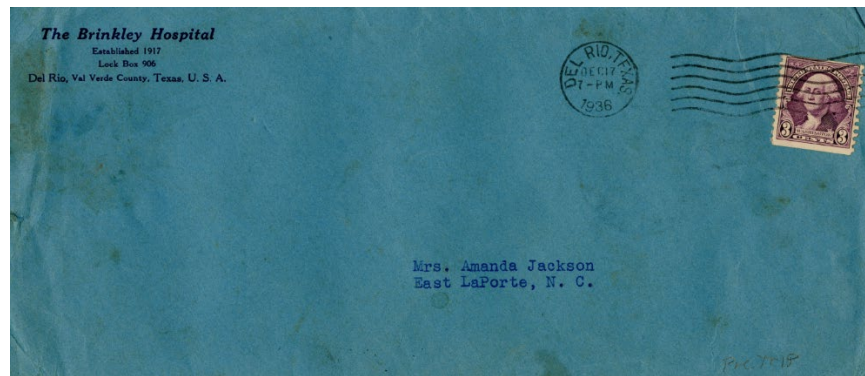


Letter from John R. Brinkley to Amanda Jackson

December 16, 1936

Manuscript:

HL_SM_24-01_BrinkleyJ-1936-Dec16



Transcribed by Gail Parker

English 618: Research Methods in English

Dr. Brian Gastle

10 December 2025

Introduction to the Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography was prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English degree program at Western Carolina University (WCU). 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 graduate students. While they take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are possible. As they learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires meticulous research and corroboration by authoritative sources. Our objective is to provide transcriptions and annotations of WCU's Special Collections materials that will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, patrons, and all users of our library's resources.

If you wish to submit an emendation or correction for this document, please email Dr. Brian Gastle (bgastle@wcu.edu).

Introduction to Document

This letter was written by Dr. John R. Brinkley to Amanda Jackson, a family friend whom he often referred to as “Aunt Amanda.” The letter was sent from his hospital practice in Del Rio, Texas, to his childhood hometown of East LaPorte, North Carolina, while he was at the apex of his career. It contains updates on family, friends, and travel plans for the new year. At this time, the Brinkleys enjoyed their wealth by spending long vacations touring Europe or sailing on one of their yachts. The letter is an interesting glimpse into Brinkley’s personal life, mentioning childhood figures such as Aunt Sally, his childhood neighbors, and glowing compliments of his wife Minnie.

Dr. John R. Brinkley is one of the most controversial popular figures in medicine, politics, and radio broadcasting of the early 20th century. Born in 1885 in rural Jackson County, North Carolina, Brinkley forged a career in promoting his dubious medical practices, most famously by performing goat-testicle transplants on human males as a cure for infertility. Brinkley’s medical certifications were questionable even for the time, when medical school and licensing were not yet standardized across the country the way they are today.

Brinkley’s first hospital was established in 1917 in Milford, Kansas, where he also ran a popular radio station that included his own medical advice call-in segment. Listeners could send in their medical questions, and he would read them on air, before recommending medicines that could be conveniently purchased at his pharmacy. In Kansas, Brinkley also ran a fervent campaign for governor, which some believe he might have won if not for variant spellings of his name on the ballots. As Brinkley grew more influential on the public, the opposition to him in professional medical and legal circles grew stronger.

Although the letterhead indicates that the Brinkley hospital was established in 1917, this is the founding year of the original Kansas hospital, not the one in Texas. The business was moved permanently to Del Rio in 1933, following a similar move by Brinkley’s radio station. The Brinkleys advertised this hospital as a place to address prostate concerns, expanding beyond the goat gland transplant for which Brinkley was famous. The new hospital was located within the Roswell Hotel in Del Rio, while the radio station was located across the US-Mexico border, where transmissions would not be subject to US federal regulation. In 1938, not long after the date of this letter, Brinkley announced that he would move his practice again, this time to Little Rock, Arkansas.

Brinkley mentions his plans to travel Europe in the summer of 1937, a trip which did happen. He also alludes to the possibility of war in this letter.

Editorial Statement

This letter was written in blue ink by typewriter, but the content was originally dictated by John R. Brinkley onto an Ediphone recording device. This would allow someone to speak into the mouthpiece, create a wax cylinder record, and then have it played back to be typed up later. It is unclear if Brinkley himself typed it or if this was done by a secretary. Either way, it was typed on a piece of stationary with the official letterhead of the medical office, reading “The Brinkley Hospital / Established 1917 / Del Rio, Val Verde County, Texas” on the center of the top of the first page. Above his typed signature, he also added a handwritten pencil signature on the second page.

The paper measures 8.5” wide by 10.75” high, the letter was typed single-sided on two separate pages. It was not printed on the front and back of the paper. There is a matching blue envelope that measures 9.5” wide x 4” high. The return address has the same information as the letterhead except it also includes “Lock Box 906,” which may be the mailbox designated to the hospital business as it was located within the Roswell Hotel. The envelope was torn from the right hand side. The postmark stamp is dated December 17th, 1936, at 7pm. There is a small note made in pencil on the bottom right corner of the envelope that reads “Pre Trip.” The letter appears to have been folded into thirds horizontally to fit the envelope.

