

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Section 10, Pages 271 - 300

A series of research correspondence from the Robert Taft collection relating to frontier artists. Robert Taft (1894-1955) was a professor of chemistry and author on the subjects of photography and art. The artists included here are Cassilly Adams, J. W. Albert, J. W. Alexander, Thomas Allen, Francis G. Atwood, James M. Bagley, George H. Baker, William Henry Bartlett, William Holbrook Beard, Joseph Becker, Otto Becker, Albert C. Berghaus, Albert Bierstadt, George C. Bingham, William Bishop, and Ralph A. Blakelock.

Date: 1930-1955

Callnumber: Robert Taft Coll. #172, Box 18

KSHS Identifier: DaRT ID: 308627

Item Identifier: 308627

www.kansasmemory.org/item/308627

KANSAS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Daily morning chronicle (a sub)
Nov. 21, 1863, p. 1, c 4, 5, 6

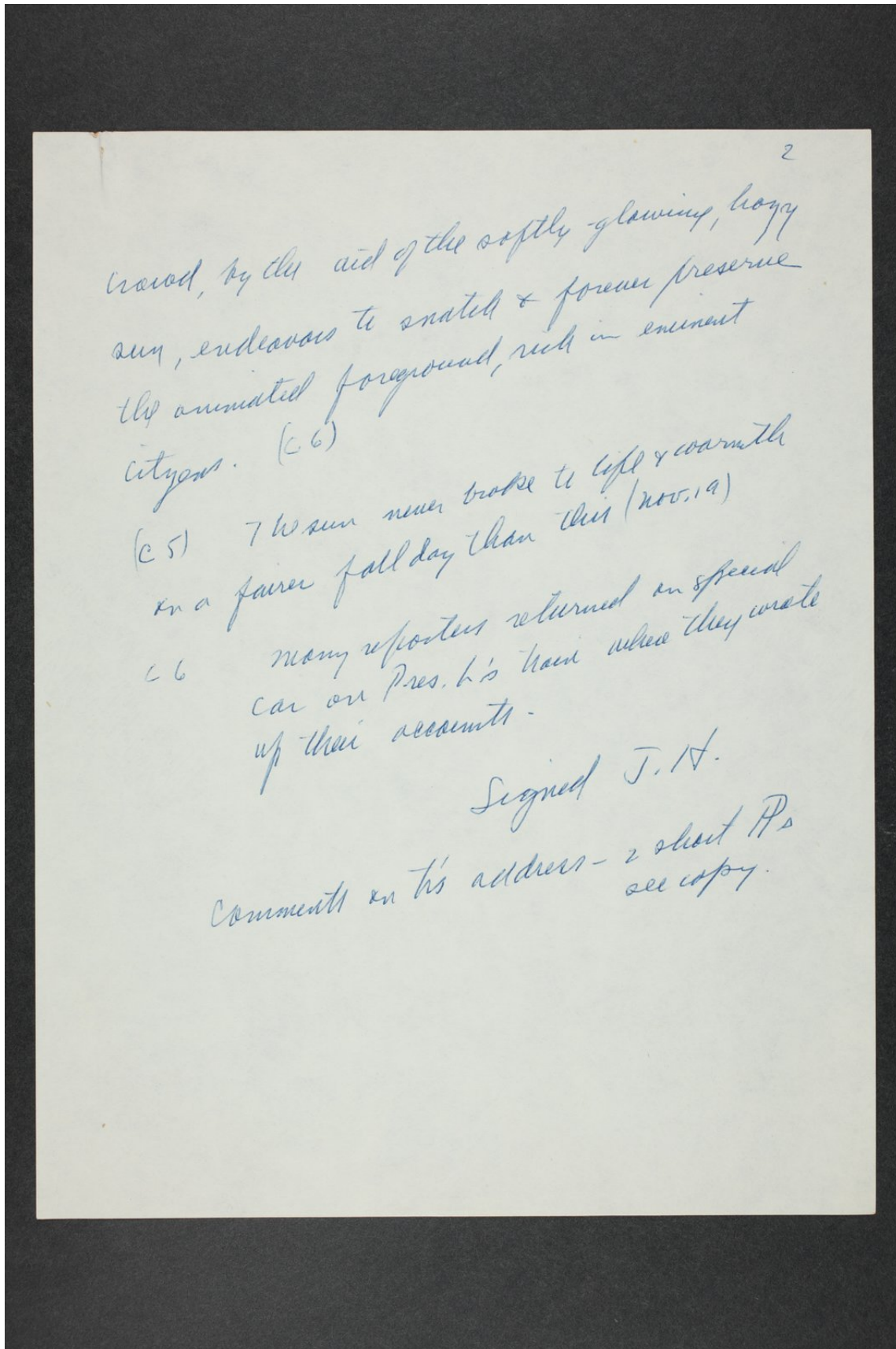
-- little tables set out with relics, for sale, of the terrible struggle, in the form of bullets and every kind of projectile, as well as fragments of shells, forcibly impressed upon the observer a painful sense of the terrible ordeal to which the citizens had been subjected.

-- The crowd upon the ground were kept in the form of a hollow square.

