

Gordon-Nash  
Library  
Presents  
the Charles  
Henry Letters

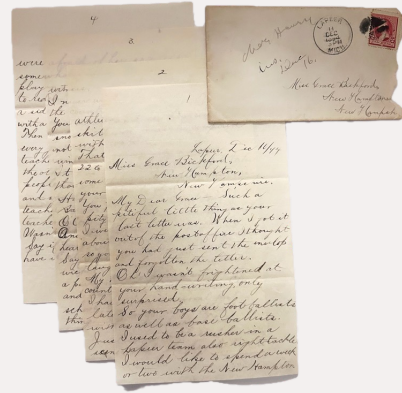
AS PART OF THE  
BICKFORD  
SPECIAL  
COLLECTION



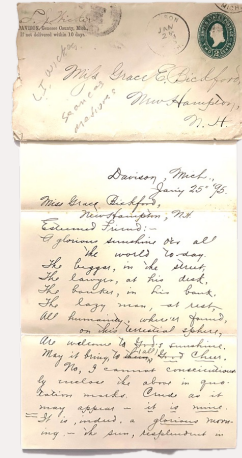
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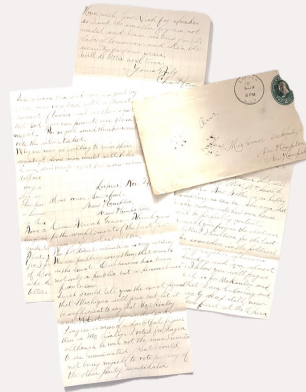
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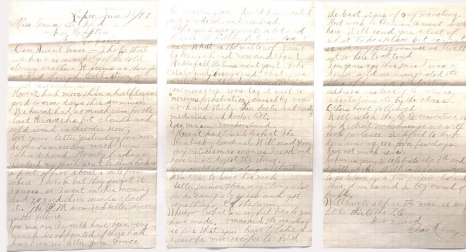
# The Bickford Collection



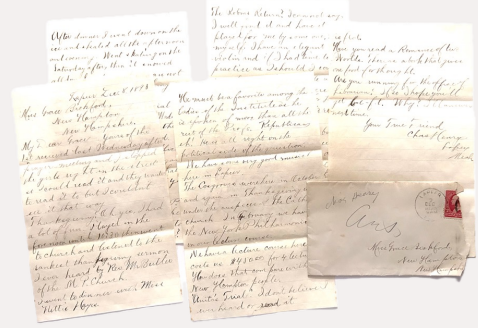
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**Charles Henry Letters to Grace (Grayce)  
Bickford**

**Between February 1894-May 1900**

**Collection contains 44 Letters and one  
Wedding Invitation**

**A note.**

The Bickford Collection includes 44 handwritten letters from Charles (Chas.) Henry whom Grayce Bickford went to school with while her family lived in Michigan. While the letters are one-sided, their closeness is revealed through Charles' sometimes comical letters where, at times, he seems to be courting her and trying to persuade her to return to Michigan. We have taken the liberty of showcasing ten of these letters from Lapeer as listed and numbered. All 44 of the letters have been scanned and transcribed as of March 2026. Please email any inquiries to [library@newhampton.org](mailto:library@newhampton.org).

