

Governor John St. John, Exoduster received correspondence

Section 59, Pages 1741 - 1770

Kansas Governor John P. St. John (1879-1883) received these letters from persons concerned with the migration of southern blacks to Kansas, commonly known as the Exodus or Exoduster movement. The letters come from blacks considering a move to Kansas, persons assisting with or monitoring the migration, officials of cities along the route, and persons providing for the relief of the migrants upon their arrival. The letters proceed in rough chronological order. Most include remnants of abstracts that were attached to the letter and then partially removed. The top of the abstract includes a reference to the letterpress book and page number of the governor's response. The governors' letterpress books are a separate collection. This collection comprises box 13 folders 13-15 and 20, box 14 folders 1-9, and box 15 folders 1-5 of the John St. John governor's records. The 1879-1880 correspondence was filed under "Immigration, Negro Exodus." The 1881-1882 correspondence was filed under "Freedman's Institute, Relief Association." A link to an inventory of St. John's entire governor's collection is available below. A full transcription is also available under "External Links."

Creator: Kansas. Governor (1879-1883 : St. John)

Date: April 1879 - October 1882

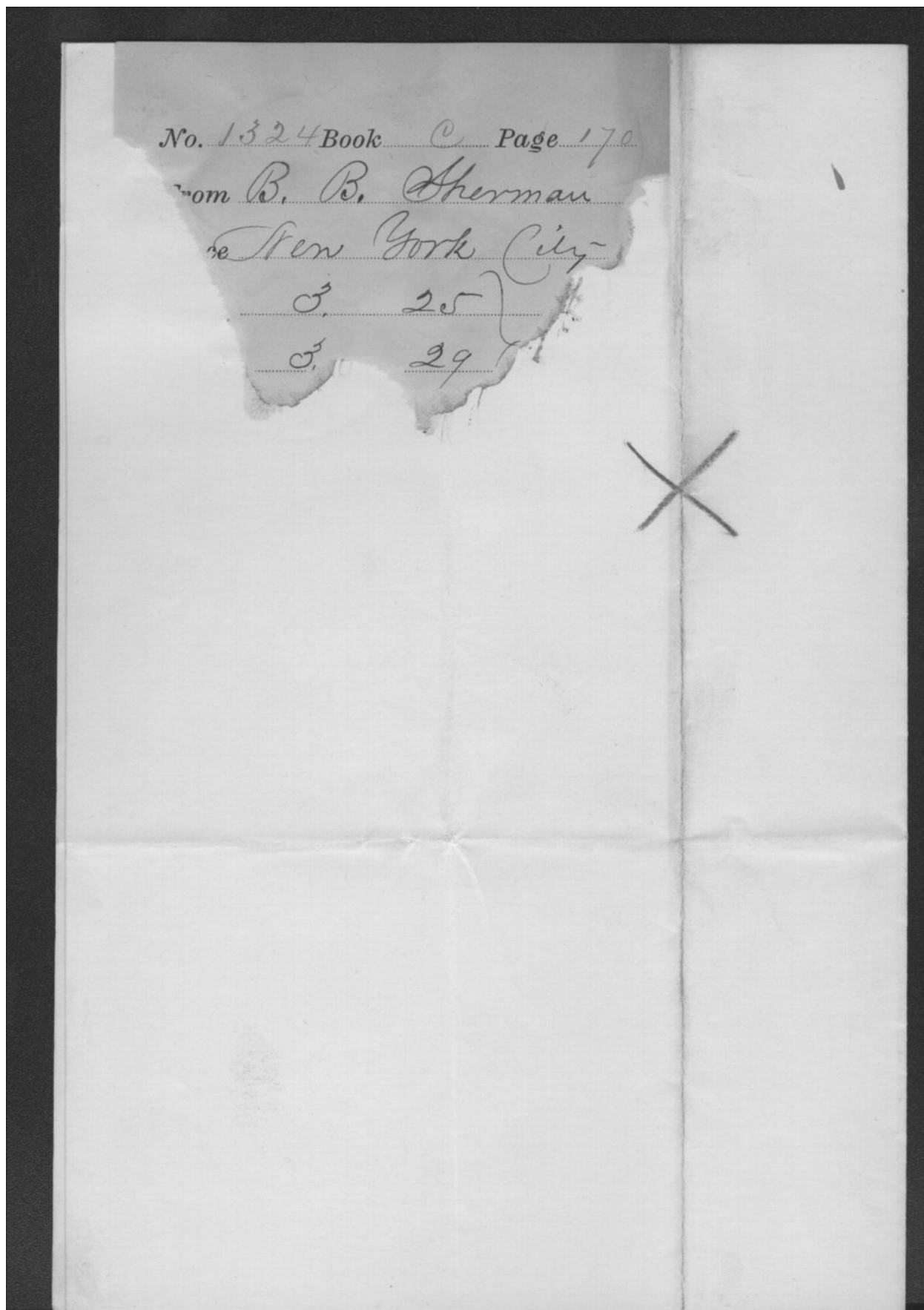
Callnumber: Governor's Office, St. John, Correspondence Received-Subject File, Box 13-15

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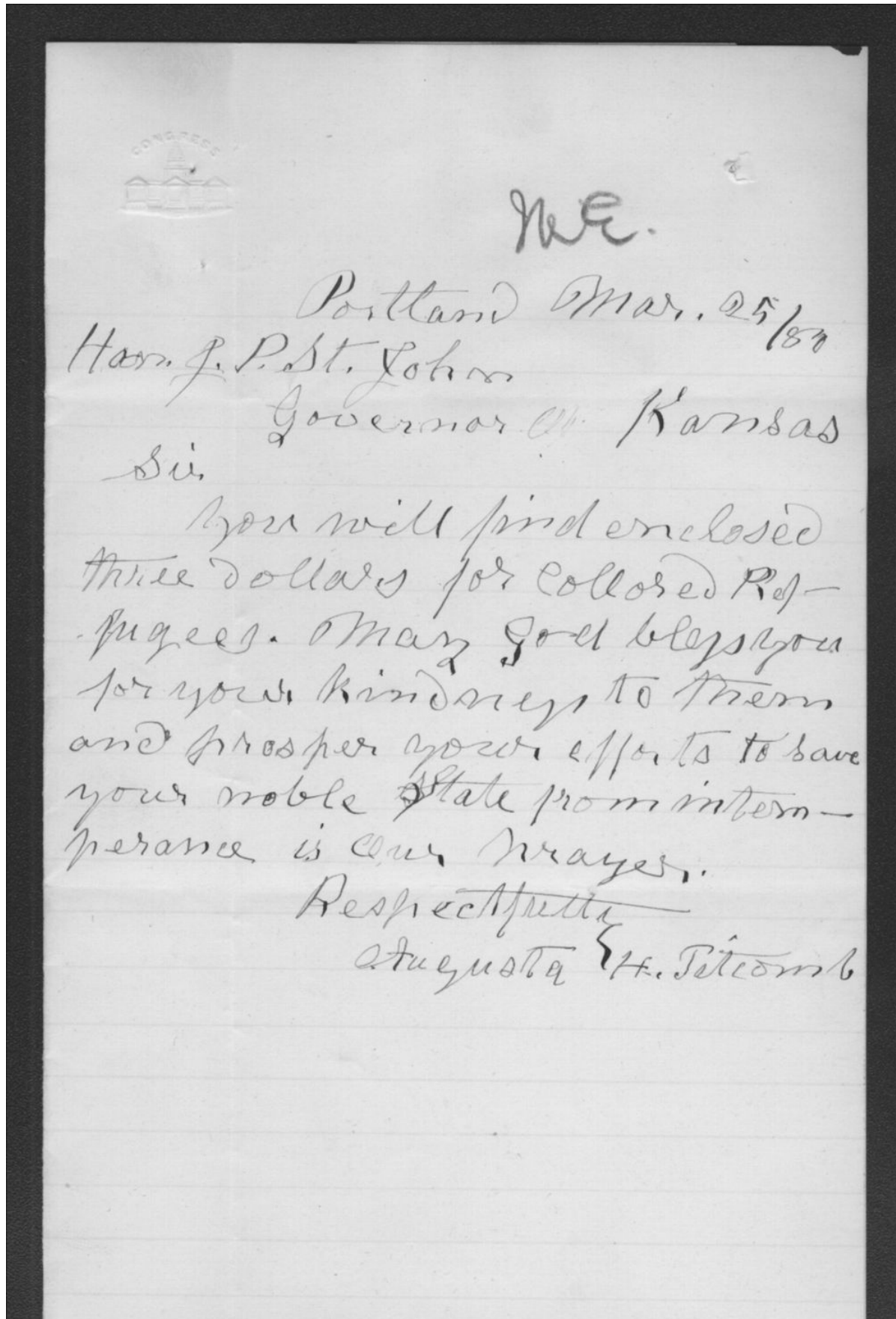
You will find Mr. Usher
name on recommenda-
 tion,
 EXECUTIVE DEPT.
 RECEIVED
 MAR 27 1880
 TOPEKA, KANSAS.
 Wags City Kans.
 March 25th 1880.
 Mr. Gov. St. John }
 Lawrence Kans. }

