

Guide to the Kenaga Family Papers

WA MSS S-1310



by Bruce P. Stark

October 1987

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: WA MSS S-1310

CREATOR: Kanagy family

TITLE: Kenaga family papers

DATES: 1851-1908

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.75 linear feet (5 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers contain correspondence and printed material documenting the lives of several Kenagas, Baers, and Reists of New York, California, and several midwest states.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.kenaga>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.kenaga>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Kenaga Family Papers were purchased in 1963 from Edward Eberstadt and Company with income from the Coe. No. 1 Fund.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Kenaga Family Papers are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Kenaga Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

FAMILY CHARTS

Family charts for the Baer, Kenaga, and Reist families are found on the next four pages. They are designed to show the kinship ties of the major correspondents and of persons prominently referred to in the letters. They are based on the best evidence available, but are by no means complete.

Benjamin, David, Joseph, and Levi Baer called Benjamin Kenaga "cousin." It is not known who the common ancestor was, but it was probably in the generation of Benjamin's grandparents. The Kenaga and Reist families are connected by the 1854 marriage of Benjamin Kenaga and Fanny Reist. BAER FAMILY

David Baer (-1898) m. Mary (1833-1901)

Joseph Baer (1832-1905)

Levi W. Baer (1839-1905)

Benjamin F. Baer (1842-) m. 1876 Margaret (1855-

Elizabeth Baer

Note: The names of important correspondents are underlined. KENAGA FAMILY-1

Benjamin Kenaga (1808-1903) m. Ester (-1892) **Benjamin Kenaga* (-1907) m. 1854 Fanny Reist (-1897)

Joseph Kenaga m. 1871 Sarah

Sarah Kenaga m. 1864 Jefferson Fogelsonger

Levi Kenaga (-1891)

John Kenaga

Anna Kenaga (-1901) m. 1858 John Fogelsonger

Jacob Kenaga m. Fanny Gray

Note: * Please refer to another chart for additional information. KENAGA FAMILY-2

Benjamin Kenaga (-1907) m. 1854 Fanny Reist (-1897)

Joanna Kenaga m. Dewitt Casler

Susan Kenaga m. Nelson A. Lockwood

Lillian Kenaga (1860-) m. 1882 *Charles L. Wickens*

Ira Eugene Kenaga (1863-) m. 1889

Una Kenaga (1866-) m. William Chaffee

Otto L. Kenaga (1868-

Allen Elmer Kenaga REIST FAMILY

John Reist (-1879) m. Anna (-1885)

Elizabeth Reist (1822-) m. Abraham Barton *Fanny Reist (-1897) m. 1854 Benjamin Kenaga (-1907)

Jacob Reist m. Maria

Susan Reist (1833-) m. 1854 Christian S. Frick

Daniel Reist m. Sabina

Elias Reist m. Flora [Long?]

Christian Reist (-1870)

John Reist m. 1851 Nancy Long

Scope and Contents

The Kenaga Family Papers consist primarily of letters sent to Benjamin Kenaga and his wife Fanny Reist Kenaga from relatives and friends, plus a small quantity of printed material. The papers span the dates 1851-1908.

[Series I, Correspondence](#), holds four boxes of correspondence, alphabetically arranged by author. Most of the letters were written to Benjamin and Fanny Reist Kenaga by Baer, Fogelsonger, Frick, Kenaga, Lockwood, Long, Miller, and Reist relatives. Five folders (Box 2, folders 48-52) contain letters between Fanny Reist Kenaga and her husband. Most were written between August 11 and November 21, 1864, when Benjamin Kenaga was on active duty with the 98th Regiment of the National Guard of the State of New York.

The correspondence consists almost entirely of personal letters devoted to news of family and friends and of farm life. The birth of children, illness and death of relatives and acquaintances, crop prices, economic conditions, weather, religion, and careers are frequent topics of discussion. In addition, the letters of several correspondents discuss the Civil War, politics in the last third of the nineteenth century, and gold mining in the West.

