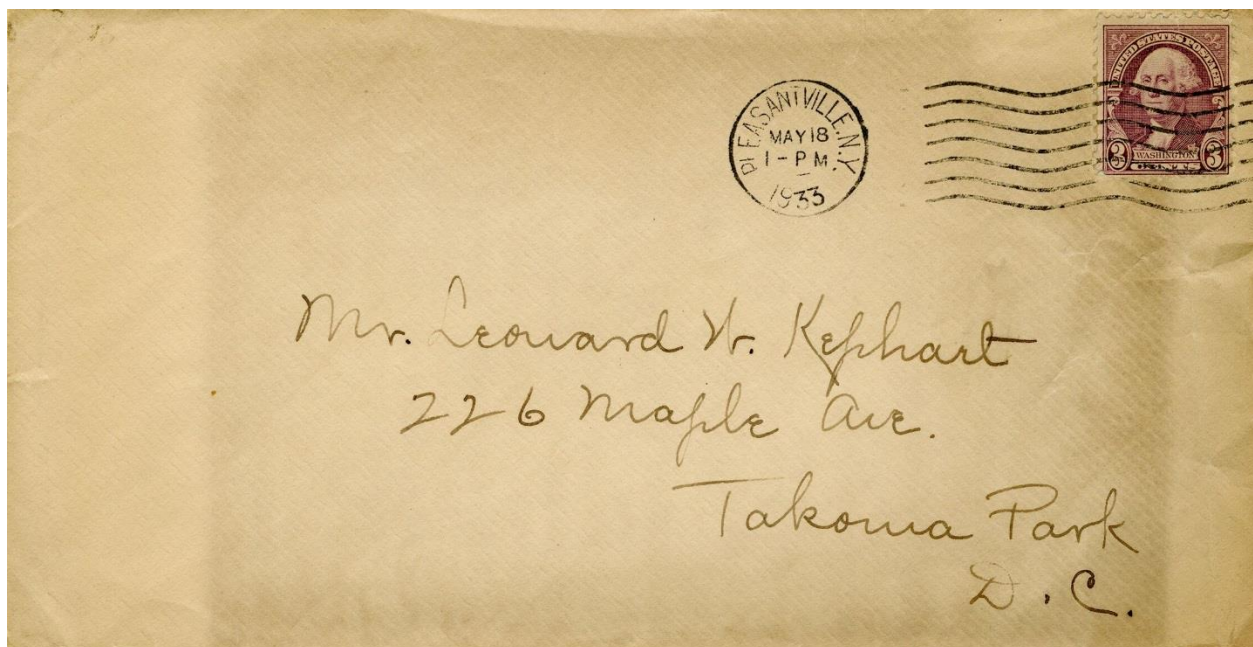


Laura Kephart's Letter to Leonard Kephart

May 18, 1933

Manuscript: HL_MSS12-05_01_08_001



Above: Envelope in which the manuscript and additional contents were sent.

Transcribed by Jordan Upton
For English 618: Research Methods in English
Instructor: Dr. Brian Gastle
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 TO DOCUMENT

This manuscript is a letter written from Laura Kephart, wife of writer Horace Kephart, to one of their sons, Leonard Wheeler Kephart. In the letter dated May 18th, 1933, only one year after the death of Horace in an automobile accident, Laura asks Leonard to check on copyright information on two of Horace's books, *Camping and Woodcraft* and *Our Southern Highlanders*, and she proposes the addition of a new chapter to each. After this brief business formality, Laura begins to discuss familial matters and give general updates to Leonard on the rest of the family. Leonard's brother, George, is working up north, presumably as a forester in Maine. Laura offers details on the Moores, Henry and Cornelia, one of Leonard's sisters; Roy, married to another of Leonard's sisters, Barbara; and Margaret, yet another sister. Laura then offers her sharp political opinions on recently elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt. She concludes the letter by writing about an unknown "Phil", and finally, offering an update on the Fernows, Karl and Lucy, Lucy being the last Kephart child mentioned. An interesting note on the Fernows is that Karl and Lucy were in Germany at the time. Karl was on sabbatical from his professor position at Cornell University to travel overseas to study agricultural diseases, mainly in potatoes. While there, Karl's laboratory host, Dr. Ernst Schaffnit, was arrested due to unknown circumstances, but perhaps related to the newly appointed Chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler, and his Nazi regime.