Kind Sir: on
 my way to Kans. Mar. 19th 1880.
 I met with the one, Mr. P. J. Usher
 Who seemed to be a very fine gentle
 man. Also he claimed to be a warm
 friend of yours.
 And on showing him my recomen-
 dation of which he approved very
 much, And recommended ^{me} to show
 the same to you. That perhaps
 you might do something that might
 be of great help to me. Therefore
 I send ^{it} to you for your consideration

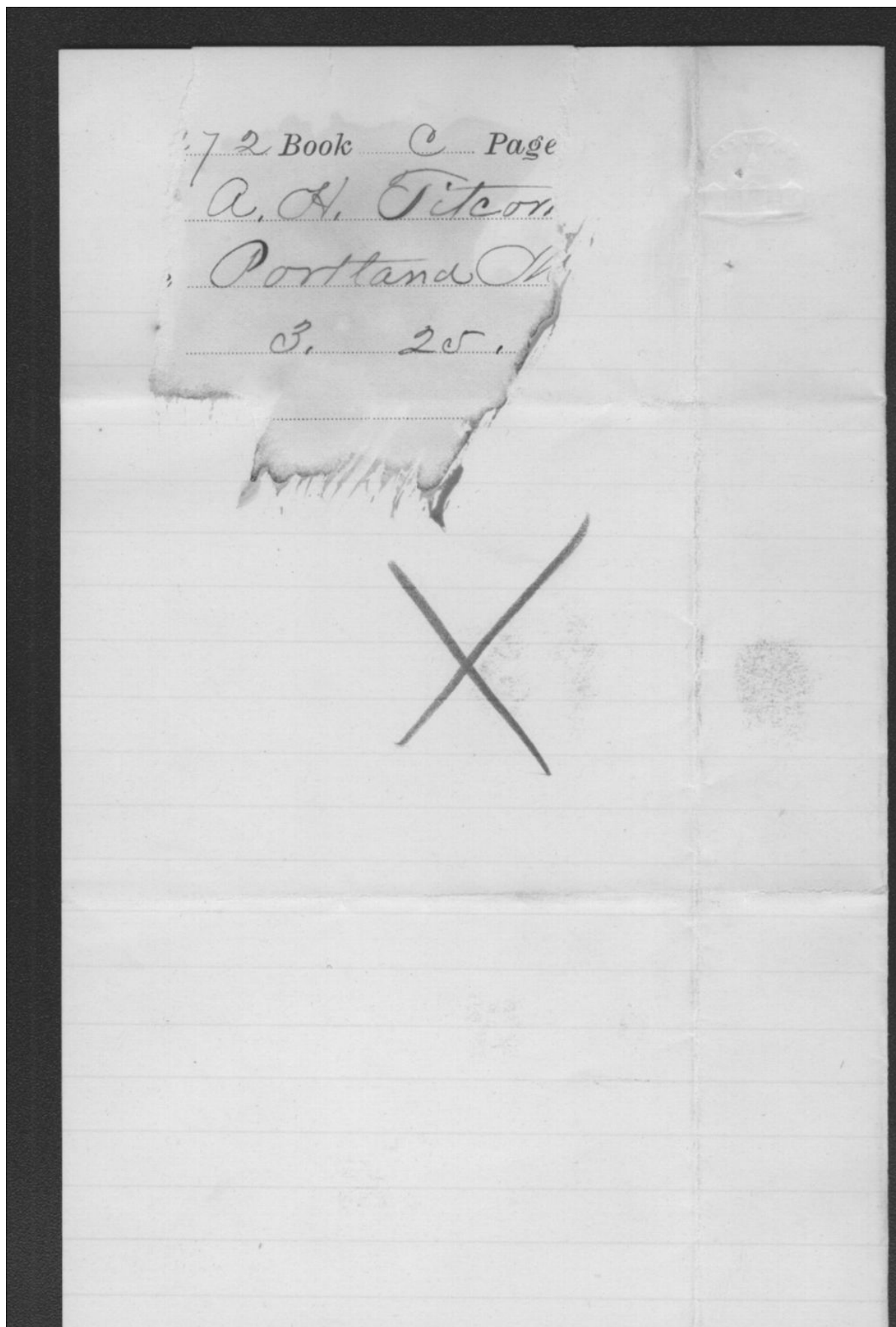
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It was night when I passed ^{stopped} through your town, or I would have
 Mar. ^{20th} 1880. I passed
 Therefore I failed to call on you.
 Would liked to have seen your
 face to face. & to have talked with
 you. But so it was I could not.
 I am not a graduate though I have
 a very good common school education.
 If you can do me any good in any way
 in my struggle to get in the proper shape
 in this state to do something for my
 ignorant and hard oppressed ^{Colo.} people it
 will be very gladly rec'd. - And will
 ever be faithfully found trying
 to fill my recommendation which
 I shall send you for your consider-
 ration. I am now at Hays City
 at work, as my means run short before
 I get into Graham Co. Please return recomen-
 dation paper as soon as Saturday 28th inst.
 As I let me hear from you please
 Respectfully Richard A. Dance.

