Kansas Memory

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

James G. Dougherty to Governor John St. John

A letter from J.G. Dougherty of Ottawa, Kansas, addresses not only the issue of prohibition and its probable impractibility, but the inevitable massive migration of southern Blacks to Kansas.

Creator: Dougherty, James G.

Date: August 28, 1879

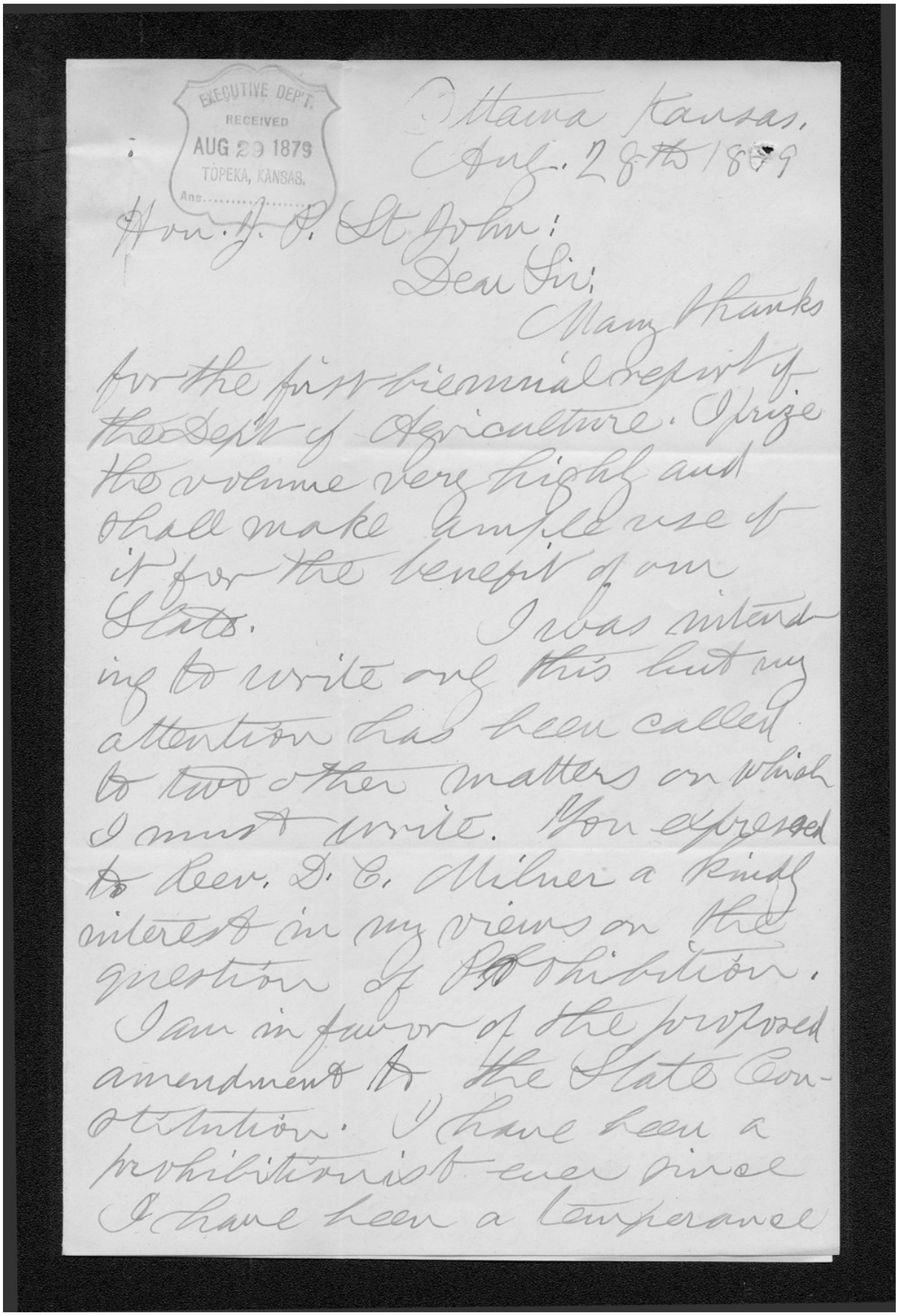
Callnumber: Governor's Office, St. John, Correspondence Received-Subject File, Box 19