Benjamin and Fanny Kenaga spent much of their lives in Disco and Clyde, Michigan, but their relatives settled throughout the northern and western United States. The correspondence of Christian Frick, Eli Long, and members of the Kenaga and Reist families tell much about Williamsville, New York, where Benjamin and Fanny lived until 1866. Christian and William Miller wrote about Monticello, Indiana. John Zimmerman lived in Gilbertsville, Indiana, and Levi Kenaga and Christian Reist worked in the gold fields in Tuolumne County, California.

Since most of the correspondents were related by birth or marriage, the letters are full of news about the lives of mutual acquaintances. The correspondence of Benjamin F. Baer, David Baer, Joanna Kenaga Casler, Jefferson Fogelsonger, Susan Reist Frick, Fanny Kenaga, Maria Miller Lockwood, Eli Long, Elias Reist, and Lillian Snyder, for example, report births, marriages, illnesses, and deaths of three generations of friends and relatives. In a March 6, 1874 letter, cousin Benjamin F. Baer of Monticello, Indiana, tells Benjamin Kenaga that he was the father of a seven month old boy, that brother Levi Baer is well, and that sister Betsy married "a worthless fellow." Several 1896-99 letters discuss the heart condition and death of brother David Baer. Elias Reist, who spent his entire life in Erie County, New York, provided a running commentary on the health of the Reists; Christian Miller wrote about the life of the the Seneca County, Ohio, cousins; and Charles and Lillian Kenaga Wickens told of their children, discussed a series of clerkships Charles held, and worried about the declining health of Fanny Kenaga.

Religion was frequently discussed by such correspondents as Benjamin F. Baer, Elizabeth Reist Barton, Eliza Segar Cook, Ira E. Kenaga, Elias Reist, John Zimmerman, and most importantly by Fanny's father, John

Reist. He was a lay minister who preached regularly throughout western New York State and Canada. In addition to discussing baptisms and his preaching tours, which he characterized as "appointments for communion," he continually urged his daughter and son-in-law to seek salvation. The letters of Elias Reist increasingly took on a religious tone after he announced on November 27, 1890, that he and his wife "have come out publicly for our saviour Jesus Christ." A similar trend occurred in the letters of John Zimmerman of Gilbertsville, Iowa, after he was baptized in the summer of 1890.

The important correspondents were neither well educated nor prosperous. Most were farmers, but some were clerks, millers, and miners. Benjamin and David Baer provided information on farm life in Monticello, Indiana; Christian and William Miller farmed in Seneca County, Ohio; and John Zimmerman was a farmer in Gilbertsville, Black Hawk County, Iowa. Elias Reist was a miller in Erie County, New York, and Benjamin's son, Ira E. Kenaga, worked for the Reist Milling Company 1885-88. Charles L. Wickens clerked for several Michigan and Wisconsin railroad companies.

Levi Kenaga and brother-in-law Christian Reist were miners. Levi sailed for California in 1859 and spent most of the next dozen years prospecting in the gold fields of the mother lode country around Jamestown, Tuolumne County, California. From October 1872 until July 1876 Levi Kenaga lived in Columbus, Nevada. He moved to the Black Hills of South Dakota in 1876, but had returned to California by 1878. In 1883 he was in Seattle still looking for mining work. Levi Kenaga was unsuccessful in his search for riches in the gold fields, although his letters suggest that Christian Reist was considerably more prosperous. Despite being severely bitten by the gold bug, Levi probably realized that he had little chance to strike it rich and thus urged brother Benjamin not to come to California. In his letters he also wrote about the lawlessness in the California mining camps, talked about his 1876 involvement in Nevada to a woman whose husband was supposed to be dead, and in 1876-77 discussed the Indian problem in the Black Hills.

The Civil War is discussed in the letters of Levi W. Baer, Elias Fogelsonger, Benjamin and Fanny Kenaga, Levi Kenaga, Christian F. Miller, and John Zimmerman. Levi Baer served in the 46th Regiment of the Indiana Volunteers, and three 1863 letters describe the Vicksburg campaign. He also complained about soldiering, railed against officers, and asserted in a November 1862 letter that he "did not enlist to fight for to free these damed slaves." Elias Fogelsonger was a cavalryman in the 10th Regiment of the New York Volunteers, Porter Guards, in the Army of the Potomac. In an August 1863 letter he described what the battlefield at Bull Run looked like. "Arms, legs, jaws, skulls, and all shapes of human bones and flesh can be seen." He alternated between enjoyment of military life and disgust.

