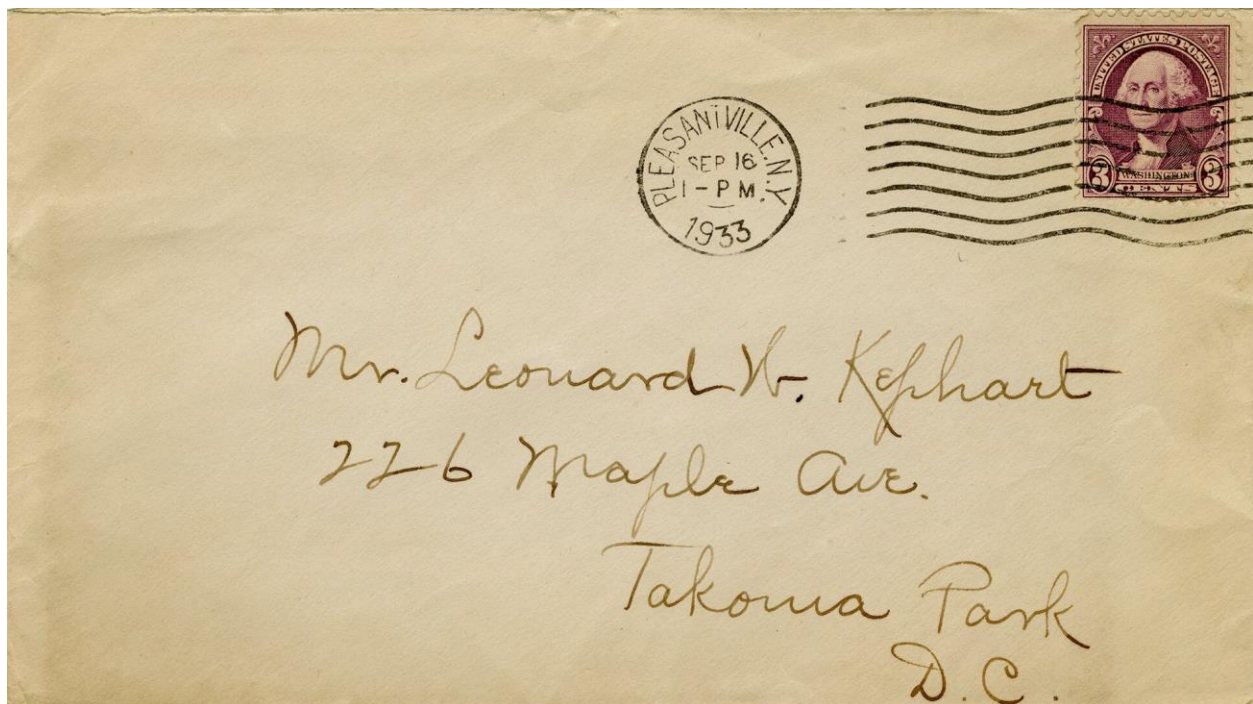


Laura Kephart's Letter to Leonard Kephart

September 16, 1933

Manuscript: HL_MSS12-05_01_08_002



Above: Envelope in which the manuscript was sent.

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For English 618: Research Methods in English
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December 10, 2019

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 manuscript is a letter written from Laura Kephart, wife of writer Horace Kephart, to one of their sons, Leonard. In the letter dated September 16th, 1933, Laura discusses news she had read in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Laura's newspaper of choice. She relays that the Appalachian Trail will soon be completed from Georgia to Maine and asks Leonard to gather some more information on the trail from the Appalachian Trail Conference, based out of Washington, D.C. At this time Leonard was working as a senior agronomist for the Department of Agriculture in Washington. Laura briefly gives news on political goings on and then discusses Thanksgiving travel plans for much of the Kephart family.

Laura Kephart, the sender of this letter, was born Laura White Mack in 1862 in Ithaca, New York. In 1887 she married Horace Kephart, born in 1862 in East Salem, Pennsylvania, and the couple would have six children. Horace was raised in Iowa but returned to Pennsylvania to study at Lebanon Valley College where he graduated in 1879. He would go on to study at Cornell University, Boston University, and Yale, working as an assistant librarian at each. In 1890 Horace took a position as head librarian at the St. Louis Mercantile Library. Horace began publishing his writings on wilderness and outdoor survival in various publications. In 1904 after suffering from health concerns, Horace moves to Western North Carolina where he wishes to rebuild his life closer to the wilderness. Over the next nearly three decades Horace would travel Western North Carolina writing and publishing articles, books, pamphlets, and various other works. Laura, meanwhile, had moved back to Ithaca, New York with the six Kephart children but never divorced Horace. Horace Kephart died in 1931 in an automobile accident, two years prior to the writing of this letter.