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 226634

Item Identifier: 226634

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Ottawa Kansas.
Aug. 28th 1879

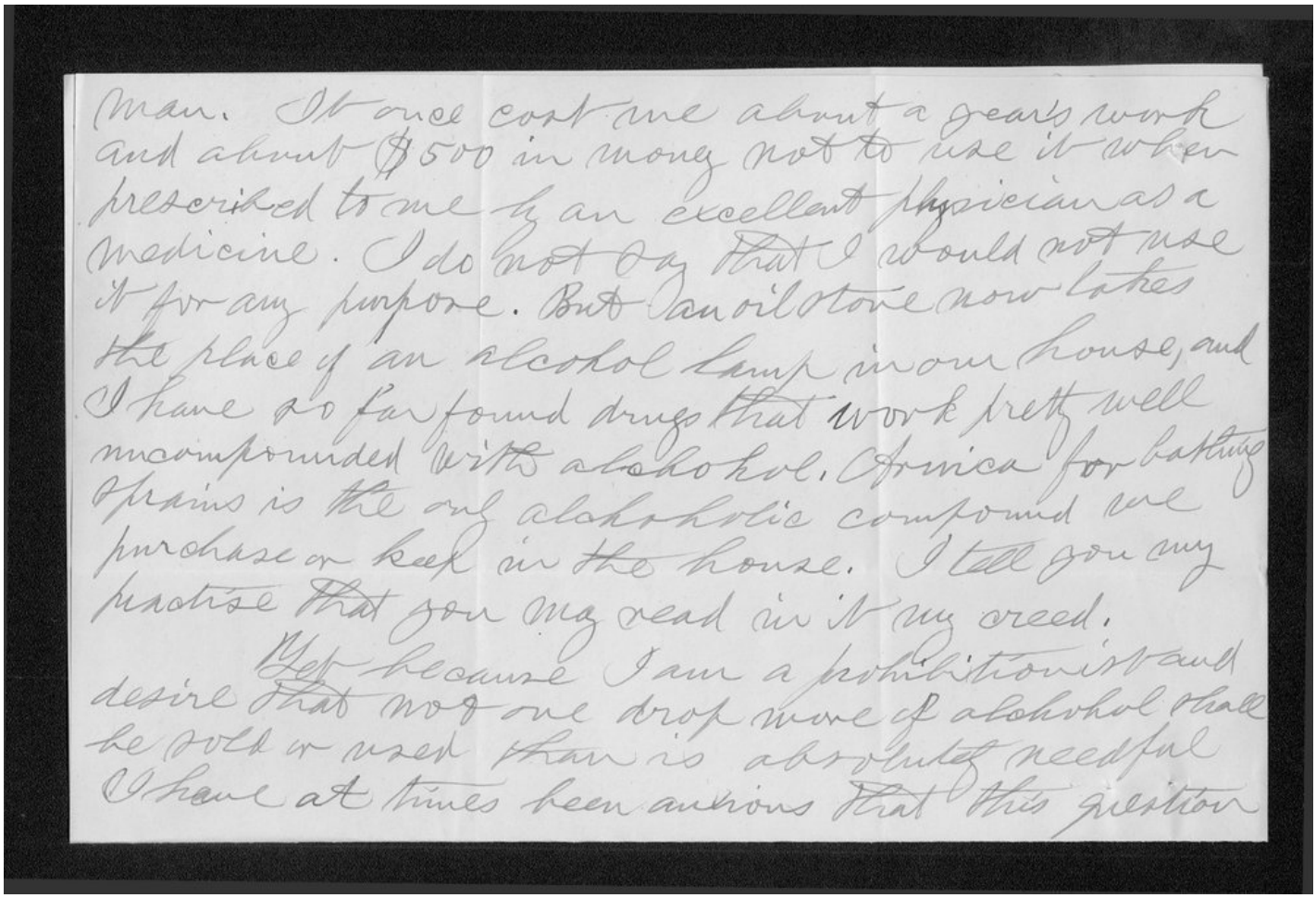
Hon. J. P. St John:
Dear Sir.

