

Robert Taft general correspondence

Section 36, Pages 1051 - 1080

Rober Taft (1894-1955) was a professor of chemistry, author, historian, and editor at the University of Kansas. The general correspondence letters of Mr. Taft consist of letters between various organizations and people.

Date: 1918-1955

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KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Robert Taft general correspondence

In practically all of the reproductions of Schreyvogel's paintings with the oldtime cavalry as a subject that I have seen to date, he stuck close in his details of uniform, horse equipments &c. to those various items prescribed for use by General Orders in 1885. That would have been a natural thing for him to do as you have stated that he did not make his first trip to the West until the summer of 1893 and since such items were changed or modified in but few particulars from 1885 up through the war with Spain.

You have contributed so much to the understanding of various artists' conceptions of "Custer's Last Fight" and, for your interest, I enclose a photo of a particular old lithograph that has what I think are some peculiar features. This litho, "Custer's Last Rally On The Little Big Horn," appeared as the frontispiece in an 1891 edition of D. M. Kelsey's OUR PIONEER HEROES AND THEIR DARING DEEDS, published by Scammell & Co., Philadelphia & St. Louis. The copy of the 1891 edition that I have bears copyright dates 1882 and 1887 (by Scammell & Co.) but have not seen copies of the earlier editions and so can't say whether this frontispiece also appeared in them. The original litho is in colors. No artist's name appears thereon and no artist is specified in the book's contents.

It is interesting to compare a photo of Cassily Adams' original "Last Fight" painting of about 1885 with this litho from Kelsey's book. Interesting even if not very profitable, I suppose I should say! But I have made a careful comparison between the two and have noted that the Kelsey litho contains some rather odd similarities to Adams' painting in regard to the poses of some of the figures and in other regards. There seem to me to be too many similarities to let the matter pass as but a trick of the imagination.

Custer appears in the litho in a pose quite the same as in Adams, although the dress is changed somewhat. The Indian receiving Custer's thrust in Adams appears pretty much the same in the litho and again this Indian's tomahawk has just fallen from his hand. In the litho, as in Adams, there appears just behind this sabred warrior another who leans forward to level a pistol at Custer. Quite a few of the other figures in the litho appear pretty much as they do in Adams. The long blank knoll that Adams used as a background appears in this litho with only its direction of slope reversed.

It seems to me that the artist, whoever he was, who produced the picture that we see in this litho, may well have viewed Cassily Adams! painting at some early date in its travels and used it as a basis for his own picture, simply transposing some figures to other points in his composition, adding a few more and also adding some embellishments to the details of dress of both troopers and Indians. You may find it interesting to make such a comparison yourself.

But I see that I have run on and on and my main idea was to send along the photo of "The Last Drop," which I hope you will enjoy.

Sincerely yours,

James S. Hutchins



Robert Taft general correspondence

Washburn Municipal University Topeka, Kansas

November 16, 1953

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

Dear Neighbor, Professor Taft:

The History of Kansas, 2 volumes, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, is in the prospectus stage. The product is planned to be similar to numerous recent state, or parts of state, histories, completed or nearly so. Some of these are: Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Montana, North Carolina, Florida, and the ake Shore of Ohio. Nyle Miller could give you a good deal of pertinent information about this project.

As editor, I am enlisting the assistance of fellow college teachers of history in Kansas, and of several persons, like yourself, who are prominent in history

Enclosed is a tentative listing of chapter headings or titles for the two volumes. Each chapter is to average about 10,000 words. I should be pleased to receive your critical viewpoint on this proposed "outline". How do the chapter titles strike you, as to proportion, utility, and coverage?

It is planned, also, by and large, to have the manuscripts of volume I and volume II prepared and completed during the academic years, 1953-54 and 1954-55, respectively. Or by the end of the following summer, in each case. The deadline for the two volumes is set for January 1, 1956.

How would you like to contribute

Mow would you like to contribute the "successive" chapters, for the two volumes?

Mining and Industry in Kansas(To c. 1900).

Mining and Industries in Kansas — Twentieth Century.

I hope these strike your "fancy". At least, I should like to find two or three chapters which would be attractive to you and would elicit your cooperation in the project.

The stipend will be fairly nominal. It will be fully pro-rated; but when it is divided about twenty ways for each volume, the quotient appears rather modest. There should be some large satisfactions, in addition, in producing a worthy Kansas history, at this centennial time.

