

My dear William,

Augusta (Maine) April 2, 1821.

Your acceptable letter of the 20. ult. was received on the eighth day after date. It contains information of an important nature, & solicits my advice in a transaction which it seems you have deliberately settled in your own mind. This important decision, I hope, has been formed as you state, with suitable caution & reflection — and as to the object of your affection, I am indebted entirely to your information & description, for ingredients to compose her character. Taking all this for granted — I might perhaps say with a rustic clergyman in another case “She is good enough for you.” Although this contemplated event is to me unexpected, yet I cannot find it in my heart, on a consideration of all the circumstances within my knowledge, to disapprove. The parties being of age & competent to forming the marriage contract, & having pledged their hearts, how can I object to the formal pledge of their hands? And being the persons immediately concerned, ought to be the most competent judges in the case. True, marriage is a divine institution, and is admirably calculated to ameliorate the evils incident to human life. Marriage is honourable in all, but (I forbear the confounding antithesis). It is moreover, the corner stone of society; without which anarchy & confusion would reign & fill the earth. — And I sincerely wish & pray that the contemplated union may be formed in the fear of God with hearts mutually & unitedly engaged in his service that the sacrifice of daily devotion may not fail to ascend from the family altar. And my dear son you must have religion! it will be more important in a family state than ever. Oh tremble at the denunciation — “Pour out thy fury on the families which call not upon thy name!” And remember that “tabernacle of the upright” which has the promise of a divine blessing; wherever “the bounds of your habitation may be appointed” in the course of divine Providence. And with respect to the place of your settlement, so far as my feelings or agency are concerned, I should certainly prefer your return to Augusta if it could be compatible with your interest & inclination. And in saying this, I am confident, I express the feelings of all the family & friends; although the subject of your letter is known by none, except your mother & myself. In the first place, I shall soon need the personal assistance of some of my descendants, if my life should be spared but a few years longer. And it is desirable that the little estate which I now possess, shall be preserved in the family, & not go to strangers; as there is some reason to apprehend might be the case, should you not return. And whatever pecuniary privileges you might relinquish at the south by the change, might you not hope to receive more than an equivalent in the precious means of grace, with which this place & the neighbouring villages are now so distinguishingly favoured? According to your suggestion, I should wish you to have the farm which has been poorly occupied by Charles, if he could be provided for elsewhere — say Chesterville; where a small farm would be sufficient for him to manage. The farm first mentioned, contains between 40 & 50 acres if arable land adjoining the east side Kenebec river [?] with a good [unreadable]. Some of the ^{the} not in the best state of repair but by building a part new annually, might be put & kept in a state of repair with little expence. A farm house might be erected of rather larger dimensions than ^{the one} you refer to, for about 1000 dollars, perhaps. A yoke of oxen I should judge, might be purchased for about 50 dollars; & a cow under 20 dollars. But the prices of these

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(Coll. Coll. 2142, Box 1/3)

Date: April 2, 1821

Description: Henry Sewall letter about his son's engagement

articles, vary with the seasons of the year. Wheat 1 dollar, Rye 75 cents, Corn 58 cents, Oats 30 cents, p bushel. Good Hay is now 10 dollars a ton, but has been purchased during the winter, for 8, & 7 dollars. A good labouring man might be procured for about 80 dollars a year. Potatoes, (which I forgot) 25 cents. The wood lot on the east side of the river, I should consider as an appendage of the farm above described. —

Thus I believe I have answered most of your enquiries, as well as I am able, & after consulting a correspondent & trader, since I began my letter, I find none of the ^{above} rates or estimates to vary materially; you may therefore consider them as pretty correct. Beef & Pork have been sold at 5 & 6 dollars a Cwt wt during the winter, & plenty.

With respect to the season. The months of December & January were remarkably cold, & afforded much good travelling. The month of March was mild until the 18. (two days sooner than you mention) when we experienced an extreme change. On the morning of the 20. the mercury in the thermometer fell 3° below zero. Since that time the weather has been mild; the snow is mostly gone in the open lane. The ice in the river, however, is yet firm, & passable with teams from Pittston to Waterville; but will probably be unsafe in another week, if the present warm weather continues.

Although no epidemic sickness has been experienced in this town, the bills of mortality for the present year have been unusually large. The following is copied from the Town Clerk's record.