Many thanks for the first biennial report of the Dept of Agriculture. I prize the volume very highly and shall make ample use of it for the benefit of our State.

I was intending to write only this but my attention has been called to two other matters on which I must write. You expressed to Rev. D. C. Milner a kindly interest in my views on the question of Prohibition.

I am in favor of the proposed amendment to the State Constitution. I have been a prohibitionist ever since I have been a temperance

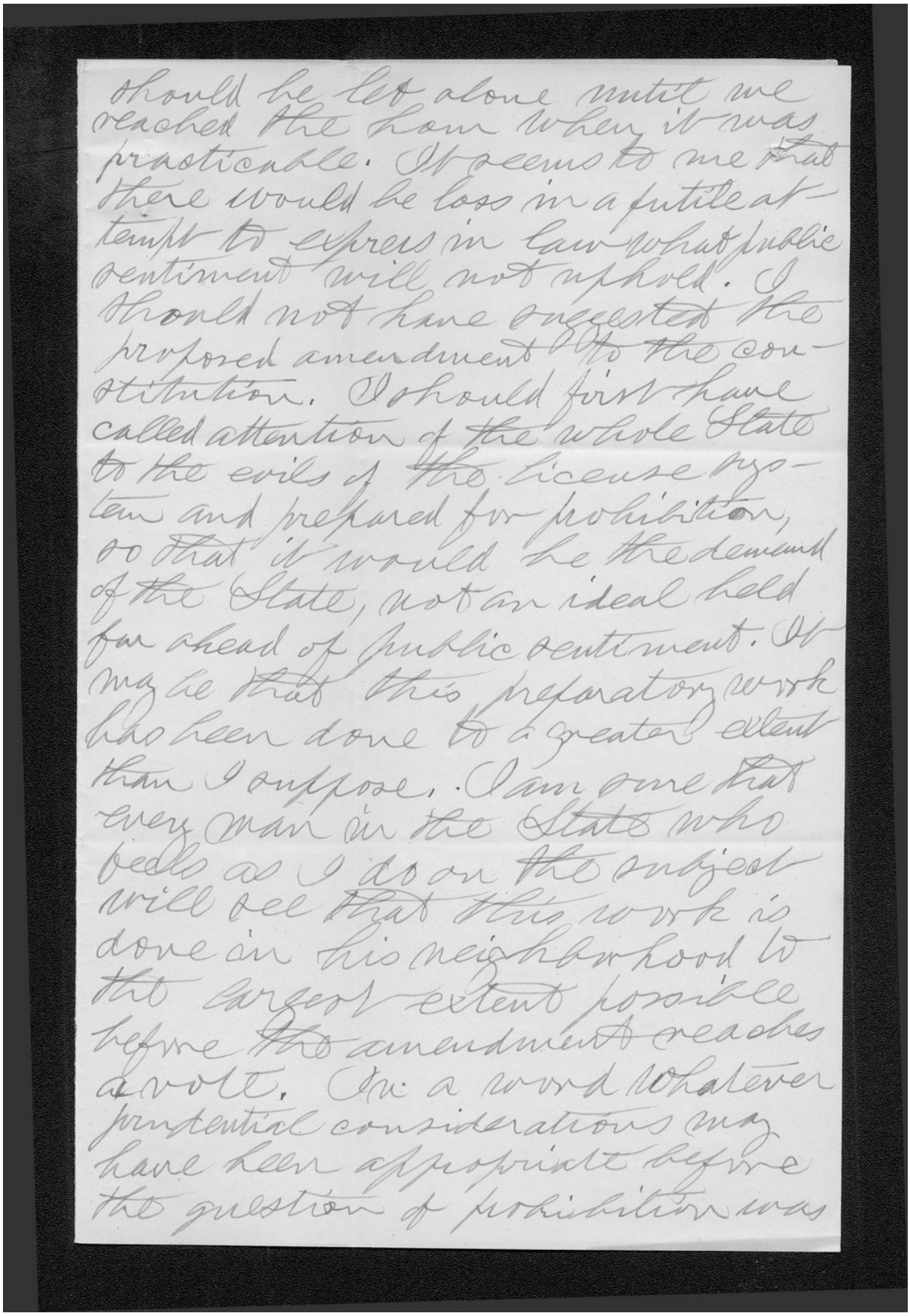
James G. Dougherty to Governor John St. John