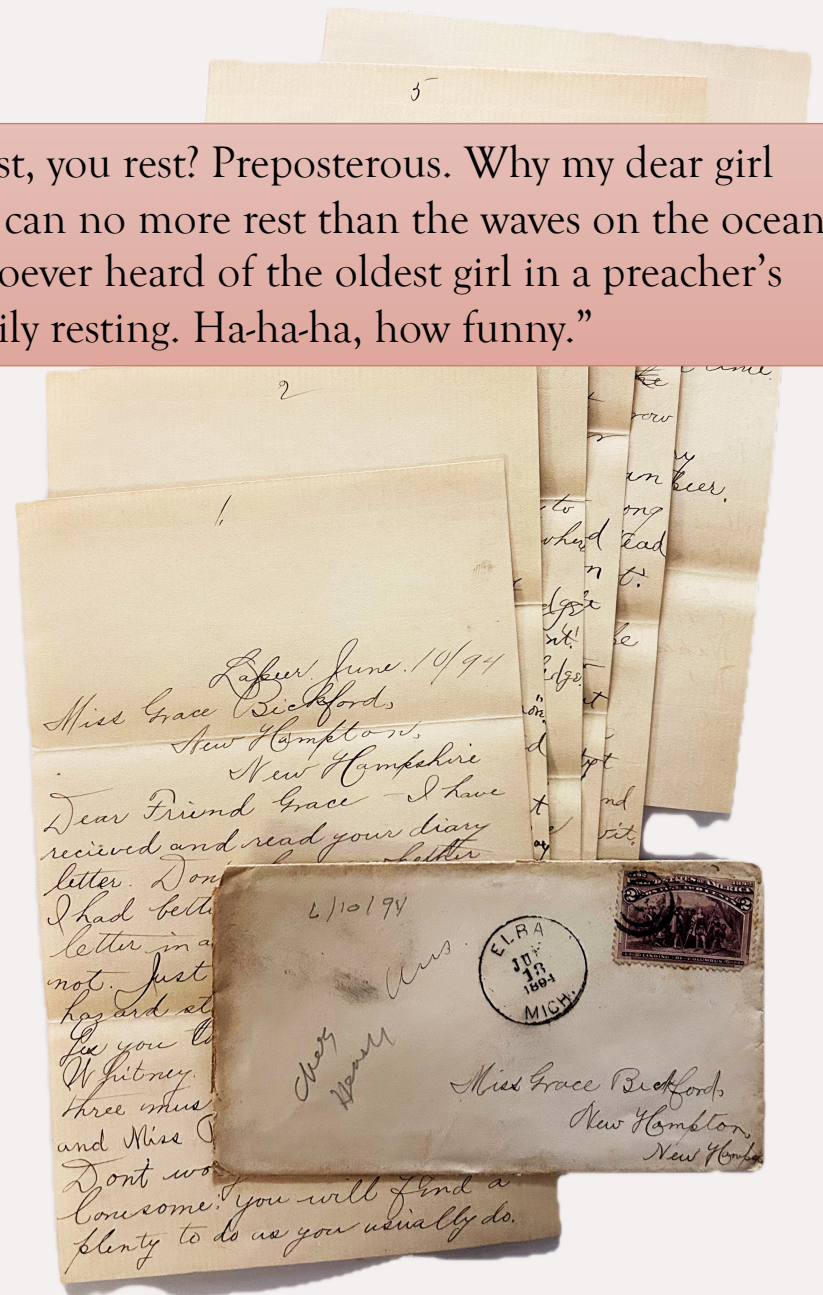
1. June 10, 1894 - Letter to Grace replying to hers. A comical tale of house chores, loneliness and the demand for no typewritten letters.
2. July 20, 1894 - Letter to Grace detailing daily routines and mutual friends, including the town being "treated to a sensation" that consists of a woman who broke windows of a local saloon (where her spouse spent time.)
3. December 11, 1894 - Letter to Grace with comments about the Institution's Foot Ball and Base Ball teams in which Henry replies with banter about wanted to play against them.
4. January 25, 1895 - Although this letter is not from Charles Henry it is from Michigan signed by a L. J. Wicker opening with a poem and is written in what seems like a lost art form.
5. May 24, 1895 - This letter is full of compassion for Grace including preparation of oration at New Hampton as well as church affairs and receipt of an art collection at the U. Michigan.
6. July 12, 1896 - Charles Henry mentions a beloved teacher, Prof. Brown at New Hampton.
7. October 18, 1896 - This letter is all about politics in Michigan.
8. November 2, 1896 - Another political letter references the 25<sup>th</sup> President William McKinley.
9. June 20, 1897 - This letter to Grace replies to her rigorous schedule including filling in for Ina Bickford at the Gordon-Nash Library.
10. December 8, 1898 - This letter contains several book reviews and one song.

# 1. June 10, 1894

A vision of 1890s Michigan was a transformative decade marked by the peak of the lumbering era, the rapid rise of industrialization, the maturation of mining in the Upper Peninsula, and the early, Gilded Age development of tourism. It was a time of "shock and change," where Michigan was shifting from a pioneer landscape into a modernized industrial state.

This is a fun letter relaying details of "Decoration Day" with spring races that resulted in "Best time made 2:21. Pretty fast for a small town. In Grace's letter she must have asked if Charles would mind a typed letter in which he replied, "No I don't wish you would write entirely on the typewriter. It wouldn't be Grace's brains but Remington or someone else's hands."

"Rest, you rest? Preposterous. Why my dear girl you can no more rest than the waves on the ocean. Whoever heard of the oldest girl in a preacher's family resting. Ha-ha-ha, how funny."





## 2. July 20, 1894

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and other organizations pushed for a ban on alcohol to solve social problems, including poverty, domestic violence, and saloon-based political corruption. In this letter a "Mrs. Chas Albertus went along the street and broke all the windows in Dumanois saloon except the plate glass window."

