

Postcard from John R. Brinkley III to Amanda Jackson

June 15, 1937

HL_SM_24-01-Postcard1937-BrinkleyJ-Vatican



Transcribed by Ky Walker

For ENGL-618: Research Methods in English

Instructor: Dr. Brian Gastle

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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 correct 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 bale to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is present 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

John R. Brinkley II, a self-proclaimed doctor, was born July 8, 1885. He is best known for his practice of xenotransplantation of goat testicles in an attempt to cure issues related to the prostate or sexual function, and he became wealthy doing so. Brinkley was the founder of his own radio station, KFKB, which broadcast everything from gospel readings, to music, to comedy, and Brinkley also threw his hat into the political ring in Kansas where he attempted to become governor. While he was unsuccessful in these attempts, he nearly won twice, and he is still famous for being one of the first to use radio in a political campaign.

While Brinkley was not an accredited doctor, this did not stop him from attempting to gain accreditation both from universities within the United States and abroad. When he sent this postcard (sent to his maternal caregiver, Amanda Jackson), from Vatican City, Rome, he was attempting to receive medical licensure from the University of Rome, located 20 minutes from St. Pietro's Church. This attempt, like many others, was unsuccessful. In 1937, the University of Rome denied Brinkley's request unless he were to pass their medical examination tests, written and delivered in Italian. He did not attempt the exams and would not gain medical accreditation from any university throughout his life.

At the end of his life, John Brinkley's luck had run out. He was eventually stripped of his fraudulent medical license in multiple states, lost his radio stations, and had many lawsuits filed against him due to his medical malpractice. He, along with his wife and six other associates, was sued for mail fraud by the federal government. Brinkley would never see a trial for his mail fraud, however, as his health was rapidly declining. After suffering three heart attacks and a leg amputation, John R. Brinkley died on May 26, 1942 in San Antonio, Texas

Editorial Statement

This transcription is a diplomatic edition, including original spelling, punctuation, abbreviations, errors, and special characters. To distinguish from the different sides of the postcard, the transcription is split from the left side to the right side. Given the overlap on the address, discretion was used when splitting the two sides.

As is seen with many other writings of Brinkley's, East La Porte, North Carolina is commonly spelled "La Port." East LaPorte is a small community located outside of Cullowhee, North Carolina. It is a non-incorporated community that has had a steadily declining population since the 1930s. The community does not have its own municipal government and is instead designated to the town of Cullowhee, North Carolina as of 2025.

Manuscript Description

The postcard is 6" x 4.25", written in pen. The card has beveled edges and is postmarked 1937 with a physical, non-printed, stamp. The front side of the postcard includes a picture of St. Peter's Basilica, also known as St. Pietro Church.

Transcription

Mrs Amanda Jackson¹

East La Port²

U.S.A. N.C.

Visiting St Pietro church

and Vatican today.³

Very hot. I am

very tired too love,

JR Brinkley MD

Rome, Italy

June 15 - 37

¹ Amanda Jackson (Born circa March 5, 1858) A close friend of the Brinkley family and maternal figure who assisted in raising Brinkley.

² A non-incorporated town located near Cullowhee, North Carolina. The birthplace and home of Amanda Jackson.

³ St. Pietro Church, also known as St. Peter's Basilica founded by Pope Julius II in 1506. Until 1989 this church remained the largest church in Christendom.

Vatican City, Rome; the world's smallest fully independent nation-state. Located 20 minutes from the University of Rome, from which Brinkley attempted to gain medical accreditation.

References

- Alton, Lee R. *The Bizarre Careers of John R. Brinkley*. University Press of Kentucky, 2002, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2nwq9hd>. JSTOR.
- Frizell, George and Lynn Hotaling. "Doctor John Brinkley." *Journeys Through Jackson*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2017, pp. 55-58. *Southern Appalachian Digital Collections*, <https://southernappalachiandigitalcollections.org/browse/search/journeys-through-jackson-2017-vol-27-no-02/>.
- Hotaling, Lynn. "East LaPorte to Lose More of Its Past with Road Work." *The Sylva Herald*, 30 Nov. 2016, www.thesylvaherald.com/columns/ruralite_cafe/article_5b519366-b70f-11e6-9851-43dac4787a15.html. Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.