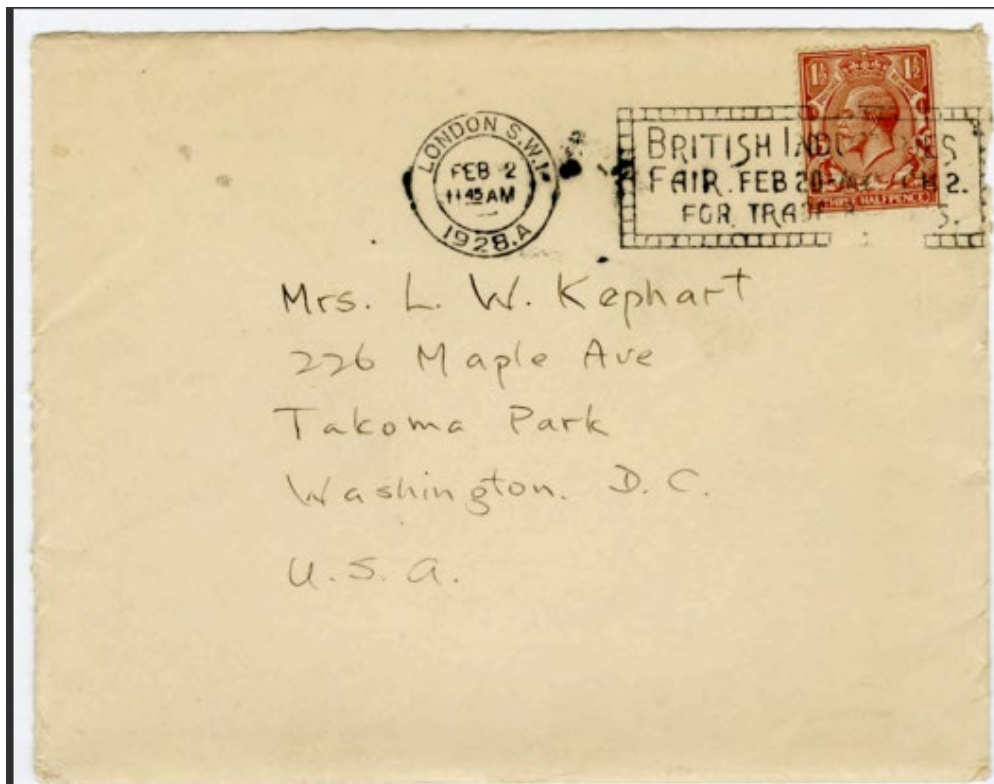


Leonard Kephart's Letter to Frances Frazer Kephart

Feb 1, 1928

Manuscript: HL_MSS 22-04_08_49_03



Transcribed by: Nyoka Pierce, Anna Robertson & Robert Stevenson

For English 618: Research Methods in English

December 2, 2024

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

Leonard Wheeler Kephart, the author of this letter, was born on January 10, 1892, in Ithaca, Tompkins County, New York and died on February 10, 1988, in Germantown, Montgomery County, Maryland. His mother, Laura White Mack was married to Horace Sowers Kephart. Leonard married Frances ‘Frankie’ Frazer, who was born June 23, 1887, in Hunt County, Texas to parents, L. Maud Overton and Willam Christopher Frazer. Frances was buried on June 26, 1971, in Silver Spring, Montgomery County Maryland on June 28, 1971.

Leonard married Frances in 1916. Frances was 29 years old, and Leonard was 24. They had three children together: Jane, Barbara-Ann, and George. At the time this letter was written, the couple’s youngest child was five years old.

In 1913 Leonard graduated from Cornell University where he studied Agriculture. He worked for the Bureau of Industry’s Department of Agriculture located in Washington D.C. While working there Leonard published a bulletin about grass. To explore more about his interest in grass, he visited Africa to see if he could discover new types of grass that could be used for his ongoing research for the Department of Agriculture.

At the time of this letter, Leonard was traveling back from an expedition in Cape Town, South Africa where he was exploring and researching various types of grasses. Frances was living in Takoma Park, Maryland.

The following edition is created from the manuscript of Leonard’s letter to Frances Frazer Kephart. Throughout this letter, dated February 1st, 1928, Leonard details his adventures as he travels through Western Europe from South Africa. What was supposed to be a straightforward trip to London evolved into a whimsical and spirited recounting of his mishaps and discoveries with his colleague, Robert Piemesel, and a few traveling companions.

Frances is regaled with Leonard’s humorous and often serious accounts of his adventures from Holland to Brussels. His travel window documents his journey through Western Europe post WWI, the Great Depression, and just before WWII—a period that witnessed Western Europe in the throes of recalibration.