Leonard Wheeler Kephart, the recipient of this letter, was the third child and first son born to Horace and Laura in 1892. In 1916 Leonard married Frances Frazer and the couple would have three children, Jane, George, and Barbara. Leonard worked the majority of his life in Washington, D.C. as an agronomist studying invasion plant species for the Department of Agriculture.

Those who would be most interested in this letter are researchers looking into the history on the construction of the Appalachian Trail, or the Trail in general as it relates to the Kephart family. Additionally, any researcher looking to gain deeper insight on relations within the Kephart family, specifically between Laura and Leonard, will find this letter personal and thoughtful.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The letter is a folio, written on one sheet of paper and folded in half, creating four pages. The paper is thin and brittle from age. It appears the paper was originally on a brown fibrous type of paper, but has faded over time. The creases where the paper was folded have ripped and torn in some places.

The manuscript itself measures 11 in. (tall) by 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in (wide). The page, turned sideways, has then been folded end to end. It has then been folded twice more, the top third down to the center, and the bottom third folded up. The bottom third (approximately 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.) has been split and separated from the rest of the document. Some other minor splits and tears have occurred down

the seams of other creases. The envelope that held the letter measures 6 ½ x 3 ⅝ in. with one stamp on the upper right.

This transcription is a diplomatic edition, meaning the text has been transcribed as closely to the original document as possible. This means any spelling errors, grammatical issues, or syntactical issues were preserved. Laura Kephart's penmanship is fairly easy to read, but here are some features of Laura's handwriting to take note:

- The lower case *f* can be easily misinterpreted as a lower case *p*
- Laura tends to save room by abbreviating, writing only a first initial or first half of a word
 - For example, "Appa-n" is Appalachian Trail; "Pres." is President; "Thanks-g" is Thanksgiving; "B." is Barbara.
- In one instance a word is misspelled and crossed out. To designate this, the "strikethrough" font effect is used.
- The line breaks have been preserved as shown in the manuscript, rather than attempting to line up how the words fall compared to the line above.
 - Therefore, some lines in this transcription look longer than others, but on the manuscript they are aligned.
- Occasionally Laura crosses her lower case *t* to the right of character disconnected completely from the *t* itself.
 - To avoid any confusion, each *t* has been reflected as the standard *t*.
- There are frequently commas placed in sentences that do not follow proper grammar rules.
- On MS page 3, there is a black scribble beside a dollar sign. Perhaps this was a mistake or a crossed-out word.
 - This mistake has been reflected as an asterisk (*)

Unless otherwise noted, information on the Kephart family (names, birth and death dates, etc.) were found via *Ancestry Library Edition*.

The digital photos found in this transcription were taken from Western Carolina University's Hunter Library from Digital and Special Collections.

TRANSCRIPTION

[MS page 1]

Sept. 16 1933

Dear Leonard-¹

The Monitor says that the Appalachian Trail is nearly completed from Maine to Ga.² Also that information (folders etc.) can be obtained from the Appa-n Trail Conference, Union Trust Bldg., Washington.³ Will you please phone - or otherwise, & find out the cost, if any? I would like any information that does not come too high.

The Monitor also gave me the only news about you all, that we have had

¹ Leonard Wheeler Kephart (1892-1988), son of Laura and Horace Kephart. At this time Leonard and his family were living in Takoma Park, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C., where Leonard worked as a senior agronomist for the Department of Agriculture. (*Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Takoma Park*)

² The Monitor: *The Christian Science Monitor*. Newspaper founded in 1908 ("What is *The Christian Science Monitor?*"). Laura's newspaper of choice.

³ "App-n" is an abbreviation of "Appalachian." The Appalachian Trail Conference, now called the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to the conservation of the Appalachian Trail. The organization was founded in 1925. (*Appalachian Trail Conservancy*)

The Appalachian Trail is "the longest hiking-only footpath in the world, measuring roughly 2,190 miles from Spring Mountain, Georgia to Katahdin, Maine. The entire trail was completed in 1937." (*Appalachian Trail Conservancy*)

for a long time. It says
that our revered Pres. is
contemplating an addition to your income.¹

I planned to go to Ithaca
with Lucy, but Barbara
has a chance at a short
time job about that last of
Oct.² She can't take it unless
some one is here at the house
to look after things. So I will
stay here.³ If the Rileys come
to Plainfield, as they usually
do for Thanks-g, I will go
back with them.⁴

However "doubtful things
are uncertain."