-- Around for off, scattered over the landscape, were crowds of people --

-- a dequerry post, with his instrument prominently placed at the outskirts of the main

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock



Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

President Lincoln's brief remarks will be
admired as a true statement of the thoughts
naturally inspired by the solemn and
patriotic occasion. Boston Daily
Evening Transcript Nov 20, 1863, p -, c 2
(Commenting on the report of the ceremony
given on another page)

Crowds, unable to hear the prayers & speeches,
wandered in every direction over the
battle-ground - Phila Press, Nov 2, 1863
p -, c 6

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

N. Y. Herald, Nov 24, 1863, p 6, c 4 (editorial)
We published yesterday two very important
orations - that of Edward Everett, on the battle-
field of Gettysburg, and that of [Henry] Ward
Becher, at the Brooklyn Academy [Becher
on the sentiments of the British towards us].

Everett - "Seldom has a man talked so long
and said so little"

Herald - Nov. 20, 1863, p 6, c 4 (also editorial)
"Mr Everett's oration was on the classical
model, and was a worthy one."

Get Saturday Nov 28, 1863 Weekly
Herald has extended acct. of Gettys.
ceremony.



Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

"A great day for Ireland"
Irish soldiers before Kenilworth with
two Kenilworth stories (practically full page)
Herald Nov 28, 1863, p. 2

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

570

LESLIE'S WEEKLY

December 14, 1905

An Artist's Interesting Recollections of Leslie's Weekly

By Joseph Becker



JOHN HYDE,
One of Frank Leslie's corps of capable
artists.



GROUP OF LEADING ARTISTS EMPLOYED ON "LESLIE'S WEEKLY" IN THE EARLY 'SEVENTIES.
Left to right: seated—Albert Berghaus, Joseph Becker, James E. Taylor, Standing—W. Yeager, T. de Thulstrup, J. H. Wales,
S. Steele, R. Stewart, A. Schimpf, F. Opper.



FERNANDO MIRANDA,
An old-time member of the art staff of
LESLIE'S WEEKLY.—Herald.

IN THE year 1859, at the age of seventeen, I entered the service of FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER as an errand boy. My duties included waiting upon members of the art staff, with some of whom I afterward worked on equal terms. Among the artists well known in their day employed on the paper at that time were Samuel Wallin, Albert Berghaus, Granville Perkins, Harry Stephens (afterward proprietor of *Vanity Fair*), and W. Jewett. During the course of the Civil War, which broke out in 1861, the following experts were added to the force: George White, Paul Dixon, W. Mombberger, Arthur Lumley, Thomas Hogan, W. Hennessey, Frank Schell, W. Crane, Henry Lovie, Stanley Fox, Frank Bellew, and Edwin Forbes. Of all these men only Lumley and Schell are still alive. Coming in contact, as I did daily, with enthusiastic artists, I soon aspired to be a picture-maker myself. Gradually I picked up the rudiments of art, and at length began to practice in earnest. I was encouraged in my ambitions by my superiors, and even by Mr. Leslie himself. I not only learned to use the crayon, but also the engraver's tool.

Mr. Leslie, who was himself a first-class engraver, was severe in his judgment of my work. I have to thank him, however, for the exacting standard he set up for me. It made me toil harder and more carefully. The paper at the date of my first connection with it was published in a building on Spruce Street, New York. It afterward moved from one place to another until it got to 110 Fifth Avenue, with its name modified to LESLIE'S WEEKLY, and in 1903 it betook itself to its present quarters in the Parker Building, No. 225 Fourth Avenue. I was employed on it in one capacity or another from 1859 to 1900—forty-one years—and for the last twenty-five years of that period I was the manager of its art department.

The great war between the North and the South began in 1861, and I was extremely anxious to go to the field, but my fitness for service in the war belt was not recognized until 1863. Mr. Leslie had sent out artist after artist to the leading points of military operations in the East, but had had considerable ill-luck with them. This eventually caused Mr. Leslie to order me to the front with my sketching outfit. I suppose that I was the youngest artist sent to the field during the war. In parting with me Mr. Leslie said, solemnly: "Joseph, I don't expect to ever see you alive again." I was a slender, delicate fellow, and nobody believed that I could stand the wear and tear of the life I was to lead. But active existence, largely in the open air, caused a distinct improvement in my health, and I grew to be hearty and robust. On the whole, I found that part of my career spent with the army exceedingly interesting. I had many a sad and wearisome time, but a great deal of the enjoyable also fell to my lot. And what a wealth of varied experience I had—such as few men can possibly have.

I witnessed all the important battles in the East from Gettysburg to Appomattox. I accompanied the armies of the Potomac and the James in their marches and engagements, and viewed the operations around Fort Fisher. I got acquainted with all the leading generals from Grant down, and hundreds of stirring incidents came to my notice. I was in at Lee's surrender, and I was in Richmond, the ex-capital of the Confederacy, when he arrived there from Appomattox. Never shall I forget the remarkable ovation given to the fallen chieftain by the inhabitants of the city. Whenever I went, from 1863 to 1865, I gathered materials for pictures, and as I was a hard worker I managed to keep the paper well supplied with war features. Many of my drawings were reproduced in the pages of LESLIE'S and I accumulated a vast number of unused sketches and studies. One of my drawings made during the war period, and never before published, appears in this number of LESLIE'S WEEKLY. It is entitled, "Last Christmas in the Field of the Army of the Potomac."