When this letter was written, Leonard and Robert were traveling on the SS *Njassa*, a ship of the Hamburg-America Line. While Kephart writes the ship's name as *Nyassa* in this letter as well as others in this series, he writes it as *Njassa* in two letters written in November 1927 (MSS22-04_08_47_03 and 04), and the latter is more likely the correct name. He describes the ship as German throughout these letters. The *Njassa* was a German ship, operated at the time by the Hamburg-America Line. The *Nyassa* was a steam ocean liner that also took passengers between Africa and Europe, connecting Lisbon and Cape Town. Later, during WWII, the *Nyassa* was used to transport Jewish refugees to various countries including the United States. But the *Nyassa* was a Portuguese vessel at the time, not German. The differences in spelling are likely because *Njassa* is the German version of the English toponym *Nyassa*, deriving from a province in Mozambique (also spelled *Niassa* or *Nyasa*); therefore, when Leonard wrote *Nyassa*, he was perhaps translating the ship's name into English.

Leonard's party initially sailed on the Scheldt River. According to the journal article, "The History of the Scheldt," dated January 1920, "there is no river in the world that plays a larger part in the economic life of the territories watered by it than the Scheldt...Belgium cannot do without the only river that connects her directly with the sea, and it is almost entirely Belgian commerce, centralized in the great port of Antwerp, that feed the navigation of the Lower Scheldt" (Terlinden, 185-197). The SS Njassa traveled the Scheldt to reach the port of Antwerp, which, at the time, was one of the largest and busiest ports in Europe. Antwerp's location and its connection to other major European rivers, such as the Rhine and the Meuse, established it as an essential hub for maritime trade and travel during that time (Terlinden 185-197; Scenic Cruising Scheldt River).

In the retelling of the initial stage of his journey, Leonard comments on the uncertainty of the ship stopping in Lisbon due to a plague at Las Palmas. According to the report "Prevalence of Disease: Foreign and Insular" from the Public Health Reports (1896-1970), dated January 27, 1928, a case of plague was documented in Las Palmas on December 16, 1927. This finding is further supported by the "Public Health" Reports from the Monthly Review of World Prevalence of Communicable Diseases dated March 9, 1928, which states, "three plague cases occurred at Las Palmas, in the Canary Islands, on December 15. Early in January there were two further cases, and a third case on January 15," (Public Health Reports, 581-603). At the time, it was apparent that an outbreak of such a small nature would be enough to derail travel.

Leonard passively comments on the uncertainty of the train service to Paris and how his party had to make alternate plans. While his tone was humorous, the brevity of the Parisian transportation issue was not communicated. Frequent strikes across Paris significantly disrupted the effectiveness and efficiency of transportation. A *London Times* article titled "Paris Strike Riot," dated August 20, 1927, just six months prior to Leonard's travels on the Njassa, reported an attack and subsequent riots involving union and non-union works and the police due to strikes for an increase in wages. Another *Times* article, dated Jan 2, 1928, titled "Railwaymen's Leaders And The New Year—Spirit of Cooperation," states "if the railway companies are forced to run at a loss, the standard of life of railway men will be endangered, and, therefore, there is a common interest in demanding the removal of anomalies, and facilities to meet unfair competition." This article alluded to the provocation and subsequent striking of the national union railway workers mentioning that "the coming year, like the past, will bristle with problems and difficulties for the working-class movement." Incidents of this nature helped create the context for Leonard's issues with the trains.

Leonard then travels to Belgium where he comments to Frances about the price of gloves being substantially more expensive than the year prior. According to the text *The World Economy between World Wars*, the drastic inflation in the price of gloves was predominantly due to economic instability in Europe after WWI and the devaluation of currency which led to the hyperinflation of goods. The text notes that Belgium was one of the countries where inflation continued after 1920. By 1926 Belgium had achieved some degree of financial stabilization and had restored the gold standard. However, its currency had depreciated to 14.5% of its "prewar parity," meaning that its value had suffered substantial loss in its purchasing power (Feinstein).

In an instance of comedic frenzy, Leonard recounts for Frances an incident involving an imbecilic cabdriver, a wrong pier, and a schedule discrepancy with their boat.

He describes his passage through Germany where they came upon the "front line during the war." He gives accounts of the sights and emotions felt by himself and those around him as they sailed down the Scheldt River where they could see Zeebrugge on the German side and Ostend on the Belgium territory. He describes how ten years prior, the land had been torn by the ravages of war.

Leonard's travels take him onto the Elbe River where he and his party arrive in Hamburg and are met by harsh weather conditions. Leonard notes about the newness in the condition of the German ships post-war compared to the old and dilapidated state of the fleet.

Through Leonard's eyes, Frances is privy to the beauty and cleanliness of Hamburg, especially as a port city, which he compares to Washington. From Hamburg to Berlin, the distance from Washington to Philadelphia, Leonard and his party take a brief respite in the neighborhood of Unter den Linden and Friederick Strasse, two of Berlin's most iconic streets. Leonard describes this area as the 5th Avenue of Berlin. After taking in a show—a revue of naked girls, he goes on to describe the experience of the show very openly to Frances. He comments on the casual nudity and the scantily clad passengers, both male and female, he witnesses while on the ship and in Germany. He follows with his reflections on differing social mores in America and Europe at the time. Leonard's tone reflects that of speaking to a close friend and confidant. Francis was older than Leonard by five years and at the time of this letter she was 42 to his 36. The couple had been married for 12 years, and this letter illustrates a brief window into their relationship as one of openness.