Benjamin Kenaga, an anti-war Democrat, was called to active duty in August 1864 for one hundred days and spent most of his term of service guarding rebel prisoners at Elmira. His wife Fanny wrote to him of her anxiety and her fear that he might be called to the front, while Benjamin's letters to Fanny describe guard duty and the upcoming presidential election. Since he favored McClellan, he was not released from active duty until the election was over. The most interesting Civil War letters, however, are those of Christian F. Miller, a staunch Unionist. Miller, who hired a substitute after being drafted, engaged in a long dialogue with Kenaga in which he professed his devotion to the Union and attacked his cousin for his support of Clement Vallandigham and the peace movement. Benjamin Kenaga's military career was brief and inglorious, but as memories dimmed he attended GAR encampments and from 1887-89 sought a pension as compensation for an attack of sunstroke suffered on the parade ground (See Box 5, folder 140).

A number of correspondents commented on national politics, including Benjamin F. Baer, Elias Fogelsonger, John Kenaga, Levi Kenaga, Lucius J. Kenaga, Maria Miller Lockwood, Christian F. Miller, and John Zimmerman. Most of Benjamin Kenaga's correspondents were Republicans, whose sentiments were expressed by Christian Miller in a May 10, 1868 letter: "As to Andrew Johnson . . . It would be an injustice to Benedict Arnold to place him in the same light with the above said trator." Benjamin Baer, however, also mentioned the Grangers in November 1874 and the Farmer's Alliance in 1890, Lucius J. Kenaga endorsed the aims of the Knights of Labor in 1886, and John Zimmerman mixed religion and the protective tariff in an 1892 letter.

Other subjects are discussed in the correspondence. Cousin Lucius J. Kenaga, for example, mentioned electric lights in Terre Haute, Indiana in February 1886; son Ira E. Kenaga noted in 1888 that he was vice president of the Williamsville, New York Prohibition Club; brother Levi in several early letters discussed California fruits; and Christian Miller wrote about using the telephone.

[Series II, Other Papers](#), includes advertisements, insurance papers, pension papers, photographs, regimental orders, subscription information, and lists. Two folders contain advertisements for coffee, patent medicine, school supplies, soap, watches, and the like. Floraplexion and Warner's Safe Cure, patent medicines that supposedly cured most known diseases, were probably purchased for Fanny Kenaga, who was ailing and crippled for the last decade of her life. The pension papers consist primarily of letters from former soldiers in the 98th Regiment of the New York National Guard who had been asked to recall Kenaga's attack of sunstroke. The collection contains two photographs; and undated tintype and an 1864 carte de visite of Fanny Kenaga holding an infant. Benjamin Kenaga had a longstanding subscription to *The Amherst Bee*, published in Williamsville, and also received *The Buffalo Courier*. The collection concludes with three folders of lists of letters in the Kenaga Family Papers.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1851-1908

1.5 linear feet (4 boxes)

Series I, *Correspondence*, is alphabetically arranged by surname with unidentified letters placed at the end. Separate listings have generally been given for individuals writing two or more letters. Single letters of individuals have been placed in "Letter" general files.

b. 1, f. 1	"A-B" general	1866-1904,n.d.
b. 1, f. 2-7	Baer, Benjamin F.	1877-1907, n.d.
b. 1, f. 8	Baer, David and Mary E.	1854-67, n.d.
b. 1, f. 9	Baer, Goldie	1898-1902
b. 1, f. 10	Baer, Jasper	1907 Apr 8
b. 1, f. 11-12	Baer, Joseph	1854-1903, n.d.
b. 1, f. 13	Baer, Levi W.	1862-65
b. 1, f. 14	Barnes, Ed S.	1877, 1886, n.d.
b. 1, f. 15	Barton, Elizabeth Reist	1868-98
b. 1, f. 16	Beam, Abner C.	1877
b. 1, f. 17	Brown, J. H.	1900-02
b. 1, f. 18	Brubaker, Daniel	1877, 1879
b. 1, f. 19	Cadwell, Jerome B.	1873
b. 1, f. 20	Casler, Joanna Kenaga	1874-1907
b. 1, f. 21	Chaffee, Una Kenaga	1899, 1901
b. 1, f. 22	Chapton, D.	1872
b. 1, f. 23	Cook, Eliza Segar	1853-55
b. 1, f. 24	Cundy, William	1877-78
b. 1, f. 25	Curtis, Mary	1884
b. 1, f. 26	"D-E" general	1874, 1903
b. 1, f. 27	Enders, Harry H.	1875, 1903
b. 1, f. 28	"F" general	1863-1901
b. 1, f. 29	Fogelsonger, Elias	1861-71
b. 1, f. 30	Fogelsonger, George	1875
b. 1, f. 31	Fogelsonger, Jefferson	1867, 1891

