

Laura Mack Kephart's Letter To Leonard W. Kephart

March 26, 1934

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Transcribed and Edited by

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For ENGL 618: Research Methods in English
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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.
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

The following edition is created from the manuscript of Laura Mack Kephart's letter written to Leonard Kephart on March 26, 1934. Throughout this letter Laura discusses the important matter of writing her will, to better prepare the family for when the time comes that she may pass on. Laura includes details on where all of her belongings will go and to whom they will go to. Laura lays out her wishes very clearly throughout this letter and in many cases trails off into casually chatting about some of her family members, friends or acquaintances. Laura encloses a letter from Jack E. Coburn who is a close friend of the Kephart family and the executor of the Kephart estate. The letter is included in this manuscript in a scanned copy located in the Appendix of this document.

Laura Mack Kephart met Horace Kephart while they were both attending Cornell University later they married and had six children together, Leonard, Cornelia, Barbara, Margaret, Lucy and George. Horace and Laura had an interesting marriage; however, throughout she always stuck by his side. Horace passed away due to a car accident at age 68 in 1931 and Laura passed away at age 92 in 1954.

The letter's recipient, Leonard Wheeler Kephart was the son of Horace and Laura Mack Kephart and was born in January 1892 in Ithaca, New York. In 1913 Kephart graduated from Cornell University where he studied Agriculture. Leonard worked for the Bureau of Industry, Department of Agriculture located in Washington D.C. While working for the Bureau of Industry Kephart published a bulletin about lawn grasses for the Federal Bureau of plant industry. To explore more about his interest in grass, Kephart took a trip to Africa to see if he could discover new types of grasses that he could use for his ongoing research for the Department of Agriculture. While on the hunt for these grasses, Kephart became the first American to scale Africa's highest peak, Mount Kilimanjaro. It took Kephart four days to reach the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro and he trekked through rough patches of snow on the last day of his hike. Unfortunately, Kephart did not discover new grass but instead, he discovered three new varieties of clover. Leonard married Frances Jane Frazer in 1916 and they both had three children, Jane, Barbara-Ann, and George together.

Editor's Note

This edition of Laura Kephart's letter to Leonard Kephart uses a diplomatic feature where the text is reproduced in the same format as the letter appears to be written in order to preserve the authenticity of the original document. Laura Kephart's use of punctuation, such as quotation marks, parenthesis, and commas have been maintained throughout this transcription. At times Kephart lacks usage of commas and tends to include many sentence fragments, in which these have also been preserved.

This transcription is a reproduction of the original letter by Laura Kephart in order by page. The transcription includes page breaks and brackets to indicate the end of each page. Moreover, the use of indentations and em dashes throughout the letter are employed to maintain the original document's layout.

Kephart features some words within the letter than are underlined for emphasis or marked out due to an error in writing. The underlined words have been duplicated with an underline and the marked-out words have been duplicated with strikethroughs. Kephart does not cross her t's directly at the line that it is meant to be crossed within the t because the line is usually found to the right of the t, therefore, Kephart's t's cannot be directly duplicated because of this. Kephart's and-signs, written similarly to a plus sign, are indicated in the document by an ampersand.

Kephart often uses abbreviations for family members and places. In most cases it is evident whom or what the abbreviations represent; however, in some cases it is not so clear. The initials are annotated to the best of the editor's ability and can be referred to via footnote. Sources for annotations are listed in the bibliography.

Manuscript Description

Laura Kephart's letter is written on the front and back side of one page of stationary that was once white but is now dis-colored to yellow. It measures, 12 and 1/8 inches wide and 7 and 11/16 inches high. The paper is rather thin, yet durable. The letter has been folded horizontally in half to allow page breaks. This manuscript was written in pen and throughout the document there are words that are marked out. On the second page there is a phrase underlined and there is also a word that is crossed out. The third page of the document has a word underlined for emphasis. The fourth page has an ink smudge on the bottom. The letter was accompanied by an envelope that is thin and dis-colored yellow from age. The inside of the envelope is a tropical design that is bright orange.