After the close of the great conflict I was dispatched to London to depict scenes connected with the laying of the Atlantic cable. The cable was to be taken out on the steamer *Great Eastern*, and I hoped to be a passenger on the vessel when she sailed for Newfoundland,

paying out the cable on the way. But the managers of the company refused passage to all artists and correspondents, and I made my way otherwise to Heart's Content, Newfoundland, where the American end of the submarine telegraph was to be landed. It was an out-of-the-way locality. Some thirty other artists and writers also assembled there. The *Great Eastern* was looked for at any hour, but she failed to appear. For thirty-eight days we were marooned in that forsaken place, with only rude accommodations and meagre fare. We grew utterly disgusted, wearied, and *craved* long before a sailing-vessel stole into the bay and notified us that the laying of the cable had been deferred. We lost no time after that in departing for civilization. My fellow-artists had refrained from making sketches at Heart's Content. But I had made drawings of the bay, the coast and hamlet, and so when, a year later, the *Great Eastern* actually dropped the cable on Heart's Content beach, FRANK LESLIE'S was the only paper which published illustrations of the locality.

I next did general work until 1872, when Mr. Leslie commissioned me to go to California to portray the Chinese who had come over in large numbers to build the Union Pacific Railway. These people were then a novel addition to our population, and Mr. Leslie planned a "scoop" on our competitors. My destination was kept a secret. I reached California in due time, spent six weeks among the Celestials, making many drawings, and then went back to Salt Lake City, where I also tarried a while, taking in pictorial features of Mormonism. In both these missions I scored "beats." The trip was also noteworthy for a reason more personal than the above. On the way West I was taken from Omaha to the Pacific coast on a special train chartered by Albert Pullman, brother of George Pullman, of Pullman palace-car fame. There was quite a party on board, and when a particularly fine bit of scenery showed itself several of the passengers would rush to the rear platform in order to get a better view. This suggested to me the idea of building what I named an "observation car." I furnished designs for this to Mr. Pullman, which afterward were utilized. I may therefore fairly claim to have been the inventor of what is now a feature on all great railways.

As I have already stated, I became manager of the art department of FRANK LESLIE'S in 1875. Among the leading artists then, or later, on the staff were the following: Matt Morgan, John Hyde, Joseph Keppler, Ben Day, T. de Thulstrup, Charles Kendrick, A. Berghaus, James E. Taylor, Sam Frizzell, William Frizzell, F. Miranda, J. H. Wales, F. Opper, W. Yeager, L. Schimpf, H. Ogden, T. Beach, D. Fisher, John Harley, Georgie Davis, Paul Frenzeng, E. Jump, W. Goater, C. Upham, and C. Bunnell. Notwithstanding I was the chief of the department, I often had to respond to "emergency calls" myself, and at last it came to pass that when any important event requiring illustration took place Becker had to go. I always in those days kept a satchel, already packed, in the office, and was prepared to leave at a moment's notice. Partly because I had become the regular pictorial reporter, and partly because I was born in and was familiar with the region, I went, in 1877, to northeastern Pennsylvania to depict scenes in the sensational "Mollie Maguire" troubles.

The "Mollie Maguires" comprised numerous lawless men whose criminal organization had had its origin in ordinary labor difficulties. Coal miners had gone on strike, and some of them had resorted to acts of violence. Eventually, members of the band perpetrated all manner of crimes, including murder. I fell in with a detective, and together, unsuspected, but

not bear to see these men swing, and so I absented myself from their execution. Afterward I received from the executioner (the detective aforesaid) a two and a half inch section of each rope used in the hanging. I have these grim souvenirs still. The "Mollie Maguire" pictures formed a feature of LESLIE'S that attracted much attention.

There was a multitude of other big assignments which I have neither time nor space to mention. I made expeditions to many places in the Union. I met hosts of prominent men. My last important duty was to attend the funeral, at New Orleans, of Jefferson Davis, the ex-President of the Southern Confederacy.

A most gratifying feature of my long connection with FRANK LESLIE'S was the intimacy which grew up between Mr. Leslie and myself. Mr. Leslie was like a father to me. He was a great publisher and an able editor. His business maxim was, "Never shoot over the heads of the people." Accordingly he studied the taste of the public, and every occurrence of interest was pictured in his publication. His successes were many, but the principal things which gave his paper a great "boost" were his anti-swall-milk crusade in 1858, the pictures of the Sayers-Heenan prize-fight in 1860, which ran the sales of the paper up to nearly 350,000, and his enterprise in depicting the events of the Civil War. The war pictures gave the paper an immense circulation. After a big battle, and when the public mind was greatly excited, it was not unusual for Mr. Leslie to issue an extra almost daily.