Leonard relates a chance meeting with personal acquaintances from the U.S. – Earl and Mabel Haskell – in a Berlin hotel, followed by a brief account of the couple's own travels to Germany from "Perisa" (modern-day Iran) where they seem to have been working in some diplomatic capacity. Kephart briefly recounts that it was he and Piemesel's last day in Berlin and their return trip to London, he offered a passing reference to Mr. Edwin Smith, and an invitation for his wife to meet him in New York upon their final return to the U.S.

The letter concludes with Leonard reading a Washington Post article about "his" climb of Mt. Kilimanjaro and shares concerns with his wife about his name appearing without reference to Piemeisel. He sends his love to his family as he prepares to return home.

This document is noteworthy for travel historians, Jewish historians, and economists as it highlights a poignant moment in history where the effects of war and economic unrest is a visceral reality. Though war is not yet in Leonard's awareness, documentarians can use his perspective to note how the world was once affected and the quality of life that will be again upended in a few short years. Travel historians would find Leonard's insights on post/pre-war Europe to be fascinating as he observes a world where travel is affected by plagues and the vestiges of economic uncertainty in the aftermath of war. Leonard's observations of the state of Germany compared to the state of Belgium is particularly interesting as he is commenting on the visual aesthetics from an outsider's perspective—how the German fleet of ships, which appear to be in better condition than the Belgian fleet, and perhaps how he was unwittingly commenting on Germany's preparation for the coming war.

Economists would find Belgium's post-war and post-depression economic uncertainty noteworthy due to the country's fall from its pre-war financial hierarchy. Before the war, Belgium was recognized as a

financial epicenter with its own stock markets. Economists would be interested in how these economic shifts altered the nation's social fabric and how popular culture responded as a result.

Leonard describes one of his travel companions, Mrs. Schlessenger, the wife of a prominent diamond geologist from Johannesburg, as “a high-class family of German Jews...cultured and nice in every way.” This information is significant for Jewish historians interested Jewish presence in South Africa. According to the article “A Short History of the Jewish Community in Joburg,” published on the *Heritage Portal*, South Africa's prominent history and heritage website, there is a rich history of Jewish presence in Johannesburg dating back to 1886. Jews were instrumental in establishing the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. And Jews have played a role in several top corporations (Davie).

Editorial Statement

The intention of this transcription is to utilize a diplomatic approach in maintaining the integrity of Leonard Kephart's original intention when first written. This transcription includes all the original spelling, punctuation, abbreviations, errors and special characters presented in the original letter. This edition of Leonard Kephart's letter to Frances Kephart maintains his use of quotation marks, crossed out words and carets used to add additional thoughts. Kephart's writing style at times presents as a stream of consciousness where his use of punctuation is sparse and his sentences frequently run together; his form of writing has also been preserved.

This transcription serves as a reproduction of the original letter by Leonard Kephart in order by page. The transcription includes page breaks, page numberings and the word (back) in brackets to signify the back of a page that was not originally numbered by Leonard. This transcription has maintained the original layout of Leonard's letter by keeping the transcription on the left margin of the page and utilizing indentations to signify a natural beginning of a sentence. Formatting is uniform throughout the document except for instances where Leonard's words float above the regular line of text. In these instances, the floating words have a reduced font size and have been formatted with a 6-pt. gap before the words to distinguish the lines with which they are associated.

Featured within the original document are words that have been crossed out which have been duplicated in this transcription with a ~~striketrough~~. Kephart's use of minims is substantial throughout his original document; in most cases, it is possible to surmise the intention of the word. Meanwhile, in other cases, it is not entirely clear. These areas are marked with a question mark after the word and is referred to via footnote. Sources with annotation are listed in the bibliography.

Given the uniqueness of the document and the combination of scholarly backgrounds brought together in the completion this project, the editors have provided detailed explanations relating to the history and economics of Europe between the two world wars and topics relating to Kephart's work as an agronomist.

Manuscript Description

Leonard Kephart's letter to Frances Kephart is written on standard hotel stationary paper measuring 6in wide x 9in long. There are 9 pages, written front and back, to this packet of letters. Each page is thick and slightly yellowed with time. On the top left portion of the paper, are the words: *Telephone: 8042,8043* and *Telegrams: Eccleston Hotel, London*. The top right portion of each page reads: *Eccleston Hotel, Eccleston Square, S.W.I—London*. The letter has been folded horizontally in half to fit in the envelope that measures 5in x 6 1/8thin. The initial three pages of the manuscript appears to be written in pencil while the rest of the document is written in pen. The manuscript features sections containing carets, to signify an additional word or thought placed above a sentence. Other areas feature words that have been crossed out with the intended replacement placed above or next to the sentence. Leonard's numbering of the pages are initially designated only to the front side of the paper until page 4 where he numbers the back page as page 6, and the back of page 5 as page 7. Pages 8-14 are numbered on back and front with the back of page 14 going without a page number. It is important to note that Leonard's number 4 is more akin to the number 6 or a sideways cursive lowercase l.