man. It once cost me about a years work and about $500 in money not to use it when prescribed to me by an excellent physician as a medicine. I do not say that I would not use it for any purpose. But an oil stove now takes the place of an alcohol lamp in our house, and I have so far found drugs that work pretty well uncompounded with alcohol. Arnica for bathing sprains is the only alcoholic compound we purchase or keep in the house. I tell you my practise that you may read in it my creed.

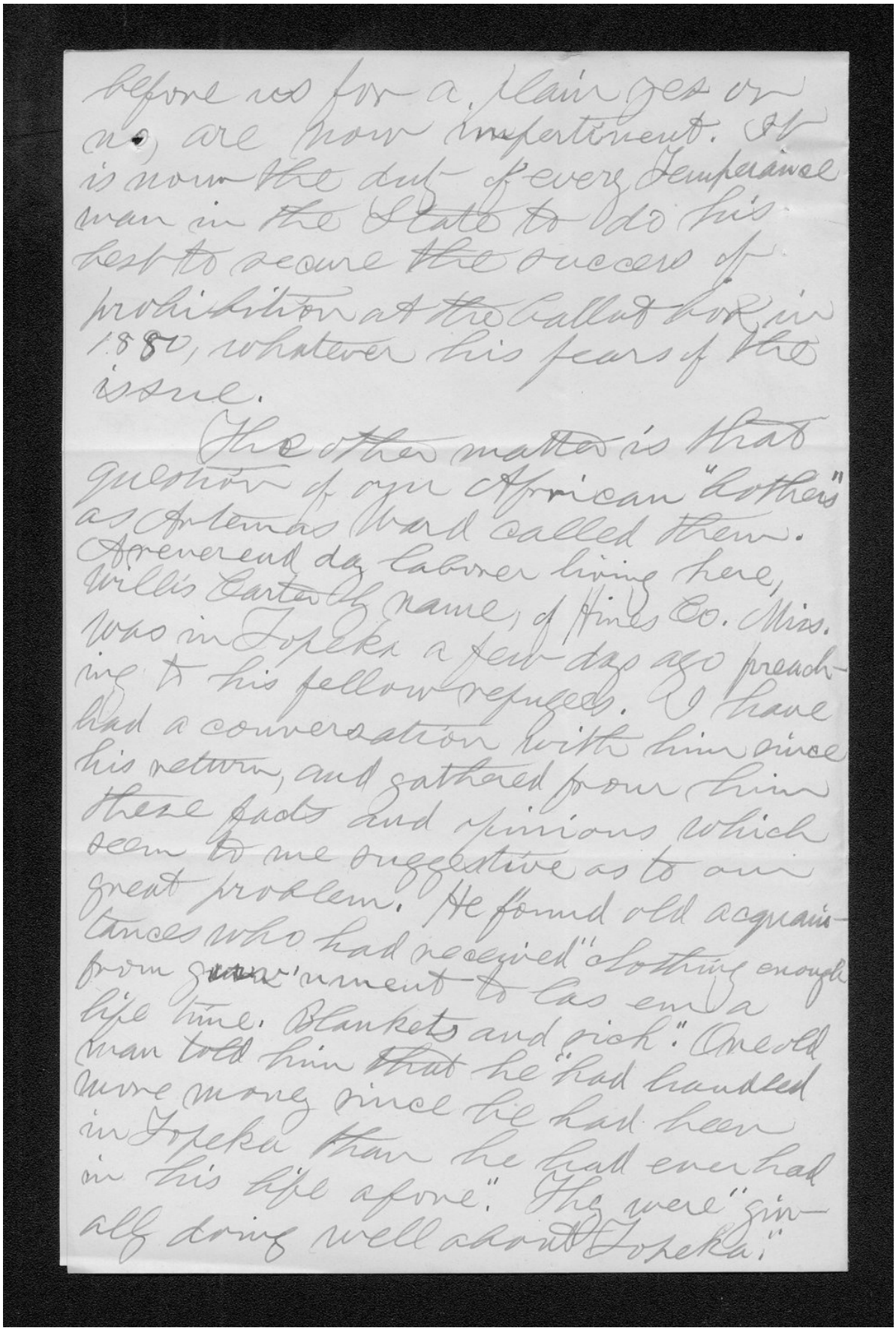
Yet because I am a prohibitionist and desire that not one drop more of alcohol shall be sold or used than is absolutely needful I have at times been anxious that this question

