

pg 1
Ann Arbor Mich. Wednesday, May 7th 1847.

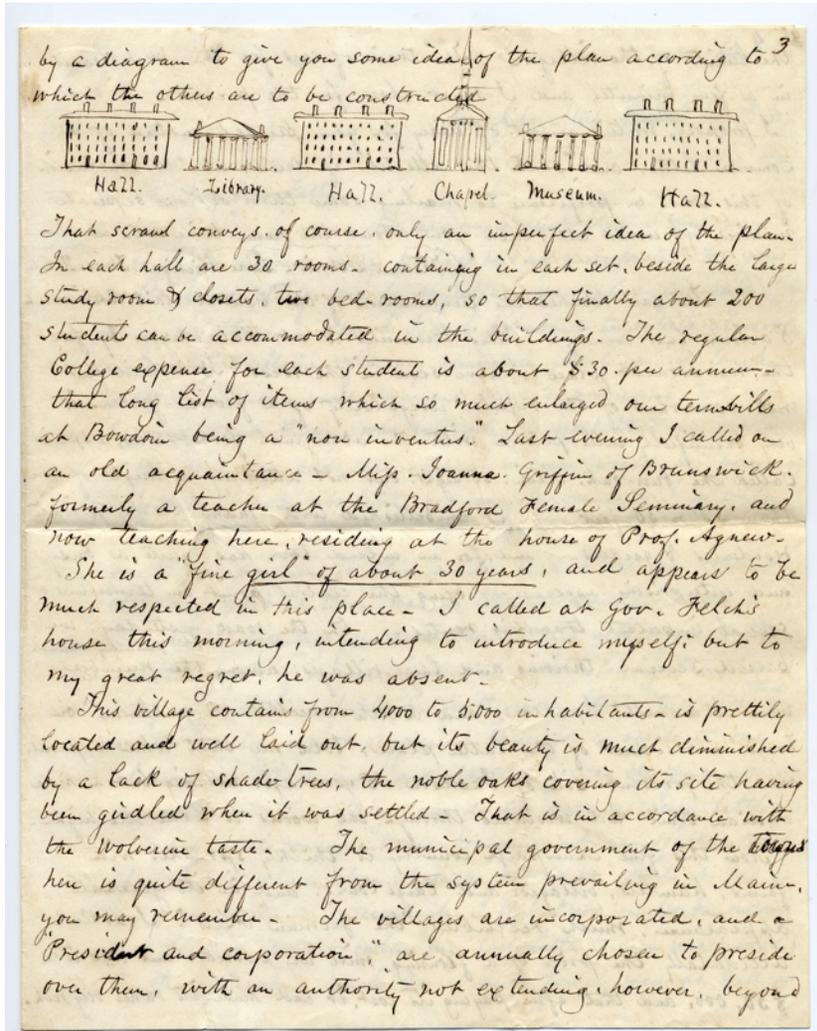
My Dear Father,

The announcement that I am now "en route" for Chicago may perhaps be as unexpected by you as the event itself was by myself. The reasons for this journey are these— Though I had proposed to return almost immediately to Maine, after my arrival in Michigan, if Uncle's health & condition would warrant such a proceeding, yet, when I found Aunt Fanny was extremely desirous that he should go there with me, and that such a measure would be very beneficial if not absolutely necessary to himself, I, of course, determined to remain two or three weeks, the time requisite for his preparation for this visit. But it was soon evident that my board at Orion was in their circumstances a considerable expense (you know their feelings with regard to the entertainment of visitors), and that while staying there I could be of no material assistance; furthermore, that these two or three weeks would afford sufficient time for a visit to our relatives in Wisconsin, and that as far as the finances were concerned, travelling caused an expense very little exceeding that consequent on boarding at one of those first class hotels, which alone I shall "put up at" while it lies in my power to do so. Accordingly I left Orion on Monday morning and reached Detroit (where my last letter to you was mailed) in the afternoon. Uncle Daniel and family were as well as

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Date: May 7, 1847
Description: Josiah Pierce letter about Ann Arbor

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by a diagram to give you some idea of the plan according to which the others are to be constructed

[drawings of building with labels]

Hall. Library. Hall. Chapel. Museum. Hall.

That scrawl conveys, of course, only an imperfect idea of the plan. In each hall are 30 rooms— containing in each set, beside the large study room & closets, two bed-rooms, so that finally about 200 students can be accommodated in the buildings. The regular College expense for each student is about \$30. per annum— that long list of items which so much enlarged our term bills at Bowdoin being a "non inventus." Last evening I called on an old acquaintance — Miss Joanna Griffin of Brunswick, formerly a teacher at the Bradford Female Seminary, and now teaching here, residing at the house of Prof. Agnew. She is a "fine girl" of about 30 years, and appears to be much respected in this place — I called at Gov. Felch's house this morning, intending to introduce myself: but to my great regret, he was absent.