The accompanying envelope appears to have been torn open along the seams at the top and partially along its sides. The envelope, a small rectangular piece of paper that has been slightly yellowed with time and featuring inkblots. The front face contains 2 black ink stamps and one postage stamp. The first black ink stamp is a circle with the words London S.W.I at the top curve and 1928, and at the bottom curve. Another circle sits within with the words FEB 2 1145AM. The second black-ink stamp states in large capital letters BRITISH INDUSTRIES, with the word Industries being slightly faded and running across the postage stamp. The words FAIR. FEB 20-MC CH 2. And the bottom line stating FOR TRANSF...3. The postage stamp features King George V on a red stamp with the numbers 1 ½ on both sides of the crown. The words THREE HALFPENCE is emboldened on the bottom of the stamp.

Transcription

[MS page 1]

Feb 1, 1928

Dear Frances,¹

The letter that I was going to write from Southampton was never started. For on a few hours notice we changed our plans completely. Instead of getting off at Lisbon, going overland to Paris and from there to London, we stayed on the boat, put our baggage ashore at Southampton kept on to Antwerp, hustled over + back to Brussels (or hustled over to Brussels + back. while the boat was unloading at Antwerp, ~~and~~, kept on the Hamburg, and finally Leaving the Nyassa² there went to Berlin. Yes sir we have been to Berlin. Its a long story and full of incidents but I'll try to get the main features in this letter, which should reach Wash. before I do As it will go by a faster boat.

¹ Frances Frazer Kephart, wife of Leonard Wheeler Kephart, was living in Takoma Park, M.D when she received this letter. She would have been 40 yrs old at the time.

² Leonard writes Nyassa in his letter, which is a Portuguese steam ocean liner. Evidence from previous letters suggests that he was onboard the German ship the SS Njassa.

[MS page 1]
(back)

As I told you before we began to talk about a change of plans before we reached Lisbon. In the first place there was some doubt that we would be allowed to land at Lisbon owing to the plague at Las Palmas.³ Then there was uncertainty about the train service to Paris. Some of the people saying it had recently been curtailed to three trains a week.⁴ But chiefly we found out that it would cost only £5 to stay on the boat and Southampton, Antwerp or even go all the way to ^ Hamburg. The more we thought about it the more we preferred the idea of seeing Belgium, Holland and Germany. So seeing a little of Portugal and Spain and France which we had already seen. We did not finally make up our minds until we got to Lisbon and found that it would indeed be at least 2 days before we could get a train to Paris. That settled it and we headed for Hamburg.

As I told you we left at Southampton all our baggage except two handbags, in order to travel light.

The boat got to Antwerp late Tuesday Afternoon. Antwerp is on the Scheldt River⁵ some 30 miles inland from the coast, on the

³ Between December 15 1927, and January 27 1928, several cases of plague was reported from the Canary Islands.

⁴ Leonard's uncertainty about the train service in Paris was perhaps due to the waves of strikes and economic unrest experienced by railway workers at the time.

⁵ The Scheldt river is the only river that connects Belgium to the sea. At the time, it was established as an essential hub for trade and commerce.

2.

Holland border. Then trip up the river was therefore through Holland. Holland was exactly as I had pictured it a flat level country, cut frequently by canals, beside which at frequent intervals were the great 8 clumsy, but efficient windmills. It was farm country all the way, just broad expanses of fields, brown and bare from the winter and mostly muddy and dreary.⁶ It really was not at all romantic or exciting.

As we approached Antwerp we could begin to see the tall tower of the cathedral, then the tall Flemish buildings along the wharves and finally the miles of wharves with ships of all nations tied up to them. Antwerp is essentially a port city, full of old warehouses and factories and rather dingy. The gayety and social life of Belgium all centers in Brussels the capital and dial city.⁷

^ 40 miles south of Antwerp. We went ashore

⁶ What Leonard was probably seeing was perhaps a polder—"a piece of low-lying land reclaimed from the sea, a river, etc., and protected by dykes," (O.E.D.). Leonard's description resonates with the historical uses of windmills in the Netherlands and the muddy landscape was perhaps due to the area being recently drained.

⁷ By February 1928, the Port of Antwerp, would have been over 800 years old which may attest to its worn down look reported by Leonard. The Port of Antwerp, built in the 12th century and established as a world port by Napoleon Bonaparte at the start of the 19th century, is considered one of the most important and largest ports in Europe.

