

1898

## Letters written by James McMillian Scott during the Spanish-American War (MSS 628 B1 F3&4)

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*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 628 SCOTT, James McMillian, 1870-1907**

1 box. 12 folders. 121 items. 1897-1907. Photocopies.

2001.14.9

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

James McMillian "Jim" Scott, the son of Thomas M. Scott and Sarah (Wilson) Scott, was born in Cumberland County, Kentucky on 10 August 1870. Early in the 1880s, his family moved to Texas and settled near Paris. As a young man he moved back to Adair County, Kentucky, where in 1897 he met Sarah Elizabeth "Ellie" Garnett, the daughter of William Hopkins Garnett and Mary Victoria Jackson (Willis) Garnett. Scott returned to Paris, Texas, took up work as a newspaper editor, worked on the family farm, and began a correspondence with Ellie. Their friendship evolved into a romance, and in August 1899 she accepted his proposal of marriage. They married on 26 December 1900 and Jim brought Ellie to Texas, but she was apparently homesick and returned to her family less than a year later. Although they established a farm in Campbellsville, Kentucky and became the parents of a son, Joe Garnett Scott (1903-1982), Jim and Ellie spent much of their married life apart. Jim continued to grow cotton and corn on his family's Texas farm, worked as a carpenter, and served as writer and editor for newspapers in Kentucky, Texas and Arkansas. Prior to their marriage, he also served as an officer in the Spanish-American War.

On 3 August 1907, while serving as city editor of the *Helena* (Arkansas) *Daily World*, Jim was shot by a former police officer, reportedly in revenge for his dismissal following a corruption investigation. Jim died the next day. Another report, however, attributed the murder to a dispute over a woman (see Box 1, Folder 1). Both Jim and Ellie (who died on 13 May 1935) are interred in the Garnett Cemetery in Adair County, Kentucky.

**COLLECTION NOTE**

Except for a few letters written to the couple, this collection consists entirely of photocopied letters written by James McMillian "Jim" Scott to Sarah Elizabeth "Ellie" Garnett, both before and after their marriage. In the two years of letters leading up to his proposal, Jim comes to rely on her friendship and support; dogged by poor health, gloom and despondency, he believes himself to be the victim of gossip (some in the form of anonymous letters) and bad faith due to an "unhappy past" in Kentucky. He writes to Ellie from Texas about such matters as his health; her courtship by another young man of whom he increasingly disapproves; his

newspaper work and social activities; his religious views and attendance at camp meetings; news of their mutual friends; and a love interest who appears to reject him. When he joins the Army at the onset of the Spanish-American War, he forecasts the deaths of many soldiers but praises Southerners for their willingness to fight. Stationed at Fort Clark Texas, and Key West, Florida, he describes a voyage from Key West to Long Island and the abominable conditions aboard the transport ship *San Marcos*. After their engagement but before their marriage, he writes ardently to Ellie for another sixteen months from Paris, Texas, telling her about his family; his work farming and building houses and organizing a National Reserve unit in the community; his social and religious activities; and his planning for their married life, including his search for a suitable home. After their marriage and Ellie's return to Kentucky, he writes of his attempts to liquidate some of their household goods and maximize the sale of his cotton crop in order to finance his move to join her. He also refers to increasing tensions with his father arising from their long-distance marriage and Jim's desire to "cash out" his inherited share of the family farm. Money becomes scarce as he applies for a veteran's pension, struggles to pay debts, and watches other locals depart for opportunities elsewhere. A proposal to invest in and edit the *Shreveport (Louisiana) Times* (see Folder 12) appears to come to nothing. Late in 1901, Jim confesses to an episode of drinking, and after a buggy accident injures both him and his father, he is fined on false charges of assaulting his father.

