

## V

1844–1850

### Letters from Cambridge and Troy, Part One

IN the spring of 1842 twenty-year-old Francis S. Thayer left his home in Hoosick Falls, New York, and took a \$100 a year job at a flour mill in Troy, New York, the city that would be his home for the next thirty-five years. He had saved his money to attend college, but his father urged him to give the money to an older brother so that the brother could go to college. Francis Thayer would go into the world of business with no formal education other than the time he had studied at the Troy Conference Academy in Poultney, Vermont. After studying in Poultney, Thayer spent a year teaching in North Bennington, Vermont, but he decided that he did not want to be a teacher. Prior to moving to Troy he had met Catherine McKie of Cambridge, New York, who had also studied in Poultney and whose brothers were his friends. There are many letters and diaries from this time period that tell about their lives.

The years 1844 to 1850 were years of growth and political controversy in America. The great national controversy of this time was slavery—both the practice of slavery in the south and its spread in the west. The term “sold down the river” would become a part of our language in reference to the practice of selling slaves to distant plantations. Slavery was always an issue as the United States either acquired new territory or territories became states. In 1844 the United States negotiated a Treaty of Annexation with Texas that was ratified the following year. Henry A. Wise, a Congressman from Virginia, had urged President Tyler, Wise’s close friend, to follow that course, and in recognition of his work, a county in Texas would be named after the Virginia Congressman. Between 1845 and 1848 Florida, Texas, Iowa, and Wisconsin would become states. This expansion of America coincided with new means of communications. In 1844 Samuel Morse sent the first telegraph message between Washington and Baltimore: “What hath God wrought!” Three years later the Post Office introduced adhesive stamps, and in 1850 the first overland mail delivery west of the Mississippi was organized with monthly mail between St. Louis and Salt Lake City. In 1845 the potato crop failed in Ireland causing a famine. In 1847 an influenza epidemic in London killed an estimated 15,000 people, and in that same year Brigham Young and his followers arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake and founded the “State of Deseret” which would later become Utah. By 1849 trans-Atlantic crossings between Liverpool and New York took thirty-three days and passage in steerage cost \$10. A fire in 1849 burned over 400 buildings in St. Louis. The 1850 publication of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* caused controversy with both its discussion of adultery and its attack on Puritan hypocrisy. Nobody in 1850 was using the term “non-native species” as part of an environmental protection project, but some might later think that the term would apply to an experiment in Brooklyn where English

Receipt for hay: "Received of G. McKie on the sixth day of September 1841, the sum of thirty five dollars, pay in full for hay bought of me to this date. E. F. Whiteside."

sparrows were imported to eat the caterpillars in the shade trees. The sparrows thrived, and the city of New York had to import starlings to prey on the sparrows in Central Park.

This was America in the 1840s as Catherine McKie of Cambridge wrote her diary and exchanged letters, for a several years a "secret" correspondence, with Francis Thayer of Troy. When Catherine wrote letters to Francis, her brothers would discreetly deliver them to him in Troy. Francis placed his letters in magazines that Catherine's brothers would bring home to her. Francis saved Catherine's letters in envelopes that were numbered and dated and Catherine saved the letters from Francis. It may seem extraordinary, but Francis also saved the *handwritten drafts* of his letters to Catherine. This was certainly not the fastest means of communications.

*Letters and diaries by:*

Catherine (Cate and Kate) Sophia McKie married, Catherine McKie Thayer  
George McKie  
George Wilson McKie (son of George & Sophia McKie)  
Niel W. McKie  
Francis (Frank) S. Thayer

*Letters written from:* Troy and Cambridge, New York; New York City; at sea, Chile, and Panama.



☞ Catherine McKie's diaries:

Between 1845 and 1850, when Catherine McKie was between eighteen and twenty-three, she kept a daily journal, three little volumes of unlined pages on which she made very short entries. One of the volumes is written in pencil and is perhaps a "draft" for one of the others which is written in ink. At the end of one volume is the "draft" and at the end of another is a more complete chronology. Both are printed below:

The draft:

C. McKie born June 16, 1827  
1836 At school at Schaghticoke  
1839 At school at Buskirks Bridge  
1840 At home.  
1841 Went to Cam— [Cambridge] School in May  
1842 At school in Cam—  
1843 At home. At Reed's Hollow, Salem. from November went to Poultney to school.

Schaghticoke is a community about ten miles southwest of Cambridge.

1844 At school in Poultney— Left P. in July.  
 1845 At home. In Salem, winter.  
 1846 At home. Uncle James'

A more complete chronology:

1836 At school at Schaghticoke.  
 1839 At school at Buskirks Bridge  
 1840 In Fairfield  
 1841 Went to Cambridge to school in May.  
 1842 At school in Cambridge  
 1843 In the winter at Reed's Hollow. In Salem.  
     In Nov. went to Poultney to school.  
 1844 At school in Poultney — left July 17  
 1845 At home. Salem during the winter.  
 1846 At Uncle James' Salem during the winter.  
     Br. George went to China in May.  
 1847 Br. George returned in March  
 1848 Went to New York with Louisa Whiteside  
 1849 Edwin McKie married to Maria A. Mosher, October 31st.  
 1850 April 30th. F. S. Thayer & C. McKie married.  
     May. George went to California  
     Nov. George returned from California  
 1851 April 22 Brother Henry died  
 1852 Sept. Brother Edwin was robbed of \$48,000 at Cleveland, Ohio.  
 1853 February 7th. Brother Peter left home for Australia.  
     Sept. 28. Brother Edwin left New York for Australia.  
 1854 July. Edwin J. McKie returned from Australia.

#### 1844–1845

Troy, August 12th, 1844, Monday morning, 5 o'clock.

Miss Catherine McKie— Permit me to address you respecting a subject which has much interested me since my return from a very pleasant visit with you of late. I have often resolved to express to you my regards for you and as often doubted what course to pursue for fear of being defeated in my expectations. Kate, I know you have an honest heart and will not expose me should you not reciprocate the regard I cherish for you. I therefore *frankly* express to you that it is my earnest desire to become more acquainted with you and continue my visits to you if it should be your pleasure. You will please inform me by mail your feelings in relation to this subject which I assure you will, if it meets your approbation, be a source of much happiness to me and I trust will not be a step to be regretted by you. My health, since my return from your house, I am happy to say is very much improved. I hope you will favor me with reply to this letter as soon as convenient. —Yours very sincerely,  
*Francis S. Thayer.*

In the following section, Catherine McKie's diaries, where quoted, are at the end of every year as a summary of the year that is ending.

Cambridge, August 15th, 1844, Thursday eve, 11 o'clock.

Mr. Thayer— Your letter, dated Monday morning, was received in the evening and in compliance with your request I answer it by return mail—

(ours twice a week). With regards to your letter, I wish to be perfectly frank. In reference to a non intimate acquaintance with you, I have not even the shadow of an objection for I have ever considered you one of my most worthy acquaintances, but I cannot approve of the cultivation of that acquaintance with regards to any particular subject— to do so would be injustice to you and of course meanness in me— not that I am engaged— no— I am as free as the mountain air.

A statement of facts may not be improper. When you was [*sic*] here you saw my Mother, perhaps you heard her say that her health was very poor— if you did not, such it is, and has been for twenty years. Her family is large— she has but one daughter, and her couch, when a child was ever the sick child's couch. The Mother watched over her with all a Mother's tenderness, and when the Mother's eyes grow dim, and when her cheek grows pale, is it the duty of that child to cultivate an acquaintance in such a manner, as may tend to alienate her affections from that Mother? Is it not rather her province to smooth her pathway to the grave? And with this view of this subject, would I not practice injustice to you to comply with your request to visit me as you describe? And besides Frank I *dare not trust myself* to form such an acquaintance. I have thus blindly given you my opinion and hope that I have not offended you— if so it has been done unintentionally. I intend to spend a few days in Troy next month. If I should see you I would be more explicit. I am happy to hear that your health is improved— neglect nothing that will preserve it. Until we meet Frank, may your own prayers and the prayers of friends shield you from temptation and guide you in the way of purity and happiness. —Your friend as ever, *Kate*.