[MS page 2]
(back)

as soon as the boat was berthed. Piemeisel⁸ and I with some of the people from the ship. Antwerp has one very good main street with good shops, and lots of narrow little side streets with interesting little shops.⁹ But the women all said that the place to shop was Brussels, which is almost a counterpart of Paris, and at least equally cheap. So we did no shopping in ~~B~~ Antwerp, but planned to leave early the next morning for Brussels. On returning to the ship we learned to our consternation that the boat was to leave at noon the next day instead of 7 o'clock at night. That squelched all idea of seeing Brussels. But while we were eating breakfast the next morning word came that the ship would not sail until four. Breakfast was instantly forgotten and amid wild excitement we filed off the ship, jumped on a tram (street car) for the RR station and at 8:45 were on our way to Brussels in a third class carriage. Our party consisted of P and I, Mrs. Hensel, a middle-aged

⁸ Robert L. Piemesel (1889-1972), who travelled to Africa with Leonard on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

⁹ The street referenced was perhaps The Meir, which, at the turn of the sixteenth century, is hailed as "Antwerp's most famous street...the wide street is not only an important commercial street, but also the site of many of the city's parades and events," (A View on Cities). During the window of Leonard's visit, The Meir "and surrounding streets [was] the place where rich patricians settle and build sumptuous mansions," (A View on Cities).

3.

German lady, and Mrs. Schlessenger, the wife of a prominent diamond geologist of Johannesburg,¹⁰ with her 20 yr old daughter and 18yr old son. These people had been our chief companions all the way up from Capetown and as soon as they heard that we were going to Berlin asked us to join them and they would show us around. The Schlessengers are a high-class family of German Jews ~~but~~ cultured and nice in every way¹¹. They all spoke German and French and knew Berlin well. So it was quite a Godsend to have them take us in tow.

We reach Brussels about 10 and at once set out to find the shops. There are all kinds of cathedrals¹² and things to see there but we could not possibly see them in the four hours that we

¹⁰ The only geologist found in Johannesburg from the 1900's was Schlesinger, S., who is listed on the board of members of the Geological Society of South Africa. This ledger is listed in the "Transactions of the Geological Society of South Africa," from the 1900's.

¹¹ Jews played a prominent role in Johannesburg in the early 19th and 20th century and were present in many aspects of the city's public life.

¹² Belgium's strong Roman Catholic heritage was displayed in the many cathedrals and churches found throughout the capital.

[MS page 3]

(back)

had available so voted to visit the shops instead. I had wired (wirelessly) to Paris to have my mail forwarded to Brussels so as to get your letter with the glove sizes. I was also expecting one from miss Brun with the sizes of the girls in the office. But the letters had not arrived, so the glove business is practically off. ~~It~~ As it turned out it is doubtful if I could have gotten many gloves anyway as prices are much higher than they were last May and instead of getting good gloves for 30-40 ¢ they now cost from \$1-1.50 Which makes wholesale glove buying out of the question.¹³ I did however get something else which is, I think, equally nice, and is still cheap. You'll see it when I get Home. The Schlessenger's helped me to get it and being really experts and being Jews got it at rock bottom prices. I did get a very good pair of gloves for myself for about \$1. 30.

We arrived back in Antwerp just in time to get in a taxi and make a

¹³ Brussels was still recovering financially after the substantial depreciation of their currency, which caused major inflation of goods.

4.

mad dash for the boat. Unfortunately we had a regular imbecile for a driver and instead of taking us to Pier 19 on the quay¹⁴ took us to Pier 19 at the freight wharves, clear across the city. When we realized his mistake we were horror stricken for we had just two minutes to spare before 4 o'clock. Jabbering at him wildly we got turned around and with everybodies head sticking out the window crying "Vite, vite!" (faster, faster) dashed madly across the city. It seems like a hopeless chase and we had begun to wonder how on earth we were to get out of the fix when we drew up to the proper pier 19 and found the Nyassa still there. every man grabbing a woman by the arm we splashed pell-mell through the

¹⁴ "A man-made bank or landing stage, typically built of stone, lying alongside or projecting into water for loading and unloading ships." (OED)

5.

mud and with a last gasp scrambled up the gangway. By the skin of our shins we had caught the boat-only to find that the hour of departure had been changed to 6 o' clock.

That night when we started down the river we passed through historic country ~~places~~. The front line during the war came ~~went~~ to the coast just below the mouth of

Schelde.¹⁵ of the line the river. On the German side ^was Zeebrugge¹⁶ where one of the most disparate naval assaults of the war took place. On the allies side was Ostend,¹⁷ which the Germans tried frantically- for four unsuccessful years to capture to cut of the channel ports and break the line of communication with England.¹⁸ Here we began to realize the almost unthinkable ~~change~~ difference between now and ten years ago. That night we sailed peacefully and happily. Ten years ago that

¹⁵ River in Europe that flows from France across Belgium to the North Sea.

¹⁶ port, West Flanders province, northwestern Belgium.

¹⁷ municipality, Flanders Region, northwestern Belgium..

¹⁸ World War I, an international conflict that in 1914–18 embroiled most of the nations of Europe along with Russia, the United States, the Middle East, and other regions.