Mar. 26 1934
12 M.

Dear Leonard¹

Roy was delighted to get the stamp & I was too overjoyed to tell to have even a note.² I had about made up my mind that T.P. had cut my acquaintance as Mr. P. seems to have done.³ Just now the Maischs are in & we are out.⁴ Gus' girl died about two months ago, which left some jewelry etc. to be distributed so — .⁵

So far as I know George is & will be working.⁶ He was on the elm tree work with the C.W.A. & it seemed probable he would be kept on with the P.W.A. or whatever part of the alphabet came next.⁷ His off days he works on

¹ Leonard Wheeler Kephart (1892), oldest son of Horace and Laura Kephart. Leonard would have been aged 42 at the time of receiving this letter.

² Roy Ferris Kephart (1927) is George S. (1894) and Pauline (1899) Maisch's son.

³ T.P and Mr. P are unable to be identified.

⁴ The Maisch's include Paul Maisch (1869) and wife Mary Maisch (1865), they are kin to Pauline L. Maisch (1899) who is George Stebbins Kephart's wife.

⁵ Gus is unable to be identified.

⁶ George Stebbins Kephart (1894) is the youngest son of Horace and Laura Kephart.

⁷ Established by Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) was a job creation program that was responsible for creating manual labor jobs for millions of unemployed workers. This was a program that was established during the Great Depression era. George briefly worked for an Elm tree business through the CWA. George switches from working for the CWA to the PWA, which is the Public Work Administration. The Public

his Gash business, in which he still
has faith.⁸ Truth to tell Gash looks
better – more honest – than Roys Tree Co.
to which he clings. If something does
not come along soon, their courage will
give out.⁹ Roy lets it out in being too

Work Administration was also part of the Great Depression's work programs and was on a much larger scale within the construction business.

⁸ Gash business is unable to be identified

⁹ Roy's Tree Co. is unable to be identified.

unreasonable & bossy to endure. I think
B. is really angelic.¹⁰ George keeps
it all in & has to prop up Pauline,
who is doing the best she knows.¹¹ She
is having the hardest time ever a
woman had, & does not let anyone
forget that & how nobly she is bearing
her trouble. Poor George. It breaks
my heart to see him. No power on
Earth or in Heaven could drag a word
of criticism from him.

I have been going to law— or
rather a lawyer- lately; ~~have~~ am
having my will drawn. There won't
be anything except the jewelry, furniture
etc. left. That is valuable; if I don't
have to pawn it before I default.
Also I want to be cremated & the way
to ensure that without controversy is
to so will it.¹² I want M. to have the

¹⁰ Barbara Kephart, born 1897. She is the youngest daughter of Horace and Laura Kephart.

¹¹ Pauline L. Maisch (1899) is George Kephart's (1894) wife. They married in 1924.

¹² Laura Kephart was cremated after she passed away, as she wished, and her ashes were placed in a grave with Horace Kephart in Bryson City, NC.

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use of the furniture etc. during her

life or as long as she wants it.

Then it is to go to my grand-daughters¹³.

¹³ Margaret Kephart (1890), Horace and Laura Kephart's middle daughter.

Therefore if there are things you &
Frances would like Jane & Barbara to
have please make a list.¹⁴ The other
girls with daughters will do the same,
then things can be juggled round
fairly as possible. Then M. can
make her will accordingly as that
will be that.

As I am paying for law by
lending the lawyers baby at times,
I had Mr. Frigar write to Mr. Coburn.
You better not approach Helen (Mrs.
Angels daughter she is) because it
would be best to steer clear of that
crowd.¹⁵ I am enclosing copy of letter
received from Mr. Coburn. Please
return at once as, I want it to refer
to at times.¹⁶ Mr. F. will answer as soon

¹⁴ Frances Jane Frazer and Leonard Kephart married in 1916.
Barbara and Jane Kephart are Leonard and Frances Kephart's daughters.

¹⁵ Jack E. Coburn (1866), Horace and Laura Kephart's close friend as well as the owner of the Kephart estate.
Helen is unidentified along with Mrs. Angel.
Mr. Frigar is unable to be identified.

¹⁶ Letter that was originally enclosed was a letter regarding the Kephart estate, written by Jack E. Coburn on March 19, 1934. See Appendix for letter. A big thank you to Jason Brady in Western Carolina University special collections for providing a copy of the Coburn letter.

as we have a chance to talk it over.¹⁷

I never agreed to leave the things

there; certainly, never intended to

¹⁷ Mr. F is shorthand for Mr. Frigar who is not able to be identified.

include any MGS.¹⁸ Mrs. Angel gave me clearly to understand that your father was not in debt; also said “he always paid by check.”¹⁹ I could find neither checks nor stubs. Of course I have no witness to our talks which occurred at the table when we were there alone. Any how we will let Mr. F run it. If you run across Helen refuse to discuss matters.

Fritz Fernow’s wife died about two weeks ago.²⁰ Horrible cancer on the spleen which pressed on the stomach so she could not swallow. She was cremated just the way I want—no casket, just covered with flowers. I want evergreens.

Please return the letter (Mr. C’s) at once with any comments you want

¹⁸ MSG is abbreviated for “messages.”

¹⁹ Helen and Mrs. Angel are unable to be identified at this time.

²⁰ Fritz Fernow (1888) is the brother of Karl Fernow who is married to Horace and Laura Kephart’s daughter Lucy Wheeler Kephart. Fritz’s wife was Ethel Fernow (1891).

to make.²¹

Good for Buddy. Roy was let
off at the Girl Scout Camp & a bachelor,
(nephew of the German Supt's wife) & German
critique was kept on although he is not
specially competent!²² Lots of love to all Mama

²¹ Mr. C is a shorthand version of Mr. Coburn who is Jack E. Coburn (1866).

²² "Supt." Is an abbreviation for "Superintendent."

During this time, WWII would be getting ready to begin in 1939, 5 years after this letter was written.

Bibliography

Ancestry Library, 2008, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/>, 1997.

- Alstrum Family Tree. <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/tree/52323977/family?cfpid=27560934373>
The Alstrum family tree provides a detailed family tree of Horace Kephart's family and is very useful for quickly finding members of the Kephart family.
- "Schedule No. 1 Population." City of New York, 12th Census of the United States, 5 June 1900,
https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/7602/4114600_00023/48926906?backurl=https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/52323977/person/27572462931/facts/citation/135121026432/edit/record
This is a census that helped indicate who the Maisch's family is.
- "U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999 for Leonard Kephart" Ancestry Library, 1913
https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/1265/40392_b074193-00154?pid=242598743&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=jmj205%26_phstart=successSource
This resource provides information about Leonard Kephart's education at Cornell such as the year he graduated and what his degree was in.

Casada, Jim. "John E. 'Jack' Coburn: A Pivotal Outlander Who Faded into History" *Smoky Mountain Living*. 2017, 1 December.
This article includes a great amount of information about the owner of the Kephart estate, Jack E. Coburn.

Coburn, Jack. Letter to Messrs. Ticknor & Ticknor Attorneys at Law. 19 March 1934. Horace Kephart Collection. Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.
This document is the letter that Laura Kephart mentions in this manuscript. Jack Coburn discusses the Kephart estate.

"Creation of Federal Civil Works Administration." *Monthly Labor Review*, vol. 37, no. 6, 1933.
This article provides information on what the Civil Works Administration (CWA) was, and how the CWA was created.

Ellison, George and McCue, Janet. *Back of Beyond: A Horace Kephart Biography*. Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2019.
Back of Beyond: A Horace Kephart Biography includes a great amount of information about Kephart and his life.

Kays, Holly. "The Story Behind the Man: First-ever Horace Kephart biography Explores a Complex Man and Momentous Life." *Smoky Mountain News*, 2019 May, 29.