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.

At the time of this letter Laura was living in Ithaca, New York with Karl and Lucy Fernow (Lucy, one of Horace and Laura's daughters), along with the Mary and David, Karl and Lucy's children.

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.

Also included in the envelope with this letter were two newspaper clippings from the *Christian Science Monitor*, Laura Kephart's newspaper of choice (see: *Appendix*). The first clipping is a photo of a couple using a bicycle pump to blow up a tent with the title "Campers Build Their Own Air Castles." Under the photo is a brief description about the tent itself and how easily it can be transported due to its light weight. The second clipping is an article about vegetable fibers being added to concrete to reinforce steel. The article discusses how this process was developed

in Ireland and argues that the vegetable fibers make the steel more sturdy and durable and that the process will be utilized in the future.

Those that are interested in the lineage of the Kephart family will be fascinated by this document. There is great detail on members of the Kephart family, both immediate and extended. Additionally those interested in Laura Kephart's life will find this letter especially fascinating. One can gain a greater insight as to who Laura is and what her personality is like after reading this letter. While Horace is not mentioned often in the document, it is curious to see how his texts live on, so to speak, after his death.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The manuscript itself is written on very thin paper that has become discolored, brittle, and fragile. The ink that the letter was written in has gotten lighter and faded over time, now appearing light gray, like graphite. The paper measures 11 inches (tall) by $8\frac{3}{8}$ (wide), and has been folded three times, once in half so that the top half of the page meets the bottom, and then folding the right half into the center, and the same with the left, leaving six distinct folded lines on the page. At these crease, many tears have occurred. The right third of the page ($2\frac{3}{4}$ in.) has been completely separated and has left jagged tears along the folded line. Along the top of the page a substantial tear has been taken out of the upper center, leaving a hole approximately 1 in. x $\frac{1}{4}$ in. This hole appearing most prominently on page two of the manuscript cuts off the first half of a name. Based on the context of the letter, it appears to be "Margaret," one of Leonard's sisters.

The two newspaper clippings appear to have been cut out of the paper with scissors. Both articles seem to have been folded in half, and were both found along with the letter in an envelope measuring $6\frac{1}{2}$ in. x $3\frac{5}{8}$ in. along with two sets of stamps. The stamps appear to be German and seem to have been torn off of two envelopes, each containing three stamps, meaning there are six in total.

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 first names by writing only a first initial
 - For example she uses "G." rather than "George"
- In place of the word "and" or using an ampersand Laura uses a small cross, or plus
 - For better understanding and editorial choice has been made to use the ampersand (&) in place of Laura's symbol (+).
- Laura occasionally leaves large gaps similar to an indentation within a line when beginning a new sentence. I have chosen to designate this space by using the "TAB" button once whenever it occurs
- 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.

- On page two of the manuscript, Laura refers to a price (\$50,000), though she does not use a comma within the number. I have chosen to preserve that omission.

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]

May 18 1933

Dear Leonard¹

It is not the proper time, nor a kind thing to do just now, I ask any one to take on an added burden. But - it has been worrying me about the copyrights on your father's books. I have no idea when they run out; think it must be before long.² If a chapter about auto camping could be added to Camping & Woodcraft & one as to changed conditions in the mountains to the Southern Highlanders, it would hold them.³ If you & George could gather the facts, some of us could put them in shape.⁴ Just now G. is touring New England with his boss trying to reap from what G. has been sowing all winter.⁵ He has worked like a fiend.

The Moores have been cut & are getting the remains piecemeal depending on tax returns.⁶ Roy is holding on & trying to work into something beside forestry.⁷ He feels that - forestry

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 In 1933 general U.S. copyright law covered works that were published and renewal processes were due every 14 years (*Rudd 141*). Based on context of letter, it can be implied that Laura is unsure of how many years have passed since the original copyright was added to Horace's works.