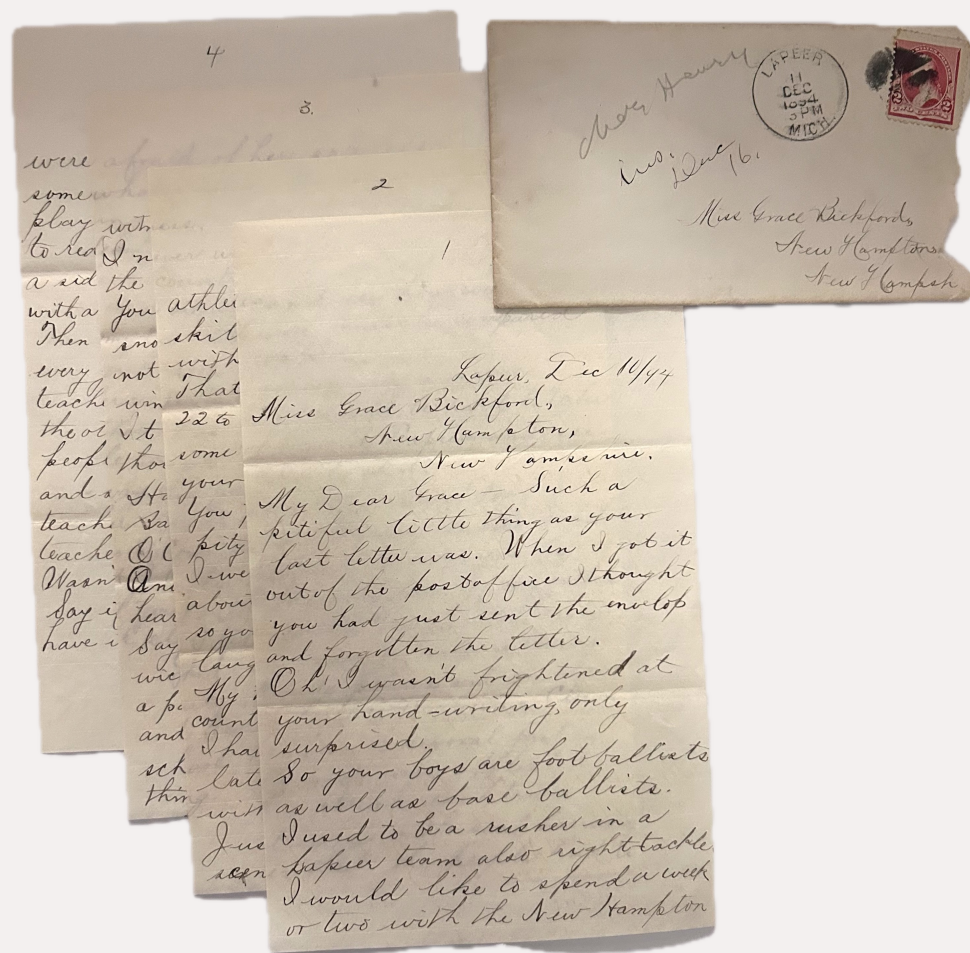
A few days since the town was treated to a sensation. Mrs. Chas Albertus went along the street and broke all the windows in Dumanois saloon except the plate glass window.

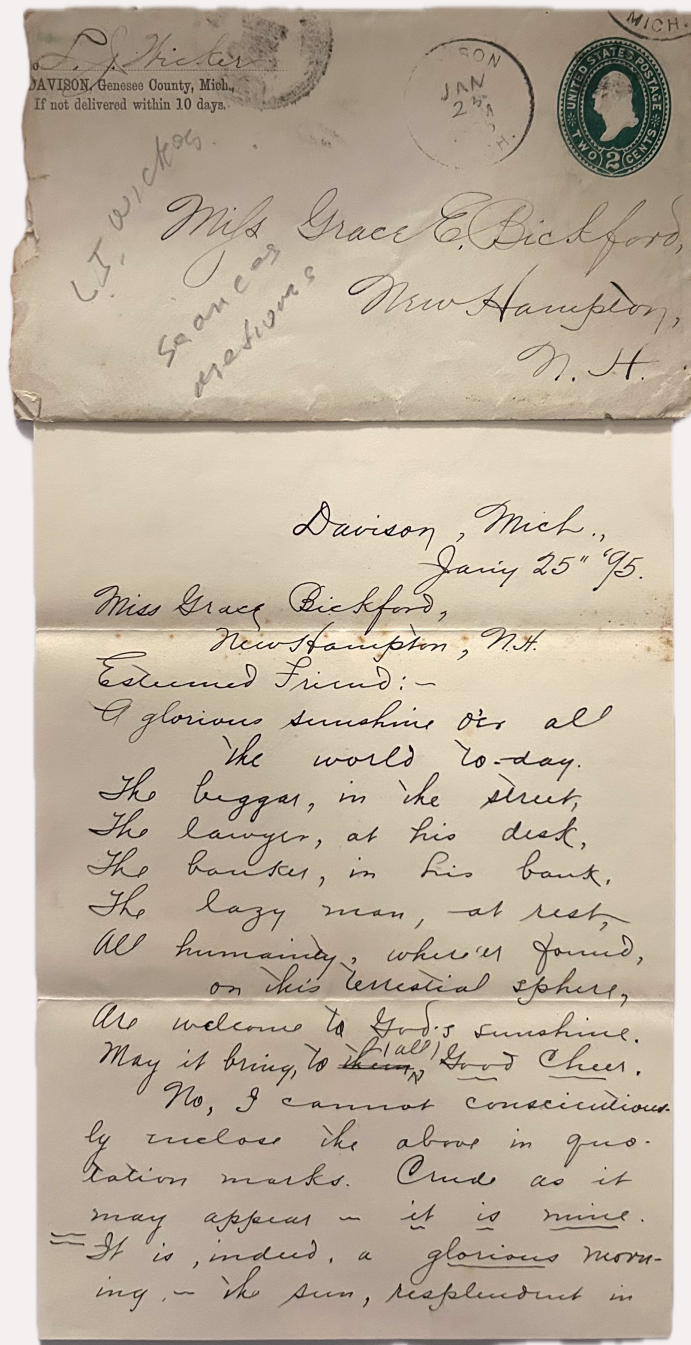
The letter goes on to say, after a threat of her arrest, that "The justice gave her a written notice to serve on the saloon-keepers prohibiting them from selling to Mr. Albertus any whiskey."