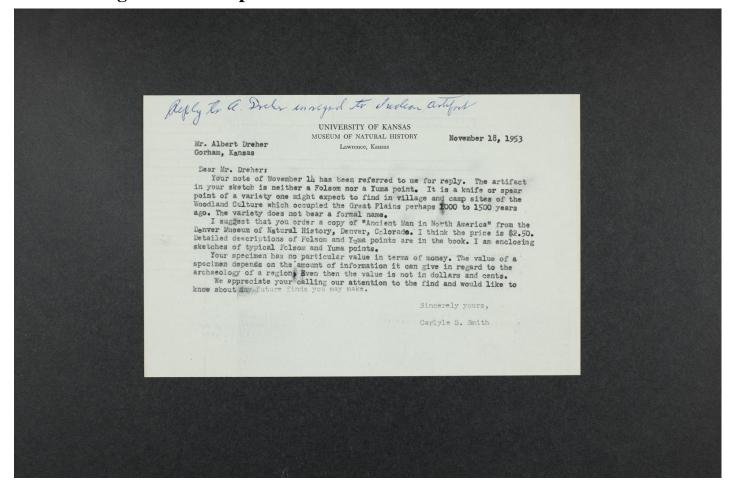
I have liked your pithy, readable, and popular short historical articles about Kansas in The Kansas Teacher. You have the heart and hand for history writing, it can be said for a fact. Hoping to have your affirmative

answer soon, I am

Cordially and sincerely yours, John D. Bright

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Robert Taft general correspondence

THE University of Kansas Lawrence

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

November 19, 1953

Dear Professor Taft:

This is a somewhat delayed answer to your questions on the use of pictures in history. A separate sheet will also answer your inquiry about Indians in Virginia. I send them on separate sheets in case you wish to file them separately or use them at different times.

You are no doubt familiar with the various publications of Stefan Lorant which seem relevant to your current problem. They include: Lincoln, a Picture Story of His Life (1952); Lincoln, His Life in Photographs (1941); The Presidency, a Pictorial History of Presidential Elections from Washington to Truman (1951); and The New World, The First Pictures of America made by John White and Jacques Le Moyne and Engraved by Theodore De Bry (1946).

Relative to your question of a day or two ago, my reference to the reversing of an original drawing by engraving referred to what the engraver Theodore De Bry did with the John White drawings in 1590. The drawings were made by White between 1585 and 1587 approximately, and they were engraved by De Bry around 1590. Both examples of White's drawings and De Bry's engravings are included in The New World. There are some strong criticisms of Lorants New World in the following reviews: Samuel E. Morison in The William and Mary Quarterly, vol. IV (January, 1947), pp. 87-89 and vol. IV (July, 1947), pp. 395-402; and by Julian P. Boyd in The American Mistorical Review, vol. LIHI (October, 1947). Morison's second statement on the book includes a detailed and discriminating comparison of the originals in the British Museum and Lorant's production. Lorant's problem arose from the fact that he was not working from the originals. There are at least two sets of reproductions of the White drawing in this country (one at the Clements Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan and the other at the McGregor Library at the University of Virginia). These reproductions were made during the 1930's by taking a faint photographic image and having a London artist paint in the color using the originals as a guide. I now have a set of colored slides from the Virginia group, and Lorant used the Michigan group. In either case you are not working from the original. There is currently a plan for the British Museum to issue a set from the originals. Orders are now being taken at \$75.00 per set to see if there are enough subscribers to warrant the publication. We recently sent forward to Bob Vosper an announcement about the proposed publication, and I believe Kansas will subscribe. I hope there will be enough subscribers to complete the project.

Information about the Virginia Indians I shall send to you in a day or so. In case you might like this sooner, I shall send it along before I finish the other.

Sincerely,



Robert Taft general correspondence

BERNARD DEVOTO 8 BERKELEY STREET CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

November 22, 1953

Dear Bob: It isn't that my manners are bad, it's just that I was victimized by virtue KNAK at an early and defenseless age and ever since then have been docilely doing what I was told was my duty, the same being someone else's convenience. You perhaps recall A. Lincoln's improper KNAKAN remark about what the office seekers didn't leave him time to do. Since I climbed on a train after lecturing at Rockford the night after I left you, editors have been chasing me about with special and instantaeous assignments, till A. Lincoln's natural functions are lesiurely compared to mine. Nor is there any let-up to be expected, for they're lining up and fighting over their turn still. V. Sackville West had a heroine who could not say no; as regards editors I seem to suffer from the same affliction and I don't enjoy the results, whereas she seemed to.

