

The Filson Historical Society

Mss.  
A     Rothert, Otto Arthur, 1871-1956.  
R846     Papers, 1908-1927.  
10     ca. 750 items, + 2 pkgs.

Correspondence,  
January - February,  
1917.

January 2, 1917

Judge Rollin Hurt,  
Frankfort, Ky.

Judge Hurt:

I am gathering material for a history of the lower Ohio river country in the flatboat days -- before the coming of steamboats. Among other things, I will tell the early history of Cave-in-Rock (in Illinois, on the Ohio) and the outlaws who made that cave their headquarters and who, during their stay, robbed many of the flatboats that came down the river. In this connection, I am looking for facts regarding Big Harpe, Little Harpe and Samuel Mason. Mr. Frank K. Kavanaugh informs me that you are well informed on the Harpes and he is inclined to think that you are also interested in Samuel Mason and his band.

I have worked on my subject for about a year and have, of course, spent more or less time at Cave-in-Rock. I gathered many traditions regarding the Cave, and have also procured a number of printed records regarding the Harpes and Mason -- some are formal histories, others I have found in historical romances. Among the former is Collins' History of Kentucky and among the latter is "Chronicles of a Kentucky Settlement", by W. C. Watts, printed in 1897, a book with which you are probably familiar. I would be glad to have you cite me to any printed material regarding the Harpes and Masons, for in doing so you are likely to point out some material that is new to me.

I am writing a history, not a book of fiction; nevertheless, I shall give, in foot notes, the names of all the poems, novels and other fiction that touch on Cave-in-Rock or any other part of the lower Ohio river country.

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I am enclosing a photostatic copy of two pages of Flagg's "Far West". I have gathered material pro and con regarding the subjects there mentioned, except two: the "engraving of the spot" and the "spirited tale". Can you enlighten me on these points, especially on this "spirited tale"? which was written before 1838?

My book is a labor of love, as was also my History of Muhlenberg County, a copy of which you will find in the State Library, and in which you will also find some Harpe history, page 35, etc.

Assuring you I shall greatly appreciate any help you may give me, I am

Sincerely,

CHIEF JUSTICE  
WARNER E. SETTLE  
JUDGES  
SHACKELFORD MILLER  
JOHN D. CARROLL  
ROLLIN HURT  
GUS THOMAS  
ERNEST S. CLARKE  
FLEM D. SAMPSON  
COMMISSIONER OF APPEALS  
WM ROGERS CLAY



COURT OF APPEALS OF KENTUCKY  
FRANKFORT

January 3rd., 1916.

*Amended  
March 3  
1917*

Mr. Otto A. Rothert,  
Louisville, Ky.

Dear Sir:-

I am just in receipt of your letter in regard to the history of Big Harpe and Little Harpe. I have been somewhat interested in gathering up the traditions and history in regard to them, which arises very largely from the fact that some of their crimes were committed and some of their operations were in my native county, Adair, and others adjoining, and from my earliest childhood I have heard the old people, all of whom are now dead and gone, relate the circumstances of their tragedies or rather crimes. I have recently written a chronicle in regard to them embracing all of the traditions, which I regarded as being founded in truth, in regard, to these characters. I do not have it at hand at the present time, but in a short time I will secure the return of it to me, and I will take pleasure in sending it to you for your inspection, and it will contain all of the information, which I have in regard to them.

Yours Truly,

*Rollin Hurt.*

script - for I believe  
only the manuscripts of  
members are published  
in their journal. Am  
I correct?

Thanking you in ad-  
vance and wishing you  
a "Happy New-Year" I am  
Very truly,  
Martha Grassham Pucell

Mrs. Clyde C. Pucell  
321 N. 5th -  
Paducah, Ky.

Jan. 1917

Ans  
Jan 14



Mr. Otto A. Rothen,  
Louisville, Ky.

Dear Sir: May I in-  
quire of you concerning  
a matter, without seem-  
ing presumptive?

You very kindly offer-  
ed to present my name  
to both the Wilson Club  
and the State Histori-  
cal Society - I receiv-  
ed my notification  
and sent check for dues

thought of proffering it  
to "The Kentucky Magazine"  
but (having been told by  
a resident of this section  
that both he and I had  
been made members of  
the State Historical Society)  
I thought of their journal.

However, I have received  
no notification of election  
to said body - so I merely  
wish to ascertain whether  
or not I was made one  
so that I may know  
concerning my name -

To Filson Club - and  
noted with interest the  
subject of the last  
meeting - for I have  
"discovered" a hitherto  
unknown drawing  
of one of Clark's grants.

(I am writing this  
confidentially). The owner  
one of Anne <sup>Clark</sup> Swathney's <sup>descendants</sup> has  
kindly permitted me to have  
a fac-simile made and  
I have in preparation an  
article on same. I had



DUNBAR ROWLAND, LL. D.  
DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT OF  
**ARCHIVES AND HISTORY**  
STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
JACKSON

Jackson, Miss., Jan. 18, 1917

Mr. Otto H. Rothert,  
St. Charles Hotel,  
New Orleans, La.

