



Armstrong Family Letter Collection (KSCOLL 14)

The KCK Letter Collection comprises correspondence of the Ben and Rebecca Armstrong family of Argentine, Kansas during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Benjamin and Rebecca Armstrong Family

Title: Armstrong Family Letter Collection

Dates: Approximately 1870-1940

Size: Two boxes, 110 folders, one linear foot

Location: Kansas Room, 2nd floor workroom, closed stacks

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

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Location of originals: Kansas City, Kansas Public Library, Kansas Room closed stacks

Citation note: (Identification of the image), Kansas Room Special Collections, Kansas City, Kansas Public Libraries

Collection Description

This collection includes correspondence of the Benjamin Armstrong family of Argentine, Kansas, and a few miscellaneous family documents.

Historical Note:

Benjamin Jeremiah Armstrong, son of Archibald and Mary Elizabeth (Brown) Armstrong, was born in Indiana February 4, 1847. He married Rebecca Tislow of Duff, Indiana. They had five sons and three daughters. Four children died in infancy.

In 1876 he started West with his wife, daughter, and brother George. George met and married Miss Missouri Organ in St. Louis. The brothers joined a building crew, working up the Missouri and Kansas Rivers to Rossville. In 1879, the two families came east to the Argentine-Rosedale hills. George soon left for the lead mines in Southern Missouri. Benjamin worked at the Argentine

smelter. After it closed, he started building houses in the West end of Argentine. In 1912, he moved to a farm near Edgerton, Kansas, but soon returned to Argentine to build houses.

Rebecca Armstrong taught Sunday School in the Dunkard church on Powell until her death in 1905.

In 1907 he married Mrs. Frances (Ashren) Armstrong and raised her son, William Norris Armstrong.

As a member of the G. A. R., he took part in Memorial Day services at Maple Hill Cemetery. He is buried in the Soldiers' Circle there, the last surviving member of the G. A. R. in Argentine. In 1935 he was invited to join the Argentine VFW Post as an honorary member. He died later that same year at the age of 88. He was a familiar figure on Strong Avenue, walking to the Post Office every day. His white, flowing beard endeared him to the children, who called him Santa Claus.

--From *Centennial History of Argentine, Kansas City, Kansas, 1880-1980*, submitted by Violet S. Beton, granddaughter

Arrangement Note

Items in this collection were in no discernable order when received. They have been arranged in two sections, by author and date of correspondence and by recipient and date of correspondence. Documents were placed at the end of the collection.

Scope and content note

The collection is organized into 10 series with letters and documents dated from approximately 1870 to 1940. The letters describe the lives of everyday families and farmers in Kansas. Family correspondence includes letters from Benjamin and Rebecca Armstrong and their children, siblings, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and friends.

Collection Inventory

BOX 1

Folder 1

Collection finding aid
History of Armstrong Family

Folder 2

Collection donation note, February 2, 1991

Series 1, Benjamin Jeremiah Armstrong Letters

Folder 3 – Letter from Benjamin Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to unidentified recipient, March 11, 1895

Folder 4 - Letter from Benjamin Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to his daughter Mary Ritchey, Paola, Kansas, April 19, 1910

Series 2, Mary B. Armstrong Letters

Folder 5 – Letters to Bennie and George, presumed to be written by Mary B. Armstrong, Georgetown, Indiana, to her sons Benjamin and George Armstrong, 1885

Folder 6 – Unsigned letter, presumed to be written by Mary B. Armstrong, Crandall, Indiana, to her brother and sister, May 6, 1885

Series 3, Rebecca Armstrong Letters

Folder 7 – Letter from “Mother”, presumably Rebecca Armstrong, Rosedale, Kansas, to her daughter Mary Armstrong, August 23, 1891

Folder 8 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Rosedale, Kansas to Mary Armstrong, February 12, 1892

Folder 9 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Rosedale, Kansas to her daughter Mary Armstrong, October 25, 1892

Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Rosedale, Kansas, to her daughter Mary Armstrong, February 12, 1892

Folder 10 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Rosedale, Kansas to her daughter Mary Armstrong, Kansas City, Missouri, January 3, 1893

Folder 11 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Georgetown, Indiana to Mary Armstrong, Kansas City, Missouri, September 9, 1893

Folder 12 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her daughter Mary Ritchey, Lenexa, Kansas, October 19, 1898

Folder 13 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her children, October 19, 1898

Folder 14 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her son Ben Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, June 3, 1904

Folder 15 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her son John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, June 4, 1904

Folder 16 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her son John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, June 11, 1904

Folder 17 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her son John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, June 15, 1904

Folder 18 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her son John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, June 18, 1904

Folder 19 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her son Ben Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, June 24, 1904

Folder 20 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her son John Armstrong, June 24, 1904

Folder 21 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Lenexa, Kansas to her son John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 2, 1904

Folder 22 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her son (presumably Ben Armstrong), July 10, 1904

Folder 23 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine Kansas, to her son John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 18, 1904

Folder 24 – Letter from Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to her family in New Orleans, Louisiana, July 27, 1904

Folder 25 – Empty envelopes addressed to Rebecca Armstrong

Series 4 – Mary Armstrong Ritchey (Phillips) Letters

Folder 26 – Letter from Mary Armstrong, Mira Creek, Nebraska to Mr. W. E. Clark, Kansas City, Missouri, December 3, 1900

Folder 27 – Postcard from “Mama” (Mary Ritchey) to her daughter Violet Ritchey, Argentine, Kansas, August 7, 1905

Folder 28 – Letter from Mary Ritchey, Lenexa, Kansas to Ben Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, June 4, 1904

Folder 29 – Letter from Mary Ritchey, Lenexa, Kansas to her brothers John and Ben Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 26, 1904

Folder 30 – Postcard from Mary (presumably Ritchey), Kansas City, Kansas to Mr. and Mrs. Willie Meyers, New Albany, Indiana, September 14, 1935

Series 5 – Martha (Armstrong) Kalenbaugh Letters

Folder 31 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Paola, Kansas to her aunt Mary McCammon, New Albany, Indiana, February 7, 1907

Folder 32 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Argentine, Kansas to her sister, August 11, 1913

Folder 33 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Ottawa, Kansas to her sister, December 23, 1914

Folder 34 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas to her sister Mary Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas, March 30, 1915

Folder 35 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Argentine, Kansas to her sister, June 17, 1915

Folder 36 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh to her family, July 31, 1915

Folder 37 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas to her sister, December 5, 1915

Folder 38 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas to her sister Mary Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas, March 8, 1916

Folder 39 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas to her sister, March 27, 1916

Folder 40 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas to her sister, March 30, 1916

Folder 41 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas to her sister Mary Ritchey, April 4, 1916

Folder 42 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas to her sister, April 10, 1916

Folder 43 – Letter from Martha Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas to her sister Mary Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas, April 17, 1916

Folder 44 - Letters to Martha Kalenbaugh from her children, no date

Series 6 – John Armstrong Letters

Folder 45 - Letter from John Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas to his mother (Rebecca Armstrong) February 10, 1890

Folder 46 – Letter from John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana to his mother, Rebeca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas, May 30, 1904

Folder 47 – Letter from John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana to his mother Rebekah Armstrong June 5, 1904

Folder 48 – Letter from John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana to Rebekah Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas, July 10, 1904

Folder 49 – Letter from John Armstrong, New Orleans, Louisiana to Rebekah Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas, July 13, 1904

Folder 50 – Postcard from John Armstrong to his mother, Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas October 1905

Folder 51 – Letter from John Armstrong, Shanghai, China to Mary Ritchey, Lenexa, Kansas, February 2, 1907