Ephraim Ballard,	died	Jan'y 8. 1821.	aged	96.	of old age.
Betsy Pettingill,	"	" 30.	"	20.	Consumption
Frederick A Lithgow,	"	" 2.	"	14.	Abroad at New Orleans.
Daniel Ranlet,	"	March 3.	"	42.	Consumption
Elijah Elms	"	" 8.	"	30.	Fit of apoplexy - went to bed well a little past 10 in the eveng. & in one hour was dead!
Sarah Pettengill	"	" 10.	"	22.	Consumption
Seth Foster	"	" 13.	"	26.	Poison, administered by himself & attempted to poison a brother & sister.
Henry A. Lambard	"	" 27.	"	14.	Inflammation of the bowels, occasioned by attending the fire of a house belonging to Widow Heath, which was consumed on the night of the 17. ult.

And now my dear son, I hope & pray you may be directed in the adoption of such a course of conduct respecting your settlement, & the care of your dependent relatives, as shall meet the divine approbation, & promote your highest interest. My faith in the divine promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" is steadfast. I want but little here below, nor shall I want that little long. "Having food & raiment I ought to be therewith content; for I brought nothing into this world, & it is certain I can carry nothing out." But in our Father's house above are many mansions — & the inhabitants thereof shall never say, I am sick — "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, nor shall the sun light on them, nor any heat — they shall be clothed in white raiment — the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, & shall lead them unto living waters — & wipe all tears from their eyes." With such a glorious inheritance in reversion, what occasion has the true believer to be anxious respecting this mortal body, "what it shall eat, what it shall drink, or what it shall put on?" For his heavenly Father knoweth he has need of these things."

Your aunt Rebecca, returned home in March, just in time to embrace the good sleighing, & to witness the marriage of Melinda C. to Rev. W. Mitchell of Waldoborough, who lost his wife about a year since. Your uncle Jotham has recently returned from a mission eastward, of about two month, in which I understand [unreadable] within the British dominion at St. Andrews. Family & friends in usual health. Susan is preparing to take a school in M. Ballard's neighborhood, N. part of the town. So that our family will be small this summer. Recommending you & your intended partner to the protection & mercy of the Great Keeper of Israel, I remain your affectionate parent

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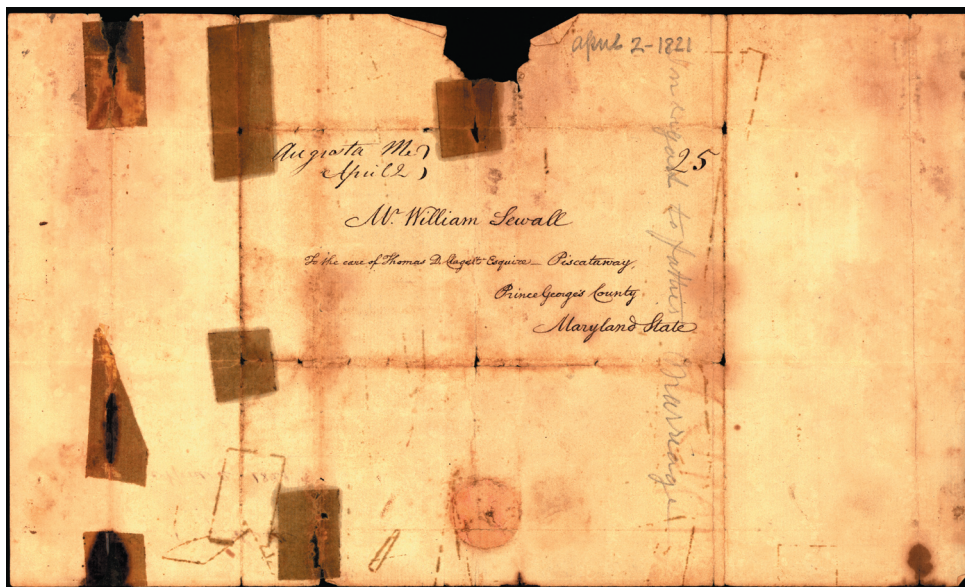
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Augusta, Me

April 2

Mr. William Sewall

To the care of Thomas D. Clagett Esquire - Piscataway,

Prince George's County

Maryland State

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