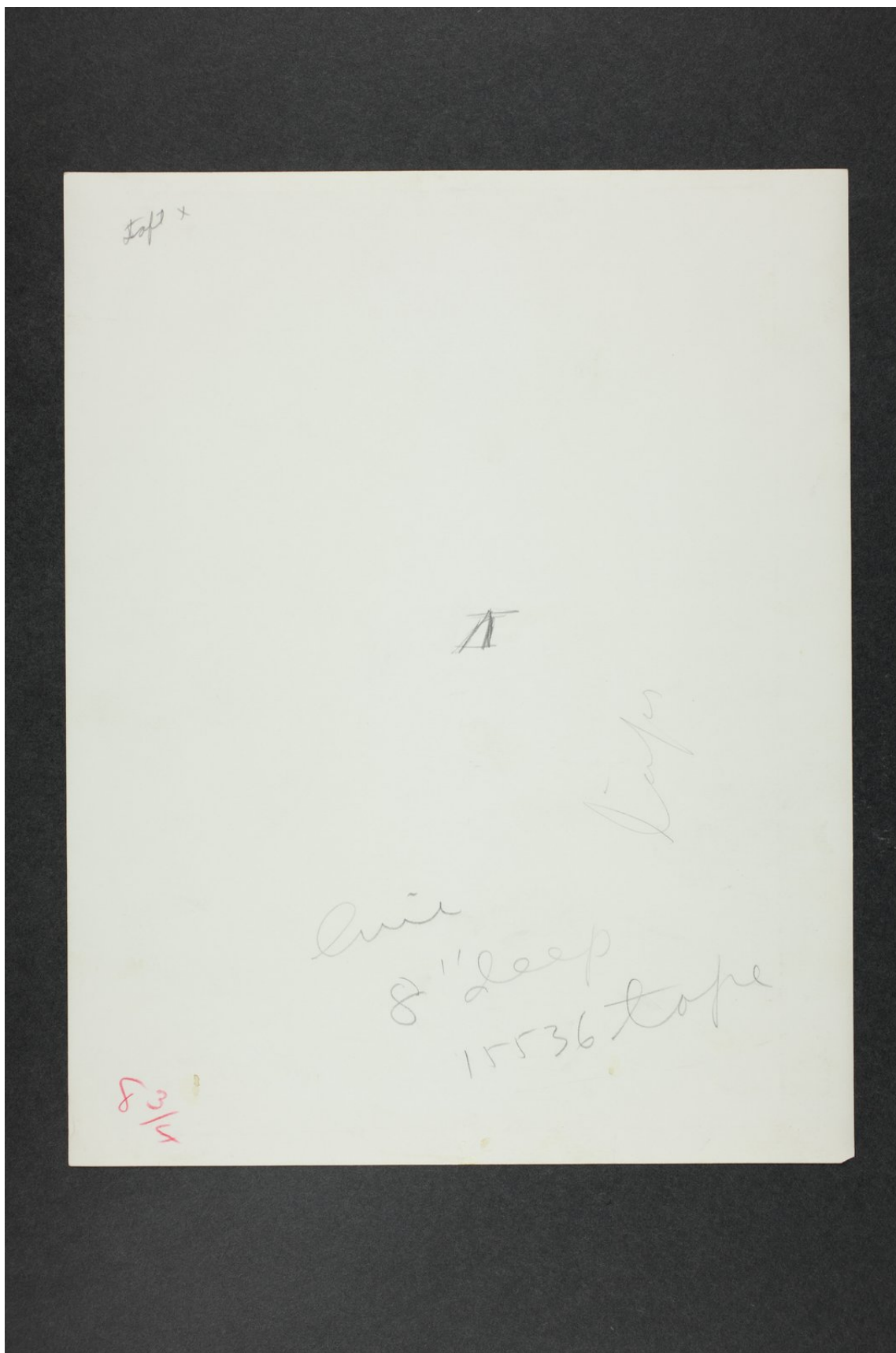
For his service to the people in the matter of impure milk Mr. Leslie was presented with a costly gold watch, which on the inside of the back cover contains the inscription: "Presented to Frank Leslie in behalf of the mothers and children of New York as a grateful testimonial of his manly and fearless exposure of the swill-milk traffic. Dec. 25, 1858."

On the inner cover of the timepiece appears the following: "To Joseph Becker, in memory of Frank Leslie's regard and appreciation." This much-treasured relic was given to me at Mr. Leslie's own request, made before his death in 1880. Because of its associations I prize it far above any other single thing that I own.

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock



Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock





Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

CITY OF MILWAUKEE
MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY

814 West Wisconsin Avenue (3)

Richard E. Krug, Librarian

July 25, 1946

Dr. Robert Taft
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Sir:

There is no Milwaukee Engraving and Lithographic Company listed in the latest (1945) city directory.

We believe the O. Becker you are interested in is still living here. We have not consulted the Art Department to see whether there is anything in the files of local artists, since we thought you would prefer writing to the man himself. He has evidently retired, since recent directories list no occupation.

The entries copied from city directories seem to indicate that the F. O. Becker listed is the same man, rather than a son; because there was no Otto after 1896 who was a lithographer, and no Frederick Otto before 1897 who was a lithographer or artist. There are many Becker entries, including three other Ottos and even more Fredericks. The listing for Edgar (which only appeared in two directories) is included to prove the Becker family living at 723 Bartlett is the same which formerly lived at 1226 Garfield.