James G. Dougherty to Governor John St. John



should be left alone until we reached the hour when it was practicable. It seems to me that there would be loss in a futile attempt to express in law what public sentiment will not uphold. I should not have suggested the proposed amendment to the constitution. I should first have called attention of the whole State to the evils of the license system and prepared for prohibition, so that it would be the demand of the State, not an ideal held far ahead of public sentiment. It may be that this preparatory work has been done to a greater extent than I suppose. I am sure that every man in the State who feels as I do on the subject will see that this work is done in his neighborhood to the largest extent possible before the amendment reaches a vote. As a word whatever prudential considerations may have been appropriate before the question of prohibition was

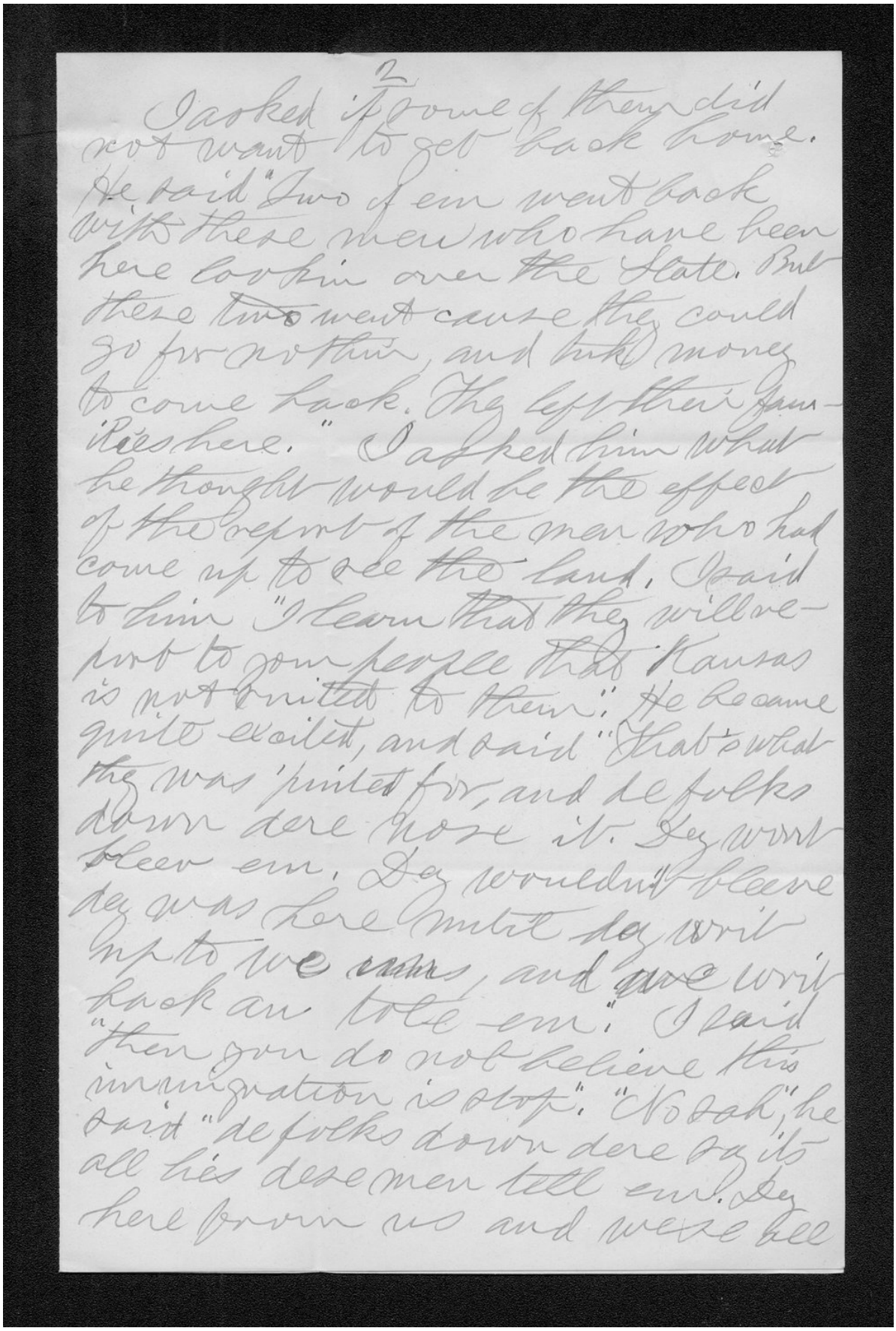
James G. Dougherty to Governor John St. John