Folder 52 – Letter from John Armstrong, Norfolk, Virginia to Mary Writchey, Kansas City, Kansas, August 23, 1920

Folder 53 – Postcard to Mary Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas from her brother (presumably John Armstrong) October 26, 1915

Folder 54 – Empty envelopes addressed to John Armstrong

Series 7 – Ben Armstrong Letters

Folder 55 – Letter from Ben (Armstrong) to his mother (Rebecca Armstrong) May 29, 1904

Folder 56 – Telegram from Ben Armstrong to Mrs. James Ritchey, no date

Series 8 – Jesse Kalenbaugh Letters

Folder 57 – Letter from Jesse Kalenbaugh, Kansas City, Kansas, to his sister, July 18, 1915

Box 2

Series 9 – Letters to Rebecca Armstrong

Folder 58 – Letter from Hattie Riley, Duff, Indiana to her sister Rebecca Armstrong, Argentine, Kansas, July 17, 1934

Folder 59 – Christmas card from Lola Landry to Mrs. B. A. Armstrong, Kansas City, Kansas, December 1934

Series 10 – Letters to Mary Armstrong (Mary Ritchey, Mary Phillips)

Folder 60 – Empty envelope addressed to Mary Armstrong, Suffolk, Co. New York, August 4, 1891

Folder 61 – Postcard from Jim, Lenexa, Kansas to Mary Armstrong, Kansas City, Missouri, January 2, 1892

Folder 62 – Letter from Mrs. Edwards, St. Louis, Missouri to Mary Armstrong, Kansas City, Missouri, August 11, 1892

Folder 63 – Letter to Mary Armstrong from her friend Helen, Kansas City, Missouri, November 12, 1892

Folder 64 – Letter to Aunt Mary (presumably Ritchey) from Bessie, William, and Mary, Joplin, Missouri, March 12, 1910

Folder 65 – Letter to Mary Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas from her brother, November 13, 1915

Folder 66 – Letter from James Kalenbaugh to his Aunt Mary Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas, December 1, 1915

Folder 67 – Invitation to Rosedale High School commencement, 1915, sent to Mr. and Mrs. James Ritchey

Folder 68 – Letter to Mrs. Mary Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas, from her sibling (Martha Kalenbaugh?), February 28, 1916

Folder 69 – Letter to Mary Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas, from a relative in Duff, Indiana, March 5, 1916

Folder 70 – Thank you note from the Winters family, Kansas City, Missouri, to Mr. and Mrs. James Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas, 1918

Folder 71 – Empty envelopes and postal receipt addressed to Mary Armstrong, and Mrs. J. E. Ritchey

Folder 72 – Letter from Anna Jones, Atchison, Kansas to Mary Ritchey, Kansas City, Kansas, February 12, 1920

Folder 73 – Letter to Mary Ritchey from Mary Waters, Order of the Eastern Star Chapter 85, Kansas City, Kansas, April 7, 1920

Folder 74 – Birthday card from Mr. and Mrs. Blake, to Mrs. M. E. Ritchey, Kansas City, Kansas, May 10, 1930

Folder 75 – Thank you card from Mrs. Blake, Omaha, Nebraska to Mrs. M. E. Ritchey, Kansas City, Kansas, December 29, 1930

Folder 76 – Letter from M. Bristow, Medford, Oregon to Mrs. M. E. Ritchey, Argentine, Kansas, March 21, 1931

Folder 77 – Letter to Mrs. A. E. Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas from Mrs. Blake, Omaha, Nebraska, June 6, 1931

Folder 78 – Birth announcement for Helen Hornbach, sent to Mary Ritchey, June 9, 1931

Folder 79 – Letters to Mary Phillips, Kansas City, Missouri from Ruth Tinslow, Chicago, Illinois, August 23, 1933 and October 23, 1934

Folder 80 Letter to Mary Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas from Zelinda, Edgerton, Missouri, March 10, 1935