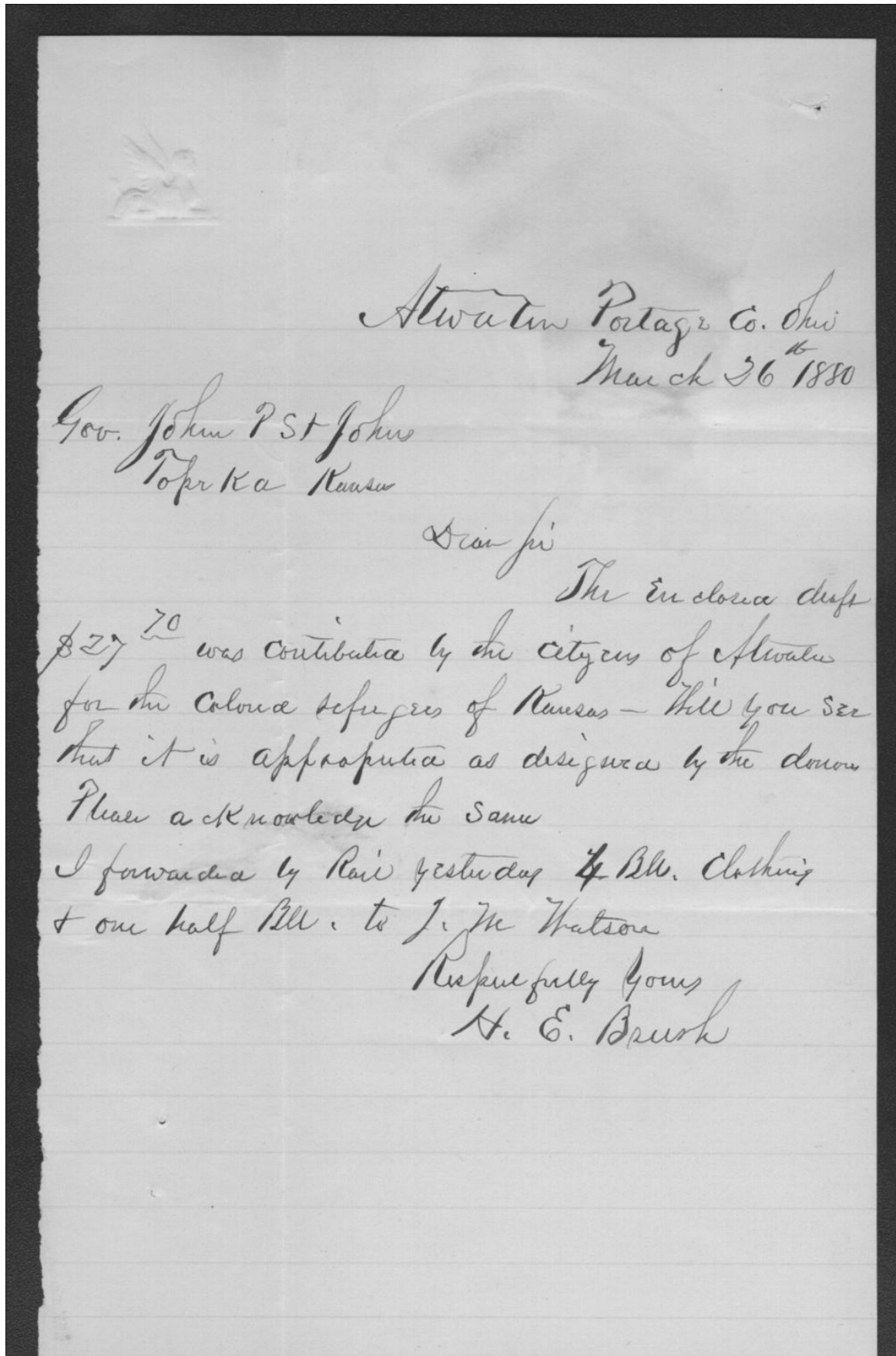
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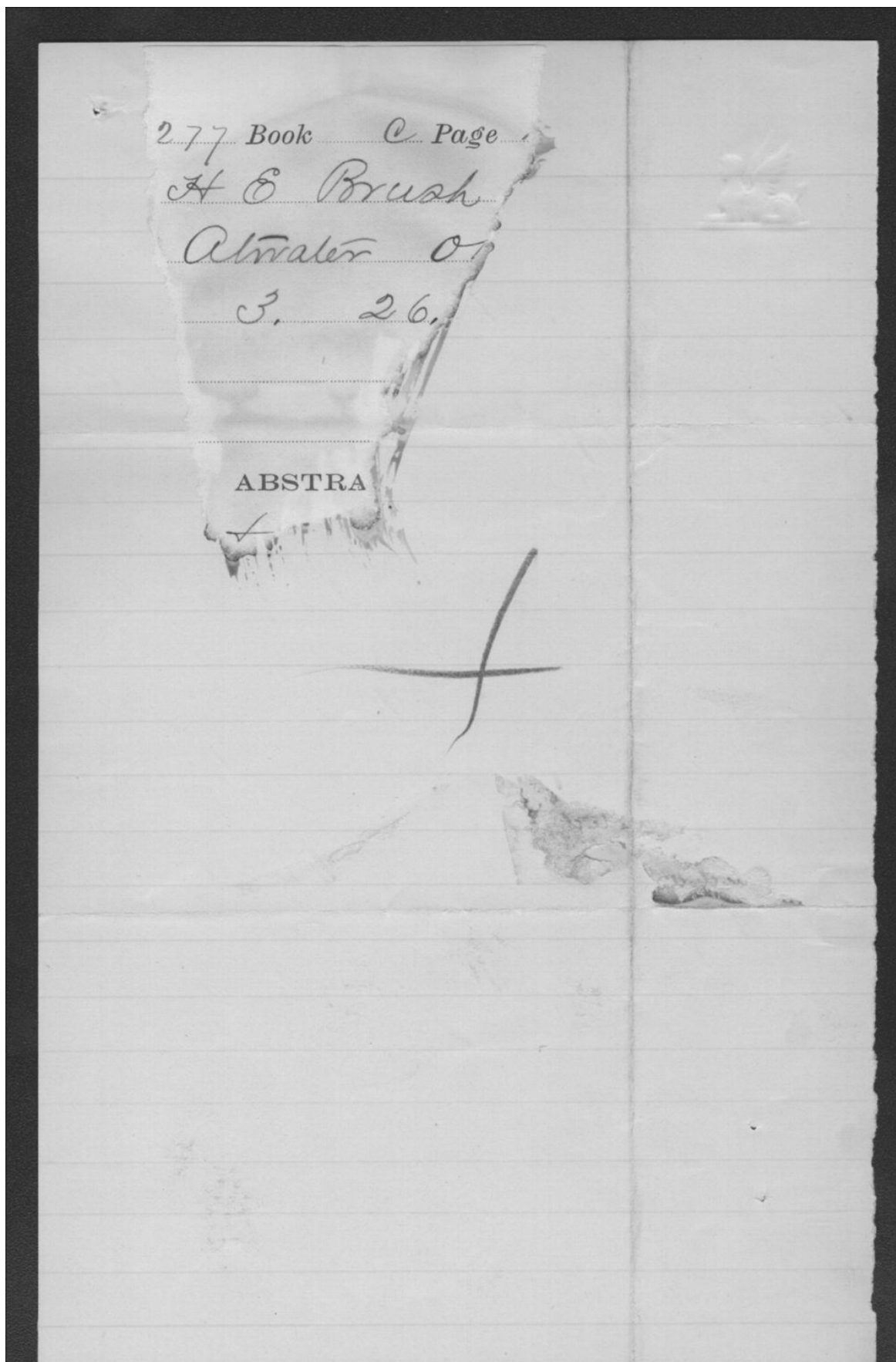
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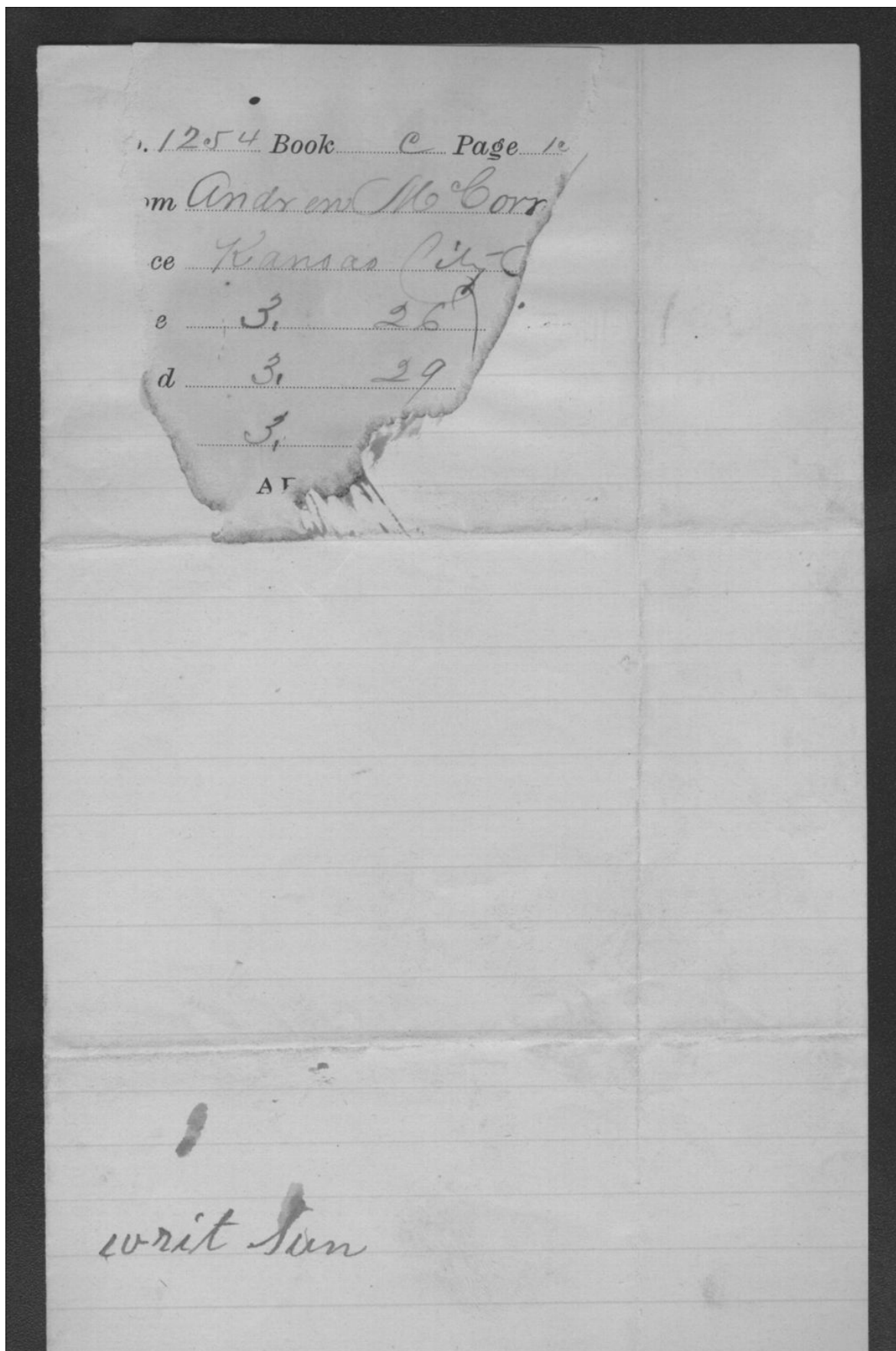