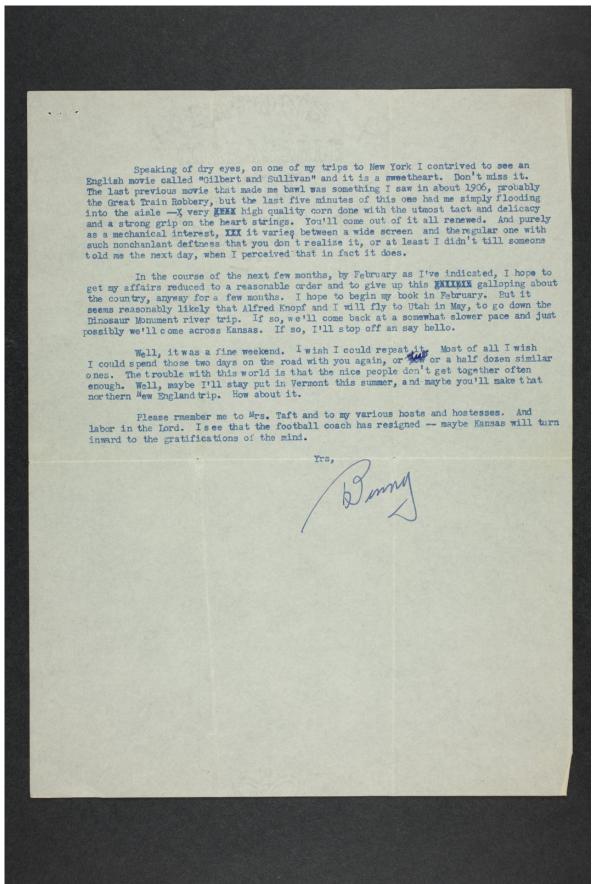
If you are ever disposed to take the train out of KC that I did, remember that it has no diner. I found out in time to get a sandwich, but only by chance.

I don't want to bore you but I do want so say several more times that I had a wonderful time. It was swell to talk to you, the people I met were uncommonly genial, and driving about the countryside meant a lot to me. In such moments as I've had off the job since I got home, which come sometime after midnight, I've been reading up on Kansas geography and the early days, so far as my library permits. When the world eases up and restores me to a merely normal delirium, which will be about XXXXXXX February if I find resolution to say a few noes, there are a number of learned questions I want to ask you but it would simply be idle to take them up now for I couldn't do anything about them.

One thing I have succeeded in reading with pleasure, though it counts as a job since I'm to find a day next week to write an introduction for it, is a set of galleys of Wally Stegner's book about John Wesley Powell. I remembered the first draft as very fine, as I told you, but he has in revision raised it several notches higher. It's a very distinguished book and will modify a lot of thinking. Dale Morgan's life of Jedediah Smith has come in and though I won't be able to read it for weeks it serves to remind me, with Wally's that I told the literal truth when I said that people like those two, Henry Nash Smith, and we-uns are piling up a mountain of stuff which will eventually force a wholly new comeption of Western History. For my money, most of the established and accepted theses about it are simply not so, are mere deductive generalizations without reference to realities. Some day somebody is going to write a general history of the frontier in American experience, and when some body does that will be for the first time. Nobody has bothered to line us up yet. I have personally supplied a lot of dope that eats large holes in the Turner hypothesis and I have never used the hypothesis in any of my stuff, but every reviewer who wants to say a kind word about me says I am a loyal follower of Turner.

Cambridge sustained its August well into November and for the lastweek has relapsed to July -- all the historic records have been broken and though we've had enough rain to slow up the cactus all the spring flowers are out as a result of the heat. It has been a wonderful time for going to Vermont but of course I haven't had any time to do so, I have, however, written one short piece on INNIVERY touring New England so lyric that there won't be a dry eye in the house, and I've got to write another one for another editor. The new one will probably convince me.