³ *The Book of Camping and Woodcraft: A Guidebook for Those Who Travel in the Wilderness*. First published in 1906. Considered a paramount handbook for campers, hikers, and outdoorsmen of all experience levels. In the eighteenth printing of the book in 1957, it does not appear that a chapter on auto camping had been added (*Camping and Woodcraft*).

Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life Among the Mountaineers was originally published in 1913 by Horace Kephart. The book was a foundational work in Appalachian literature. *Our Southern Highlanders* was based on Kephart's stay in various parts of Western North Carolina from 1904-1920. The latest revision to *Our Southern Highlanders* was published in 1922. Therefore, it does not appear that this revision has occurred. ("Horace Kephart: Bibliography of Kephart Writings.")

⁴ George Stebbins Kephart (1894-1961). Fifth child and second son of Horace and Laura Kephart.

George could also refer to George Overton Kephart (1920-2011), son of Leonard and Frances Kephart. Based on context of letter and given that George Overton Kephart would have been 13 years old at the time, it can be assumed that George Stebbins Kephart is who is being referred.

⁵ G.: An abbreviation of "George."

"Sowing all winter": George worked as a forester for various paper companies in Maine. It can be assumed that George is in Maine for work based on the context of the letter (Kephart, George)

⁶ The Moores: Henry Carleton Moore married Horace and Laura's daughter, Cornelia F. Kephart (1888-1947).

⁷ Roy: Based on context, this appears to be nickname for Royal Gould Bird (1893-1981), married to Barbara Kephart (1897-1985) daughter of Horace and Laura Kephart. Royal worked as a "forester" on the 1930 census (*Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Pleasantville*).

[MS page 1]

won't come into its own during his life.
Barbara has worked herself to a frazzle baking

Roy could also refer to George and Pauline Kephart's son, Roy F. Kephart, born in 1927. At the time of this letter, Roy Kephart would have been six years old, which does not fit within the letter contextually.

[MS page 2]

for the Woman's Exchange.¹ Margaret has been sending me what she could, so we have managed to pull through so far.² If our darling Rosy does not push prices up & the dollar down too far, we may weather the storm.³ Before I die, it would give me great pleasure to see a dollar that did not make faces at me. The aforementioned party will probably get his pension since it was nothing but nerves instead of an arm or leg that she left in France.⁴ I can't help thinking it was asking a bit too much from us ornery folks to spend \$50000 for a bath tub for his highness.⁵ Perhaps you can guess that I don't admire our present denizens in the White House. I see he has adopted Harding's⁶ plan for getting instructions - week end cruises. I prefer logs to yachts.

Had a fine letter & picture from Phil.⁷ He weighs 230 lbs. but the same Phil is looking at you over the plump cheeks.

The Fernows have not been molested & are having a fine time, in spite of the fact that Dr. Shaffnit, Karl's laboratory host, has been arrested.⁸

¹ Barbara Kephart Bird (1897-1985), daughter of Horace and Laura Kephart.

Woman's Exchange Movement: Beginning in 1832, the Woman's Exchange was a way for women to cosign homemade products to be sold in shops in the area. Woman's Exchange shops were found all over America. (*The Woman's Exchange*)

² Margaret Kephart (1890-1972), daughter to Horace and Laura Kephart.

³ Rosy: Based on context of letter "Rosy" appears to be a pejorative nickname for President Franklin D. Roosevelt who began his first of four presidential terms in 1933. Roosevelt had an older half-brother named James Roosevelt (1854-1927), commonly called "Rosy."

Due to the poor economy Roosevelt proposed an inflation to stimulate the economy. It appears that Laura is concerned about this plan (Jailil and Rua).

⁴ The meaning of this sentence is unclear. It appears that "the aforementioned party" is referring to President Roosevelt, but the use of the "she" pronoun complicates the meaning.

