

XII

1870–1877

Letters from Cambridge and Troy, Part Six

ECONOMIC expansion and industrial growth were the watchwords in America between 1870 and 1877. Southern states were being readmitted to the Union and the entire nation was still in a period of “reconstruction” that would not officially end until 1877 when the last Federal troops were withdrawn from the South. The United States had a population of 39.8 million people in the 1870 census that included 4.9 million free Negroes for the first time. By one estimate, 2.3 million immigrants had come to America since the 1860 census. America was growing. Beginning in 1870, economic growth could be measured by Thomas Edison’s new invention, the stock ticker. The establishment of the U. S. Department of Justice in 1870 acknowledged the growing responsibilities of the Attorney General, and in 1871 Brigham Young was arrested for practicing polygamy or what some called “that special institution.” The Chicago fire of October 1871 killed an estimated 300 people, left over 90,000 homeless and caused an estimated \$196 million in damages, but another fire, the “forgotten fire” of October 1871 in northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, burned 2,400 square miles and killed between 1,200 and 2,400 people. The following year a three-day fire in Boston killed 13, destroyed over 800 buildings and did an estimated \$75 million in damages. The Republican National Convention of 1872 in Philadelphia included William Henry Grey’s speech seconding Grant’s re-nomination for President—the first speech to a national political convention by a person of African descent. The invention of barbed wire in 1874 would forever change the western plains, and two years later Colorado became the 38th state. Penny postcards were introduced in 1873, and in that same year free delivery of mail was provided in all cities with a population of at least 20,000. One of the greatest changes in communications was about to begin transforming society when, on March 7, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell received a patent for the telephone. The prosperity in America was not being enjoyed everywhere around the world. An earthquake in Venezuela and Columbia killed 16,000 in 1875 and between 1875 and 1876 over 5 million died in a two-year famine in India.

In Troy, Francis Thayer’s successes could be easily measured. He had a good business, he had been elected a State Senator, he enjoyed summer vacations at the seashore with his children, and his son was preparing to go to college. Despite all of this, illness would become a part of his daily life, and he would search in vain throughout the country for relief.

Letters and diaries by:

John Birge, Francis Thayer’s business partner

E. R. Eaton, a friend in Troy

William Henry Grey (also Gray), a speech
Catherine “Mungie” McKie Thayer
Francis S. Thayer
Catherine (later, Katherine) Sophia Thayer
Francis McKie Thayer

Letters and diaries written from: Albany, Cambridge, Troy, Luzerne, and Fire Island, New York; St. Paul, Minnesota; Amherst, Massachusetts; Montpelier, Vermont; Old Orchard Beach, Maine; Philadelphia, Chicago, and the White Mountains of New Hampshire.



1870

☞ Senator Thayer astonished:

It appears from statements in the *Troy Times* that Hon. Francis S. Thayer was recently surprised by the receipt of a letter from the Assistant Adjutant-General of the United States which read as follows: *Assistant Adjutant-General's Office* Washington, Feb. 28, 1870. *Mr. Francis S. Thayer, Troy, N.Y.* Sir: Referring to your application for the remission of the sentence against your son, George E. Thayer, Second United States Cavalry, I have to inform you that the same has been presented to the Secretary of War, and that he declines to intervene therein. SAMUEL BRECK, Ass't Adjutant-General.

Three days later Mr. Thayer, having in a measure recovered from his astonishment, replied as follows: Troy, March 3, 1870. *General S. Breck, Assistant Adjutant-General, Washington D. C.* My Dear Sir: I can neither fathom nor *father* your communication of 28th ult., which I beg leave to return herewith. My only son is a lad some 12 years of age, still under the parental roof, and I am very happy to say remarkably well behaved. Regretting that any one should bring discredit on the name, I am very respectfully, your obedient servant. FRANCIS S. THAYER.

—*The New York Times*, March 8, 1870, page 1.

April 5, 1870. Stayed in Albany last night. New York Charter passed Senate today 30 to 2. Harry G— & myself voted against it. To my mind a greater mistake never was made by any party than was made by the Republicans voting for Tweed's charter.

April 6. The smoke of the battle over the New York Charter is clearing away a little. Some of the best politicians in the State congratulate me on my course...

April 7. Albany at 9:30 met my good friend Genl. Woodford... and he took me by the hand & said, "Thayer you were right on the New York Charter..."

April 26. Adjourned this morning at half past one o'clock. Had the good fortune to get my local Bills through...

April 27. Once more at home, relieved from legislative duties. This winter has been one of perplexity & dissatisfaction to the minority, and at times I have wished myself away from the halls of legislation, however I have learned something of men & politics. At office most of the day looking over business.

April 30. Beautiful day. This is the twentieth anniversary of our wedding day and our hearts should be full of thanks to our heavenly Father for all his goodness & mercy

towards us. Moved to our old store, 143 River St. where we shall feel more at home...

May 9. Weather warm & pleasant. Busy getting our office cleaned & painted...

July 7. At Cambridge. Weather very warm. Busy drawing lumber & helping the carpenters. We build a kitchen 16 x 18 on the South end of the House and use the Parlor for a dining room. Finished drawing the lumber. When night came too tired to sleep.

July 22. ...Frankie (aged 13) commenced his clerkship in our office & I find him very useful...

July 29. Weather hot. Kate & Kittie took the 9:50 Express Train for Fire Island... to be absent about two weeks. I would like much to be with them but must stay at home & attend to business...

August 2. ...Recd a good letter from Kate at Fire Island reporting all well & doing well...
—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

☞ Summer vacation:

Troy, Aug 9th, 1870, Monday noon.

My darlings— I “broiled” in New York yesterday until 3:45 P.M., took the fast Saratoga train and arrived here at 8:15, hot & dusty. Frankie was at home reading the war news. He takes much interest in the movements of the great armies and I hope he will know more about what they are fighting for than did the Old Man “Peterkin.” It seems to be quite certain that the Prussians have gained “a great victory” which I hope will be repeated in double quick succession until the proud Emperor will be humiliated if not utterly put to rout. Frankie had a pleasant visit over Sabbath at Cambridge. Mother is very well & Edwin is ditto... I don’t know as there is anything new here... Frankie says he sends lots of love to Mother & Sister and I give you a great big heart full. As ever yours faithfully, *Frank.*

Troy, Aug 10th, 1870, Wednesday noon.

My own dear Kate— Your welcome note of Monday eve came to hand this morning. Your moonlight sail must have been charming and quite in contrast with the hot dusty ride I had on that evening. Yesterday & last night we had a heavy rain storm and today it is a little cooler, but still pretty hot. Frankie & I go to Saratoga this eve. I shall return in the morning... I hardly think I shall come after you as it takes two whole days and my time now is rather precious. I wish to save all the time I can so as to spend more at the Old Home. As to the time of your coming home— I leave it *entirely* with you. You & Kittie are doing well and I think you should not hurry home but stay and get all the strength you can... It is dinner time so good bye for this time. Frankie sends much love to Mother & Sister & I too. As ever yours sincerely, *Frank.*

Aug. 11th, 1870. Troy.

My own dear Kate & darling Kittie— Mother’s letter to Frankie was recd this morning. I am very happy to know that you are passing the time so pleasantly and I trust you will leave Fire Island much improved in health & strength... Aaron has pretty much made up his mind to take his family to Watch Hill and I think that a good place for them. Lizzie is better but not strong. The War News is somewhat exciting. Prussians seem to be marching on from victory to victory and many think they can see the end. I don’t

believe the French are so easily whipped. It is life or death with the proud Emperor and the tables will turn ere long. I think it will not be a war of a few days but months & perhaps years... Tis now about dinner time and after dinner I am going to Albany on business so excuse this very hasty scrawl. As ever your own *Frank*.

☞ Headlines from the *New York Times*:

WAR AT LAST, Formal Declaration by France of War Against Prussia, Acceptance of the Situation by King William, Troops Hurrying to the Frontier, and the Navies Getting in Readiness, France to Germany — She Wars Only Against Prussia. — July 16, 1870.

—*THE WAR*, An Actual Encounter on the Frontier at Last, The Prussians Repulsed in a Skirmish at Forbach, A French Reconnaissance Across the Prussian Boundary, Departure of the Queen of Prussia for Berlin, Her Farewell to the People of the Rhine Provinces — July 25, 1870.

—*THE WAR*, The First Battle—Capture of Saarbruck by the French Forces, Length of the Fight Two Hours—The Losses Light, Scenes in Berlin on the Departure of King William for the Front, Rumored Rupture Between Bismarck and Prussia's Crown Prince, Russia Denies Having Designs on the Danubian Provinces. Efforts of France to Conclude an Alliance with Denmark. — August 3, 1870.

August 18, 1870. Weather very warm. Mercury up near 90°. Hard at work all day getting settled in our new Old Home. P.M. over to Easton for stove-pipe. Kate & the girls came in P.M. & Ed brought Mother over & we are all together at the Old Home. Cooked our first meal in the new kitchen.

August 20. At Cambridge. Stayed at home. We are all so tired that we wish to rest. The weather is delightful. Expected Ed over but he did not come. Killed a chicken for dinner. We enjoy keeping house very much & the Old Home is dearer than ever.

October 19. Charming weather. At Cambridge all day, very busy fixing up things generally left for the winter. Put the plank around the cistern pump & worked hard all the



Lane and Carriage House of Hon. F. S. Thayer, Hurd's Stereoscopic Views, Greenwich, N.Y.; The Old Home, Cambridge, 1950.

day & evening. Could find plenty of work here for a month & I wish I could stay here & do it. I am getting tired of business.

October 21. Weather pleasant. Spent part of the day looking after political matters which are a good deal mixed. Business very good...

September 11. Charming day... Did not go to church. This is my birthday, 48 years old & I have great reason to be thankful to God for all his goodness & mercy to me & mine. I pray for a continuance of His loving kindness & tender mercies.

December 3. This is Kittie's birthday, 11 years old and so bright & happy. Her room is furnished with a new carpet & she has several presents from Mother, Grandmother & Brother...
—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

1871

April 18, 1871. ...Legislation is going on at a rate that is awful. Bills pass by the score without consideration...
—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

May 1871, New York.

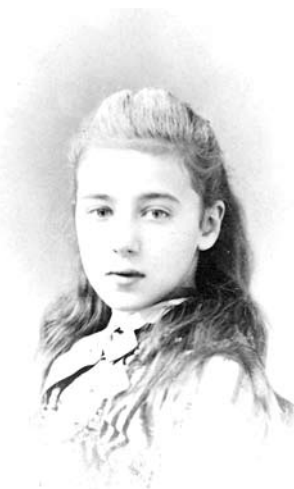
My dear ones at home— I left home as you know yesterday 2 P.M. Had a hot & dusty ride down but did not suffer much from asthma. On arrival at 5th Avenue Hotel I went up to 26th Street and took a Turkish Bath and a luxury it was too... Well I am going to Fire Island to stay over Sunday in hopes that sea air [End of letter from Francis Thayer.]

May 18, 1871. Office of E. W. Coleman & Co., Commission Merchants.

My Darlings at home— ...I have concluded to go on to Philadelphia this evening and tomorrow shall be at H. H. Mears & Son 330 & 329 South Water Street. I expect to return here tomorrow evening. I didn't have much faith in this trip but thought best to comply with the wishes of the head of the firm. It is quite desirable to have a correspondent in Philadelphia as we shall soon want to buy some new southern wheat there. I would stay at home with my dearest ones *all* the time if I could have my own way but you know I must take a short trip now & then in order to have all agreeable on River Street. With a heart full of love I am your *Frank*.

May 18th, 1871, Continental Hotel, Philadelphia, Thursday evening.

My own dear ones— I left New York at 6:30 this eve and arrived here at 10 o'clock and now, after a good supper, I'll say good night. I expect to spend the day here tomorrow and at eve go towards home or to Baltimore. Can't tell which way until I see what can be done here in the way of business. Now I am on here I might as well make the acquaintances we desire so that I shall not be obliged to make another journey. Should I go to Baltimore, I will spend Saturday there and go on to Washington Saturday eve and stay over Sunday and turn my face towards home Monday. This is a long time to stay away from you but I trust you will excuse me for it seems to be purely a necessity in order to please the head of the firm. Should I return without doing anything here, and not go to Baltimore, my journey would seem to be lost, and under the circumstances, I know you will bear my absence without saying "Frankie 'twas naughty in you to stay away so long." Rest assured I shall be with you at the earliest possible moment... Now good night. God bless you all. I do hope



Katherine Sophia Thayer, date unknown.

This letter includes the first mention of Francis Thayer being afflicted with asthma.

and pray you are feeling better this beautiful evening. More than ever your own *Frank*.

June 26, 1871. Charming day, cool & very comfortable... Eve went to Mt. Zion Lodge & then & there took my first degree in Masonry. Went home & told my dear Kate what I had done and it almost broke her loving & confiding sensitive heart.

June 30. Delightful weather. Mr. Bills at Saratoga. Came home from Cambridge this morning. Had a long & candid talk with my precious Kate & I do hope & pray that she will very soon become reconciled to my joining the Masons. Nothing new in business. Eve at prayer meeting. —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

☞ Summer vacation:

Fire Island, July 11, 1871.

My precious Darling— Well, I only wish I could know where are you and have been, if in Cambridge last night or in our own home and what your plans are for the coming two weeks... By the way we have moved to the bay side, have taken two connecting rooms, at the south end of the hall, one room large and one small. I found the rooms unoccupied, and without cards on them and Mr. S— said he would change if I desired, and I did because I am convinced that the air is not quite so strong on this side and thought best to try it. Hope it will be for the best... —I am your own *Kittie*.

July 16, 1871. Metropolitan Hotel, St. Paul. Sabbath P.M.

My own precious darlings— Here I am in this delightful city almost half-way across the continent and yet present with you in thought every moment. Another week I hope & trust will bring us together in health and strength. It seems a month to me since last Monday morning, traveling most of the time day & night, still I am not fatigued thanks be to the man who invented sleeping & Pullman cars. ...All about this western country I shall give you a full description by word of mouth. My pen is not equal to the task, so wait patiently for particulars. I will write from Chicago Tuesday telling you the course of my journey. I hope you are making the most of your stay at Fire Island. Drink in the pure air, take in the good food that will give you health, strength & flesh in abundant manner. Now goodbye my own dear precious Kate, Kittie & Frankie. God bless you now and always is the prayer of your own *Frank*.

July 18th, 1871, Chicago. [On stationery of Thayer & Tobey Furniture Co, Porter Thayer's company.]

Dearest and most precious ones at Fire Island— My heart was made glad this A.M. on my arrival here by the receipt of Kate's & Kittie's letters. I shall not go to St. Louis but leave for home tonight at 9 o'clock, spend most of the day in Toledo and tomorrow P.M. start for Troy. You may look for me on Saturday. No more time to write as Port is waiting to give me a drive about the city. Good-bye, God bless you all. Yours Always, *Frank*.

Troy, July 25th, 1871, Tuesday P.M.

My own dear Kate— I took the 11 o'clock train from New York & arrived here at 4:45... Rec'd a letter from Edwin last eve saying Mother was "first

rate.” ...No more time to write. Give Frankie & Kittie a word of caution in regard to bathing & sailing... —More than ever your own *Frank*.

Surf Hotel, Fire Island, July 25, 1871, Tues. A.M.

My precious Husband— I watched long after your form disappeared, and then with Mrs. Boyd turned my back to the Bay (which I cannot bear to do when you are on it) and slowly made our way up to the house. She is most happy in her “Bob” as I am in you my darling. Saturday morning the Yacht Party authorized Mrs. Eaton to invite a Party to go out in the Yacht. The Fullers, Eatons, Mr. Livingston, and ourselves made up the company. The sail was most charming, we went up through the Bay, and after a fine lunch on board we returned about 5 o’clock having made about forty miles. We all wished you could have been with us. I forgot to say to you— How would you like to have Francis go up and spend two or three days this week at the Old Home, putting things in shape? Perhaps it is not worth while, it will not take long when we get there.

12 noon— Oh! How cold it is today. We are having a driving north-east rain storm. The Steamboat is just in and a half dozen forlorn looking passengers have hurried up through the rain— how they wish they were at home. The Bay is covered with “white caps” and as I write in our room the rain is driving against the windows with that cheerless sound... I wish you were here, but my heart is so full of thankfulness that you have been brought safely to us again and so brimming over with sweet memories of your visit here, of your pleasant readings, of our evening out-look upon the Ocean and of all our loving intercourse, that I cannot be sad or homesick. Is it not a joy to be thus fortified by the trusting love that finds fruition here? ...I have just written Mother and hope you will see her... Children send love. —Your *Kittie*.

Troy, July 26th, 1871, Wednesday P.M.

My own precious Kate— I have only time to give you a thousand thanks for your sweet letter rec’d this morning full to the brim with all that makes loving hearts thrice happy. God bless you my darling and bring us together again in His own good time in peace & safety. Mr. Bills and Johnny Birge are at Saratoga and I shall run the machine with Johnny until Friday eve. Good bye Kittie, Your *Frank*.

July 26, 1871, Troy.

My Darling Daughter— Your very affectionate letter was recd. this morning and I thank you for it ever so much. I have only two minutes to write. Mr. Bills & Johnny Bills Jr. are away & I have all the work to do and I have been quite busy all day. It is very lonely down at our house especially when I set down at the table all alone. I hope we shall all be at home again, well & happy by & by. —Yours very affectionately, *Father*.

September 8, 1871. Perfectly delightful weather... Recd a flattering letter from C. W. G. New York suggesting my name for a high office in the State...