This village contains from 4,000 to 5,000 inhabitants — is prettily located and well laid out, but its beauty is much diminished by a lack of shade trees, the noble oaks covering its site having been girdled when it was settled — That is in accordance with the Wolverine taste. The municipal government of the [?] here is quite different from the system prevailing in Maine, you may remember — The villages are incorporated, and a "President and corporation," are annually chosen to preside over them, with authority not extending, however, beyond

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the limits of the village— The train of cars for the west leaves
in a few minutes and I must close for the present—
I propose, writing a sort of diary for your perusal, instead of a
common letter, and to send the collection if decent, at the conclusion
of this tour, in preference to mailing some three or four separate
missives, w'h would all reach you about the same time — — — — —
Steamer Detroit - Lake Michigan. Thurs. 11. A.M.
The cars reached the termination of the "Central Rail Road" about
8 o'clock last evening. This terminus is at Kalamazoo, by far
the handsomest place I have seen in the West. It is laid out
with somewhat of the regular irregularity of a flower-garden—is
very beautifully interspersed with the aboriginal forest-trees, a species
called the burr-oak, clean, straight, but not attaining a height of more
than 50 or 60 feet — is embellished with many tasteful private
residences & gardens — and, for an inland town has quite a busy
and enterprising appearance, being the central point or terminus of
several important travelling routes. On the road, yesterday, we
passed several thriving and large villages; among the number
were Marshall, Jackson, and Battle-creek. A gentleman "on
board," a resident of the latter place, told me that when he passed
over the present site of Jackson, 15 years ago, nothing but a mere
Indian trail led westward through the woods to Lake Michigan—
Now this fine champaign country is thickly sprinkled with
farms, hamlets, villages, and large towns, and in its general
appearance, much resembles "the German Flats." I asked
accidentally the price of a flouring mill we passed, and was told
\$50,000, and that after paying its cost, it had made its owner very rich.

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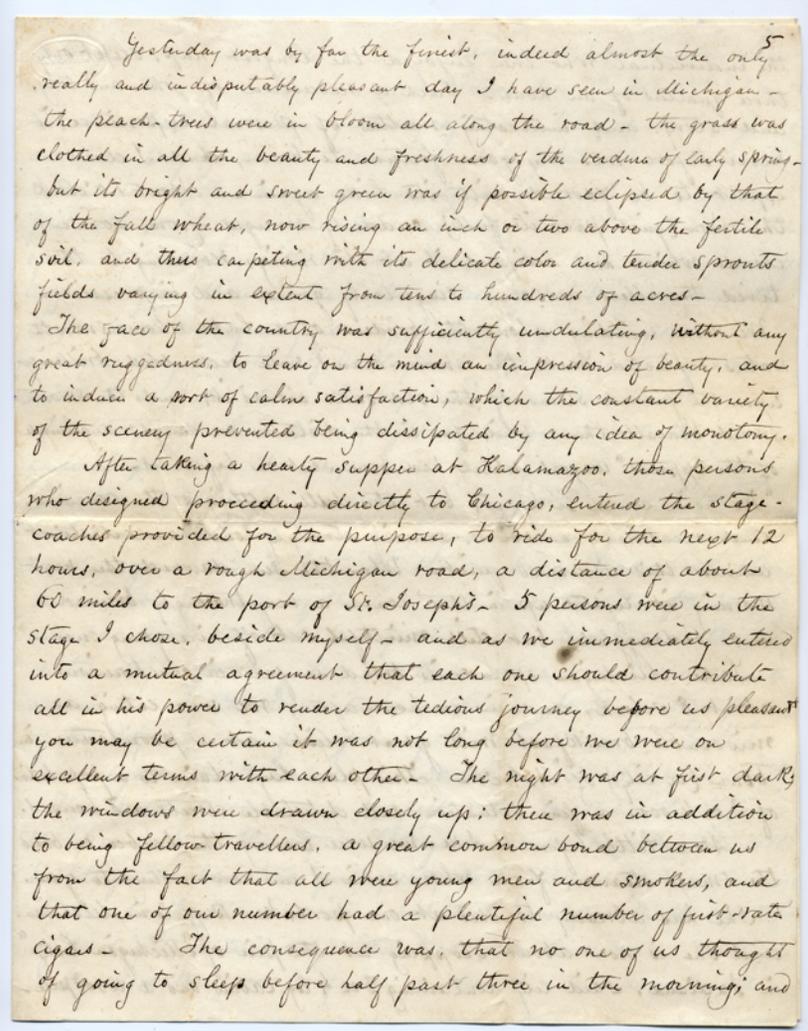
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Yesterday was by far the finest, indeed almost the only⁵ really and indisputably pleasant day I have seen in Michigan - the peach-trees were in bloom all along the road - the grass was clothed in all the beauty and freshness of the verdure of early spring - but its bright and sweet green was if possible eclipsed by that of the fall wheat, now rising an inch or two above the fertile soil, and thus carpeting with its delicate color and tender sprouts fields varying in extent from tens to hundreds of acres -

