

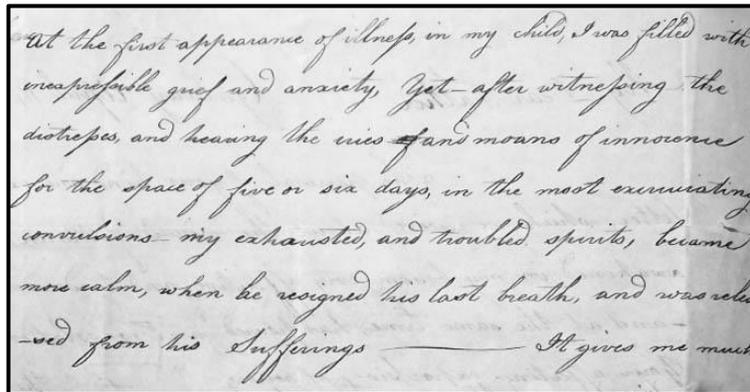
This Week in Saratoga County History

Ever & affectionally your daughter:

The Flora Jewett Letters

Submitted by Dave Waite December 21, 2022

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Flora Jewett Letter to her father April 14, 1808
William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

In this holiday season, our thoughts turn to our family relationships, the bonds that tie us together to those close at hand...and far away.

Over 200 years ago a young woman picked up a quill and wrote of her happiness, success, sadness, and loss as she embarked on a new life far from family and friends. The woman was 24-year-old Flora Jewett and the place was Galway, a small community in rural Saratoga County, New York. Flora Baldwin had married Thaddeus Jewett in early 1807 and soon after they left Newtown, Connecticut for Galway where Thaddeus' family resided. It was shortly after arriving in Galway that the letters begin.

Remarkably, her letters are still with us, for they must have passed through countless hands, any one of which could have dismissed & discarded the seemingly unimportant correspondence. Four letters to her father did survive, archived now as part of the David Baldwin Papers at the University of Michigan's William L. Clements Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Through the power of technology and the internet these letters have been made available and today the words she put down on paper so many years ago can be seen and shared with others. I have done my best to transcribe these letters as accurately as possible, retaining Flora's spelling, punctuation, and grammar wherever possible. Included here are two of her letters which reveal her thoughts about daily life and her sadness at the passing of one of her children.

Galway April 19th 1807

Dear Father ____

The opportunity which presents of writing by Doctor Thomson I am happy to improve, several weeks having elapsed since my departure from home and no intelligence from you, has created an anxiety in me to hear from my parents and friends which embitters the (otherwise)agreeable days I pass ____ when I took leave of my Fathers house and received your blessing, and earnest wishes, for my future happiness, every exertion of my philosophy and fortitude was made use of to stifle the emotions of my heart, and to prevent me from falling into an unbecoming weakness--- so opposite to those principles assiduously invested by thy precepts of my parent, and eminently exhibited in his examples ____ Our journey hither, which we performed in about three days I endured with very little fatigue and have continually since my arrival here enjoyed good health and spirits, except when interrupted by the reflection that I am distant from my Native home and those friends whose tenderness and solicitude for my happiness is almost without a parallel, and will ever call forth my unceasing gratitude _____

Much of my time since I came here, has been employed in receiving and returning complimentary visits to the acquaintances of Mr. Jewett's family, residing in this town and its vicinity ____ among them I have found those, who treat me with every polite and friendly attention __ particularly a Mr. Ten Eyck and his family, people of wealth and respectability who removed from Skenactady about a year since ____ the gentleman, who received his education at Yale College, still retains, he says a strong partiality for the inhabitants of Connecticut, whose hospitality and affability to strangers are his favorite themes ____ I indulge the hope that a visit of my Father the present summer, will prelude the necessity of describing my situation here, from which Mr. Jewett intends removing to a house in the center of the, town, to commence the mercantile business early in the month of May, it will be necessary therefore that my furniture be forwarded as soon as possible which cannot I think, be conveyed with safety in wagons as most of the articles we brought were considerably injured, and one of the looking glasses in particular was broken to ____ pieces, should it be convenient, we should be glad to have it all send up the river as it would be less damaged and save extra expenses _____

With affection

Your Child Flora Jewett

PS. I shall expect to hear particularly concerning your health as at Doctor Thompsons return also when we may hope to see you here____ I wish to be remembered affectionally to my Mother, also to Brother David _____ F. J.

Galway April 14th 1808

My Dear Father

The perusal of your kind, and excellent letter, which we received about the middle of March, has awakened in my bosom every affective, and tender sensation—and at the same time, has poured in it consolations—Your affecting expressions of sorrow, and regret for the loss of my Dear Child, seem to be the affections of a heart, susceptible of the finest parental feelings—Indeed the belief that I have friends, who would deeply sympathize with me, has administered consolation, through the distressing scenes, which I have recently experienced—In the discharge of various duties, which devolve upon an affectionate mother, I had anticipated happiness—particularly that of instilling into the tender mind, of my lovely infant an early love of truth, and every virtue, which would make him an estimable member of society—engaged in employments thus useful. I had hoped to pass every hour, in a manner that would give peace to the mind, in moments of reflection—but that power, which was pleased to give me this blessing—has removed it at a moment, best suited to his designs, and purposes—at the first appearance of illness, in my child, I was filled with inexpressible (?) grief and anxiety, yet—after witnessing the distresses, and hearing the cries and moans of innocence for the space of five or six days, in the most excruciating convulsions—my exhausted, and troubled spirits, became more calm, when he resigned his last breath, and was released from his sufferings—it gives me much satisfaction, to hear you have recovered from a sickness that attacked you, while at Hartford, and also that your acquaintances have rendered those kind and friendly offices, which are particularly due from your nearest connections, and what my duty and affection, would ever prompt me to do, if situation and circumstances would permit me—I hear with much concern, that my Brother has left his native home, and State, and still hope that he will duly appreciate his advantages, and return to his Country and Friends.

To my mothers inquiry after my health, I can answer that it is very good, and that I hope to visit Newtown early in June.

Ever & affectionally your daughter

Flora Jewett

The source of the material for this article is the David Baldwin Papers at the Clements Library, University of Michigan or William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.