

Laura Kephart to
Leonard W. Kephart
March 14, 1934

Hunter Library MSS12-05_01_08_003

Transcribed and Edited by
Hailey Blevins
For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English
Instructor and 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 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 Laura Kephart's letter to Leonard W. Kephart on March 14, 1934. Within this letter, Laura Kephart requests that Leonard send her anything he has of his father's that pertains to his affairs after his death. Additionally, she informs Leonard that George Mack, her brother, wants to give away his tools if Leonard wants any of them. Interesting topics within the letter include events in Germany around this time, mention of Einstein, mention of the Dillinger Gang, and recent events within the family. The letter also includes a version of a poem that Laura Kephart published. This letter mentions 30 people, including Laura Kephart and Leonard Kephart. Other people referenced include Horace and Laura's other children, their grandchildren, family friends and acquaintances, in-laws, and one of Laura's sisters.

Horace Kephart, Laura's husband and Leonard's father, was born in 1862 in Pennsylvania but grew up in Iowa where he loved the outdoors. He attended Western College, Lebanon Valley College, and Boston University. While at Boston University, he spent much of his time at the Boston Public Library studying, where his interest in becoming a librarian began. He worked as a librarian at Cornell University, Rutgers College, and Yale College. After shifting his focus to his literary work, he moved to North Carolina and pursued his interests in nature, writing about his outdoor adventures for magazine. He was an advocate for environmental conservation and the Appalachian Trail, and he was one of the largest motivators for the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. He died in an automobile accident in April 2, 1931.

Laura White Kephart was born on February 14, 1862, in Ithaca, Tompkins, NY. Her parents were Horace Mack Jr., who was the assistant treasurer at Cornell University, and Lucy Wheeler. She had two siblings: George Mack, who was two years older, and Julia Riley, who was fifteen years younger. Her extended family was well-established in Ithaca, with the Macks serving as judges, merchants, and elected officials. Laura married Horace in 1887 at the age of twenty-five. They had six children, in order of birth: Cornelia, Margaret, Leonard, Lucy, George, and Barbara. When Horace left the family in 1909, Laura moved back with her parents for the next ten years and raised her kids through college. During this time, she held an array of jobs to support her six children, including cooking, sewing, tending children with disabilities, giving piano and dancing lessons, and splitting fire wood. She then worked as a clerk in a factory for \$35 a month, \$40 after four years. Religion was important to Laura, and she served as superintendent of the Unitarian Church's Sunday School. At the time of this letter, Laura was 72 years old and was living in Chattagua, N.Y. Laura died in 1954.

Leonard W. Kephart, Horace and Laura's oldest son and third oldest child, was born on January 10, 1892. He attended Cornell University, like all of his siblings. He married Frances Frazer in 1916, and they had three children: Jane, George, and Barbara. Leonard was a professional agronomist working for the USDA in Washington, D.C. He travelled to East Africa in 1927 for an extended plant-collecting trip as part of the USDA's East African Plant Exploration Expedition, where he would visit areas that few agronomists had explored. At the time of this letter, Leonard was 42 years old and was living in Takoma Park, D.C. Leonard died in 1988.

For more information on correspondence between the two around this time, see Laura's letters to Leonard on April 5, 1934, transcribed and annotated by Sarah Rhu, and on March 26, 1934, transcribed and annotated by Jessie Clay.

Editor's Note

This edition of Laura Kephart's letter to Mr. Leonard Kephart uses a diplomatic format. Following this format, the text is transcribed to recreate the appearance and presentation of Laura Kephart's original document as closely as possible to retain its authenticity. Within this letter specifically, this style of transcription does not interfere with the manuscript's readability, which is the primary reason for using a diplomatic edition. This edition keeps formatting, such as indentations, in the same position. 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 in combination with the page-by-page format to allow quick access to background information without losing the context or place in the letter, along with the addition of [MS page #] to further signal these transitions. The single-spaced layout of the edition is for aesthetic purposes and allows for more information in a smaller amount of space.

Laura Kephart has distinguishing features of penmanship, syntax, and grammar, which are included in a list below as a reference for future readings of Kephart's letters to Leonard:

- Closing quotation marks are missing in one place
- The letter *p* appears similarly to a cursive *f*
- The cross in the letter *t* is often placed beside it rather than with it
- "And" is often abbreviated in the manuscript and has been replicated with &.
- The letter *e* in lowercase is written similarly in the manuscript to the shape of a capital *E*
- Names are often abbreviated with a first initial following their first use
- Commas sometimes appear inside quotation marks and sometimes appear outside quotation marks
- A few words are underlined to signal they would be italicized, and therefore emphasized
- The stanza numbers appear both in parenthesis and without parenthesis surrounding them

Manuscript Description

Laura Kephart's letter is written on yellowed paper that measures 10 inches by 7.75 inches. The paper is about the same as thickness as standard paper weight. It is yellowed from age and is creased horizontally in thirds as well as vertically into thirds, likely to fit into the envelope.