As a diplomatic edition, the transcription maintains all original spellings, sentence breaks, and page breaks. The text is presented as close as possible to the appearance of the original.

Transcription

[MS page 1]

December 16, 1936

Mrs. Amanda Jackson
East LaPorte, N.C.¹

Dear Aunt Amanda,²

Your good letter of the 11th just received and I am hastening to reply, dictating to you on my Ediphone

¹ An incorporated community, then part of the River Township in Jackson County, NC. Today it is designated as part of Cullowhee. Variant spellings, either with or without an “e”, have evidently never been standardized.

² A family friend for much of Brinkley's life, and also the aunt of his first wife, Sallie Margaret Wike. He frequently referred to her as Aunt Amanda, and maintained a relationship with her long after the end of his first marriage.

record.³

I am glad Annie's little boy is better and hope nothing serious comes of his illness.⁴

I am having sent to you a photograph of the family to give to Annie. I would mail it to her direct but you know I can't remember her last name.⁵ Tell her that everyone who knows Mrs. Brinkley loves her right away. I know I did and have for almost 24 years.⁶ She is a wonderful woman, just the same every year, never changes. Has a heart in her as pure as gold and is indeed a lovely character.

Mrs. Brinkley has been a wonderful help to me and through her help, I have made the success that I have.⁷ Every man needs a good wife and few men can succeed with the other kind.⁸

I have been thinking about flying over the day after Christmas and coming back after New Years. However, I am superstitious. Aunt Sally told me that whatever I wanted to do all of the year, I should do it on New Years.⁹ One time I was away from home on New Years and that year everything went bad.

Last year, I operated on New Years Day and this year has been a wonderful year for us. I would love to go there and loaf around during the holidays but I am afraid that my superstition will keep me away until the first of next May. I expect to spend May there, then leave the first of June for England, Ireland,

³ A dictation device first patented by Thomas Edison in 1878. When spoken into, it would create a tinfoil cylinder with a recording of the sound that could be replayed. A secretary might listen to the recording and type it out afterward. Later improved models used wax cylinders, and this is likely the kind Brinkley would have had.

⁴ Probably Amanda's daughter Annie Lou Jackson. Annie had one son, Ray Bernard Ashe, who lived until 2023.

⁵ Annie's married name had been Ashe since 1924.

⁶ Minerva "Minnie" Telitha Brinkley, his second wife. They were married in 1913.

⁷ Minnie had an active role in promoting the radio and hospital business.

⁸ Brinkley was previously married to Sallie Margaret Wike in 1907, but they were separated by 1913 when he re-married. His first marriage and resulting children were rarely acknowledged in his public image. Sallie moved to Chicago with her children, claiming in a 1920 census that she was a widow.

⁹ A parental figure in Brinkley's life, named Sarah Mingus, who raised him after his mother and father had passed. Brinkley almost always called her "Aunt Sally", and she was frequently referred to by others as his mother's aunt. However, this relationship is uncertain. Additionally, Sarah Mingus is also the name of Brinkley's father's fourth wife. She passed in 1906.

Scotland, Italy, France, Germany, and Switzerland, if they are not at war by that time.¹⁰

¹⁰ A few years later, Brinkley would use his radio station to argue against US involvement in WWII.

[MS page 2]

Mrs. Amanda Jackson - - - 2.¹¹

Johnnie has had a cold, so has Mrs. Brinkley but they are both quite well again.¹²

I have just left the operating room where I had four operations and of course, I am busy operating every day.

Mrs. Brinkley just now is down town getting her hair fixed and I will show her your fine letter when she comes in.¹³

May Peace profound be with you, may the Christmas be an enjoyable and happy one, may the New Year be good to you and may you have many more of them with your loved ones. Regardless of when you are called on to leave here, I am sure, you will go to a better place.¹⁴

Is John Moody's wife still alive? I thought she was dying the day I saw her but have never heard.¹⁵

With lots of love from each of us and write us again soon,

Faithfully yours,
Jno. R. Brinkley M.D.¹⁶
J.R. Brinkley, M.D.

¹¹ This is likely just a pagination method.

¹² John R. Brinkley and Minnie's son, nicknamed "Johnnie Boy".

¹³ The Roswell Hotel was not located far from downtown Del Rio. According to a 1930 fire zoning map, the hotel was within a quarter mile of the courthouse, in the center of city density.

¹⁴ Amanda would have been in her late seventies at the time of this letter, but she did not pass away until 1845 at the age of 87. She actually outlived Brinkley, who passed in 1942.

¹⁵ John Moody was a neighbor from Brinkley's childhood, who allegedly drove the wagon to collect his father's body from where he had passed away during a patient house call. His wife was Emma J. Moody, maiden name Wike. She was also first cousin to Amanda Jackson. Emma passed away in September of 1936, so she was deceased at the time of this letter.

