

# Horace Kephart life timeline (as deduced from *Back of Beyond*)

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For Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery, June 2019

Note: There is uncertainty in this compilation, at least in part because the authors no doubt had some difficulty in pinning down the dates.

## Horace Kephart timeline, as best as I can discern, from *Back of Beyond*

- Horace Sowers Kephart, first child of Mary Elizabeth Sowers and Isaiah Lafayette Kephart, was born in East Salem, PA on September 8, 1862.
- Father Isaiah and grandfather Henry were both ministers of the United Brethren Church; Isaiah led an interesting and varied life, including raft pilot, teacher and other school-related occupations, chaplain of the 21<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment, pastor, author and editor.
- The family moved to Greene County, Iowa in 1867 and lived first on a farm – where his mother Mary, who taught him to read, gave him his first book - *Robinson Crusoe*.
- A few years later, the family moved into a campus dormitory at Western College, where Kephart would begin his studies as a young teenager.
- The family returned to Pennsylvania where Kephart completed his BA degree at Lebanon Valley College in 1879.

## West Main Street - Jefferson, Greene County



Source: Iowa GenWeb Project - [iagenweb.org/greene/photos/jefferson/IA\\_Jefferson\\_WestMain\\_ca1910RV2.jpg](http://iagenweb.org/greene/photos/jefferson/IA_Jefferson_WestMain_ca1910RV2.jpg)

Western College – from 1875 *Iowa Atlas*;  
Isaiah's younger brother Ezekiel was President



LANE HALL COLLEGE NEIDIG HALL  
**WESTERN COLLEGE. FOUNDED 1856.**  
WESTERN LINN CO.  
E.B. Kephart - J.M. Trues.

## After Lebanon Valley

- After a short period of study at Boston University, he enrolled as a graduate student of political science and history at Cornell (Ithaca, NY), where he worked at the library and met his future wife, Laura Mack
- In late 1884, he left for just over a year in Europe, cataloging a private collection for the former Cornell librarian, Daniel Fiske
- After returning to the U.S. in early 1886, he took a job as assistant librarian at Yale
- Married Laura Mack in April, 1887; the couple lived in New Haven until 1890; that is where the first two children, Cornelia and Margaret, were born. His first published (paid) article was during this period.
- In 1890, he accepted the position of director of the St. Louis Mercantile Library – a subscription library. Starting salary = \$2500 (equivalent to \$66,000 today)
- Laura mostly remained in Ithaca until 1892; their third child and first son, Leonard, was born there in January of 1892. She and the children joined Kephart in St. Louis the following month.

## Notes on life in St. Louis

- Three additional children were born in St. Louis: Lucy (1893), George (1894), Barbara (1897); in the 1900 census, the Kephart family had a live-in servant, Matilda Richter (and her daughter)
- There were frequent moves of household within the city
- An assistant (later director) referred to him as “the most brilliant man I have ever known.”
- Extensive experimentation with all aspects of firearms was accompanied by multiple published articles
- Weekends out of doors – with ensuing articles
- Cultural conflict
- Increasing amount of time away from both work and home
- Laura and children left for Ithaca in early 1903
- Resignation demanded by library board in the fall of 1903
- Breakdown in early 1904

# The Kephart children in St. Louis, circa 1901



Source: Dottie Cassaday, Ancestry.com

## From St. Louis to WNC - 1904

- Isaiah came to St. Louis and took his 41-year old boy to the family home in Dayton, Ohio. Laura came to St. Louis from Ithaca to take charge of his belongings.
- After some time in Dayton, father and son visited in Pennsylvania and returned to Dayton
- In late July or early August, Horace Kephart left Dayton for the Smokies, pausing near Dillsboro (Dicks Creek) from August to late October
- *Back of Beyond* asserts that Dr. C.D.W. Colby saw him during his time in the Dillsboro area

DAC note: The latter claim (unsourced) is doubtful; newspaper accounts and military reports place Colby elsewhere in both 1904 and 1905. In October 1904 he enrolled in Army Medical School in Washington, DC (Evening Star, 8 Oct 1904) and graduated in 1905 (Asheville Citizen, 24 Sep 1941 obit). A 1907 report by the Adjutant General of Michigan placed him at a Michigan National Guard encampment in August, 1905. He was in WNC by 1906. Colby was a native of Michigan and served in the Spanish-American War.