<https://www.smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/27014-the-story-behind-the-man-first-ever-horace-kephart-biography-explores-a-complex-man-and-momentous-life>
This article provides information about Laura Mack Kephart and goes in depth about the relationship her and husband, Horace Kephart had.

Kephart, Laura M. Letter to Leonard W. Kephart. 26 March 1934. Box 1, Folder 12.
MSS12050108004 Horace Kephart Collection. Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.
The original manuscript written by Lauran Kephart to Leonard Kephart.

Lowery, George, "Outdoor Legend Horace Kephart's Many Cornell Roots," Cornell Chronicle, 11 October 2011, <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2011/10/janet-mccue-co-writes-intro-classic-book>
This resource provides information about Horace Kephart's time at Cornell. This helps give the reader more of an inside look of Kephart's college career.

"Public Works Administration" The Roosevelts Paper Project.
<https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/pwa.cfm>
This resource provides information about the Public Works Administration (PWA) by describing how the PWA was created and why.

S.J. "Laura White Mack Kephart" Find A Grave, 25 Apr 2010,
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/51603834/laura-white-kephart>
On this Find A Grave, it provides information on the burial of Laura Kephart.

"This Week in Cornell History" Cornell University, 27 August 2014,
<http://news.cornell.edu/essentials/2014/08/week-cornell-history-0> Accessed 6 July 2015.
This resource provides a write up about Leonard W. Kephart regarding his success at hiking Mount Kilimanjaro and his discovery of three different types of clovers.

Wallace, Glen. "Leonard Wheeler Kephart." Find A Grave, 23 May 2011,
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/70285193/leonard-wheeler-kephart>
This resource has information on Leonard's family, and burial information. It provides a quick look into who Leonard was and what he did during his lifetime.

Appendix

Coburn, Jack. Letter to Messrs. Ticknor & Ticknor Attorneys at Law. 19 March 1934. Horace Kephart Collection. Library Special Collections, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC.

J. E. Coburn
Timber & cut over lands
Bryson City Bank Building
Bryson City, N.C.

March 19, 1934

Messrs. Ticknor & ticknor
Attorneys at Law
Mount Kisco, New York

Gentlemen:
Re: Estate of Horace Kephart

This is in reply to your letter of the 16th in regard to the above estate. I qualified as Administrator of the estate on April 10, 1931.

My friend, Horace Kephart, was suddenly killed in an automobile accident April 2, 1931. His people were notified and Mrs. Kephart and children came to Bryson City to the funeral. I attended the funeral of Mr. Kephart and left immediately thereafter for a business engagement previously arranged in Knoxville, Tennessee, and did not return home to Bryson City until April 6th. At that time, I found Mrs. Kephart and the rest of the family about to return to their home and my meeting with them was very brief. I found that it had been arranged with Mrs. Kephart and the children and Mr. Kephart's friends in Bryson City for me to act as Administrator of his estate, which I agreed to do and have done. They also advised me that they had agreed that the effects of Mr. Kephart-- his library and camp outfit-- would be kept intact, and, whenever it could be arranged, were to be placed in a suitable place memorial in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park for the benefit of his many friends and admirers.

I then duly qualified as Administrator and have carried out the above agreement to the best of my ability.

Following is a list of the claims against Mr. Kephart's estate that have been filed with me as Administrator:

W. E. Elmore, funeral director, metal casket at actual cost, with no charge for hearse, ambulance, or other service	\$375.00
Mrs. Jennie Angel, proprietress of the boarding house where Mr. Kephart lived for 20 years before his death. This board was at the rate of \$20.00 per month	551.00
To the Wilhide estate, office rent Bryson City Drug Company (Kelly E. Bennett)	212.00
	196.62

Then there is a small amount that I have paid personally for moving his office and other matters, which will amount to \$25.00 or \$30.00, of which I have an account but which is not included in this list.

