<sup>2</sup> "Miss Cutler" refers to Marry Salome Cutler who was in charge of the American Library Association (A.L.A) at the 1893 World's Fair and was later appointed as a member of the planning committee. The 1893 World's Fair was called the World's Columbian Exposition to commemorate Columbus's discoveries 400 years prior and was held in Chicago. The A.L.A held its fifteenth conference at the 1893 World's Fair and, as suggested by Frank P. Hill, the A.L.A presented a modern model of a library, with modern ways of categorizing and classifying. The A.L.A exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition contained publications from Italy, Canada, France, Great Britain, Germany and other countries.

refused to have anything to do with the matter.<sup>3</sup> So I sat down in my dignity, exceeding wroth, & wrote Miss C. that I wished to be relieved from any further connection with the thing.<sup>4</sup> Cuss such a way of doing business, anyway. We would doubtless have found when the time came to report that our work had been done for us by somebody or other after his own fashion & we were responsible for it. I don't care to be a tail to Dewey's kite.<sup>5</sup>

Once in a while I hear from Woodruff, but is a very long while.<sup>6</sup> Between you and me, Ed. is a damned bad correspondant, and I only know one fellow who is more – myself. I owe Fiske a letter for Lord-knows-how-long, and other people in proportion. The last I heard from Fiske, he was growling because Ed. never answered his letters.<sup>7</sup> I guess that we fellows who live so far away from anywhere are a bad lot. If some of the rest of you would come to see us once in a while the shock of pleasure might brace us up. I would like to have no end of a chin with you, but what's the use in trying to get it on paper? The prologue would give me writer's-cramp.

Laura & I like St. Louis more and more every day.<sup>8</sup> It is a dear old barbarous place, where a poorly equipped chap like myself can be of some use and get the credit for it.<sup>9</sup> The surroundings are philistine, but the people are warm-hearted, and open-hearted, and allow their hearts to rule their heads sometimes;

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<sup>3</sup> "Winsor" refers to Justin Winsor who was a librarian at the Boston Public Library and was one of the councilors in The Executive Board of the A.L.A in 1890.

Kephart is referring to the A.L.A's *Papers and Procedures of the Twelfth General Meeting of the American Library Association*, where Winsor's name appears under the committee of Revision of the Constitution.

<sup>4</sup> Kephart was not relieved from the participation in the A.L.A exhibit at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Kephart, who was the librarian of the Mercantile Library, St. Louis at the time, was nominated for the office of president, but received 6 vote out of 220.

<sup>5</sup> "Dewey" refers to Melvil Dewey who was the president of the A.L.A (1892-1893). There is a classification named after Dewey, and it is called the "Dewey decimal classification"

<sup>6</sup> "Woodruff" refers to Edwin Hamlin Woodruff who was an instructor of English from 1888 to 1890, then became the Librarian of the Fiske Library in Florence for one year and was a Law professor at Cornell from 1896 to 1927.

<sup>7</sup> "Fiske" refers to Willard Fiske, who was the first librarian at Cornell University, and Kephart met him when he was working with him at Cornell University Library in 1880. Fiske also traveled to Florence, Italy, and Kephart later followed him to help assemble Fiske's Petrarch collection (Lowery par.5)

<sup>8</sup> "Laura" refers to Laura Mack; Kephart's wife, whom he met when he was at Cornell University.

and that's all the difference between a mammal and a bed-bug. St. Louis was nearly crushed by the war, but about ten years ago it woke up and got a move on. The city is now very stout and rigorous, for a ten-year-old, and has a devil of a lot of growth in her — substantial growth — no boom that a few month's cholera-scare would kill.<sup>10</sup> (You may observe that I sometimes use profane language. It agrees with me, as I am of spare habit and a little bilious.)

The other day I woke up thirty years old, and was struck by the profound thought (after breakfast) that, granting a normal lease of life, some 30 more years were left potential of all that I would be known for when I was dead. This led me to take account of stock, and I unanimously agreed to set about something other than library work, on the sly, devoting my nights and Sundays to preparation for the great Biz. It will take perhaps four or five years of such leisure as I can command before I can get a good ready on, and then I may perpetrate a book of my own.<sup>11</sup> This thing of forever brushing the dust off of other people's books gets monotonous in time; and, honestly, I am losing enthusiasm for a profession which has no prizes that may not be grasped by a stripling of thirty.

Now be a good fellow, and write me one of these long, juicy letters.

Laura & the kids join in best wishes.

H. Kephart.

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<sup>10</sup> Kephart is referring to 1849 when St. Louis witnessed the death of one-tenth of its population, due to cholera ("Cholera Epidemic of 1849").

Between 1861-1903, St. Louis witnessed a rapid growth in population, industry and infrastructure, which is what Kephart is observing in this letter ("A Brief History of St. Louis" par.4).

<sup>11</sup> Kephart wrote his book in 1901, *Pennsylvania's Part in the Winning of the West*, nine years after this letter.

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