## Dicks Creek to Medlin (late October, 1904)

- Traveled 30.5 miles (not 22, per *Back of Beyond*) by rail to Bushnell where he was met by Granville Calhoun with mules
- Then 16 or 16.5 miles to Medlin
- A period of nursing back to health – or not
- Lived in a cabin on the Little Fork of Sugar Fork of Haw Gap Branch for just over a year
- Father Isaiah paid a visit in the summer of 1905
- Stayed in the Hall cabin on the state line in either the summer of 1906 or 1907
- Spent time on the Tennessee side of the mountain in 1907 and 1908
- Returned home in late summer or early fall of 1908 to be with his father, who died in Oct, 1908
- Reunited with his family in Ithaca in November, 1908 – the first time he'd seen them in six years; they were together for six months under apparently strained circumstances
- After a short return trip to Dayton, moved in with Bob Barnett family just south of Rome, Ga.
- No evidence was found that he ever visited Dayton or Ithaca again.

## Return to the Smokies

- “Kephart returned to the Great Smokies in mid-spring of 1910...he stayed for a while....with the Barnett family, who had moved from Georgia to the last house on Deep Creek.”
- Then “On April 8, 1910, Horace Kephart moved into his rented room at the Cooper House.”

### DAC notes:

The last house up Deep Creek was the Bryson Place

No sources for the “mid-spring” arrival at the Bryson Place or the April 8 Cooper House date were provided. This pair of times is confusing, since one would normally think of “mid-spring” as being halfway between the vernal equinox and the summer solstice – i.e., early May, several weeks after the purported Cooper House arrival date.

The 1910 census at the Cooper House was recorded on April 15, a week after Kephart purportedly moved in. His name does not appear in that census. Cooper House owners Uncle Billy and Frances Eliza Wiggins Cooper, their daughter Rowena Thompson and her son Roy, and Jack and Bland Coburn were listed by the census taker. All of these folks are buried in the BC Cemetery.

## Continuing the timeline

- Other than some undefined time spent in Washington, DC in late 1914 and early 1915, Kephart apparently spent the bulk of the balance of his life in Bryson City. Picking out this section of the timeline from the biography is difficult, if even possible; perhaps that is because the authors weren't able to pin him down.
- 1913: First edition of *Our Southern Highlanders*
- Several articles in *Forest and Stream* (1906) and *Outing Magazine* (1912-1913) included much of the content
- 1916: *Camping and Woodcraft* published as a two-volume set. A less comprehensive version had been published in 1906. Both employed articles published in *Field and Stream*, *Sports Afield* and other periodicals.
- 1922: Second edition of *Our Southern Highlanders*; three chapters were added, including *The Snake Stick Man*, *A Raid into the Sugarlands*, and *The Killing of Hol Rose*
- Kephart took a brief dip into local politics in 1925 he chaired the Bryson City Board of Aldermen for approximately one year, resigning in mid-1926 (this is not mentioned in *Back of Beyond*)

## Awards and recognition

- Patterson Cup (for *Our Southern Highlanders*) was awarded to Kephart in 1913 by the NC Literary and Historical Association.
- He was elected president of that organization in November of 1929
- Named County Historian in 1927; if there were products of this position, they were not named
- Had a mountain named for him while still living, but Mt Kephart ended up moving

## The later years

- Publication productivity declined in the late 1920s
- He was a significant promoter of the development of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- Developed a strong friendship with George Masa; the pair collaborated on Park-development publicity
- Continued to do some exploring, but much by vehicle and horse
- Likely never set foot on the mountain which bears his name, although a photo of him was taken by Masa on Mt. Collins, which temporarily was Mt. Kephart
- Died suddenly in an automobile wreck near the mouth of Cooper Creek in April, 1931. Fellow author Fiswoode Tarleton also died in the crash.
- Accounts of the funeral service were that it was the most heavily attended in the town to that time
- Buried (as was Tarleton) in a family plot which had been purchased by Bland Coburn.
- In 1936, a boulder from the Chastain Reagan place on Bradley Fork was brought to the cemetery and placed on his grave. The bronze plaque which is now on the stone was added over a decade later.