After the birth of their son Jim is closer to home, but his letters relate his travel through Kentucky and Tennessee representing *The Mountaineer*, a Somerset, Kentucky newspaper. He instructs Ellie and her brother William (who works for them) on matters relating to their farm, and continues to resent the effects of gossip on his reputation. Late in 1906, while editing a newspaper in Arkansas, he berates Ellie for her infrequent letter-writing and continues to relay farm instructions. Shortly before his death, he refers to his crusade against a "cowardly gang whom I deposed from office" in Helena, Arkansas, and indicates his intention to take charge of a newspaper in Fulton, Illinois.

### ***SHELF LIST***

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>James M. Scott</b>	<b>1897-1907</b>	<b>121 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory; news reports of Scott's death		5 items
Folder 2	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie Garnett	1897	10 items
Folder 3	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie Garnett	1898	7 items
Folder 4	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie Garnett	1899	15 items
Folder 5	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie Garnett	Jan. - June 1900	12 items
Folder 6	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie Garnett	July – Dec. 1900	10 items

Folder 7	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie (Garnett) Scott	1901	19 items
Folder 8	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie (Garnett) Scott	1903-1905	10 items
Folder 9	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie (Garnett) Scott	1906	10 items
Folder 10	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie (Garnett) Scott	1907	15 items
Folder 11	James M. Scott – Letters to Ellie (Garnett) Scott	n.d.	2 items
Folder 12	Letters to James and Ellie (Garnett) Scott	1901, 1907, n.d.	6 items

### ***BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD***

MSS SCOTT, James McMillian, 1897-1907  
628 1870-1907

Letters of James McMillian Scott, a native of Cumberland County, Kentucky, to Sarah Elizabeth “Ellie” Garnett of Adair County, Kentucky, written before and after their marriage. Frequently separated from his wife because of his work on his family’s Texas farm and his editorial positions on newspapers in Texas, Kentucky and Arkansas, Scott writes of his family, his social and religious activities, his Spanish-American War service, and his newspaper work. He is frequently resentful of local attacks on his reputation arising from unspecified indiscretions committed while living in Kentucky.

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### ***SUBJECT ANALYTICS***

Baker, George Erwin, 1867-1951 – Relating to B1,F9,10  
Bryan, William Jennings, 1860-1925 – Comments about, 1899 B1,F4  
Bryan, William Jennings, 1860-1925 – Mentioned B1,F2  
Consolation, 1900 B1,F6  
Courtship, 1897-1900 B1,F2-5  
Farms and farming – Texas, 1899-1901 B1,F4-7  
Floods – Memphis, Tennessee, 1897 B1,F2  
Key West, Florida – Travel and description, 1898 B1,F3  
Goebel, William Justus, 1856-1900 – Comments about, 1899, 1900 B1,F4,5  
Hurt, Mattie (Garnett), 1860-1900 – Relating to B1,F6

Medicines – Prescriptions and remedies, 1907      B1,F12  
 Memorial Day – Comments about, 1899      B1,F4  
 Newspapers – Arkansas, 1906-1907 – Relating to      B1,F9,10  
 Newspapers – Louisiana, 1901 – Relating to      B1,F12  
 Scott, Sarah Ann (Wilson), 1834-1918 – Relating to      B1,F7-10  
 Scott, Sarah Elizabeth “Ellie” (Garnett), 1866-1935 – Letters to      B1,F2-12  
 Scott, Thomas Marion, 1829-1906 – Relating to      B1,F6,7,9  
 Smallpox – Texas, 1900 – Comments about, 1900      B1,F5  
 Spanish-American War, 1898 – Comments about, 1898, 1899      B1,F3,4  
 Spanish-American War, 1898 – Fort Clark, Texas – Relating to      B1,F3,4  
 Spanish-American War, 1898 – Key West, Florida – Relating to      B1,F3  
 Spanish-American War, 1898 – Military life, 1898      B1,F3,4  
 Texas – Social life and customs, 1900      B1,F5,6  
 Texas – Travel and description, 1897      B1,F2  
 Woman suffrage – Comments about, 1899      B1,F4

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