Troy, August 19th, 1844, Monday morning, 5 o'clock.

My Friend Kate— Your letter of Thursday eve came to hand Saturday afternoon. Although it was not such as I wished it might be— yet I am not offended but disappointed. If I have offended you I hope you will forgive me for I was honest. I thank you for your prompt and frank reply. Your reasons are good for not complying with my request even if there was no other obstacle in the way but the poor health of your kind and affectionate Mother who has watched over you in sickness and in health with such tenderness and affection as a fond Mother only knows. I would be committing a sin which would haunt me by day, and by night as long as I live, to ask you to comply with my request while it would alienate your affections from that Mother who above all others under heaven merits your unceasing love and affection now in her declining years.

Kate, I have a dear Mother whose health is much like your Mother's. I know what it is to love such a Mother but I cannot find words to express it when I gaze upon my Mother's pale cheek or think of her. I ask myself this question: how I shall ever pay her the great debt I owe her for all her kindness from the moment of my existence to the present time. I answer: Leave nothing undone which will make her happy and do nothing which will make her unhappy, which I shall do as long as reason holds her power over my mind. Kate I do hope that what has passed between us since I saw you will not in the least *mar* our former friendship. The periodicals which I promised to send you I will leave at the Washington Hall done up in a bundle addressed to your brother Edwin with directions to have them

forwarded the first opportunity. I intended to have sent them by George Saturday but I was so much engaged in business that I did not have time even to treat him (Geo) with common civility. I hope he will excuse me this time and I will promise to give him my undivided attention next time he takes the trouble to call on me which I trust will be the first time he comes to the City... I would be glad to receive another letter from you as a friend if you think it best. Please overlook all errors in this hastily written letter and believe me to be your sincere friend as ever. —*Frank*.  
PS *May the last clause of your letter have effect.*

*your letter* The letter of August 15, 1844.

Cambridge, August 29th, 1844, Thursday eve, 11 o'clock.

Friend Frank— Your letter of Monday morning was received in the evening. In reference to what has passed between us through the medium of pen and paper, I trust you will not dream of having offended me, for you have given me no occasion for offence...

I received the periodicals last Sat eve and have read three numbers of the *Knickerbockers*— am much pleased with the work, and think it the best of the kind I ever met with... And Frank, will you not come up to attend the Barbecue— be assured we shall be happy to see you. It is late and the hour bids me close... 'tis an hour for reflection and is it not a season for reflection? The sun and yellow leaf are but types of the fading scenes of earth— and each leaf that falleth hath in itself a lesson... Nature is a silent teacher too— she tells a 'mystic lesson,' but they who watch her well may prophet by her teachings. Now Frank, do not think that you are under obligations to answer this scrawl— *merely* because you may not think it polite to leave it unanswered— for I shall think you deserve a compensation if you read it. As a friend, I shall always be happy to hear from you— and hope you will soon let me know whether you will attend the meeting in Saratoga or not. "Good night" Frank, and may your pillow be guarded by him who dispenses health and happiness in this life and that which is to come. —*Kate*.

*Knickerbockers* First published in January 1833, *Knickerbockers* quickly became the most popular and influential literary magazine of the period. It ceased publication in 1859.

Troy, Sept 2nd, 1844.

My Friend Kate— ...With regard to attending the Whig Barbecue to be held at Saratoga on the 19th inst. I would say that when I first heard that there was to be such a meeting I promised myself that if possible I would attend it, and now since receiving your letter that resolution has been strengthened and I now promise you that I will attend the said meeting... I would like very much to be at Cambridge on the 14th or 15th but I cannot ask my worthy employers to let me be absent so long at this very busy season of the year when my humble services are needed most... As the mail which takes this closes at 7 o'clock I am obliged to stop, fondly anticipating that I shall soon see you— when we can talk over matters and things in general. Hoping that this may find you and all your friends in good health, I subscribe myself your sincere friend as ever. —*Frank*.

*friends* Francis Thayer and Catherine McKie used this term when they wrote about their families.

Troy, October 1st, 1845, Wednesday evening.

Dear Friend— In a most welcome letter which I received from you a little more than a year since, I find these pleasing words— "As a friend I shall always be happy to hear from you." With this view Kate, I am disposed to break in occasionally upon your quiet and leisure and claim a little of your

precious time for my own pleasure and satisfaction. If I intrude you can tell me so and that will be the end of it. It would please me greatly to hear from you now and then. We have known something of each other. We once traveled a short way together in common pursuits and enjoyments. Those school days and the images they wrought on my mind have not passed away. Memory goes back often and seems to delight to linger long on the scenes of those few months that made so bright a spot in my life. I could wish for my own improvement and the friends I made there that they have been many years instead of months. And yet I believe I have not lost all the friends I made there. At any rate I have endeavored to retain some of them and whether I have succeeded or not in one instance, for the present and future, I submit to you. Kate I do love a sincere and open friend. One whose sympathies are kindred with my own. And when in youth such a friend, one or more of them, is found, and you feel and know that such a one has a spirit akin to your own, one whose moral sentiments and social qualities are responsive to your own, it is ennobling and elevating to strengthen and cultivate that friendship, to brighten its links and add to them one by one, as the years roll on and cares and sorrows chill the glow and warmth of our first associations... George called on me on his return to College...

George McKie, Catherine's brother, was a student at Union College.

I have not been out of the City since the day I left your house, since which time I have been much engaged in business, so much so that I long to get away from the counting room and spend a few of these *charming* days in the country with my friends, which I regret to say I am unable to do at present. My duties are arduous now, and will be so until the close of navigation when I shall (Providence permitting) have the inexpressible pleasure of again visiting my friends... In conclusion I would say, that if I have in writing you this epistle intruded, I hope you will pardon me. On the other hand should you consider it worthy an answer, be assured it will meet with a most hearty reception. Until we meet Kate, "may good angels and happy thoughts be your companions." —Your sincere friend, *Frank*.

#### A Summary of 1845:

1845 *Cambridge, Washington Co.*

Jan 23. Left home for Salem.

Jan 25. Went to Poultney

Feb. 9. George came home.

Feb. 11. Finished quilt.

June 13. Father & Mother went to Whitecreek

June 16. My birthday.

June 18. F. S. Thayer called.

June 17. F. S. Thayer left.

July 26. E. P. Beadle & Miss Jones called.

Aug 9. ...Mother & myself called at Mr. Beadle's.

Aug 11. Niel returned to New York.

Aug 22. Went to J. J. Lee. F. S. Thayer here.

Aug 25. F. S. left...

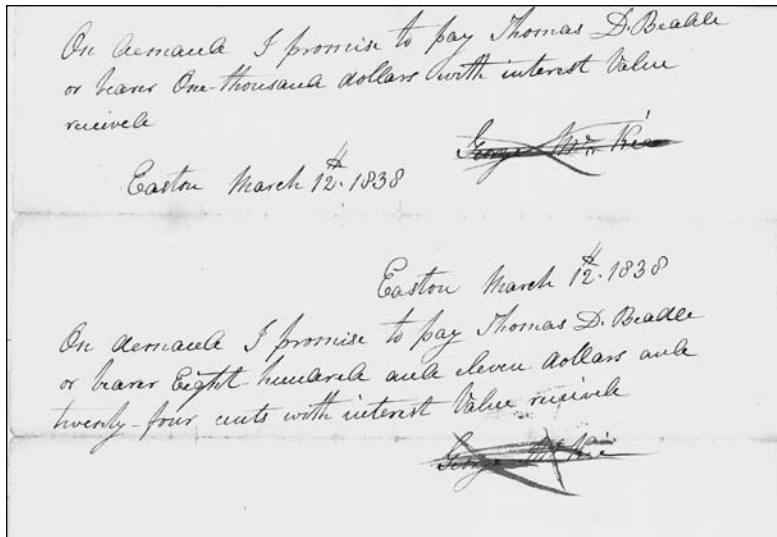
Nov. 13. Father & Mother went to White creek. Eliza W— here.