before us for a plain yes or no, are now impertinent. It is now the duty of every Temperance man in the State to do his best to secure the success of prohibition at the ballot box in 1880, whatever his fears of the issue.

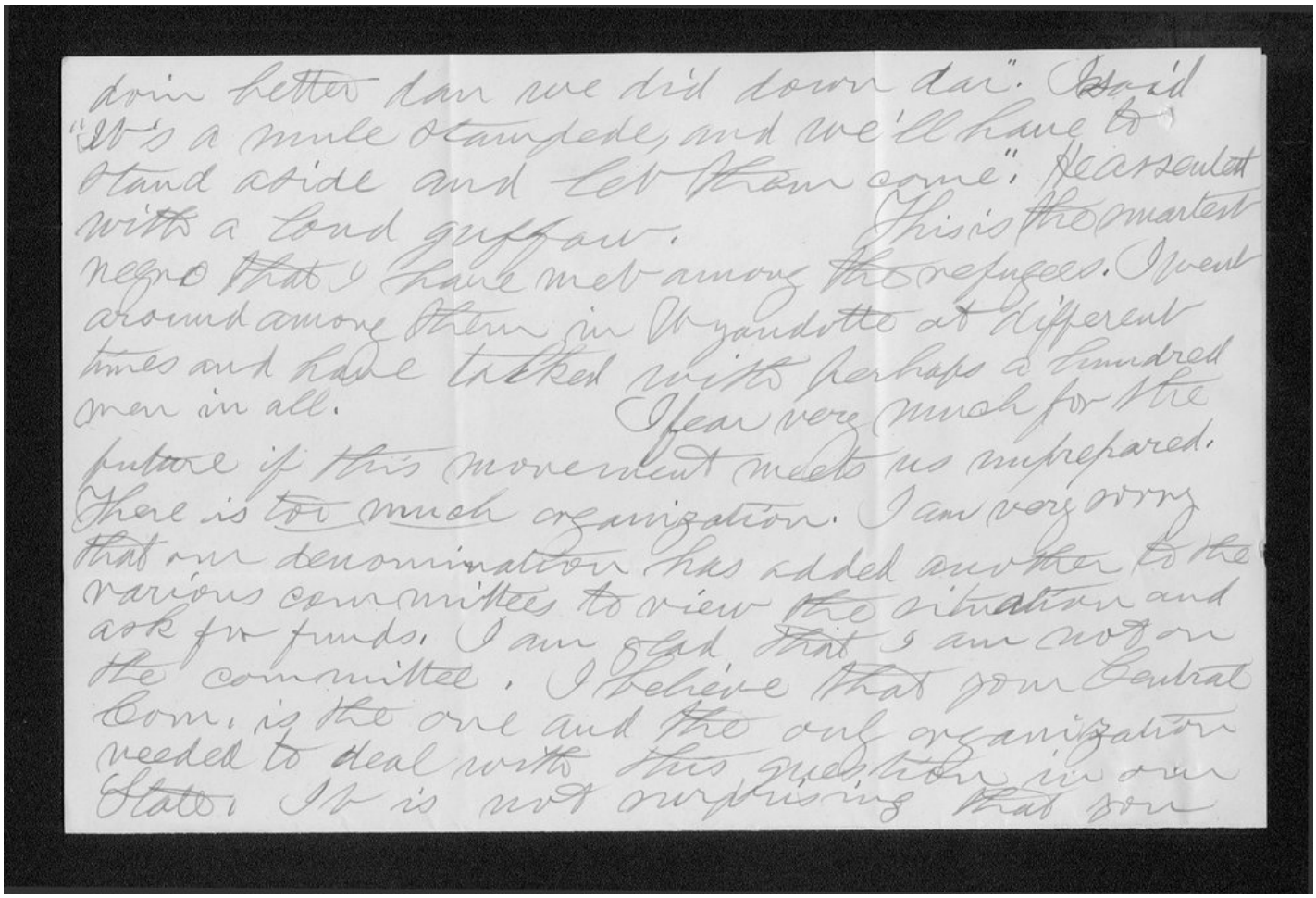
The other matter is that question of our African "Brothers" as Artemas Ward called them. A reverend day laborer living here, Willis Carter by name, of Pines Co. Miss. who is in Topeka a few days ago preaching to his fellow refugees. I have had a conversation with him since his return, and gathered from him these facts and opinions which seem to me suggestive as to our great problem. He found old acquaintances who had received "clothing enough from government to last em a life time. Blankets and sich." One old man told him that he "had handled more money since he had been in Topeka than he had ever had in his life afore." They were "finally doing well about Topeka."

James G. Dougherty to Governor John St. John



I asked if some of them did not want to get back home. He said "Two of em went back with these men who have been here lookin over the State. But these two went cause they could go for nothin, and had money to come back. They left their fam-ilies here." I asked him what he thought would be the effect of the report of the men who had come up to see the land. I said to him "I learn that they will re-port to your people that Kansas is not invited to them." He became quite exciet, and said "That's what they was sent for, and de folks down dere knows it. Dey wont believe em. Dey wouldn't believe dey was here unless dey writ up to we ones, and we writ back an tole em." I said "then you do not believe this immigration is stop". "No ah," he said "de folks down dere say its all lies dese men tell em. Dey here from us and we're tell