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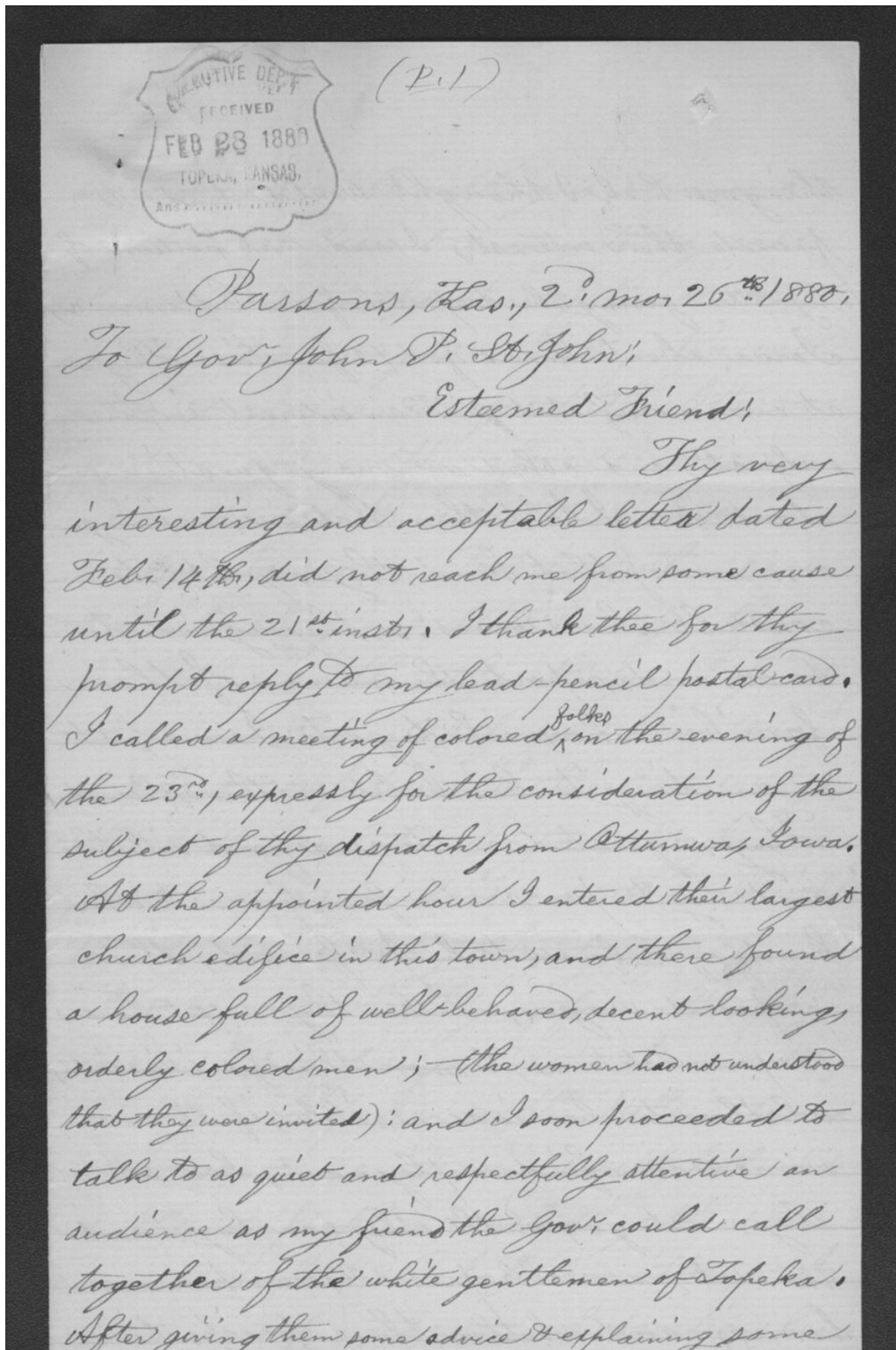