October 9. Terrible fire in Chicago. The whole country under great excitement. One third of the city in Ashes. Porter [Porter Thayer, brother of Francis S. Thayer, also “Port.”] came from Hoosick this morning & took the first train for home [Chicago].

October 10. Hardly anything thought of or talked about save the terrible fire in Chicago.



Catherine McKie Thayer, date unknown. C. R. Clark, Photographer, Troy, New York.

Loss estimated \$300,000,000 & 300 to 500 lives. From the accounts I think Port's street & house must be burned. Hope the factory is safe.

October 11. News in regard to the terrible fire in Chicago worse & worse & it makes me sick at heart to think of the awful calamity...

October 12. Weather pleasant. Recd a telegram from Port saying "Store & House burned. Factory & lumber found safe." We all feel truly thankful that it is no worse for the good fellow...

October 13. Recd a letter from Port in which he says we can have no conception of the terrible fire. His loss will be \$30,000 over insurance. People all over the country are sending money & supplies to Chicago. Flour market dull & the demand falling off a little.

—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

☞ Fires, October 1871:

A City In Ruins — The Terrible Devastation of Chicago. Three Square Miles in the Heart of the City Burned. Twelve Thousand Buildings Destroyed — Loss \$50,000,000. Every Public Building, Hotel, Bank and Newspaper Swept. Appeals to Other Cities and a Noble Response. Frightful Details of the Disaster from Our Own Reporters.

It is impossible to give in any approach to detail the devastation of Chicago. The fire of Sunday, previously reported, began in the lumber and coal tract, along the west bank of the river, laying waste several squares, as previously reported... A violent south-west prairie wind prevailed and filled the air with fiery messengers of destruction before which the cheaper frame tenements of Market, Wells and Franklin streets melted away like wax. It is impossible now to give even an approximately correct statement of the losses, but a faint idea may be formed when it is stated that every bank in the city, except the small Savings South Division, and one on Randolph Street, in West Division, are destroyed... Men who were millionaires yesterday morning are nearly penniless today, but more terrible than all is the awful certainty that many human beings have perished in the flames—how many no one can tell... Hundred of horses and cows have been burned in stables, and on the north side numbers of animals, though released from confinement, were so bewildered and confused by the sea of fire which surrounded them...

—*The New York Times*, October 10, 1871.

THE CHICAGO CALAMITY — I am able to commence my dispatch with the joyful intelligence that the ravages of the devouring element are checked, and the blessed rain has removed the appalling dread of total extermination that seemed at one time certain...

—*The New York Times*, October 11, 1871.

DESOLATED CHICAGO — Confidence Entirely Restored and Business Reviving — Honorable Action of the Mercantile Community — No Repudiation of Debts and no Extortions from the Needs — Grocers and Coal Dealers Refuse to Raise Their Prices — The People of New York and the Whole Country Responding — Enthusiastic Meeting in London, £10,000 Subscribed. —*The New York Times*, October 13, 1871, page 1.

THE FIRE FIEND — Fires Sweeping Over Forests, Farms, Villages and Towns. Fearful Sacrifice of Human Life in Michigan and Wisconsin — One Hundred and Fifty Persons Burned in A Barn. — IN MICHIGAN — Villages and Farm-Houses Destroyed — Many Lives Lost — Fires sweeping Over the Northern Part of the State. News has just been received that the largest portion of the City of Manistee, Michigan has been destroyed by fire... IN WISCONSIN — Fearful Loss of Life at Peshtigo A dispatch has

just been received from Green Bay, Wisconsin stating that a steamer had just arrived bringing a report that 325 bodies were buried at Peshtigo last night and as many more are still missing...

—*The New York Times*, October 13, 1871, page 5.

LATEST GENERAL NEWS — The Burning Forests in New York and Pennsylvania — Earnest Appeal in Behalf of the Michigan Sufferers — Twelve to Fifteen Thousand People in Absolute Need — The Case Against the Arch-Polygamists in Utah — *To the People of the United States*: We need instant and plentiful aid. From 12,000 to 15,000 people, at least, in the State of Michigan have lost their homes, food, clothing, crops, horses and cattle... The number of individual farm-houses, barns and frontier dwelling which have been destroyed by the all pervading fires cannot, from want of information, be accurately calculated. The aggregate we know to be enormous. The fires are still burning, and new ones spring up. The area of ruin and devastation is daily increasing, and much suffering exists— *The Michigan State Relief Committee* — UTAH, Washington, October 24. — A petition was received at the Executive Mansion today, fifty feet long, and signed by the women of Utah, protesting against polygamy, and urging effective measures to suppress its practice in that Territory.

—*The New York Times*, October 25, 1871, page 1.

December 13, 1871. ...Had some talk with Gil Robertson about my running for Congress next fall. I am inclined to go in for it if the way is clear.

December 31. ...Another year gone and the great question we should ask ourselves is this— What progress have we made in the service of our kind Heavenly Father? God in His Providence has bestowed upon us many blessings, more than we can number and I pray that “each tomorrow may find us better than today.” During the year our near friends & relations have generally been in the enjoyment of good health and favored with a good share of worldly prosperity, except my good brother Porter who lost half his fortune, say about \$35,000, by the great fire in Chicago, Oct. 8th & 9th.

—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

🌀 Newspaper clippings, found in the back of the 1872 diary, but they are all dated 1871:

The following just compliment to Hon F. S. Thayer of this city we find in the *Daily Saratogian*: We hear the name of Francis S. Thayer of Troy mentioned in connection with the office of Comptroller on the state ticket. We have no hesitation in fully indorsing Mr. Thayer as a man who can be relied on every time. His position against Tammany in the Legislature of 1870, when he fought the Tweed Charter single-handed is still fresh in our memory, an evidence not only of his sagacity but his courage. Nor is his fitness for office of Comptroller any less than his ability and reliability as a legislator. With a state ticket made up of men like Thayer, the opposition will be left absolutely without cause of appeal even to Democratic voters.

—September 17, 1871.

FOR SECRETARY OF STATE In several Republican journals in the state the name of Hon. Francis S. Thayer of this city has been favorably mentioned for nomination on the Republican state ticket. Some of them have suggested his candidacy for Secretary of State; others for Comptroller. To such suggestions Mr. Thayer has listened with pleasure, because they evinced the estimation among his fellow citizens of his conduct as a representative in the Legislature during the last four years. Yet he has not felt as though it would be practicable for him to accept a nomination, if tendered to him, on account

The Great Chicago Fire immediately captured the consciousness of America and is well remembered, including the legend of a cow kicking over a lantern. Peshtigo, Wisconsin, had a single horse drawn steam-pumper to combat the fire that consumed that community. Burning over 2,400 square miles in remote areas of Wisconsin and Michigan, the fire killed between 1,200 and 2,400 people, making it the most disastrous forest fire in American history.

of other engagements which seemed to require all his time and attention. With respect to these, however, it is now possible for Mr. Thayer to make arrangements which would permit his acceptance of a nomination and election, if they are made. To the solicitation, therefore, he now responds by consenting to receive the nomination for Secretary of State, if the Convention shall find it fit to give it to him.

Mr. Thayer's nomination at the present junction of our politics is one which would be well received among the Republicans in the state. His record in the Senate during a period of extraordinary temptation and amidst unusual seductions is without blemish. He constantly served the people and their interests with unswerving faithfulness. He was the only Republican Senator in 1870 who voted from first to last against the greatest piece of legislative jugglery which the Tammany Ring contrived; namely the Tweed charter. For these reasons there would seem to be a particular propriety in choosing Mr. Thayer as our standard-bearer in a campaign whose end will be a signal triumph over the misrule and corruption of the Tammanyized Democracy of the state.

—*Troy Times*, September 22, 1871.

1872

January 1, 1872. Truly thankful for the mercies & blessings of the past, I offer sincere prayer to God for His choicest blessings in the future. At 9 A.M. went to church prayer meeting...

January 4. Weather mild. A little snow but not enough for sleighing. Kate in bed most of the day with headache. Expected Dr. Mosher but he did not come...

January 10. Weather mild, south wind. Dr. Mosher came down to see Kate. I do hope & pray she may soon be better

January 20. Weather mild. Dr. Mosher came down to see Kate. Sold about 300 Bls. flour this week, very good trade today...

January 24. Weather decidedly cold. Went to Albany in A.M. to see about some Canal appointments

January 30. ...P.M. went to Albany with Gil Robertson to see about canal appointments...

February 1. Pleasant winter weather. Aunt Lucy went home at 5 P.M. ... Rec'd a letter from Ed [Edwin McKie] saying that a little daughter was born to them this morning at 6 o'clock and both Jennie & the baby are doing "splendidly"...

February 29. Cold & unpleasant. This has been a very trying month to those who are at all sensitive to wind & weather. Kate has been obliged to stay in the house most of the time...

April 4. Bright & beautiful day. Libby Beadle here & Kate took her about town. John backed against a wagon pole & smashed in the back of his carriage which is about a \$40 job...

April 5. Pleasant. Mother's birthday [Sophia Whiteside McKie], 77 years old and the light of our household. God grant that she may be spared many years.

April 30. Beautiful day. Twenty-two years ago this day we were united & Oh how much happiness we have enjoyed. God grant that we may see many more happy years...

May 19. Rainy day. In the House all day trying to get the better of a cold I have had for weeks. Took medicine and at night put a mustard paste on my chest...

June 5. Pleasant A.M. Rainy P.M. National Convention at Philadelphia to nominate candidates for Prest. & V. Prest. Grant of course will be nominated... Eve at home.

—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Edwin McKie, 1818–1895,
married Jane "Jennie" I. Shortt,
1850–1930, and their baby was
named Jennie Sophia McKie.



Philadelphia — Opening of the Republican National Convention — Magnificent Spectacle Presented at the Academy — All of the Old Leaders of the Party Present — Eloquent and Patriotic Speeches the Order of the Day — Addresses by Morton McMichael, Senators Morton and Logan — Fervid Utterances of the Colored Delegates

Last night was one of the most memorable in the history of this city. Blazing illuminations, great bonfires, bands of music, crowded streets everywhere...

...Finally, Mr. Borusk of California obtained the floor, and said they had all heard with delight the distinguished speakers who had spoken so eloquently in favor of the colored race, and now desired that that race now be heard through one of its representatives. [Applause.]

Loud calls were made for Gray, and Wm. H. Gray, of Arkansas, a medium-sized dark-skinned colored man, of genteel appearance and good manners, came to the platform and said: Gentlemen of the Convention: For the first time probably in the history of the American people, there stands before you in a National Convention assembled, a representative of that oppressed race that has lived among you for two hundred and fifty years, lifted by the magnanimity of this great nation, the power of God, and the laws of war, from the degradation of slavery to the proud position of American citizenship [Great applause.] Words fail me on this occasion to thank you for this evidence of your grand progress in civilization, where a people of such magnitude, the grandest and greatest nation upon the earth, not only in the recognition of the merit of the glory of the war which her noble sons waged so successfully, have in convention assembled willingly, and listened not only to the greatest of her orators, but to the humblest citizens of this great Republic. [Great applause.] I scarcely know where to begin upon an occasion like this. If I raise the curtain of the past, then I open the door of the sarcophagus from which we have but just emerged. If I go back to the primary history of my race on this continent, I would open up, perhaps the discussion of things and circumstances that would make us blush, and the blood upon our cheeks to tingle in view of the evidence of the condition of our race such as the American people have never thought of in its degradation in the shameful and humble condition from which we have just emerged. But this is scarcely necessary. We are ready to say, "Let the dead past bury its dead." While we remember these errors, while we remember all these degradations, there is no vengeance, thank God, found in our hearts; no revengeful feelings; no desire of retaliation; but God has given us a heart to thank the American people for the position in which we stand today, and we are willing, as I said before, to "Let the dead past bury its dead," and go on in our progress and fit ourselves to become what we have been made by law— American citizens in deed and in fact. [Applause.] It is the wonder of the world—the miracle of the nineteenth century—that in this great struggle, which rocked this country from centre to circumference—that amid the debris of 250 years a living people were found by this great nation, and lifted from that degradation, as it were, by the strong arm of power, and at once and without forethought placed, as I have before remarked, upon the broad plane of American citizenship. If we have failed somewhat in the sanguine expectations of our friends, yet upon the whole I think we have fairly worked out the problem, so far as we have gone. Today, for the first time, God has pleased me with a sight of that grand, noble and good old man, Gerrit Smith, [applause] who stood by us and for us when we could not stand for ourselves. [Tremendous applause.] The sight of him repays me for all the toil, all the suffering, all the pain of years. The sign of him renews my faith in that humanity which is divine.



William Henry Grey as a young man.

Gerrit Smith, 1797–1874, was an active philanthropist, abolitionist, and social reform advocate from Peterboro, New York, near Utica. Before the Civil War, he was very active in anti-slavery societies, a financial backer of John Brown, 1800–1859, in Kansas, and even sold Brown the farm in North Elba, New York, where Brown was buried. Later Smith was willing to help underwrite the \$1 million bond needed to free Jefferson Davis. Working with Frederick Douglass, Smith was an early advocate of black suffrage. Smith's first cousin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1815–1902, was a founder and leader of the women's suffrage movement.

There is strong circumstantial evidence that William Henry Grey, spelled “Gray” in the *New York Times* article, was the son of Henry A. Wise of Virginia. Wise had emancipated a slave, Elizabeth Gray, and her two children, Mary Jane and William Henry, in 1827. Years later, a young “mulatto boy” of that name accompanied Wise to the House of Representatives and helped him there with his paperwork. There is no evidence of any subsequent contact between Wise and the young man, and it is not known if Wise knew of Grey’s speech at the 1872 Republican Convention. Grey lived in Pittsburg, Cincinnati, and Saint Louis before moving to Arkansas in 1865. He attended the 1868 Republican Convention in Chicago where, coincidentally, Francis S. Thayer from Troy, New York, was a delegate. Grey died in 1888. Some of history is incomplete and uncertain. The Virginia newspaper used the name “John A. Gray” in its brief report about the Philadelphia speech perhaps because the editor knew of Grey’s relationship to Wise and wanted to minimize discussion of it in Virginia. During all of this time, there was perhaps no communication between Wise and Grey because that might have been one of the conditions of the emancipation of Grey’s mother years before. Some writers in that time period might have described Grey as a “mulatto” to indicate that he was the son of a prominent white man. Descendants of Henry A. Wise and William Henry Grey today acknowledge

Continued next page

[Prolonged cheering.] We are here today, gentlemen, a part and parcel of this great people, an integral part of the great body of this country, and here for the purpose, in harmony with you, of intrusting therein of power into the hands of that hero that led us through a great bloody struggle of years; led us out to citizenship; and who, when the war ended and he was nominated for President in 1868 said: “Let us have peace.” The solving of the problem of our citizenship has been the work of years. No one knew how that position was to be brought about. But few men could comprehend the situation, or the political position of affairs in the South—few men knew. I happened to be present upon that occasion in 1868 when Gen. Grant was nominated, and when I went home to my state of Arkansas I know very well, and there are men here who can attest it, that throughout that political canvas it cost the lives of three hundred black men in Arkansas to carry the State for Ulysses S. Grant. Today the problem is being worked out to further solution. The Kuklux problem is being worked out. The Kuklux situation is settled, and the peace of the country secured. But, had it not been for the law, and the men at the helm who had the nerve to execute it, that organization would be today in full venom in that section of the country; therefore, we urge upon the American people to give us Ulysses S. Grant for our candidate, for his name is a tower of strength at the South and the only name that unrepentant rebels respect. [Prolonged cheers.] He is the man to work out the great problem now being solved in this country by the great Republican Party. As has been truly said the past problem has not yet been fully solved. Its duties are not entirely fulfilled. Its organization must not yet be disintegrated. The full measure of our citizenship is not yet completed. We stand many of us in a prominent position in the Southern States, but right among the people we hold no position. The law is so weak, and the public sentiment so perverse, that the common civilities of a citizen are withheld from us. We want the Civil Rights bill [Applause.] We demand that we shall be respected as men among men—free American citizens. [Cheers.] We do not ask that for any small reason. There are always two classes of people. We have to be afraid of that class who love us too well and hate us too much. [Laughter.] All we ask is a fair share in the race of life, and give us the same privileges that are given to other men. I hope the action of this Convention will be such that we may be able to go home rejoicing. So far as the colored people of the South are concerned, they are a unit today for Ulysses S. Grant. [Cheers.] I know they told us often “niggers” can now go for the father of Republicanism. When we objected to this on the ground that he was not the Republican nominee, they said he is the father of Republicanism. Said I, “Very well; if that is so, I thank him for having been the father of such a brood of illustrious and loyal men, but I fear, like Abraham of old, he takes Hagar instead of Sarah. We cannot afford that.” [Laughter.] If you do this, we do not intend to recognize any of those outside children. [Renewed laughter.] There is the inheritance of the free woman, the legitimate offspring of the old man, and we are going to keep the boys all at home. [Cheers.] I fear some of these talkers are like the Ishmaelite of old, and the old lady will have to hunt for water in the wilderness. [Great laughter.] The black people of the State of Arkansas are solid. They know who are their friends. They know very well there is no standing for the black man outside of the Republican Party. [Cheers.] They know they cannot afford to vote against their best friends, and they will not do it. They will all vote for Grant from the start, from Arkansas to the Gulf of Mexico. [Cheers.] I am happy to hear from other gentlemen of the Convention the sentiments here uttered, and for the privilege of knowing that the ranks will be kept solid together for the victory that will perch upon our banners in the coming contest. [Prolonged applause.]