Folder 81 – Letter to Mrs. A. E. Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas from Mary, New Albany, Indiana, October 8, 1935

Folder 82 – Letter from Vernie Denny, Los Angeles, California to Mrs. Mary Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas, October 10, 1935

Folder 83 – Letter from C. Chamberlain, Blythedale, Missouri, to Mary Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas, November 12, 1935

Folder 84 – Letter from May Aynes, Talent, Oregon to Mrs. A. E. Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas, January 6, 1936

Folder 85 – Letter from Julia Armstrong, Vincennes, Indiana to Mary Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas, August 2, 1936

Folder 86 – Letter from Clifford Nowlin, Kansas City, Missouri to Mrs. A. E. Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas, October 16, 1936

Folder 87 – Letters from Mrs. J. H. Kellams, Huntington, Indiana to Mrs. A. E. Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas, December 19, 1937 and December 4, 1940

Folder 88 – Letter from John Brendle, Eminence, Missouri to Mr. A. E. Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas, December 4, 1938

Folder 89 – Letter from Dorothy, Eminence, Missouri to her mother, Mrs. A. E. Phillips, Kansas City, Kansas, December 15, 1938

Folder 90 – Empty envelopes addressed to Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Phillips (3)
Poem clipped from the Kansas City Star, no date

Series 11 – Letters to Dorothy Beton and Violet Ritchey Beton

Folder 91 – Letter to Violet Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas from former classmates in Wellsville, Kansas, November 25, 1914

Folder 92 – Letter to Violet Ritchey, Atchison, Kansas from her cousin Cleo, Colorado Springs, Colorado, July 26, 1918

Folder 93 – Easter cards addressed to Miss Doris Beton, Kansas City, Kansas, 1929

Folder 94 – Easter card to Mrs. D. R. Beton, Kansas City, Kansas, March 29, 1929

Folder 95 – Postcard from James John to Dorothy Beton, Kansas City, Kansas, February 11, 1933

Folder 96 – Empty envelope addressed to Dorothy Beton, Kansas City, Kansas, October 25, 1935

Folder 97 – Letter to Mrs. Ralph Beton, Argentine, Kansas from brother Rog, Ranger, Texas, February 12

Series 12 – Letters to Mary McCammon

Folder 98 – Letter to Mary McCammon, New Albany, Indiana from her aunt and uncle in Joplin, Missouri, February 20, 1914

Folder 99 – Birth announcement for Roy Martin sent to Mary McCammon, December 1922

Folder 100 – Postcard to Mary McCammon, New Albany, Indiana from her brother Ben, March 1935

Series 13 – Miscellaneous Letters

Folder 101 – Letter from M. E. Bateman, Shelter Island, New York to Lizzie (May) Armstrong, Rosedale, Kansas, September 11, 1892

Folder 102 – Letter to Florence Nichols, Atchison, Kansas from Mrs. C. H. Blake, Kansas City, Missouri, July 1917

Folder 103 – List of family births, marriages, and deaths, sent to Martha McKinley, Hazelton, Indiana, March 27, 1900

Folder 104 – Miscellaneous envelopes and items from letter collection

Series 14 – Documents

Folder 105 – Contract for legal services for Matthew McCammon, September 27, 1906

Folder 106 – Tax receipts, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1908, 1912, 1915
Gas Light & Coke Co. receipt, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1870

Folder 107 – Kansas Automobile license and application for J. W. Ritchey, 1908, 1928

Folder 108 – Deed to lot in Maple Hill Cemetery for A. E. Phillips, April 12, 1946

Folder 109 – Contract of sale, and notification of contract cancellation, Laurel Heights Real Estate, Violet Beton, 1930

Folder 110 – Letter to Douglas Root, Great Lakes, Illinois from his mother in Cooperstown, New York, August 13, 1913 (*unclear how this letter relates to the Armstrong family correspondence*).

Processed by Anne Lacey, Kansas Collection Librarian, September, 2021