⁵ Bath tub: While unclear, this appears to refer to President Roosevelt's need for wheelchair accessibility. Roosevelt, wheelchair-bound since 1921, required the Presidential yacht, the *USS Sequoia*, to be altered to suit his needs. It can be assumed that Laura is referring to a rumored cost of the alterations to the ship. (*National Register*)

⁶ Harding: Former President Warren G. Harding, who served 1921-1923.

⁷ Phil: Unknown.

⁸ The Fernows: Karl Herman Fernow (1893-1983) married Lucy Wheeler Kephart (1893-1977), fourth child of Horace and Laura Kephart. Karl Fernow was a professor at Cornell University specializing in diseases found in crops, especially potatoes ("News and Reviews: Karl Herman Fernow" 798).

Molested: To cause grief, trouble, or vexation; to disturb, annoy, or inconvenience. (Oxford English Dictionary)

Dr Shaffnit: Karl's laboratory host while Karl took a one year sabbatical from Cornell to study potato diseases in Germany. Presumed to be Dr. Ernst Schaffnit, notable German agricultural scientist. ("Ernst Schaffnit") Schaffnit's arrest could perhaps be related to the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service

Love to all mama

in Germany which was passed in April 1933. This law required all civil servants who were not descended from Aryan ancestors to retire. Amendments of this law continued, eventually forcing any non-Aryans to step down or retire from most jobs in Germany (Stackelberg and Winkle 150).

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ancestry Library Edition. Ancestry.com.

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

“Ernst Schaffnit.” Catalog of the German National Library, *German National Library*, 14 May 2019, <http://d-nb.info/gnd/10205567X>. Accessed 10 Dec. 2019.

The National German Library contained information I used to find Dr. Ernst Schaffnit and his work.

“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.

Jalil, Andrew, and Gisela Rua. “Inflation Expectations in the Recovery from the Great Depression.” FEDS Notes, *Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System*, 30 Aug. 2016. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econresdata/notes/feds-notes/2016/inflation-expectations-in-the-recovery-from-the-great-depression-20160830.html>. Accessed 10 Dec. 2019.

This article describes the economic conditions of the early 20th century and provided context for President Roosevelt’s economic strategies.

Kephart, George Stebbins and Shirley Thayer. “George S. Kephart Correspondence.” *Maine Writers Correspondence*. Maine State Library, 11 Sept. 2015. http://digitalmaine.com/maine_writers_correspondence/297.

This packet of documents from George Stebbins Kephart contained information on George not found elsewhere like a brief biography of George’s life and work.

Kephart, Horace. *Camping and Woodcraft: A Handbook for Vacation Campers and for Travelers in the Wilderness*. 1906. 18th ed., Macmillan Company, 1957.

I used this edition of *Camping and Woodcraft* to verify if any new chapters had been added to the book since the writing of this letter in 1933.

Kephart, Laura letter to Leonard Kephart. 18 May 1933. Box 1, Folder 8. MSS12-05. Horace Kephart Collection. Hunter Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form: USS Sequoia. United States Department of the Interior, 30 June 1987, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/521ccd36-3959-409c-b509-3eeefd97e4d4/>. Accessed 10 Dec. 2019.

This is a form containing valuable information on the *USS Sequoia*, such as its uses, alterations, and years in service.

“News and Reviews: Karl Herman Fernow.” *American Potato Journal*, vol. 60, no. 10, 1983, pp.798-799.

This is an obituary for Karl Fernow found in the *American Potato Journal*. It contains a brief yet invaluable biography of Karl and discusses his travel to Germany in 1933.

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

The OED was used to search for the term “Molested.”

“Roosevelt Genealogy.” *Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum*.
<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/resources/genealogy>.

This website contained a family tree for the Roosevelt family and brief information needed to make connections.

Rudd, Benjamin W. “Notable Dates in American Copyright 1783-1969.” *United States Copyright Office*. <https://www.copyright.gov/history/dates.pdf>.

The brief timeline found here gave me information on copyright law prior to, and in, 1933.

Stackelberg, Roderick, and Sally A. Winkle. *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*. Routledge, 2002. *ProQuest Ebook Central*,
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hunter-ebooks/detail.action?docID=170682>.