—*The New York Times*, June 6, 1872.

☞ A Virginia newspaper describing the same event:

Meeting of the Republican Convention — Philadelphia

By Associated Press

The Convention Called to Order — Temporary Organization

Philadelphia, June 5. Ex-Governor Claflin, of Massachusetts, called the Republican convention to order shortly after noon today... Committees on credentials and permanent organization were appointed... During the day speeches were made by Messrs. Morton, Logan, Gerrit Smith, Governor Oglesby, John A. Gray (colored delegate from Arkansas), and others; all of them in warm eulogy of Grant, who, it is declared, will be nominated by acclamation...

—*Daily Dispatch*, Richmond, Virginia, Thursday, June 6, 1872.



August 23, 1872. Weather hot & sultry. Troy in morning & back (to Cambridge) at eve as usual... Letter from Ed saying his little baby was so very poorly.

August 24. Weather hot & sultry. Kate & Kittie went to Cambridge this morn... just in time to see the sweet little baby pass away to the better land. Ed & Jennie are completely crushed by the blow. The light of their home has gone to heaven. God bless & sustain them...

August 26. Over to Cambridge with Kate & children to attend the funeral of the dear little Baby Jennie Sophia, born the 1st day of last February. Very large funeral. The whole community sympathetic with the afflicted parents. She was brought over to the old Whiteside burying ground & placed beside her Grandmother. This has indeed been a sad day to me.

November 5. Beautiful day. Election passed off very quietly. Democrats long ago made up their minds to defeat and they seem to take very little interest. At store most of the day. Business very good. Early in eve learned enough to insure a great Republican victory everywhere.

November 6. Election news comes in gloriously. Victory, victory is the watchword today... Almost every horse in the city is sick. Our horse Charley is very sick, but John takes the best care of him.

November 8. Weather cool & pleasant... My three horses sick. Charley very sick...

November 11. Weather cool & pleasant... Horse sickness better...

December 22. Cold day. Water pipes froze, burst & leaked down into the pantry & kitchen. Mr. Vincent preached in A.M. to a small audience. Cold weather kept people at home about their fires. This is the coldest day of the season...

December 28. Breakfast at 8 o'clock & soon after at Dr. Clarks where we spent an hour & a half. The Dr. examined Kate & myself thoroughly. He says there is no serious trouble with Kate's lungs, good care & good living is all she requires. To me, he said I must take the world easily which I will do...
—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

A summary of 1872:

February 1, 1872. Pleasant winter day... Letter from Edwin, he has a daughter. What an event.

April 5. Mother's birthday. Pleasant day... Frank went to Albany at 5. Returned at 11

that a relationship very likely exists between them, and perhaps there will be a time when modern science will provide a definitive answer to a question that the historical record alone can not do. William Henry Grey was the first person of African descent to address a national political convention.

her Grandmother Catherine Whiteside McKie, 1793–1824.

Catherine's diary has no entries describing the death of her brother's baby in August.

p.m. I rejoice in this my dear Mother's 77th birthday that she is in such comfortable health. I hope she will be spared to us many years...

April 30. Twenty-two years ago today we were married. How much I thank our dear Father in Heaven for the heart-joys of these years I cannot tell. May there be many more given us, each sweeter, better than the last.

September 11. My dear husband is fifty years old, nothing to give him but a heart-full of love and some beautiful flowers & yes a most earnest prayer that "all things may work for his best good."

December 31. This is the last day of the old year. With such feelings of gratitude and regret we write 72. —*Excerpts from the 1872 diary of Catherine McKie Thayer.*

1873

January 22, 1873. Weather cold & pleasant. Business very good. Had a talk with Mr. Bills about my selling out my interest in the business. I need for peace & rest. The fact is, Mr. B— is too fickle & unpleasant & I will sell out if I can...

February 21. The most severe storm of the season. Snowing hard from Northeast all day— 16–18 inches.

Business very dull. Had a long talk with Mr. Bills about business. We are in the opinion that it is about time for us to separate. Mill running moderately...

February 26. Beautiful day. Had a plain talk with Mr. Bills about selling out or buying out. I offered him \$22,000 for half of the Mill. He offered me \$20,000. Great excitement in the stock market. —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Wall Street Panic in Stocks Yesterday — Cause of the Depression — A Heavy Operator Reported in Difficulty — At the very latest house on 'Change, yesterday, it was rumored that Mr. A. B. Stockwell, President of the Pacific Mail Steam-ship Company and one of the heaviest operators in the street, was heavily involved, and that his failure was extremely probable... Mr. Stockwell's losses, it is generally said, are due to the course of Jay Gould, who for the last few weeks has been locking up currency, thereby forcing holders to part with their stocks. The entire stock market was terribly demoralized yesterday, especially in those lines which Mr. Stockwell deals extensively in... Jay Gould, who has kept away from the "street" for a few weeks past, and who is generally supposed to be at the bottom of this trouble was visited by a TIMES reporter, last evening. Mr. Gould said that he had heard about the trouble through his private wire... that the public did wrong to charge him with being the cause of the panic... In spite of Mr. Gould's general denial, there is but little doubt that he is at the bottom of the depression of the stock market, and that he will add a large sum to his already immense gains in the Street. —*The New York Times, February 27, 1873.*

March 3, 1873. Weather cold... Had a little talk with Bills about business matters. He asks me to give up politics & attend to business every other month for three years. I'll do as I have a mind about that...

March 19. Mild & pleasant. Business very good for the season. Mr. Bills still looking for a Partner, if he doesn't succeed soon I shall have to buy him out & run the business alone...

March 24. Very cold. Mr. Bills handed me his figures for the Mill & I put them in my pocket without looking at them. Attended the funeral of Mrs. Cumberland... At dinner I looked at Mr. Bills' figures, \$22,500 & at once decided to buy...

March 26. Sleet & snow enough for sleighing again. Accepted Mr. Bills offer to sell

the Mill at \$22,500 & \$500 bonus I agreed to give him... Glad the vexed question is settled & I hope & trust 'tis for the best...

April 26. Cold & windy. Mr. Bills returned from the western part of the State whither he went to buy a mill. He bot one at Middleport (Niagara County).

May 24. Summer weather, at store all A.M... Markets dull and declining, stock market perfectly lifeless... eve called at Mr. Eaton's with Kate —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

That is the last entry in Francis Thayer's diary in 1873. There is no explanation for this, and there are no other diaries by him.

☞ Summer vacation:

June 18th, 1873.

My darling Kittie— ...I am inclined to get a little sea air for my asthma and don't be disappointed if I slip off to Fire Island for a day or two...*Fraddie.*

Troy, Aug. 18th, 1873, Monday, 6 o'clock P.M.

My own dear ones at Fire Island— I arrived in New York just in time to take the 10 o'clock train, arrived in Albany just too late to take the 2 o'clock local and had to wait there nearly an hour. Rained hard most of the way. I found business matters all straight. Thought but not to go up home this eve as it rained hard and the prospect of walking or a ride on a back road seemed so good that I thought but to stay here. I will go up to Liz's for tea and after a while find my way down town. —Yours affectionately & truly, *Francis.*

Aug 19, 1873, 2:30 P.M.

My darling wife & children— You will look for a letter tomorrow & for the writer next day. I am afraid you will be disappointed about seeing me on Thursday for there is more to do here than Johnny Roche can attend to well. Business is good & it needs an older head than will be here when I am gone. I will certainly come at the earliest possible day... Today I feel very well and hard at work. Have just come up from dinner. A desk full of letters must be answered... Hope you are all having a pleasant time. Be careful about bathing & sailing. Yours affectionately, *Frank.*

Fire Island, Aug 20, 1873.

My dear Husband— I have just rec'd your letter of yesterday and am glad to know that you rested well "last night." We have not seen the sun since you left us. It has rained hard every night and is raining now... Now the Eatons leave here Friday morn. What do you say to me going with them? Kittie is longing to go. Frankie is ready to do so, and I feel that you can come down here whenever you *find* or take the time... —*Kittie.*

December 3, 1873, Troy.

My Dear Daughter— You are fourteen years old today and O how thankful we should all feel that our home is so happy. It is my wish to make you a present not as a pledge of my love and affection for you know my darling that you have those in full measure. But it is pleasant to give and receive something on a birthday. I have not had the time today to go into the stores, and select something for you so I give you a "greenback" which will buy a token to remind you that my love is "evergreen" and constant. —Your devoted and affectionate Father, *Francis S. Thayer.*

To— Miss Catherine Sophia Thayer, Washington Park, Troy, N.Y.

Auditorship Francis Thayer was appointed Auditor of the New York Canal Commission. An unidentified newspaper article reads: "The appointment of F. S. Thayer to the position of Canal Auditor is one of the most commendable appointments that the Governor has made during his administration. We have known him for many years, and can say without fear of contradiction, there is no higher toned, honorable gentleman in the State than F. S. Thayer, of Troy." Subsequently, political opponents accused him of certain improprieties but those were all unfounded and unproven. An unidentified newspaper column describes that: "Indeed, the Commission presented its charge to the Commissioners of the Canal Funds two weeks ago and demanded the suspension of the Auditor without having given him any opportunity whatever for a hearing. And there is every reason to believe that this report was then in type—except as some few additions have been rendered necessary by subsequent proceedings—and that the design was to consummate the suspension and publish the report all at one blow, so as to produce a public sensation. An hour was chosen for the meeting in the afternoon when it was supposed the Auditor would be away. No notice was given him. The members of the Board were clandestinely called together. The proceeding was to be entirely of a secret character, and it was expected that the suspension might be immediately accomplished before the Auditor should know it or the public hear

Continued on next page

August 11, 1873. Frank, children and myself left in the morn for Fire Island.

August 30. All home fr. Fire Island. Mother met us at the cars. Rhoda has been staying with her. House beautiful with flowers.

October 24. All came home from Cambridge. Frankie & Kittie here in school.

—*Excerpts from the 1873 diary of Catherine McKie Thayer.*

1874

Troy. April 3, 1874

My Dear Kate— Nothing from you today. Kittie said it was too bad Mother did not write. Of course we shall hear from you tomorrow morning... I hear nothing more from Albany in regard to the Auditorship. That's a matter I shall not run after. When it presents itself in a manner that requires action on my part I shall give it due deliberation and decide wisely I hope. Of course your wishes will be consulted... I hope you are having such a good time that you will think best to stay and come up with Jim the first of next week. We will take good care of Mother & make her birthday very happy. Love to all & all love to you my darling. —*Frank.*

April 15, 1874. Warm and sunny. Francis went to Albany as Auditor. I spent the day as best I could but do not feel that he is able to add to his labors...

April 20. Francis to Albany this rainy morn. Home to dinner... to the office and home at 1/2 past 7 or so for the eve. Raining all day and I fear my good husband has taken cold.
—*Diary of Catherine McKie Thayer*

☞ A trip to the White Mountains of New Hampshire:

July 2, 1874. ...Took cars for Littleton at 8. It rained hard and we had some dinner in cars... I had sick headache. Arrived at L [Littleton, New Hampshire] at 7:30. Stopped at Thayer's Hotel, a good place. Francis and all like this house.

July 3. Francis had asthma last night. He sat too long downstairs with the door open and it was damp. Took the stagecoach... for the Profile about 9:30, distance twelve miles. It was a hard ride for Mrs. Mason, but a charming one to us, almost entire distance through woods. Reached the Profile at 1:30. It is wonderfully beautiful in situation. These grand mountains, like walls of living green, all more than I dreamed of in beauty. This aft. Mr. Mason took a short walk with me. Francis, Frankie, Kittie agree that this is the loveliest spot in nature we ever saw. The mountains are grand and start from your very feet.

July 5. Mrs. Mason and I walked to Profile Lake. She seemed a little tired.

July 6. Lovely day. Our party, except Mrs. Mason, went to the Flume and the Pool. The first is wonderful and the ride is charming. In the aft Kittie had a short horseback ride with her father.

July 7. Lovely day. This A.M. Francis & I went to Profile Lake together. Took a boat and went out fishing but did not get a nibble...

July 8. Breakfast at 7. A goodbye to our dear friends and this charming spot and with Kittie and myself on top of the coach we whirled away from the Profile down the mountain. The ride was a new variety to me but after about 10 miles I was glad to change seats with Francis. He soon found Dr. Shafton, a son of his old friend... We stayed at Fabyan.

July 9. Fabyan House. I had such a headache that I could not go on to the Crawford House. This A.M. with Dr. S— took coach for base of Mt. W[ashington]. ... a pleasant ride of four miles and then took rail up the Mt. —an hour and a half took us above the world to Tip Top from which the view is indescribably grand and wonderful...

July 10. Twin Mountain House. This house is well kept and the air is very fine, the views charming, the mts not so near, and the sun rises early. Left at 8 o'clock by cars, changed five times and arrived at Burlington about 5:30...

July 11. Burlington, Vermont. This morn (cloudy) we took a carriage and drove about this beautiful town... took the boat *Vermont*, Capt Flagg, had a delightful sail to Whitehall... and then to our very sweet home.

July 13. Francis to Albany. I was busy putting away and unpacking. Kittie as useful as I could wish and Frankie lending a helping hand.

July 14. Pack, pack. Kittie and I made currant jelly this a.m....

—*Diary of Catherine McKie Thayer.*

1875

June 30th, 1875, Amherst.

Dear Ones at home— We left Albany at 2:40 and came through to Springfield where we arrived at 7:30... took the cars at 8:15 for Northampton. On inquiry we learned that the Hotel accommodations were not very good at N— so we engaged a man to bring us over here (8 miles) last evening... I slept well. No asthma and this morning we are up at 7. After breakfast went to the College Hall where were assembled some slightly anxious young men awaiting the oral examination in Greek... I have engagements to meet in Albany Friday and as we shall get through with examinations by tomorrow 4 o'clock we might as well leave for home. Have done nothing about Boarding place yet. Will see to that tomorrow. Frank keeps up good courage and is as usual quiet, dignified, and retiring. There are a dozen or more boys here at the Hotel and Frank does not take to them. He says there is time enough to get acquainted. We are much pleased with the college buildings, grounds etc etc. It is a beautiful old town... It almost makes me wish I was young again. Still I'll not complain but rejoice that my humble "Alma mater" brought with it the richest treasure of my life, Old Cambridge Academy forever... All together I am much pleased with Amherst and hope and pray our dear boy will not only honor himself by coming here but add to the reputation of this old time honored institution of learning. With much love to all I am as ever yours lovingly. *Francis.*

☞ Letters to Frank at Amherst College:

Sep. 6, 1875, South Cambridge.

My dear Son— Soon after the family party passed from sight, I went up to your room, and found razor and strap on the bureau, and queried if they should not have been put in your bag, but Grandmother and I concluded that you would be able to get a clean shave in Mass. in some way. I cannot tell you how much we have missed you all in so many ways... The remainder of the day I spent in the garden with W. McKie all weeding, pruning and clipping... That God may bless and keep you in the prayers of your loving, *Mother.*

of it... The plan miscarried, and both the attempted suspension of the Auditor and the publication of the report were delayed. But though the Commission was thus forced against its own will into granting a hearing, it has lacked the grace to modify in important particulars, as the examination required, the report which had already been prepared." Francis Thayer resigned from that position in 1876.



Francis McKie Thayer, C. R. Clark, Photographer, Troy, New York.

Sep. 9th, 1875, *State of New York, Senate Chamber.*

My Dear Son— While waiting for my dinner I'll drop you a few lines. I need not tell you that it was a "choking" time with us when we left you all alone among strangers— strangers today, but among them I trust you will now find many good friends... I pray God that you may be blessed with health and strength to bear well each day's duties. *Aim high my son*, discharge every duty faithfully & manfully, and you will succeed... With much love, I am you affectionate *Father*.

Sept. 11th, 1875. *State of New York, Canal Department.*

My dear Son— Your welcome letter of yesterday's date came to hand this morning... We had a slight frost this morning at Cambridge. Mother & Kittie covered the flowers, tomatoes etc. in the garden last eve. I am 53 years old today. These birthdays remind me that I am growing old, so it is my son, one generation after another... —*Father*.

Sept. 15, 1875. *State of New York, Canal Department.*

My Dear Son— Thanks for your good letter of yesterday's date. Hope you will find time to give us a few lines if not more, quite frequently. With all I have to do, I'll take the time to write you every day or two... Let us know how you are getting on in your studies and all about your introduction to College life... —*Father*.

Sep. 15, 1875, Old Home, Cambridge.

My dear dear Son— Your good Father brought to us this evening your letter to him of the 14th and one to me written Sabbath evening. Both have been read and re-read with an interest you may understand someday but cannot now. ... We trust you are in the best place for your highest good, and so trusting we have been very much pleased with the description of your rooms and hope you will enjoy yourself in them... Grandmother had a very poor day Monday. We had Dr. yesterday and she is much better today... How I would like to step in and look at you in your pleasant quarters. How do you like your slippers? I thought them beautiful, and do they fit? ... GrandM says "give my love to him and tell him I wish I could see him." —*Mungie*.

Mungie A family name for Catherine McKie Thayer.

Sept. 18, 1875. *State of New York, Canal Department.*

My Dear Son— I suppose you have a little rest from study Saturdays. If you were at Williamstown you could come home and spend the sabbath after all. I think you made a wise choice in deciding upon Amherst... I hope you will write us frequently and keep us well informed as to yourself. Your letters are good and indeed very acceptable. Yours Truly, *Father*.