Nov. 14. Father & Mother returned. Aunt Mary very low.

Nov. 27. Aunt Mary died.

Nov. 28. Attended funeral.

Mary McKie (also Aunt Polly), 1787–1845, second of eleven children of James McKie, 1760–1843, and Elizabeth Wilson McKie, 1765–1849. There is no record of her ever marrying.



Promissory note from George McKie: "On demand I promise to pay Thomas D. Beadle or bearer one-thousand dollars with interest value received. George McKie, Easton March 12, 1838"

Nov. 30. Snow fell—the first this fall.

Dec. 1. Snow all day.

Dec. 31. The year has passed and what changes has it wrought—sure, time must leave its impress and years are pilferers. The poet has said. There is "not a year but pilfers as he goes some youthful grace that age would gladly keep."

—Excerpts from the 1845 diary of Catherine Sophia McKie.

## 1846

New York, May 16, 1846.

Dear Father— Yours of the 13th just came duly to hand & seen George & done the best in my power to have him return home but all to no purpose. He has left this day for Canton in the ship *Rainbow*. I have given him a good outfit & everything to make him comfortable. It is a splendid ship & first-rate men are the owners & Captain I have seen them both and told them under what circumstances he goes out. They calculate to be gone 10 months. She is the fastest ship in the world & George goes out under favorable circumstances. If he is disposed to do well he can do so. I have given George all the good advice I was capable of doing & think he is determined to try to do well. There is quite a number of young men gone out in the *Rainbow* out of first rate families in this city. George received 2 coats & a letter from Benj Fish enclosing 10 dollars. I think I shall be up home in 2 weeks or so. Tell Ed I want to know when he is coming down or whether he intends to come or not. Remember me to all the family— Your affectionate son, *N. W. McKie*. [Niel Whiteside McKie]

New York, May 19, 1846.

Dear Brother— When I wrote Father on Saturday last I had not time to say what I wanted to. It rained all day here on Saturday last & George did not

leave the harbor until Monday morning (yesterday). George says he was not expelled from college nor did he cut up any scrape there... He owes 8 or 9 dollars for board & a little at the college & 3 or 4 dollars at Dorlons Troy is all he owes... Remember me to all the family, Your Brother, *Niel W. McKie*.

George's trunk is all packed up & I have the key.

Schenectady, May 19th, '46.

Mr. George McKie— Dear Sir, Your son has been boarding with me & has left a small bill unpaid & I understand that your son has left home and don't intend coming to college any more. He promised to pay me this term. I should like to have you send the ballance [*sic*] on to me for I have a payment to make. Let me hear from you soon & by so doing you will much oblige me. Yours etc. *P. V. R. Livingston*.

[Itemized bill]

<i>July 7th to eight weeks board, \$2.00 per week.</i>	<i>\$16.00</i>
<i>July 31 to 3 weeks &amp; 3 days Board &amp; Room \$3.50</i>	<i>12.00</i>
<i>1846 March 11th to 17 weeks &amp; 2 days Board \$2.00</i>	<i>34.58</i>
<i>July 22nd to use of horse &amp; wagon &amp; Sundries</i>	<i>11.69</i>
	<i>74.27</i>
<i>March 10th Cr. By Cash at 3 different times</i>	<i>50.00</i>
	<i>24.27</i>

☞ George McKie's trip to China:

A far bit at sea, May 31, 1846.

Dear Brother— Little did you think or did I, of the toils and hardships which a person in my situation has to undergo. Had I imagined that the life of a sailor was so burdensome— never, never would I have stepped my foot on board a ship. The first day or two out it was pretty pleasant— smooth sea and gentle breezes. But the fourth day we had a strong gale— the ship pitched bows under every wave. I was drenched to the skin all day long and at night got into a cold— wet— damp— dreary berth— and had hardly got to sleep when “all hands on deck” aroused me and from that time until morning, there I stood, wet— wet— wet clear through to the skin.

And to give you any further history of our further voyage would only be a repetition of the above. Every other day we begin work at 4 o'clock and work like the D— until 8 o'clock, then we have until 12 o'clock to ourselves. From 16 o'clock work again until 6 o'clock— when “clane up the decks” keeps us about an hour. Then we stand watch 4 hours on and 4 off all night.

The food is the next consideration. Salt beef and pork with dry hard navy crackers, tea for supper, coffee, breakfast— sweetened with molasses. This with what they call “Duff” at sea made out of flour— put in a bag and boiled and eaten with molasses. This is fare for an epicure you may well say. You cannot appreciate my feelings when I think of home and all its pleasant endearing associations, brother, Cate and all dwell continually in my mind. But still I think that it will be of great benefit to me.

I was seasick about ten minutes— but for two or three days I felt a qualmish sensation at my stomach— but now my appetite is perfectly wolf-



ish. It is the opinion of some of the crew that we will be gone from New York 2 years on a trading expedition in the Indian Ocean. The Captain has his wife with him. The ship is prepared with sails and rigging enough for a three year cruise— so the conjecture may be a true one...

*June 9th*— Some days have elapsed since I wrote the above. Since then things have passed off much as usual on shipboard. Yesterday about 2 o'clock PM, while I was painting some iron, the cheering cry of "Land ho" was shouted from the crop-trees. The land appeared to be about 30 or 40 miles off and as the weather was somewhat misty we did not get a good sight. It was one of the Cape de Verde Islands, St. Antonia by name, so that you can see about where we are. If I live, won't my heart pound when the cry of "Land ho" is heard in latitude 41 of thereabouts and New York bay is made.

I would give all that is in the power of mortal to give, to take one look upon our family on one of these beautiful summer evenings. Niel— you know nothing about beautiful climates away up there. The nights are beautiful— clear— stars very bright— the ship sailing along at about 10 knots an hour. The wind such as we would call a fine summer's evening breeze. Last night we caught for the first time a flying fish and a queer fish he was— about 10 inches and shaped like our brook suckers or rather more slim. The wings were simply an elongation of the fins, just behind the gills. The wings were about 4 inches in length.

We have seen several sail but have spoken none yet. While I am writing there is a sail off to Leeward about 8 miles, standing on the same course that we are. I shall be satisfied to stay at home when the voyage is out, and be perfectly contented with country life. If ever a person was disappointed in these expectations, that person can appreciate my feelings. Any respectably connected person casting his life in such a mould, as the life of a sailor, is only to be wept as lost, if he allows himself to be led by many of his companions. If anything ever had a moral effect upon a sensitive mind, it is the shock caused by the utterance of the vilest oaths of the most uncouth language— the most degraded conversation— must have a very bad or a good effect. With me I hope the latter has been the case. Time to think and deep thought have caused me to deeply to regret my first course of life as to shed tears of repentance over the ruins, and when you see me again, if God in his providence ever permits you to do so, you will not see your wild unprincipled rogue of a brother, but a man. I hope Father will forgive my youthful indiscretions. I do not hope that he will, only wish it, as I know that he cannot do it, but when I say the pecuniary difficulties that he would soon find out if not settled were what drove me away from home (for think not Niel that I wanted to go to sea) it will be something of a plea in my defense. But could father know my feelings when I left home or when we left the port of New York, he would consider it sufficient punishment for all my faults. The 2nd day out my hands were covered with work blisters within and blistered without by the sun. If I recollect there were 17 blisters on the insides of my hands and fingers. How is Mother and all the rest of the family? I don't ask to be answered, but only because it is natural. Many have been the times my night watches on deck, that I have sat on the rail and thought of you and all the family and almost wept as I thought of the kindly brotherly feeling which you showed when you parted with me when the ship was about sailing— yes hot blistering tears of repentance have I shed over my past misspent life— but none over this last rash act the great-

est of all— which has separated me from family— home— friends— and in fact almost all that makes life endurable. But if after one year and I return, the meeting will be all the sweeter and that little knowledge picked up will interest friends. I will write every opportunity so goodby and God bless you and all the family. Bid all the family a kind farewell for me— tell Cate that I will bring her something as a remembrance— and that she must not get married until I get back again. To Mother a kiss of affection and a son's blessing, to Father the same— to Ed, a warm brotherly hug— and goodbye to Henry, James, and Peter and the warmest well wishes and prayers of your affectionate brother to yourself. —*G. W. McKie*.

