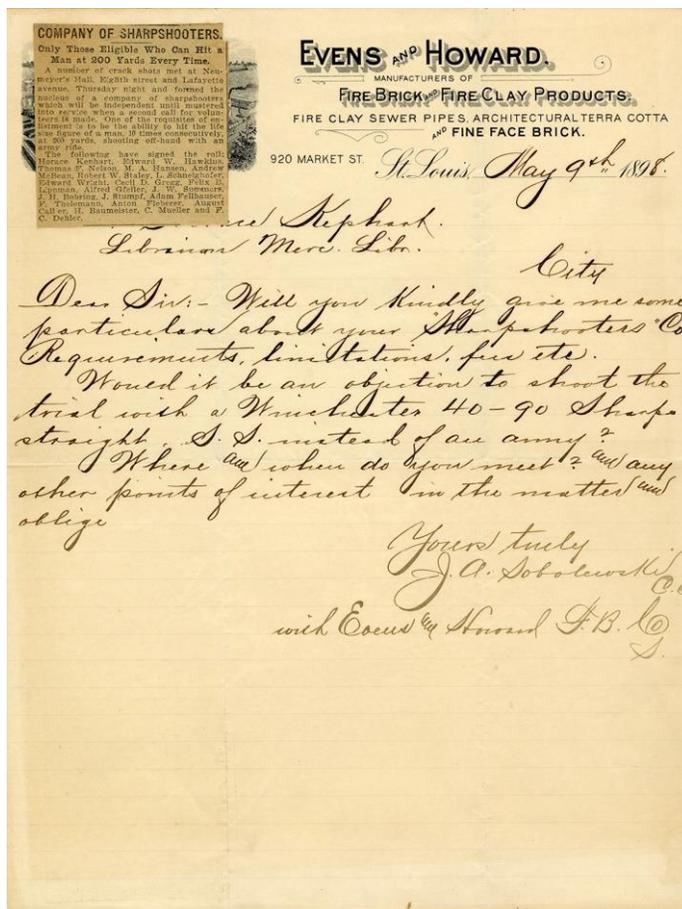


Letter from J.A. Sobolewski to Horace Kephart

May 9, 1898

MS 12-05 04 35 009



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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 the MA in English at Western Carolina University. The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

1. Conduct appropriate, effective, and ethical scholarship
 1. 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.
 2. 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.
 3. Develop accurate bibliographies and reference citations.
 - Students will be able to annotate, abstract, and cite materials following standard MLA format.
1. 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

Horace Kephart published an advertisement in “Shooting and Fishing” and other news outlets (Askins) for sharpshooters who would form a company ready to join the Spanish American War when a second request came for volunteers. The advertisement is included in Appendix A. This kind of sharpshooter company was a new development pioneered by the Berdan Sharpshooters in the Civil War (Wicklund and Williams). Because of the short duration of the war, the second call for volunteers never came and some of the first companies of volunteers never saw action (Martin County). I did not find evidence of the company ever forming or of whether Sobelewski ever joined. However, I have heard there is a list of those who tried out for the company and those who were accepted available by request from the Hunter Library Special Collections.

The advertisement for the Sharpshooter’s Co. (included in the Appendix) was published by Kephart in “Shooting and Fishing” where he was a regular contributor. This “weekly journal of the rifle, gun and rod,” as described by Ockerbloom, “began in 1885 as ‘The Rifle’ and was renamed ‘Shooting and Fishing’ in 1888.” The secretary of the NRA bought it in 1906 and renamed it “Arms and the Man,” which it remained until 1923 when it took its current name: “American Rifleman.”

Editorial Statement

The letter is handwritten on stationery belonging to the company with which the author claims an affiliation. It seems to be an official business letter, but covers only personal details, which makes me wonder why the writer notes his connection to the company in his signature. All the letters in the letterhead are capitalized. The entire run of stationery must have been printed with an intent to be used in the last decade before 1900 because it includes an open line which ends with the first part of a date stamped “189__” with room for the writer to fill in the final number of the year.

Formal letterhead like this may raise expectations of the author’s standing in the community, and this is confirmed both by his occupation and by his handwriting. For the most part, the script is beautiful, relatively easy to read and clearly decorative in some areas. At first glance it appears that the letter and the signature were formed by two different pens, one gold and the other a darker brown, but further examination shows the gold color gradually emerging from a dark beginning to a very faint ending suggesting that the author’s pen was running out as he wrote.

