

McLean County Museum of History

Harry Kingsley—Lorraine McElroy Collection

Processed by
Kathryn Kerr
January-February 2024

Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1891-1898
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	None

Brief History

Lorraine McElroy was born in September 1869 in Pennsylvania, the daughter of James and Emily McElroy. James was from New Jersey, Emily from Pennsylvania. He became an engineer on the Chicago and Alton Railroad. In 1893 the family was listed in the city directory as residing at 616 W. Locust St. in Bloomington. Lorraine married Harry Kingsley, born 1869, August 14, 1894, at her parents' home. At the time of this correspondence, Lorraine lived with her parents, while Kingsley traveled with a theater company.

Scope

The collection is mostly correspondence from Harry Kingsley to Lorraine McElroy. The letters and other items were discovered in the attic floorboards of 616 W. Locust St., Bloomington. They were donated in January 2024 by Orman Jones of the same address. Included are photographs and a letter from Loraine's father, as well as supporting research completed during the processing of this collection. Note that in the early correspondence, Kingsley refers to McElroy as his wife and himself as her husband, though the announcement of their marriage occurs later.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Correspondence of Harry Kingsley to Loraine McElroy, November 1893.

- 1.1 To "My Darling Little Wife": the engagement closed this evening to a good house. They made money. At 3:30 AM, he will catch a train to the next town, Harrisonville. He is worried that she is sick, but glad baby is better. The two-page letter on Commercial Hotel letterhead, is from Warrensburg, MO, 5 November 1893, with an envelope dated 4 November.
- 1.2 He is pleased to have received her letter, but he has been too tired and busy to write. He is well, business is good, the weather beautiful. Two pages, front and back with envelope on Hotel Heckler letterhead, Clinton, MO, 18 [November ?] 1893.
- 1.3 Harry is writing as he waits for a train to take the company to the next venue. Her health is a concern. Three pages, front and back on Hotel Mitchel letterhead, Nevada, MO, 19 November 1893.
- 1.4 A continuation of the earlier letter, he says, pouring out great longing for Loraine on Talmage House letterhead, three pages front and back with envelope dated 20 November 1893.
- 1.5 Harry reports a stormy night and heavy rain. He begs Loraine to have a talk with her parents and report all to him. Two pages, front and back Talmage House, Rich Hill, MO, 20 November 1893.
- 1.6 Harry thanks Loraine for a dear long letter. Business is good—the house sold out and lost \$15, but they are satisfied. The weather is splendid in Rich Hill, they go to Butler next week. Talmage House letterhead with envelope, 21 November 1893.
- 1.7 Harry is sorry Loraine had a fainting spell and that he is not there to care for her. He expresses worry about losing her and the baby. The letter was interrupted by a cry of

“fire!” Rich Hill lost a block of businesses. Harry resumed his letter at 3:15am stating Butler, MO is next. Rich Hill, MO, Talmadge House letterhead, three pages front and back with envelope, 23 November 1893.

- 1.8 Harry to Loraine professing love and honesty, reference to a photograph not received, Talmadge House letterhead, Rich Hill, MO, three pages front and back with two envelopes, 24 November 1893.
- 1.9 Harry to “Darling Little Woman”: He received no letter, but he is excited about getting a telegram from her. The letter is filled with affection and anticipates seeing her in a month, Talmadge House letterhead, Rich Hill, two pages front and back with envelope, 25 November 1893.

Folder 2: Correspondence of Harry Kingsley to Loraine McElroy, December 1893.