As against these claims, his assets consisted of a library, an office table, an old typewriter, and some 500 volumes of miscellaneous books and manuscripts, the only manuscript of any possible financial importance was a story-- "Mountain Magic"-- that he had completed just prior to his death, but had never been publishable to get publishing company interested in publishing. Then, there is a contract with the McMillan Publishing Company of New York that was made by Mr. Kephart several years before his death. This company published on a royalty basis "Camping and Woodcraft" and "Our Southern Highlanders". The royalties received by Mr. Kephart on Camping and Woodcraft was 12 1/2 cents per copy sold; and on Our Southern Highlanders 30 cents per copy sold. On June 1, 1931, The National Sportsman paid for a story that Mr. Kephart had sent them just a few days before his death \$50.00. On July 22, 1932, McMillan paid \$217.88 on royalties. On July 22, 1932, On July 13, 1931, McMillan & Company paid on royalties \$246.67. On July 29, 1932, McMillan paid \$317.88 on royalties. On July 28, 1933,

McMillan paid \$245.05 on royalties.

On August 6, 1932, I paid W.E. Elmore for the metal casket \$375.00. Under the laws of North Carolina, burial expenses are preferred claims and are paid out of the first money received by the estate. On August 8, 1933, I paid I paid 25 per cent of the balance of the accounts, amounting to ~~\$\$\$~~ \$227.40. There is a balance of \$750.42 still due and owing by the estate, in addition to the amount I have personally advanced. The balance of cash and securities I have on hand will be applied on the indebtedness of the estate as rapidly as possible. I expect to make another distribution the last of July or the first of August, when I get ~~an~~ accounting from the McMillan Company.

My reason for not filing an accounting was owing to the agreement made by Mrs. Kephart and the family with Mr. Kephart's creditors that we would like to keep his personal effects intact and carry out the original plan for a memorial in the Great Smoky Mountains Park. She expressed this as her desire and I have been trying to carry it out.

I might add that the Wilhides were clamoring for the rentor to move Mr. Kephart's effects from their building, and I had to provide a different room and made arrangements with the local telephone company for storage at \$4.00 per month. However, they later needed the room and I had to shift the property again to a building owned by the Nantahala Power & Light Company, and, as yet there has been no storage paid on the library and camp outfit, and I am rather hopeful that arrangements can be made whereby the rents will be very nominal, if anything.

Shortly after the death of Mr. Kephart, Kelly E. Bennett as Secretary, George W. McCoy, Editor of the Asheville Citizen, as Director of Publicity, and George M. Stevens, of the Citizen staff at that time, as Treasurer. After several meetings, it was decided that we would make an effort to secure membership and contributions for a memorial to Horace Kephart to be established in the National Park. In February of 1932, we sent out something over 1000 letters to friends of Mr. Kephart, not only in North Carolina and Tennessee, but in a good many of the Northern states. This was done right in the face of the depression. We received a good many replies from people who were in sympathy with the movement, but were at that time unable to make any contribution. One letter from Governor Pinchot of Pennsylvania who was heartily in favor of the movement, but stated that he felt he could not make any contribution at that time when he 3 million people in his own state facing starvation. He further stated that he hoped to be able to make a contribution later on. I am enclosing one of these circular letters.

My object and intent is to clean up the indebtedness of Mr. Kephart's estate without resorting to his personal effects. If his personal effects and library were put up for sale they would bring practically nothing and we would entirely lose them for the purpose of putting them into a memorial. If you so desire and think it advisable, I could at any time file an itemized statement with the Clerk of the Superior Court; then it would be my duty to advertise and put up for public sale the above mentioned effects, which we would very much like to keep and preserve in the form of a memorial in the National Park, which we feel that Mr. Kephart was to a large extent instrumental in getting located in these mountains.

I shall be glad to consider any suggestions you desire to make in regard to the matter.

Yours very truly
J. E. Coburn, Adm.

~~JEC~~
JEC.W
Enclosure.