Very truly yours,

Reference Department

Mamie E. Rehnquist
Mamie E. Rehnquist
Reference Librarian

For Gretchen DeWitt

ghd

Enclosure

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Entries from city directories from 1890 to 1945

Becker

1890 Otto lithog. h 419 15th
 1891 Otto F. lithog. 217 3d, h 1226 Garfield
 1892 Otto artist " "
 1893 Otto lithog. " "
 1894 Otto F. " " "
 1895 Otto F. " " "
 1896 Otto F. " " "
 Edgar lithog. 1226 Garfield
 1897 F. Otto lithog. 723 Bartlett
 1898 F. Otto designer 217 3d, h 723 Bartlett
 1899 F. Otto artist 723 Bartlett
 Edgar lithog. 723 Bartlett
 1902 Otto F. artist 723 Bartlett
 1903 Otto F. artist 219 3d h 723 Bartlett
 1905 F. Otto artist 723 Bartlett
 1906 F. Otto artist "
 1907 Frederick Otto artist "
 1914 Frederick O. artist "
 1921 F. Otto designer "
 1927 Fred O. (Mary) artist "
 1940 Frederick O. 2929 N. Bartlett Ave.
 1945 Frederick O. 2929 N. Bartlett Ave.

Note: 2929 is the new numbering for 723. Milwaukee streets were renumbered in 1930.

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

July 26, 1946

Mr. Otto Becker
2929 North Bartlett Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Becker:

Are you the lithographer who prepared the well-known picture "Custer's Last Fight", first published by Anheuser-Busch, Inc., in 1896? If so, can you tell me something about the making of the picture? What sort of copy did you have to work from? Did you make a painting from other sketches and then re-draw the painting on stone or in what manner was the lithograph done?

If you are not the "O. Becker" whose signature appears on the Anheuser-Busch lithograph, are you related to him?

I am preparing an article on pictures of Custer's Last Fight and would very much like to have any information that you can give me. Under separate cover I am sending two copies of articles that you may find of interest.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:wac

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

August 5, 1946

Miss Mamie Rehnquist, Reference Librarian
Milwaukee Public Library
814 West Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin

Dear Miss Rehnquist:

Thank you greatly for your letter of July 23rd concerning the "O. Becker" of 1890-96. As you suggested, I wrote to the Frederick O. Becker at 2929 N. Bartlett Avenue, but so far I have had no reply. If your reference or art departments have any information on "O. Becker" I would greatly appreciate receiving it. I am particularly interested from the fact that, in the famous lithograph published in 1896 by Anheuser-Busch "Custer's Last Fight," the signature of "O. Becker" appears in the lower right-hand corner of the print. As the original lithographs were printed by the Milwaukee Engraving and Lithographic Company, I made the guess that O. Becker of Milwaukee was the artist who drew the picture on stone. If there is any information in your files, especially contemporary newspaper accounts, that would confirm my guess that Otto Becker was the lithographer of the print, I would greatly appreciate receiving the information.

Under separate cover I am sending copies of two of my articles on "The Pictorial Record of the Old West" which may be of interest.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:wac

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Aug. 7, 1946

Mr. Frederick O. Becker,
2929 N. Bartlett Ave.,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Becker:

I wrote you on July 26th but as I have had no reply, I am afraid my letter went astray so I am writing again in the hope my letter will get to you.

I am preparing an article on pictures of Custer's Last Stand among which is the lithograph published by Anheuser-Busch. In the first copies of this lithograph printed by the Milwaukee Engraving and Lithographic Company in 1896, the signature of "O. Becker" appears in the lower right hand corner of the print. Are you the lithographer, or are you related to him? Who prepared this picture for publication? If so, could you tell from what kind of copy you worked and if the finished picture made for the lithograph still exists?

I shall greatly appreciate your courtesy and kindness in supplying this information as soon as convenient for my article has to be ready for the printer by September 1.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:vh

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Dr. Robert Taft,
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.
Department of Chemistry.

Milwaukee 11, Wis.
Aug. 9, 1946.

Dear Dr. Taft,

Your letter plus two copies of articles under separate cover were promptly delivered and taken from our mail box by a friend who makes her home with me and an oversight on her part is cause of my neglect in not answering you promptly. I greatly regret this. Today I received yours of Aug. the 7th and hastened to give you the information you request.

Otto Becker, whom you refer to, is my father who passed away on Nov. the twelfth, nineteen hundred and forty six, lacking two months of the age of ninety two years. I am his only daughter and we were very devoted to each other. I now am alone here with my friend, my youngest and only surviving brother living in Toledo, Ohio.

Father was the sketch artist and foreman of the Artists Department of the Milwaukee Lithographing and Engraving Co. (no longer in existence) for 35 yrs. He painted the oil and water color originals from which the lithographs were made on stone by the artists in his department father supervising the work.

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

11.

When finished on stone they went to the presser and then the printing departments etc. —

"Buster's Last Stand" which you refer to is my father's work. He painted the original oil painting from which the lithographs, you refer to, were made. I have a letter of father's at hand (dated 1933) in which he states as follows: —

("I painted 'Buster's Last Stand' in 1895. — The original oil painting is still in my possession, but unfortunately, I was forced to cut it into pieces so that a number of artists could work on it at the same time, making the color plates." —)

The oil painting was patched together and fully & perfectly restored and sold to the Anheuser-Busch Co.

father relinquishing all claims thereto.

My mother was incurably ill at the time and father's financial struggle great & anxiety & grief bearing heavily upon his aged shoulders, you can fully realize the rest, I believe.