Robert Taft general correspondence

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
LAWRENCE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

November 23, 1953

Dear Professor Taft:

Relative to your question sometime ago about the number of Indians in Virginia, I give you an excerpt from my Ph. D. thesis on the "The Indian Folicy of Colonial Virginia." The area concerned refers to Virginia as it is today in size, not the vast domain that could be claimed under the charter of 1609 from the Crown. Here are a few statements pertinent to your question:

"The Jamestown settlers first encountered the Algonquians who were members of the Powhatan Confederacy, so-called after the name of their 'ndian chief. This Confederacy consisted of about thirty different tribes (footnote 10, For the names of the main tribes of the Bowhatan Confederacy and the number of the warriors in each in 1607, see Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, II, 130), eight of which had come under Powhatan's jurisdiction by heredity, the others having submitted to his rule through conquest. (footnote 11, William Stith, The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia, Sabin's reprint - New York, 1885- p. 104). Both Captain John Smith and William Strachey have given an estimate of the number of these tribes occupying an area of about 8,000 square miles, or about one-fifth of the present state of Virginia. According to Smith there were 2,385 fighting men under Powhatan; (footnote 12, Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, II, 129-30) but since he omits in his number several kings houses which are included on his map, it seem justifiable to make the figure 2,500. Consequently on a reasonable calculation for the entire group, the total population for the Confederacy may be estimated at 8,500, or about one native to every square mile (footnote 13, James Mooney, 'The Fowhatan Confederacy, Past and Present,' American Anthropologists - Lancaster, Pa., 1907 - IX, 129).

"Considering the entire Indian population of Virginia, we may conservatively estimate that the inland groups of Siouan and Iroquoian stock equalled the Powhatan Confederacy, giving a total of 17,000 as a fair estimate for the number of Indians living within the bounds of present Virginia in 1607 (footnote 22, James Mooney, 'The Powhatan Confederacy, Past and Present,' American Anthropologist, IX, 131-32)."

Additional figures for Indians in other areas may be found in John Reed Swanton, The Indians of the Southeastern United States, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 137; or perhaps in Frederick Webb Hodge, editor, Handbook of American Indians north of Mexico, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30.

Hope this information will assist you in answering your question.

Sincerely,



Robert Taft general correspondence

November 27, 1953

Dr. V. R. Krishnan
Department of Chemistry
D.A.V. College
Sholapur, Bombay State, India

My dear Krishnan:

We were greatly pleased to have your letter of November 17 and to learn that you were safely home. Your letter from Paris was received and I hope to publish the manuscript on the ternary system in the March issue of the Transactions. I shall send you reprints of course, when the article appears. Your thesis, if it is agreeable to you, I'll submit to the Journal of Biological Chemistry for their consideration. If it isn't the type of work in which they are interested, we shall have to consider other possible sources of publication.

Your degree was voted by the faculty of the Graduate School at their fall meeting so that only the formal announcement of the award at cur next commencement remains to be made. You may, therefore, feel perfectly free to use the title "Doctor" as the time and occasion require.

Work progresses here as usual. Our enrollment again is slightly larger this fall than the previous one and the indications are that it will continue upward for some time. Our new building fortunately is rapidly approaching completion which should enable us to handle more adequately the increasing number of students. The builders should be through by late winter so that the process of removal will be under way during the spring and summer--a process to which I am not looking forward with much enthusiasm.

My outside activities continue to take more and more of my time. I no sconer get one task completed than another one appears. At the present moment, I am preparing an address to be given at a joint dinner meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association and the American Historical Association (the two leading organizations of professional historians) in Chicago late in December. The promise to talk was made far in advance of the date of the meeting; as the date approaches I can only regret my foolishness in accepting.

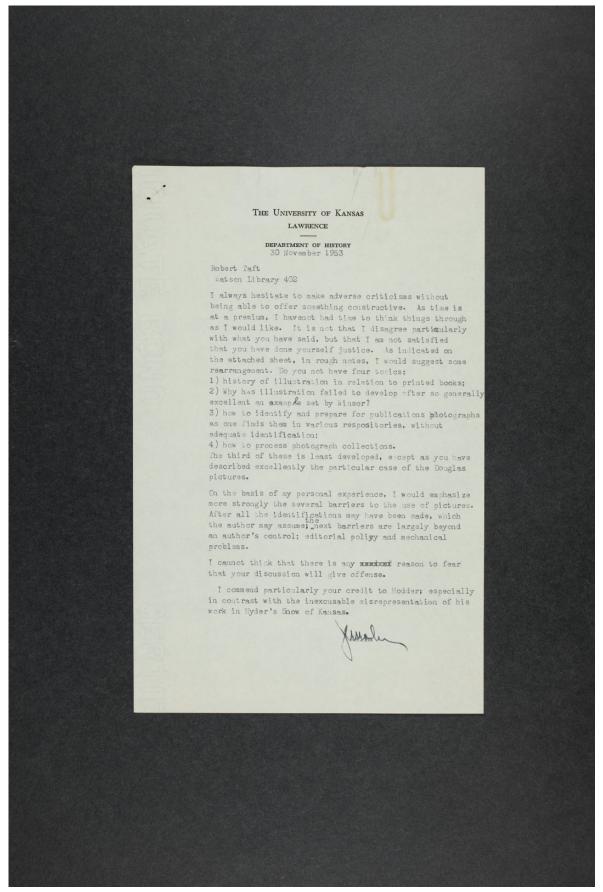
Our plans for the Centennial next year are pretty well laid by this time, but the work necessary to carry them through increases day by day. I think if I liswethrough the coming year, I'll never promise again to do anything for anyone.