b. 1, f. 32	Fogelsonger, John M.	1866-67
b. 1, f. 33	Fogelsonger, Nathaniel	1862
b. 1, f. 34	Fogelsonger, Sarah Kenaga	1864-1903
b. 1, f. 35	Foster, C. T.	1884-85
b. 1, f. 36	Frick, Christian S.	1864-90
b. 1, f. 37	Frick, Elma	1878, n.d.
b. 1, f. 38	Frick, Fanny H. and Martin	1897, 1899
b. 1, f. 39-40	Frick, Susan Reist	1866-1902, n.d.
b. 1, f. 41	"G" general	1859-77
b. 1, f. 42	Hicks, W. P.	1903-04
b. 1, f. 43	"K" general	1860, 1871
b. 1, f. 44-45	Kenaga, Allen Elmer	1891-1904
b. 2, f. 46	Kenaga, Daniel Hitt	1903-04
b. 2, f. 47	Kenaga, Ester	1857
b. 2, f. 48-52	Kenaga, Fanny Reist	1857-85, n.d.
b. 2, f. 53	Kenaga, Isaac Newton	1887
b. 2, f. 54	Kenaga, Ira Eugene	1885-1905
b. 2, f. 55	Kenaga, J. B.	1895 May 17
b. 2, f. 56	Kenaga, Jacob	1854-62
b. 2, f. 57	Kenaga, John	1858-77, n.d.
b. 2, f. 58	Kenaga, Joseph	1856-79
b. 2, f. 59-65	Kenaga, Levi	1856-89, n.d.
b. 2, f. 66-68	Kenaga, Lucius J.	1876-1907
b. 2, f. 69	Kenaga, Otto L.	1895-1906
b. 2, f. 70	Kisselbrous, David	1867-68
b. 2, f. 71	"L" general	1863-1900, n.d.
b. 2, f. 72	Leech, Albert F.	1903-04
b. 2, f. 73	Lockwood, Maria Miller	1853-97
b. 2, f. 74	Lockwood, Nelson A.	1901, n.d.
b. 2, f. 75	Lockwood, Susan Kenaga	1877-1908

b. 2, f. 76	Long, Benjamin A.	1862, 1868
b. 2, f. 77-78	Long, Eli	1862-1907, n.d.
b. 3, f. 79	"M" general	1859-91
b. 3, f. 80-86	Miller, Christian F.	1854-1907
b. 3, f. 87	Miller, William S.	1867-85
b. 3, f. 88	Mothersill, J. W.	1893, 1896
b. 3, f. 89	Munger, C. A.	1903
b. 3, f. 90	"N" general	1897
b. 3, f. 91	Osborn, D. M. & Co.	1881-91
b. 3, f. 92	"P" general	1868-92
b. 3, f. 93	Pearce, Eliza G.	1853-54
b. 3, f. 94	Penfoldt, William	1902
b. 3, f. 95	Peters, George	1884-99, n.d.
b. 3, f. 96	The Plymouth Iron Windmill Company	1886
b. 3, f. 97	"R" general	1867-83
b. 3, f. 98	Rapp, Charles	1851, 1854
b. 3, f. 99	Reist, Christian	1851, 1870
b. 3, f. 100	Reist, Daniel	1879
b. 3, f. 101	Reist, Ellen	1886, 1893
b. 3, f. 102-05	Reist, Elias	1864-98
b. 3, f. 106	Reist, Jacob	1871-79
b. 3, f. 107-09	Reist, John and Anna	1866-77
b. 3, f. 110	Reist, Sabina	1889, n.d.
b. 3, f. 111	"S" general	1888-89, n.d.
b. 3, f. 112	Salter, M. B.	1871-76
b. 3, f. 113	Segar, Barbara	1866-84
b. 3, f. 114	Shank, Abraham	1854-55
b. 3, f. 115	Synder, Jacob W.	1866-67
b. 3, f. 116	Synder, Lillian L.	1892-1904
b. 4, f. 117	Staley, Henry A.	1862-63