Sept. 22, 1875. *State of New York, Canal Department.*

My Dear Son— I have nothing new or interesting to communicate... Let us know all about how you are getting on in your first weeks of college life. How about the societies etc. etc. etc. —*Father*.

September 24, 1875, Old Home, Cambridge, New York.

My dear Boy— Your letter of the 20th was brought us by Father this eve. We are glad to know that you are interested in your studies... Have you had

a touch of homesickness? I used to suffer terribly with it and know how hard it is, but you cannot miss us more than we do you. Dear Grandmother said tonight with swimming eyes, “I do so miss my good-night kiss.” We all think of you with our first and last waking thoughts, and hope and pray that you are growing strong, wise and are truly happy... Kittie says who do you know in your class? You will have to tell her about the *boy*... Good night my precious boy. God bless and keep you. Loving, *Mungie*.

STATE OF NEW YORK.



Senate Chamber.

W. H. W. Sep. 25th 1875

My dear Son:

Oct. 1st., 1875. *State of New York, Senate Chamber.*

My dear Son— Yours of 30th came duly to hand this morning. You are certainly an excellent correspondent and these frequent missives of affection are bright spots in our daily life... have no doubt your society experiences will prove pleasant and profitable. It does us good to mix with the world around us. One thing we should always keep in mind, that is, we should strive to make our associates better... I am much better of my cold & asthma. You may expect a box of grapes next week... I remain your affectionate *Father*.

Oct. 5th, 1875. *State of New York, Canal Department.*

My dear Son— I rather expected a letter from you this morning but was disappointed. Of course I would not have you neglect your studies to write letters, but I assure you my good boy, we are all hungry for your letters and hope you will continue to write often... Write as often as you have the time... Kittie wrote you a loving letter Sunday evening, asking a good many questions etc., etc. —all of which you will no doubt answer in due time... —*Father*.

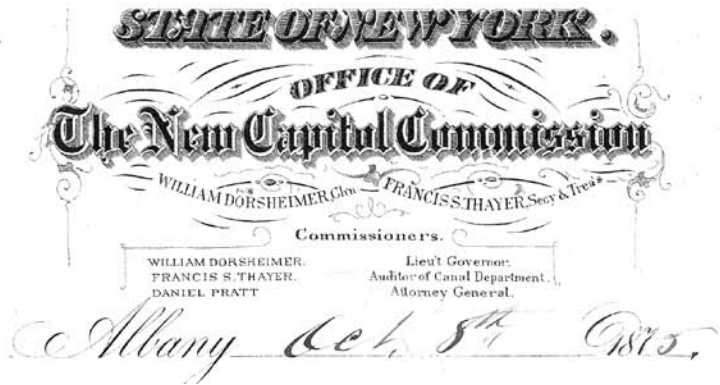
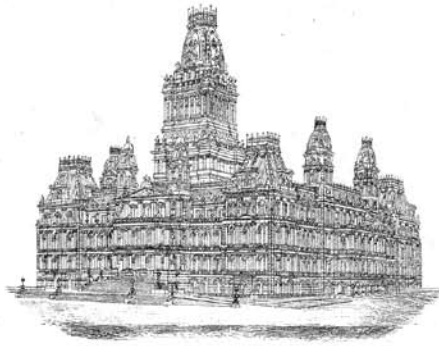
Oct. 7th., 1875. *State of New York, Canal Department.*

My dear Son— I recd your good letter of 4th yesterday morning. With good health and hard study I have no doubt you will stand above par in all your studies at the end of your first term in college... —*Father*.

Oct. 13th, 1875. *State of New York, Senate Chamber.*

My dear Son— Your note of 12th came to hand yesterday morning (I think you must have got ahead of time one day.) ...I will send you a draft for \$75, tomorrow and on receipt of it you can pay Mr. Delano. ...Mother went to Hoosick yesterday to see Aunt Fanny who is very near the great change that awaits us all. Mother thought she would not survive more than two or three days... —*Father*.

Mr. Delano The Delano House for Permanent and Transient Guests was where Frank boarded in 1875. The files include several bills from the Delano House for: board, fire, washing, and, in one instance, a “loan” of \$5.00. This building was on the site of the current Mayo-Smith House, formerly the Chi Psi fraternity at Amherst College.



October 14th, 1875, Old Home, Cambridge, New York.

My dear Boy— We have just had prayers and Father has gone up-stairs. Kittie is embroidering. Grandmother sits by the stove, which the cold weather obliged us to resort to and Dandy lies in the rocking chair. ... We now count the weeks to Thanksgiving. Father and Kittie have written so often and they write such entertaining letters that I am very tame in comparison, but if Mungie does not write often, she thinks, and well you know that, all the time of and for the dear boy. ... Tuesday I went to see Aunt Fanny and I found her very feeble. Today she is still lower, but she shows great power of endurance.
—Mungie.

Oct. 14th, 1875. *Office of the New Capital Commission.*

My dear Son— Enclosed I send you Troy City Ntl Bank Draft on the Third National Bank New York for \$75. Made payable to your order. You can put your name on the back of the Draft right under mine and hand it to Mr. Delano. ... Aunt Fanny still lingers growing more feeble every day. The Dr. said yesterday that she could not live many hours... How are you getting on in your studies? Are you making up the conditions so that you will be all right at the end of the first term?... —Father.

Oct. 16th. 1875, "Whiteside," Sabbath evening.

My dear Son— Mother says, write my dear boy and tell him how I wish I could put my arms around him and kiss him... You have been aware for two or three weeks that every letter from home might bring the sad news of the death of your Aunt Fanny—the sad reality came Saturday morning about 6 o'clock when the spirit of a noble woman peacefully took its flight to the bosom, as we trust, of our blessed Savior... —Father.

Nov. 2, 1875, Troy.

My dear Son— Your welcome letter of Sabbath evening came to hand this morning... This is election day and all the Banks are closed so in order to enable you to meet your Bill promptly I send my own Draft instead of a Bank Draft as before. You can endorse this draft and hand it to Miss Delano who can use it at the Bank. She will of course pay you the difference between the Draft & your bill. I am hopeful as to the result of the elections. However, I have room for disappointment. The Democratic party is strong still I hope & pray right and justice will prevail. Affectionately yours, —Father.

Nov. 11th, 1875, Troy.

My dear Boy— I asked Kittie to write you yesterday about Father. He did not sleep well last night and does [not] feel as well today. His breathing is not so labored as it was the first of the week, and yet it is as difficult all the time as you ever knew it. Father just opened his eyes and said: “Writing to Frank?”— Yes, what shall I tell him?— “that I have been confined to the house since last Sat. by asthma aggravated by cold but hope the worst is over and that I can be out soon.” He sat up twice yesterday, an hour or so each time, but the least movement of his hands or arms increases the difficulty of breathing. The Dr. (Bloss) told him today not to be discouraged, that the weather was bad. I do hope and pray that he will be better very soon. I am much better than I have been as you will conclude when I tell you that I sleep on the lounge and take care of Father at night. The ground is covered with snow, a light covering however... May God keep and bless you my dear boy. Write a few lines often. All send love and a Mother’s heartfull —*Mungie*.

Nov. 12, 1875, Troy.

My dear Boy— I am happy to say that your Father is better this aft. —his breathing so much easier that he has been able to sleep some— the first relief since last Sat... He sends much love to you, and hopes you are getting on well in which we all join. We have heard nothing from you since last Fri but hope to get a letter this eve— God bless and keep you and us. —Good by darling. *Mungie*.

Nov. 14, 1875, Troy.

My dear Frank— I am glad to say that dear Father is more comfortable, has been sitting up an hour and a half and had a little venison for his dinner which he seemed to relish. We have not heard a word from [you] since a week ago Sat. Will you not write regularly on certain days. ...Much love to you my precious boy. God bless you. —*Mungie*.

Nov. 17th, 1875, Troy.

My dear Boy— I am rejoiced to be able to say that dear Father is decidedly better, his breathing is quite improved and he looks like a convalescent. I think your letter brightened him up a good deal, indeed we were all glad to hear from you... —*Mungie*.

Dec. 3rd, 1875, Troy.

To Our dear Daughter— “Sweet sixteen” today. Accept this ring from your affectionate *Father & Mother*.

Dec. 7th, 1875, Troy.

My dear Son— I am indeed happy to inform you that the Doctor has given me permission to go out the first mild and pleasant day. During the past week I have gained considerable strength and am now able to go down to my meals. With a good appetite and good digestion I hope soon to be in the enjoyment of my usual health and strength. Four weeks last Saturday, since I gave up— it seems to me like a dream. While I have had everything in the way of care and attention that loving hearts could prompt it has been anything

but pleasant to be sick and I hope & pray that I may now be well again. All send much love. —Affectionately Yours *Father*.

Dec. 11th, 1875, Troy.

My dear Son— We had not heard from you this week until this morning when your letter of 9th came to hand and I assure you it met with a glad welcome. Hope you will find time to write as often as twice every week, if only a few lines. I am gaining every day. Have been out to walk a block or two twice. If the weather should be pleasant I hope to go to Albany next Monday and in the course of a few days expect to be in the enjoyment of my usual health and strength. I shall be careful and take business and official duties easily. I enclose Draft for \$75 as requested. You will bring home your expense book... —With much love from all I remain your affectionate *Father*. P.S. I would advise you to cultivate the acquaintance of your teachers by calling frequently at their homes.

Dec. 19th, 1875, Troy.

My dear Son— I have not written you for several days for the reason I have been engaged the whole time preparing to meet the charges made against me by the Governor's Canal Commission. You have probably seen a good deal in the papers during the past few days. I shall put in my answer tomorrow which is (I think) such as to lift the cloud thrown over my official acts by the *inquisitional* commission. I had no opportunity to explain matters or facts. They refused to hear me. Enough of this. Well, we shall look for you Wednesday. Suppose you will leave for early morning train. Mother says you had better bring your trunk & your dress suit. You can check your trunk through to Troy. Get off at Adams Street and William can take your check up to the depot and get your trunk. I am improving in health every day. All send much love. —Affectionately your, *Father*.

1876

☞ Letters to Frank at Amherst College:

Jan. 7, 1876, Troy.

My precious Boy— I have just had your very good and most welcome letter of Wed eve. which came this morning. I was out when it came, attending the funeral of Frank Plum who died Wed. aft. Christmas day he was at Mrs. Gilberts and now is he buried. He grew worse rapidly Tuesday. —*Mungie*.

January 11th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— They kept me in Buffalo until Saturday P.M., too late to reach home before early Sabbath morning. I took the sleeping train and had a comfortable nights' rest. It seems almost marvelous to go to bed in Buffalo at 10 o'clock in the evng and wake in Albany (300 miles distant) early the next morning... You will see by the *Troy Times*, which I send you, that I have resigned my office in Albany. Under all the circumstances I thought best to take this course rather than go into a long fight to regain a position which would only be a burden to me. The only unpleasant thing about giving up the office is the way and manner in which the thing was done. One thing I am sure of is I have done nothing intentionally wrong and I believe my worst

enemies do not accuse me of any crime. Violation of duty is the broadest construction they can give it. —*Father*.

January 23, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— Your welcome letter of Friday evening came to hand this morning. I am very glad you appreciate the advice I gave you in regard to keeping a strict acct. of your expenses. These figures stare us in the face very often and no doubt with beneficial affect. Many people go on spending money without a thought until the last dollar is reached and then they wonder where in the world so much money has gone. I do not propose to give you weekly lectures on economy. You well understand my wishes and your duty, and I think I can trust you. Grandmother is still quite feeble. ...Her cold is somewhat better for the past two days, but she is very frail. Her advanced age and feeble constitution are sufficient to create much solicitude when disease takes hold of her; still we hope and pray she may be spared to us years yet... She was very glad to have your letter read this morning. ...Uncle Edwin was here one day this week. All well up there [Cambridge]. We shall expect a letter from you Tuesday morning. It would please Grandmother to receive a letter from you and I would suggest that you write to her. All send much love.
—Your Affectionate, *Father*.

February 1st, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son—The first of the month reminds me that you have some bills to pay and I think it is always best to be prompt in such matters, in fact promptness is one of the rare and beautiful traits of the human character. On receipt of this, please figure up and let me know the amount required to put you on a sound financial basis, keeping a sharp lookout, as it behooves us all in these times, towards economy. It is not my purpose to give you a lecture on economy every month. I think you understand and appreciate the situation and will be quite reasonable in all your expenses... —I am, as ever Your Affectionate *Father*.

February 4th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— It is now all of ten days since the receipt of your last letter. Much too long my son. Can not get along very well without hearing from you once or twice a week. Please write often. We do not expect long letters, but a few lines to let us now how you are if no more. Grandmother is improving slowly. Last eve she walked from the sitting room into her bedroom with a little assistance. She often inquires after you and I think it would do her good to receive a letter from your hand. Do sit down & write her one of your good full letters... I don't know as there is any news worth communicating. —I remain your loving *Father*.

Feb. 9th, 1876, Troy

My dear Son— Your very welcome letter of Sabbath eve 6th came to hand yesterday P.M. I hope you will not again allow two weeks to go by without writing to the dear ones at home. We must hear from you as often as once a week and more frequently will be very acceptable. Grandmother inquires very often, "Hear anything from Frankie?" and if your letters are not recd in due time she says, "I wonder if the dear boy is sick?" These Mothers & Grandmothers think more of the loved and absent ones than we are aware of.

Grandmother is perhaps a little stronger than when I last wrote you, but still very feeble. She sits up in the easy chair an hour or two during the day, but does not gain strength much. You must write to her. . . . You speak of having good sleighing. We have had very little snow. . . . It is now clouding up and fixing for a snow storm I hope. —I am as ever, your aff, *Father*.

April 26th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— Your *long looked for* letter of Sabbath eve, mailed yesterday (Tuesday) reached me this morning. I do not like this irregularity in our correspondence. We should be regular and prompt in that delightful duty as well as in everything else appertaining to the duties and responsibilities of life. I suggest that you write to me every Sabbath eve, and I will promise to answer on the following Tuesday. What do you say to this my boy? . . . I am glad to hear that the interest in the revival meetings still continues, and I hope and pray you are doing your full duty as a *worker* in the vineyard of our blessed Lord & Master. . . . —*Father*.

May 4th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— I am disappointed in not receiving a letter from you today. Last Saturday I wrote you on a very important matter and while I do not doubt your answer will be all I could wish, still it would be a satisfaction to know from your own hand that you had made the wise decision I so strongly and decidedly urged you to make in regard to your studies. I will not allow myself to doubt. Now, do not fail to write very soon. I put this in with a letter from Kittie, Yours affectionately, —*Father*.

May 5th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— I thought certainly I should get a letter from you today but the busy letter carrier has made his last round for the day and no letter from my dear boy. As I wrote you yesterday, I cannot for a moment think of your taking a “partial course” and I shall be grieved to the heart if you do not very soon relieve me from all anxiety on that point. . . . It is my wish that you should be as prompt in the payment of your bills as well as in everything else. You should make your calculations and arrangements so as to have the money ready on the *very first* day of every month. Now is the time for you to form habits of regularity and promptness, which, if well established at your time of life, will be a blessing to you as long as you live. . . . I have always noticed that the man who is on hand and prompt to meet his engagements is the one who succeeds in almost anything he undertakes. I have some customers who always send their check on the day their bills become due and those are the ones I like to deal with. Your habits of study I hope and trust are regular and systematic. It is your business to study now and the habits you form will stick to you through life, so be careful and start right. I didn’t think of writing more than a line or two when I commenced, but you see the bottom of the fourth page is now at hand, so I’ll stop. —Lovingly Your *Father*.

May 6th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— A week ago today I wrote you a long letter on a very important matter. Of course I expected a reply without delay. You should have recd. my letter Monday P.M. and it seems to me passing strange that you did not answer it by return mail. But no, you have kept us anxiously

waiting all the week and now Saturday evening's mail brings nothing from you and we are still in doubt (No, I cannot doubt) what course you will pursue. —*Father*.

May 9th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— I was very confident, aye, was almost certain that tonight's mail would bring me a letter from you, but none came, and I was almost discouraged. You must be aware of our anxiety to hear from you and it is the strangest thing in the world that you do not write, certainly you cannot plead want of time for 'tis only a matter of a very few minutes and it was understood and agreed when you left home that you would write as often as once per week. It is not in my heart to scold or say a single unpleasant word, but really my dear boy, I do not like this long silence on your part... —*Father*.

May 27th, 1876, Amherst.

Dear ones at home— I arrived here at 3:30 yesterday P.M. Found Frank well and hard at work. He got behind in Mathematics, but he hopes with hard study, to come up to par at the end of the term. I have called on the Prest., Profs Mathew & White. In Latin & Greek Frank will have no difficulty in passing examinations so his teachers say. This is a delightful [*“charming”* crossed out] day. Nature is in her most charming [*“delightful”* crossed out] dress and everything in the world without bright and beautiful. Frank gave the package & letter to Miss Delano & I have no doubt she appreciated them, but she has not said so. You may look for me Monday late in the evening. —Lovingly Yours, *Father*. Frank sends much love.

June 1st, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— I shall expect a letter from you tomorrow morning and hope and trust it will tell me that you are getting on bravely with mathematics under your new Prof. You will of course keep me well advised of your progress and drop a line or two as often as two or three times a week. —*Father*.

June 2, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— I believe it was understood that you would write to me on Thursday, so I looked for a letter this morning but none came. Very likely you wrote, but not in time to post your letter for the P.M. mail... I trust the report in regard to your studies will be all a loving father's heart could wish to hear from his dear and only son... I trust you will give me a full letter Sabbath eve. —*Father*.