I would greatly like to hear your lectures on various aspects of American culture. I am sure that we could all profit by hearing what outsiders really think of us.

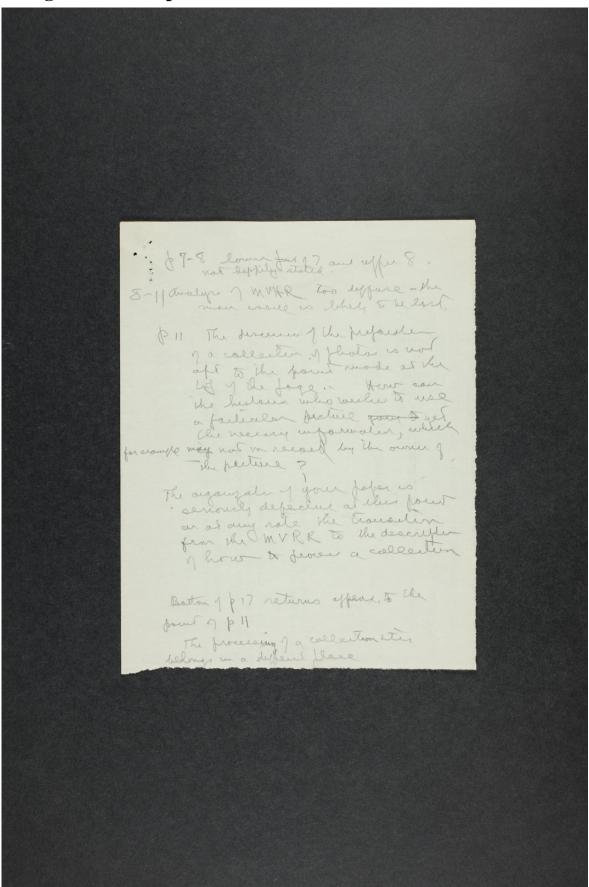
Write me again as you find time.