b. 4, f. 118	Stark, Frank	1898-99
b. 4, f. 119	Steinbaugh, Frank	1904
b. 4, f. 120	Steuer, Tobias	1857-58
b. 4, f. 121	Strohm, Abraham	1858-59
b. 4, f. 121	Strohm, Jacob H.	1860-78
b. 4, f. 122	"T" general	1884, 1888
b. 4, f. 123	Vogel, H. F.	1885-86
b. 4, f. 124	"W" general	1863-90
b. 4, f. 125	Wickens, Charles L.	1883-1906, n.d.
b. 4, f. 126-27	Wickens, Lillian Kenaga	1882-1901
b. 4, f. 128	Wiede, Louis	1872-99
b. 4, f. 129	Witmer, Martin	1854, 1857
b. 4, f. 130	Zimmerman, Fannie A.	1879 Sep 10
b. 4, f. 131-32	Zimmerman, John B.	1855-1903
b. 4, f. 133	Unidentified correspondence	1867-1902, n.d.

Series II: Other Papers, 1853-1904*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

Series II, *Other Papers*, is alphabetically arranged by subject, except for an item level list of letters at the end of the series.

b. 5, f. 134-35	Advertisements	1873-89, n.d.
	Insurance	
b. 5, f. 136	Citizens' Mutual Fire Insurance Company	1901, 1903
b. 5, f. 137	Michigan Mutual Tornado, Cyclone and Wind-storm Insurance Company	1903-04
b. 5, f. 138	State Insurance Company	1867
b. 5, f. 139	Miscellaneous papers	1875-1904, n.d.
b. 5, f. 140	Pension papers	1887-1904
b. 5, f. 141	Photographs	1864, n.d.
b. 5, f. 142	Political literature	1886, n.d.
b. 5, f. 143	Regimental orders	1864-65
	Subscriptions	
b. 5, f. 144	<i>The Amherst Bee</i>	1880-1900
b. 5, f. 145	<i>Brother Jonathan</i>	1853, 1887, n.d.
b. 5, f. 146	<i>The Buffalo Courier</i>	1892, 1894
b. 5, f. 147	Street & Smith	1888, 1897, n.d.
b. 5, f. 148	<i>The Sun</i> (New York City)	1872, 1886, n.d.
b. 5, f. 149-51	List of letters	n.d.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Death
Families
Farm life
Gold mines and mining -- California
Lay ministry -- New York (State)
Lay preaching
Old age

Reist, Elias
Reist, John, d.1879
Wickens, Lillian Kenaga, 1860-
Zimmerman, John B.

Families

Baer family
Kanagy family
Reist family

Geographic Names

California -- Economic conditions
Erie County (N.Y.)
Gilbertsville (Iowa)
Indiana -- Economic conditions
Iowa -- Economic conditions
Jamestown (Calif.)
Monticello (Ind.)
New York (State) -- Social life and customs
Ohio -- Economic conditions
Seneca County (Ohio)
Tuolumne County (Calif.)
United States -- History -- 1865-1898
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

Occupations

Farmers -- United States
Millers -- United States
Miners -- United States

Names

Baer, Benjamin F., 1842-
Baer, Joseph, 1832-1905
Baer, Levi W., 1839-1905
Fogelsonger, Elias
Frick, Susan Reist, 1833-
Kenaga, Benjamin, d.1907
Kenaga, Fanny Reist, d. 1897
Kenaga, Ira Eugene, 1863-
Kenaga, Joseph
Kenaga, Levi, d. 1891
Kenaga, Lucius J., 1853-
Long, Eli
Miller, Christian F., 1834-