The face of the country was sufficiently undulating, without any great ruggedness, to leave on the mind an impression of beauty, and to induce a sort of calm satisfaction, which the constant variety of the scenery prevented being dissipated by any idea of monotony.

After taking a hearty supper at Kalamazoo, those persons who designed proceeding directly to Chicago, entered the stage-coaches provided for the purpose, to ride for the next 12 hours, over a rough Michigan road, a distance of about 60 miles to the port of St. Joseph's - 5 persons were in the stage I chose, beside myself - and as we immediately entered into a mutual agreement that each one should contribute all in his power to render the tedious journey before us pleasant you may be certain it was not long before we were on excellent terms with each other - The night was at first dark; the windows were drawn closely up; there was in addition to being fellow-travellers, a great common bond between us from the fact that all were young men and smokers, and that one of our number had a plentiful number of first-rate cigars - The consequence was, that no one of us thought of going to sleep before half past three in the morning, and

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the individual who then enjoyed the longest nap, slept only three quarters of an hour - Such a succession of joke, and song, and story, and interesting matters of personal experience, it never before was my good fortune to hear, and I don't expect to be favored with its like again. About 10 o'clock the moon (just past its full) suddenly emerged from some clouds which had eclipsed it at its rising, revealing to the tired travellers a scene singularly grand and impressive -
We were winding along the borders of a lake whose smooth waters reflected back the moon-beams with redoubled brilliancy upon the gnarled stems of the old oaks around it, and the smooth sward beneath them, while far in the distance we caught a glimpse of "the Express" wagon, which had been sent on before us -
No noise could be heard, but the dull rattling of the carriages, and occasionally a voice, seeming strangely loud and distinct amidst this unusual quiet - When the sun dawned the next morning it lighted up in that coach a very thoroughly bruised and bedraggled, but still mirthful set of nice young men -
Lake Michigan spread its broad surface in our horizon about 8 o'clock, and in an hour after, we were eating a miserable breakfast with great relish, at a poor tavern in Town (or city?) of "St. Joe's" - This place lays claim to a population of 3, or 4,000, a fine situation, and detestable streets and houses.
At a little before 11. A. M. we were leaving the harbor on board the small steamer, from whose cabin I am now writing to you.
She has already touched at one port, New Buffalo in Michigan, and she is now about stopping at the pier of "Michigan City" in Indiana, said city containing 3 or 4 log cabins and a woodpile -

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We were winding along the borders of a lake whose smooth waters reflected back the moon-beams with redoubled brilliancy upon the gnarled stems of the old oaks around it, and the smooth sward beneath them. While far in the distance we caught a glimpse of "the Express" wagons which had been sent before us;

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Steam-boat Superior Lake Michigan.
Friday, May, 7th 1847. 4 o'clock P.M.

- At a little past three yesterday afternoon, I arrived at Chicago, and took lodgings at the Sherman House, a fine hotel - 5 stories high. From its cupola, a very commanding point of view, I made my first attempt to gain some ideas regarding the extent and construction of the city - Having with the other Western cities, that common point of difference from those in the Eastern states, of not being so compactly built, and consequently covering in proportion to its population a much larger extent of territory; it has a diameter of several miles in each direction. Its population is at least 15,000.

The streets are laid out at right angles according to the four cardinal points of the compass - viz. running north and west. The town is built, you are aware, on a prairie - and I think that I never obtained before so perfect an idea of a complete level, as from this its site. On the one hand, stretches the blue interminable expanse of the lake waters - on the other ~~for~~ 20 or 30 miles (at least) the broad and fertile prairie, terminated in the dim distance by a forest of tall oak trees, which is dwindled down to a mere line by the long intervening space - At the northern part of the city are some fine groves of trees; and ^{in a natural garden} ~~there~~, are located some elegant private houses, and St. Mary's college (Catholic).