### 3. December 11, 1894

There were several ways New Hampton School “exercised their youth.” In our school magazine called the *Hamptonia* the earliest talk was in 1891, “Foot ball is largely supplanting other sports during the colder weather. The College and Institution boys have each secured a new ball and are practicing with the intention of having a matched game.” And, “Foot ball is receiving a great deal of attention this term, and clothing and skin suffer accordingly. It is a great game, however, and it would be a good plan to organize a regular team. There is plenty of good material to select from. We have long held the supremacy in base ball and there is no reason why we cannot in foot ball as well.”

In Charles Henry’s 1894 letter he uses the term “footballists” and “base ballists” to describe the play. Noting that he played as a rusher in Lapeer.





## 4. January 25, 1895

Although this letter is not written by Charles Henry, I thought I'd include it. It is signed by L. J. Wicker who was a friend from Michigan. It is written so elegantly and reads like a lost art form.

“It is indeed, a glorious morning, the sun, resplendence in its dazzling, glory the earth adorned with the snow white mantle of purity – the air, pure and wholesome, filled with infinitesimal particles of corrugated vapor, which sparkle and glisten in the full brilliancy of the morning sunshine—A day to appreciate the wondrous beauties of nature with all the intelligence with which we are endowed and yet, again, to marvel, in ignorance, of the purpose of Creation and the great unknown. Human intelligence is limited. No man knows the limits of space. To us, it is illimitable the beginning of Creation is beyond our comprehension so, also, is the end.”

He also talks of clairvoyance – “Best I have seen” and the IOOF (Independent Order of the Oddfellows) in Davison which is still organized in Davison today.

# 5. May 24, 1895

Oration was the pinnacle of school life early on in every institution across the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Students prepared their senior papers for oration to read in front of their peers, much like public speaking classes today.

In Henry's May letter, he speaks of his own salutatorian address in which his Sunday school teacher sat on pins and needles and was overjoyed at how well he had done.

Church was also center to life. Charles speaks of, "Next Thursday is Decoration Day here, also the M.E. Church people lay the corner stone of a very fine church." He is also very proud of the fact that the University of Michigan receipt of "The Lewis Collection" art worth \$300,000.

NEW HAMPTON INSTITUTION.

REPORT OF

*Annie O. Dickford,*

For the Term Ending *Nov. 21, 1902*

STUDIES.	RANK.
<i>Grammar</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>Spelling</i>	<i>93</i>
<i>Arithmetic</i>	<i>88</i>
Absences from Church,	{ EXCUSED, <i>1</i> NOT EXCUSED, _____
Absences from Prayers,	{ EXCUSED, <i>5</i> NOT EXCUSED, _____
Absences from Recitations,	{ EXCUSED, <i>11</i> NOT EXCUSED, _____
Department, <i>100</i>	

*Jessie Waterman*, Principal.

The rank ranges from 0 to 100—100 being perfect.



