Mary E. Stearns correspondence

Section 1, Pages 1 - 30

Letters to and from Mary E. Stearns, wife of George Luther Stearns who helped finance the settlement of Kansas Territory by free-state supporters. Included in this correspondence are letters from the Kansas State Historical Society acknowledging receipt of donations and information, particularly relating to John Brown.

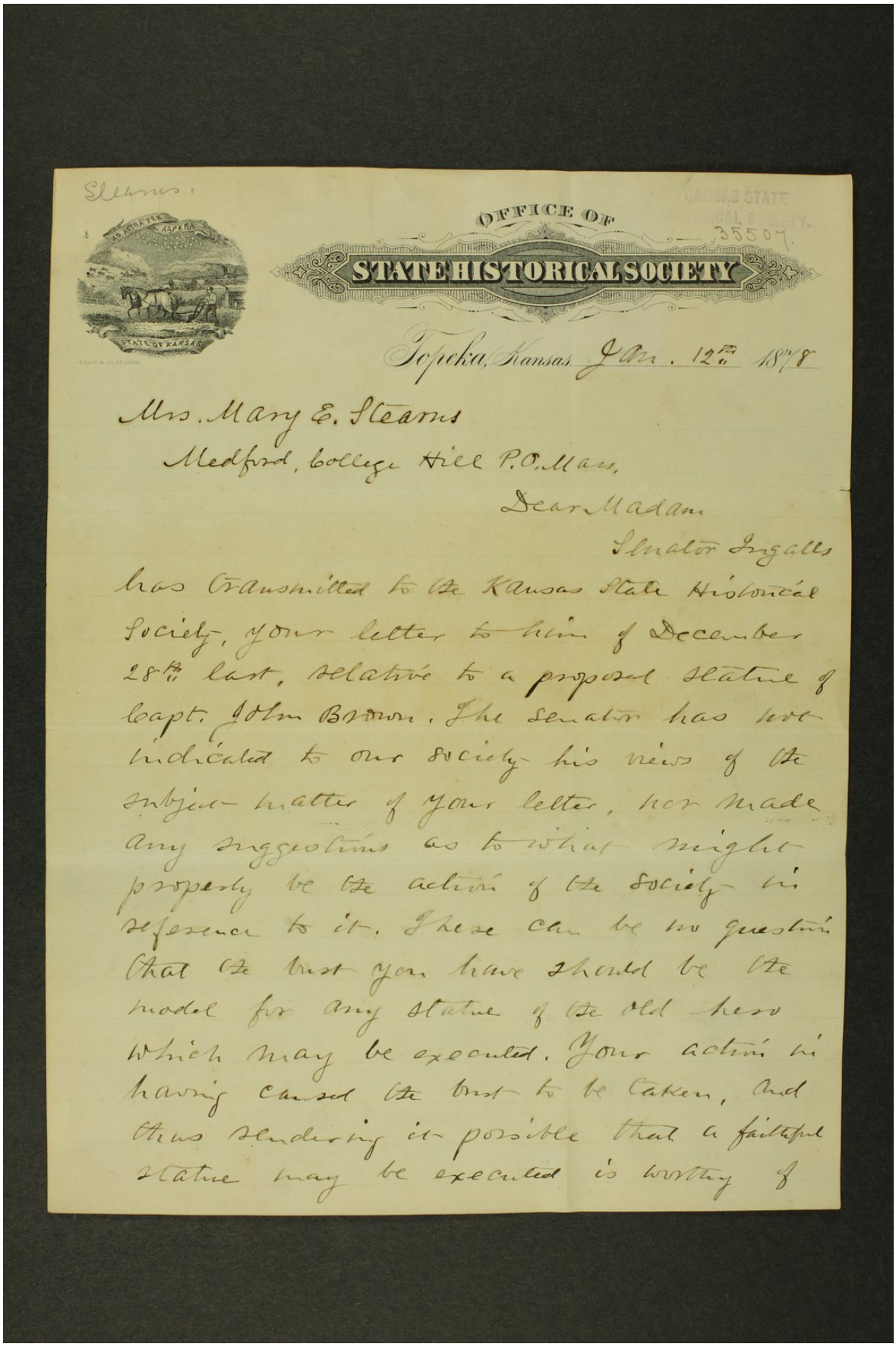
Date: 1878-1901

Callnumber: George L. & Mary E. Stearns Papers Coll. #507, Box 1 Folder 8-12

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Stearns.

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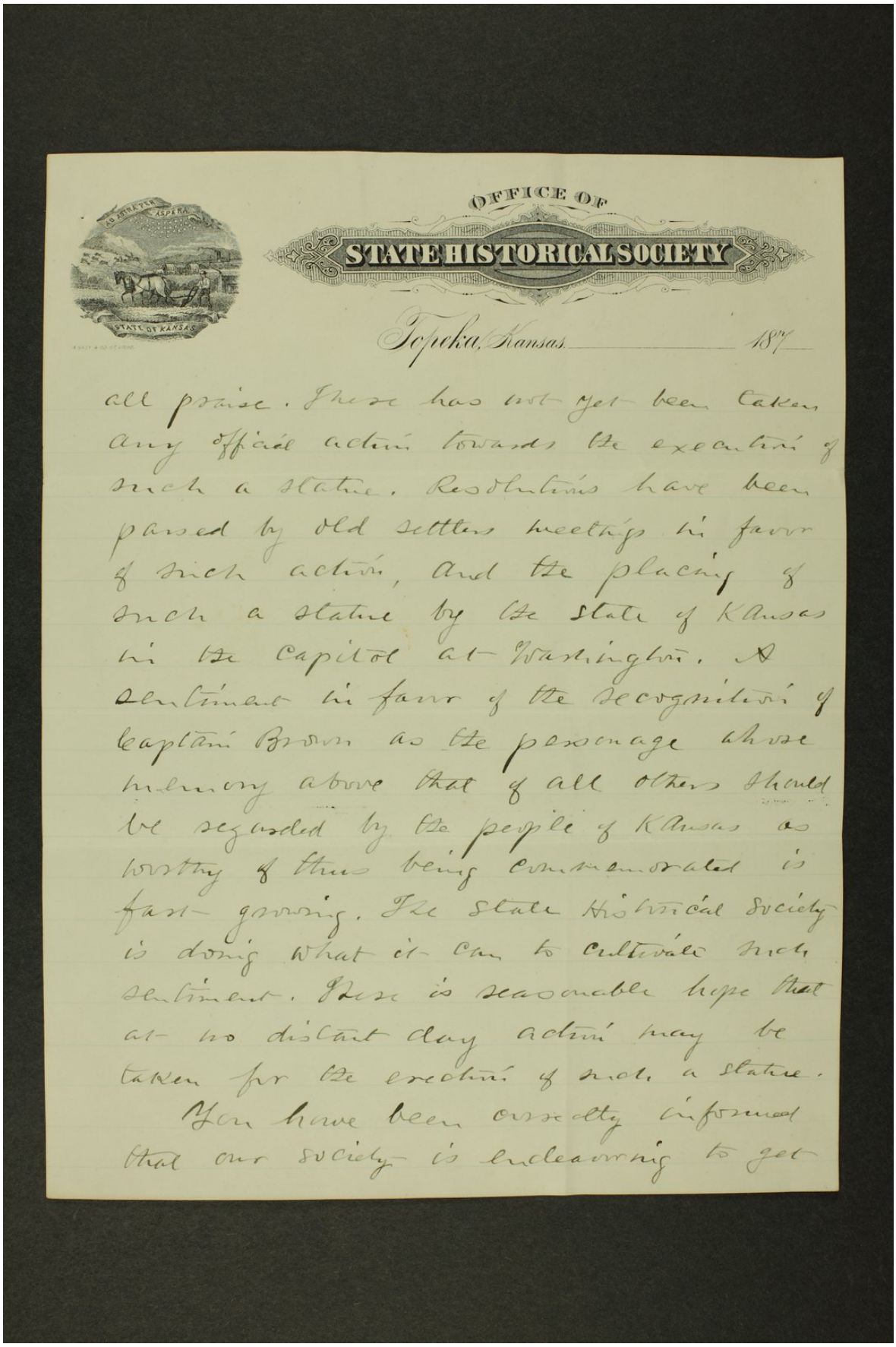
Topeka, Kansas Jan. 12th 1878

Mrs. Mary E. Stearns

Medford, College Hill P.O. Mass.

Dear Madam

Senator Ingalls has transmitted to the Kansas State Historical Society, your letter to him of December 28th last, relative to a proposed statue of Capt. John Brown. The Senator has not indicated to our society his views of the subject-matter of your letter, nor made any suggestions as to what might properly be the action of the society in reference to it. There can be no question that the bust you have should be the model for any statue of the old hero which may be executed. Your action in having caused the bust to be taken, and thus rendering it possible that a faithful statue may be executed is worthy of

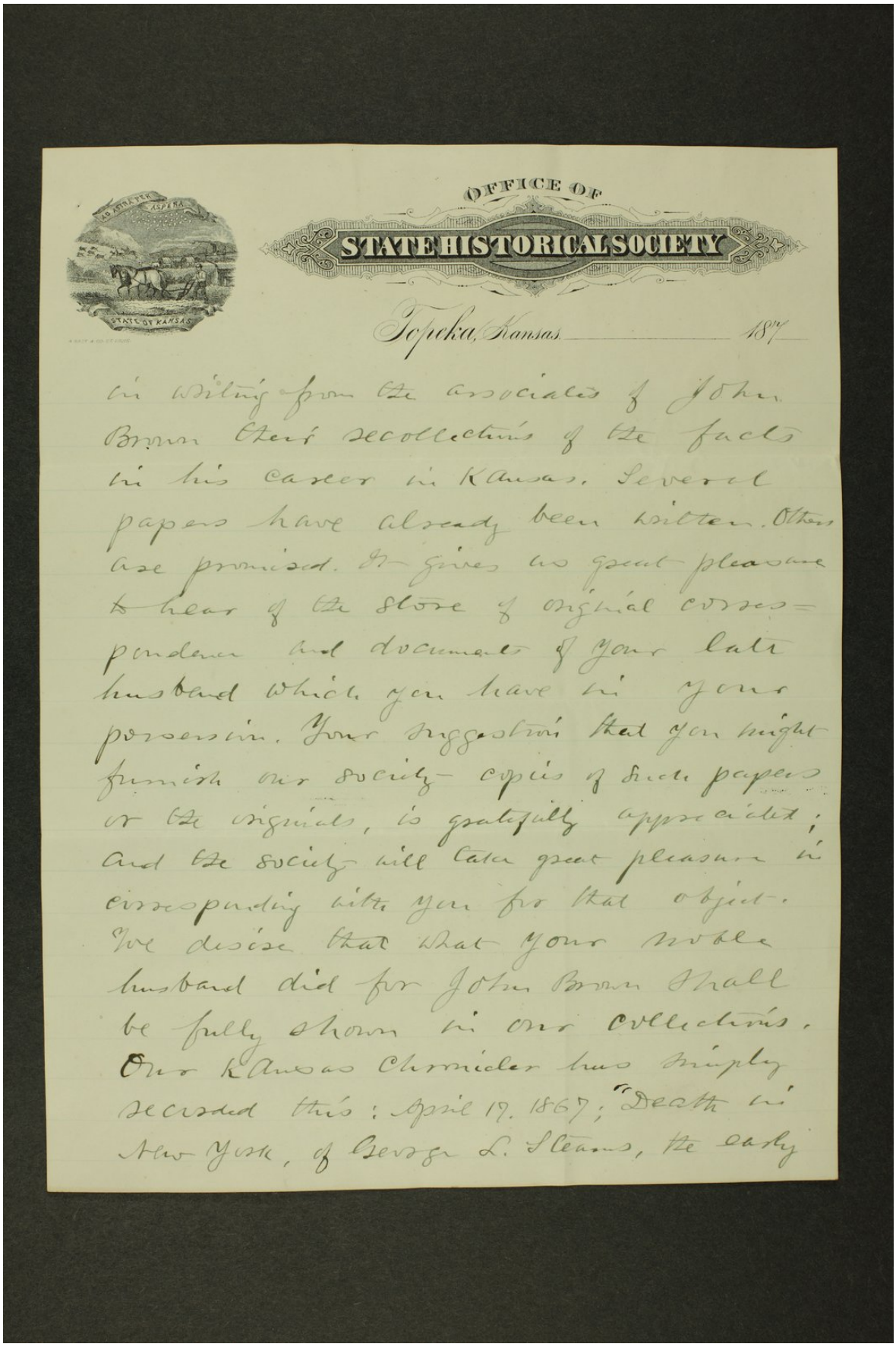


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all praise. There has not yet been taken any official action towards the execution of such a statue. Resolutions have been passed by old settlers meetings in favor of such action, and the placing of such a statue by the State of Kansas in the Capitol at Washington. A sentiment in favor of the recognition of Captain Brown as the personage whose memory above that of all others should be regarded by the people of Kansas as worthy of thus being commemorated is fast growing. The State Historical Society is doing what it can to cultivate such sentiment. There is reasonable hope that at no distant day action may be taken for the execution of such a statue.

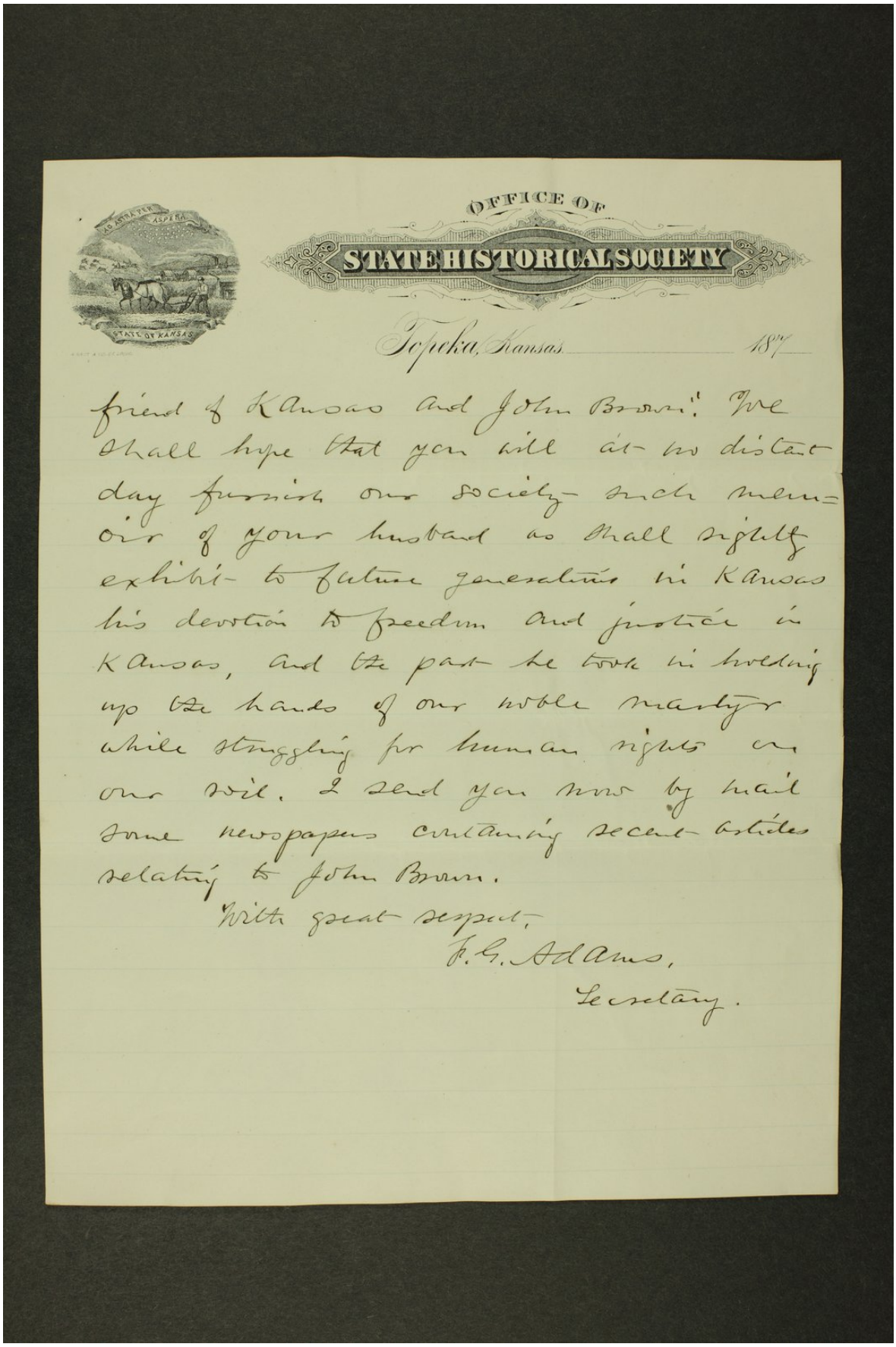
You have been correctly informed that our society is endeavoring to get



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in Writing from the associates of John Brown their recollections of the facts in his career in Kansas. Several papers have already been written. Others are promised. It gives us great pleasure to hear of the store of original correspondence and documents of your late husband which you have in your possession. Your suggestion that you might furnish our society copies of such papers or the originals, is gratefully appreciated; and the society will take great pleasure in corresponding with you for that object. We desire that what your noble husband did for John Brown shall be fully shown in our collections. Our Kansas Chronicler has simply recorded this: April 19. 1867; "Death in New York, of George L. Stearns, the early



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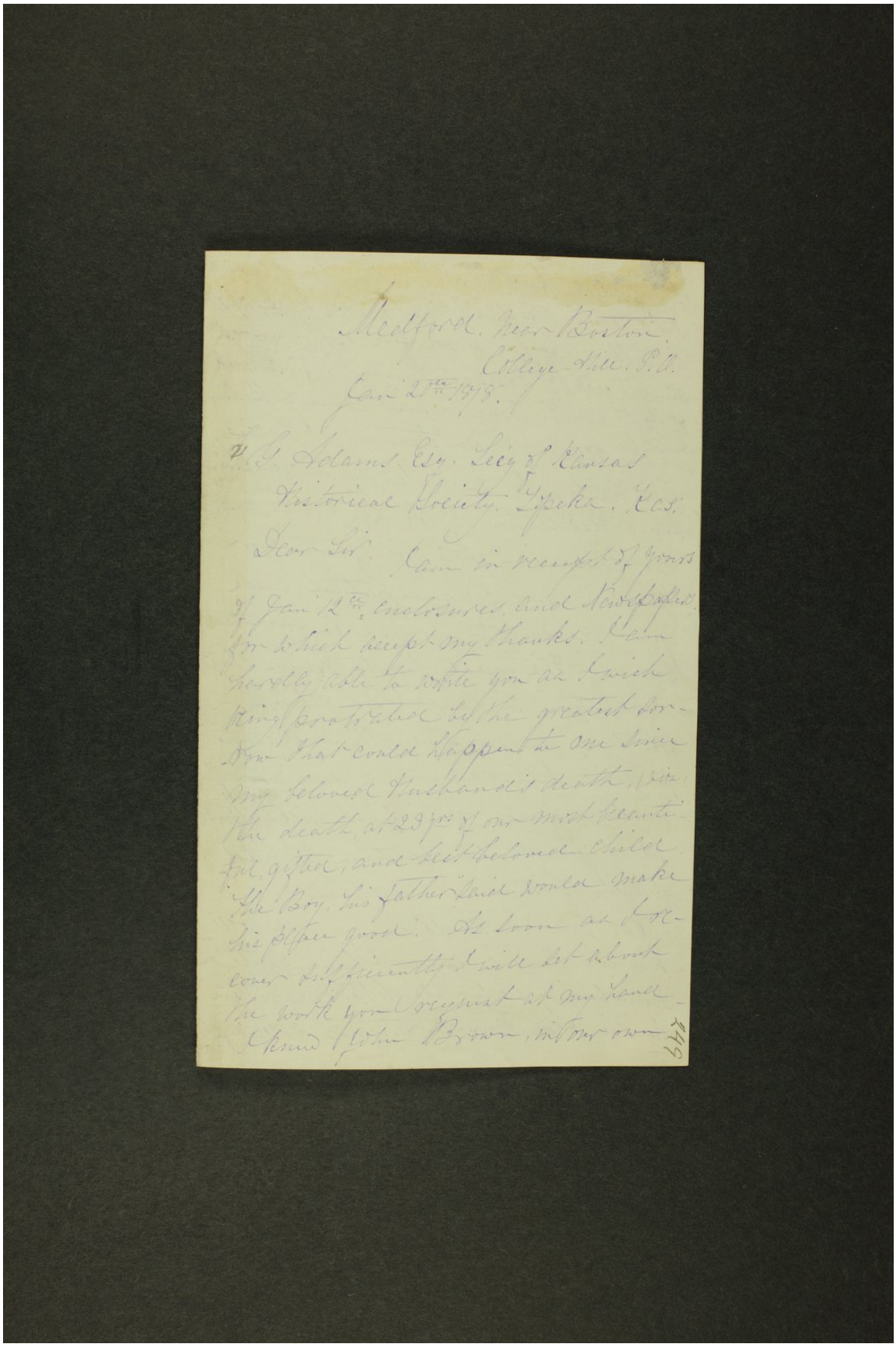
friend of Kansas and John Brown! We shall hope that you will at no distant day furnish our society such memoir of your husband as shall rightly exhibit to future generations in Kansas his devotion to freedom and justice in Kansas, and the part he took in holding up the hands of our noble martyr while struggling for human rights on our soil. I send you now by mail some newspapers containing recent articles relating to John Brown.

With great respect,

F. G. Adams,

Secretary.

Mary E. Stearns correspondence

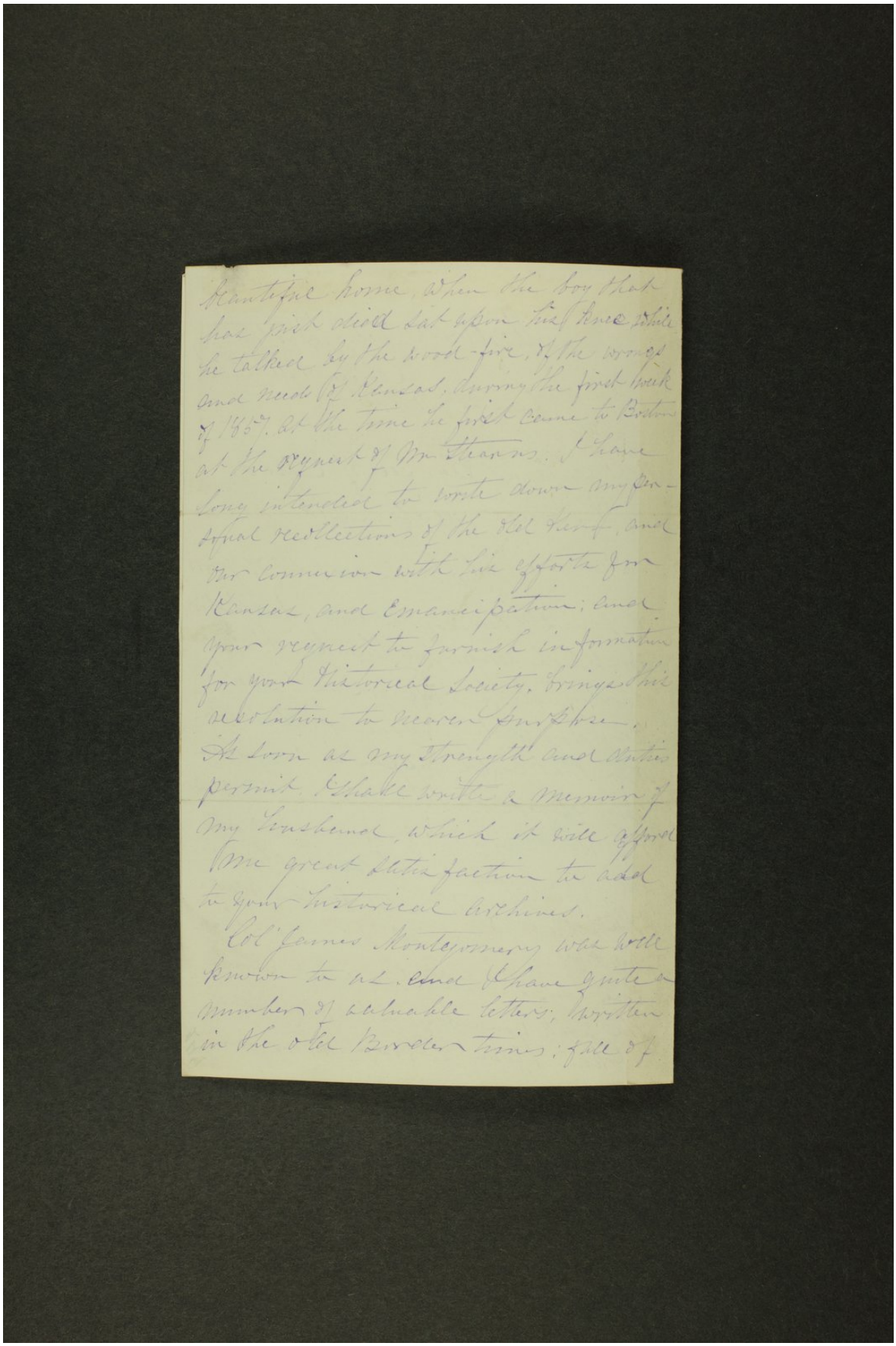


Medford. Near Boston.
College Hill. P.O.
Jan 20th 1878.

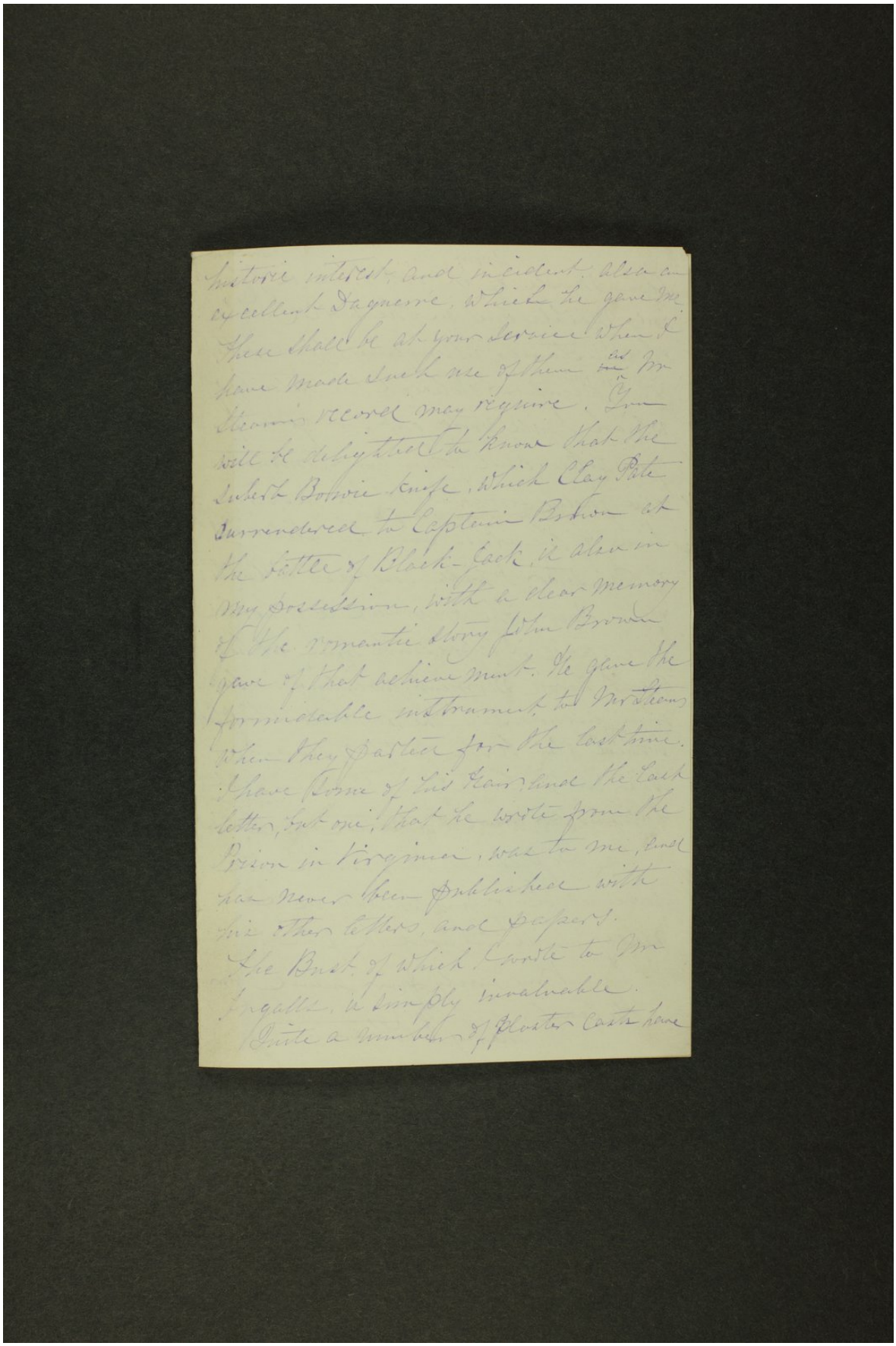
F. G. Adams. Esq. Secy of Kansas
Historical Society. Topeka. Kas.

Dear Sir. Am in receipt of yours
of Jan 12th. enclosures. and Newspapers
for which accept my thanks. Am
hardly able to write you as I wish
being prostrated by the greatest sor-
row that could happen to one since
my beloved Husband's death. viz.
the death, at 23 yrs of our most beauti-
ful, gifted, and last beloved child
The Boy. his father said would make
his place good. At soon as I re-
cover sufficiently I will set about
the work you request at my hand.
Should John Brown, or our own

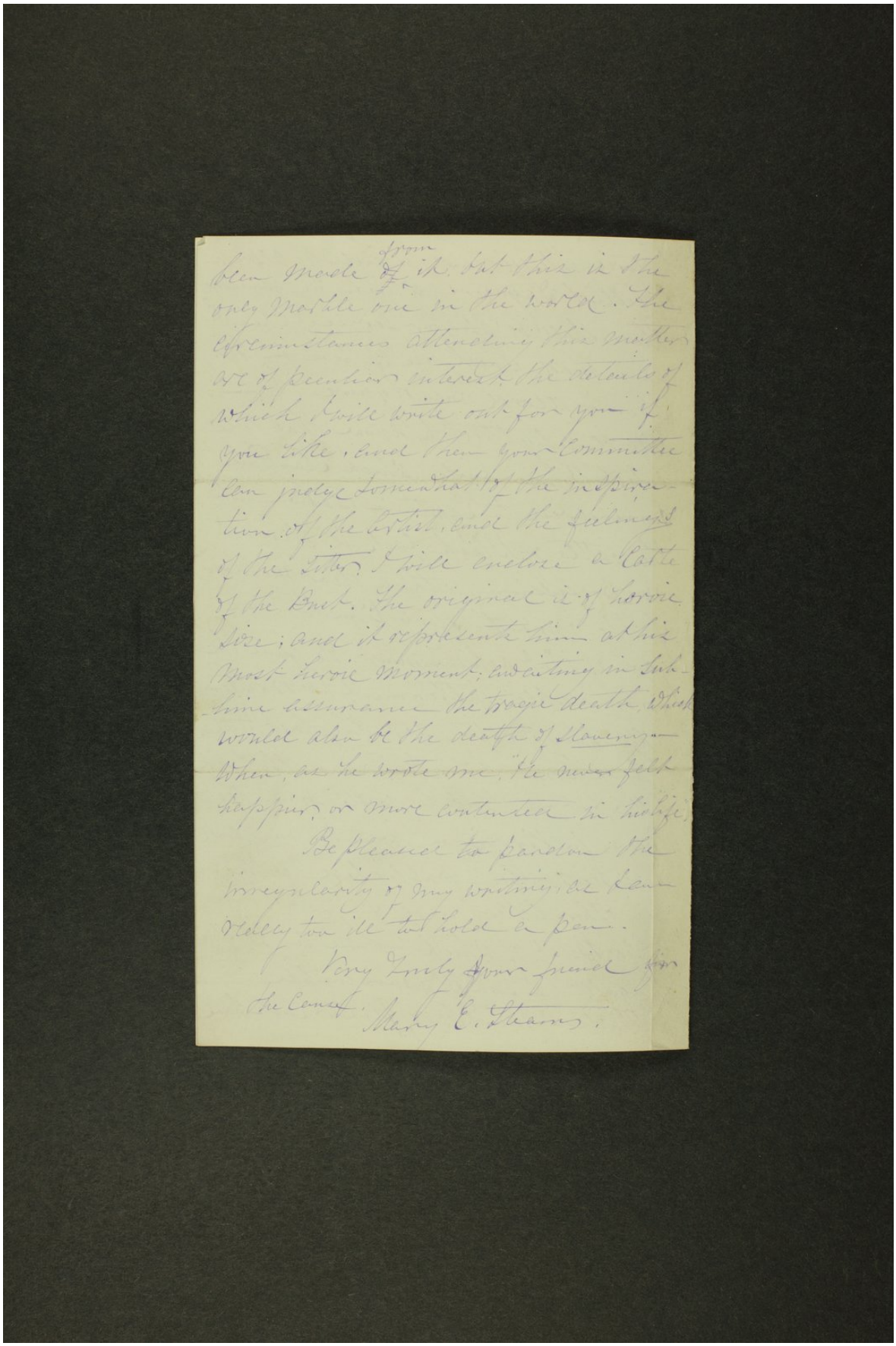
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beautiful home, when the boy that
has just died sat upon his knee while
he talked by the wood-fire, of the wrongs
and needs of Kansas. during the first week
of 1857. at the time he first came to Boston
at the request of Mr Stearns. I have
long intended to write down my per-
sonal recollections of the old Hero, and
our connection with his efforts for
Kansas, and Emancipation; and
your request to furnish information
for your Historical Society, brings this
resolution to recover from those,
as soon as my strength and duties
permit. I shall write a Memoir of
my Husband, which it will afford
me great satisfaction to add
to your historical archives.
Col James Montgomery was well
known to us, and I have quite a
number of valuable letters; written
in the old Border times; full of



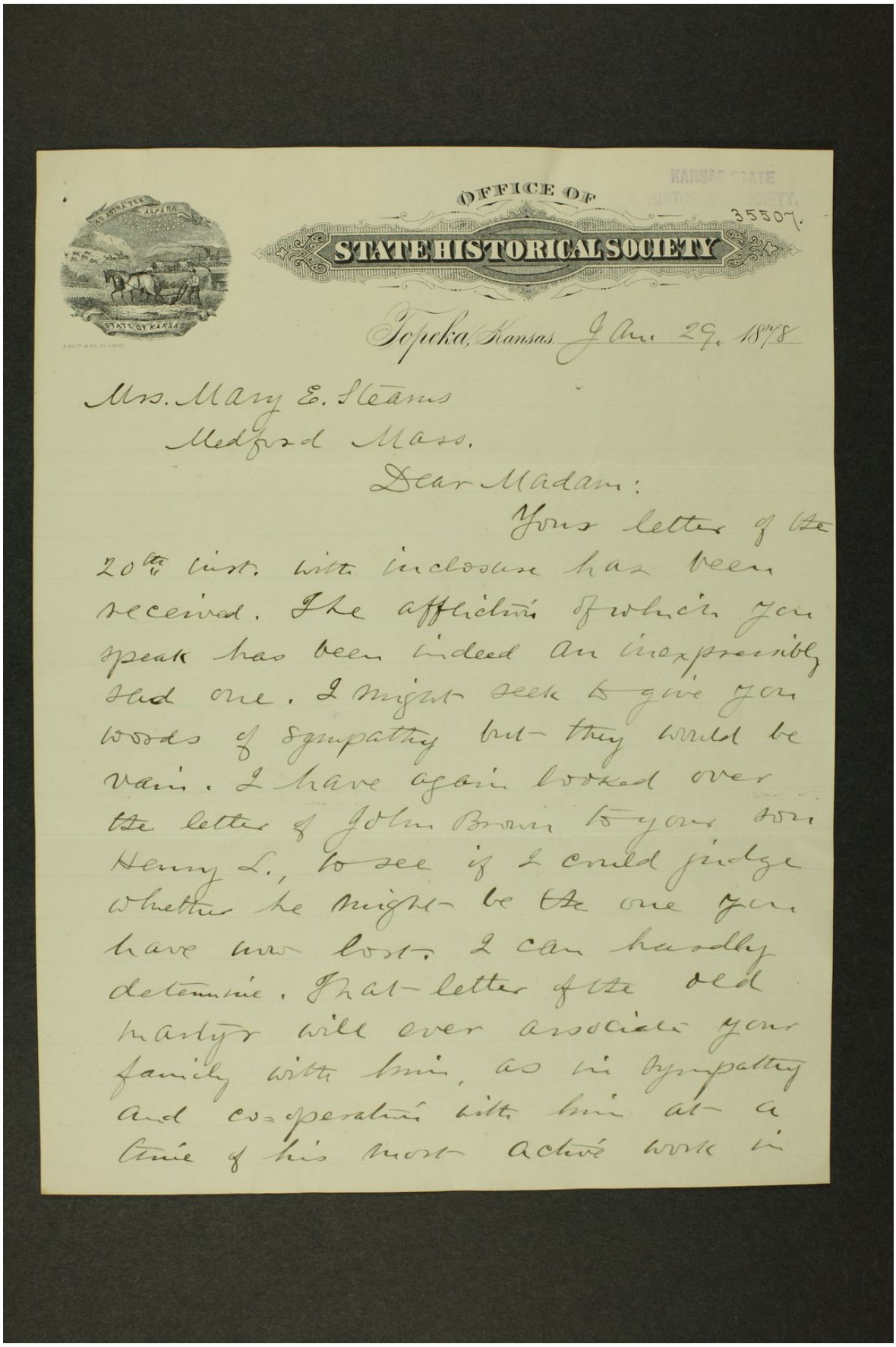
historic interest, and incident. Also an excellent Daguerre, which he gave me. I shall be at your service when I have made such use of them as I may require. You will be delighted to know that the Inlaid Bowie knife, which Clay Pate surrendered to Captain Brown at the battle of Black-Jack, is also in my possession, with a clear memory of the romantic story John Brown gave of that achievement. He gave the formidable instrument to Mr Stearns when they parted for the last time. I have some of his Hair since the last letter, but one, that he wrote from the Prison in Virginia, was to me, and has never been published with his other letters, and papers. The Best of which, I write to Mr Sanborn, is simply invaluable. Pate a number of plaster casts have



been made from it. But this is the only Marble one in the world. The circumstances attending this matter are of peculiar interest, the details of which I will write out for you if you like, and then your Committee can judge somewhat of the inspiration of the artist, and the fulness of the Love I will enclose a Card of the Bust. The original is of heroic size; and it represents him at his most heroic Moment; awaiting in sublime assurance the tragic death which would also be the death of slavery. When, as he wrote me, "He never felt happier or more contented in his life."

Be pleased to pardon the irregularity of my writing; as I am ordered to "lie still and hold a pen."

Very truly Your friend for the Cause,
Mary E. Stearns.



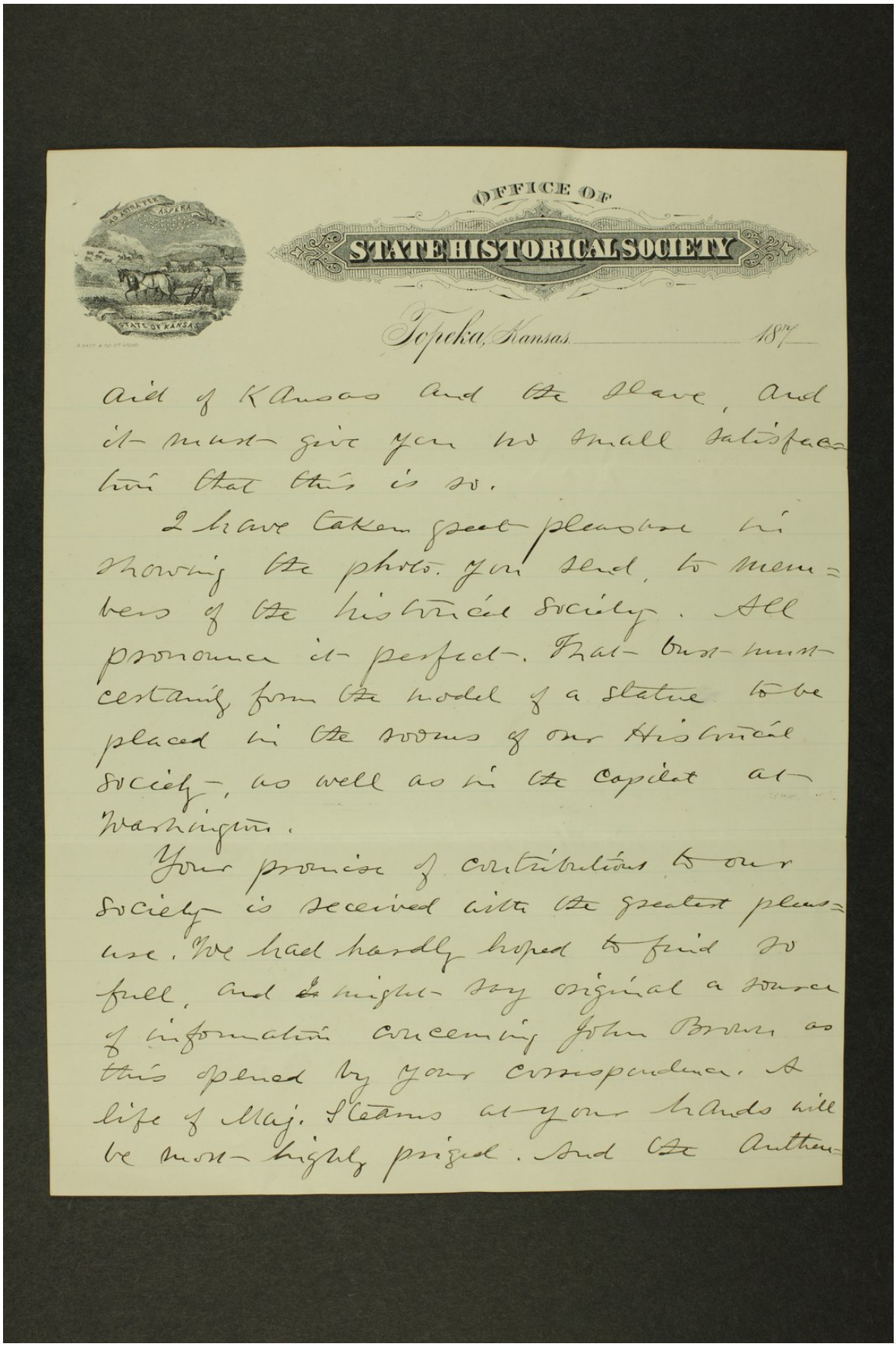
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35507.

Topeka, Kansas Jan 29. 1878

Mrs. Mary E. Stearns
Medford Mass.

Dear Madam:

Your letter of the 20th inst. with inclosure has been received. The affliction of which you speak has been indeed an inexpressibly sad one. I might seek to give you words of sympathy but they would be vain. I have again looked over the letter of John Brown to your son Henry L., to see if I could judge whether he might be the one you have now lost. I can hardly determine. That letter of the old martyr will ever associate your family with him, as in sympathy and co-operation with him at a time of his most active work in



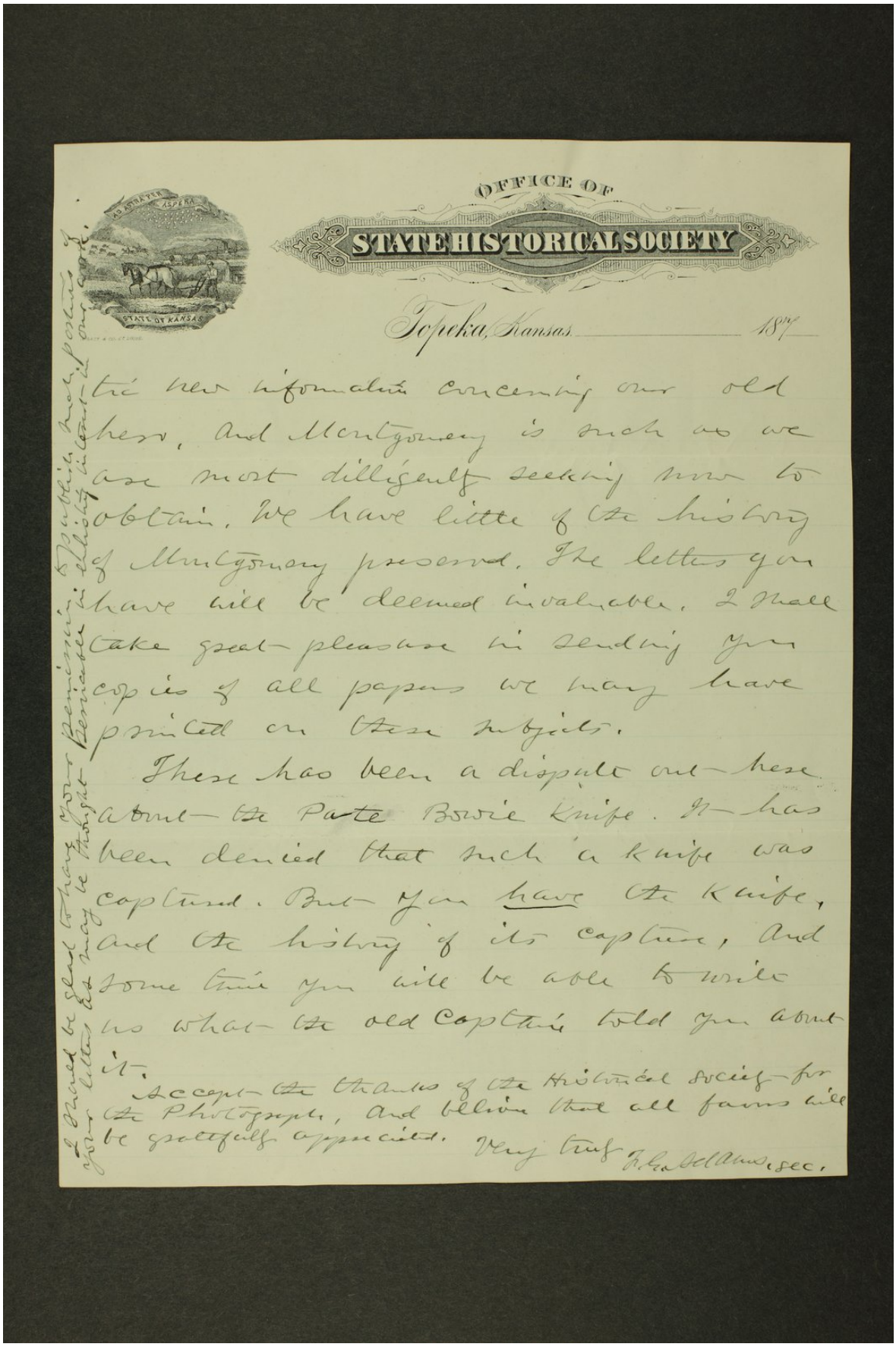
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aid of Kansas and the slave, and it must give you no small satisfaction that this is so.

I have taken great pleasure in showing the photo. you sent, to members of the historical society. All pronounce it perfect. That bust must certainly form the model of a statue to be placed in the rooms of our Historical society, as well as in the Capitol at Washington.

Your promise of contributions to our society is received with the greatest pleasure. We had hardly hoped to find so full, and so might say original a source of information concerning John Brown as this opened by your correspondence. A life of Maj. Stearns at your hands will be most highly prized. And the Author-



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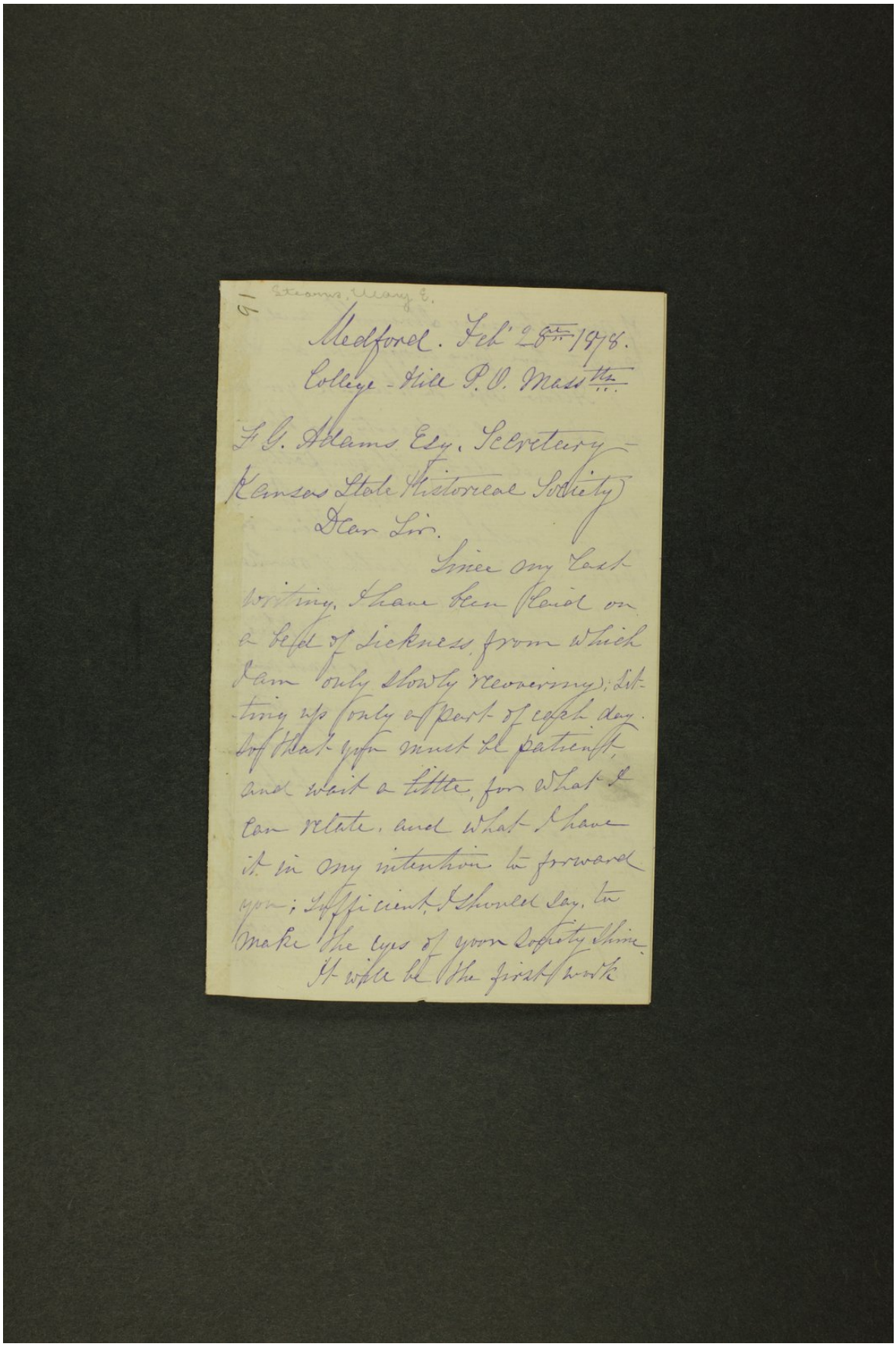
tic new information concerning our old Chess, and Montgomery is such as we are most diligently seeking now to obtain. We have little of the history of Montgomery preserved. The letters you have will be deemed invaluable. I shall take great pleasure in sending you copies of all papers we may have printed on these subjects.

There has been a dispute out here about the Pate Bowie knife. It has been denied that such a knife was captured. But you have the knife, and the history of its capture, and some time you will be able to write us what the old Captain told you about it.

Accept the thanks of the Historical society for the Photograph, and believe that all favors will be gratefully appreciated. Very truly F. G. Adams, Sec.

I should be glad to have your Memoirs & Publish them in the Historical Collections of the State. Will you kindly let me hear from you on the subject at your earliest convenience.

Mary E. Stearns correspondence

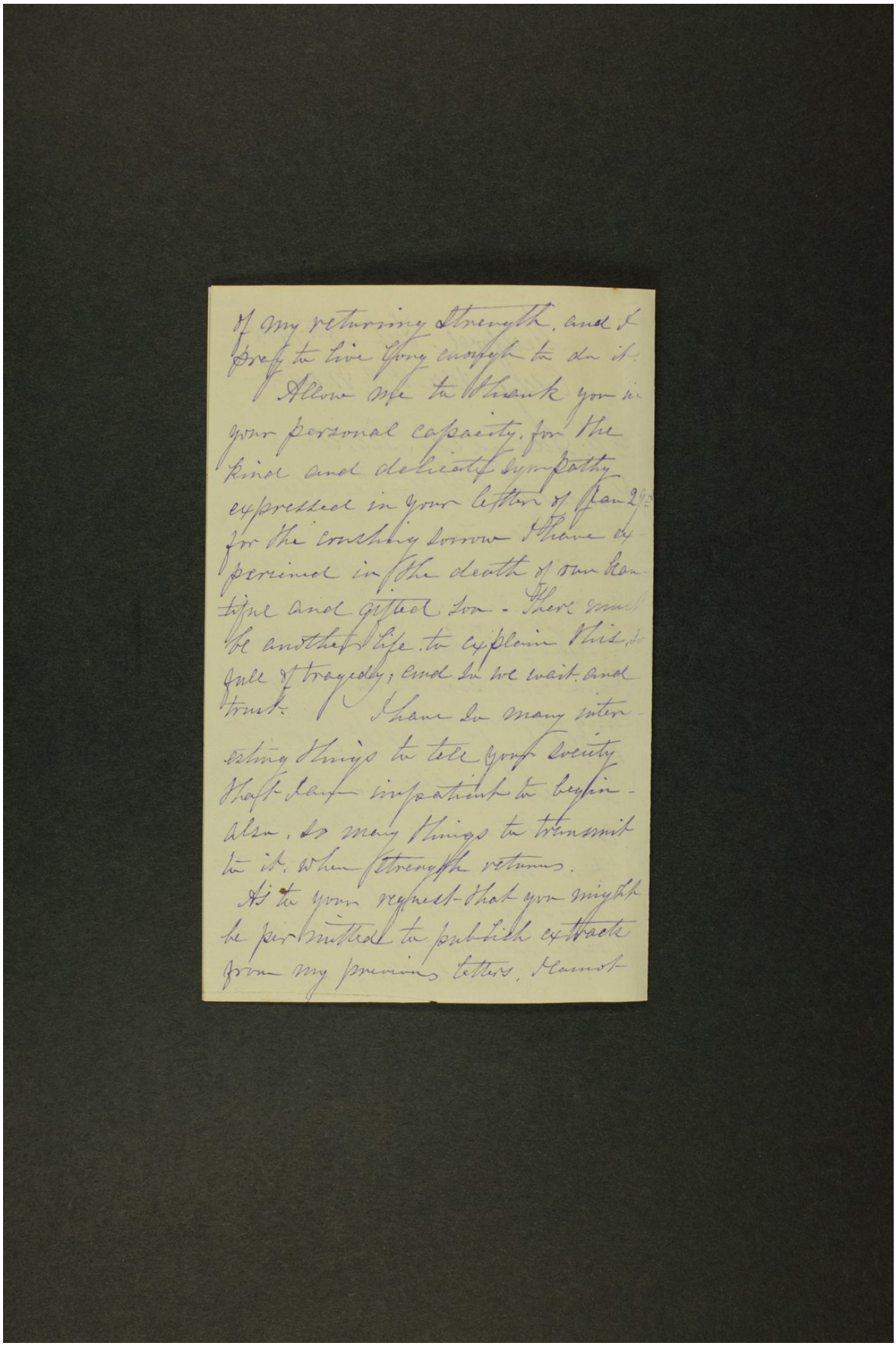


Stearns, Mary E.

Medford. Feb 20th 1878.
College Hill P.O. Mass

F. G. Adams Esq. Secretary
Kansas State Historical Society
Dear Sir.

Since my last writing, I have been laid on a bed of sickness from which I am only slowly recovering; sitting up only a part of each day. So that you must be patient, and wait a little, for what I can relate, and what I have it in my intention to forward you; sufficient I should say, to make the eyes of your Society shine. It will be the first work

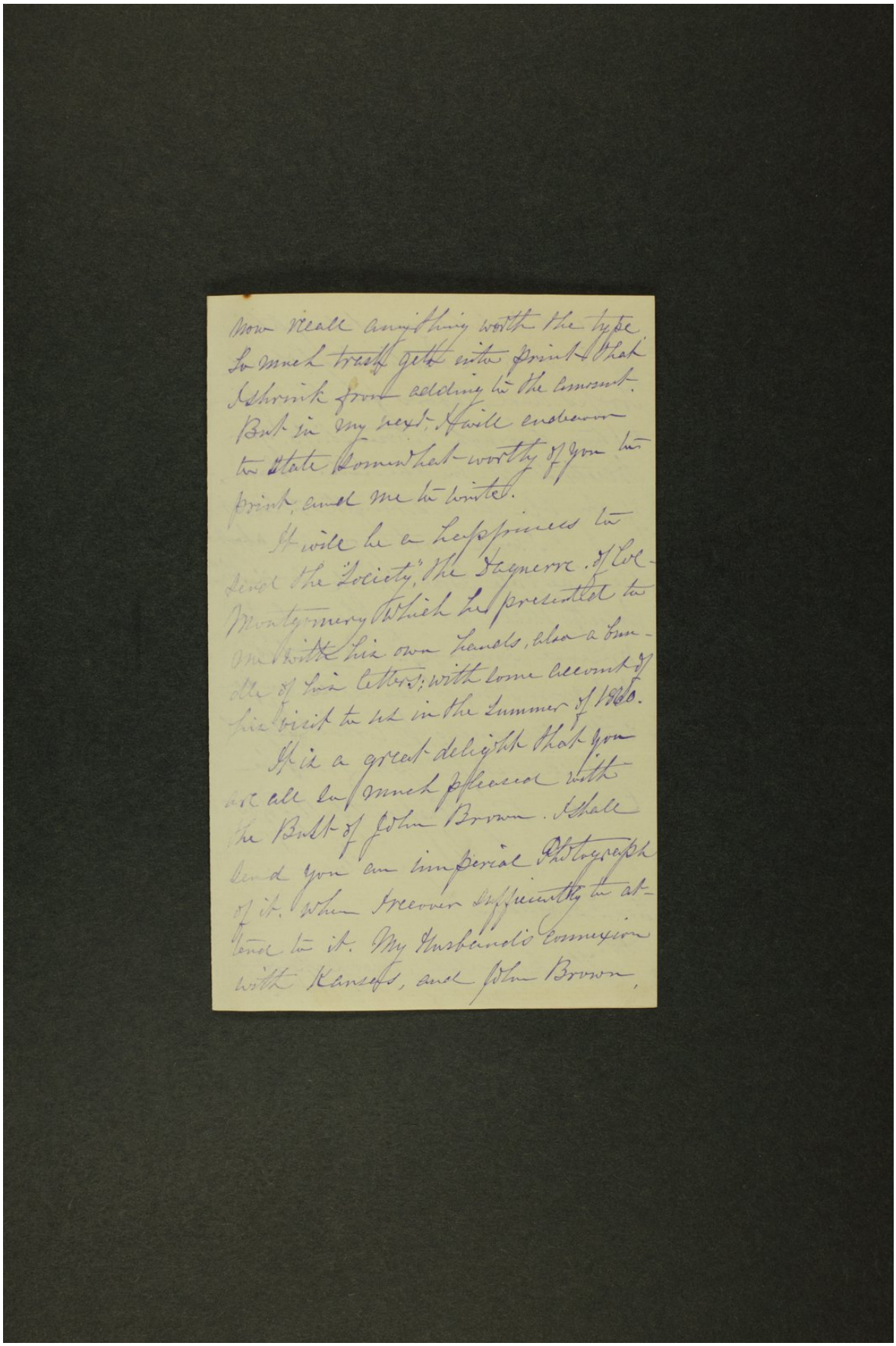


of my returning strength, and I pray to live long enough to do it.

Allow me to thank you in your personal capacity, for the kind and delicate sympathy expressed in your letter of Jan 2nd for the crushing sorrow I have experienced in the death of our Kentype and gifted son - There must be another life to explain this, so full of tragedy, and so we wait and trust.

I have so many interesting things to tell your society that I am impatient to begin - also, so many things to transmit to it, when strength returns.

As to your request that you might be permitted to publish extracts from my previous letters, I cannot

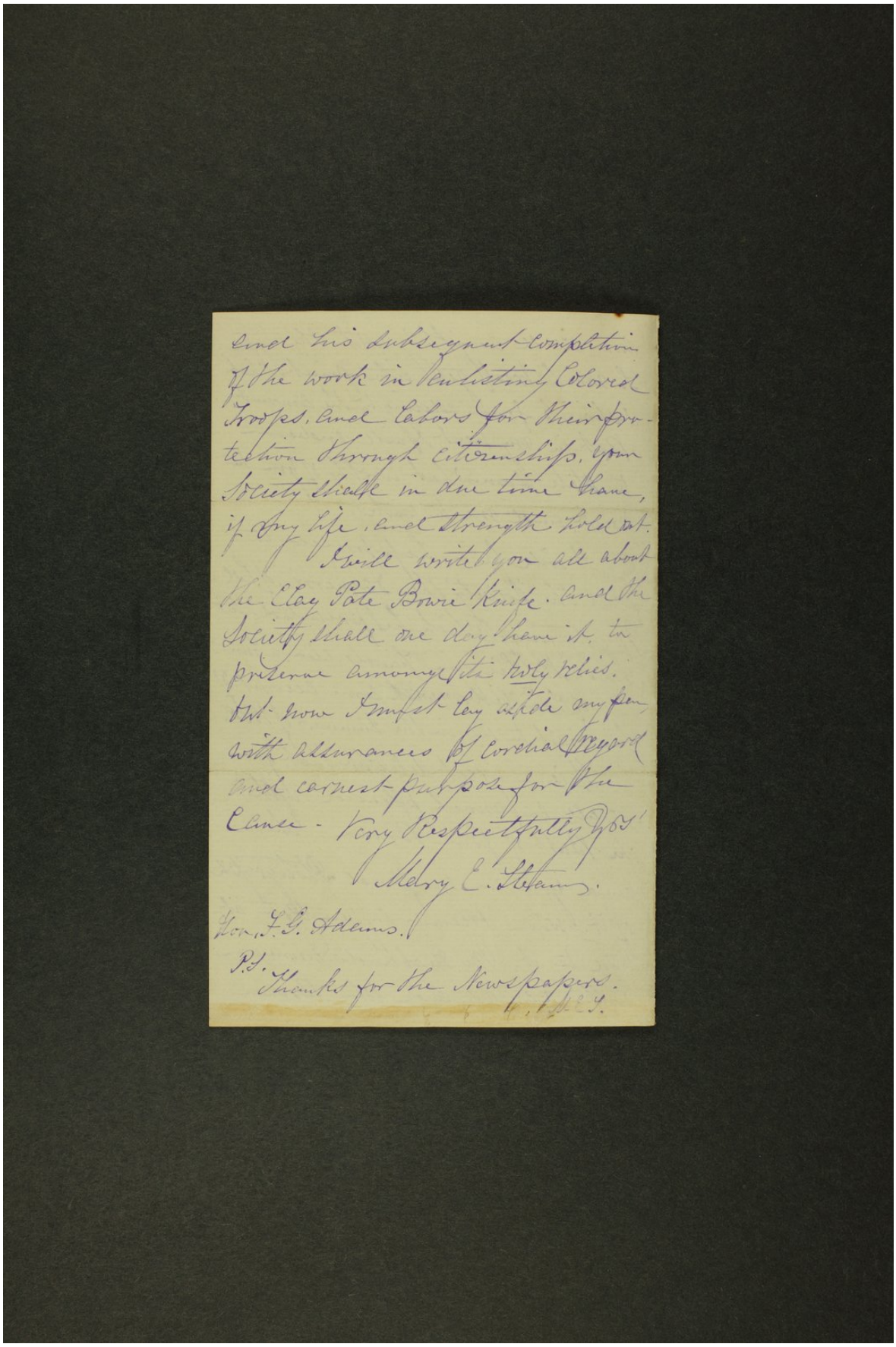


Now recall anything worth the type so much trash gets into print. That I shrink from adding to the amount. But in my next, I will endeavor to state somewhat worthy of you to print, and me to write.

It will be a happiness to send the "Society," the Daguerre of Col. Montgomery which he presented to me with his own hands, also a bundle of his letters; with some account of his visit to us in the Summer of 1860.

It is a great delight that you are all so much pleased with the Bust of John Brown. I shall send you an imperial Photograph of it. When I recover sufficiently to attend to it. My Husband's connexion with Kansas, and John Brown,

Mary E. Stearns correspondence



and his subsequent completion of the work in enlisting Colored troops, and labors for their protection through citizenships, your Society shall in due time share, if my life, and strength hold out.

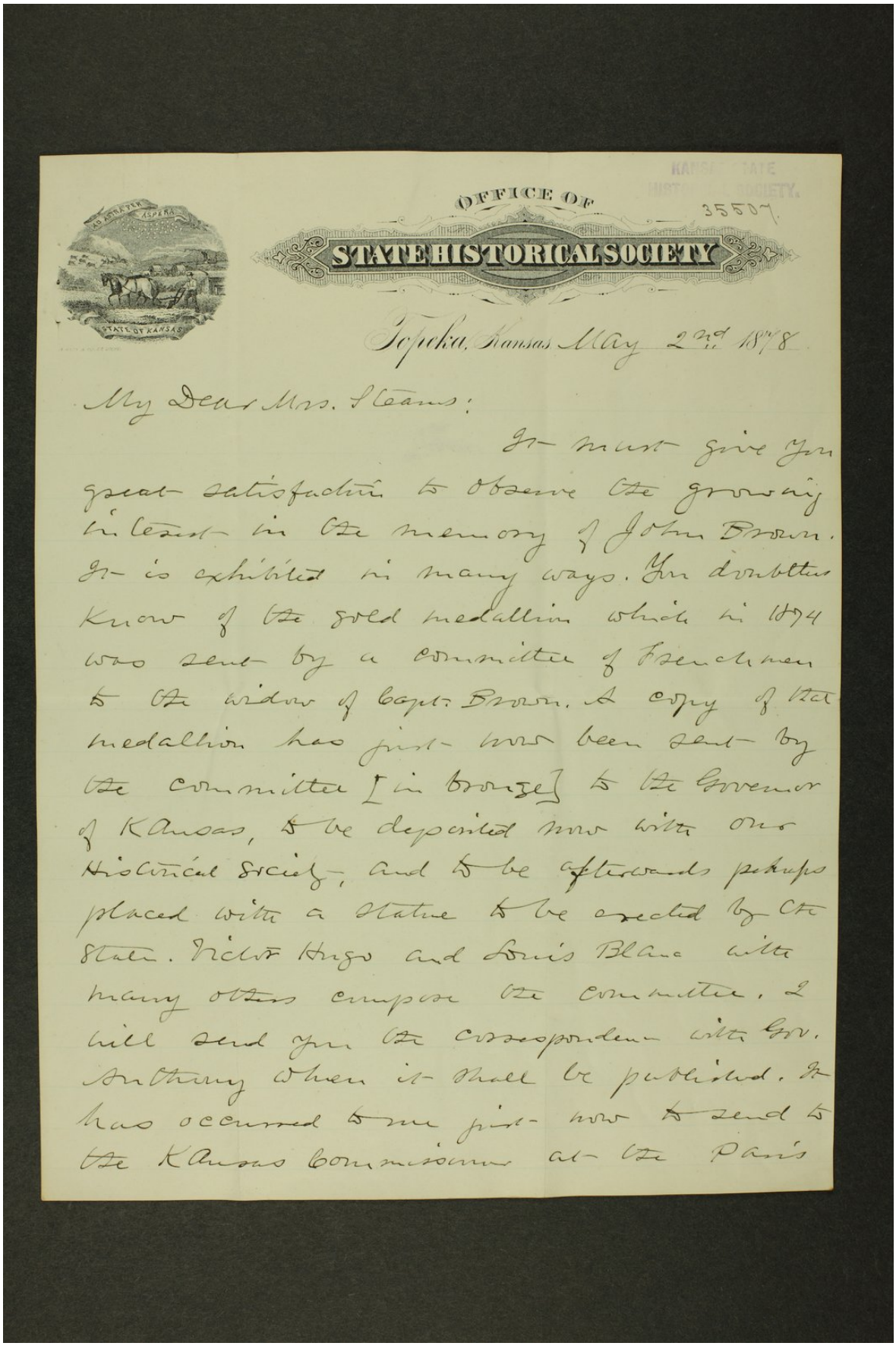
I will write you all about the Clay Pate Bowie Knife, and the Society shall one day have it, to preserve among its truly relics.

But now I must lay aside my pen with assurances of cordial regard and earnest purpose for the cause. Very Respectfully Yours

Mary E. Stearns.

Hon. F. G. Adams.

P.S. Thanks for the Newspapers.

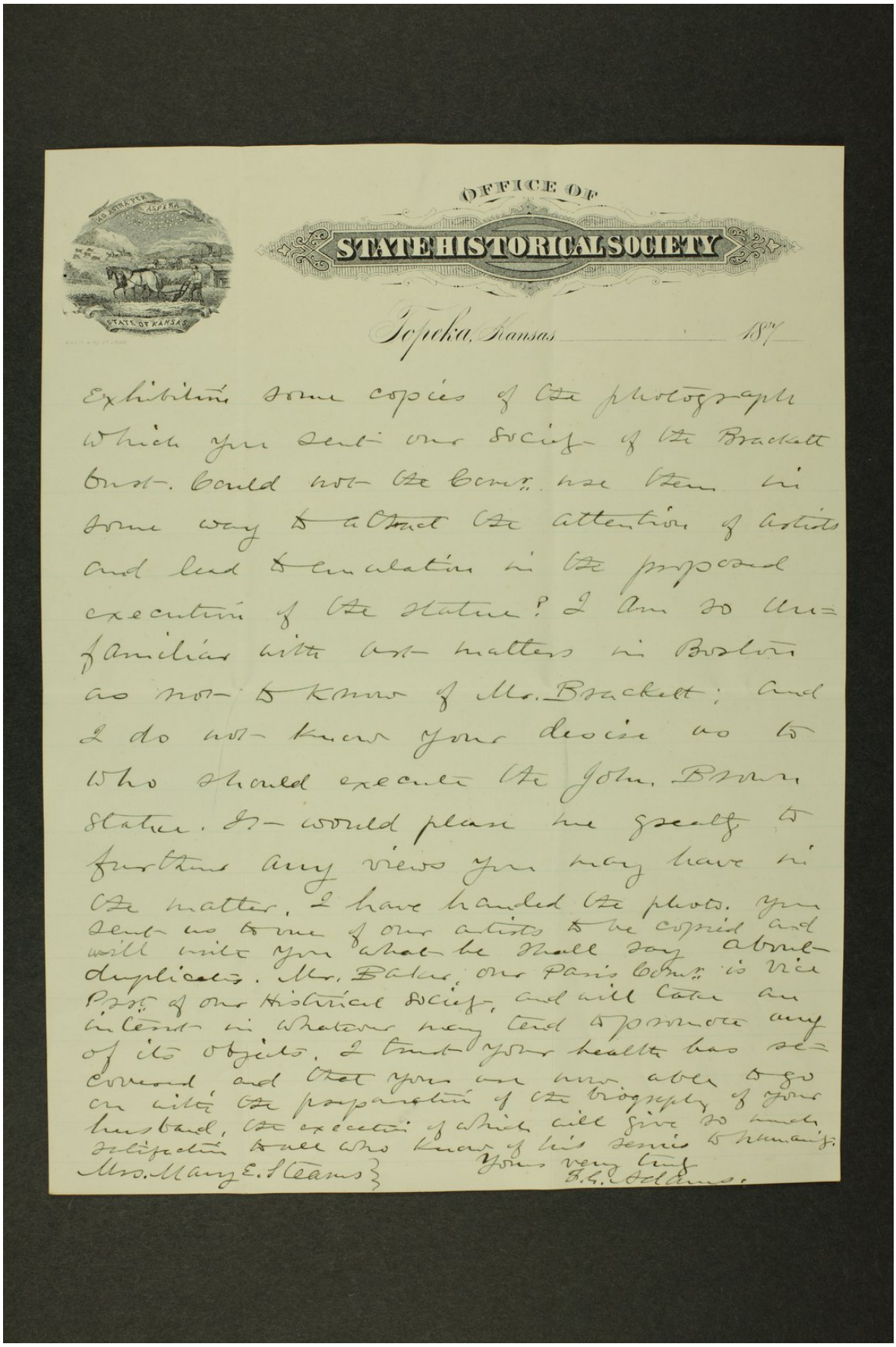


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Topeka, Kansas May 2nd 1878

My Dear Mrs. Stearns:

I must give you great satisfaction to observe the growing interest in the memory of John Brown. It is exhibited in many ways. You doubtless know of the gold medallion which in 1874 was sent by a committee of Frenchmen to the widow of Capt. Brown. A copy of that medallion has just now been sent by the committee [in bronze] to the Governor of Kansas, to be deposited now with our Historical Society, and to be afterwards perhaps placed with a statue to be erected by the State. Victor Hugo and Louis Blanc with many others compose the committee. I will send you the correspondence with Gov. Anthony when it shall be published. It has occurred to me just now to send to the Kansas Commissioner at the Paris



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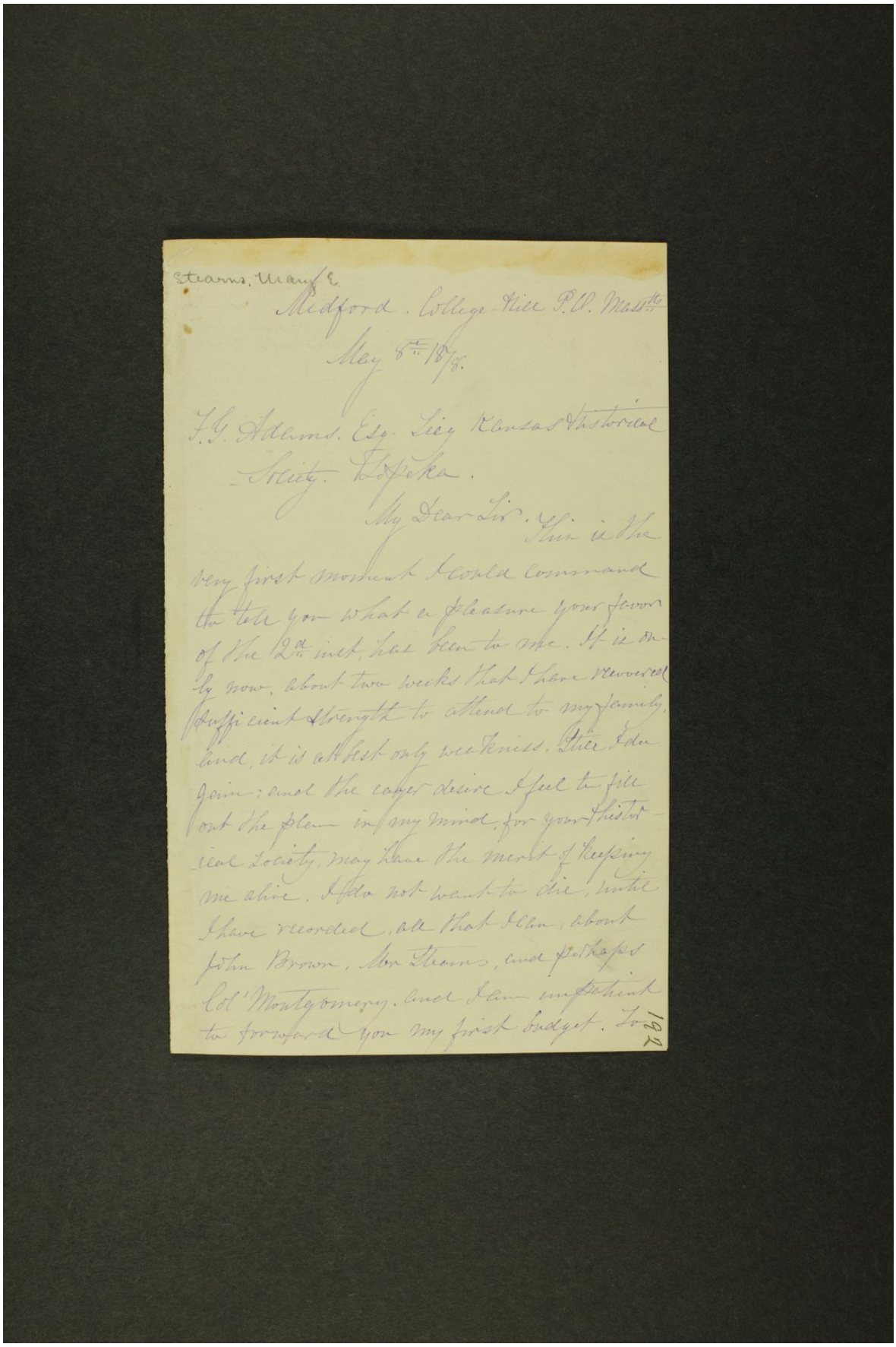
Topeka, Kansas, 187

Exhibition some copies of the photographs which you sent our Society of the Brackett bust. Could not the Comm. use them in some way to attract the attention of artists and lead to emulation in the proposed execution of the statue? I am so unfamiliar with art matters in Boston as not to know of Mr. Brackett; and I do not know your desire as to who should execute the John Brown statue. It would please me greatly to further any views you may have in the matter. I have handed the photos. you sent me to one of our artists to be copied and will write you what he shall say about duplicates. Mr. Baker, our Paris Comm. is Vice Pres. of our Historical Society, and will take an interest in whatever may tend to promote any of its objects. I trust your health has recovered, and that you are now able to go on with the preparation of the biography of your husband, the execution of which will give so much satisfaction to all who know of his services to humanity.

Mrs. Mary E. Stearns

Yours very truly
S. G. Colburn.

Mary E. Stearns correspondence

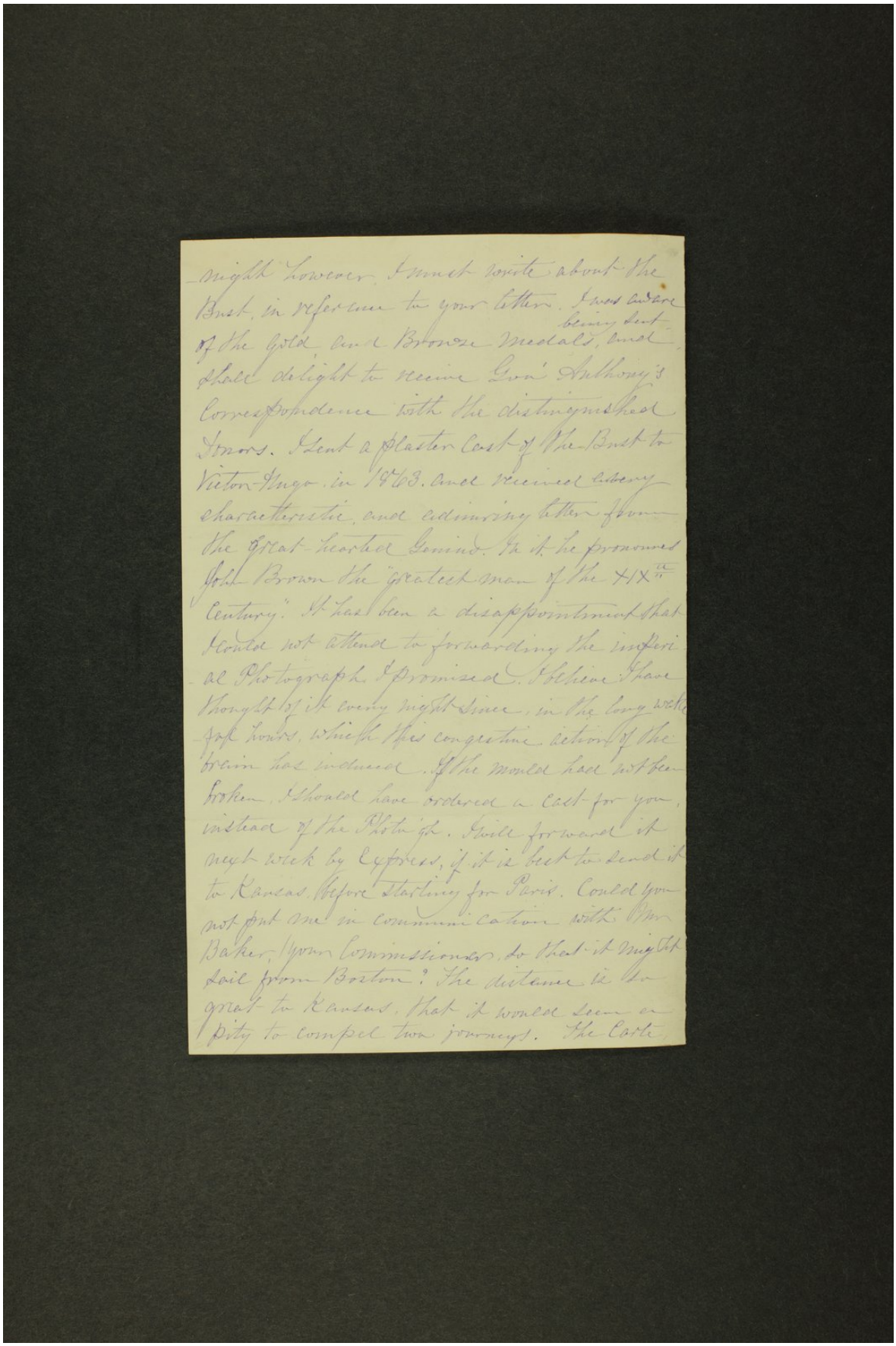


Stearns, Mary E.

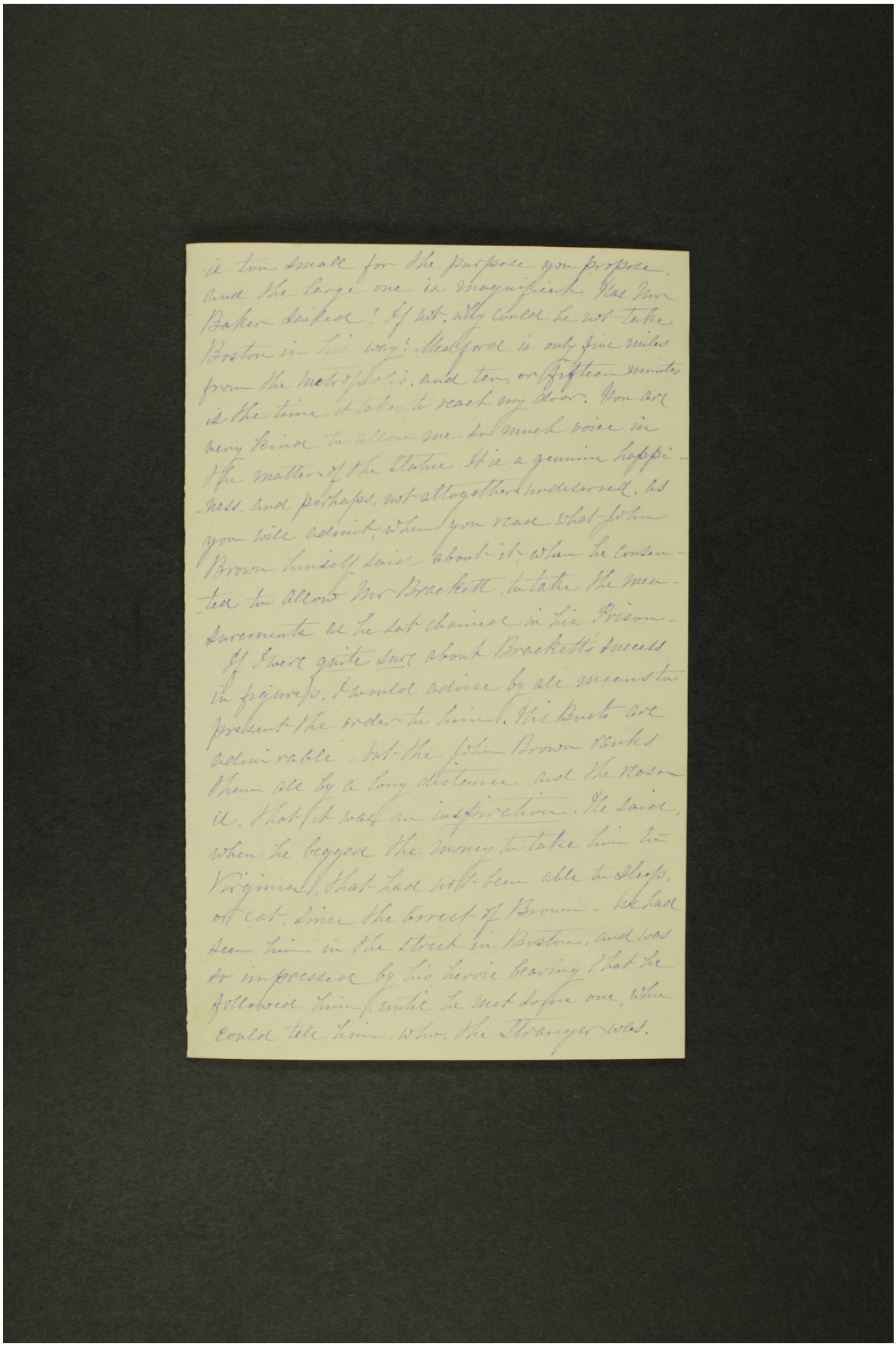
Medford. College-Hill P.O. Mass.tts
May 8th 1876.

F.G. Adams. Esq. Sec'y Kansas Historical
Society. Topeka.

My Dear Sir. Yes. Now is the
very first moment I could command
the time to tell you what a pleasure your favor
of the 2d inst. has been to me. It is only now, about two weeks that I have recovered
sufficient strength to attend to my family,
and, it is at best only weakness. Slow I am
gain; and the eager desire I feel to fill
out the plan in my mind, for your Histor-
ical Society, may have the merit of keeping
me alive. I do not want to die, until
I have recorded, all that I can, about
John Brown, Mr Stearns, and perhaps
Col Montgomery. And I am impatient
to forward you my first budget. To-

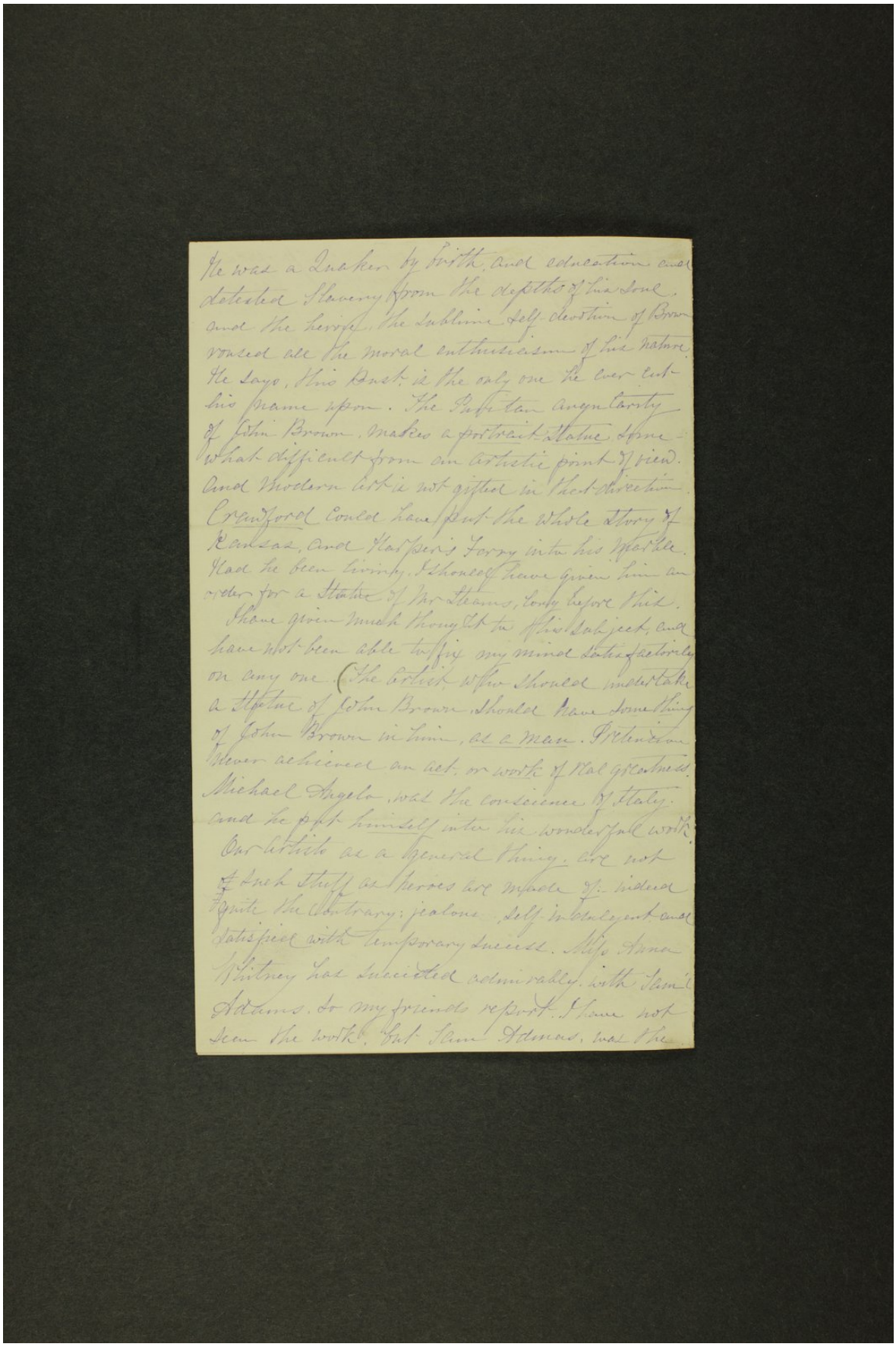


might however. I must write about the Bust, in reference to your letters. I was aware of the Gold and Bronze Medals, and being sent shall delight to receive Susan Anthony's Correspondence with the distinguished Donors. I sent a plaster cast of the Bust to Victor Hugo, in 1863. and received a very characteristic, and admiring letter from the great hearted Seminde. In it he pronounced John Brown the "greatest man of the XIX th Century." It has been a disappointment that I could not attend to forwarding the imperial Photograph I promised. I believe I have thought of it every night since, in the long wakeful hours, which this congestive action of the brain has induced. If the mould had not been broken, I should have ordered a cast for you, instead of the Photograph. I will forward it next week by Express, if it is best to send it to Kansas, before starting for Paris. Could you not put me in communication with Mr Baker, your Commissioner, so that it might sail from Boston? The distance is so great to Kansas, that it would seem a pity to compel two journeys. The Cable,

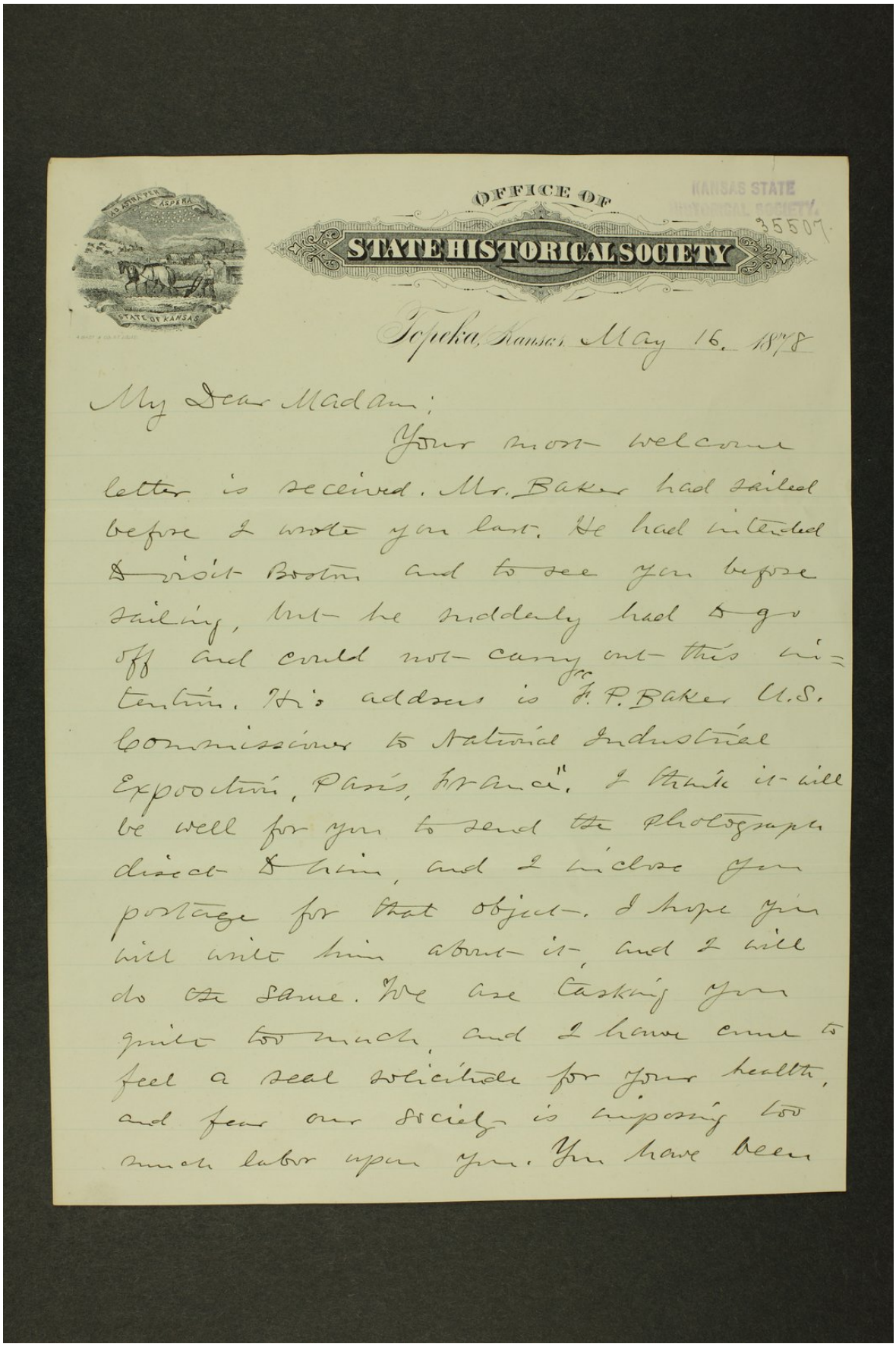


it too small for the purpose you propose, and the large one is magnificent. Has Gen Baker declined? If not, why could he not take Boston in his way? Medford is only five miles from the Metropolis, and ten or fifteen minutes is the time it takes to reach my door. You are very kind to allow me so much voice in the matter of the statue. It is a genuine happiness, and perhaps, not altogether undeserved, as you will admit, when you read what John Brown himself said about it, when he consented to allow Mr Brackett, to take the measurements of he last chained in his Prison-

If I were quite sure about Brackett's success in figures, I would advise by all means to present the order to him. His Busts are admirable - but the John Brown ranks them all by a long distance and the reason is, that it was an inspiration. He said, when he begged the money to take him to Virginia, that had not been able to sleep, or eat, since the arrest of Brown - he had seen him in the street in Boston, and was so impressed by his heroic bearing that he followed him, until he met a person one, who could tell him, who the Stranger was.



He was a Quaker by birth, and education, and detested Slavery from the depths of his soul. and the heroic, the sublime self devotion of Brown roused all the moral enthusiasm of his nature. He says, this Book is the only one he ever put his name upon. The Puritan augmentity of John Brown, makes a portrait statue some what difficult from an Artistic point of view. And Modern Art is not gifted in that direction. Crawford could have put the whole story of Kansas, and Hasper's Ferry into his Marble. Had he been living, I should have given him an order for a Statue of Mr Stearns, long before this. I have given much thought to this subject, and have not been able to fix my mind satisfactorily on any one (The Artist, who should undertake a Statue of John Brown, should have some thing of John Brown in him, as a man. Phidias never achieved an act, or work of Art greatness. Michael Angelo, was the conscience of Italy, and he put himself into his wonderful work. Our Artists as a General thing, are not of such stuff as Heroes are made of: indeed quite the contrary: jealous, self indulgent and satisfied with temporary success. Miss Anna Whitney has succeeded admirably with Sam'l Adams. so my friends report. I have not seen the work. But Sam Adams, was the



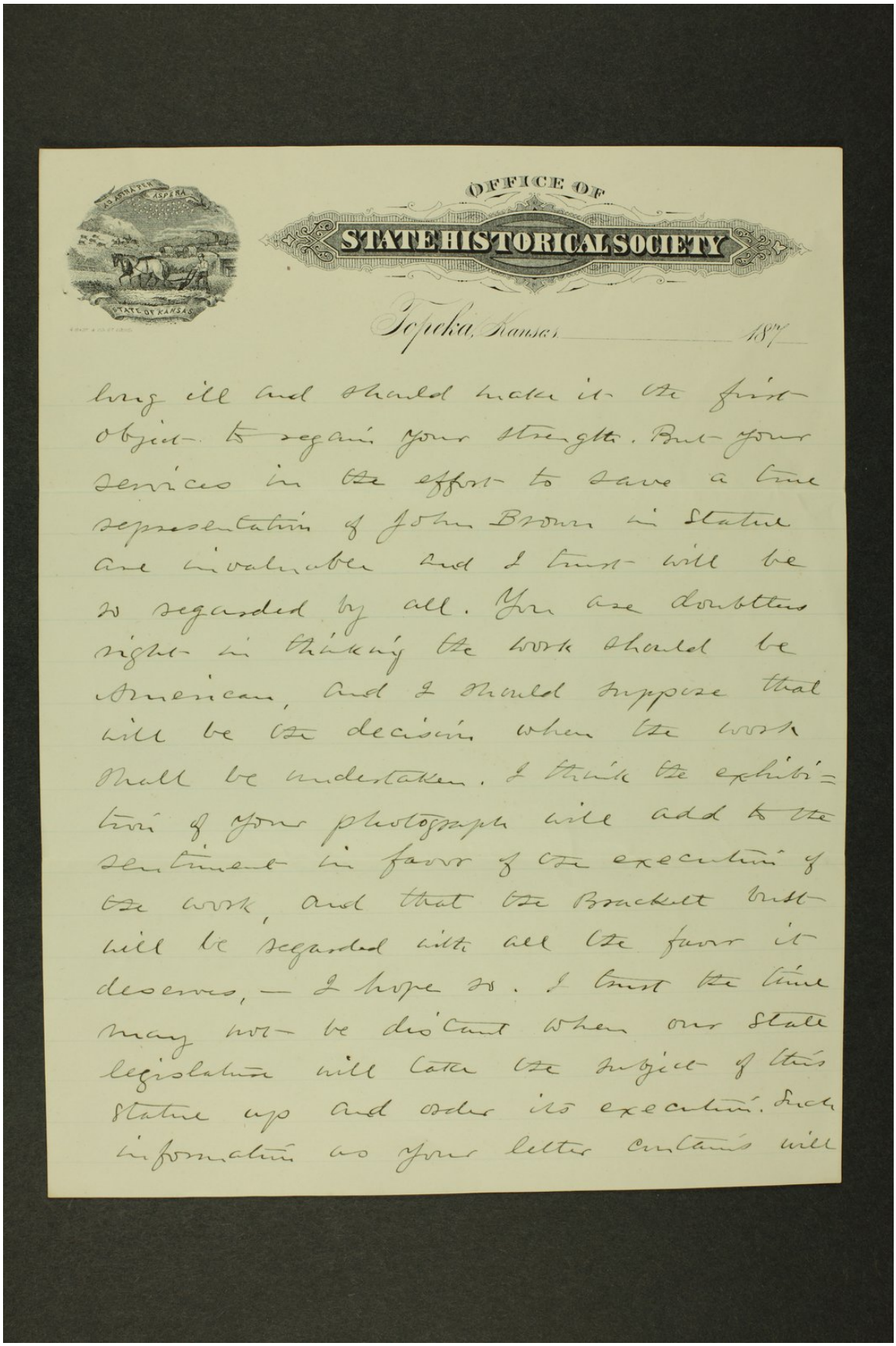
KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
35507

OFFICE OF
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Topeka, Kansas, May 16. 1878

My Dear Madam;

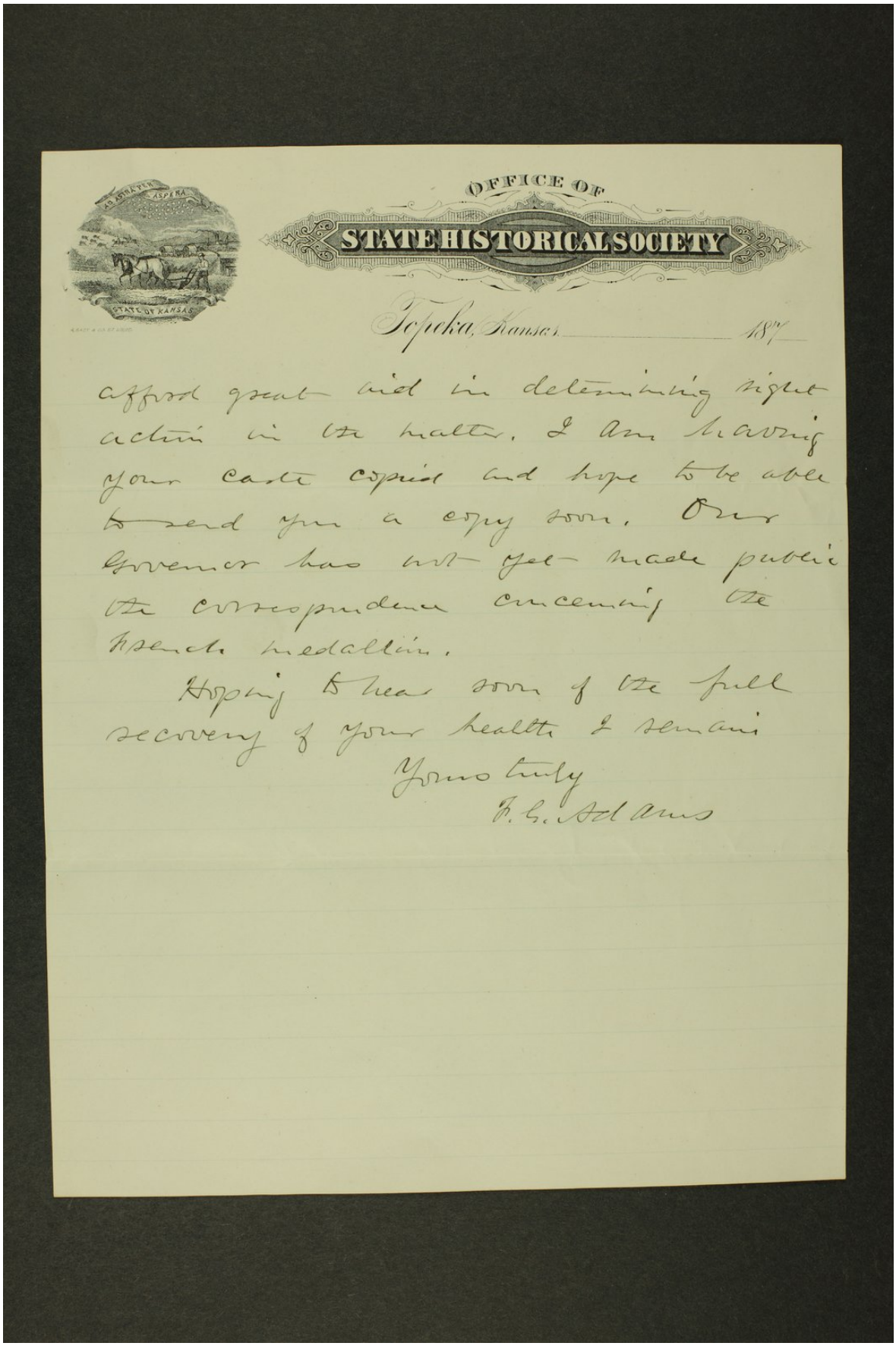
Your most welcome letter is received. Mr. Baker had sailed before I wrote you last. He had intended to visit Boston and to see you before sailing, but he suddenly had to go off and could not carry out this intention. His address is "F. P. Baker U.S. Commissioner to National Industrial Exposition, Paris, France". I think it will be well for you to send the photographs direct to him, and I inclose you postage for that object. I hope you will write him about it, and I will do the same. We are tasking you quite too much, and I have come to feel a real solicitude for your health, and fear our society is imposing too much labor upon you. You have been



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Topeka, Kansas, 1887

long ill and should make it the first object to regain your strength. But your services in the effort to save a true representation of John Brown in Statue are invaluable and I trust will be so regarded by all. You are doubtless right in thinking the work should be American, and I should suppose that will be the decision when the work shall be undertaken. I think the exhibition of your photograph will add to the sentiment in favor of the execution of the work, and that the Brackett bust will be regarded with all the favor it deserves, — I hope so. I trust the time may not be distant when our State legislature will take the subject of this Statue up and order its execution. Such information as your letter contains will



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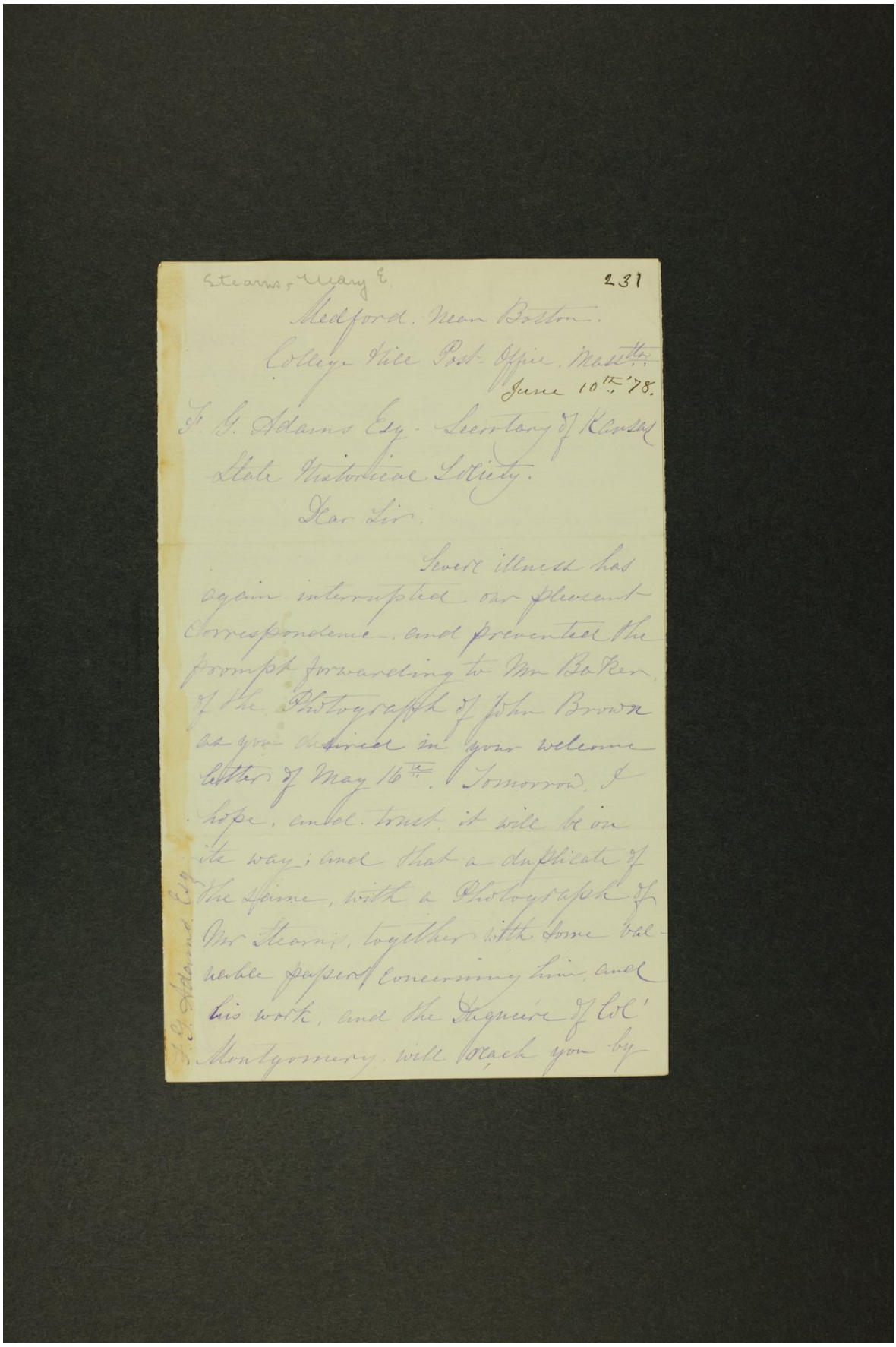
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afford great aid in determining right action in the matter. I am having your case copied and hope to be able to send you a copy soon. Our Governor has not yet made public the correspondence concerning the Ranch medallion.

Hoping to hear soon of the full recovery of your health I remain

Yours truly

B. G. Adams



Stearns, Mary E. 231

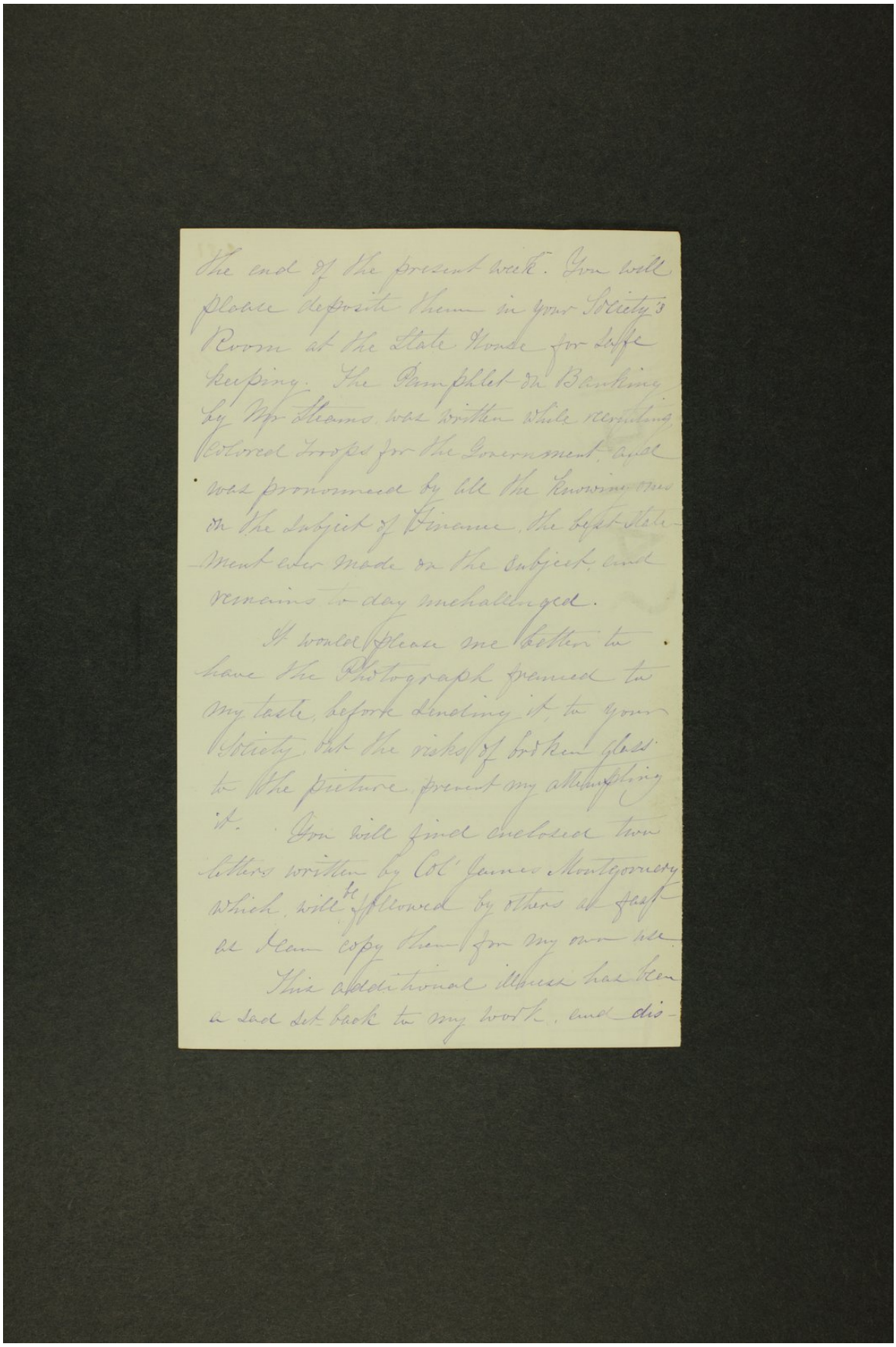
Medford. Near Boston.
College Hill Post Office, Mass.tts.
June 10th. '78.

F. G. Adams Esq - Secretary of Kansas
State Historical Society.

Dear Sir.

Severe illness has again interrupted our pleasant correspondence, and prevented the prompt forwarding to Mr Baker, of the Photograph of John Brown as you desired in your welcome letter of May 16th. Tomorrow, I hope, and trust, it will be on its way; and that a duplicate of the same, with a Photograph of Mr Stearns, together with some valuable papers concerning him, and his work, and the Signature of Col' Montgomery, will reach you by

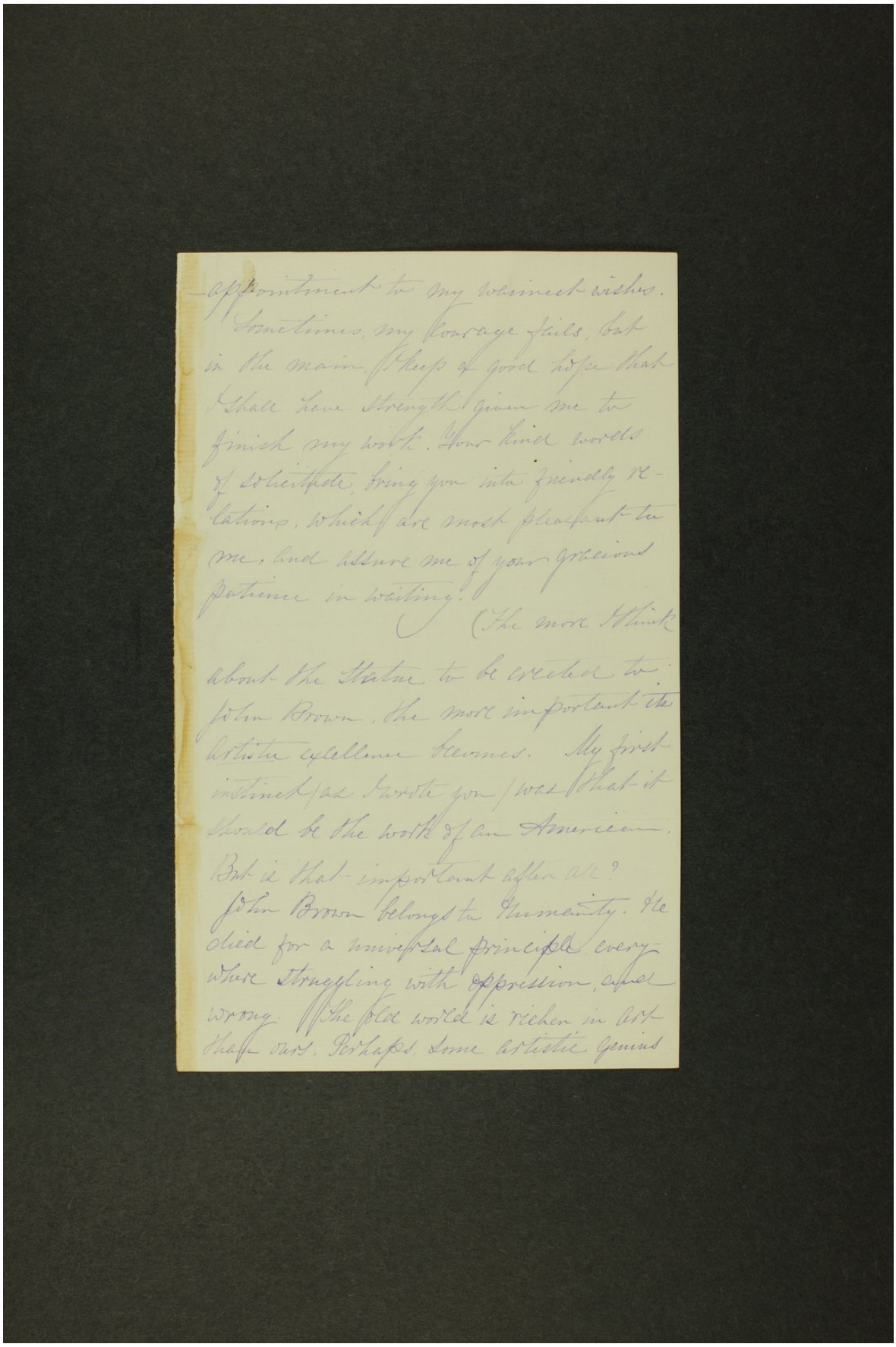
F. G. Adams Esq



the end of the present week. You will please deposite them in your Society's Room at the State House for safe keeping. The Pamphlet on Banking by Mr Stearns was written while recruiting Colored Troops for the Government, and was pronounced by all the knowing ones on the subject of Finance, the best Statement ever made on the subject, and remains to day unchallenged.

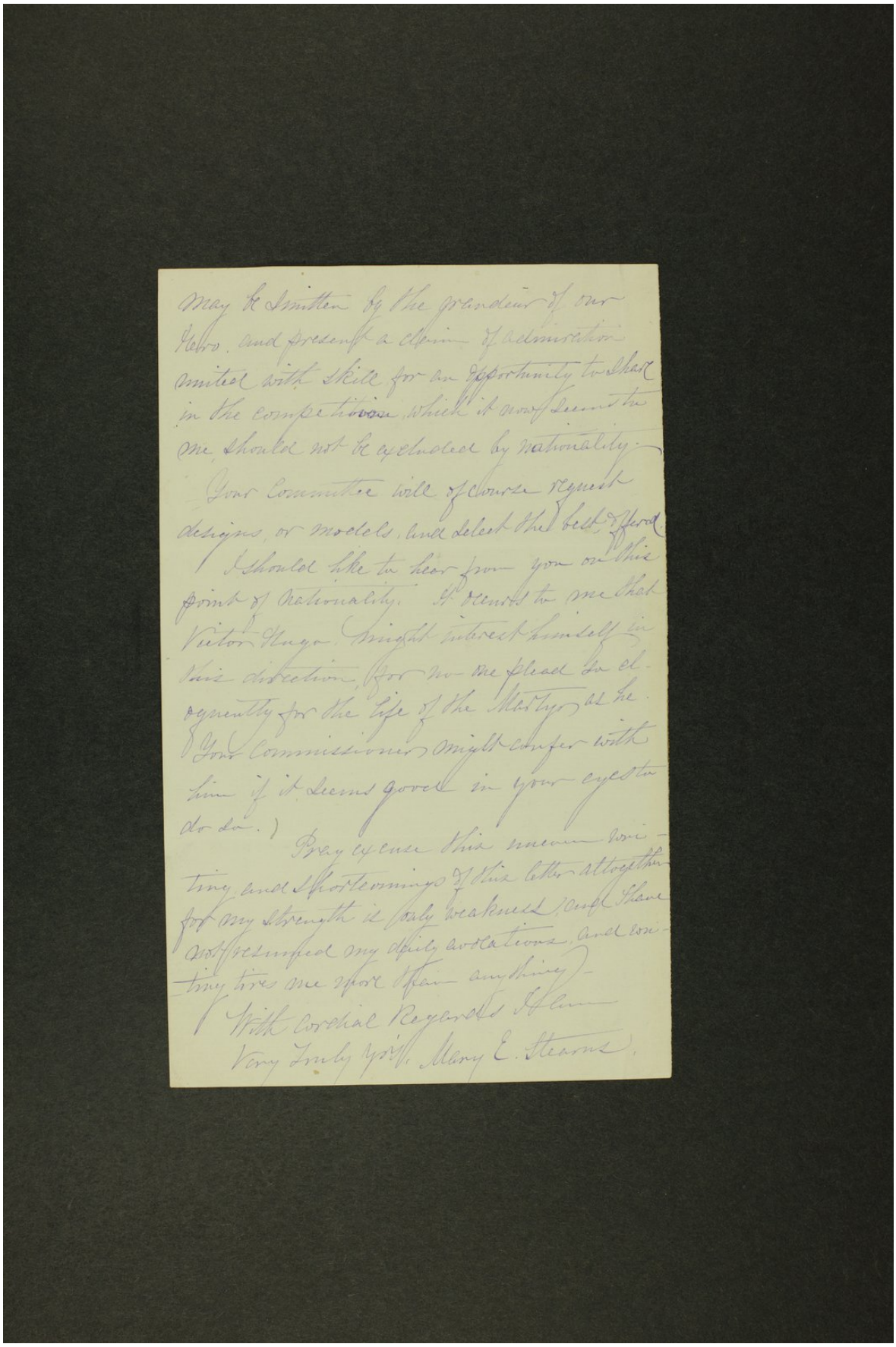
It would please one better to have the Photograph framed to my taste, before Sending it, to your Society, but the risks of broken glass to the picture, prevent my attempting it. You will find enclosed two letters written by Col James Montgomery which will be followed by others at least as soon copy them for my own use.

This additional illness has been a sad set back to my work, and dis-



appointment to my warmest wishes.
Sometimes my courage fails, but
in the main I keep a good hope that
I shall have strength given me to
finish my work. Your kind words
of solicitude bring you into friendly re-
lations, which are most pleasant to
me, and assure me of your gracious
patience in waiting.

The more I think
about the Statue to be erected to
John Brown, the more important the
artistic excellence becomes. My first
intimation as I wrote you, was that it
should be the work of an American.
But is that important after all?
John Brown belongs to Humanity. He
died for a universal principle every-
where struggling with oppression and
wrong. The old world is richer in art
than ours. Perhaps some artistic genius



May be smitten by the grandeur of our Nature, and present a claim of admiration united with skill for an opportunity to share in the competition which it now seems the one should not be excluded by nationality.

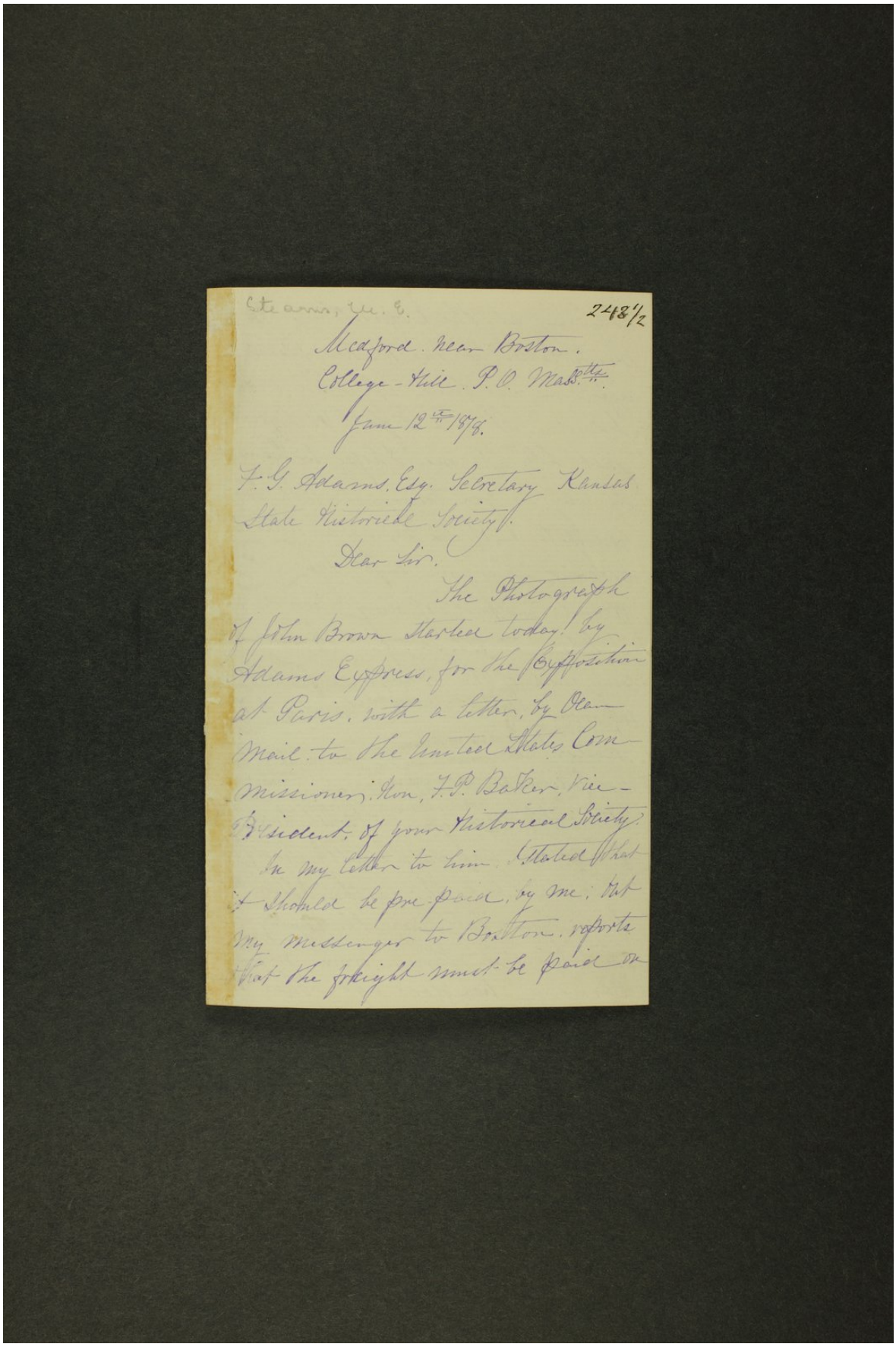
Your Committee will of course request designs, or models, and select that best offered.

I should like to hear from you on this point of nationality. It occurs to me that Victor Hugo might interest himself in this direction, for no one plead so eloquently for the life of the Martyrs as he. Your Commissioner might confer with him if it seems good in your eyes to do so.)

Pray excuse this unseemly writing and shortcomings of this letter altogether for my strength is only weakened and I have not resumed my daily avocations, and writing tires me more than anything.

With cordial Regards I am
Very Truly Yours, Mary E. Stearns.

Mary E. Stearns correspondence



Stearns, Mrs. E.

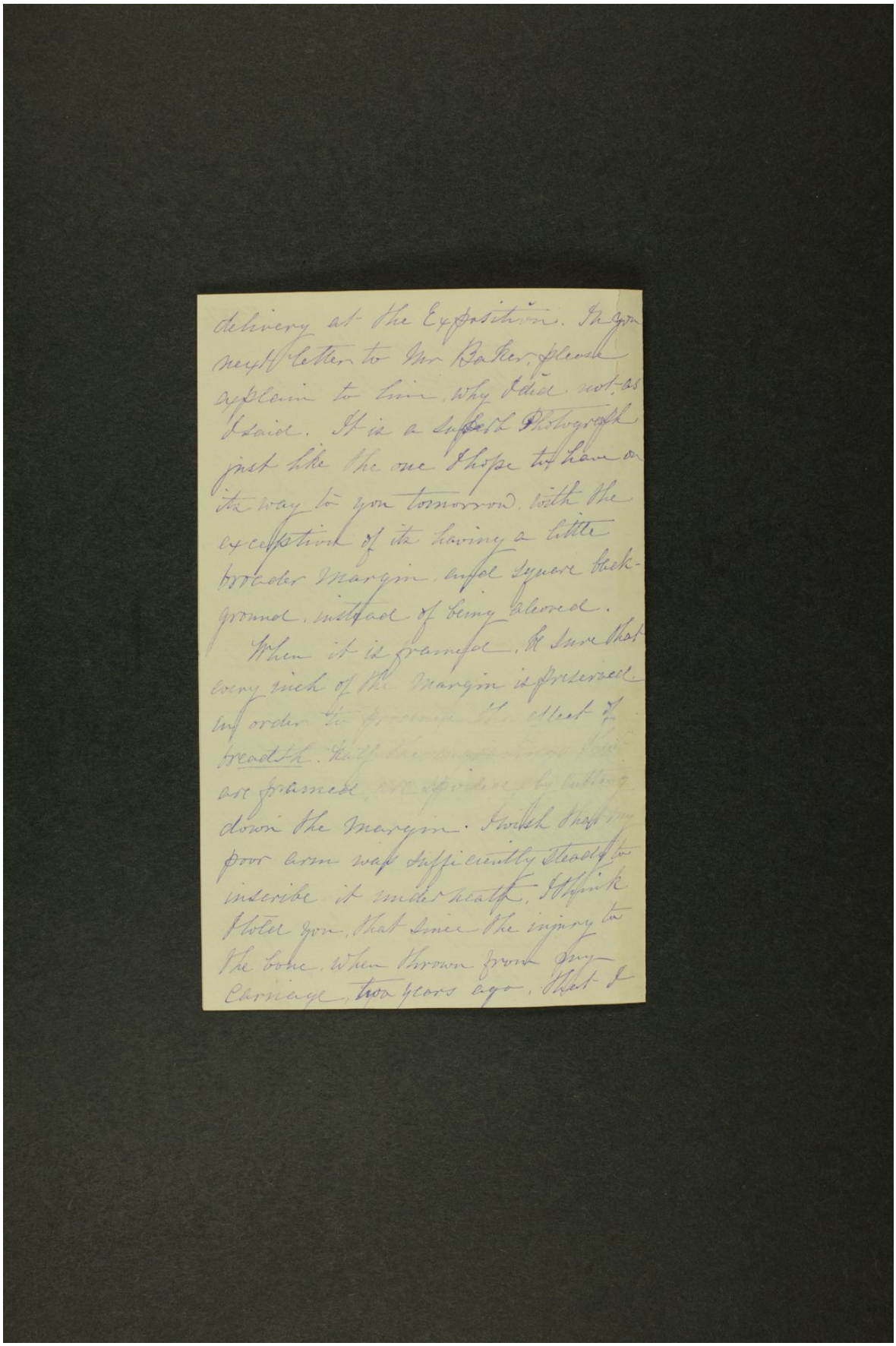
248½

Medford. near Boston.
College-Hill. P.O. Mass. 9th mo.
June 12th 1878.

F. G. Adams. Esq. Secretary Kansas
State Historicle Society.

Dear Sir.

The Photograph
of John Brown started today by
Adams Express, for the Exposition
at Paris. with a letter, by Steam
Mail. to the United States Com-
missioner. Hon. F. P. Baker. Vice-
President of your Historical Society.
In my letter to him. I stated that
it should be pre paid. by me; but
my messenger to Boston. reports
that the freight must be paid on



delivery at the Exposition. In your next letter to Mr Baker, please explain to him, why I did not, as I said. It is a superb Photograph just like the one I hope to have on its way to you tomorrow. with the exception of its having a little broader margin, and a square background, instead of being oval.

When it is framed, be sure that every inch of the margin is preserved, in order to preserve the effect of breadth. Half the mounts now are spoiled, are spoiled by cutting down the margin. I wish that my poor arm was sufficiently steady to inscribe it under neath. I think I told you, that since the injury to the bone. When thrown from my carriage, two years ago. That I