- 2.1 Harry wrote a quick letter of affection from Webb City at 4am on 17 December 1893, envelope included.
- 2.2 Harry is just back from Joplin where he heard the Mexican Ladies Orchestra where he thought of her and wished she was with him. He is glad she is well. His little affair meant nothing, he had forgotten about it. He is entirely devoted to her. He finished his letter the next morning and asked her to address him in the future as Janus (?) Hudson; he will explain later, Buffalo House letterhead with envelope, Webb City, MO, 18 December 1893. There are many pages, front and back, some only fragmentary.
- 2.3 Harry didn’t get a letter. Perhaps she sent it to Webb City, Kansas. He wants to know if she goes to Chicago. He relates a disagreement in the company, but says they had a large audience the previous night. He wants her to write. The letter, three torn pages front and back and envelope are from Buffalo House, Webb City, MO, 19 December 1893.
- 2.4 Harry writes that he has received her Christmas gift and that he has sent her a case and some candy for “our dear little Emilie”. He says the McA must now know how matters stand between them because he (McA) knows his folks and they could tell him I was not married. “We will be married at the first opportunity next summer. . . . We will be together next season.” Written on Sutherland Bros. & Co., Hatters and Furnishers letterhead, two pages, incomplete with envelope, Webb City, MO, 23 December 1893.
- 2.5 Harry writes his thanks and affection on the letterhead of his company, Sadie Raymond, 3 fragmentary pages with envelope, front and back, saying next season he won’t be alone. Next venue is Columbus, KS. 27 December 1893.

Folder 3: Correspondence of Harry Kingsley to Loraine McElroy, 1894.

- 3.1 Harry writes that they are preparing six new plays for the next week because there has been a schedule change. He is in Chillicothe, MO, at the Leeper House, next week he will be in Moberly, MO, 3 pages front and back with envelope, 11 April 1894.
- 3.2 Harry reports that business is poor and he would like to be out of Missouri. He drove to Fenton and back and is tired. He is looking forward to a trip to Bloomington. “Kiss our baby for me.” Leeper House letterhead, 3 pages front and back with envelope fragment, Chillicothe, MO, 13 April 1894.
- 3.3 Harry pencils a short letter (poor condition) front and back with envelope, as he awaits a train in Fenton, MO, 16 April 1894.
- 3.4 Harry writes that he is worried not to have heard from her, fragmented letter or letters in poor condition with Arlington Hotel envelope, Fenton, MO, 18 April 1894.

- 3.5 Harry writes of a letter from his parents urging him to marry her, *Tribune* letterhead in Arlington Hotel two pages front and back with envelope, Trenton, MO, 21 April 1894.
- 3.6 Harry will take the midnight train to Moberly, MO. He writes of loneliness and longing and how poor business is. He reports that cities they will play in September and asks if she will be with him. Leeper House letterhead, 4 pages front and back with envelope, Chillicothe, MO, 22 April 1894.
- 3.7 The weather is delightful and they opened to a good house in Moberly, MO and might be there next week, as well, Arlington Hotel letterhead, 3 pages front and back with envelope, 24 April 1894.
- 3.8 The play opened as the worst storm he ever saw hit the town, so there was little profit. Next week he will be with her in Bloomington. New Grand Opera House letterhead, 2 pages front and back with envelope from T.M.Bolton's Diamond and Jewelry Palace, Fulton, MO, 10 May 1894.

Folder 4: Miscellaneous

- 4.1 Gift agreement, Orman Jones to Museum, January 5, 2024, incl. initial inventory of letters and miscellany.
- 4.2 Letter to "My daughter" with an enclosed photograph from William Schwartz, Philadelphia, 14 September [18]91.
- 4.3 Three photographs, at least one is William Schwartz, one might be him as a younger man, the third is a woman's photograph from Allentown, PA, no dates.
- 4.4 Notification of the marriage of Loraine to Harry S. Kingsley, *Weekly Pantagraph*, 17 August 1894.
- 4.5 Mrs. Harry S. Kingsley (nee McElroy (sic)) . . . now playing at Pekin . . . *The Pantagraph*, 10 May 1898.
- 4.6 Census of US, June 1900, showing Harry and Loraine living with her parents.
- 4.7 Loraine Kingsley, detail from 1900 US Federal Census.
- 4.8 Lorraine McElroy, Miss, res 616 W. Locust, *Bloomington City Directory*, 1893.
- 4.9 Kingsley, Harry S., actor, res 616 W. Locust, *Bloomington City Directory*, 1899.