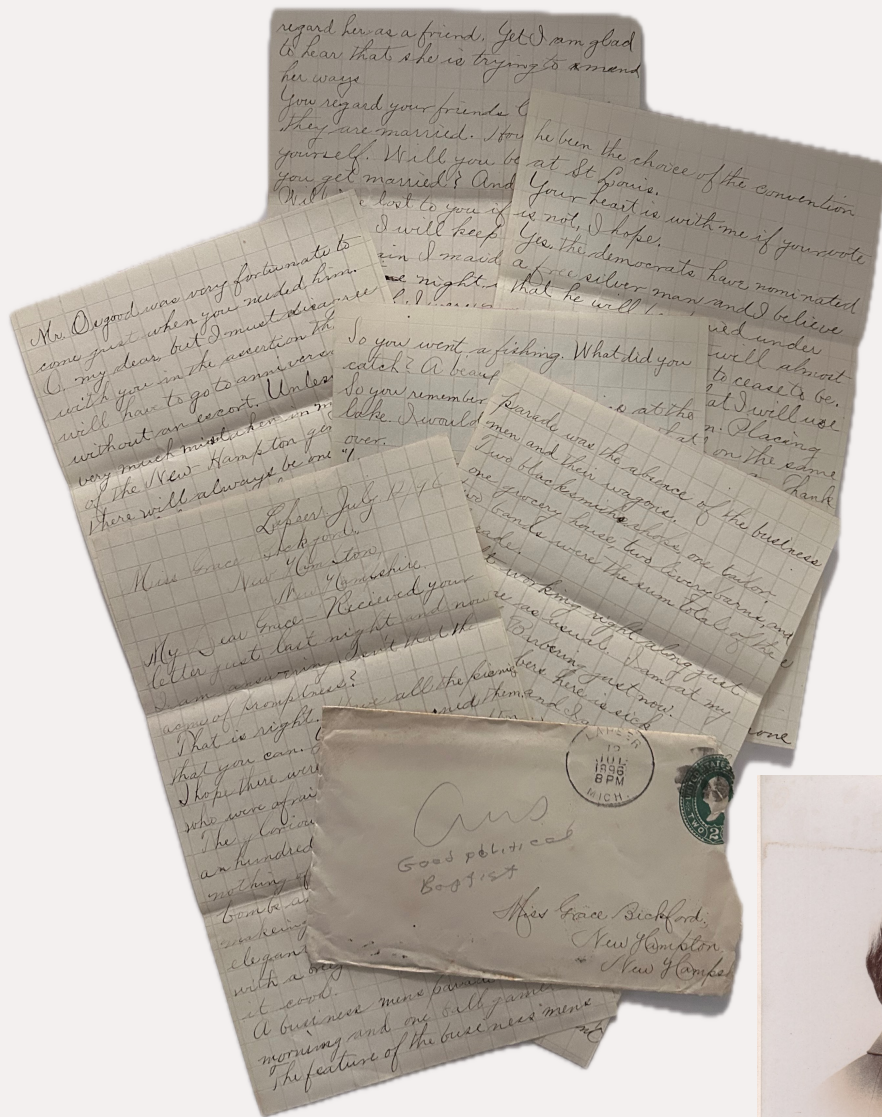
## 6. July 12, 1896

In this letter to Grace, Charles indicates that he is back to barbering as, "One of the barbers here is sick with the typhoid fever and I am running his shop during his sickness. The work comes back to me just as easy as can be."

This era of America was a heightened time for typhoid, as clean water was not rooted out as the cause yet. It wasn't until the turn of the century, when a major push to filter and chlorinate water was used to eliminate typhoid.

Charles also replies to Grace's comment about Professor Brown being gone. It is July and the school year is over. This prominent teacher at New Hampton School has been drawn up several times in the school's news, *The Hamptonia*, as being beloved by all.

- Early photo of Professor Henry W. Brown (taught 1887-1897 Vice Principal 1898-1912). The good professor was instrumental in the early days of the Gordon-Nash Library, selecting the art and books in the library.