Valparaiso [Chile], August 8, 1846.

Dear Brother— ... We entered this port this morning about daylight and cast anchor in 28 fathoms water. A beautiful place is Valparaiso— built on the side of a range of hills that rise from “old ocean's” bed to the height of three or four hundred feet almost perpendicularly, covered with green verdure down to the very waters edge— not a tree to be seen— just over this range— inland the Andes raise their snow clad tops. The air on the water is almost insupportable— (although we have a sea breeze)— on account of the heat, and just overhead the snow is piled up to the very heavens. We have not been ashore yet but the crew hopes to get on shore over Sunday— and if ever the Sabbath was broken by rambling about, it will be broken that day. We had a cold passage around Cape Horn. The rigging covered with ice for a week without a thawing day, the deck with snow and ice. But thank God we weathered the cape without losing a man or spar or sail. The rest of the voyage will be in warm weather. We shall stay in this port about a week, then for Callao, the port of Lima, then for Canton...

I hope that all difficulties will be settled up before I get home and allusion made afterwards. I know that it was wrong and have applied the corrective— all that can be said will only aggravate not cure the matter. My mind is made up... if I am received as formerly, with kindness and kisses, I'll go to work and be a farmer or go through college, but if on the other hand, if kicks & cuffs await me, the sea is my home ever after— and so mote it be. That is enough and finishes the subject forever on my part. You might have written me to Canton, and I hope you have as a letter from home would be to me a world of interest at present. When we were in the bay at New York I wrote a short letter to Father detailing the state of my financial concerns, and I sincerely hope that they are all settled. When I went up to Troy from N. Y. and borrowed the 40 dollars of John White, I paid 33 dollars to different individuals that had lent me in their innocence.

You are all enjoying good health I hope at home. The warm weather and exercise is conducive to health as I have found by experience as the erysipelas has troubled me but once or twice, and then only in the eyes, although I have not had a dry foot or shirt from one week to another for three weeks in succession. My time is about up and I must draw this letter to a close— commending the blessing of God on you all. Kindest love to all— Father, Mother, Sister, Brothers— and all enquiring friends. We will not take a two or three year cruise as I have predicted in the others, but will be home in less than a year from the time of starting— if God spares our ship and crew. Ask Louisa or Cate Whiteside (Fuller) if they know a young fellow by the name of Pound,

From this series of letters it appears that George McKie may have left Union College with some financial problems and debts, but there is no other information about that. The only records of the 1846 trip to China are the following: 1) his sister's entries in her diary, 2) a lacquered box that he brought back with him, and 3) this letter. Unfortunately the original copy of the letter has been misplaced or lost.

a minister's son. He knows them and is a doctor on board this craft with me— Once more love to all—  
As ever you affectionate brother, *George*.

Troy, August 27th, 1846.

Dear Friend Kate— When I visited you a few weeks ago I intended to have disclosed to you what was uppermost in my mind. But no favorable moment offered itself. . . . Yes Kate, I love you and have long loved you. “I know you but to love you.” Years ago, when I first knew you, this attachment was formed. I hardly knew myself then. It might be a boyish fancy and sober thoughts and mature years might efface the first bright and beautiful image that love impressed on my heart, but I have lived long enough, haven't I Kate, to trust myself to know my own constancy. And I now avow to you that with every year and month of my life, you who first touched my heart with love, have become more and more the object of my affection until you are now interwoven and bound up in all the hopes, desires and ambition of my life. And now Kate do you respond to this fond and devoted affection of one who has loved you for years— and loves you alone. If you do, I am happy and O how bright the promise of the future. . . . I have thus *honestly* and *frankly* made known to you my feelings towards you, and I hope I have not offended you. If I have I trust you will be kind enough to forgive me. Do let me hear from you soon that I may know my destiny and meet it brave hearted and firm like a man— this I shall do Kate come what may, both for your sake and my own. With these deep and heartfelt feelings I subscribe myself. Your sincere Friend,  
*yes more than friend, Frank Thayer*.

This letter was written on my 24th birthday. May it never be so celebrated again. K.

Troy, Sept. 11th, 1846.

Friend Kate— Your letter of 3rd inst. came to hand the 5th and however surprising it may seem to you, my own feelings will not permit me to let it pass unanswered. This is probably the last letter I shall ever write to you and I wish to be *frank* in every sense of the word, as I was in my letter to you of Aug. 27th in which I made a *sincere* and *devoted* avowal of love. And with equal frankness you have answered that you did not respond to it. The simple truth is that I loved you and you did not love me and there is now left no room for doubt. I have but one course to pursue and that is to veil the memories of the past and fill up the future with other hopes and this precludes the propriety or wish on my part to continue an intimate association as *friend*. . . . You will not understand me Kate when I tell you that our association except as we may by accident be thrown together will now cease and that in this is my safety. If you loved me you would understand. My task is now *to forget you and my association with you*. . . . Do not imagine that in all this there is anything of wounded pride that gives me this tone. My own happiness requires that I should not seek your society. It tells me that separation and time are the messengers of my peace. You need not as you suggest “be pained” on my account. I am too keenly alive to your happiness to wish that even in memory for me one drop of bitterness should ever come to that overflowing cup of pleasure which I pray God may be yours through life. My task to forget you may not be easy but in time it will be accomplished. . . . I am grieved to learn that you

have been called upon to watch over the sick bed of a dear brother. I know by painful experience that the care and anxiety under such circumstances is very great and am not surprised that you are almost worn out with watching. I hope and pray too that your dear brother may soon regain his usual health and that each and every one of you may enjoy health, happiness and prosperity. I shall return you your letters, the first *safe and convenient opportunity* and I wish you to return mine *including this*. Good bye Kate. Your Friend and well wisher, *Frank*.

Troy, October 10th, 1846, Saturday evening.

Dear Kate— Your letter of 1st inst. (mailed at the Junction P.O. 5th) came to hand Monday afternoon. *Welcome, thrice welcome*. I never before knew how much there was in those words “better late than never.” The connection in which they now come to me will make them forever cherished. In my letter to you of Aug. 27th I opined to you my full heart. I loved you and I loved you so well and truly that I did not approach the matter perhaps as I should. I did not adopt any prudential steps to ascertain how much and well you thought of me. If I had been experienced at all in such affairs I never should have walked boldly up to you with my heart in my hand as I did but cautiously and by slow degrees. I should have revealed my attachment in some doubtful expressions and in this way sought in some manner to ascertain your feeling towards me. But Kate this is not my way or character. I know my own feelings...

When I received your reply to my letter, your first reply I mean, I felt that the brightest promise of the future was darkened to me. I felt that my earliest and first love was disappointed. O Kate you do not know how sad and heavy some of those gloomy hours were when I had fully made up my mind that you did not reciprocate my attachment and that I must turn away and leave to some other person more fortunate the precious treasure of your affection. But I made up my mind to do it. And now if I mistake not (Do I?) a new light breaks in and I may believe that there are *two* who in inclination and feeling are *one*. Your philosophy and observation so far as much of the world goes is good no doubt, but it is not all so. Heaven has planted some flowers of “frail and delicate growth” that when nursed and watched with affection, care, and tenderness will grow up and strengthen with the years of life and diffuse around our path sweeter blessings and richer joys, as we go on our journey through life... The clouds have now rolled away and I feel myself in a sunlight of pleasure that I never before experienced and while I ask may I not now hope for your love. I wish you would write me by week from Monday’s mail, (sooner if you have time), and tell me all you think of me. I don’t care much for anybody else opinion just now. Kate I want to see you much— very much and I now hope that I shall be able to avail myself of that pleasure in two weeks from this afternoon, perhaps three— at any rate as soon as I can. I can hardly deny myself the pleasure of attending your county fair but business is so pressing at this season of the year. I am obliged to adopt for my motto, “business before pleasure” and stay at home. I should really like to hear the Ladie’s report read... There was no need of your making an apology for the appearance of your last letter for it was the best letter I ever received, and may I not look for another soon. Please accept this scrawl from your sincere and devoted lover. *Frank*, always.