Kindest regards,

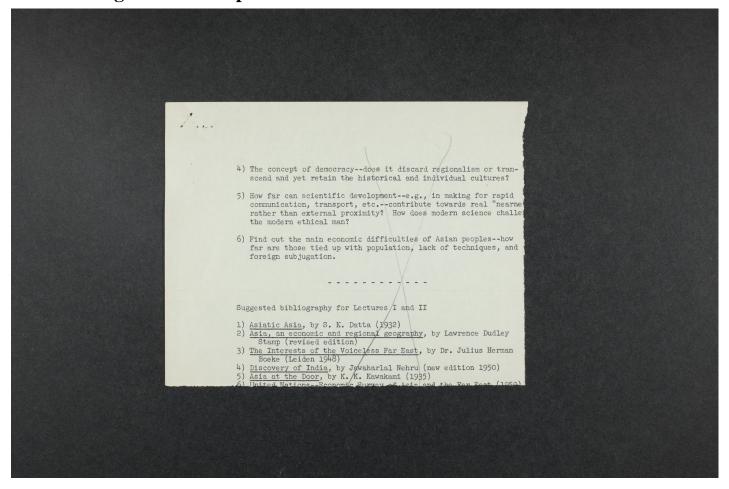




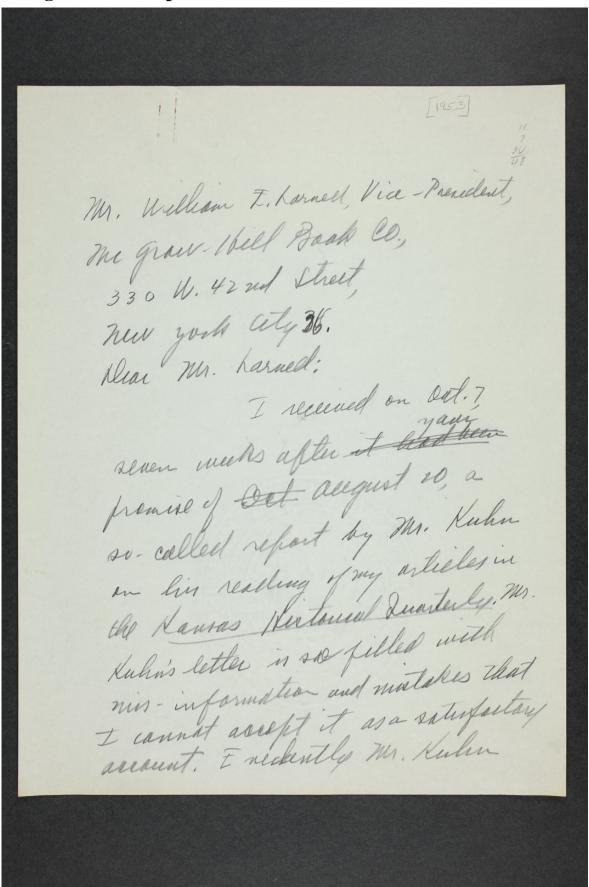








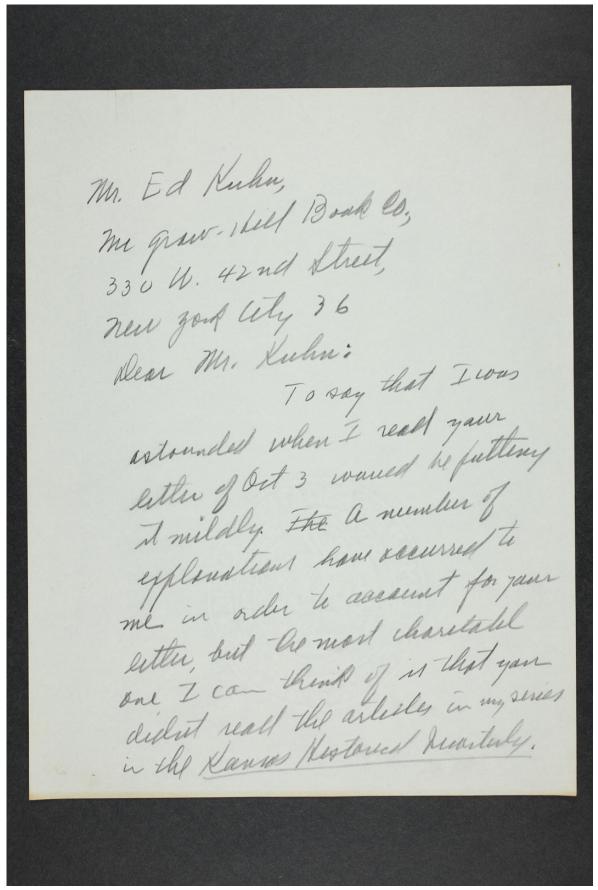






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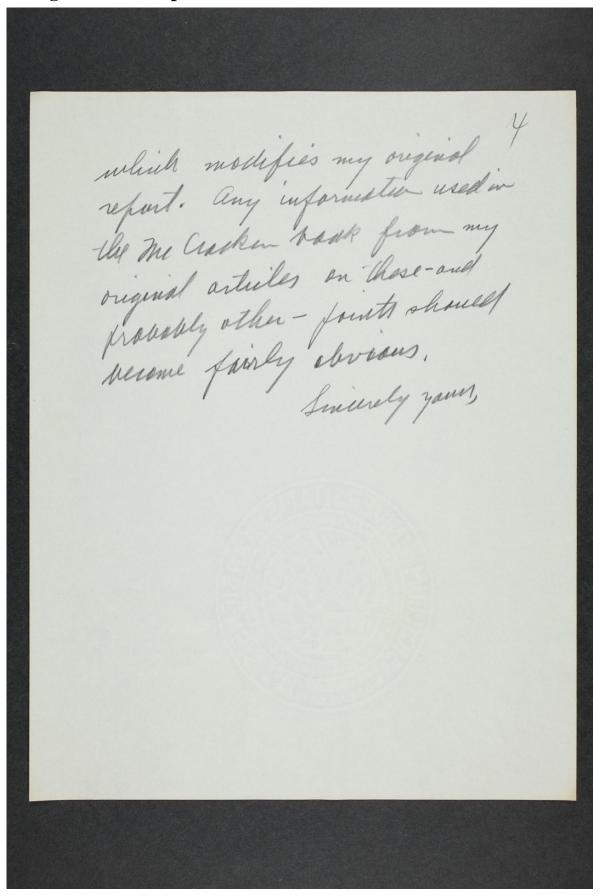