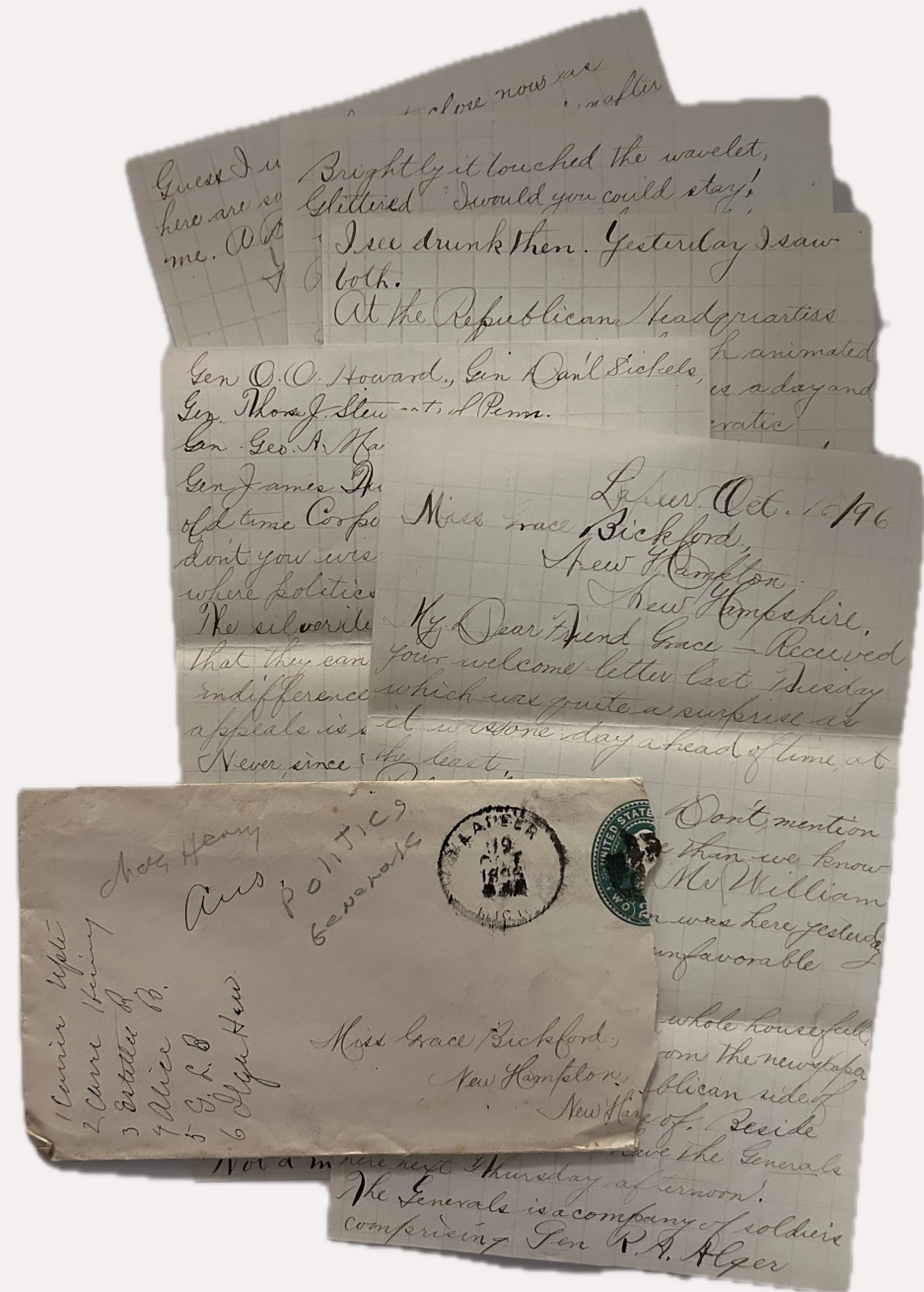


# 7. October 18, 1896

This letter to Grace is chock full of political names starting right at the beginning, "Political meetings. Don't mention them. We have more than we know what to do with. Mr. William Jennings Bryan was here yesterday and created a very unfavorable impression... Beside those mentioned we have the Generals here next Thursday afternoon! The Generals is a company of soldiers comprising Gen. R. A. Alger, Gen O. O. Howard, Gen Dan'l Sickels, Gen. Thos. J. Stewart of Penn., Gen Geo. A. Marden of Mass., Gen James Turner and the famous old time Corporal Tanner. Now don't you wish you were in Michigan where politics and pleasure are rife?... Yesterday, when Bryan was here there were not over 500 or 600 people in the crowd and I saw 2 McKinley buttons where I saw one Bryan. The crowd scarcely cheered him. A week ago Friday last, Julius Caesar Burrows, Michigan's senator was here, the town was full of people and the Opera Hall and Court House were both crowded to their utmost."

William Jennings Bryan (March 19, 1860 - July 26, 1925) was an American lawyer, orator, and politician. He was a dominant force in the Democratic Party, running three times as the party's nominee for President of the United States in the 1896, 1900, and 1908 elections. He served in the House of Representatives from 1891 to 1895 and as the Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson from 1913 to 1915. Because of his faith in the wisdom of the common people, Bryan was often called "the Great Commoner",<sup>[1]</sup> and because of his rhetorical power and early fame as the youngest presidential candidate, "the Boy Orator".<sup>[2]</sup>

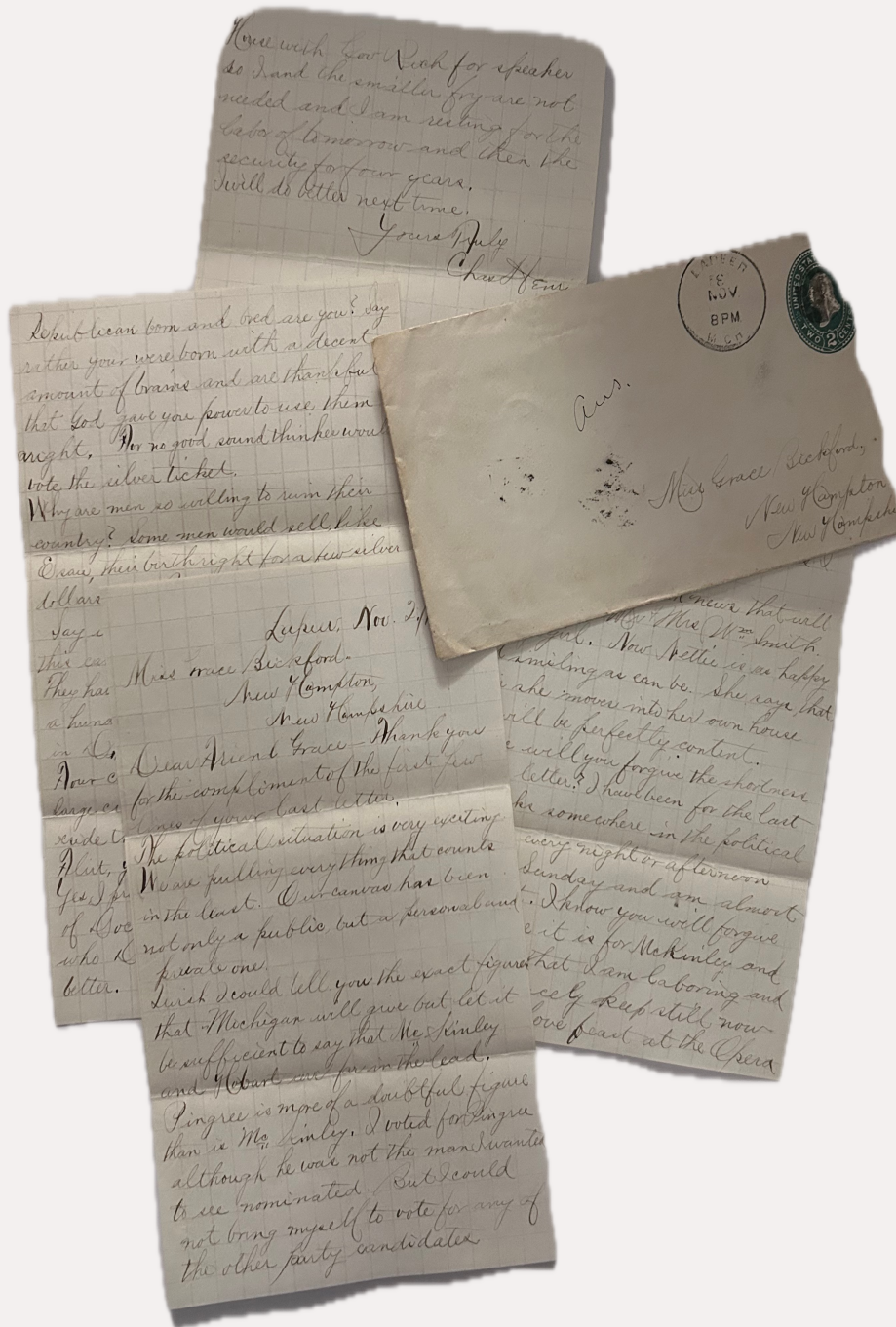
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Jennings\\_Bryan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Jennings_Bryan)