These buildings command a prospect rarely equalled - the lake - the prairie - and the city. Chicago cannot boast much of its public buildings - I saw one quite pretty gothic church of brick, however it has no banks, and its inhabitants have generally the reputation of devoting their time only either to dissipation or money-making.

My visit there was confined, you perceive, to a days length.

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On counting up the funds, and the cost, I found it would be quite out of the question for me to make the proposed visit to the Fox's. It would really be a sort of "wild goose chase", for I did not know where they lived, nor had any certainty of discovering - I thought of inquiring at the Racine court-house, but then if they were at Burlington or East Troy, quite a long distance in the country, it would cost me, I found, 20 or 30 dollars, nearly all I had, and I could not think of borrowing of them, or waiting for a remittance. Therefore, I have written a letter to them, directed to East Troy, explaining the matter, and have taken passage in in this steamer, for Detroit.

We have just reached Southport. (quite a pe-art place, as a Hoosier near me, says.) larger in point of population, than Racine.

Sunday morning. 9. A. M. off Milwaukee.

The Superior left this port, on Friday night about 12. o'clock. In a short time a strong head wind began to blow, which prevented the boats progress so much that by 10. the next morning she had only made 50 miles, and the captain concluded to turn about and "put back" to this place. off which the steamer anchored at 2. P.M. it being impossible to get into the docks. The lake effervesced, yesterday, in fine style - and the boat with the unfortunate passengers were tumbled about in a most unceremonious manner - Very few escaped the horrors of sea-sickness, but among the few I was extremely happy to reckon myself. As ^{soon as} possible, this morning the boat came up to the wharf, to take in wood - when I went upon terra-firma, to see the sights. Milwaukee is finely situated, upward, from its fine port, gradually rises the land to an elevated plateau, and on

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Lake Mich. Great. Manitou. Island. Monday. 8. A.M. May. 10.

This is quite an important "wooding up station," for these Chicago boats. Its name is of Indian origin you perceive, and signifies, the evil spirit, or, the residence of the evil spirit.

Indeed, so firmly did the natives believe that its name was deserved, that it was only within a few years, an Indian could be prevailed upon to come here, or to a sister island ^{close by} of the same name, somewhat smaller. The Isles are sandy, covered with trees, mostly fir, and is encircled by a broad beach of pebbles, two or three feet in depth. The water of this lake is very pure, and one can see objects in it at a very considerable depth.

Monday evening. 8. o'clock.

We reached the island of Mackinac about 4 o'clock this afternoon. For several miles we had passed through fields of ice, and on the distant hills the snow was plainly visible.

This island and its fine, healthy climate have become so well known from repeated descriptions, and that too, by choice writers. I had better not say much regarding it. An Irishman was once told, that this place possessed such a salubrious climate that it was impossible for people to die here. "Arrah! An is it so," then surely I'll go there and spend the remainder of my days.

The village is celebrated for its sale of Indian curiosities. but I visited every shop there, in the vain hope of finding a Calumet of the famous "red pipe-stone." The fort, and other buildings appertaining to the military present a very imposing appearance.

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They are painted white and situated directly above the town, like the fortress of "Governor, Manco, the left-handed. The town is for the most part, a collection of mean and strange-looking cottages. The distance from here to Detroit is 325 miles - we expect to reach the latter place sometime during tomorrow night -
Lake Huron. Tuesday May 11th. 11. A.M.
We are now off Saginaw Bay, enveloped in a dense fog, and of course out of sight of land. The color of the water in this lake much resembles that of Lake Michigan, a rich blue. I am told by an old gentleman on board, long familiar with the lakes, that the variety in their hues so much harped upon, does not arise from any real difference in the water, but only from an apparent one, caused by the difference in their bottoms, those of the upper lakes being sandy and pebbly, while those of the lower lakes are clayey or muddy -
I have enjoyed the circumnavigation of the lakes, thus far, very much, and shall ever consider myself amply repaid for the time and expense devoted to it, by the new information I have gained, and the pleasant food for memory I have laid up.
Steam boat. Superior. Lake St. Clair -
Thursday. May 13. 2 o'clock P.M.
On Tuesday night, the boat was obliged to "lay by" at the pier of a small settlement called China, some ten miles above where we now are. as the fog was so thick as to render it almost impossible to avoid grounding on the dangerous shoals at the mouth of the St. Clair. The precaution was to no purpose - for the next morning we were as effectually stuck in the mud as if it had been done designedly. - Are just off - shall reach Detroit in 2. hours. then mail this letter, ridiculous as it is. Sans corpore. your aff. son. J. Pierce Jr

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