 March the 26th 80
 Mr Governor St John
 I have taken my Pen in
 hand to inform you
 that I am single
 from New Orleans and
 and I am in Kansas City Kas
 Between first and Second
 No 21, 11 and I have been
 very badly treated and
 I would like to go down
 to the South when the
 Drown is ready to taper
 and the affector Rager
 Shoder ship for march
 and take me Fire and
 Led at will
 Andrew McCarver

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things which I thought would tend to promote their interest, I read that portion of thy letter giving the dispatch from Ottumwa, Iowa about homes for 70 families. They at once manifested quite an interest in the subject, and asked me many questions about it. I told them that in making a move of that kind they ought to consult their wives: so they agreed to do so, and report the names of those families who wish to go to Iowa, at a meeting to be held on the 28th inst. They requested me to correspond with thee and try to procure information as to what kind of labor is to be performed, the proposed wages, whether they can get houses (upon what terms) to move their families into, whether timber is accessible, if their women can find employment, how soon they must go, whether they can buy land there at reasonable prices & secure permanent homes, - and whether their prospective

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employers will be willing to advance and send here sufficient money to pay cost of transportation from here up there & deduct it from their wages. Perhaps thee will be kind enough to request the Ottumwa party to answer the above inquiries either through thee, or direct to me here at Parsons. But in either case I should be pleased to hear further from thee on the subject; for I find the mass of these refugees have such implicit confidence in thee; and they think that whatever Gov. St. John recommends or advises must be all right; thy rely upon both thy integrity & judgment, I will now briefly inform thee of some of my doings here. I arrived here from Topeka on the 14th inst; and after numerous interviews with both white & colored people, - including the seven members of the Relief Committee, - I formed a programme of operations here,

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which I think has proven successful, and has met the approval of said Committee. I invited the adult colored people of both sexes to meet with me in the evening of the 16th inst., they selecting the place. A few of them promptly hired and paid the rent for Hughes' Hall (the largest one in the City). At the appointed time, I found that large hall filled with about an equal number of men & women who - notwithstanding their dark complexions - could be favorably compared with almost any audience of the Caucasian race, as regards their neat, tidy appearance, their good manners, their quiet, orderly deportment, and their very respectful attention to all that was said to them. I addressed them pretty seriously for a considerable time, calling attention to some among the many & various duties now devolving upon them, the increased responsibilities resting upon them, and the vast importance of their carefully

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pursuing a straight-forward, honest, truthful, strictly moral, virtuous course of life, — ever accompanied with habits of industry, economy, & uncompromising temperance, — now that they have really and fully acquired their freedom, and are starting out — with some degree of poverty and ignorance — in their new career of life as free citizens of this noble — long sought for — State of Kansas. I reminded them — in language they could understand — that large numbers of people in both hemispheres are interested in their welfare, and are anxiously watching to see what kind of a start they are making toward becoming true men and women. I tried to discourage them from depending upon any charitable aid, and desired them to make every reasonable effort to earn an honorable livelihood, ever prayerfully seeking for Divine guidance and assistance through life. — I have since received assurances that what I said to them was favorably accepted by them.

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In the same meeting, I requested the members of each of the three colored Churches in the town to name & vote for one man & one woman who are well known & respected among them; and those present who are not members of any Church to do likewise; the persons thus appointed to constitute a representative Committee of Consultation, - and as a visiting committee, I then requested those present who recently arrived from the South, and now conscientiously feel that they are really needing help in procuring the necessaries of life (shelter, food or clothing), to give name & address to the proper member of the Committee (the one by whom such person is represented); the members of the Committee were then to inquire about & if practicable, visit such applicants, and hand their lists of names to me. I told them that I would also visit all of them as far as possible & take notes. Before issuing any goods, the Committee and myself were to meet, have the names read aloud, and I was to cross off any that were

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clearly shown to be not entitled to draw (from any cause); questionable ones were to be marked by a question mark & deferred for further investigation; and those not objected to were to be divided into two classes, as follows, — The sick, the crippled, those too aged & feeble to work, orphan children, destitute widows & their children, and those especially unfortunate by fire or other accident or total loss of property, were to be marked as entitled to draw first. Those who are known to be workers when they can get work to do, but are now out of employment and needy, and those with quite large families to support, were to be next entitled to draw, — afterwards. In addition to the above, those who have no more self respect & ambition than to idly & lazily hang around the street corner, or visit liquor or gambling saloons, — were to be entitled to draw the leanings — if any remained, — in time to prevent extreme suffering for want of food or clothing, — We have endeavored to practically carry out the above arrangements, and

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I believe it is giving general satisfaction among among the masses, although there will undoubtedly be some grumblers. - I am trying to do my duty fearlessly and impartially for these people. - After consultation with white citizens, and the more intelligent colored people, I selected a competent, reliable colored woman (who was highly recommended), to assort & distribute the female clothing, and let her select a female assistant. I similarly selected a well known colored man of first class reputation, to assist me in assorting & distributing the male clothing. I also selected a colored Preacher for door-keeper. We admitted a man & a woman at one time for drawing, - or a family. I called the names from the connected list, and the door-keeper gave the call outside. Few but those whose names were on the list joined the crowd, and the outsiders behaved themselves very well. - On the 24th inst. I went down to Oswego, and called upon Dr. W. S. Newlon, who kindly

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took me to his house to meals & lodge,
The next morning I accompanied the
Dr. in his buggy, & visited a number of
families of the colored people, a few of whom
were sick. As the Assocⁿ has an Agent
appointed for Asawago (Jonathan C. Pickering),
I need not describe things there.

But I wish to tell thee that I
had a lengthy & satisfactory interview
with Philip M. Eckels, the young
colored man who recently wrote to
thee - & withheld a special communication
which he had to make to thee. E. S. Comstock
sent the said letter to me & requested me
to see him. He is a single man, an orphan,
near 22 yrs. of age, quite dark, naturally
a smart fellow, but little education,
principally self-instructed; was born in
Miss^{ss}; his master took him to Texas & held
him as a slave (calling him an apprentice),
for a number of years, & then he escaped,