6.

night the North Sea and all its shores were a hellish inferno.¹⁹ We sailed on waters, passed towns and cities. Walked on streets where 10 years

we met ago would have ~~been~~ instant death. The very people on that boat that night, without a single exception, were then our deadly enemies. It was utterly grotesque and incredible. We were going "On to Berlin". But with what a difference.

We reached Hamburg early Sunday morning in a scudding snow storm. The front of the ship was crusted with ice. Two short weeks before those very decks and portholes were too hot to touch with the hand. we had sweltered in white ducks.²⁰ Now we shivered in the thickest woolens. Never again I think will circumstances surprise me. I'm prepared for anything.

Hamburg is unquestionably one of the greatest ports in the world. It lies on the River Elbe²¹ 30 miles from the sea. But great basins and ships have been dug out until for miles and miles there is nothing but docks and wharves. The war sent it to almost complete ruin for the

¹⁹ Siege of Antwerp, German capture of the Belgian city of Antwerp from September 28 to October 10, 1914, in the early months of World War I.

²⁰ Cotton trousers popular in England and sometimes associated with dandies.

²¹ One of the major waterways of central Europe. It runs from the Czech Republic through Germany to the North Sea, flowing generally to the northwest.

7.

allies confiscated nearly 70% of the vast fleets of merchant vessels that Germany possessed. By some queer arrangement of finances however Germany has been able to build large numbers of ships during the past five years. And now she is back on the sea with fleets of ultra-modern, efficient ships while the allies have the old and now almost obsolete ones, with which to compete. Perhaps the Germans aren't laughing up their sleeves.

We only had two hours in Hamburg So we spent one hour in the art gallery and one hour in a taxi seeing the city. The Germans on the boat had told us not to ~~be~~ expect too much of Hamburg as it is only a port city. But to my amazement we found it spick and span as a new coin, and in places as beautiful as Washington. There certainly is no American port city that remotely approaches it.

We left on the noon express for Berlin. Some thrill there I can tell you. I had not had the remotest notion of ever seeing it.

8.

From Hamburg to Berlin is about as far as from Wash. to Philadelphia. The country is flat and sandy, not unlike ~~the~~ New Jersey. Except that the farm houses are all grouped

this is the

in little villages and the woodlots all in straight, planted lines, one might easily think himself in America.

We reached Berlin about 4.30 and it was already almost dark for Berlin is in the latitude of Labrador²² and the winter days are short. We went to a hotel that the Schlessingers²³ had recommended, only to find the S.R.O.²⁴ sign out. We tried another hotel. Then several more. Nothing doing. The town was jammed full on account of a convention of some sort. For over an hour we walked the streets asking at every little hotel we came to. At last when we really were beginning to get rather anxious we ran across a little (hotel) called Schmidts

²² Northeastern portion of the Canadian mainland.

²³ Leonard spells the name of the family with an 'i' on this page but with a 'e' on other pages in the document.

²⁴ "Single-room occupancy." (OED)

[MS page 9]

9.

Berliner Hof.²⁵ and there we finally got a room. It was a little place on a side street one of hundreds in Berlin.

Hurriedly cleaning up we started out to see the city. We were only two blocks from the corner of Unter den Linden and Freidrich Strasse, the 5th Ave. and 42nd. St. of Berlin. The shops were as gay and beautiful like as those of 5th Ave, with lots of nice things in the windows. But the prices of everything except cameras and field glasses

in

Were at least as high as ^ Washington. Germany is no longer the place of depreciated currency.

About 8 o'clock we decided that we wanted to see a show. So looking around we picked out one called Holleis Revue. Judging from the pictures of beautiful, almost naked girls displayed in the lobby it was the naughtiest show in town, and as this was our last chance to see a real European revue we bought tickets.²⁶ Well—I'll tell the world it came up to the e ads. We could not make out the dialogue as it was

²⁵ See Appendix A

²⁶ Prior to WWII, Berlin has been described as a “modernist experiment with its unconventional theatres.” (Gay, 15)

10.

mostly in rapid-fire Plat Deutch.²⁷ But what

hear

we could not ~~all~~²⁸ ^ we certainly could see. They kept taking off their clothes until in the climax scene eight really beautiful girls were walking nonchalantly around the stage without a stich of clothes on except a pocket handkerchief between their legs. They were as near to being stark naked as any native woman in Africa. And the queerest thing to me was that the loudest applause came from the women in the audience, not fast-looking women either but nice hausfraus²⁹ and girls with their beaus. Of course in France and Germany and to some extent in England there is nothing like the prudery that there is in America. On all the bathing beaches and in the swimming baths on the boats the men wear only a very thin

²⁷ Plattdeutsch, or “low German” - a family of dialects spoken in North Germany and the Netherlands

²⁸ Illegible word – possibly “all” – is here marked out and “hear” written in the margin above

²⁹ German for “housewife”

11.

or trunks
one-piece cotton bathing suit, which, when
wet leaves nothing to the imagination
except the color of the skin. While the
women are practically as much exposed.
I have seen a dozen women, nice refined
ones too, whose bathing costumes were so
loose and thin that their breasts were

in Berlin
constantly exposed. While ^ there are dozens
of high class art stores whose windows
are full of beautifully painted nudes in
most realistic detail. Yet so far as I
know there is no more nastiness or
immorality than in America and certainly
you don't hear the deluge of rotten jokes
from Englishmen that you get in any
Pullman³⁰ smoking room. Perhaps
after all secrecy is a bad policy.