I do not know whether it is just the thing for me to do at this writing but it is in justice to my dear father that I reveal the following. My father's painting of "Buster's Last Stand" appeared in Fortune Magazine accompanied by a considerable write up and another artist's name accompanied father's painting. I scarcely believe father would want me to mention this, it is not his way of



Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

III.
 doing, but it hurt me keenly at the time.
 Figures quoted were not accurate, but this is the
 way of the world. My father relinquished
 his rights by request, so anything could be expected.
 I would appreciate if you considered
 this unpleasant incident as confidential. It is
 not the first time such things have happened nor
 is it the last. And now father need no longer feel
 hurt about it of which I am deeply grateful to
 Lord for it was He who made provision for dear
 father in his extremity and his painting was sold
 when he was practically at the age of 85 yrs.
 Father had studied at the Royal
 Academy of Arts in Dresden, ^{been} awarded a scholarship
 entitling him to two years study in Italy, or wherever
 he chose to further his studies at the expense of the
 government & one of his outstanding professors told
 him that he saw in father the making of a great
 "historical painter." He often spoke of this as the
 coincidence for him to have sold "Hunter's Last Stand"
 at the age of 85 yrs. —
 I am very sorry that his hand
 cannot pen these lines to you instead of mine. He
 would have been very happy indeed upon receiving
 your letter and the copies you so thoughtfully sent him
 for they would have greatly interested him.
 Since he cannot appreciate my theme I shall
 extend to you my appreciation & thanks in memory
 of my dear father. It means much to me. —
 If there are any further questions
 you would like answered I shall be pleased to



Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

15
favor you whenever possible.
I sincerely trust that you will pardon the
tardy reply to your letter, it was not intentionally
done. I hope you have not been unduly
inconvenienced because of it.

Thanking you most sincerely,
remain

Respectfully yours,
(Miss)
Blanche Becker.

2929- N. Bartlett Ave.,
Milwaukee 11, Wis.

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Aug. 12, 1946

Miss Blanche Becker,
2929 N. Bartlett Ave.,
Milwaukee 11, Wisconsin

Dear Miss Becker:

Thank you greatly for your kind letter of August 9th. I regret to learn of your father's death but I am glad indeed to have the information given in your letter. Since there is no biographical data concerning your father in the standard handbooks of artists, as there should be, would you be good enough to furnish me the additional information: When and where was your father born? When did he come to this country (I am assuming that he was born abroad)? When did he start working for the Milwaukee Lithographic and Engraving Co.? Do you recall the titles of any other paintings made by your father?

With regard to the picture "Custer's Last Fight", I am trying to collect information that will give your father due credit for his part in the work. Did you ever hear him discuss the circumstances under which the painting was made in 1895? The original lithograph published by Anheuser-Busch in 1896 is signed by your father but the legend below it states: "From the artist's sketches. The original painting by Cassily Adams." I have a photograph of the original Cassily Adams' painting and your father's lithograph is far superior to it. I thought possibly your father and Adams had collaborated on it and hence, the signature and the legend as described above. If any letters or diaries of your father for 1895 exist, would they throw any light on this question?

I appreciate greatly your kindness in helping me.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:vh

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Mr. Robert Taft,
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Milwaukee 11, Wis.
August 14, 1946.

Dear Mr. Taft.

Your kind letter of Aug. 12th was received today and I shall be pleased to furnish the additional information you seek, to the best of my ability.

My father was born in Dresden, Saxony, January 28, 1854. He came to New York City, N. Y. in 1873, and there secured his first position in the United States at a weekly salary of \$50.00. He also worked in Boston, Philadelphia etc. finally in St. Louis where he was advised by the late Mr. Stiefel of St. Louis to go into business for himself and he would finance him. His admiration and interest in father was great and he was a man of wealth and splendid character. Father however did not accept this kindness. He was married in St. Louis, Mo. in Jan. 1879 and accepted a position in Chicago where he met with the President of the Milwaukee Lithographing & Engraving Co. who urged him to come to Milwaukee, and it must have been in 1880. During those years the Mil. Lithographing Co. took all the credit due his work and the numerous paintings of his here at home were mostly done during

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

11. his spare time. He later became stock holder of the concern, and that not their choice, and lost all the invested when the company became insolvent. Then he worked here in his spare time having his studio upstairs. Depression later war did not create a demand for oil paintings and he later on switched over to making large Birdseye Views which offered the largest and quickest returns. As to the titles of various of his paintings father being a great lover of the Spirit of Indians & Cowboys in action he painted many western scenes (copies of Remington etc) also (The Vanishing of the Race) a large buffalo head, and portraits of various Indian Chiefs, one of these being "Left Hand Bear" which he presented to Mr. W. Pershaw, an Indian by birth & an Attorney for the Indians, protecting their rights. In appreciation Mr. Pershaw presented my father with an illustrated book entitled "My Friend the Indian" by James M. Laughlin. Febr. 9, 1904 On the fly leaf he wrote: - Presented to Otto Becker by W. Pershaw in partial recognition of his kindness in painting "Left Hand Bear" portrait. - Other paintings were "The Appinines", "Sketch Interior Scenes", "Venetian Merchant Ships", many religious paintings among them one of life size of the Resurrection painted for the making of a colored glass window in a Lutheran Church & and of "The Good Shepherd" which father presented to a Lutheran Hospital. Bethelmann numerous others too many to list here.