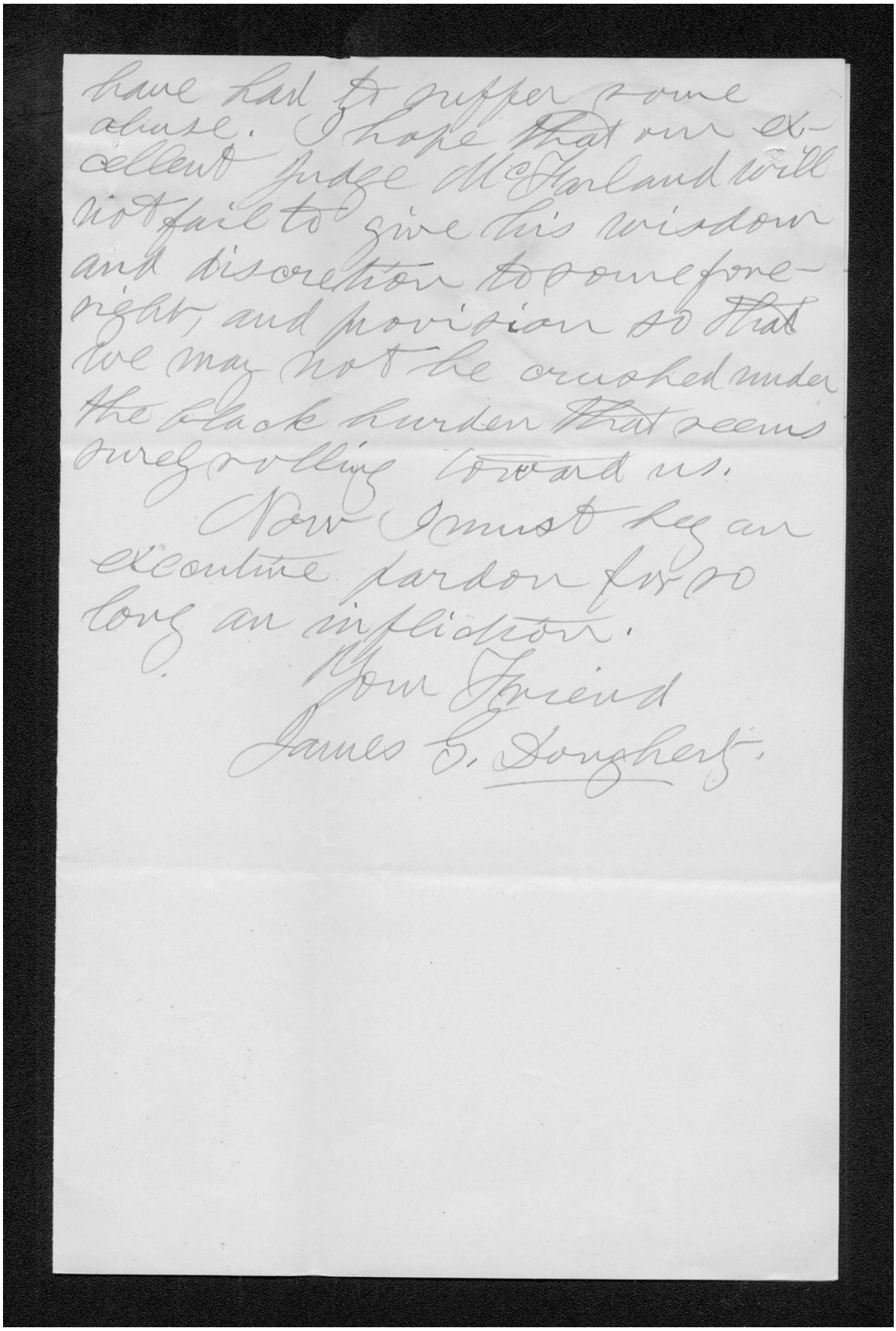
James G. Dougherty to Governor John St. John



doin better dan we did down dar". Said "It's a mule stampede, and we'll have to stand aside and let them come". He shouted with a loud guffaw. This is the smartest negro that I have met among the refugees. I went around among them in Wyandotte at different times and have talked with perhaps a hundred men in all.

I fear very much for the future if this movement meets us unprepared. There is too much organization. I am very sorry that our denomination has added another to the various committees to view the situation and ask for funds. I am glad that I am not on the committee. I believe that your Central Com. is the one and the only organization needed to deal with this question in our State. It is not surprising that you

James G. Dougherty to Governor John St. John



have had to suffer some abuse. I hope that our excellent Judge McFarland will not fail to give his wisdom and discretion to some purpose right, and provision so that we may not be crushed under the black burden that seems ever rolling toward us.

Now I must beg an excuse pardon for so long an infliction.

Your Friend
James G. Dougherty.