The next morning we got up early to
see Berlin by daylight. As we were going
out the concierge (general factotum) asked
if we did not want to have breakfast in
the dining room upstairs. So we

³⁰ Likely referring to the Pullman Company – a manufacturer of railroad sleeper cars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As the Pullman brand focused on luxury and comfort for long-distance train travel, the cars were often supplied with public smoking rooms where one might (apparently) overhear lewd language or jokes from fellow passengers.

12.

turned around, went back up the stairs
and down a hallway to a little breakfast
room. As I sat down at the table and
was unfolding my napkin I heard a
little commotion at the table facing
and on looking up, who should
I see but Earl and Mabel Haskell³¹ and
the two children. I was too dumbfounded
to speak. Of all places on earth, to meet
them in the dinning room of a little out-of-

hotel in
the-way ^ Berlin.

You can well believe there was an
uproarious reunion. For several minutes
we were too excited to talk coherently.
Finally when we calmed down they told
us that the contacts of the American
mission³² in Persia³³ had been cancelled and
they were on their way home. They left

about
Tehran³⁴ ^ Jan. 15 and had come by way
of Baku³⁵ and Moscau³⁶. They will be back in

³¹ An Earl and Mable Haskell with two children (Ruth and Robert) are recorded as living in Washington DC per 1940 U.S. Census data. Mr. Haskell's occupation is listed as "senior economist" and he is further described as a "wage or salary worker in government work". The couple is listed as 53 and 50 years old respectively in 1940, meaning they would have been (roughly) 41 and 38 years old at the time of this letter (see Fig. 1).

³² Could be referring to a missionary organization sent for religious purposes, which were active in the region at this time (see Mansoori, 1986), but given Kephart's own role in government and the employment census data provided for Earl Haskell (above) it is most likely being used in the secular sense of OED III.7.a "The sending of representatives to a foreign country, esp. for the purpose of conducting negotiations, establishing political or commercial relations, watching over certain interests, etc; a body of persons thus sent." (Mission, 2024). A telegram from then-U.S. Secretary of State Frank Billings Kellogg to Persian Minister Ali Akbar Davar references the "termination of the treaty of 1856 between the United States and Persia" as "being possible next May." (Kellogg, 1927).

³³ Ancient Greek (and early 20th-century Colonial) name for the area comprising modern-day Iran.

³⁴ Administrative capital of Persia (and later Iran) since 1796 C.E.

³⁵ Capital city of Azerbaijan on the west coast of the Caspian Sea

³⁶ Archaic spelling of 'Moscow' – capital city of the Russian nation since the late 13th century C.E.

13.

Washington about March 1. They look prosperous and well except that Mrs. Haskell has grown, for her, quite stout and her hair is quite grey. They sent you their love and are looking forward eagerly to see you.

Naturally we spent the rest of the day and that evening with them. We went on a sight-seeing bus and had lunch at the cafes.

P. and I had to leave at noon on the next day. That morning the Schlessengers took us out to the Zoo and Aquarium. We were very sorry to say goodbye to them.

We reached London yesterday morning + went post haste to the Embassy for our mail. But those folks don't go to work until 10 so I wrote most of this letter while waiting for them. Unfortunately Edwin Smith is in Liverpool and we did not see him.

There was lots of mail here. 3 letters from you, all fine. Aren't you coming to N.Y. I've kinda looked forward to that. It will be pretty lonesome to come in all alone.

14.

I also received here the Wash Post with the story of my climb up Kibo.³⁷ Who in the Sam Hill put that in the paper. I supposed of course that the story had both of our pictures and gave us both credit. But the way it is P. is almost completely ignored. It is rotten for him and I'm so embarrassed I don't know what to do. Lord knows how I'll ever square myself as people will naturally put me down for a rank publicity hound. Especially as they put in that last little touch about "fame" Great Lord. I would not have had that in the paper for anything on earth.

P. has known about it for some time as his wife wrote to him about it. But he never said a word. He doesn't care unless the article was O.K'd by the bureau in which case its an absolute slap in the face. And in

³⁷ "Youngest and highest" (Kilimanjaro, para. 1) of three relict volcanos comprising the iconic, snow-capped massif of Kilimanjaro in present-day Tanzania. Kephart and Piemeisel were the first Americans to scale this highest peak in Africa as a part of their agronomy research. Between glaciated upper peaks and cloud forest, Kilimanjaro supports a tussock grass or heathland ecoregion with a diversity of herbaceous plants, along with uniquely Afromontane species of tree-sized 'giant' groundsel (*Dendrosenecio kilimanjari*) and lobelia (*L. deckenii*) (see Figs. 2.A-B). Kephart is personally credited with identifying three species of clover previously unknown to western scientific literature while on this trip (Cornell, 81).