Although the paper has yellowed over time, thin lines can still be seen across its face, etched almost invisibly with an effort to be elegant and discreet. At the bottom of the letter and along its left edge, there is a narrow straight section that seems to have been covered – almost as though the letter was held for some time in a frame. One might also presume it had been covered by another stack of papers or a book. However, both theories are called into question by the lower right hand corner which does not have a clean edge like such a history might give to it. In preparation for delivery, the author folded it in half long-ways and then in thirds. The creases can still be seen.

I am uncertain how the advertisement copy came to be attached to this letter. It was clearly referenced (Askins) and alluded to (Bird) by other authors, but the archives I found for the

magazine where it was published do not precede 1900. Nevertheless, the date and the contents of the letter indicate its connection to the attached advertisement whether it was placed there by Mr Sobolewski or by an archivist at some later date.

The following transcription adheres the “diplomatic” editorial style, which attempts to reflect as closely as possible the content of the letter including its layout, spelling, placement of words, capitalizations, etc. Exceptions to this standard and potential editorial interpretations are described in the following paragraphs.

The author has a few peculiarities in style. First, there is a period at the end of the salutation, but not at the end of the final sentence. A question mark appears in the middle of the last sentence without interrupting its continuity and is followed by a unique ampersand. The manuscript uses a unique ampersand, which appears to be a combination of the word “and” formed into a kind of squiggle. Since the author seems to be trying to use a symbol rather than a spelled word (indicated by its placement at an angle off of the writing line), the transcription has used the ampersand rather than spelling out the conjunction.

The use of capitalization mostly follows convention, but the letter “k” seems to be an exception. There are only three instances of that letter in the manuscript and the first one is definitely capitalized. The next two appear at twice the height of the surrounding letters, but are not as elaborate as the first “k.” One of them appears near the end of the author’s surname, which suggests that the apparent capitalization is just a uniquely unhelpful feature of the author’s penmanship. For this reason the “k” is transcribed as lowercase except in Kephart’s name.

Transcription Section

HL MS 12-05 04 35 009 (page 1)

May 9th 1898

Mr..Horace Kephart.¹

Librarian Merc. Libr.

City

Dear Sir: - Will you Kindly give me some particulars about your "Sharpshooters" Co.² Requirements, limitations fees etc.

Would it be an objection to shoot the trial with a Winchester 40-90 Sharp³ straight, S.S. instead of an army?⁴

Where & when do you meet? & any⁵ other points of interest in the matter & oblige

Yours truly

J.A. Sobolewski⁶

C. E.⁷

with Evens & Howard F. B. Co⁸

S.⁹

¹ Although it is hidden by the pasted advertisement, the author began his letter to with the title "Mr."

² The advertisement for the Sharpshooter's Co. (included in Appendix A) is elaborated in the introduction.

³ Winchester 40-90 Sharp was a sharpshooter rifle first produced in 1873 (Hawks)

⁴ S.S. stands for single shot in contrast with the army rifles which were moving toward multiple rounds. The advertisement (Appendix A) stipulated that the trial would be shot with an army rifle, which was most likely the .30 caliber carbine Krag-Jorgensen or the .45 caliber trapdoor, which was still in use by the national guard in 1898 ("History of U.S. Army Weapons").

⁵ Another letter to Horace Kephart on May 8 asks similar questions (Askins).

⁶ The minims for this name also suggest the name Sobolecoski, but the searchable internet has no records of anyone with this surname. Ancestry suggests this is John A Sobolewski a Civil Engineer from St Louis.

⁷ John Sobolewski's profession was a Civil Engineer (Ancestry).

⁸ The shapes that the author used to form Co are unusual, but no other transcription options seemed apparent.

⁹ This may be an initial of the author to certify that the message is authorized.

Works Cited

Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

Askins, Charles. Letter to Horace Kephart. 8 May 1898. Box4, Folder 35. MSS 12-05 Horace Kephart Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

This letter in the Horace Kephart Collection responds to the same advertisement included here in Appendix A, but mentions where it was seen.

Hawks, Chuck. "Buffalo Cartridges of the American Frontier." *ChuckHawks.com*, 2012, https://www.chuckhawks.com/buffalo_cartridges.htm

Explores the various kinds of rifle selections available and preferred by in the American "Wild West." It provides a kind of timeline context for what was unique about different rifles and cartridges.