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

III. A portrait of himself, which I prize. Also painted in water colors but preferred working in oils. Also made the finest pen and ink portraits, as well as, the "Head of a large hunting dog with a snipe in his mouth," (by Rosa Bonheur) This done in pen and ink so accurate as to be difficult to distinguish from the original. We have that picture here on the wall. —

And so I could go on one but you do not desire my giving any further I am certain. —

When writing you I refrained from making known more than was requested and that unless you desired to know all I would remain silent and therefore did not state that the artist's name accompanying father's painting in *Fortune Magazine* was that of "Cassidy Adams," and here are the facts I shall disclose and confide in you, as follows:—

Father and a Mr. Koenig, personal friend of the late Mr. Adolphus Busch, were in St. Louis, Mo. on a business trip. Father had done a great deal of work for Mr. Adolphus Busch and on this occasion he said to father:— "Mr. Becker, I want to show you a painting I got, and I want to have your opinion of it. Tell me just what you think of it." The painting was the one of "Custer's Last Stand" by Cassidy Adams, and to father a horrible piece of work. "I feel if you want to know, and you like Frankness, I have to tell you that it is not worth the canvas it is painted on." (Mr. Busch told father what he paid for it at that time. —)

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

IV. This is the circumstance surrounding father's painting of "Custer's Last Stand." Mr. Adolphus Busch intended to present father's painting to the Seventh Regiment U. S. Cavalry but I again copy father's statements I now have at hand as follows:- ("I was forced to cut into pieces the original painting as I had to put 16 artists, 2 in one color plate, due to the extremely short time allowed me for the finishing of it and that was the reason why it could not be presented to the Seventh Regiment U. S. Cavalry as originally intended.")

Instead the painting of Cassidy Adams was presented to the Seventh Regiment U. S. Cavalry & it is now at Washington. -

Adolphus Busch presented all U. S. regiments with a lithograph of father's painting accompanied with a booklet entitled "Custer's Last Battle" & I shall send you the one he gave to father, under separate cover for your interest and inspection asking that you kindly return same to me as it was father's and the only copy I have. "Thank you." -

Father was not acquainted with Cassidy Adams, but we had heard of his passing away years ago.

As to the Fortune Magazine issue in question I cannot accurately state the

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

✓ year or month it was brought to our notice
but can say it was perhaps 4 or 5 years ago, the
month I do not recall. The purchase price
given in that article was ^{not then} over half the amt.
actually paid. —

I believe, Dr. Taft, this answers the
information you sought and I have given it in
confidence that you will regard it as a sacred trust
and execute your wisdom and good judgment in
this matter.

O, how I regret father could not answer
you instead of I. What great joy it would have
brought to his heart and — appreciation. —

I am happy indeed to possess the
two articles you so kindly sent to him. I have
enjoyed them, as he would have, and they shall
remain a cherished treasure.

Thanking you most sincerely,
I remain

Respectfully yours,
(Miss) O Blanche Becker

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

CITY OF MILWAUKEE
MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY

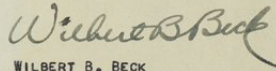
AUGUST 20, 1946

DEAR MR. TAFT,

YOUR LETTER REQUESTING INFORMATION ABOUT "O. BECKER",
ARTIST, HAS BEEN TURNED OVER TO ME FOR A FURTHER SEARCH IN
OUR MILWAUKEE ART FILES. THE REFERENCE DEPARTMENT SEARCHED
THRU THE NEWSPAPERS OF 1890-96, BUT FOUND NOTHING.

I HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN TRYING TO REACH MR. EMIL
HUNKEL 1927 W. JUNEAU AV., MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, BY TELE-
PHONE. HIS MOTHER'S FATHER OWNED THE MILWAUKEE LITHOGRAPHIC
AND ENGRAVING CO. AT THE TIME CUSTER'S LAST FIGHT WAS PRO-
DUCED. MR. HUNKEL HAS A GOOD MEMORY, SO I SUGGEST YOU
WRITE DIRECTLY TO HIM.

YOURS TRULY,



WILBERT B. BECK
CURATOR OF ART & LITERATURE

WB:DM



Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

August 22, 1946

Mr. Emil Hunkel
1927 West Juneau Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Hunkel:

The Milwaukee Public Library has suggested that you might have information concerning the publication of "Guster's Last Fight" by the Milwaukee Lithographic and Engraving Company. Do you know anything about the circumstances under which it was produced? Miss Blanche Becker has told me that her father, Otto Becker, prepared the picture for stone. Do you know what material Mr. Becker had upon which to base his picture?

Any information you can give me will be thankfully received.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Taft

RT:wac

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Milwaukee 11, Wis.
Aug. 28, 1946.

Mrs. Robert Taft,
University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Dear Mr. Taft,

Your message of August 26th has been received and I assure you that it is with pleasure I send you under separate cover three more of father's latest photos taken, at a studio. I have indicated the one which father chose to make his portrait from; no doubt he considered it best perhaps for that purpose, or himself preferred it. I wrote you of this portrait which I prize, it is 12 x 16 as indicated on back of photo sent you. With this letter I enclose his earlier photo of 1880 or 1881

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

silently slipping away: just fell asleep.)—

O, what joy it would have brought to his heart to have learned to know you; and how truly interesting the conversation between you.