15.

any case it puts me in a horrible light.
I'm almost ashamed to come home.

Well I guess I'll just have to face the
music. The Republic sails at 1.30 today
and our tickets are bought.

Anyway I'll be terrifically glad to be
home.

Love to all the family until I see
you on the 13th.

Leonard.

Sorry this is such an awful scribble.
These English hotels aren't heated and
I'm blue with the cold.

L.

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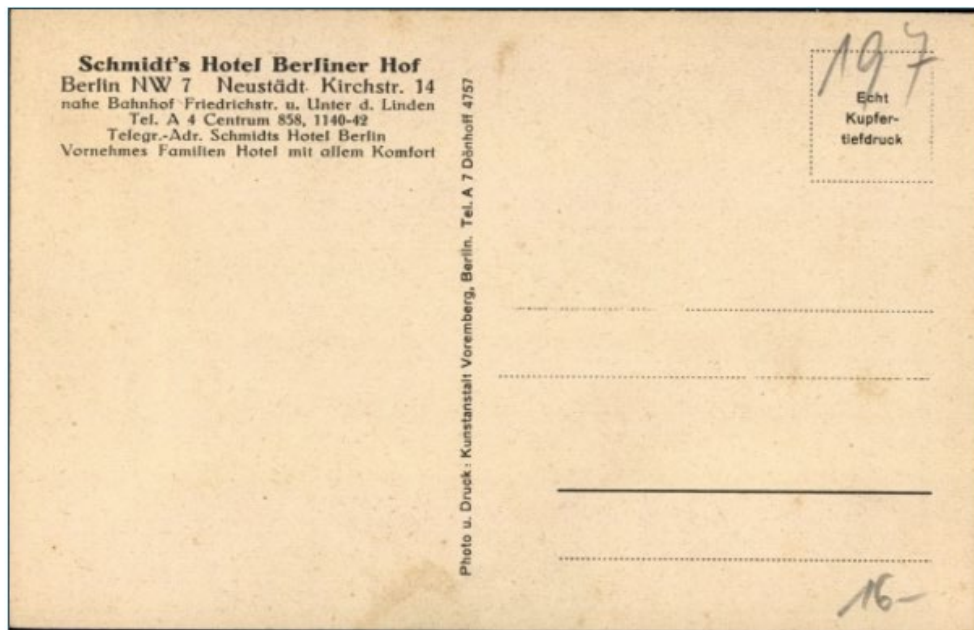
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U.S.
Census data used to speculate on identity of the “Earl and Mabel Haskell” Kephart mentions running into in Berlin.

Appendix A: Schmidt's Hotel Berliner Hof



Hotel where Kephart and party
stayed in Berlin. Images originally retrieved



Appendix B: 1940 United States Federal Census

1940 United States Federal Census for Mabel Haskell
 District of Columbia > District of Columbia > Washington > 1-262

Form	Name	Relation	Class	Sex	Race	Age	Marital Status	Attend. School	Grade	Code B	Birthplace	Code C	Code D
	_____, Ronald	Son	2	M	W	1	S	Yes	0		District of Columbia		
	_____, Frederick	Son	2	M	W	3	S	Yes	0		District of Columbia		
-M	Sudoh, Stephen	Head	0	M	W	25	M	No	02	20	New Jersey		
	_____, Ann	Wife	1	F	W	20	M	No	02	20	Ohio		
	_____, Patricia Ann	Daughter	2	F	W	10	S	No	0		District of Columbia		
-M	_____, Paul	Head	0	M	W	42	M	No	04	30	Virginia		
	_____, Chemmie	Wife	1	F	W	42	M	No	04	30	Virginia		
	_____, Betty Ann	Daughter	2	F	W	12	S	Yes	0	9	Pennsylvania		
001M	Husick, Earl	Head	0	M	W	53	M	No	04	20	Iowa		
	_____, Mabel	Wife	1	F	W	58	M	No	04	20	Minnesota		
	_____, Ruth	Daughter	2	F	W	22	S	Yes	04	20	District of Columbia		
	_____, Robert	Son	2	M	W	18	S	Yes	3	3	District of Columbia		
001M	Rogers, Harold	Head	0	M	W	47	M	No	04	20	Indiana		
	_____, Olive	Wife	1	F	W	46	M	No	04	20	Arkansas		

Mabel Haskell
 1940 United States Federal Census

Detail Related Source

Name Mabel Haskell

Respondent Yes

Age 58

Estimated Birth Year 1882

Gender Female

Race White

Birthplace Minnesota

Marital Status Married

Relation to Head of House Wife

Home in 1940 Washington, District of Columbia, District of Columbia

Map of Home in 1940 Washington, District of Columbia District of

The highlighted portions list census data for four “Haskell” family members living in the D.C. region circa 1940, with corresponding columns for “relation”, “sex”,