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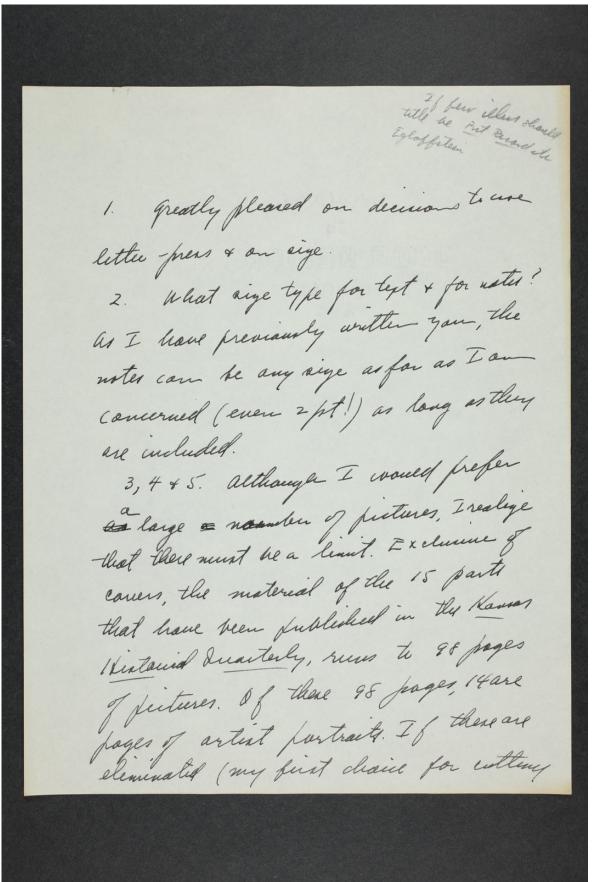


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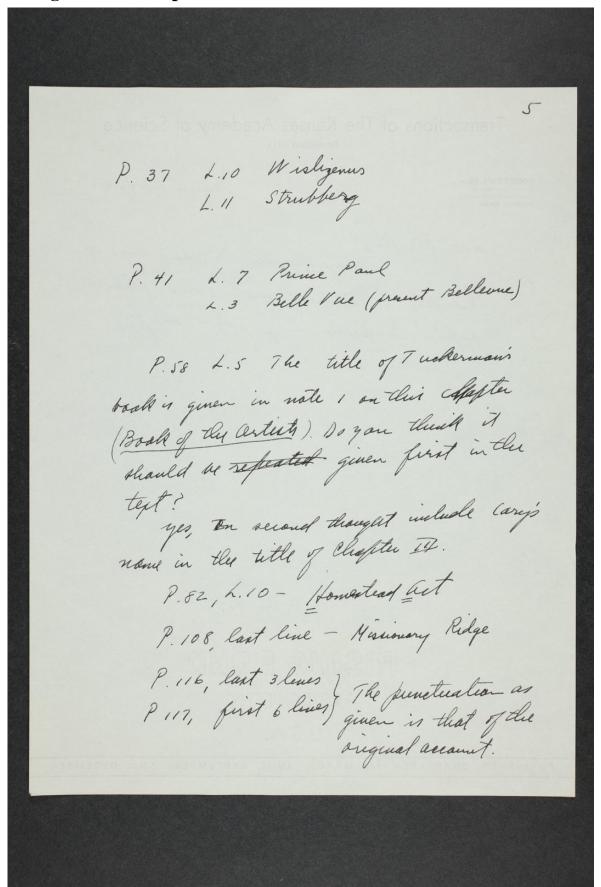


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Transactions of The Kansas Academy of Science Established 1873
ROBERT TAFT, Editor University of Konsos Department of Chemistry Lawrence, Kansos
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