The status quo here
remains the same.

¹ In May of 1933 Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act which acted to reduce crop production and refinance fields. Due to the Great Depression crop surplus meant that most of the agriculture industry plummeted. This act paid farmers for destroying their own crops or for not planting at all. This was meant to balance the oversupply of crops and help farmers. Leonard, who worked in the Department of Agriculture, perhaps would be getting a pay raise for being in the industry as well (Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933).

² Ithaca: Ithaca, New York. Home to Cornell College and Ithaca College (Google Maps).

Lucy: Lucy Wheeler Kephart (1893-1977), daughter of Horace and Laura Kephart. Married to Karl Fernow.

Barbara: Barbara Kephart Bird (1897-1985), daughter of Horace and Laura Kephart; Married to Royal Gould Bird.

³ In the 1930 census Laura is living in Ithaca with Lucy and Karl Fernow, but the return address on this letter is listed as Chappaqua, New York, nearly four hours southeast of Ithaca (*Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Ithaca*).

⁴ Rileys: Howard Wait Riley (1879-1971) married Laura Kephart's sister, Julia Whiton Mack (1877-1963).

Plainfield: Plainfield, N.Y. Town in central New York, approximately two hours Northeast of Ithaca (Google Maps).

"Thanks-g": Abbreviation of Thanksgiving.

Love to all.

Hastily¹

Mama

Yesterday B. made 148
tea cakes;² she has had her
~~handfu~~ handsfull with
baking this week; it will
mean * \$10 or more³.

¹ *Hastily*: Quickly, speedily, swiftly; suddenly, without delay (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The use of *hastily* is odd in this context; perhaps related to Laura's request on MS page 1 asking about information on the Appalachian Trail and wanting it soon.

² B.: Abbreviation for Barbara.

³ *: In the manuscript Laura has scribbled out something leaving a circular black mark. To reflect this mistake an asterisk has been used.

\$10: Adjusted for inflation, \$10 in 1933 is equal to approximately \$194.85 in 2019 (CPI Inflation Calculator).

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933.” The National Agricultural Law Center, *The National Center for Agricultural Law Research and Information*, pp. 31-54. Web. Accessed 11 Dec. 2019. <http://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/farmbills/1933.pdf>.

This is a PDF file of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 uploaded by the National Agricultural Law Center.

Ancestry Library Edition. Ancestry.com.

Ancestry provided most of the information used to find family names, dates, places of residence, and other information.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy. 2019. www.appalachiantrail.org.

Here I found all the information needed on the history of the Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy itself, which at the time of the letter was known as the Appalachian Trail Conference. I used timelines, histories, and other website resources.

“CPI Inflation Calculator.” Data Tools, *United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics*, Nov. 2019. https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

I used this calculator to determine what \$10 in 1933 would equal in today’s economy.

Google Maps. *Google*, 2019. www.google.com/maps.

Google Maps was used to see the locations of determine driving distance between cities referenced within the letter.

“Horace Kephart: Bibliography of Kephart Writings.” *Horace Kephart: Revealing an Enigma*. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, 2015. Web. <https://www.wcu.edu/library/digitalcollections/kephart/biography/bibliography.htm>. Accessed 10 Dec. 2019.

Through this resource I used bibliographies, general information on Horace and the Kepharts, images, and other useful tools mainly for the introduction.

Kephart, Laura letter to Leonard Kephart. 16 Sept. 1933. Box 1, Folder 8. MSS12-05. Horace Kephart Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press, 2019. www.oed.com.

The OED was used to look up history and meaning of word “Hastily.”

“Trail Marked Through Central Maine’s Forests.” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 Sept. 1933, p. 4, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*, Accessed 10 Dec. 2019.

This is a digital version of the edition of the newspaper Laura seems to quote. This article is about the construction of the Appalachian Trail and gives the details on where to find more information on the Trail.

U.S. Census Bureau. “Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930.” Ithaca, Tompkins, New York, April 15, 1933. www.AncestryLibrary.com.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I used this census to find information on where Laura was living at the time.

U.S. Census Bureau. "Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930." Takoma Park, Montgomery, Maryland, April 3, 1930. www.AncestryLibrary.com.

Here I found information about Leonard, specifically his job was and where he lived.

"What is the *Christian Science Monitor*?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2019.
<https://www.csmonitor.com/About>.

This is the *Christian Science Monitor* website. I used the "About" page to learn the history of the publication and other general information.