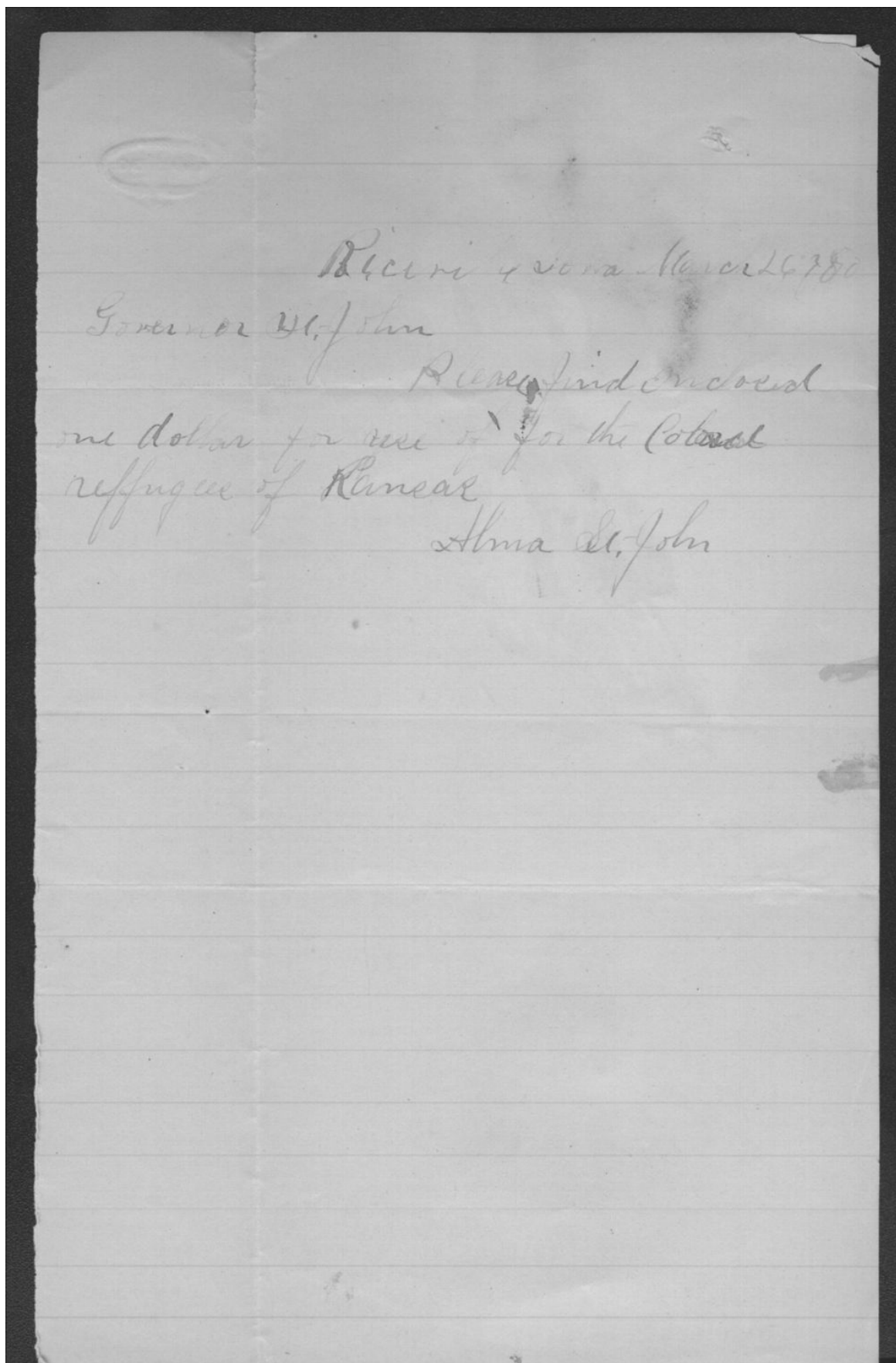
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I think he would be a good witness
in that Voorhees investigⁿ case in Washⁿ.
I requested him to write a brief history
of himself & what he saw in the South,
and send it to me soon as convenient.
He promised to do so. I think he
is a man who will either make his
mark as a useful & influential
member of his race, or else
become insane in the vain attempt;
or give up all in hopeless, gloomy despair.
I have just been to the Depot to
see about 30 refugees from La. who
arrived here a while ago. They are
now pretty well fixed for the night,
and I will attend to them tomorrow;
but I find most of them have a
little money to start with.

Please excuse this hasty writing.
Hoping to receive further tidings
from thee when convenient, I remain
truly & respectfully thy friend,
Wilmer Walton.

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No. 1271 Book C 1
From Alma H. [unclear]
Place Riceville [unclear]
Date [unclear] 26.
Rec'd [unclear]
Ans'd [unclear]

ABSTRACT
1⁰⁰ for free

X

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Near Bolivar Gas Co Ohio,
March 27th 1880,

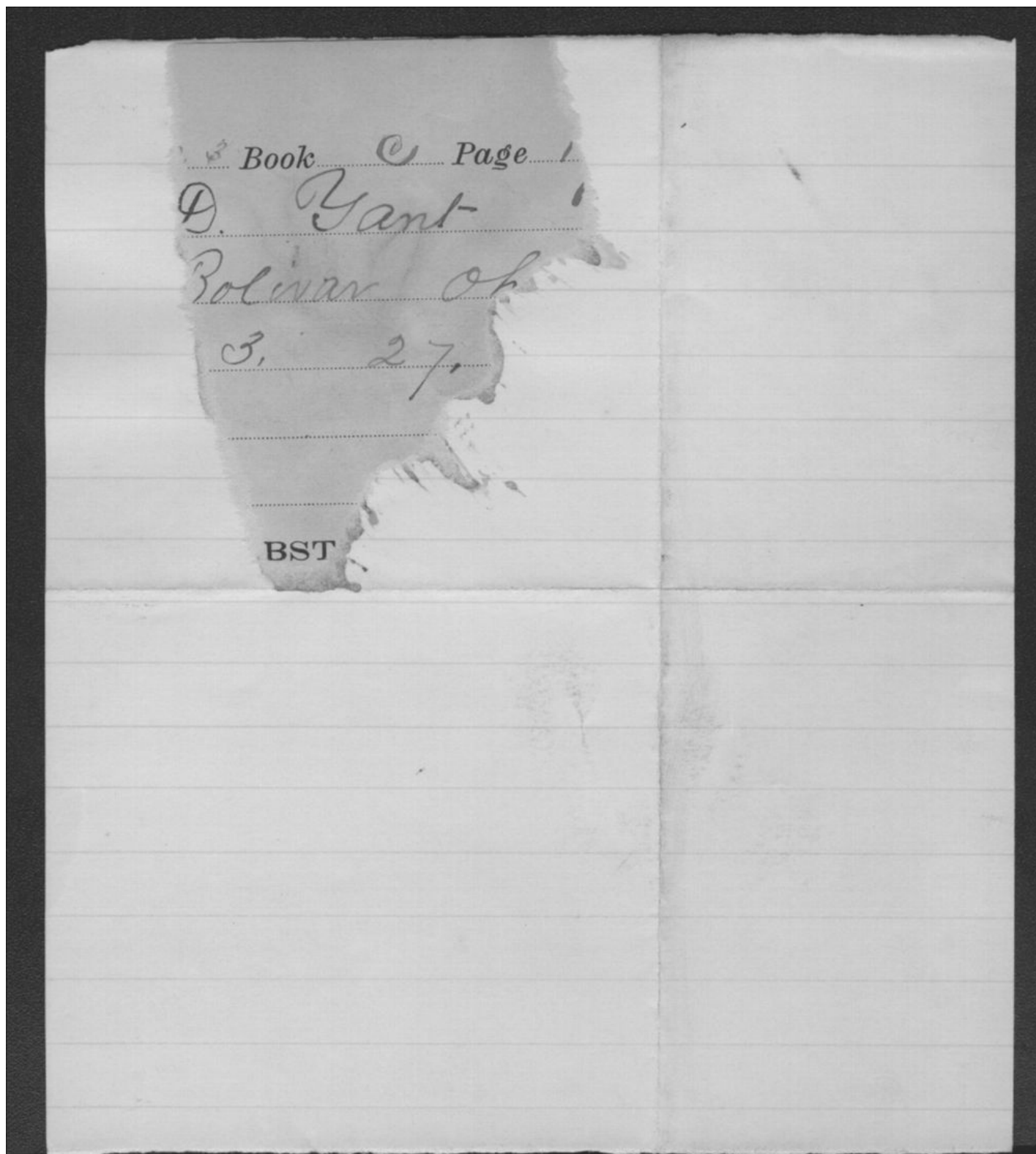
Dear Governor,

Inclosed you will find five
dollars for the relief of
the freedmen, the contribution
of the people at Bolivar
and vicinity.