Compositions:

Dame Duck's First Lecture on Education

Dame Duck lived close to the brook & every morning she took her ducklings there to swim, and as they were quite strong now, and they had seen the orchard and meadow, she thought it best to begin her course of lectures.

Catherine “Kittie” Thayer's compositions from when she studied at the Troy Female Seminary were found folded, some in envelopes, amongst the other letters. Some were labeled: “Miss Mann's Composition Class. Troy Female Seminary,” today the Emma Willard School.

“Come children,” she said, “it is time for our morning ramble, and I wish to talk to you all on education when we arrive at the swamp. Now children, walk behind me, one after another, and turn out your toes, look at me as a pattern of all things. Now see those young ducks fighting already. I do declare, don’t let me see you doing such an ill bred thing, unless with the goslings of the old goose. She insulted me last summer. Now we have reached the swamp and we shall be free from disturbance. Take seats duckies.” She soon made herself comfortable and began. “Now ducklings, the most important thing of all is to turn your toes out, and carry your head in an easy and graceful manner.” She had gone no farther in her discourse when she heard a loud bark, and through the shrubs, trees, and bushes, rushed a large dog which sent the audience in every direction.

And this was the last of the duck’s first lecture on Education.

Miss Mann’s Composition Class. Troy Female Seminary.
A Story by the Fire — by Katherine Thayer

There may be an element of truth to this story. When writing about her Grandmother and the grandmother’s sister, Kittie is describing her grandmother, Sophia Whiteside, 1796–1878, and her great-aunt, Catherine Whiteside, 1793–1824, the two daughters of Peter Whiteside, who grew up on the Cambridge, New York, farm in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, Eleanor Whiteside Hobson Mackenzie, Kittie’s daughter, would tell her children and grandchildren a story about an Indian squaw who lived on the farm in Cambridge. The squaw had once been left there by a tribe of Indians as they passed through on their way to Canada, and for the entire time that she lived on the farm she would never come into the house except when other Indians were in the area. Eleanor Mackenzie remembered a pile of rocks as being the only remains of the hut when she visited the farm as a child in the early twentieth century. This oral history had been passed on for seven generations before the discovery of the written account of the Indian living on the farm.

A bright fire burned on the hearth. We were all waiting for Grandma to tell some quaint old story of times gone by when she was a little girl. “It was one of the favorite pastimes,” said Grandma, “of my sister and myself to go through the orchard into the woods, race down the hill, and then sit under the shade of the trees. After resting we would run to the brook, clear as crystal, look at the minnows gliding over the pebbly bottom, spring from one stone to another which we used as a bridge, then follow the little path winding up the hillside on the other side until we came to a small opening where stood the hut in which the old squaw lived. She was what was called a friendly Indian, very fond of the whites, and very much afraid of the red men.

“Hearing our voices she would greet us at the door, and she was always glad to see us. During our visit she would set before us the best refreshments her hut afforded, with cool fresh water, which flowed just before her door, and we, with appetites made keen from our scramble, enjoyed our simple repast far more than the plentiful table at home. The squaw earned her livelihood combing wool and spinning for her well-to-do neighbors. After answering her numerous questions, and promising to visit her again when the nuts were ready to gather, we bade her good day and, stopping only to pick mint by the brookside and ferns from the hollows, we hastened homeward.”

This was my Grandmother’s story. We now go every summer to the same woods, rest under the old trees, cross the brook, climb the hill-side still kept green by the little spring, but we find only a few stones and broken bricks to mark the spot where the old hut stood.

My First and Last Day at Boarding School

I arrived at school safe and well but rather depressed in spirits, and the principal took me up four flights of stairs and down to the very end of the hall and showed me my room. It was very small and the furniture consisted of an iron bedstead, two straight back chairs, and a wash-stand with drawers. I had hardly brushed off the dust of my journey when two jolly looking girls appeared and announced dinner the next thing in order. I was guided by the joining ladies to the dining hall where I was shown a seat at the farther end of the room having to pass two hundred pairs of staring eyes, and reaching my seat I was glad enough to sink into my seat. A dish of oatmeal was set before me, which was to constitute our complete dinner. Now oatmeal in any form seemed to me more like fodder than food, and I never could eat it, and this dinner

decided me. I hastened to my room, put on my wraps and took the next train for home, startling the beloved home circle around the tea table by my appearance and declaring that “This was my first & last day at Boarding School.”

An Afternoon Spent with the Man in Possession of the Fountain of Perpetual Youth.

“Forty-five today and I am beginning to look quite old. A good many gray hairs scattered here and there, crow tracks very visible & I must say I am quite a spinster.” This was said by a beautiful woman one morning as she sat before her mirror. “Why not go to the man in possession of the magic fountain? He will restore the beauty of youth again,” said the maid. “Why what an idea, going to the ends of the earth in search of it, but I will think of the subject.” The next day a friend said to the lady, “You begin to show the marks of age with your gray hairs.” This decided the matter, and she resolved to take the journey and was soon on her way to the wonderful fountain. After traveling a great distance both by land & sea she arrived at a beautiful village. It was in the afternoon, and she was told to follow a well beaten path until she came to a grove where she would find the object of her search. Following the instructions, she met in her walk young girls and maidens with sparkling eyes and blooming cheeks, tripping merrily along. A few minutes walk brought her in view of a crystal fountain flowing out of a rich green ground and around it were hundreds of people. Drawing near she beheld an old man take from the fountain a cup of water which he gave to a very aged man, who immediately after drinking was changed into a young and ruddy youth. As the man spied her tired face he beckoned her forward and gave her some of the water to drink. Her dimples, smiles and ruddy cheeks quickly returned, and she was the same lovely girl as of eighteen.

—Kittie T.

This is Kittie Thayer’s account of her first day at boarding school. It has been a long family tradition that that is just what happened when she was first sent to boarding school, and that in fact, she did arrive home just as the family was having dinner.



Katherine Sophia Thayer, W. Kurtz, New York, date unknown.



☞ Letters to Frank at Amherst College:

June 3, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— I hope and pray that you will not neglect to write down a few lines twice each week. You will remember that you promised to write Thursday and here it is Saturday afternoon and no letter... Do turn over a new leaf in regard to your home correspondence. —Father.

June 6th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— I am sorely disappointed in not receiving a letter from you this morning. It is not in my heart to find fault with you but really, my dear boy, I cannot stand this want of punctuality in regard to your correspondence and again I ask you in the most loving and affectionate manner to write certainly as often as twice a week. I do not ask you to write long letters, but keep us well posted in regard to your progress etc. etc. —Father.

June 6th, 1876, Troy

My dear Son— Your very welcome letter dated 4th mailed 6th (today) is just recd. I am glad to know that you are studying hard and I trust you will come out at the end of the term fully up to the standard in Mathematics...



South College, left, dormitory where Francis McKie Thayer lived while a student at Amherst College. Johnson Chapel in background.

Ask Prof Root to write me how you are getting on. Post your letters as soon as you write them and then there will be no complaints. —Yours lovingly, *Father*.

Sept. 23, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— I have no letter from you this week. Suppose you thought writing to Kittie would answer for the whole family. Not so, my son. I am selfish about this matter and cannot submit to anything short of one of your good letters quite as often as once a week. So please remember to write every Sabbath eve and be sure and mail your letter Monday... —*Father*.

Oct. 3, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son—Your excellent letter of Sabbath eve Sept. 24th did not reach me until Wednesday morning, a day or two behind as usual. I would suggest, indeed urge upon you, the desirableness of posting your letters earlier in the week. —*Father*.

Oct 16th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— Your welcome letter dated 8th reached me Wednesday, 11th, same day it was mailed. It is really too bad to cheat us out of two or three days in the receipt of your good letters, and again I urge upon you to write every Sabbath eve so as to have your letter ready to post Monday morning. *Establish this as a rule and let there be no failures in future.* ... We are again comfortably ensconced in our Troy house after passing a most delightful summer at the dear old house in Cambridge... Mother thought of writing you yesterday but she had a headache & went to bed in the P.M. She is better today and you may soon expect to hear from her... Please write me just how you are getting along in all your studies. I want to know all the particulars and hope you will keep me well posted... And now my son I wish to say a few words in closing in regard to your religious duties. Read your Bible regularly every morning and evening. Go to your Lord and master in sincere and earnest prayer often and do not shrink from the discharge of your whole duty as a professing Christian wherever you may be. "Let your light shine." Please write me on receipt of this and again next Sabbath eve. —*Father*.

Dec 6th, 1876, Troy.

My dear Son— Your letter of Sabbath eve giving an account of the fire came to hand yesterday P.M. John Birge who came from Boston Monday told me Tuesday morning that he saw in the *Springfield Republican* that the Delano House had been destroyed by fire. We of course were anxious until the receipt of your letter. Kittie says she thinks you must have "hurried up" a little when you saw the flames approaching. It was certainly very fortunate that you escaped as you did without much if anything. No doubt your things were stirred up and it would be strange if not damaged by hasty removal. I hope you are pleasantly fixed in your new quarters. You can remain at Mr. G—'s for the present. You may think but to take a room in the College, if so, we can send you some furniture. Grandmother is improving a little every day ... All hearts are sad over the terrible calamity in Brooklyn last night. It is awful. How true in the midst of life we are in death. With much love, I am as ever your loving *Father*.

THE BROOKLYN CALAMITY — The Extent of the Disaster Underestimated. — Two Hundred and Eighty-three Bodies Recovered. — Over Three Hundred and Fifty Lives Probably Lost. — The Accounts Given By Those Who Escaped. — Two Actors Among The Victims. — Widespread Grief In The City of Churches. — THE STORY OF THE FIRE. - The Breaking Out And Progress Of The Flames. — A Terrific Scene Of Wild Despair. — The Mad Rush For The Doors. — Numbers Trampled Under Foot And Killed—The Falling Of The Walls And Galleries — Brave Acts Of Brave Men. — EXHUMING THE BODIES — The Firemen In The Smoking Ruins Of The Theatre Where Most Of The Dead Were Found — Excited Crowds Around The Building. — Early yesterday morning the people of Brooklyn realized the fact that the destruction of the Brooklyn Theatre by fire on Tuesday night had involved a considerable loss of life. Up to 6 o'clock the general public understood that the loss of life, if any, had been very small, but soon the rumor reached the public ear that the dead bodies of fifty persons had been exhumed by the firemen. When the "extras" announced this fact, the wildest excitement was created both in Brooklyn and this City, and hopes were expressed that the worst was known. Men, women, and children went rushing to the site of the ruined theatre and to the morgue in eager search for missing friends. The city put on an air of mourning, and when it was learned later in the day that over one hundred bodies had been taken from the ruins, the excitement grew more intense and sympathy for the friends and relatives of the victims was generally expressed. Again came the news that 150 bodies had been recovered, and soon that number was increased to 190. Never before in the history of Brooklyn was public feeling so much aroused... As many of the victims are working men, steps have been taken to extend relief to their families, the bodies not identified will be buried at the public expense, and on the day of the funeral business will be suspended in the City, and the day kept as a holiday.

—*The New York Times*, December 7, 1876.

THE BROOKLYN CALAMITY. TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY BODIES THUS FAR RECOVERED. — The Number Of Killed Probably Over Three Hundred and Fifty — A Thorough Search Of The Ruins Made Yesterday — Scenes At The Morgues — One Hundred and Thirty-Five Bodies Not Yet Identified — Measures For The Relief Of The Families of the Victims — Memorial Services To Be Held On Sunday — The Official Investigation. SCENE AT THE CITY MORGUE. The Crowd Outside Greater Than Those Of Wednesday — Difficulties Attending The Identification Of The Bodies. — Removal Of The Corpses On Coroners Permits. EXHUMING THE BODIES. Scenes At The Ruins — Clearing Away The Debris — The Remains of Two Women and a Child Discovered — Fragments Of The Dead Removed To The Morgue.

—*The New York Times*, December 8, 1876.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC FUNERAL TODAY — Two Hundred and Thirty-One Bodies Identified — Scenes At The Morgues And At The Ruins — Action Of Theatrical Companies For The Relief Of The Families Of The Victims — Subscriptions Already Received Toward The Relief Fund. — The excitement created in Brooklyn on Wednesday morning by the fire in the Brooklyn Theatre, has in part subsided, but the calamity has created an impression in the city that months will not remove. The search among the ruins were resumed yesterday morning, and one body was found reduced to a cinder, together with many small bones, and watches, keys, scraps of clothing, opera-glasses, rings, theatrical costumes and other articles. The Police were assisted and relieved by the military. The number of dead identified is now 231. Twenty-eight

of the victims were buried yesterday, including the five members of the Solomon family. The Morgues still contain a number of bodies not identified, most of which are burned past recognition by features or clothing. If not identified by 10 o'clock this morning they will be buried by the city authorities. The Committee of the Common Council appointed for the purpose met and made arrangements for the funerals today and decided that the city should bear the expenses of burial where the relatives of the dead were destitute. —*The New York Times*, December 9, 1876.

1877

☞ Letters to Frank at Amherst College:

January 8th, 1877, Troy.

My dear Son— Your p/c announcing your safe arrival at Amherst came duly to hand. The day you left was stormy and blustering here and we were afraid you would meet with longer delay than occurred. ... You will find Chemistry a very interesting and profitable study and I hope you will be delighted with it. ... Did you find your books, especially the a/c book? You know I am particular about keeping things straight and I trust you will not disappoint me in regard to the manner of keeping acct. of your expenses... We must hear from you as often as *twice* each week and I hope you will be regular in your correspondence. —*Father*.

January 18th, 1877, Troy.

My dear Son— Your welcome letter of 15th (mailed 17th) came to hand this A.M... It is no hardship for you to write to the dear ones at home as often as twice per week and once again I urge upon you to be regular in your correspondence. Just put it down as one of the duties and I hope pleasures of your College life... —*Father*.

January 22, 1877.

My precious Boy— I intended to write you a long letter last eve., but your good Father has been much troubled with asthma of late, and was in bed all day yesterday. Taking medicine, and keeping perfectly quiet, and last eve, I read to him and Mother all the eve... —*Mungie*.

January 23, 1877.

My dear Son— No letter from you today as we had a right to expect. Think you must have forgotten the promise made in your last. We hold you to all good promises my boy. —Yours lovingly, *Father*. Grandmother gaining.

January 25th, 1877, Troy.

My dear Son— My last was a protest saying your promised letters of Sabbath eve had not been recd. On going home I found your excellent letter to Grandmother and I told Kittie to send another postal taking back all I had said on the subject of delinquency. I hope you will find time to write *twice* per week, but however much your time may be occupied during the week, don't fail to write Sabbath eve. Make this a rule to be *strictly observed*, rain or shine, cold or hot. Grandmother was perfectly delighted with your letter. She read it over and over again, and I really think it "built her up." Write her often... —*Father*.

Feb 18th, 1877, Troy.

My precious Boy— Your Father and Grandmother are sleeping and Kittie's in Sunday School, and as you are in all my thoughts I have taken a pen that we may converse a little, this will be my say, I shall expect yours very soon in reply. By the way, it seems to be so difficult for you to maintain your home correspondence with regularity that we may be obliged to resort to the new instrument, the "telephone" in order to keep up a satisfactorily frequent communication... and now I appeal to you to do everything in your power to help to lift your precious Father back to health. The first thing is, let him know you think of him, if you use only a postal card... —*Mungie*.

Feb 20th.

My dear Brother— Your letter we received last night and were very glad to hear from you but were sorry you made no allusion to Father's illness for he is really far from well... I hope you will write soon a little letter to him, for it cheers him up to hear from you. —*Kittie Thayer*.

March 5th, 1877, Troy.

My dear bussard— ...Father is a little better. I should not wonder if Mother & Father will start for some warmer clime soon... *Kittie Thayer*.

bussard, also *Buzzy* Two nicknames for Francis McKie Thayer.

March 9th, 1877, Troy.

My dear Son— Illness is my only excuse for not writing to you during the past two or three weeks. ...I am indeed happy to inform you that for the past week I have gained rapidly and it seems to me now that my health will be fully restored or at least I shall soon be as well as usual... Well, Mr. Hayes is President... I am confident that we have a wise and good man at the helm and that the good Old Ship of State will ride out all storms successfully and that our whole country will grow in peace and prosperity... We hear that Mr. Mumford has taken his son from College. I am indeed sorry to hear this... What a disappointment to a parent to have a son fail in his college course... —*Father*.

May 15, 1877, Cambridge.

My precious Son— I hasten to tell you what a comfort your letter, received this morning, was to us all... Grand Ma has not been able to sit up much this past week, but was just up, by the window with her bible in her lap, when your letter was given her. "What a sweet letter and beautiful too," she said. ...Father is better, goes out now twice a day, and comes in early, does not go out evenings. Dr. B— tells me that we must go to the New Hampshire hills, perhaps to the Twin Mountain House, and see if his Asthma will be relieved there... He is so cheered by your letters... —*Mungie*.

May 27th, 1877, Troy.

My dear Brother— After all my good advice you have again failed in writing your *weekly* letter and we are all very much hurt... —I am your sister *Kittie*.

May 28, 1877, Troy.

My dear Son— I am through with business for the day and now will devote a few minutes in writing to you my dear boy altho' I have nothing newsworthy of note to communicate. For several days past I have had more

asthma than usual and if I do not find relief soon shall take your mother and go off somewhere perhaps to the White Mts. for a week or two... If you are enabled to bring home a good report you will make us *indeed happy*. Make the most of your time and talents. Let this be your constant aim and if life and health are spared "Old Amherst" will give you enduring honors. —*Father*.

June 3rd, 1877, Troy.

My dear brother— Father and Mother are all packed and ready to start for Luzerne tomorrow morning, so I write to let you know how lonely I shall be and hope to hear from you some to help keep up my spirits... Now adieu my dear with best love and kisses from all. I am your aff. Sister... —*Kittie*.

☞ A rare letter from Amherst College:

Amherst, June 4, 1877.

My dear Father— I have received your letter of the 31st inclosing draft. The box of summer clothing came Saturday. Tell Mother it is very acceptable in this hot weather. The vests fit well but the Blue sack coat is too large. I can send it back if you wish and Mother can get me the next size smaller... The asthma seems to be giving you a good deal of trouble this year. But after all there is reason to be thankful that it is only the asthma and though troublesome and disturbing it is not dangerous... I have bought of the student that occupies my new room now some bedroom furniture. A bureau, washstand, and looking glass, all for \$7.00. Perhaps you have some furniture at home for me. If so write me, for now is my best time to get the little furniture I need when the seniors are selling out their furniture at great bargains. Give my love to all at home. Your affectionate son, *F. McKie Thayer*.

☞ Summer vacation:

Luzerne, N.Y.

My dear Frank— ...You may return the coat by express prepaid charges, which were thirty-cents over and should be the same back. In regard to furniture, if you find what is suitable and will be satisfactory at a reasonable rate you may supply yourself with what you need. Father had a most distressing week, just passed, and he is much prostrated from it. I think his nights have been a little better here, but he is suffering today from a very severe headache... Do your best for your dear Father, for yourself and for your God in the strength He will give you. —Your loving *Mungie*.

Rockwell House, Luzerne, June 7, 1877.

My dear Mother & Kittie— Your most welcome letter has just been read— and I am glad to see that you are doing nicely. I do not doubt that Charlie behaves, and is a comfort to you in many ways, but do not forget that you are in school, and that unless you can practice about two hours a day, it were far better that you cease to take lessons and save the money, and let there be an understanding between you and Charlie that when you study, you study and when you play, you play, one thing at a time *well done*... And now I will tell you about your dear Father. Yesterday morning a severe headache came on which grew into a sick headache. I did all I could for him but he was not

relieved till this morning, and as he seemed to have taken a little cold we sent for a physician, and he left medicine, and direct mustard paste on the chest, so my rubber and flannel were soon brought into service. As it is raining and the air is full of moisture I presume your Father will keep quiet in bed, but I have a stove in the room, wood and kindling ready at any moment, so he may sit up a little for a change. He has just eaten a very good dinner from a table by his bedside, chicken soup, fried trout, (I wish I could give you some) and other good things. We have everything in the way of attention, the house is neat, the table faultless, and the family affectionate as well as kind in all offers of assistance to me. Perhaps God has sent us to this Doctor for something new or different and happily suited to dear Father's case I hope so. . . . My time is more occupied than you would think, not so much today as yesterday when I tried but failed to relieve his head. . . . Father joins me in tender love to you and Grandma. . . . now be a goodie girl my ting a ling. Your Loving *Mother*.
 —Your Father has not written a letter since he came & say to John Birge what I have written about your father, it will save repetition.

ting a ling An occasional nickname for the younger Katherine Thayer.

Rockwell Hotel, Luzerne, June 8, 1877.

My dear Mother & Kittie— Your Father passed a far more comfortable night than the night previous was. He says his chest is better— and now the Doctor has been in and confirmed this opinion, and says too that the tongue is much less coated, and Father quite enjoyed his breakfast. And now the clouds are breaking away and we have an occasional glimpse of sunshine, this is favorable. The mail has just been brought, and we have devoured our welcome portion with a quickness known to Fathers and Mothers away from home. I did tell you before I left home that you might have some company to tea while we were away, and supposed you would concentrate your efforts on a half dozen perhaps, when Miss E— would be in Troy. But when I read that you had company the night we left, and three or four calls from gentlemen, it struck your Father and me that our schoolgirl daughter was, or might be, a good deal occupied with society in general, perhaps *too much* for reasons less apparent to her now than ten years hence. . . . I did not intend to say that you could invite no one but Miss E— & Mr. C— to tea next week, but that we did not wish you to invite persons frequently and so occupy all your time, as well as thoughts. As to the few favored ones I thought your own good sense must govern you. I have just got Father dressed and in our other room, and he says he has not near so much “wheezie” as yesterday, which is very apparent to me. . . . 2 P. M. I went down to dinner at one o'clock and your Father has just about finished his dinner which he says tasted good. The air is warm, pleasantly so, and it seems to be clearing away, although we have had a shower since I commenced this. . . . With love. . . . Your loving *Mother*.

—I may be mistaken and have no dictionary but just look and see if an unmarried female of any age is not a girl.

Rockwell Hotel, Luzerne, June 10, 1877.

My dear ones at home— I saw a carriage arrive a little while ago, and on inquiring find that it came from Glens Falls, and I want you to hear tomorrow, that Father is now almost free from the bronchial trouble. We chased the asthmas from the left side last night with a mustard & linseed paste, so that is better this morning, and we propose to attack the whole chest tonight, and

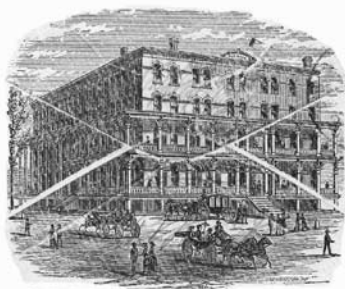
I think now your Father will continue to improve daily. He had a breakfast fit for a prince (as he is) sent him this a.m.— and I think he enjoyed it better than any meal since he took his room. You understand that he has not been down since Wed. a.m. Spoke of coming down to dinner but concluded to wait for *more wind*. We hope for clear weather for him— it is still cloudy and “muggy” now, but we have a good breeze from the South in our room, and could not be more comfortable at home which is saying much, and it may be cooler here among the hills. I have written this between courses at table. I wish you could be with me to eat trout. I bathed Father and got on clean clothes and left him sitting on the lounge, and now I must go up & get his table ready for his dinner, as it is going up soon. Hoping that you are all well and happy and that you will not worry about Father. We like our Doctor. Your loving *Mother*.

June 13, 1877, Lake George.

My dear boy— We left Luzerne this morning at half past five and expect to be at Burlington tonight and The Twin Mountain House, White Mts., N.H., tomorrow. You dear Father hopes to find at the latter place the relief he sought at Luzerne, but did not receive. The asthma is present all the time, and far worse at night. So bad that he has watched the whole night through, sleeping none till after the dawn in the morning... —*Kittie*.

June 13, 1877, Lake George

My dear Mother & Kittie— This is our dear boy’s birthday and I have just written him. We left Luzerne at half past five this morning, we expect to stay in Burlington tonight and reach the “Twin Mountain House, White Mts. N.H.” tomorrow where I hope and pray dear Father will find rest. He has had a little nap in the saloon and is now out enjoying the wondrous beauty of this lovely lake, set in the mountains. I wish you could enjoy it with us— I say enjoy, there cannot be much pleasure till Father can breathe better and get some sleep, but I hope to report better things very soon. Am sorry not to say something more cheerful now, but do feel that *deliverance* is near at hand, and that he will soon find great if not perfect relief... Remember me to girls and Wm. and take time to write me about everything. Father joins me in love to you and Grandmother, yes love and kisses without number. —Loving *Mother*.



PAVILION, Montpelier, Vt. T. O. BAILEY, Proprietor.

Pavilion, Montpelier, Vermont. A hotel in 1877 when the Thayers visited on their way to the White Mountains and used for State offices in 2007.

New Pavilion Hotel, Montpelier, June 13, 1877, 10 o’clock p.m.

Dear Kittie— Just arrived here and are very nicely ensconced in a beautiful Hotel. Quite different from the accommodations which were here three years ago. I am feeling better. Yours lovingly, *Father*.

☞ Letters from the White Mountains of New Hampshire:

Littleton, N. H. June 14, 1877.

Dear Kittie—M We reached L— at 11 a.m. and leave for Twin Mountain House White Mts, N. Hampshire at 5 p.m. It is about 13 miles from here. Father much as he has been but I hope he will soon find relief. Weather warm and pleasant have had a little rain today, so that it is not dry, and there are showery looking clouds afloat. We watch the weather closely. —*Mother*.

Twin Mountain House, White Mts. June 14, 1877, 8 p.m.

My dear K— Here we are since 5 p.m. and now comfortably settled in two front rooms, 2nd floor. I think now Father may begin to improve very soon but it will take a little time to get him up to his usual condition. Four guests in the house and we have already rec'd much kindness. Glad to get your letter here just after we came. With love to all, *Mother*.

Twin Mountain House, White Mountains, N. H. June 15, 1877.

My dear Mother & Kittie— Well we have passed a night here, and although I cannot say that it was a very restful night with Father, it was better than those of the past week: and at six this morning he had a cup of coffee, after which he had an hour and a half of sleep. I was never more thankful to reach a destination than when we took our seats on the piazza of this house. The front is to South. I have marked the windows of our rooms and the place on east piazza where we have been the past two hours. The air is warm & clear, and I hope brings healing on its wings. But for the mountain breeze it would be very warm here, which makes us think that it must be more heated with you, and we have been talking over the “going to Cam.” —*Mother love*.

June 16, 1877. White Mountains, N. H. Twin Mountain House.

My dear Son— We left Luzerne Wednesday morning, passed the night at a new Hotel in Montpelier, (you will remember the old one with disgust), and arrived here Thursday P.M. We find the House & everything about it very pleasant. Your mother and I compose just half the number of guests. The journey here was about all I could stand, having been quite ill at Luzerne. Now after two days rest I feel somewhat better, but the old asthma “sticks and hangs like a dog to a root.” This is not an elegant quotation especially to one just about passing into his juniorship. Well, my boy you will soon be packing up for home and summer vacation... You will have to move into your new room and get things in order so far as possible and then you will be prepared to enter at once upon your studies on your return in Sept. You will figure up the amt. of funds required to pay all bills, and \$10 to \$15 more for traveling expense and write John Birge care Thayer & Birge to send you a draft on New York payable to your order for the amount. You can make close connection at Millers Falls, with the train that arrives in Troy at 2:22 p.m. I notice that communication with Northampton is cut off by the destruction of the Conn River Bridge and that several lives were lost... Your dear good mother is on the opposite side of the table writing to Kittie. She has on her spectacles (I can write without such aid) and looks quite matronly and well she may for today she is half a century old and possesses in the highest degree more of all those high, noble and beautiful traits of character than are in the female, often called heavenly, than anyone I ever knew. My dear boy you are blessed, yes thrice blessed in your Mother and always let it be your highest aim to live as she would have you. You have just passed your 20th birthday. I am nearly 55. We are all growing old and I hope and pray that each added year will find us in all things better than before. Please write us here upon receipt of this. Mother sends a heart full of love and I do too. Lovingly your, *Father*.



Twin Mountain House, the White Mountains, New Hampshire. Note black dots, second floor, Francis and Catherine Thayer's rooms, and porch (lower right), where they sat.

June 19, 1877, Twin Mountain, White Mountains, N.H.

My dear Mother and Kittie— I wrote you a few lines last night, and although I have not much in particular to say this morning, except to report dear Father's case. I will do that first and no doubt other thoughts will come. I think he slept more last night than in any one night in ten days, perhaps two hours before five in the morning. I told you that he did not close his eyes in sleep several nights till after the morning dawned. This was in Luzerne. We make up in full after coffee at six and he walks better this morning, a little faster and his breathing is not so much affected by the slightest movement, so I think the bronchial trouble had not passed away before we came here, but is now doing so, slowly and daily. We went down to breakfast about half past ten this morning, and I have left him sitting in the clear pure air, every breath of which I pray may be a blessing to him. He *looks* better, brighter and I now begin to, or rather, do feel encouraged. Care and time with the Dr's medicine, which I hope will come tonight, will bring dear Father back to a better condition than he has known in some time. I think there are many drafts in the halls here and I have to keep watch that he does not sit in an exposed position. ...All the men and women about the house are New England people— and as guests are not expected here until after July fourth, the notes of preparation are to be heard and seen everywhere. Carpenters, glaziers, painting, varnishing, laying carpets, painting walls, hanging curtains, work of all kinds going on all quietly and in order...

I have just been down to see where Father is and I found him whittling the end of his cane. This shows improvements, and as it is pretty warm I feel that I would like a lighter dress and might as well be wearing the gray one. So you may put [it] in a proper box, as small as will answer the purpose, the gray silk, my black alpaca petticoat, two undershirts (rather light) and my shetland shawl. (I thought I had it)— Two shirts for Father, eight collars, four pairs wristbands, his duster. You can put these things together and then see what size the box should be and send by Ex. I am sorry to trouble you but this gray seems rather heavy... Good bye loved ones... Father joins in love and kisses to your both. —Your loving *Mother*.

Twin Mountain House, White Mountains, N. H. June 21, 1877.

My dear Mother & Kittie— How my mind runs to you in these busy times, but I hope you are all better than usual in order to meet the demands for heads and hands. When this comes to you I suppose you will be at the Old Home, where we shall think of you after Friday eve. ...Father was able to keep his bed last night, the second night in two weeks that he has done so. He inhales and smokes two or three times, and takes something besides, but he said this morn that he thought he had slept three or four hours before coffee, and he must have slept two after. He has just returned from the summer house in front where he has been airing and taking a sunbath nearly two hours. He lives in the open air and sunshine. It has been somewhat cloudy today, but warm and just now it is raining. I think Father is doing as well as can be expected, for he was ill indeed after leaving home.

I shall wish to know about the garden, vegetables and flowers, vines and hen-house... With a head full of love to you and Mother, regards to Wm. and girls, love to Minnie and family. In all this dear Father joins. Your loving *Mother*, my darling child.

Some other correspondence:



Letterhead, June 21, 1877, from John Birge, listing the different flour produced at the Crystal Palace Mills.

Crystal Palace Mills. No. 143 River Street, Troy, New York.
June 21st, 1877

Mr. F. McKie Thayer, Amherst, Mass.

Dear Sir: ...I have a letter from your Father today, the tone of which is very cheerful. I sincerely trust the air of the White Mountains will prove to be just the thing to restore his vigor. —John T. Birge.

154 First St. Troy. June 21, 1877.

My dear Mrs. Thayer— Your more than welcome letter was opened with trembling fingers, but the assurance of a favorable change, the assurance that our dear friend was *breathing easier*, made us all breathe easier & strengthened me for the duties of the day. Having suffered so much myself, I can readily sympathize with suffering... As a heavy shower this morning prevented me from going over to your house, I have just sent Grandma a note & Thomas returning, says that she is very bright & strong— this is the latest bulletin... —E. R. Eaton.

A rare letter from Amherst College:

June 22nd, 1877. Saturday night. Amherst.

My dear Father— I have received letters from you and Mother and Kittie this week but I have been so busy preparing for my examinations that I have not found time to answer them. I am happy to inform you that I have been entirely successful in all my examinations and that I am now a “full fledged” junior. Our class celebrated the completion of the Sophomore year by a supper last night at Northampton. We left Amherst about 7 o’clock, were taken to the Round Hill House, Northampton— sat down to supper at 10 P.M. Everything was well arranged and the supper was a decided success. I had a glorious time and shall always recall the sophomore class supper as one of the happiest events in my College life. We got back to Amherst in time for breakfast. After breakfast I went to bed and slept ’til 5 P.M. and now I feel like myself again... The tone of Mother’s letters is very cheerful and I sincerely trust that you will find the mountain air just the thing to restore your vigor... —F. McKie Thayer.

George B. Wood's *Treatise on the Practice of Medicine*, 1858, described one of the prevailing treatments for asthma as follows: "The inhalation of fumes of burning paper, previously impregnated with a saturated solution of nitre, and dried, is asserted to be sometimes very effective. It is best that the paper should have been dipped a second time into the solution and dried. It may be either burned in the chamber, or smoked by means of a pipe, or in the form of a cigar."

☞ Letters from the White Mountains:

Twin Mt. House, White Mts. N. H. June 22, 1877, Friday.

My precious Mother & darling child Kittie— Your very good letter of yesterday (21st) came to use at three o'clock... It has rained and been very cool since two o'clock yesterday (Thurs). Of course this has shut your Father in, and if he has not made much advance, he has not taken cold. We [have] a pleasant fire in a wood stove in one of our rooms, this changes the air of both. Father's appetite is better. He comes upstairs with less difficulty, it does not affect his breathing so much and he coughs but little now. He has more trouble at night than through the day, and smokes two or three times during the night, but he is vastly more comfortable than he was when we came here... Father enjoys his *Harpers* and sends love & kisses to you... —Your loving *Mother*.

June 24th, 1877. Twin Mountain House, White Mountains, N. H. Sunday evening.

My dear Daughter— Mother said at tea time that she would write you a few lines to send in the morning mail. But I guess she has forgotten it... Well, I suppose you are now comfortably ensconced at the Old Home. I hope so and that you will take time to rest for you have had enough for one of ripe age and experience to attest to for the past few weeks, now just take it easily. I am really on the gain today. I have walked as far as nearly out to the Twins & back. How long we shall remain here will depend upon the progress I make in gaining health and strength. I hope this week will give me a good long stride towards recovery. Love to Grandmother & yourself. Mother joins me. Yours lovingly, *Father*.

Twin Mountain House, White Mountains, N. H. June 25, 1877.

My dear Kittie— Father wrote you last evening, and now we will say something before hearing from you. Father's night was not quiet as he was up in a chair twice, he said he slept better there than in bed, smoked twice, but this is such an improvement on a week ago, and two weeks since, that it is encouraging. I rose at 9 o'clock, he at 10, breakfast at half past 10. So you see what is lost at night is made up in part in the morning, besides he sleeps in his chair during the day. I have been with him on the piazza since breakfast, reading him to sleep, two or three times. I am glad he makes up lost time in this way. I see by the papers that the Russian troops are crossing the Danube. You know I can not help taking an interest in warlike matters, this little Hilton-Seligman affair and the St. John's fire engross all minds just now, albeit the subjects vary greatly. The "box" came last eve, everything all right, my dress has been much improved. I think Ellen a neat worker, and she may do us nicely in the house in future if we can secure her... Your Father had a letter from Aunt L— Saturday saying that "she went down to see you off, that all seemed glad to go and Grandma said she felt as strong as last year." I was glad to hear this last. And now we are thinking of you at the Old Home, have turned our thoughts from Troy to Cambridge and think we may get a letter from you sometime today. Father appreciates your cares of late and gave you some good advice in his letter to you last eve, which I pray you will heed... Of course you will all tell me how you all bore the journey... Do you remember

how prettily this house was ornamented with plants and vines and baskets? They do far more “in the season” than at that time, log cabins, canoes and all styles of hanging baskets filled with growing plants and vines fill the dining room, parlor, and entrance hall. Paint brushes and carpet hammers are in motion still but every day tells toward a final completion of the work of renovation... With love and kisses to you and dear Mother... —Your loving *Mother*.

June 28, 1877. Crawford House, White Mts. N.H.

Our dear Ones at home— We came to this place yesterday afternoon, eight miles from the “Twin.” We desired to see this wonderful mountain region of which the half may be felt but can never be told, but turned our faces thitherward hoping that the greater elevation would bring more marked and speedy relief to your dear Father. He rested more last night than he has in a week, and feels quite comfortable today. In these mountain houses, the lower rooms have no cellars underneath, and are not fit for your Father, so of course he must make the ascent of the long flight of stairs, the hardest thing for him to do, and he, of course, does it but once a day, but there being no place for him to lie down on the first floor, he finds an easy chair in the sun, and often gets several naps in the course of the day. Some mornings he has taken his breakfast in bed, and then he could turn over and have a good nap, and be quite refreshed by it, and now, after his breakfast, he is sleeping quietly and with our window wide open, although I have a shawl around me, he is receiving the benefit of this high mt. air, which I hope and pray may bring a decided and lasting change for the better. Your Father just asked me to close my letter to J. Birge by saying that should he not receive the benefit desired here, or in this region, he would try sea air, by making a short trip, perhaps to Eastport. I hope it will not be needful, and I would not dare to attempt anything but a very short voyage, say of a few hours. Indeed I must have the advice of Dr. Bloss before I would be willing to try an experiment that I could not end any hour. We will hope for the best. We missed your letter last night, as we took the train that brought the mail— it will be here soon and I can answer this aft. The train (6 p.m.) runs only to the Fabyan. Later in the season it will come here. We came in coach from Twin— ...I think I answered the points in your last interesting letter. I do so hope that Grand Ma is gaining strength every day, and that everything goes smoothly with you and will do so. Frank will be with you tomorrow eve. How I should like to be with you all. Father joins in love to each and every one of the dear circle at home... Address us here till you hear of a change in our place of rest— yes *rest*. I hope for Father day and night. May God bless and keep you and us ting-a-ling. —*Mungie*.

Crawford House, White Mts., N. H. June 29, 1877.

My dear Mother and daughter Kittie— Your full letter of the 25th Kittie reached us yesterday aft. It was sent us by private hands last eve. from the “Twin.” I felt that we were leaving home when we left there, but the wife of the Manager here just met me, inquired for Father (who has just been in to breakfast with me) and said I must ask for any and everything I wished. These New England people are brim full of kindness and it is not all dollars and cents, as we are sometimes inclined to believe before we come in contact



The Crawford House, Crawford Notch, the White Mountains, New Hampshire.



The Willey House, White Mountains, New Hampshire. Photo by N. W. Pease, North Conway, New Hampshire. In 1826, this was the site of an avalanche where nine people died as they fled from their house that was ironically saved by a boulder behind it. The house became an early place for tourists to visit and marvel at the forces of nature, and an inn, the taller building to the left, was built to accommodate them. "The Ambitious Guest," a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne, was based on this incident.

with individuals. I think there are about thirty guests here, some permanent and others going and coming. We took a drive yesterday aft., through the "Notch" and to the Willey House, which you remember was saved by a great boulder back of it, which parted the avalanche into two streams as it were, and left the house standing firmly between while the five people who left it perished, the two who were found are buried near the places marked by piles of stones. This ride through this mountain gateway at the bases of Webster and Willard is the most awe inspiring of anything we have seen. The Port. & Og. Railroad creeps along the side of the mountain at a dizzy height above you— this will do. I thank you more than I can tell you for your letters. I knew a fresh spirit was needed about the house. I have been "played out" for some time, and made almost indifferent by more absorbing topics. "Bread is the staff of life" when good. I rejoice with you. Am glad Mother can go to the table with you... The weather yes[terday]— was pleasantly cool. Father wore overcoat all day, I a shawl. When you write me again take this letter please and answer the questions not already answered— What do you pay Thompson? Is the hen house moved? what is in the garden, of the potato bugs !! and any matter of local interest... Father slept more last night and the night previous than in several nights. A part of every night in a large easy chair, but he sleeps with less medicine and smoke, and I hope we are approaching nights of sleep without either. Now that you are all together take all the good comfort you can, keep well, and we will try and get well so as to be with you under the old "[illegible] tree" as soon as we can. God guard us all. Love and kisses to you four. —Your loving *Mungie*.

Crawford House, White Mts. June 30th, 1877.

My dear Daughter— While your mother is cleaning her nails and we are waiting for our breakfast at the table, I will commence this letter as it is quite late, 10:15, and the mail closes in 40 minutes. Well this is a delightful spot, one of the wildest and most charming in all the mountain range. I am improving slightly, but surely. I hope and trust. Breakfast is now being placed before us and so good morning to you all... About 7 p.m. yesterday a severe rain storm set in and it has been a howling night with wind and rain. This a.m. it is cool, the skies look full of water and we occasional glimpses of the sun. I do not know whether the storm king will have the wasting or not, on Father's account we pray for clear weather, and if he does not take cold now it is all we can expect. You answered some of my questions yesterday in your two good letters sent us last eve from the "Twin." This last place has one advantage in having stoves in many rooms and steam in halls and dining room, but fair weather will come soon... Father joins me in love to you four and regards to Wm. & E. May God keep you and us now and always, —Your loving *Mungie*.

Crawford House, White Mts., N. H. July 1, 1877.

My dear Mother and Children— I wish we could be with you, then we should not need the medium of pen and paper, but as it is so ordered that we must be apart for awhile, we rejoice that we can talk in this way. I have just left Father seated in a corner of the parlor, and as he seemed disposed to be quiet, I proposed coming up and writing to you, as from this time forward the cars leave here in the morn at seven, heretofore the first mail from here has been at eleven a.m; as the season advances the number of trains increase.

We have had a long south east storm. We came here Wed. eve and we have had three raining nights. Occasionally the sun has broken through for a few minutes during the day, the air has been so damp and cool that I have wished for winter clothing of all kinds: with all this, your Father has not taken cold, nor has he lost any ground. On the contrary, I think he gets more sleep from “sun till noon” and he is smoking less to reach a state favorable to sleep. I do hope that we may soon have clear weather that he may live out of doors more. He walked about two blocks and back this aft (in distance). Any ascent affects his breathing very much still, indeed there is not much change in regard to this. I do think he came upstairs easier last night than the night we came here and we hope and pray that good weather will help him steadily toward a comfortable state of health. Your letters Kittie are a great comfort to us. You answered nearly all of my questions in your last. Now that your dear Buzzy is with you, *train* him into frequent writing. He writes an excellent letter, and now he can treat us often... We have had two Epis— services in the parlor today. About forty guests here... We have every comfort. I am well and if dear Father improves rapidly, I shall feel that I arrive on the mountain top, for this let us pray. Father desired me to give love and kisses to all. In this I join most fondly dear Mother and children and to C, Wm, & E, kindness. —Your loving *Mungie*.

Crawford House, White Mts, N. H. July 2, 1877.

My dear Mother and Children— Still another stormy day in the mts. I think it may have rained twenty times today, and the sun has shone perhaps ten times about two or three minutes at a time. The plank walk has not been dry today so we have had no out door walk. Still with all the damp fog and rain dear Father is no worse certainly and I think when it clears up again, he will show the capacity to improve. It is quite cool and in the large parlor there is a huge fire on the hearth or rather in the fireplace in which I see three wheelbarrow full of wood placed in one day, a barrow full at a time. No mail from you today, papers from J. B. The car changed the morning time today and there is a “hitch” somewhere... Well, I trust you are all very happy together in the Old Home, or as much so as you can be, when we are away on dear Father’s account. I hope everything will go along smoothly in every respect and that I can soon write you a good report when some July sunshine is placed upon our heads and softens the air. I have found your match here Kittie and more— a man who kills, skins, and eats snakes and considers them a very great luxury. (This is worse than bottling them). His soubriquet is Captain Jack. I am going to see him, he being one of the local wonders. I left Father in the parlor, he desired to join me in love and kisses to you all. I hope to hear that you are well as also Uncle Edwin. May God bless and keep us all. —Your loving *Mungie*.

Captain Jack Jack Viles (or Vials) was an eccentric hermit who lived near the Crawford House in a “woodland shanty” where he entertained and intrigued tourists with his life and ways.

Crawford House, White Mts., N. H. July 4, 1877.

My dear Son & dear ones at Home— Many thanks for Kittie’s letter of yesterday morning. She answered all my questions and gave me several interesting items beside. I wish I could have been with the dear lamb during that awful thunderstorm... We had thunder here and it was so cool that I wondered when I heard it. One of the residents said she knew it was warm somewhere. I think dear Father is improving slowly but steadily. He walked a little farther today than before, *talks* of going up Mt. Wash., eight and a half miles.

I had a pleasant ramble up one of the hillsides, where there are a number of cascades and rocks over which the water runs similar to the flume. Have not had an opportunity to visit the many curiosities on account of the rainy days and beside I had not even a deaf companion. This eve I was invited by some ladies to join them in the future, and I may avail myself of the offer if Father can not accompany me.

“Wall” the excursionists are here, about one hundred and ninety of them, good looking people too, but some ways a crowd of this kind always seems to me like a flock of sheep settling along. This has been another lovely day, not even a fire cracker to make you sorry that the fourth of July is at hand. I said to a lady at the “Twin” that I thought there were three schools in New England that fitted boys for College (properly). There may be many more. I have since received a note from Mrs. B— asking me to give her the names of these. Please Frank write me— I had in mind, E. Hampton, Phil Academy and Andover, and enlighten me. Trusting that you young people will take good care of Grand Ma and of yourselves and have a good time and hoping that Father will improve every day, we send love and kisses to you all. —as ever your loving *Mungie*.

Crawford House, White Mts. N. H. July 8, 1877.

My dear Mother and Children— We started to come to our room half an hour since, but were told by Manager Merrill that “his choir” would soon sing, and so we have been sitting in the dining room listening to some most enjoyable music, party from Moody School with a few others, the Lord’s Prayer, and closing with grand old Coronation, it was a sweet fitting close to a Sabbath day. The domestics here are all Vermont or New England people, the head waiter who leads the choir is to study law or medicine, our waiter is sitting for College, reads the Latin mottoes to us, and has just sent for his “English literature” because he “has time to read when he can not study.” So much for this department of the Crawford. We have had two services in the parlor, Episcopal which we attended, your Father being the only gentleman present. I am happy to say that Father seems to be steadily gaining the power of walking. Yesterday we went up Mt. Willard in about two hours and a half. The distance is two miles and the road through woods the whole distance of the way. I suppose we sat down and rested forty or fifty times, *but we went up*, and had a magnificent view from the top, rested and came down. The air was clear and bracing, and cool, so that we did not get heated at all. We were surprised at ourselves, and the people at the house astonished when we reported. Today is quite warm, and cloudy, imagine “muggy” with you, but I hope you will have no more terrific thunder-storms. My Ting-a-ling does not enjoy them, and surely I would not... Father joins me in love and kisses to you all... May God bless & keep you. —Your loving *Mungie*.



Summit of Mt. Willard, Crawford Notch State Park, the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

July 10, 1877, Crawford House, White Mountain Notch, N. H.

My dear Ones at Home— The mail of this eve brought us no letter, indeed we knew that in the absence of Sunday mail, we would get none. Father’s bowels are about right now, but we have not walked far today as he wishes to keep right. He keeps talking of going to the seashore to try the air and I soothe to keep still, and get the full benefit of this place... The truth is that when the mercury has ranged at 80° to 90° in the cities, it has not been



View from summit of Mt. Willard, Crawford Notch State Park, the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

above 75° here, to say nothing of the purity and invigorating character of the air here. I want to see him much better than he is before he leaves, and while he gains a little from day to day, the aggregate in a week, is something imperceptible. So I hope he will be content to stay a while yet. Much as I want to see you all, and see my house and all the precious ones in it, counting every hour and day away from you, and yet rejoicing that God has enabled us to make this change for dear Father's good, and beside I do feel that you will do the best at home, and J. Birge with Father's advice will do very well in Troy... Everybody sees that he is better, and I am thankful and know you are. With a heart full of loving tenderness for you all, we are your *Father and Mother*.

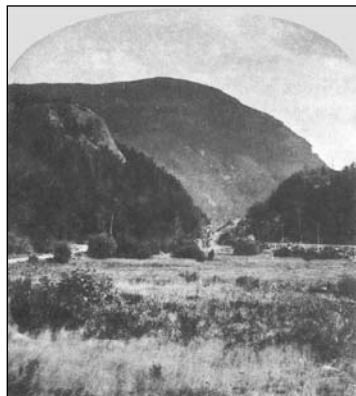
Crawford House, White Mts., N. H. July 10, 1877, Tues eve.

My dear ones at the Old Home— Another Excursion from Portland here tonight and I have been listening to some good music on the piano by a young lady who played about an hour without a note, so may our daughter do one of these days. Your very pleasant letter Kittie came as usual at eve... Tonight I think of Kittie in Bennington, and I presume she will have a jolly time. We had a heavy rain last night and it has rained several times today so much, that our walk has been confined to the plank walk of about two blocks. Father came upstairs this aft. and lay down and had a nap. This is the first time he has been upstairs in the day since we left home. He takes little medicine now, has finished what Dr. B— sent him, and is now taking something sent him by a Physician in Portsmouth N. H. with whom we have corresponded. A man who has suffered many years from Asthma, and in all climes, and by every treatment, sought relief and has finally secured some measure of comfort by remedies of his own preparation, perhaps I should say inventions, so Father is trying these and attending to suggestions by the same Phy. We hope all will be beneficial. He has had that soreness of the bowels the past two days that he had in Troy. I think from cold, and it is relieved somewhat this aft... Hoping that everything will go on in the best measure with you all and

believing that you will all aim to have all things right and with hearts full of love and tenderness to you all, we are your loving *Father and Mother*.

Crawford House, White Mts., N. H. July 13 1877.

My dear ones at Home— Your dear good letter Kittie came this eve. Also one from J. Birge saying that he had a call from Frank today (12th) and he was looking very well. By this time Charlie has left you. He has made you quite a visit and no doubt has enjoyed it. He is as you say, very kind and I think a boy of good principles and correct habits, and I hope he will do well in business. You and Frank will miss him, but then I know you and Frank can be happy with each other, your duties, your books, work of various kinds, a few good friends about, and last but not least your dear good Grand Ma to bless your every hour. As I write it seems as if I must be in a dream this being away from you so long. It is very cool tonight, there is fire in the parlor and reading and sitting rooms and it is too chilly to sit anywhere else. The great outside doors stand open till the house is closed for the night and I never leave my room without a shawl. We had a heavy rain two days since, and I think Father took a little cold, but I know he feels better tonight than last night, and I believe will rest better... There are about a hundred guests in the house now, the most of them will “tarry but a night” and others take their place tomorrow. I went alone this aft. to a rock called “Elephant’s head” from the very marked resemblance. I’ll tell you by word o’ mouth. Father joins me in love to you, Frank, and the dear good Mother. Oh how we would like to see you all... (I even saw a snake today but I did not mind.) ...May God keep you and us in all our ways, “Mungie” —Dear K. Do show Frank how easy to write often [*sic*].



Elephant’s Head and Gate of the Notch. Photo by Albert Bierstadt, Gems of American Scenery, Consisting of Stereoscopic Views Among the White Mountains published in 1875. The ledge known as “Elephant’s Head” is to the left, just beyond the open meadow, and the Webster Cliffs are in the background. The editor of this volume has visited and hiked in the White Mountains of New Hampshire since the 1950s and has authored and edited a number of books about that region.

Crawford House, White Mts., N. H. July 15, 1877. Sab. eve 7 o’clock.

My dear Ones— I have just come up to our room from our second service in the parlor. Father is just up after a nap, and while he is dressing I will write a few lines to you all, of whom we think so much. Kittie’s letter, of Wed, was received Fri. No letter yesterday, but pleasant as it is to hear, I will think that everything is right with you when we do not hear. This has been a lovely day, just warm enough to take off all the chill that is quite common morning and evening. The mercury yesterday morning was 40°, rather low for the fourteenth of July. And this is the middle of summer. Is it possible! When it seems as if we have but just entered the summer season... —9:30 p.m. We have just come up from the dining room where we have been listening to the waiters, who sing beautifully every Sab. eve. You can understand the words they sing as if a person were reading the last piece, “What shall the harvest be?” impressed me as it never did before. We are all sowers, and what shall the harvest be to each of us, for ourselves? for our friends? Let us ponder this momentous question daily. What shall the harvest be? I think I wrote that dear Father had taken a little cold. He seems to be better of it, has breathed a little better the past two nights. He is certain a good deal stronger than when we came here. I wish he would get so that he could come up stairs without being all “wheeze,” and I hope he will. He has improved in this respect and while I dressed him almost entirely for weeks, he can now dress himself, but *effort*, he cannot make much, and yet I hope and pray that he will keep on improving steadily and this will bring up anyone. It is a great comfort to hear that everything goes on smoothly in Troy and at home and helps generally to

keep Father contented. J. Birge writes very frequently and is doing as well as anyone can... I hope to hear tomorrow. Father joins in much love to you...
Mungie.

July 18, 1877, Crawford House. Wed eve.

My dear Mother and Children— A good long pleasant letter from Kittie this aft. with one inclosed from Uncle Will. I think you are doing very nicely, and I hope everything may be right sweet and peaceful with you all. Father and I leave at 9 o'clock in the morning for Old Orchard Beach where I hope perfect relief may be found. We can only go and see what the affect will be. Hoping, praying for the best. There are several very kind and agreeable people in the house and they say they feel sorry to have us leave, I hope they are. Weather fine today, mercury 80°, but the mountain does not prostrate like that of the valley. J. Birge writes that it is warm... Father has had a very comfortable day... I never was away from you all so long before. If you have your pictures (small ones) do send them in a letter. Father joins in love and kisses to you all. God keep you and us. —*Mungie.*

July 20th, 1877, Old Orchard House, Old Orchard, Maine.

My dear Son— We left the Crawford House yesterday morning and arrived here about 2 P.M. The ride down through the mountains was grand indeed. You will remember that when we visited the Mts. three years ago one of your mother's headaches compelled us to stop at the Fabyan House instead of going on to the Crawford as we expected. The Crawford is one of the gems of the Mts. —both as a point of great natural beauty and grandeur and as a Hotel. We spent three weeks there very pleasantly... I think we shall like it here (Old Orchard Beach). Last night I slept comparatively well and I have little doubt the sea air will agree with me. We shall give this place a fair trial hoping for the best results. —With love to all I remain Yours Lovingly,
Father.

July 22, 1877, Old Orchard House, Old Orchard, Saco, Maine.

My dear Frank— Every time I write the date of my letters, I feel the summer passing by, and I have not seen you yet my dear boy, and I wonder when I can see you all in the dear home. Week after week has passed without the relief we hoped to find and so we have moved on and hoped on. First you know dear Father had a bronchial attack from which it has taken weeks to recover. I know the mountain air has been a source of strength to him, and he is sleeping far better nights than he did for weeks, but the shortness of breath still continues, and an ascent increases this trouble. We think there has been a little improvement in this respect since we came here, at any rate, we can not see that the air here is favorable to him. Should we do so, we must try something else. I am going to try bathing him in sea water in the evening. You understand that he cannot use his arms much. This has been a clear beautiful day, and we have not felt as "heavy as lead" as we have ever since we came here— when we have tried to walk the elasticity of the mountains all gone, but with a clear air, a better feeling has come, and oh how I hope, and let us pray most earnestly that the change may lift up your dear Father to a better state, easier breathing. I try to keep up his courage and hope for relief for him. Kittie, the dear child, has written me long interesting letters keeping us

advised about home matters and things in general for which we are thankful. Will it be too much trouble for you to write us a few lines occasionally. Try and do this to gratify Father, as it certainly would and so would give me a double pleasure. We have said that we suppose you have listened to Mr. Gordon today, we would like to have been at the Old Church— that woodchuck must be rooted out of the grave of our fore father. Father desired me to send love and kisses to you and all, and hoped we would soon come together in our home. In this I join him... —Loving *Mungie*.

July 30, 1877, Old Orchard Beach, Saco, Maine.

Our Dear Child— No letter since one of last Wed. rec'd last Sat. We hope all is well with you all— and naught to trouble or make afraid. The sun has not shown here since last Thurs... we had two rainy days and now we have two of dense fog, which still prevails. It does not affect Father much, but of course we cannot go out much. We had a great excitement from a theft last night. A man entered Gen. Baxton's room, took two diamonds, watch & chain and money, about \$2,200 in value. Came in and went out window over piazza roof... Father has taken another bath and thinks it did him good. He is "on the gain." But the weather is bad for anyone just now. I hope we will leave tomorrow, that you are all right in every respect... I hope to see you before long... God bless you all. *Mungie*.

August 3, 1877, Portland, 5:30 P.M.

Our dear Ones at home— Received K's letter of the 1st just as we were leaving O. O. We are now on our way to No. Conway where we may stay until Monday if pleasant there. The foggy weather at O. O. was too much for Father— it gave him the "wheezees" a little. Still he is better than when he went there... We have had a pleasant time at O. O., formed several very agreeable acquaintances, and left the place with many regrets. Hope however the mountain air will be better suited to Father's needs. You may address us at Bethlehem Maplewood House N. H. as before advised... —Your loving *Mungie*.

August 4, 1877, North Conway, N. H.

Our dear ones at home— I wrote you twice yesterday, and although I have nothing special to say, I thought that a few lines sent by this pm mail would reach you Tues morn. so that there would be no Sabbath gap, so I call the day that fails to bring us a letter, for want of mails on the day of rest. This House will accommodate three hundred guests and like most of the houses this year is about half full. The House and village of North Conway are situated on the upland overlooking the Saco Valley, with Mt. Washington in the distance. There are mountains in every direction, some clothed with green, some faced with a tall precipice. From my seat I see one of these perpendicular cliffs, the white figure of a horse about as large as Frank's rocker... this design is on a dark background and is much like a drawing on a blackboard. There are all sorts of resemblances pointed out to us who travel through this wonderful region. The walks and drives of this locality are said to be superior to those of any place in the "tour." There is an Echo Lake, a wonderful natural Cathedral, the ceiling of which is eighty feet from the floor, and is formed by an overarching rock, and the outer wall is formed by immense trees. I have heard about many of these places of interest. Do not know that we will ride

today, but we can take our crocheting and look. When we arrived last eve it was pretty warm, but before morning the wind blew cool, and Father has on his overcoat to keep out the wind. I hope you do not have oppressively warm weather, it is so prostrating. We have not had a day when I could not put up my hair with ease. My dear precious Mother will understand what this means. I hardly know who I am when I think that our “ten days absence” has grown into two months. I would not be willing to be put back to June 4th for Father is much stronger, has been able to take more exercise and now that we are in the dry air, I think he will keep on improving. I have just heard of a new cure for asthma— dry sulphur. We are to remain here till Mon and see the effect of this locality. I hope it will prove the best of all. Father joins in love to you three dear ones and regards to family & friends. Your loving *Mungie*.

Aug, 6th, 1877, Kearsarge House, North Conway.

Dear ones at home— Mother says she has done most of the writing lately and now I must take my turn which I am quite willing to do altho' my poor scribble may prove a poor substitute for her lively epistles. Be that as it may, I'll just let you know that we are still here and both think it the place for us at present. We were very unfortunate in having rainy & foggy weather at Old Orchard and I think we stayed there a little too long... How long we shall remain here I cannot tell now. All this week no doubt, so you will direct your letters here for the present. I have consulted with a Homeo Physician here from Boston and he thinks he can help me— taking his medicine one day seems to have a good effect. With much love to all from Mother & self. I remain as ever your loving *Father*. —No letter from Frank yet.



Kearsarge House, North Conway, New Hampshire.

August 14, 1877, Kearsarge House, North Conway, N. H.

Tuesday evening, 9:30 PM.

My Dear “Ting-a-ling”— Your letter from Hoosick Falls written Sunday came to hand this P.M. —also the little package from New York. Many thanks. Hope you reached home Monday morning and found all well. Now my darling I hope you will find time to take some rest. You must by this time, with all your cares, hot weather etc. etc. be pretty well “played out”. Do take good care of yourself. Mother is in the parlor and by the looks of things I guess she has got hold of her match in talking and for fear she won't be ready to go to her room 'till morning I have taken it upon myself to write you a few lines just to let you know that we are doing well. Have just had a long and pleasant talk with my new Doctor. I am certainly better than when I came here and if we can have pleasant weather you may expect to hear of rapid improvement... We long to be with you and shall set our faces toward the dear Old Home and the loved ones there at the earliest possible and practicable moment... With a heart full of love to all and the same from “*Mungie*” I am as ever you loving “*Pop*.”

August 17, 1877, Kearsarge House, North Conway, N. H.

My dear Daughter— We hear nothing from Bethlehem in regard to room and as all the hotels in and about the mountains are crowded we have thought best to stay here until Monday pm and then go to Maplewood House Bethlehem N. H. You can write Tuesday at Bethlehem and in case of anything important and you wish to telegraph us you can do so at Bethlehem, and if

we have left there the message will be forwarded. I am doing very well notwithstanding the rain rain rain fog fog fog. It is clear tonight and we hope for pleasant weather. Lovingly your *Father*.

August 17, 1877, Kearsarge House, North Conway, N. H.

Our dear ones at home— No letter today and I have nothing new to communicate except that we have had some sun today as well as a heavy rain but it does not clear off bright and certain... We will hope for a good bracing day tomorrow. Father still wishes to try the air at Bethlehem and we have written for a room on the first landing, have had no response as yet, and we may not have one, as the Mountain houses are full. A message from the Crawford to a girl here says they can offer nothing better than a table to sleep on. I am sure of one thing that Old Cambridge will look well when we do get back... I hope we shall not give our new Housekeeper any trouble, the home flavor is what we shall enjoy... Father joins in love and kisses to you three dear ones. —*Mungie*.

August 19, 1877, Kearsarge House, North Conway, N. H. Sabbath evening.

My Dear Daughter— Your good letter of 16th Thursday came to hand yesterday p.m. Frank seems to be going to Troy frequently. I hope he will not desert you. It makes us so happy to know that dear Grandmother is so well, “sewing today and out in the yard.” ... We couldn’t get a room at Bethlehem and now we propose to leave here for Thayer’s Hotel Littleton tomorrow p.m. 1:30 about three hours ride. Tuesday we may take a horse & buggy and drive up to Bethlehem from Littleton, some 6 or 7 miles. It has rained here almost every day this month. What I need is clear pleasant weather and I have about made up my mind that we shall have to go home to find it. Notwithstanding the drawbacks I am better than when I came here and hope to reach home in a condition to go right along improving day after day and week after week. I hardly dare say it, but really think you may look for us the last of this week. Would that I could say tomorrow.

The President is to be up this way Tuesday. He has not sent me word to meet him on his journey but I still hold myself open to any invitation he may extend to me. I see by the papers that Mr. Hayes has lately visited the home built by his father and the one in which I was born and you can’t tell what will come next. Mother is picking up things about the room and getting ready to pack so of course I had to write the letter to “Ting-a-ling” tonight. Love to all. —Your Loving *Father*.

August 20, 1877, Kearsarge House, North Conway, N. H.

My dear ones at home— No letter today as yet. Perhaps the 10 o’clock mail may bring one— Kittie’s of the 16th the last. Father wrote you last eve that we would leave for Littleton today, but this morning was bright and promised a fine day and Father thought he would try one good clear day at Conway, and I think he looks better tonight and besides, the President is coming through the notch tomorrow, probably as far as this place, and we may see him, and go on the same train with him tomorrow. The Pres. went up Mt. Washington today and stays at the Fabyan tonight... Father wrote you last eve that we hoped to be at home the last of this week, as the time draws near I count the days and how glad I shall be to see you all in the dear home

Francis Thayer was born in a house that had been *owned by* President Hayes’ father, but it had been built before Mr. Hayes lived in Dummerston, Vermont. The Hayes family later moved to Ohio where President Hayes was born.

once more. Now, Father has just come up and says there is no letter, and the Presidential Party will be here on special train at 9:15 tomorrow am. to stay an hour and return. So good night for this time, love and kisses from both to you all... —*Mungie*.

August 21, 1877, Twin Mountain House, White Mountains, N. H.
 My dear boy— Well, here we are again in this most comfortable and pleasant place. This morning the President and Mrs. Hayes, with a large party, came to the Kearsarge for an hour where a reception was held from nine to ten. Mrs. Hayes charms everyone who comes in contact with her. We will tell you about the affair when we reach home. We left No. Conway at one-thirty expecting to spend the night at Littleton, but were detained an hour at a railroad crossing and failed to make connection, so turned in to this familiar place where we find several apparently glad to see us again. Tomorrow we hope to leave for Troy and expect to reach that home at seven in the eve. Father will look over matters Thursday with J. Birge and we hope to be with you by the five o'clock train in the aft.— and then, oh I hardly dare think I shall be so glad to see you all. Father joins in love and kisses to you all... —Your loving *Mungie*.

☞ Colorado — planning and departing:

Sept. 8th, 1877, Troy.
 My Dear Son— ...I stopped at house Thursday & Friday, came down this morning and have spent an hour at my desk looking over matters, generally an hour or two every day or two will tax my strength about all it will bear at present. Good reports from Old Amherst will strengthen and encourage me more than anything else in the world. —*Father*.

Sept. 16, 1877, South Cambridge.
 My dearest Brother— Here I am at home again... Father did not look as well and seemed discouraged about himself, he has been taking Dr. Mosher's medicine and his (Father's) legs and fist are so very large, I had to tug to draw on his stockings. The Dr. came this morning and said he would never be better in this climate, and maybe never, and if he stayed here he would [not] live longer than spring. Is that not horrible & to think dear Father who has always done so much for us... I am so ill with the thought I can scarcely write. I suppose Mother and Father will be obliged to start for another climate soon and oh, how lonely I will be. You can see how now more than ever, you should strive more than ever to be as careful steady prudent and wise in all your ways so as to give him no trouble and if we pray, strength will be given us from above... It gave us great pleasure to see that you were a candidate for class President... —*Kittie Thayer*.

Oct. 4th. South Cambridge.
 My dear Son— ...Your father is just getting his voice again, has been able to whisper only several days, and has had a very sore cough... Something has been said of our going to Denver City on Father's account, but it involves so much and separation from friends who are so dear, that we are slow to speak of it. Still I must say that I think it will come to this... —*Mungie*.



Francis S. Thayer, 1822–1880.
 Photograph by Zeph F. Magill,
 336 & 338 River Street, Troy, New
 York.

November 6th, 1877, Troy.

My dearest Brother— No letter from you this week. How can you neglect your dear sick Father. It is beyond my comprehension. Father has not been downstairs in a week, and only walks to and from his chair. Seems weaker every day. Grandma has a cold so Mother has kept her in bed today so she may soon be better... My hair is fixed a new way on top of my head and one curl. Now good bye and all send love and kisses. —Your *Kittie*.

Nov. 18th, 1877, Troy.

My dear precious Frank— ...The probability of our going away on Father's account seems to be growing into a positive intuition and preparation. Dr. Mosher said Denver Col. was the place to winter... it seems probable that we shall go to Den— perhaps remain there long enough to try the climate and do what seems to be for the best, as we strive to now from day to day. It is the old story of nights more or less broken, and an effort to make up by naps during the day, but this is so exhausting when long continued, that it will in time wear out anyone. Dr. Hubbel expects a great relief by the right change of climate, and if months pass without a severe attack the whole condition of the chest will be improved... *Mungie*.

Troy. Nov. 20th, 1877.

My dear Brother— We hope to receive a letter from you this evening. Today has been quite a busy one getting odds and ends ready to go away. It is *decided* we go week after next if Father keeps as well as now. He rides out a little every day and seems some better. Mother is busy and keeps well. Grandma about the same... —*Kittie*.

Dec. 9th, 1877, Sabbath eve, Troy.

My dear Son— Here we are yet enjoying the comforts of our pleasant home... All the past week I gained a little strength from day to day and now I feel as tho' it would be safe to start on our long journey. Our trunks are packed and tomorrow at 2:55 P.M. we expect to leave Troy for some months. How long I cannot tell, all will depend upon the state of my health which I hope & pray may be greatly improved. We shall go through to Chicago without stopping over, arrive at C— Tuesday eve, remaining there until Wednesday noon and then off for Denver Col. where you will address us until further advised. We leave Grand Mother very well with Minnie and Mrs. T. You will be at home soon to make her thrice glad and of course you will do all in your power to make her happy in her loneliness... We shall not be here in person to enjoy your vacation but our thoughts will be continually with you and the dear ones at home. Now my dear boy, remember what you know I would say to you if I could take you by the hand and say Good Bye, God Bless you, —Affectionately yours, *Father*.

Office of Crystal Palace Mills. No. 143 River Street. Troy, New York.

December 12, 1877.

Mr. F. McKie Thayer

Dear Sir— Your father, mother, & Kittie left Monday afternoon at 2:55 all in good spirits. A postal from Rochester says, "All well, does not tire me to ride." Your letter was sent to the house and there I re-mailed it to Denver City Col. —Very Truly, *John T. Birge*.