☞ The Ladies report:

The Committee of Ladies experience great pleasure in being able to state, that the large variety and superior quality of articles presented, furnish good evidence that the Ladies of the County feel an increasing interest in these annual assemblies.

This fact leads us to anticipate a brighter, better day—a day when the industry of woman, usefully applied, shall have triumphed over indolence and *profitless* employment. For upon woman, as a being of *useful* industry, depend her happiness, her elevation, and the morals of those associated with her. Every lady has duties to perform in her own private sphere; and nothing can give her more real enjoyment than a consciousness of having discharged those duties faithfully.

Useful employment is no less necessary for the mind, than active exercise for the body. Both are required to sustain under present exertion, as well as to strengthen and mature for greater trials and more strenuous effort. When indolence governs the body, inactivity creeps over the mind. It becomes dull and spiritless, appears to have lost the elements of happiness, and evinces none of its former energy, except in seeking for one of two things, as circumstances may require: either external opiates, to drown imaginary evils, or external stimulants, calculated to create a fitful, feverish glare of happiness—happiness which soon expires, and the mind is left in the same dull state as before...

We are told with truth that “there is beauty all around our paths,” and all may cull the flowers; yet experience, that potent tutor, tells us that in this life the sunshine, the cloud, and the storm, rapidly succeed each other, and in order to be prepared to meet the changes of life, we should early acquire a thorough practical knowledge of all its duties.

Without industry, no woman can attain the position for which she is designed. There are those who plead as an excuse for their want of intelligence, that their domestic, or other active duties, require all their time. This should not, need not be. We are not required to cultivate and strengthen the mortal, to the total neglect of the immortal. Every individual should devote a portion of each day, to reading such books as would be calculated to call forth and awaken into energy, latent principles of thought, which may be improved and matured by future examination...

In conclusion, your committee would remark that if the views which they have advanced be just—and they hope they are—the Ladies of this County must feel deep gratification for the institution of this Society, which generously smiles upon, and greatly encourages female industry. Untrammelled by those invidious distinctions caused by imposing titles and high sounding pedigree, as well as by any false standard of superiority, we are free to reward and appreciate true merit, without regard to name or station.

The scene which is about to close has been a happy one; yet we look forward to a brighter, happier scene than this—a day when woman shall banish indolence from the fireside; when a correct taste, and a mature judgment, shall give elegance to plainness, combine beauty with utility and economy, and when the influence of woman shall be, like that of the moon upon the ocean, —unseen, but felt,—in the *noiseless* but *dignified* duties of her home. —C. McKie.

—From the report of the Washington County Agricultural Society, *Washington County Post*, October 27, 1846.

Troy, Nov. 4th, 1846, Wednesday night, 11 o'clock.

My Dear Kate— In compliance with your request and my promise I herewith return to you *the letter* which has given us both some unhappy hours.

Catherine's father, George McKie, strongly disapproved of her giving this report and having her name and the report published in the newspaper.

You have explained to my *full satisfaction* why you penned such a letter and I now hope and trust that you will not for *one moment* harbor a single painful thought in regard to it. Although my neck was bowed down for a while I now walk erect and elastic in the hope and promise of future joys. Yes Kate, that same love which I have so long cherished for you still burns with a pure and quenchless flame and believe me when I tell you that my letter of Aug. 27th was a “candid one” *without* the slightest “coloring of imagination.”

That I had a delightful ride after leaving you on the bright and charming morning I need not tell you— for how could it have been otherwise? When the sun shone out with unusual splendor upon all nature clothed in the garb of autumn presenting to the eye a scene truly grand and sublime. As I glided swiftly along over hills and dales towards my much loved home I could think of little else but the happy happy hour I had just passed with you that made an impression upon my memory which never can be effaced. In a few minutes (as it seemed to me) after I left you I was with my friends at Hoosick. As I expected I was asked some questions in regard to the route which I took to get there so early in the day. I *frankly* told them that I came via Cambridge (a fact which they would have soon learned from some other source) which I thought the better course. My visit at home was necessarily *short & sweet*, only 4 or 5 hours— a longer one next time I hope... Good night Kate and may our affection for each other be deep-rooted, sincere, and growing which I trust it is. Affectionately your, ever faithful and true, *Frank*.

Thursday, Nov. 19th, 1846.

*this sly way of corresponding*  
Francis Thayer and Catherine McKie exchanged these letters without the knowledge of her parents.

My Dear Kate— ...I must confess Kate that I can hardly reconcile myself to *this sly way* of corresponding and when I think of the time that must elapse before I can see you. I am half (if not more) inclined to believe that it would be better for us both to let your folks know the feelings that we cherish towards each other and ask their approbation which I hope and pray too, they may be pleased to grant. I will not argue this but merely suggest the idea, leaving it entirely with you to act as you think best. I now think I shall go up home and spend Thanksgiving and I assure you it would give me much pleasure to return via Cambridge and make you a short visit, which pleasure I must forego until the *proper time* arrives. I am as usual hard at work over Journal & Ledger, day after day, week after week & so on. When it will end I know not. Business has been such this fall as to require my whole time and attention. I hope for cold weather soon to close navigation, when I shall have a little more leisure. I know you will write me the first convenient opportunity which I hope may present itself soon... Your sincere and devoted *Frank*.

Wednesday evening, 6 o'clock.

Dear Frank— I have just been told by Ed that he could take a package to you if I wished him to do so. Last evening he did not know that he would have time. A month since I received “said letter” from you, read it, and then gave it to the flames. I trust it will be forgotten by both. Two weeks since in a note you expressed a dislike to this “*sly correspondence*,” I can but agree with you. Truth and good intentions require no covering and yet Frank I cannot think of giving publicity to what *we only* are acquainted with, not even my Mother. It is far

more for her sake than my own, that I would keep it from her. How can I give her any uneasiness now on my account. Wait 'till I see you again, and then you can tell me your best method of arranging matters. You need not fulfill your promise of sending a note in each one of the periodicals unless you choose. I would love to hear from you, *yes* and *see you very often* but I do not wish you to do anything merely to gratify me, which you very much dislike particularly when there results no *real* lasting benefit to either. However I must hear from you once more before you come home in winter... I should have written before, but I have had no opportunity. Henry has been in Troy but had not time to “take a package.” ...Ed says he is waiting for my “bundle of books,” so good bye this time. Your own *Kate*. —I am perfectly well.

Thursday afternoon, December 17th, 1846.

My Dear Kate— ...In regard to giving publicity to our affairs, I have only to say that your own wishes should be strictly adhered to. Yes Kate, I love you and your dear Mother too much to ask you to take one step that would give her any uneasiness on your account at this time. When I see you we will talk over this matter if we have an opportunity. We will for the present move along in *quiet loveliness* at the same time having an eye on the many bright and happy days which I trust we may be permitted to spend together. Glad was I to hear that the “said letter” had been given to the flames— a wise disposition of it. I think it is my wish, as well as yours, that it should be forgotten for I am quite certain that there was nothing in that I have the least desire to remember... —Ever thine faithful & true *Frank*.

A Summary of 1846:

*Feb. 16.* Mother quilted

*Feb. 18.* Finished the quilts. At work on four quilts about 18 days.

*March 10.* F. S. Thayer

*March 11.* F.S.T. left in the aft.

*April 20.* Libby Beadle came here, went to [illegible] and procured plants, returned & took tea. Lib went home.

*May 18.* Br. G— left New York for China.

*Oct 24.* F. S. Thayer came

*Oct 25.* F. S. Thayer and Ed went to Church

*Oct 26.* F. S. left.

*Nov 23.* Ed went to Glens Falls.

*Nov. 24.* Henry went to Troy on horseback

*Nov. 25.* The first snowfall. Dreadful wind storm.

*Nov. 26.* Ed returned. Sleighing

—*Excerpts from the 1846 diary of Catherine Sophia McKie.*

## 1847

*February 22, 1847.* Pleasant. Started from Troy in the stage for Hoosick, arrived home about 1 o'clock, found our folks all well, also my friends in the village. Was glad to get home— all it lacked to fill up the cup of pleasure was good sleighing...

—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

April 19, 1847. Monday morning.

My dear Kate— I have passed a long night in painful thought— such thoughts as I once cast from me. I felt myself the happiest man on earth. I have thought of everything that has been said or written on this subject which weighs heavily on my mind at present. Kate, when I am gone, I wish you to review the past, lay the whole matter before your dear Mother— make up your mind and write me the result; which I pray God may be such as will make me the happiest man on earth. Is it right that we should go along in doubt much longer. I can write no more. Anxiously awaiting your reply I subscribe myself your sworn and devoted *Frank*.

Troy, May 5th, 1847.

My own dear Kate— I waited long and anxiously for your letter of 22nd which was not received till the evening of the 28th. I almost dreaded to receive it for it was to convey to me so much of joy or disappointment. I had staked my happiness on my love for you and you had answered in words of sweet response that you loved me... I have had some dark and gloomy hours in this my *first* and *only* love. At one time I almost despaired of winning your affections and at the moment when I had given up all, a few words from you broke the gloom— the clouds rolled away and with a joyous heart I saw and hailed the light of a new day— it was fair and beautiful for with it then came your smile, your welcome, your promise of love. This was almost a new being to me and I have lived in it ever since. And now Kate shall I not always live in it? ...In your letter you desired me to write you a good long letter which I am happy to do. I could find no time to write before this evening on account of having more business than usual. I am very busy in closing up the business of my old employers and commencing the business of *Howland, Bills & Thayer*. You will of course excuse the delay. This is a long letter and I will leave you to decide whether it is a good one or not. I have only to say that it has one merit and that it is a *true one*. Kate I want you to write me a good long letter. You can't tell how happy I shall be to receive it— just say how soon I may visit you— name the day. I want to see you more than ever. —Your own devoted *Frank* always.

*July 2, 1847.* This is a yellow day. I would like to get away into the country but cannot at present. Hope to about the 17th this month & then won't I have a good time...

*July 17.* This is a scorching day indeed. Started from Troy with Mr. H's man & our wagon about 11 o'clock... Arrived home about 1/2 past 4 P.M. found friends all well and glad to see me...

*July 28.* Weather continues fine. Just the kind of weather for harvesting the abundant crops which this County is again blessed with... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, July 31st, 1847.

My dear Kate— ...O Kate— you can't tell how happy I should be if I could hear from you once a week and see you once a month. How long before this state of things may be brought about? I leave it with you to decide. With no small amount of pleasure shall I improve every opportunity of writing to you and I shall expect you to write to me in return... Kate don't say that you can't write to me for such is not the case. If I could write half as well as you



can I would promise you a good long letter every week. You write *just exactly* to suit me and that is enough when you are writing to me. Next time you are writing to me, if Miss Thomas asks you to put out the lights, just tell her to go to sleep and dream about her *sweetheart* if she has got one— if she has not, it is *high time* she had... When I commenced scribbling on this sheet of paper I did not think of getting as far as the fourth page, but here I am and here I will stop. If I was not quite so sleepy I would fill up this page and then copy it and make some attentions for the better as there is much need of. But here you have it, just as I have scribbled it off, without much thought. So good night. Sweet dreams & happy thoughts to thee —Your own devoted *Frank*.

August 21, 1847. One of the loveliest days that ever smiled upon the earth— not a cloud to be seen, the air is cool & refreshing. Busy at work... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer*.

Sep 3.

Dear Frank— I have just been told by Ed that he is going to Troy... Had I known that I would have an opportunity to write you today I might have written more than I am now. Your notes (how welcome) have been received and I only wished that I could answer them verbally. In response to your visiting here before the end of Oct, I can say this, I shall attend the State and perhaps the Rensselaer Co. Fair if nothing prevents... but if I should not see you at either of these gatherings, I would like to see you here about the last of Sep... The truth is Frank, many gents come here much oftener than you do, and about some of them & myself there are sundry memoirs; now I can not deny myself the pleasures of seeing you occasionally... How often I have thought of you these quiet, moonlit evenings. I never so much enjoyed a summer as I have this last, most beautiful one. Ed is ready and has sadly *crumpled* this scrawl trying, or pretending, to *see* its contents. He returns tomorrow. Write by him will you not? Tell me what you think of my plan. —Yours always *Kate*.

Troy, Sept. 3rd, 1847, Friday evening, 10 o'clock.

My own dear Kate— I have just rec'd your note from Ed. Glad indeed was I to learn that there is a *fair* prospect of meeting before the last of Oct... I don't know as there is anything going on here worthy of note save the heat of the Eternal Sun beating down upon the brick walls and stone pavements. I would like to be in the country about three days— O the green carpet that God has spread out for those who live far from Cities. I would like to cast myself upon it and look up to Heaven and thank Him for the summer's verdure and the summer's shade... I want to see you very much. My thoughts are always with you. —Your own true *Frank*.

Troy, Oct 30th, 1847, Saturday evening.

My own dear Kate— I left the store a little earlier than usual tonight rejoicing in the hope that tonight's mail would bring me a letter from my own dear Kate. I hurried on up to the P.O. with a light heart & buoyant step almost sure of the rich treasure. But on looking into Box No. 40— “lo and behold” it was empty. I was not a little disappointed. I assure you for I had said to myself all the week— Well this is the last week in Oct & I shall see or hear from Kate

this week sure... I have no notion of letting an opportunity pass without reminding you that there is a certain young man in the City of Troy by the name of Frank Thayer who thinks more of you than he does of all the rest of creation and that he is very anxious to hear from a certain young lady up in Cambridge. Who do you guess it is? Well to tell you the plain truth— it's Kate McKie & "it's nobody else." It is now some seven weeks since I have seen or heard a word from you. This is my third letter (you can hardly call them letters) and I do hope you will not let it remain long unanswered... I am waiting to hear from you before naming the time when I shall be up to see you. You know my feelings on this subject & I will be governed as your own good judgment shall dictate. Now Kate be sure and write me soon & remember that I am more than ever your own *Frank*.

Troy, Nov. 25th, 1847.

My own dear Kate— ... This morning Mr. Bills and myself drew lots to see which should go to hear Dr. Berman's Thanksgiving Sermon. As fate would have it, it fell to my lot to stay in the Office and attend to business. I quietly seated myself at the desk and waited till about sermon time & then got a man to stay in the office and I walked over to the church, slipped in slyly, took a back seat, and then remained *chained to my seat* for nearly two hours. I will not now attempt to give you even a faint outline of the Doctor's discourse. It was grand indeed and worthy of the Doctor... Kate how much do you suppose I would give to see you tonight?— To take you by the hand, to meet those lips and to call you my own. Why I would give anything in the world... In a little more than two weeks I shall hope to see you & then what a grand time we will have— the thought of it makes me happy. I hope we shall be alone awhile Monday night. Now Kate don't forget to write to me soon. I have a hundred things to tell you— amongst others is this, that I love you better than ever— Your own *Frank*.

December 2, 1847, Thursday eve, 10 o'clock.

My dear Frank— I am all alone now, and of course my thoughts are with you... Now *do not* think that I do not enjoy writing to you. I know but one greater pleasure, and you can guess what it is. Is there nothing that you are in duty bound to do, that you try to forget, until the very moment arrives, in which your task must be performed; and when that moment comes you go about it— soon your task is completed and you find yourself in a very happy mood and realise in fact, that the very thing to which you looked forward with dislike, has really afforded you much enjoyment. Well, if you are so situated, you know precisely how I feel. Letter writing is the *bane* of my happiness as regards my duty to friends, and a neglect of duty is ever staring me in the face to mar my happiness. But when I commence writing to one I love, as now, in a few moments I seem to see them, to take them by the hand, and after a few moments I am only surprised that I receive no answer, and then comes the thought that the Lord and remembered, are far away. Well, Frank I give you permission to write an essay on *Snakes* or *serpents* as you please, a [illegible] earthy subject I grant, but a sufficient return for this dissertation on writing.

I believe that you have given me your views in reference to writing to friends on the Sabbath, and asked me what I thought on the subject— Well

as I look at it now, it seems to me that all thoughts which may be verbally expressed on the Sabbath with perfect propriety are equally innocent if expressed on paper, but neither of us I believe would think it right to use the Sabbath as a day “very convenient,” as I have heard some remark, for keeping up a general correspondence with friends. I hope and trust dear Frank that we value the privileges of the sacred day too much to spend it so. This afternoon I heard Mr. Jones preach, and so headless and pointless was his discourse, that I could get but this one idea from it, that the Kingdom of God, and the Gospel of God are synonymous— so you see that I have but little to reflect upon as regards the sermon... Thanksgiving passed off like *any other day*, more of that when I see you. Write here by Ed if you wish to, and tell him when you will be here... Good night ever more. Oh if I could see you. Yours, *Kate*.

Troy, December 12th, 1847.

My own dear Kate— The elements have conspired against me and I cannot see you tomorrow as I had so fondly anticipated. So I must do the next best way— and I will write you a letter. I shall defer writing an essay on “*Snakes & Serpents*” until I can find nothing else to write to you about; and think you my dearest that time will ever come? I know your answer will be, “no.” I shall always have a story of love to tell you and though I may tell it a thousand times over, I will try and tell it in a different way so as to make it more interesting to you than an *essay* on “*Snakes & Serpents*.” ...My sheet is nearly written over and I have yet a thousand things to tell you. Oh that I could see you one hour tonight— the time is coming when I can see you every day and night and then we will be happy... I am glad that our views in regard to writing to each other on the Sabbath coincide. I don’t believe I could have spent this evening any better than I have. Now Kate I have written you a long and loving letter— perhaps it is too loving— if it doesn’t suit you tell me so for I can write in another style... Good night my own dear Kate. —More than ever, your own *Frank*.

*December 21, 1847.* At Mr. McKie’s, Cambridge. Staid in the house all day or till 5 o’clock when I started for Hoosick after enjoying one of the happiest times anyone ever enjoyed. Never have I enjoyed myself so well before. Every renewal of my association with that family makes them to me dearer. Was invited by all to come again as soon as I could. Had rather a cold ride home, got home about 7 o’clock. Spent the evening in calling on friends. Was asked any number of questions about my visit at Cambridge— all of which I answered as I pleased. —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

A Summary of 1847:

*Feb. 15.* F. S. Thayer

*Feb. 16.* F. S. left

*March 10.* George Wilson came home.

*March 26.* Rain & snow, dreadful wind

*March 27.* A perfect hurricane

*March 28.* Bright & clear

*March 29.* Breaking roads

*April 17.* F. S. Thayer & Uncle William

*April 18.* All at home

*April 19.* F. S. Thayer left in the aft.



*A souvenir from China. A small lacquered box brought back from China by George Wilson McKie in 1847.*

October 24. All at home— dark & gloomy without. Pleasant & cheerful within.

Nov. 16. Went to Troy.

Dec. 2. Rainy & very warm.

Dec. 3. Father went to Salem. Uncle William here.

Dec. 20. F. S. Thayer. Attended Dr. Mosher's funeral.

Dec. 31. ...The year is about to close. This with other years has gone from the earth forever...  
—Excerpts from the 1847 diary of Catherine Sophia McKie.

1848

☞ About a letter:

Troy, January 2d, 1848.

My own dear Kate— With all my heart I wish you a happy thrice-happy New Year— rather late, but “better late than never.” In my last “short note” I asked you if my style of writing suited you. I again asked you the same question when I last saw you. Your reply was “I will let you know when I write to you.” I have since heard nothing from you so *I am still in the dark*. However, I shall keep on in the old style. Our loving communications, my dear Kate, are not to be restrained and I hope there is *but one* opinion in regard to the freedom to be used in the interchange of feeling. The pleasure I take in receiving & writing to you my dear girl is the pleasure of heart responding to heart, akin to that we enjoy when together, and does not that surpass all that we are blessed with anywhere else? ...Kate I have thought much about “*the letter*” since my return, and the more I think of it the more I wish for the time to come when you may *think it best to present the said letter*. Or if you do not wish to present it just say to me that I may send something of *that sort* by mail. I am aware that it is a delicate subject to broach but just think my dear Kate how much happier we should be if the matter was settled as I pray God it may be soon. I cannot think of opposition on the part of your Father. No Kate, I shall not have it, shall I? ...Now my dear Kate, just remember how punctual I am and write me soon. —More than ever your own *Frank*.

Troy, January 16th, 1848.

My own dear Kate— Many thanks for your *kind* note per Ed. Every day for a week past I have *looked anxiously* for that letter which you said you should write “the first suitable and convenient opportunity.” Which I hope may present itself soon, *yes, very soon*... What do you suppose your father would say if he knew all about our affairs? Suppose you *hand over that letter* and see what he will say. I hope and trust nothing— only what we would have him say. Many no doubt, unacquainted with the joys of *true love*, would say that it is foolish business to *get in love*. But we Kate can give them the *lie*— till then they know nothing about it... I have noted with some care the different ways in which men seek for enjoyment. And amongst the young, the pleasures of society and friendship is one of the greatest sources of happiness. But if the bosom thrills at the name of friend, what emotions will fill it when the heart has learned to love? ...Now Kate *observe how faithful* I have been in writing to you and answer this as soon as *possible*. May I not expect an answer this week? Good night my own dear Kate. Your own forever *Frank*.

Troy, January 23rd, 1848, Sunday evening.

My own dear Kate— Has the appointed time arrived yet Kate? Or according to established rules ought I to wait a week longer? ...With regard to “that letter,” I must say that it is my *honest* opinion that the sooner you hand it over the better. Will it be any *easier* to deliver it two months hence than it will in one hour after you receive this? I cannot see that it will. I am aware that it is a very delicate matter and am not surprised that you *dread woefully* to say a word about it to your parents. I can wait till I see you “*once more*” if you say so. *I hope you will not say so...* Just think favorably about “that letter” —won’t you my dear Kate? Give it to your Mother first for she is not wholly unacquainted with our affairs. Now Kate do answer this just as soon as possible—this week won’t you. I don’t know as there is anything going on here that would interest you, so I will bid you Good night and go to bed. I subscribe myself *Your own Frank*, ever faithful & ever true.

Cambridge, January 28th, 1848, Friday, 11 o’clock.

My dear Frank— ...Now Frank do not think hard of me if I say that I felt that I cannot present it now, do not think either that I would not rather consult your wishes than my own however trying it might be to me at the time, if I thought it would make any *material* difference. In this case I can hardly think that a few weeks or three or four months would do so. The same uncertainty hangs over us that ever has. I am only certain of one thing, of the sincerity and fervor of my regard for you. Every day and week that passes but bind me more closely to you— and now I will answer your question in a letter written about three weeks since— That wherever others may be, whatever others may say, you will always find your own Kate with you in thought and feeling... I can write no more. Good bye your own *Kate*.

Troy, Feb. 6th, 1848.