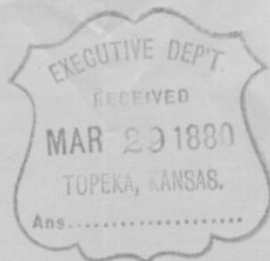
Respectfully yours

Wm. H. Hunt

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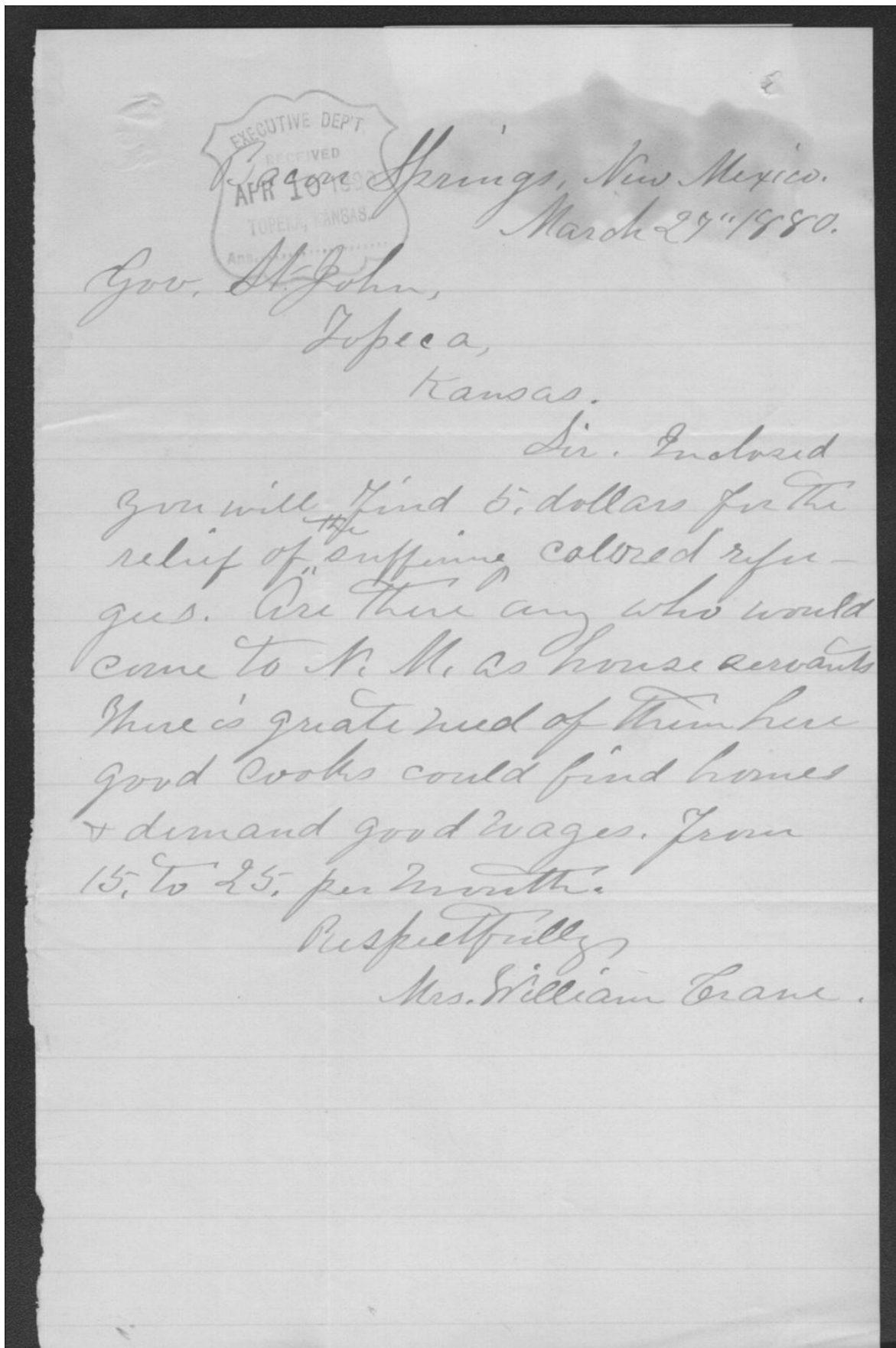
Your Excellency
J. P. St. John -
Governor of Kansas
Enclosed please
find Post Office Order for
six dollars & eighty (~~80~~ ⁸⁰/₁₀₀)
Collection raised by the R. P.
Congregation of Winchester Ks
to be appropriated for the
benefit of the colored refugees
Yours &c D. S. Paris
Winchester Kansas
March 27th 1880
P.S. Please receipt