I used this book to find out potential laws in Germany in 1933 that could have gotten Dr. Schaffnit arrested. Here is where I found the information on the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service.

The Woman’s Exchange. The Woman’s Exchange of Saint Louis. <https://www.woexstl.org/>.
Accessed 9 Dec. 2019.

This minor website held a description and very brief history of the Woman’s Exchange and what its purposes are.

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

This census record was used for information found in the introduction on where Laura Kephart and who was residing with her.

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

In this census I found Royal Bird’s information more specifically about his work in forestry.

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.

APPENDIX

HL_MSS12-05_01_08_001_03

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, BOSTON, TUESDAY, MAY 16, 1933

Campers Build Their Own Air Castles



THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR—© Keystone

TOURISTS ERECT NEW TYPE OF TENT WITH AID OF A BICYCLE PUMP

Featherweight Homes Which Can Easily Be Carried on a Walker's Back Revolutionize Hiking. One Man Tramped From Greenock, Scot., to London, 420 Miles, to Attend Camping Exhibition.

a towed vehicle, folds up like an envelope and is transportable as luggage on the car. For camping, a novel type of canoe combines the advantages of the Indian and Rob Roy canoe, and is at the same time portable.

These boats are 15 to 18 feet long and nearly a yard wide. They weigh 35 to 56 pounds. They can be comfortably stowed away in a trunk or on the luggage grip of an automobile. The average two-seater canoe packing into a trunk is the keel and long ribs in one bag, the short ribs in another, and the "skin" in a collapsible rubber canvas bag. The pieces are carried on a bicycle.

Among the new inventions for road and camp use is a road which, when not in use, is rolled along the road, and is used only in the ground. "Curate's Delight" is a new means of clipping hair at intervals up to 10 days. The plates are inserted in the hair.

The members of the Club stands in 1901, the total of the total of the last five years is exactly 100,000. In the year the Club acquired over 100,000 being

Cl

Above: Newspaper clipping from *The Christian Science Monitor* sent from Laura to Leonard.

Vegetable Fiber Is Said to Excel Steel in Cement

Jute Reinforcement Acts in Tests Better Than Usual Metal Rods

Special to The Christian Science Monitor

DUBLIN—A saving of 20 to 30 per cent is claimed in the cost of constructing concrete houses by a novel method—at present believed to be in use only in Ireland—in which vegetable fiber such as jute is used as reinforcing material. The concrete is grouted onto the fiber and when dry not only takes on almost the hardness of sheet metal but also, unlike ordinary reinforced concrete, a considerable degree of “springiness.”

The new system has been named “nofrango” because it is extremely hard to shatter. So hard in fact that it can be punched like steel. Sheets of it will bear enormous weights. There is a floor near Dublin constructed on this system which is carrying a load of 600 pounds to the square foot without any “give” being visible. The slab on which this load rests is 2 feet 6 inches above the ground and is supported on small pillars not more than 3 inches in diameter at the top and about 3 feet apart.

The walls of houses built on the system are generally composed of two sheets, each from one-half to one and a half inches thick with a sealed air space in between. It has been found that such walls are absolutely damp-proof, practically sound-proof and almost indestructible.

In addition to walls, the system is

being used for floors, ceilings, roofs, stairs, garden paths and even rain-water pipes. A special light cellular chimney has also been developed which is said by the inventor to be as “near earthquake proof as possible.”

The system began to take shape during the war, when the inventor saw a British Tommy painting a leaky tent with cement. Not only did the leaking stop, but when the time came to move the tent it was found to be quite solid although it was only a fraction of an inch thick.

A further stage in the unfoldment of the idea was reached when the inventor went yachting with some friends. It's no use having wire stays, he was told, because they generally snap much more easily than hemp. The inventor's thoughts flashed back to that tent and he decided to see what happened if hemp or jute were used instead of metal to reinforce concrete. The result even exceeded his expectations.

Above: Newspaper article on vegetable fiber cut from *The Christian Science Monitor*, sent from Laura to Leonard.