## 8. November 2, 1896

Another political letter from Charles Henry. "The political situation is very exciting. We are pulling everything that counts in the court. Our canvas has been not only a public but a personal and private one. I wish I could tell you the exact figures that Michigan will give but let it be sufficient to say that McKinley and Hobart are far in the lead. Pingree is more of a doubtful figure than is McKinley. I voted for Pingree although he was not the man I wanted to see nominated. But I could not bring myself to vote for any of the other party candidates."

William McKinley would become the 25<sup>th</sup> President the next year but sadly was assassinated in 1901.

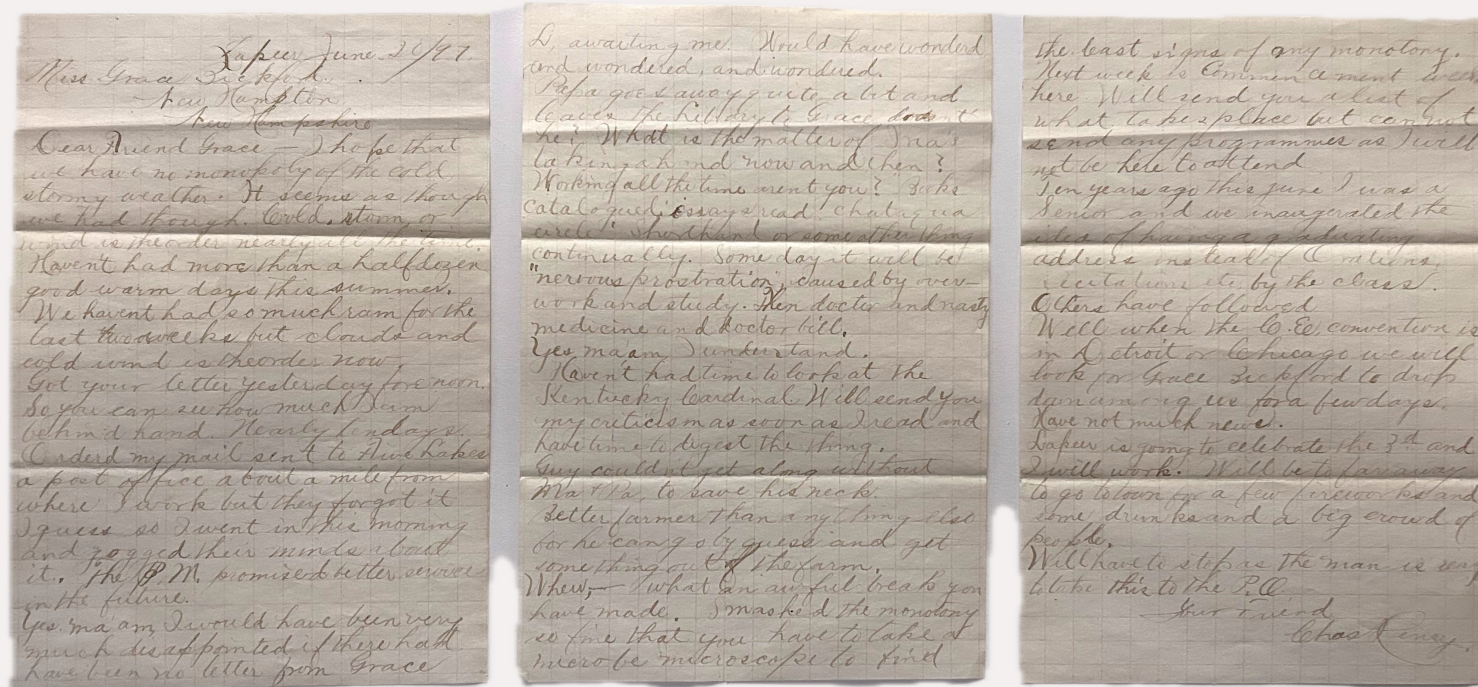


private one.  
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## 9. June 20, 1897