My dear Mr. Rothert:-

I am delighted to hear that you have had a pleasant and profitable visit to Fayette and Natchez and that you are agreeably impressed by Judges Truly and Reed.

I have some degree of hesitation in complying with your request in connection with the Spanish letters, and I comply with great fear and trembling. The ordinary photographer has but a dim conception of the value of historical documents and this causes me to be a little dubious about Mr. Hesse. I am sending him the documents by today's mail.

With best wishes,

Cordially yours,

*Dunbar Rowland*

My dear Rothert :- I have read carefully the two extracts and taken counsel with high learning, - and we can make out only this : on p. 13 Taylor says that the \$ money was found in the woods, on a little bush; - on p. 30 he says simply that it was found in the woods. We cannot make out any play of words here, and nothing in the report as given in these two fragments indicates that the money was hidden, or taken from some place of concealment.

I am returning the passport under separate cover. You will find my comments in the translation enclosed therewith.

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I received your good letter of the 22. inst. and also the Monnette photos, which give me great delight. Many many thanks

for your thoughtfulness! I have the most profound respect for that great old man whose history of the central states (Mississippi Valley) still is an authority and describes so exactly just that part of the events which interests us most. It must have been a joy indeed to walk about his old haunts, and you must tell me more about your experience and impressions there when we meet again.

I have secured a transcript of the supplementary chapter to Monette's book of which you told me, and will bind it up with your photographs. It completes his history beautifully.

If you can't go, you can't, but I wish you could, and it adds ever so much to one's enjoyment if a kindred soul can share traveling experiences. I am looking

back on my Monastery trips in Allison's company with the feeling that most of the deeper things might never have come close to me if they had not been shared by both of us.

This will go to Louisville and await your return, and in the meantime I am, dear Rother, with love from all mine,  
Faithfully yours,

J. Christian Bay.

January 29., 1917.





This continues thus on next page;

And he further said that  
the notes were in a bag  
(Traveling bag). (The end)

So translated for QAR.

The Filson Historical Society

*St Charles Hotel  
New Orleans.*

January 31, 1917.

Judge Jeff Truly,  
Fayette, Miss.

My dear Judge Truly:-

I am still on my pilgrimage looking for material relative to early flat boat days and the Masons. I have gathered some very interesting facts on flat boats, but have added practically nothing to my Mason data.

I hope you found the original record of the proceedings of the Setton and May trail. If you did, I shall be very glad to have you send me a verbatim copy, no matter how long it may be. Mr. Willis R. Easterling will, I am sure, typewrite it. The work he did for me when I was in Fayette was highly satisfactory.

If you found the original record in the Court House, it certainly will be more than a surprise to me, for if ever I looked "high and low", I did so in my efforts to find this record. While this is a misfortune to me, I am nevertheless jubilant, for your account of what you remember reading in this old record will be looked upon by my readers as being as authentic as the original record itself.

Some ten days ago I requested that your name be added to the membership of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association and that the Review be sent to you for one year with my compliments. This, I presume, has been attended to before now. If by mistake they sent you a bill, please forward it to me unpaid.

I leave here in a few days for Texas, and hope to be home about the 20th of February: 132 East Gray St., Louisville, Ky.

Assuring you I greatly appreciate your interests in my efforts, I am,

Sincerely,

WILLIS R. EASTERLING  
ATTORNEY

FAYETTE, MISS.



# THE LOUISVILLE HERALD



February 2, 1917.

"Most High, Most Mighty, Most Equitable, and Most Beneficent History":

Your note was received with that same ostentatious gladness I am inclined to believe the Kaiser would most likely bestow at the present stage of the European war, upon the dove of peace. It transported me to a state of ecstasy I had never before visited in poetical flights of the imagination; a state that no master of ~~expression~~ expression can describe, for so gloriously resplendent was its environment, that the five senses of man would be limited in their capacity to appreciate it at its full value. A state whose freedom was boundless in the application of its laws to movement and speech; as much so in fact as the liberty that is allowed in the spreading of a certain brand of fertilizer over the length and breadth of the scope of the Louisville Literary Club.

Surely I am blest in having a friend whose benign influence is felt to such an extent over so many leagues of geological formation. Indeed I will teach you to drink deep when we meet again.

"When we meet again?" That is the question, for I have suddenly decided to join the caravan that moves to "that mysterious realm" where each shall take his chamber "in the biggest house of Bedlam in Earth". Otherwise you are to understand that I strike the trail



# THE LOUISVILLE HERALD



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that leads to the East. New York!--the biggest house of Bedlam on Earth. A free-for-all fight! with six million human beings in it and a standing invitation to the rest of the world to get in and do your worst.