The text is black and is faded in some areas and darker in others, showing both age and the re-dipping of the pen with new ink as the letter goes on. The writing is neat and mostly legible. There is one word on the third page which appears to be marked out. The third page is also marked with a 2 at the top, signaling it is the start of a separate sheet of paper.

The manuscript also includes the original envelope that the letter was sent in. The envelope is yellowed and creased in some places, possibly due to transport to Leonard or storage/handling of the letter over time. The place where the stamp would be has been cut out. The text on the front of the envelope is addressed to Leonard, and the text on the back side is Laura's address.

The information on this manuscript is made possible by the efforts of Western Carolina University's Hunter Library Special Collections.

Transcription

[MS page 1]

Dear Leonard¹,

If you have any letters from Bryson,² about your father's affairs³, will you please send them to me. If no letters, let me have any information that may have come to you. Please tend to this at once.

We have been hearing rather regularly lately from George Mack⁴. He feels that he won't use his tool very much from now on, & wants you children to have what you want, if you will pay the freight. I have asked him to make an inventory, send it to me & I would type carbon copys, so you could mark what you would like, if anything. He hopes you or the Rileys⁵ can get out his way.

Fritz Fernows wife⁶ died about ten days ago; cancer of the spleen; it pressed on the stomach so she could not swallow.

We here have all kept well except for a small snuffle now & then. Roy & Horace⁷ have just had intestinal flu. The Birds⁸ were there yesterday; R. was back in school but H. was pretty miserable yet. They seem to be very susceptible to this trouble. Too much German cooking? Guess anything German is too much these days.⁹

Perhaps it is not necessary to go so far afield to find dubious conditions. The Sun Herald Tribune¹⁰ had a review of a pamphlet by

¹ Leonard W. Kephart, Horace and Laura Kephart's third born child. Was 42 at the time of this letter.

² Judge T.D. Bryson, a close friend of Horace Kephart's (George 75).

³ Horace Kephart died on April 2 in 1931, three years before this letter, in a car accident near Ela. Laura likely asks for information to settle his affairs now because they were estranged for the last three decades of their marriage, though they corresponded regularly (Horace Kephart: Revealing...).

⁴ George Mack, Laura Kephart's brother.

⁵ The Riley's are Laura and Horace Kephart's in-laws. Laura's sister, Julia married Howard Riley.

⁶ Fritz Fernows, most likely the father of Lucy Kephart's husband, Karl Fernow. Ancestry and birth records have not clarified.

⁷ Roy Kephart and Horace Kephart, George Kephart's sons, this George being the son of Horace and Laura.

⁸ Barbara Bird, Horace and Laura Kephart's sixth and final child, married Royal Gould Bird. This instance likely references her parents-in-law.

⁹ This is likely a reference to Adolf Hitler taking power in the same year and the rise of his malicious attacks on Jews and other groups of peoples leading up to WWII.

¹⁰ Established in 1884 as a weekly newspaper that has since expanded, serves South Mississippi (Sun Herald).

Andrew D. White¹. It was written long ago but dealt with the inflation question, as if written today. I would like a copy of the reprint published by this "literary executor", Prof. Burr, but it costs \$.60.² Can't even write so large a sum correctly!

No S.O.S. was sent my from W. Plains³ as has been usual when things went wrong.

We are out just now & the Maisch's⁴ are in. Poor George,⁵ it makes our hearts ache to look at him.

We had a days visit from Julia & a few minutes of Howard.⁶ He had to be in N.Y. for a meeting & left J. with us. They were here two nights. Their auto was stuffed to the limit with potatos etc. from them & pie, dresses for B. & P.⁷, and other things from the Fernow. Everything was in pairs – one lot here, one for George.

A letter from Cornelia⁸ yesterday. She says that politics and the possible presence of Dillinger⁹ in their neighborhood is of no interest compared to the School Play. "All of Bailey School is in it." Jeanette was a fairy and Susie the "second tinkling water."¹⁰

The Supt. of the Chappagua schools gave Marny's room an "experience test."¹¹ Her teacher told B. that no report was made of these tests, "but I must tell you how remarkably Margaret did. I knew she would do well, but Mr. Bell & I were amazed."¹² She was easily the best.

Roy had work at the Girl Scout Camp for several months. Then money got short and the Supt. (a German) let R. go, but kept a nephew-in-law who

¹ Andrew Dickson White, most likely. Co-founder of Cornell University. White served as President at Cornell University for almost two decades while Horace Kephart was a librarian (George 162).

² Unclear in manuscript, most likely says \$.60. Prof. Burr, unidentified.

³ Unclear what Laura is referencing here.

⁴ George Kephart, son of Horace and Laura Kephart, married Pauline Maisch. This is likely a reference to her family.

⁵ Most likely still referring to Leonard Kephart's brother and not Leonard's son.