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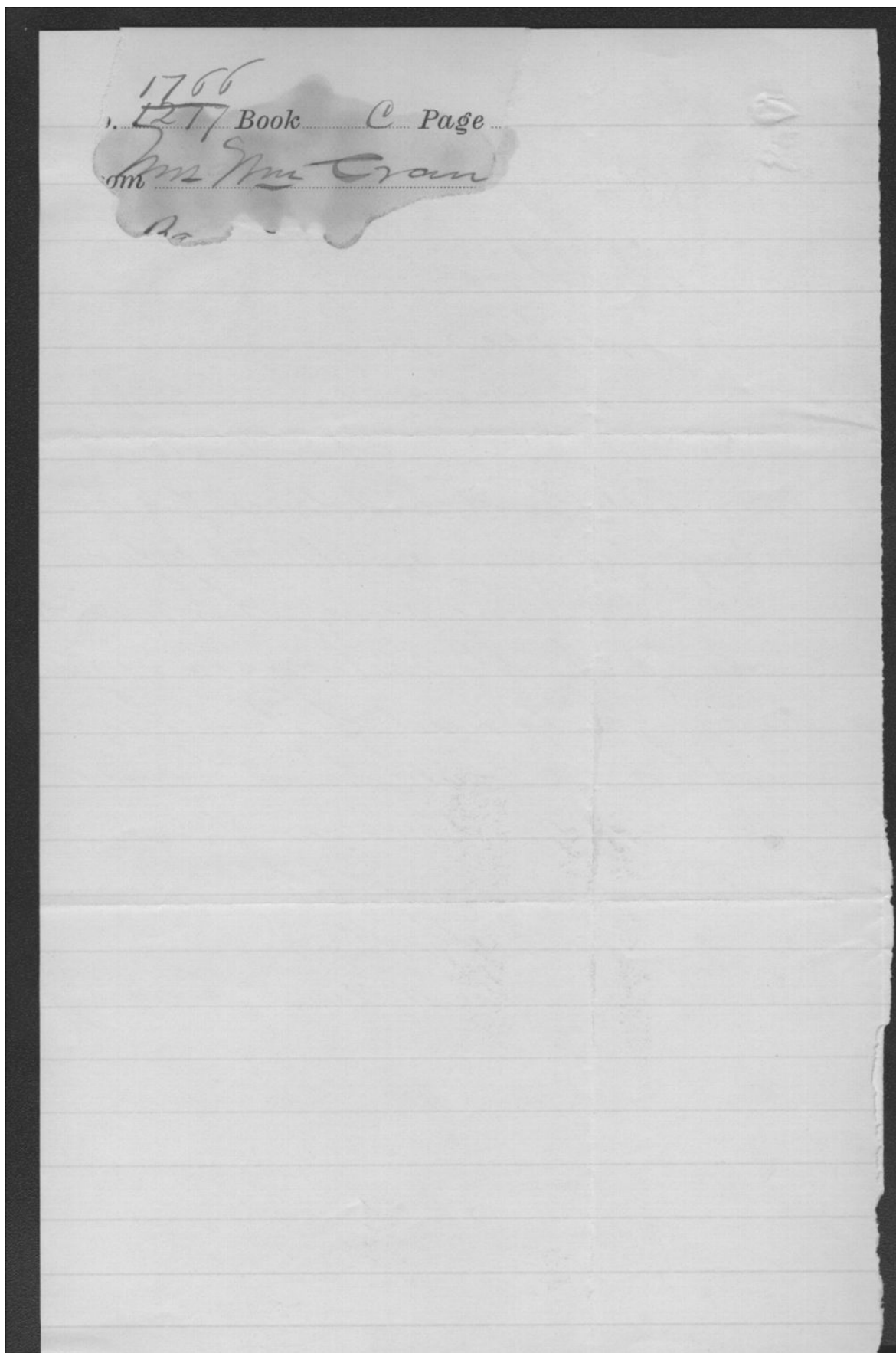
No. 1270 Book C Page 13
From D. J. Faris
Place Winchester
Date 3. 27
3. 27

X

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L. W. CLARKE, President.

E. B. COWLES, Secretary.



CONNECTICUT.

O. R. McNARY, Special Agent,
Leavenworth, Kans.

WESTERN DEPARTMENT MERIDEN FIRE INS. CO.,

OF MERIDEN, CONN.

R. S. CRITCHELL, General Agent,

141 & 143 LA SALLE ST., CHICAGO.



Leavenworth March 27 1887

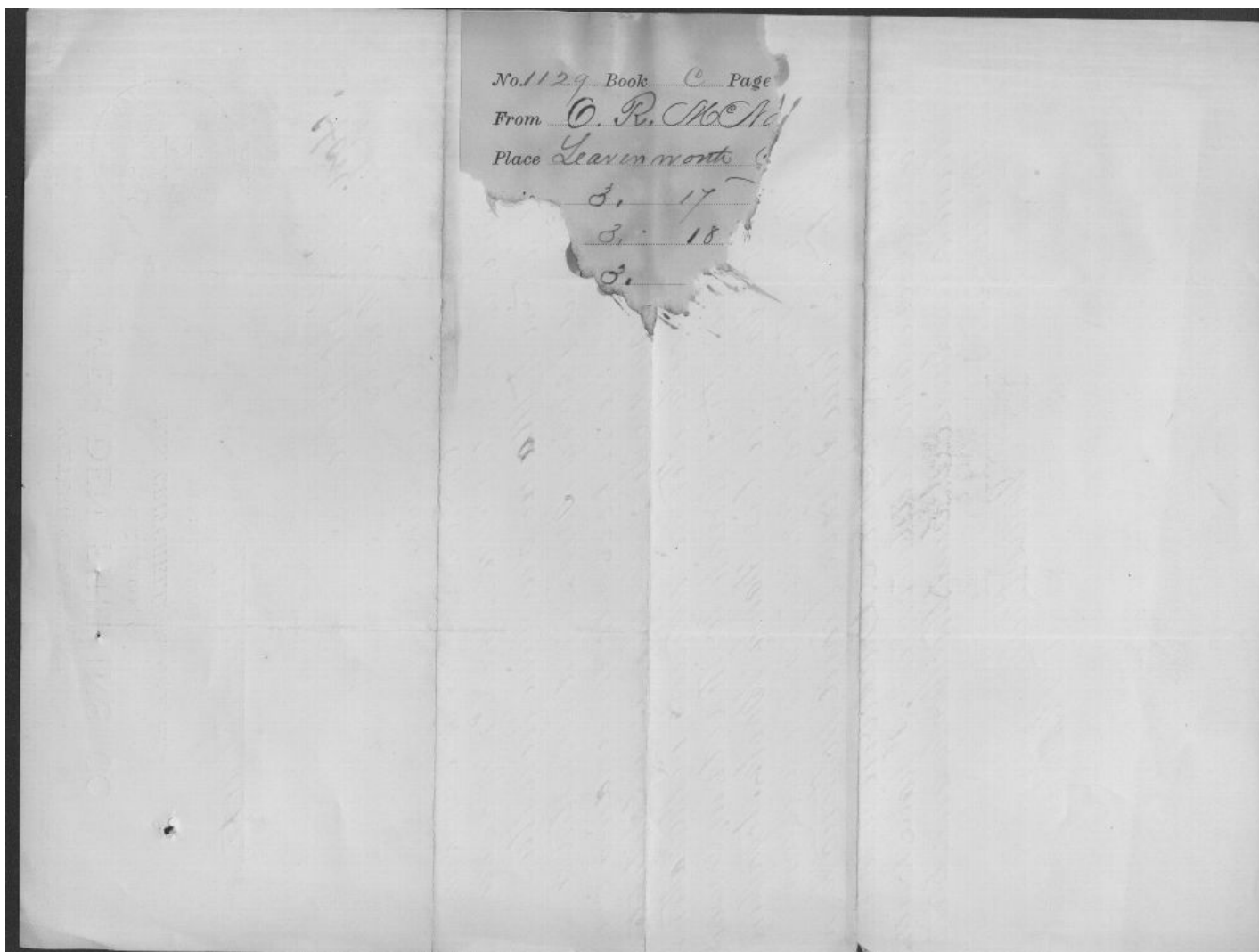
*Hon. J. P. St John
Topeka Kansas*

Dear Sir

On the 5th of March Ephraim Adams. An Exoduster Freedman. Called on me in relation to Money due him from the Freedmans Saving Bank. And presented a Postal Card from you recommending one Joseph E. Baldwin of Topeka as a suitable person to look after his interests, in the matter. On the strength of which with Adams Consent I sent Baldwin his Bank Book. together with a letter and requesting an answer up to his time I have heard nothing from him. Who is Joseph E. Baldwin and is he Capable and trustworthy? I have written him once since I sent the Book and still no answer.

*Yours Truly
O. R. McNary*

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The Bellevue.

17, Beacon Street, Boston.

March 29, 1880

Gov. St. John,
Dear Sir,

I regret to say
that your communications
relating to the Exoduster
have been filed away
with our private papers,
& sent to Mr. Cook's
summer home at Lake
George, where we shall
neither of us be for two