Grace's sister Ina would help her father run the Gordon-Nash Library and take over for him when he retired. It seems that Grace helped out when Ina was away according to this line of the letter from Charles, "Papa goes away quite a bit and leaves the Library to Grace didn't he? What is the matter of Ina's taking a hand now and then? Working all the time aren't you? Books catalogued; essays read, Chataqua Circle. Shorthand or some other thing continually. Some day it will be nervous prostration, caused by over work and study. Then doctor and nasty medicine and doctor bill. Yes ma'am, I understand. Haven't had time to look at the Kentucky Cardinal. Will send you my criticism as soon as I read and have time to digest the thing."

A *Kentucky Cardinal* by James Lane Allen (1894) is a lyrical, turn-of-the-century novel about Adam Moss, a reclusive naturalist living in post-Civil War Kentucky who breaks his self-imposed isolation when he falls in love with his neighbor, Georgiana Cobb. The story explores the tension between human connection and a love for nature, symbolized by a red cardinal.



# 10. December 8, 1898

This letter is full of book reviews and one mention of a song to play. "Anita's Trial." I don't believe I ever heard or read it. The Robins Return? I cannot say, I will find it and have it played for me by some one, maybe myself. I have an elegant toned violin and if I had time to practice as I should I could soon learn to play quite well. If your fathers lumber were here I could soon sell it for him as I want some myself to rebuild a house... Did you ever read Uarda, a Romance of Ancient Egypt. Oh! By the way I have read that book by Beatrice Harraden, The Ships that Pass in the Night and do not like it for a book! There are some good thoughts but as a whole it is flat. Have you read a Romance of two Worlds. There is a book that gives one food for thought."

Tiffany, Esther B. *Anita's Trial or Our Girls in Camp. A Comedy in Three Acts for Female Characters only.* Walter H. Baker & Co. Publishing, Boston, 1889. "The story follows the adventures of a group of young women who find themselves embroiled in a trial after one of their own is accused of stealing a valuable necklace. As the trial unfolds, the girls must use their wit and intelligence to uncover the true culprit and clear their friend's name. Along the way, they encounter a cast of quirky and memorable characters, including a strict camp director, a bumbling detective, and a mysterious stranger. Full of humor, drama, and suspense, *Anita's Trial* or *Our Girls in Camp* is a delightful and entertaining play that is sure to delight audiences of all ages. This scarce antiquarian book is a facsimile reprint of the old original and may contain some imperfections such as library marks and notations. Because we believe this work is culturally important, we have made it available as part of our commitment for protecting, preserving, and promoting the world's literature in affordable, high quality, modern editions, that are true to their original work."

The Robins Return is a whistling solo, with piano, harp, and orchestra, you can hear it at the library of congress site [loc.gov/item/jukebox-16602](http://loc.gov/item/jukebox-16602) "Uarda: a Romance of Ancient Egypt – Complete" by Georg Ebers is a historical novel likely written in the late 19th century. Set against the backdrop of ancient Egypt during the time of the Pharaohs, the narrative intertwines romance and societal exploration, centering around characters like the princess Bent-Anat and her encounters with common people, including a girl from a lower social class who suffers an accident. The opening of the novel introduces the contrasting settings of Thebes, detailing the vibrant life on the eastern bank of the Nile and the somber atmosphere of the necropolis on the western side, where the dead are honored. As the narrative unfolds, we meet significant figures, including Bent-Anat and her retinue, who seek to address the injury caused to a girl from a lower social order. The interactions reveal themes of class distinction, human compassion, and the intertwining of the living and the dead in ancient Egyptian culture. Through these early chapters, the author sets the stage for a rich tapestry of relationships and conflicts that likely explore broader societal issues within this ancient civilization." Project Gutenberg <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5449> Harraden, Beatrice. *Ships that Pass in the Night.* London, England, January 1, 1895. "Arguably one of the best-known Suffragette writers, Beatrice Harraden was a popular novelist who was heavily involved in the Suffragette tax resistance campaign. Her best-selling sentimental romance, *Ships that Pass in the Night* tells of a doomed love-affair between two patients in a tuberculosis sanitarium. This story caught the public's imagination, and the title became a byword for a fleeting or doomed love affair. The title was inspired by lines in Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, Third Evening, Theologian's Second Tale (Elizabeth), Fourth Part." Goodreads.