⁶ Julia and Howard Riley, Laura Kephart's sister and brother-in-law.

⁷ Most likely Barbara Kephart, daughter of Horace and Laura Kephart, and Pauline Maisch, George Kephart's wife. B may also refer to Barbara-Ann, Leonard and Frances Kephart's daughter.

⁸ Cornelia Kephart, Horace and Laura Kephart's first born child.

⁹ Most likely John Herbert Dillinger, part of Dillinger Gang. In January, 1934, the gang robbed \$20,000 from a bank.

¹⁰ Jeanette, Cornelia and Henry Moore's middle daughter. Susie, Cornelia and Henry Moore's youngest daughter. Word written unclearly in the manuscript, is most likely "tinkling."

¹¹ Supt., shorthand for Superintendent. Marny, aka Margaret Bird, daughter of Barbara and Royal Bird.

¹² Likely a misspelling of "remarkably." Margaret Kephart, Horace and Laura Kephart's second oldest child. Mr. Bell is most likely Marny's teacher, referenced above this instance.

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is single, a German not naturalized. That's the way the Blue Eagle² helps. It seems to me one of the first things good for the Pres.³ to tend to is round up all the aliens & send them back ~~for~~ to be cared for by their own people, except the Einsteins⁴ & such who do not come in pairs.

Don't miss an article in the Mar. 17th S.E. Post⁵ - "Where Do We Go From Here?"

Here's my latest, as nearly as I can remember.

To Conventions & Such.
With apologies where due.

- (1) Words, words, words,
That break on the shores of Time.
I will that my pen shall aid me
To express my thoughts in rhyme.
- (2) O, well for the fisherman's boy,
On his shout there's no tax to be paid;
O, well for the sailor's lad,
That water's his stock in trade.
- 3 And the Ships of State sail on.
O'er Political Seas they toss,
With the hand of Greed at the wheel,
And each Captain trying to boss.

¹ A "2" is placed at the top of this page in the manuscript to show that this is the start of a second sheet of paper.

² Blue Eagle, symbol for National Industrial Recovery Administration (NRA). Encouraged fair competition, set minimum wages and maximum hours, guaranteed union rights, and prohibited child labor ("Document for June...").

³ President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

⁴ This appears marked out in the manuscript, is likely "for," though it is unclear. The Einsteins is a reference to the family of Albert Einstein, a German who was accepted because of the popularity of him and his philosophy despite growing tensions with Germany (L. Kephart).

⁵ S.E. Post is likely a local paper, but is unclear.

- (4) Words, words, words.
They batter my ear drums sore.
They get no where & then come back
To repeat themselves o'er & o'er.

The Fernows are sailing along as usual.
Dr. Duraud¹ has given Mary Beth² a scholarship
in music. Lucy³ wrote in a hurry & did not
say what instrument. The child care not for
the 3 Rs. Music & horses fill her desires.

Have not heard from Margaret in
some time. She can't afford to get into the city
often, but hoped to be in for Easter. I hope
to go down there but "me too," I'm poor.

We call Laura⁴ "me too," because whatever
Marny has or does, L. says "me too." She is
going to kindergarten & is thrilled to pieces.

You won't be me too, if I spin this
out any longer.

Lots of love to all
Mama⁵

¹ Unidentified. Written unclearly on manuscript, may also be Dreraud.

² Most likely Mary Beth Fernow, Karl and Lucy Fernow's daughter, based on the mention of the Fernows at the paragraph's start and the mention of Lucy.

³ Lucy Fernow, Horace and Laura Kepharts' fourth oldest child.

⁴ Laura Bird, daughter of Barbara Bird, who is not mentioned in this letter.

⁵ Laura White Kephart, wife of Horace Kephart and Leonard's mother. Was 72 at the time of this letter.

Works Cited

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This source details most of the Kephart family, though many members are either missing or marked as private.

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George, Ellison, and Janet McCue. “Back of Beyond: a Horace Kephart Biography.” *Great Smoky Mountains Association*, 2019.

This source discusses the lives of Horace, Laura, and Leonard, among others, in great detail, giving dates and important events in their lives.

Horace, Kephart. Journal 17. July 1904. Box 63 *MSS 80-24* Horace Kephart Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, NC.

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Kephart, Laura. Letter to Leonard Kephart. 14 Mar. 1934. Box 1, Folder 8. *MSS12-05* Horace Kephart Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

This is the original letter from Laura Kephart to Leonard Kephart and was used to transcribe and create the edition.

Kephart, Leonard. “Kephart, Horace & Laura Mack Kephart Family.” Add. #2, Box 2, Folder 21, *MSS16-01*, Horace Kephart Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

This manuscript is an unpublished autobiography by Leonard Kephart discussing, among other things, several prominent figures during this time and the family’s relations with them or thoughts about them, including Albert Einstein.

Sun Herald. <https://www.sunherald.com/customer-service/about-us/>, Accessed Dec. 8.