"History of U.S. Army Weapons." *Military.com*. Army.mil/News, 2019. <https://www.military.com/army-birthday/history-of-us-army-weapons.html>.

Provides a timeline of transition from one kind of rifle to another by the US Army along with some details of the firearms.

Humphrey, John, Taylor (Editor). "Shooting and Fishing: A Journal of the Rifle, Gun and Rod." Vol. XL, No. 1. New York, *Shooting and Fishing Pub. Co.*, 12 Apr. 1906. Special Collections Cornell University. Available from Google Play Books as "American Rifleman, Volumes 40-41.

This journal includes an article by Horace Kephart as well as mention of EW Bird and his excellent marksmanship. It also mentions a bullet called the 90-grain Kephart.

Martin County Veterans Memorial. *Spanish-American War*. <http://www.mcvm.org/kia-mia-pow.html>.

Provides a history of the soldiers from Martin County and their connection to the Spanish-American War.

Ockerbloom, John Mark (Editor). "Arms and the Man." *The Online Books Page*, <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=armsandtheman>.

As with the next entry, Ockerbloom is outlining a simple history of dates and names with regard to the evolution of a magazine purchased by the NRA to which Kephart was a frequent contributor.

Ockerbloom, John Mark (Editor). "Shooting and Fishing." *The Online Books Page*, h
<https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=shootfish>.

Rolfe, William E. (Editor). "The Journal of the Engineers' Club of St. Louis." Vol. 2, No. 1, Jan, 1923 <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=888dAQAAIAAJ&rdid=book-888dAQAAIAAJ&rdot=1>.

Displays an advertisement by Evens and Howard and also mentions a relative of JA Sobelweski who was applying for membership with an engineering association.

Sobolewski C. E. Letter to Horace Kephart. 9 May 1898. Box 4, Folder 35. MSS 12-05 Horace Kephart Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

"Spanish-American War of 1898." *American Government A to Z: The Presidency A to Z*, edited by Peters Gerhard, and John T. Woolley, CQ Press, 5th edition, 2012. *Credo Reference*, https://login.proxy195.nclive.org/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/spanish_american_war_1898?institutionId=2378. Accessed 10 Dec. 2019.

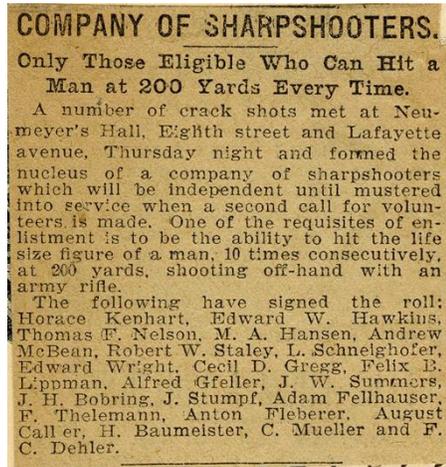
Provides basic dictionary details of the Spanish-American War.

Wicklund, Doug and Michael G. Williams. "How These Elite Civil War Marksmen Changed the Face of Warfare." *HistoryNet*. <https://www.historynet.com/how-these-elite-civil-war-marksmen-changed-the-face-of-warfare.htm>.

Explores the influence of sharpshooter companies on warfare and especially notes how the Berdan Sharpshooters were an innovative company. There had not been a group of marksmen like this before – at least in the United States.

Appendix

HL MSS 12-05 04 35 009 (page 1 - clipping)



COMPANY OF SHARPSHOOTERS.

Only Those Eligible Who Can Hit a Man at 200 Yards Every Time.

A number of crack shots met a Neumeier's Hall, Eighth street and Lafayette avenue, Thursday night and formed the nucleus of a company of sharpshooters which will be independent until mustered into service when a second call for volunteers is made. One of the requisites of enlistment is to be the ability to hit the life size figure of a man, 10 times consecutively, at 200 yards, shooting off-hand with an army rifle.

The following have signed the roll:
Horace Kephart, Edward W. Hawkins, Thomas F. Nelson, M.A. Hansen, Andrew McBean, Robert W. Staley, L. Schneighofer, Edward Wright, Cecil D. Gregg, Felix B. Lippman, Alfred Gfeller, J. W. Summers, J.H. Bobring, J. Stumpf, Adam Fellhauser, F. Thelemann, Anton Fleberer, August Callier, H. Baumeister, C. Mueller and F. C. Dehler.