

18 May 1955

Professor George E. McCracken  
977 25th Street  
Des Moines 12, Iowa

Dear George:

Receipt of your very nice letter of 5 April 1955 is acknowledged.

Thank you for your flattering remarks about our manuscript on the alleged ciphers in Shakespeare. It was very nice to win the prize and it will also be nice to hear favorable news from the prospective publisher who has the manuscript under consideration. We have good hopes that our first choice of publishing house, one which approached us and not vice versa, will be the one that will actually put it out.

I had no idea that the news about our good fortune in the foregoing had gone as far as it apparently went. If you still have the item as it appeared in your local paper and don't want it, I would be very glad to have it. John Coddington was quite thoughtful in sending you the account which appeared in the Washington Post.

I was very much interested in what you told me about the three books on which you are working at the moment. I guess I do not have to tell you anything about the extra work and burden which one assumes in undertaking to do serious writing outside of office hours and addition to one's usual work. It is possible that this additional burden is what was responsible for my having suffered a coronary occlusion the very day that the announcement of our winning the Folger Shakespeare Library award was published. The attack occurred early in the morning, soon after I had gotten up, and by noon I was on my way to George Washington University Hospital in an ambulance. I was in the hospital for one month, flat on my back all the time, and then came home by ambulance a couple of weeks ago. I am ambulatory now, but confined to the second floor of our house until the small elevator which we decided to install goes into operation sometime this week. We like our house so much we just couldn't give it up for an apartment again or for the much-touted "rambler" type of house. We're just a couple of blocks from the Folger and the Congressional Libraries.

I shall be very happy to learn further details about your own two books and how they fare upon publication. Will it be the Drake University Press or some other Press for your own? I note what you say about Stanford taking on the Macfarland biography.

I also note with much interest what you tell me about your military activities. I am glad to see that you are continuing to maintain an active interest therein, and to build up credits toward your retirement as a Reserve Officer. I am sorry to say that I missed qualifying for the 20 years service, because I lacked something less than a month's time and there seems to be no way of making up for that deficiency. My case has been before the Board for the Correction of Military Records for some time; the case was turned down once because one of the five members is a "meanie," but it may be up for review again soon. There are about 50 others in my same boat in this regard and it may be necessary to get special legislation.

No progress has been made on the Voynich manuscript. I have had no time to devote to it. However, I acquired some extremely interesting working papers and notes prepared by my friend Father Theodore C. Petersen, of St. Paul's College, here in Washington. A wonderful man and scholar! I hope to have further talks with him while I am home from the office recuperating.

I indeed recall quite well that you got to know Professor Kent; in fact, you sent me extracts from some of your correspondence with him and I have kept them with my Voynich documents. Also I have maintained occasional contact with Mrs. Voynich, who is still very much interested in it even at her extremely advanced age. I have never met her nor her companion, secretary, and, I believe, a co-owner of the manuscript, which still reposes in the vaults of the Guaranty Trust Company, in New York.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM F. FRIEDMAN