I am conscious of a lingering sadness, for I miss him so. —

It is remarkably kind and thoughtful in you to give me the great pleasure of receiving one of your November copies.

Words fail completely to express my gratitude to you.

and a few funny snap shots of a few years ago. You will note that he changed little in general appearance; he seemed to hold his own remarkably well.

I am not expecting you to make use of the earlier photo nor the snap shots and send them merely for you to have a look at. Naturally they are not appropriate for your requirements.

(Father had no illness simply grew weaker, his limbs becoming tottery so he finally became bedridden, gradually. Kept up his interest in reading up to within four months before

Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

14
Upon reflecting on father's
photos after having them
ready for washing I thought
of another one of his sit
perhaps is more apt to
resemble father as he
appeared when painting
Custer's Last Stand. —

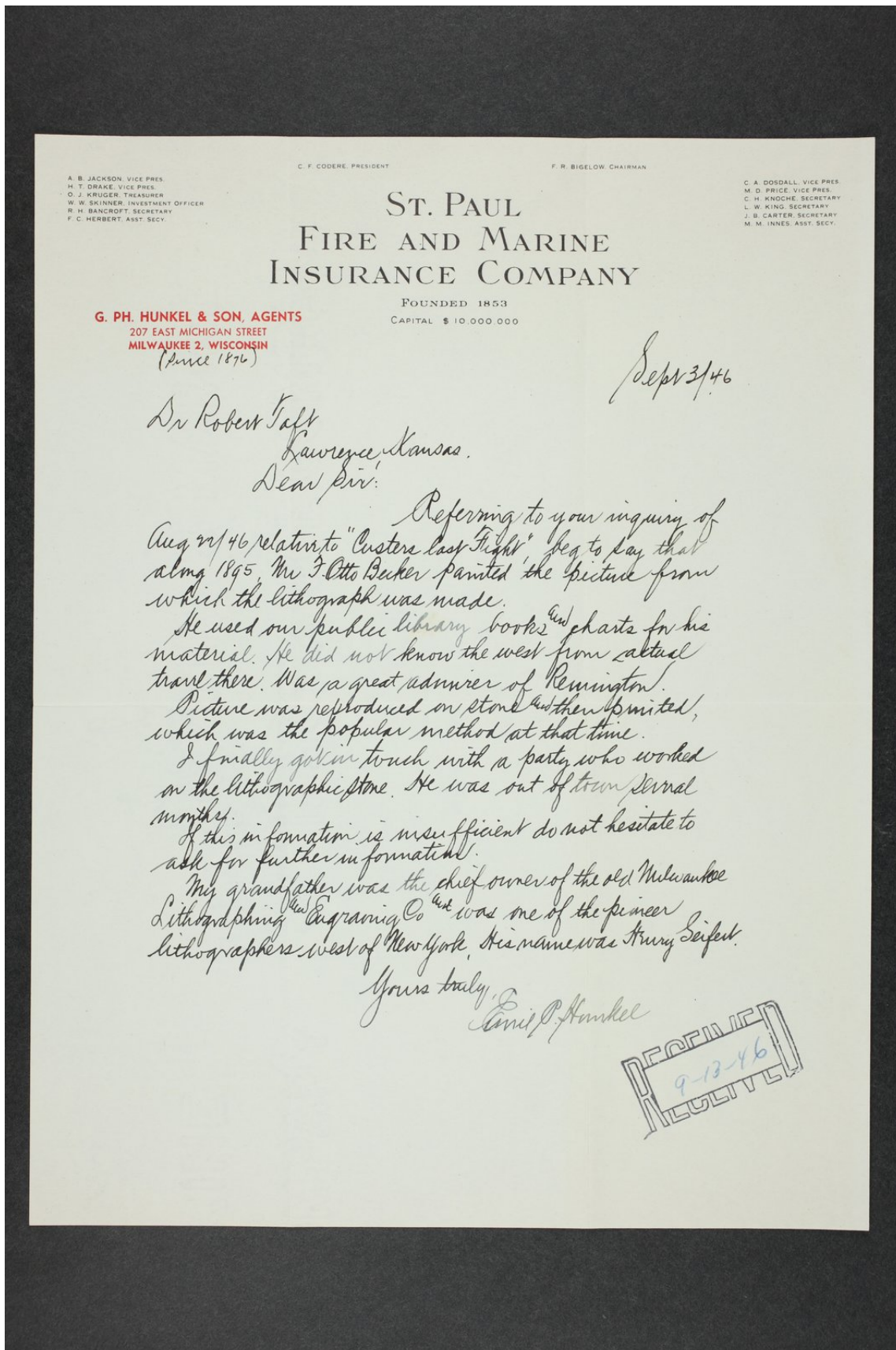
There is no hurry
returning the photo. Use
same as you prefer.

Thanking you, I
remain

Respectfully yours,
Blanche Becker.



Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock



Robert Taft correspondence related to frontier artists, Adams - Blakelock

Becker, O
Amer, ac (1886) in St
Louis, Mo. Mallett
Library Supplement
to Mallett's Index
of artists 24 1840
p 18 with Mallett
Eber, Elk and
Mallett