

Portland January 19th 1800

Eliza's letter. No. 1 -
 Portland 19th Jan 1800
 recd. by Phila
 7 Feb. 1801.

I will try and see if I can write. If I do pro-
 duce a letter to my Papa I shall be very glad, and
 if I do not I shall not be much disappointed. I am
 have really so lost the habit of writing this winter,
 that sometimes the thought of it is a task. Can
 you account for it that I, who used to consider
 writing as one of my greatest private amusements,
 should have become quite indifferent about it,
 and without any apparent cause? I seriously
 lament that this is true, but I believe it to be.
 Instead of the sheets I used to write to Nancy Doane
 I have not sent her one this winter. Can there
 be in nature a cause for these changes? If there
 be, I may hope in due time to get back to my
 old love of writing.
 When I wrote you last I was alone, wait-

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Date: January 19, 1800

Description: Letter from Elizabeth Wadsworth to her father, Peleg Wadsworth, mentioning Eliza's request for a lock of George Washington's hair.]

ing for Mr Bartlett and Zilpah to come from the assembly.
I am now alone. The family are at meeting, ^{excepted} ~~but~~
John. He has just returned from a walk to horse tavern.
It is a long walk for an invalid, such a windy day and
on sheets of glass, almost. - But I was going on to say—
you may think it not very flattering that when I
have no one else to engage myself with, I apply to you as
the only companion within my reach. But let us
see if this be not the greatest compliment I could give
you. When one is in entire solitude, and the mind
left at liberty to ~~choose~~ choose its object, does it not
naturally fix on what is dearest to them? I believe
so. - And to carry the thought still farther - when
one is in affliction, and all surrounding objects
fail to give consolation, how readily do the thoughts
turn to that being who alone is capable of engaging
the heart that is oppressed with grief, and alleviating
its sorrows. I have thought that this was a proof
that love and veneration for the deity was natural
in every human being. Education or circumstances

ing for Mrs. Bartlett and Zilpah to come from the assembly.
I am now alone. The family are at meeting, but excepted
John. He has just returned from a walk to horse tavern.
It is a long walk for an invalid,¹ such a windy day and
on sheets of glass, almost.- But I was going on to say—
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(Footnotes)

¹. This may be a reference to Eliza herself who had begun her decline with consumption, from which she died in 1802, age 22.

may for a while totally obscure, and seem to have destroyed this instinct—that is, confidence in, and love of a supreme power, to which nothing can prevent from flying a soul that is in trouble, and can find nothing here to amuse its grief. As well may a man learn to hate food. many things may for the present make him disregard it, but nothing can effectually destroy the love of it, because to all who breathe it is natural. — I am sure I did not think of writing this when I began, but I by chance got hold of one end of an idea, and thought I would follow it and find out what it was.

Papa I will tell you what I want more than any thing I think of at present— it is a scrap of General Washington's hand writing, perhaps his name. I should think you might obtain it without any difficulty, and I should value it very highly.. Papa had he hair? A lock of that if I could be sure I should value more highly still; but this I

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suppose impracticable, -the first I hope for.

Papa I have wondered that you have not filled a sheet or two with the thoughts that would naturally arise on the death of General Washington. I have anxiously waited, but find I have waited in vain.

And now I have thought of another thing I want most, -in this request my sisters join me. It is the Dead march and Monody performed at the funeral of General Washington in Philadelphia, composed for the occasion, and sold by B. Carr, No 36 South Second Street - price thirty two cents

I have one request more - that you will think me your affectionate daughter

Eliza Wadsworth

I will thank you to give my love to Mrs Green and the misses Wallaces.

MS01-445

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