I feel that Louisville has lost its claim on me, or perhaps I had better reverse it and say that I have lost my claim on Louisville. After nine years of honest effort I am weary of trying for the success that I have painted in the vision of my ambition. I am not going to delay until I have passed the meridian of manhood, when it will be too late; when I shall be compelled to look forward to the day when some envious rival will make the suggestion that I was designed by nature to be a floorwalker in a department store. Alas! poor Madison Cawein.

I am due to leave about February 15. I don't know what I will do in the East, but I shall certainly put forth an effort. I shall certainly try to reconstruct my trembling temple of fortune of more substantial materials in the great game of commercialism. I know that you will wish me success.

Write me real soon and inclose your route of "one night stands" so I can keep in touch with you.

My! Oh, my! How I do wish I could be with you in the Crescent city to gurgle a flagon o' rhenish and look deep, very deep into the

27 Feb 1917



# THE LOUISVILLE HERALD



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the smiling eyes of some olive skinned Spanish creole, full of life and vivacity, and make her spirit move, move, I say, in sympathy with mine. But ah! it is only a wish. That is all I have had to worship for some time, Insubstantial things like

thoughts, hopes, ideals, dreams and so on ad libitum thru an infinite variety of unresponsive creations of sentiment. Its hell! No, its worse than that. General Sherman said that war is hell, but he stopped there when he should have gone further and given us a definition of life. Let me do it for him in the statement that life is a disappointed hope of paradise and if that isn't worse than hell I don't know what is. I'd rather be in hell than go thru life hoping for paradise on a promise that is never fulfilled.

In my next instalment I'll make you laugh till your body's phlegmatic wells run over with a surplus of their briny product.

Yours always and all ways,

Bob.

Sincerest love to Bob Carr.

6 Feb. 1917

2841 Sunset Place.  
Los Angeles, California.

Mr. Otto Rother

Dear Sir,

I am sorry indeed  
to have to confess that your letter  
has remained unopened and  
overlooked for a long while because  
it came when my father was  
critically ill, and looking like  
many others of advertising matter  
was put aside in the accumulation  
of mail to await a convenient  
time.

your picture with best wishes for the  
success of your work, which I hope we may  
perhaps, have the pleasure of seeing, when  
it does come out.

Very sincerely

Virginia Gregg

February 6. 1917.  
For - William Albert Gregg.

The name outside gave no idea  
of the importance, as it was not  
familiar, but nothing is ever destroyed  
without investigation, so just  
recently when my father was able  
to be up again, your letter with  
interesting plans and picture  
came to light. Going through all  
portfolios, and all drawings and  
paintings of Desmurs we happen  
to possess, he can find nothing  
of what you wished. He is sorry,  
for it would have been a pleasure  
to lend aid in this way, (though  
I fear it might have come too  
late, any way) and herein returns



15 FEB 1 1919

My dear Rothert :- Many thanks for your card from New Madrid. I answered your previous letter by your home address and returned the photos and translations with remarks on the points in question.

The international crisis has knocked the bottom out of my European plans thus far, but I am glad it is nothing worse than that. It would be worse if I had gone and got stuck over there, with all the incompetent authorities preventing my return to little old U.S.

So I am plugging away at the Monastery stuff at this end — and Allison is slating lime at his end, and between us we will build a book good enough for the old Pope himself to read.

If you have any influence with the Mississippi Hist. Soc. which you care to use on my behalf, will you do me a favor? Will you

Another article by Allison has been uncovered — this time by Mrs. A. Here is the record of it:

The story of Bishop Flaget. (In the Louisville

Courier-Journal, November 17., 1889.)

ask if they have published any biography of Dr. Monnette which is obtainable, or which they might lend to me? ~~the~~ Likewise, if I can obtain a portrait of Monnette in or form or the other?

You started my interest in the great old man when you sent those photographs. Not but that I loved the man before, but I want to know more about him now, and I am willing to pay my way to it, if the Society will help me. Funny thing that his book still is the one really exhaustive, authoritative — and esteemed book on the history of the Mississippi Valley, but it is. None is better or more comprehensive.

I am chasing another copy of Donz Powers. One turned up in December, and I lost it; I hope to land this one. If not I'll keep on.

With love from us all,

Yours as ever

J. C. A.

February 15., 1917.

Louisville

Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> 1917.

Dear Robert:

Glad to hear from again. I have been under the weather with grippe—just pulling out. You might have known all about New Madrid by reading Train's "Life on the Mississippi" and saved your disappointment. The weather here has been outrageous ever since you left and is little better today, with four inches of new snow on the ground.

Hope you had a good all around trip and that you have a full cargo of facts and inspiration. I wrote to the Kiddicks at Memphis—thanks to your good letter—but Mrs. Pulliam is not of the Mississippi connection and after several letters we could find nothing in common.

Will be glad to see you when you come home and you had better prepare for Sunday dinner and afternoon at my house.

All well and hope you are.

Yours,

YCS