¹⁶ This signature is in pencil, unlike the rest of the letter. Jno is a common shorthand for John.

JRB:WH¹⁷

P.S. I am also sending you a picture to give to Maggie.¹⁸

¹⁷ WH is likely the secretary or typist's initials, showing who was responsible for transcribing the Ediphone dictation.

¹⁸ Another of Amanda's children, Margaret D. Zachary.

Annotated Works Cited

Ancestry Library Edition. [Ancestrylibrary.com](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com)

I used this site to search for census, birth, marriage, and death records to determine relationships between Amanda Jackson, John and Emma Moody, “aunt” Sally, and Brinkley’s first wife Sallie M. Wike.

Brinkley, John R. John R. Brinkley’s letter to Amanda Jackson. 16 December 1936. MS HL_SM_24-01_BrinkleyJ-1936-Dec16. Hunter Library Special and Digital Collections, Western Carolina university, Cullowhee, NC. Accessed 1 November 2025.

Brinkley, John R. Vienna Postcard from Dr. John R. Brinkley to Mrs. Amanda Jackson. 28 June 1937. MS HL_SM_24-01-Postcard1937-BrinkleyJ-Vienna. Hunter Library Special and Digital Collections, Western Carolina university, Cullowhee, NC. Accessed 5 December 2025.

This item from the same collection in Hunter Library shows postal stamps that use the “e”-less spelling of East LaPort.

Buchanan, Jim. “In East LaPorte, Education Had a Brief But Shining Star.” *The Sylva Herald and Ruralite*, 27 Aug. 2024, https://www.thesylvaherald.com/history/article_bf975f20-64a1-11ef-8087-ab1b8531aa32.html. Accessed 5 December 2025.

This article tells some history about the community of East LaPorte, using the “e” spelling.

Del Rio 1930 Sheet 1, Map. Sanborn Map Company, 1930, New York. *The Portal to Texas History* <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph553330/m1/1/>. Accessed 7 December 2025.

I used this source to locate where the Roswell Hotel was located in relation to everything in Del Rio in the 1930s.

“Ediphone, Model E, 1912-1914.” *The Henry Ford*. <https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-collections/artifact/60022>. Accessed 29 November 2025.

This museum’s digital collections site gives more information about the history of Ediphones.

Find A Grave. [findagrave.com](https://www.findagrave.com)

I used this site to confirm dates of death and birth.

Goat Gland Doctor. Produced by Dave Kendall. KTUW Washburn University, 1986. https://texasarchive.org/2017_02504

This documentary gives an overview of key dates in Brinkley's early life and career until his death. Includes interviews with wife Minnie and son Johnnie.

Moorhead, Gerald, et. al., editors Gabrielle Esperdy and Karen Kingsley. "Roswell Hotel." *Society of Architectural Historians SAH Archipedia*. <https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/TX-02-EL15>. Accessed 7 December 2025.

This gave me the address for the Roswell hotel and confirmed that it is the same historic building where Brinkley operated.

North Carolina County Registers of Deeds. "Jackson County Marriage Registry, 1853-1993" North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC, September 28, 1885. ancestrylibrary.com.

This registry shows the marriage of Emma Wike to John Moody.

North Carolina County Registers of Deeds. "Jackson County Marriage Registry, 1853-1993" North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC, January 2, 1870.

This page of the registry from 1870 shows the marriage between J.R. Brinkley and Sarah Mingus.

North Carolina State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics. "North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909-1976". North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. ancestrylibrary.com

This is where I found the death certificate for Amanda Avaline Jackson. It also uses the "e" spelling of East Laporte.

Smith, Philip C. "John R. Brinkley: A Quintessential American Quack." *Journal of community hospital internal medicine perspectives* vol. 12, 5 1-5. 9 Sep. 2022, doi:10.55729/2000-9666.1095

An overview of Brinkley's sham medical credentials and the charges led against him by the rest of the medical community.

US Census Bureau. "Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900." River, Jackson, North Carolina, 1900. ancestrylibrary.com

This census listed Amanda Jackson and her children's names.

Valerie Parker. Personal Interview. 9 December 2025.

This source informed me of business typewriting practices, like pagination and typist initials.

“What's That? Executive Ediphone.” *YouTube*, ploaded by Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, 27 May 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8O3Uwk5SNg&t=47s>

This video demonstrates how an Ediphone would be used.

Wood, Clement. *The Life of a Man, a Biography of John R. Brinkley*. Kansas City, Goshorn Publishing Company, 1937.

This is the biography commissioned by Brinkley during his life. I used it to compare early family stories and claims of relationships against other sources.

“Writing the Basic Business Letter.” *PurdueOWL*.
owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/basic_business_letters/. Accessed 9 December 2025.

This source confirmed the modern use of typists initials in business letters.

Appendix

THF157848 / Ediphone, Model E, 1912-1914



An Ediphone Dictation device from the Collections of the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation.