

## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

### Section 6, Pages 151 - 180

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

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## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

1889

2.

object of visiting libraries and historical collections in Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin. We are to have new rooms in the state capitol, now approaching completion, and I am to study models for the arrangement and furnishing of such rooms.

I shall take my second daughter, who is my amanuensis, with me; and if I can make it practicable I shall take a ~~lake~~ trip from Detroit to Put-in-Bay Island and spend a day or two with Captain John Brown, Jr. A year and a half ago, it is now nearly, he spent ten days in Kansas most of the time with me. He is a charming man in my eyes; a man of the deepest sense of honor, the broadest charity, and unfailing love and trust in God and in humanity. He left me to visit Owen, Jason, Ruth and the others in California. He had a period of illness there and his trip was one of little or no enjoyment. Since then Owen has died. After the death a letter came to me from John, expressive of the deepest tenderness, showing how sincerely and truly he loved him who with the other sons had grown up to manhood in a regard for the father as an ordained leader and prophet in the great cause; the sons willing to follow such leader to the very death. I shall take this letter of yours and show it to John if I see him.

I have now in my hands also, of date July 29th, a letter from George B. Gill who was Captain Brown's secretary of the treasury under the organization formed at Malden, Canada. Gill was with Captain Brown here in Kansas for two weeks while concealing from the blood-hounds of



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

3.

Missouri the eleven fugitives, the last convoy escorted by him from Missouri through Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa to the refugees haven in Canada. Gill was the only white man who accompanied Captain Brown in the escort from the place of concealment, on Pottawatomie Creek, to Major Abbott's house near Lawrence. He, like many others was waiting in Iowa and elsewhere for orders for ~~the~~ movement on Virginia, but received no such order, owing to the haste of the final undertaking. Gill now lives at Milan, Sumner county, Kansas. He is an interesting correspondent; as, during a visit he made me some years since I found him to be personally and socially an interesting character.

Should I visit Captain Brown I shall of course let you hear from me concerning him. I trust this letter will find you much stronger; indeed in the full enjoyment of health.

Yours truly,

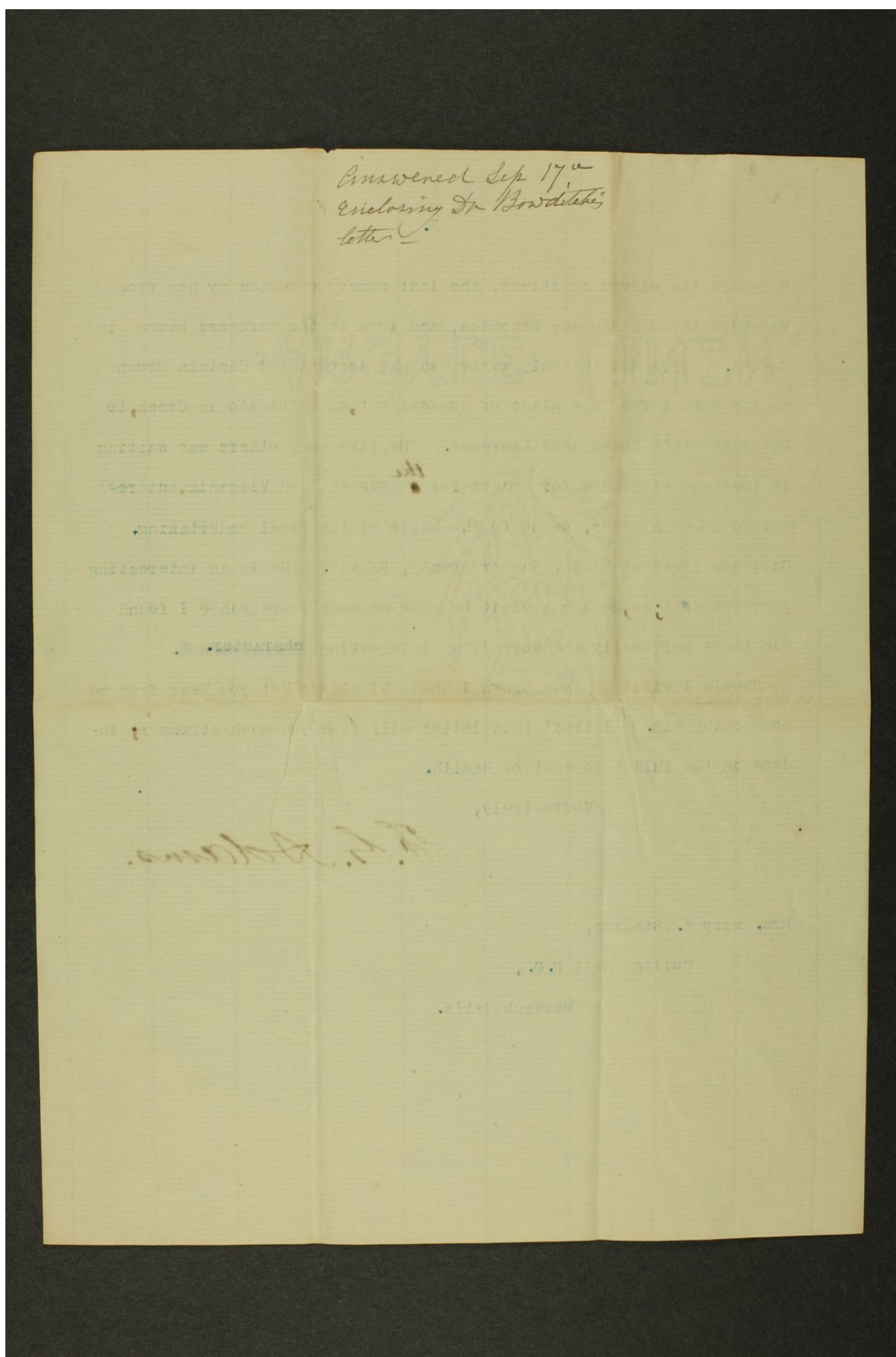
*F. G. Adams.*

Mrs. Mary E. Stearns,

College Hill P. O.,

Massachusetts.

## Mary E. Stearns correspondence





## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

Brown, Mary W.

KANSAS STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.  
35507.

Lyons Sept 7<sup>th</sup> 89.  
21 Market St.

My dear Friend:

Yesterday for  
the first time since your last  
dear letter came to me. I played  
the "Moonlight" Sonata. A most  
uncomfortable Summer this has  
been to me, and all of my  
plans have been overturned.  
When I wrote you last, I  
told you of the concert and  
two musicales that were  
to come. as soon as these

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mine over. my invalid Aunt  
came to visit me and as  
she has failed mentally. so  
there is need of constant  
watching. I was ~~broken~~ unable  
to sleep very much while she  
was here and that with my  
work through the day completely  
worned me. so that it was  
an easy thing for my old  
enemy Asthma to get an  
most perfect control. I  
used opiates enough to enable  
me to finish my lessons. but  
the vacation was most terrible.  
I could not be comfortable  
with anything and in order  
to breathe at all, was obliged



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to use ether, opium and many other unpleasant  
remedies. The Dr. thinks he is getting it under  
control now. But I have to use opiates ~~now~~  
to allow me to come to my room. However I  
hope soon to be myself - I have heard that  
you were better, and that Mrs. Preston's friends  
from Lynn, Miss Condy, had a most enjoyable  
call with you. I have hoped every day would  
bring relief so I could at least call for a few minutes  
to see you. But I could go to see no one, and  
I was so stupid most of the time that I did  
not write - There is one bright side to it, and

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What is that I have had my  
dear mother write me more  
than I could have done if  
I had been well. Is it this  
a doleful letter? I did not  
mean it. and I do want you  
to know that I love you so  
dearly. Can you write me  
a few lines so I may know  
just how you and yours are?  
Please give my love to Mr. Barry  
and regards to Mr. Frank if he  
is with you.  
With more love than I  
can write you. from  
Yours faithfully  
Mary W. Brown.



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

TOPEKA, KANSAS, September 28th, 1889

KANSAS STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
35507

My dear Mrs. Stearns,---

Your very kind letter of the 17th is too long unanswered. Since my return from my little trip eastward I have been extremely busy. It gives me extreme pleasure that you are so well recovered from your illness, as evidenced by your words and your good long letter, written with so steady a hand.

I have read Dr. Bowditch's letter, and I herewith return it. Its subject interests me deeply. I do hope the bust may be copied. I wish our society had funds to defray whatever expenses may attend the work. But it has not. Our legislature restricts us very closely in the expenditure of the small appropriations given for all uses. But just now a matter is pending which may make it quite desirable that a copy of the bust should be here for examination. The architect of the State capitol proposes, for a pediment over one of the main entrances, a historical piece, presenting in relief groups representing persons who were prominent in our early history. His plan is that John Brown shall stand as the central figure in the design, and on one side there shall be a group or groups of free state men, and on the other side groups of pro-slavery men. If your heroic bust of John Brown by Brackett were here for the inspection of artists, it might heighten and confirm the idea now in the mind of architect Ropes, and lead to its adoption by the state house commissioners.



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You may be sure I am in complete sympathy with you in your desire that the memory of John Brown should in an exalted manner be commemorated by the people of Kansas in works of art. His sacrifice is recognized by the world as the greatest, in that struggle for human freedom which began in Kansas and culminated in Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation; and it will be to the perpetual honor of the people of Kansas if they shall realize and embody the fact, and by suitable monuments appropriate his glory as their own.

I am in sympathy with good Dr. Bowditch in his regard for young Bartlett. The father of the latter wrote <sup>me</sup> many years ago expressing great interest in John Brown sculpture and giving such expressions of great admiration of the character of the man that I feel confident that the son must possess the enthusiasm requisite, and I am glad to read Dr. Bowditch's testimony as to his ability in execution. His father sent me, some years ago, a photo. of the miniature statue executed by his son to which the Doctor refers.

Yes, myself and daughter spent two days with Capt. John Brown Jr., at their home on Put-in-Bay Island. They have a very pleasant situation and are living very comfortably. I think Capt. Brown is much inclined to shrink from the public. His is <sup>a</sup> modest and retiring nature, and the great prominence of his father in the public mind brings <sup>to</sup> him a feeling of comparative smallness which shadows and oppresses him when he feels that the public eye is upon him. This is my theory. I have never been so closely intimate with him as to have heard any expression from him on this point, but this is my analysis.



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

3.

He is a man, I think, of more than average ability, of wide information, and fond of nature. He has given close attention to the natural sciences as their principles apply to the facts with which he is locally surrounded. Mrs. Brown is an admirable woman, modest and retiring as is her husband. She went through an ordeal of fire in Kansas the nature of which I have learned to comprehend in all its innermost burnings. In my mind of course she is a heroine, and now in her later years she is with utmost devotion living to make the narrow means with which the family go to bring to her husband and children the greatest amount of comfort and blessing. They have a daughter just arrived at womanhood whom they have managed to fairly educate and who is possessor of much cultivation and pleasing manners. I should say she is a noble good hearted accomplished girl. Their son, the only child beside, is a man well up in the thirties, - thirty-five, about. They brought him with them to Kansas, a child of two years of age, in the spring of 1855. There were the four Brown brothers, John, Owen, Jason and Frederick. They opened their little farms. The Captain told me as we were riding from his house to the boat as we were starting home the other day, how a cloud came to be brought over the intellect of his baby John; a cloud which has shadowed the boy ever since, for he is yet a boy in mind. The four brothers worked together, as they planted their fields. When they planted Owen's corn field, chopping the corn into the newly turned sod, Owen carried in one pocket some watermelon seeds, and unknown to his brothers, planted them in such places in the field as suited his fancy. One day, late in the summer he invited



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

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all to his field, to inspect the then well *grown* crop. So all went, men women and children. To their great surprise they found in the field a great abundance of such luscious water-melons as they had never seen before; for the virgin soil of Kansas is unequalled in the growth of *melons*. But the fierce Kansas sun was shining, and the exposure to its heat was too great to be borne by the infant John, ~~who~~ *and he* was taken severely ill before they could return to the shelter of the house. It was in fact a case of sun stroke, from the effects of which the child barely recovered at the time, and which dwarfed his intellect for life. He is merely simple minded, as we might say. He is strong in body, and his powers of mind sufficient to enable him to well perform all ordinary home duties, to be useful in manual work on the little fruit farm, and to aid in the transaction of their *common* affairs of business. He is pleasant and truthful, not troublesome from talkativeness, fond of attendance upon religious meetings, reads, is obliging and happy.

Now my dear friend cannot you and I conceive that this misfortune has had some effect upon the gentle yet proud minded father and mother, towards retiring them from the world, and leading them to narrow their circle of acquaintanceship; not purposely perhaps, but as certain in effect as if it had been deliberately intended. I must confess that the *circumstance* which I have related, and which till now I only *knew* in small part, has greatly endeared me to all the members of this little family; and I have perhaps abused their hospitable kindness in writing you as I have. But only to such as you would I mention the subject.



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5.

I will, when I write to Gill, convey to him your kind invitation to visit you. For myself, I hope sometimes to travel all over New England. I have never set foot in New England. If I go there, no place will attract me to it more than yours.

Yours most sincerely,

*J. G. Adams.*



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

TOPEKA, KANSAS, October 15th, 1889.

35507.

My dear Mrs. Stearns,---

Your letter is received with the most agreeable information concerning the forward state of the work on the cast of your John Brown bust. I am writing to half a dozen or more institutions or persons of our state to see if we can order the half dozen copies you speak of in accordance with Dr. Bowditch's excellent suggestion. I will inform you of the result as soon as possible, but from experience I judge it will take sometime to get definite responses even though they may be favorable in the end. Will it matter with Mr. Geary if it should be a number of weeks before the order shall be made? I have made the price fifteen dollars and said nothing about expressage. I mail you a copy of my letter to Prof. Graham of the State Agricultural College, so that you may know just how I present the matter. The scheme may fail utterly, but I hope not. The object I am sure is a most worthy one. I can not tell you how much I appreciate your own most praiseworthy efforts to give to the future generations of Kansas incitements to the study of the character of him who of all others will live in the history of our beloved state.

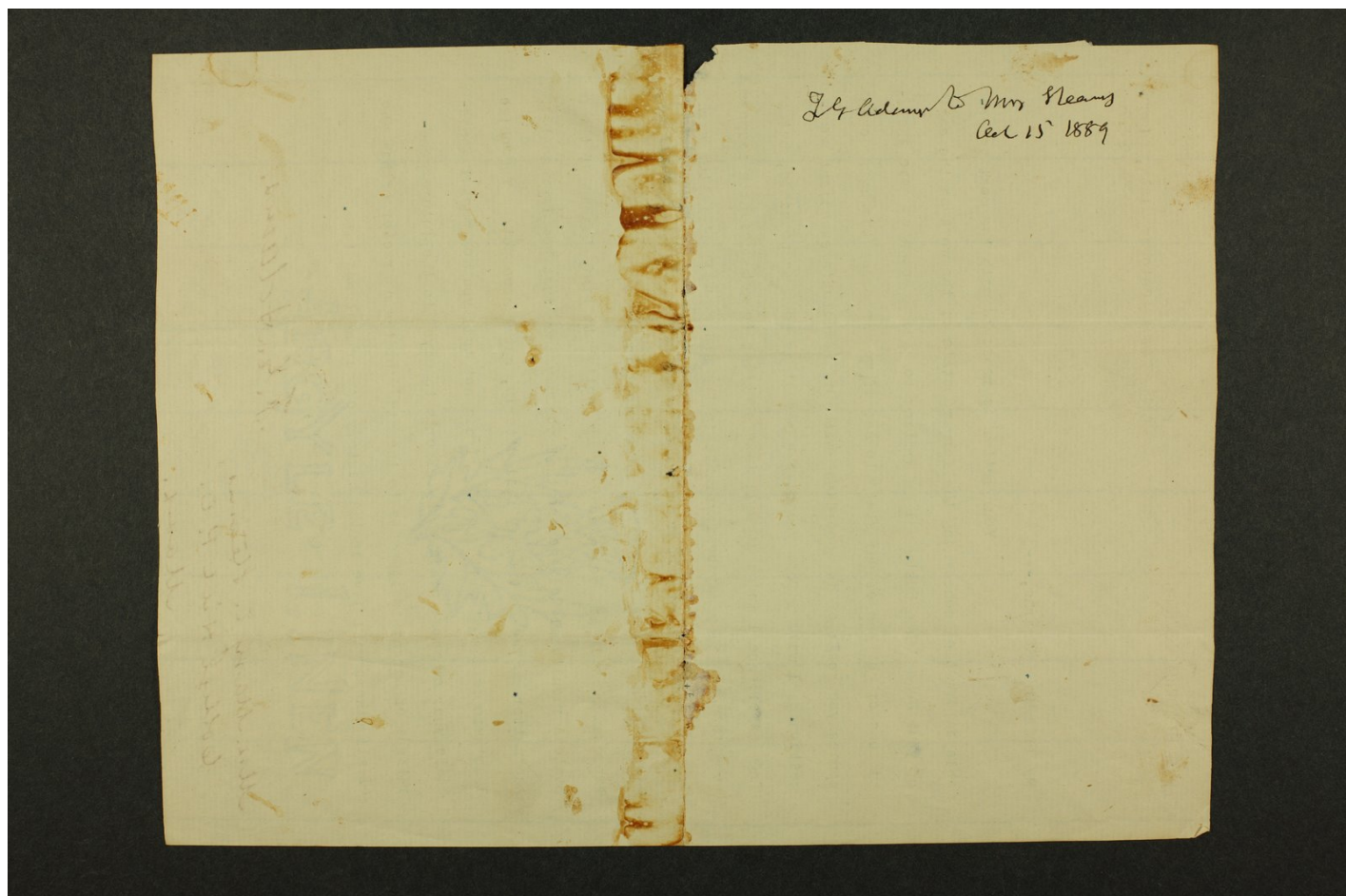
Yours most sincerely,

*J. E. Adams.*

*Mrs. Mary E. Stearns,  
College Hill P. O.  
Mass.*



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

35507

TOPEKA, KANSAS, October 26th, 1889.

My dear Mrs. Stearns,---

I have favorable responses as to the John Brown bust from but two sources. The State University at Lawrence at Emporia and the State Normal School will each take one. This makes but three, including the one for the State Historical Society. This puts the cost on a different basis from that of the artist's proposal to make six for \$75.00. I was in hopes to obtain orders for the six, and thus to much lessen your personal outlay. The price mentioned by me to these Kansas institutions and persons has been \$15.00 each. Should the number be but three in all, will the artist give the two for the University and Normal School at \$15.00 each? We may get other orders, but I have as yet no promise of any. The Emporia people think \$15.00 rather a high price, but I have more fully explained to them how it is that the copies are to be made at all, and probably they will not murmur further. I hope that it will be so that the artist will give the two for \$15.00 each, and yet not charge you with the full cost of making the mold.

How will it do for us to get into the newspapers of the country a brief paragraph stating that a Boston artist, naming him, is making casts of your famous bust of John Brown, executed by Brackett from studies made by him while the old hero was awaiting execution in the



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

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Charlestown prison, and that the Kansas Historical Society, the Kansas State University and other Kansas institutions have procured copies of them ? This may lead to other orders, outside of Kansas. Maybe you would not like to have them distributed in this way.

Yours truly,

*F. H. Adams.*



Stone, N. H.

Boston 2. Nov. 1889

Dear Madam,

KANSAS STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
5507

Mr. Forbes directs me  
to say that he has mailed  
a note to you at Cottage  
Hill in error, thanking  
you for your note and  
suggesting your making  
some better use of the  
Book than sending it  
to him and he hopes  
you will make any other  
disposition of it you deem  
best.

Yours truly

N. H. Stone



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

TOPEKA, KANSAS, Nov. 11, 1889.

KANSAS STATE

35507.

Mrs. Mary E. Stearns,

College Hill, Mass.

My Dear Mrs. Stearns,---

Your last most welcome letter should have been acknowledged long ago, but I fell ill almost immediately after its receipt, and this is the first letter I have dictated since. I rejoice with you in your good fortune in the gift from Hon. John M. Forbes of \$50.00 to aid your good purposes. I will make the best distribution of the three busts that I can.

Your gift, the first bust, only arrived yesterday afternoon, day before yesterday, having come by freight, not by express. The package sent has not yet been opened. It will be placed in the room immediately. I greatly regret that I shall be deprived for sometime of seeing it, for my illness, though not dangerous is serious, <sup>and</sup> will lay me up for some time to come.

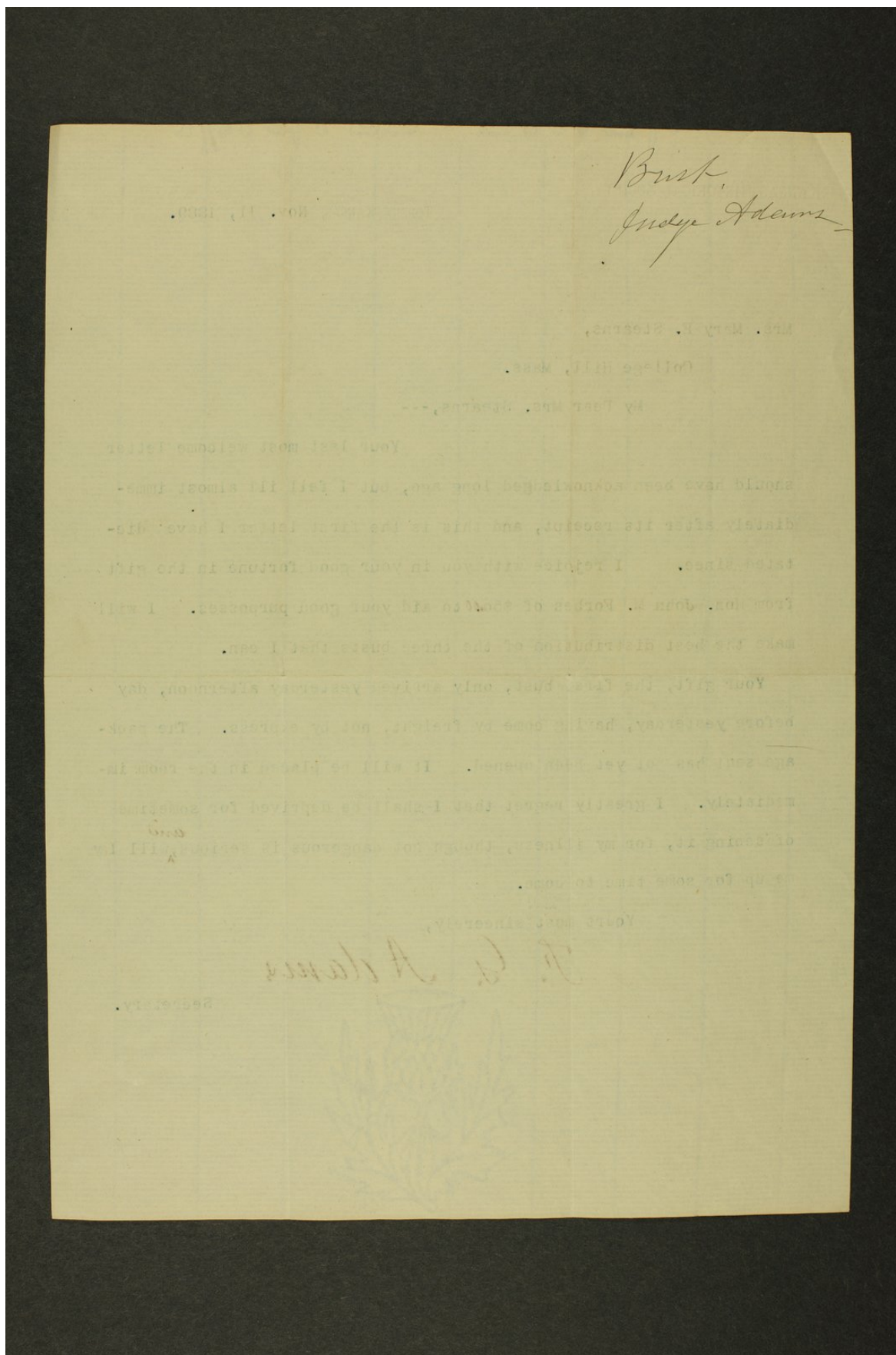
Yours most sincerely,

*F. G. Adams*

Secretary.



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence





## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

Allen, Jas. H.

KANSAS STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
35507

Cambridge, Mass., Nov. 13. 1889.

5 GARDEN STREET.

Dear Mrs. Stearns,

Let me relieve any impatience  
you may perhaps have felt regarding the two  
papers of your son which you put into my  
hands, by saying that I read them with  
much pleasure, and have them by me in  
readiness to take up as soon as that now in  
the printer's hands is done with, - that is, for  
use in January & February.

Yours very truly J. H. Allen.

## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

KANSAS STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.  
35507.  
TOPEKA, KANSAS, Nov. 21, 1889.

Mrs. Mary E. Stearns,  
College Hill, P.O.  
Mass.

My Dear Mrs. Stearns,---

Your very kind and sympathetic note came two or three days ago. I am still ill, but am beginning to mend, though slowly, and it will be some time before I shall be able to do much work.

Have one bust shipped to the Chancellor of the Kansas University, Lawrence; and one to President A. R. Taylor, State Normal School, Emporia. I will direct remittances to be made to you for these two, \$12.50 each. They should be shipped by freight, as that will be much less expensive than by express. You might have bills made out and sent to the two institutions.

Later I will inform you where to have sent the four contributed by Hon. John M. Forbes. I have not yet felt equal to the task of conducting the necessary correspondence as to locating these four.

I do not yet hear whether or not the Agricultural College will take one.

Yours sincerely,

*J. G. Adams*

Secretary.



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

Brown, Mary W.

Lynn, Dec. 9th '89.  
21 Market St.

How I wish I could help  
you, my dear Mrs. Stearns, and  
that you might be relieved of  
all care and anxiety, and go  
on with your book, while I am  
longing to see. I am so sorry  
for Mr. Frank. Does he take no  
interest in anything? How is it  
with his cousin Mr. Preston? Can  
he do nothing for him? I so often  
think of that German saying - "The  
heart is the heart, yet is the foot bound."  
Many things I would gladly do -  
but cannot. For you I can

## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

only love you - and pray for you.  
and that is so little compared  
with what I wish to do. Richter  
says. "We should the cages of birds.  
then we would teach them to sing"  
and truly our greatest musical works  
have come from those who had  
most intense suffering. But surely  
you have not needed suffering  
to develop the great strength within  
and I feel rebellious when I think  
of the many sorrows that have come  
to you. are you really gaining  
some strength? You write me  
almost nothing of yourself. Do  
not all you can. and do not  
write to tire you. only if I can  
ever do anything helpful. please



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

let me know. Yes. I am much better. so I have  
 need no opiates for three weeks. which is a very great  
 gain. so I was obliged to take them every day. in order  
 to go to my room. I think the disease will be wholly  
 conquered soon. My Mother is the dearest of nurses.  
 and such a comfort. and she always says. "Give my  
 love to Mrs. Stearns" when I speak of writing to you.  
 She too, is constantly hoping that those dear to you may  
 have strength given. Keep me in your heart. and know  
 that I love you always. Faithfully yours  
 Mary W. Brown.

## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

TOPEKA, KANSAS, Dec. 11, 1889. 35507.

Mrs. Mary E. Stearns,

College Hill P.O., Mass.

My Dear Mrs. Stearns,---

Your kind letter of the 4th, found me still confined to my room, and capable of giving very little thought to business, yet I am slowly but surely improving, and will be myself again not long hence, I trust.

For the eight busts now to be distributed I have in my mind as many places with only two or three, perhaps, not quite determined: Atchison, Leavenworth, Wyandotte, (now called Kansas City, Kansas, the largest town in the State,) Osawatomie, Fort Scott, Wichita, and State Agricultural College at Manhattan. This leaves one which may go to Hutchinson, Salina, or elsewhere. The State University, you know, is at Lawrence. Our State Historical rooms are in the State House, so your suggestion that one should go in the State House is already fulfilled. Our rooms are the principal attraction to the public in the State House, and I may now answer your inquiry by saying that your bust, which I had mounted at once upon a bracket in the most suitable place, is much commented upon, and very favorably indeed, and what is best, more so by those who saw Capt. Brown in Kansas, than by others.

The appointment of the John Brown statue committee for the State of Kansas, as suggested by good Dr. Bowditch and approved by you, meets my cordial approval. As soon as I can get out of my room I will con-



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

sult with two or three judicious friends here and have the committee appointed. It occurs to me since you mentioned Senator Ingalls that it might be well for him to head the committee. His very exalted estimation of Captain Brown as shown by expressions on many occasions, would seem to point to him as probably the best helper we may have in the matter. I hope you and your friends will have patience to put up with my tardiness in this work. I am getting well, though slowly, and shall, I trust soon be able to promptly attend to my duties.

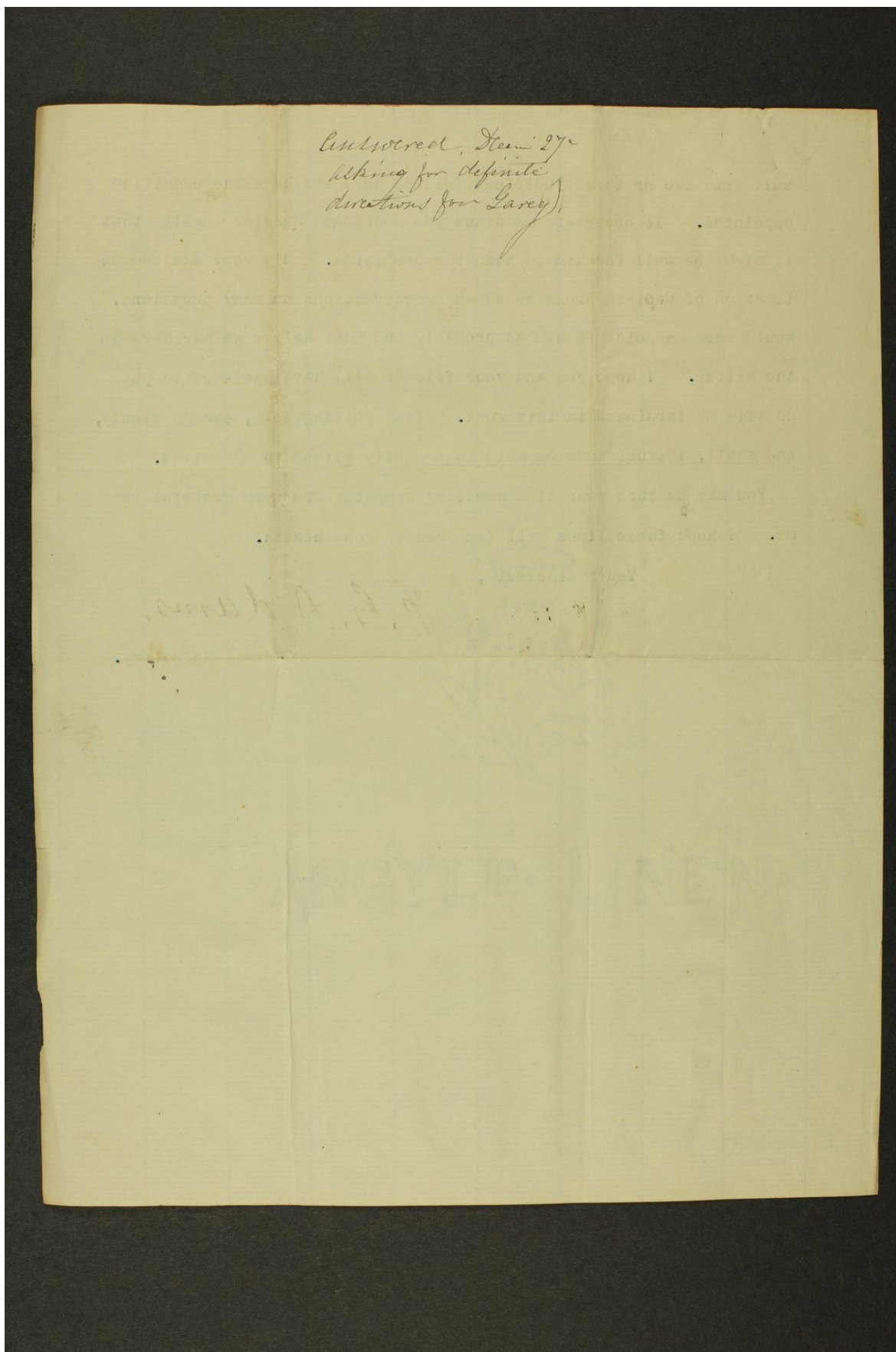
You may be sure your kind words of sympathy are very grateful to me. I hope these lines will find you in good health.

Yours sincerely,

*J. G. Adams.*

Secretary.

## Mary E. Stearns correspondence





## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

TOPEKA, KANSAS, Dec. 26, 1889. 35507-

Mrs. Mary E. Stearns,  
College Hill P.O., Mass.,

My Dear Mrs. Stearns,---

I have progressed so far in the distribution of the John Brown plaster casts as to be able to give you the following directions for shipment of four of them, namely to,

Col. D. R. Anthony, Leavenworth, Kansas.

Chapin H. Carpenter, Esq., Kansas City, Kansas.

Prof. I. D. Graham, State Agricultural College, Manhattan, Kansas.

Hon. George Storch, Atchison, Kansas.

In the other four cases I have not heard from the persons to whom I wrote on the subject. Generally it seems to take them a little time to consult as to places, etc.

At Atchison, Mr. Storch is president of one of the principal banks, in the finest building in the city. After retaining the bust a short time to be viewed at his banking office, he will place it in the city public library.

Mr. Carpenter, at <sup>Kansas</sup> Kansas City, was one of John Brown's boys in Kansas, and is a member of the G. A. R. They have not yet quite decided where the bust is to go.

Colonel Anthony is editor of the Leavenworth "Times," is one of ~~the~~

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oldest and most prominent citizens, an enthusiastic worshiper of the memory of John Brown, and has been President of our State Historical Society. He will place the bust in the new United States building, in post office or court room.

The Agricultural College people will put the bust in one of their public halls.

I hope soon to be able to give you directions as to the others. I have taken pains to request my correspondents to see that due credit is given, and written acknowledgment made to the donors, giving particular name in each case. They may forget to attend to this. If so, I will try to have the omission remedied.

I am able to say to you now that my health is being restored. I have for ten days been able to be out of my house. We have been having most delightful weather, and I have taken advantage of it. Hoping to hear from you that your patience with me is not entirely exhausted, and that you are in good health, and wishing you great prosperity during the coming new year, I am

Sincerely your friend,

*J. H. Adams.*



## Mary E. Stearns correspondence

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

TOPEKA, KANSAS, <sup>35507.</sup> December 31, 1889.

My dear Mrs. Stearns,---

I wrote to Rev. Samuel L. Adair of Osawatomie, in reference to a copy of the bust for that place. He turned the matter over to Maj. J. B. Remington, a leading citizen, who writes me that he will receive it, and that the members of his G. A. R. post will pay the charges, and present it to the city authorities in the name of Mr. Forbes, provided they will furnish a suitable place for it; otherwise the post will retain it in their room and care for it.

I have written him that I think this will be satisfactory. If so, you can have the bust shipped to Maj. Remington. He is commander of post No. 322, Dept. of Kansas.

I hope soon to write you in reference to the other three busts.

Yours truly,

*J. E. Adams.*