My own dear Kate— Your last was received a week ago this morning and it came as ever Kate, thrice welcome. It was a *first rate* letter Kate, long & loving— that is the kind. Isn’t it rather singular that I haven’t another correspondent who *can write* such letters as you do? ...Now, if it should happen that the sleighing should not last till Saturday you will not see me. Now Kate you must not think that I feel hard towards you for not presenting that letter. *No. No. No.* I do not. More about this when I see you. If I did not expect to see you soon I would write more. Good night my own dear Kate. *You are Frank’s more than ever, a good deal.*

*February 12, 1848.* Very cold at Hoosick. Spent the day in visiting friends. All of whom I found in good health...

*February 13.* Very cold but pleasant. Went to Bennington with Liz to Church— heard two very good sermons...

*February 14.* Beautiful day, sleighing first rate. 11 o’clock started for Cambridge, found my friends at home and such a good time as I had I have not room enough in this book to describe.  
—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Wednesday evening, 6 o’clock, Feb. 16, 1848.

Do not write *that* letter until you hear from me again. I would write more but I have not been up a moment today, and am now writing sitting up in bed. Nothing but a *very bad headache* and cold. —Your own *Kate* as ever.

Troy, Feb 18th, 1848, Friday evening, 11 o'clock.

My own dear Kate— I cannot let Ed go home tomorrow without taking a few words to you from your own Frank... I hope & pray too that you will be quite well when you get this. It seems to me Kate that you have a good deal more of the headache than you used to have... Kate I wish I could be with you when you have such turns of the headache. O if I could only be with you at such times and sit down by your side... I would give anything if I could see you tonight. I must close. Good night dearest. More than ever your own *Frank*.

Cambridge, Feb. 20, 1848.

My dear Frank— In your unexpected but *very welcome* letter received yesterday by Ed, you say that you shall expect to hear from me by Monday's mail. I will not disappoint you... Besides I had not read the copy I have in some time, thinking that I would read it over with you, when you came, but I did not. You know I spoke to you of one slight change, I have now looked over that letter, and see nothing else to alter unless it be this one trifle. I merely suggest the alteration, leaving it to your better judgment to decide. You say in the first place, 'Custom of duty' and so on. You then say, 'A reciprocal attachment exists between— and myself, which has induced us to exchange the vows of marital love.' You tell the truth, and the whole truth, and surely your own Kate should not be the one to teach you to keep back the truth— but would not parental advice seem to be more *strictly consulted* if nothing were said of vows on our part. Would it not be better for Father to suppose that no vows had been exchanged... I would not even have him think for a moment, that I would make any binding promises that would permanently affect my happiness, without consulting him. I would not, I could not, do anything that might have the least tendency to make him think that his wishes have been un-cared for... These are my reasons, and I merely suggest the suppression of the last clause of the sentence— 'A reciprocal attachment exists between— and myself'— does not that *completely tell the whole story on both sides*. Do as you please. I can trust you at all times. Just let me have undisputed possession of "Old Sarsaparilla" (Have I spelled that word right?— if not, tell me in your next) and I shall be happy. Now that I have said all I have to say about the letter, I suppose you wish to know when to send it. All I have to say is this— that I wish you to send it just as soon as is convenient after you receive and read this. If it must come, and Mother and you say it must, why the sooner the better... Your own *Kate*.

~ The Letter:

Troy, February 24th, 1848.

Mr. and Mrs. George McKie—

Respected Friends— Custom and duty demand that I should make to you a disclosure which concerns alike the happiness of your daughter and myself. A reciprocal attachment exists between Catherine and myself. I therefore as in duty bound solicit your favor to my suit and assent to a union when situation and circumstances shall render it proper. I make the request at this time in order that a correspondence and intercourse desirable to both may receive the sanction of parental authority and advice. You know my char-

acter and disposition and should you deem me worthy of the hand of your daughter it will ever be my highest aim to merit the alliance. With the highest respect and esteem I am, as ever, your obedient servant, *Francis S. Thayer*.

Troy, February 27th, 1848.

My own dear Kate— ... Well my dear Kate have you seen or heard anything from “*the letter*” yet, or have you observed anything unusual in your Father’s looks or actions. I reckon you have by this time for the said letter was altered as suggested by you and mailed last Friday morning. I hope and pray too that on the *third reading* it will pass by a unanimous vote. I shall look for an answer next Tuesday evening. I dare not think of opposition for I know not how I could *stand it*. If I get a favorable answer to *that letter*, and the traveling is pretty good, I shall be up to see you two weeks from yesterday P.M., that is if you have *no objection*... But the icy chill has gathered upon a nation’s heart and there is weeping all over the Country. I refer to the death of Mr. Adams [John Quincy Adams, 1767–1848]... I think that letter was much better after altering it as you suggested... I did not say that *that letter must* be submitted to a third reading soon. I only said I thought it would be better to have the matter settled before long and I still think so. Kate, I did have the blues between the reception of your two last letters. How often did I wish that I could be with you but as you say, it could not be... Now my dear Kate just take care of yourself and think of me as always your own *Frank*.

I have only one excuse for writing such a *prosy* letter as this— that is I have got a horrid toothache which would stop me from writing to anybody except my own dear Kate.

Cambridge, March 7, 1848.

My dear Frank— It is now after 12 o’clock and I can write you but a few lines for I must be up in the morning early... Niel leaves early in the morning for New York... Your very kind and good (not *prosy*) letter was received in due season. It did not read like a letter coming from one who had the toothache. Indeed I think you must have forgotten it just at the time. I never had the *vile ache*, and cannot *really* sympathize with you, but for your sake I heartily concur with all that Burns has said. You ask me if the letter was received by Fri. mail? It was— at least I saw it and gave it to Mother Friday eve, and I presume it was soon read. Now Father has said nothing *directly* to me in reference to it. I suppose that it would have been answered last week had not Father been very much engaged. And now as to what it contains, I am perfectly dependent on you for information. The truth of the matter is just this, I think— Since the day that you left here, I have not been very well any of time. I think I took cold that morning, but what if I did. I shall soon get over it... Mother and Father, they seem to think that because I am somewhat subject to the headaches, and have not been very well for the last three weeks, that I am in a deplorable state of health. Now from what I have heard said, I believe that in the letter, no objection is made whatever, but I think that some bit of sermon is made to my health. Let me know will you not? ... This morning I received word from Uncle James McKie saying that he would come for me on Thursday, to go home with him, to stay a few days— he will return on Friday and I suppose I must go with him. You know now Frank that I would dearly love to see you and yet I honestly believe that you had better wait at least

two months... I must say no more except to ask you to write by Ed. I have scrawled much but written nothing. You deserve something better in return for your last. But good night, pleasant dreams, and happy waking thoughts to you. —Your own *Kate*.

—I persuaded Mother to let me have the letter to deposit, and although it may seem a little strange, I send it with mine instead of by the mail.

☞ The Response:

When Francis Thayer had first met Catherine McKie, years before in Poultney, Vermont, she was wearing a white muslin dress with a pattern of little pink sprigs. When they became engaged, he asked whether there were any pieces of that dress in existence. A remnant was found amongst the odd pieces of material always kept for rag carpets, and Francis carried a small piece of it in his wallet until he died.

Cambridge, March 6, 1848.

Mr. Francis Thayer— Sir, your letter was duly received and I do not know but that I have violated the rules of modern etiquette not returning an answer at an earlier day— but in answer to your request I cannot say that we have any reasonable objections in relation to your entering into a correspondence with Catherine provided it has its origin in mutual affection. Anything further than a correspondence at present would, when taking into consideration the delicate state of Catherine's health, be considered by us imprudent and rather premature. —Respectfully yours etc. *George McKie*.

Troy, March 23, 1848.

My own dear Kate— “Better late than never.” You would have heard from me a week or more ago had you not said in your last that you were soon intending to spend a few days from home— so I thought it would be just as well if I took a few days *grace*... Kate, you were right in your suspicion that allusion was made to the state of your health in your Father's letter which was received with yours. It grieves me to the heart to know that you are suffering at all. But I am consoled on this point by your own assurance that you are not seriously ill. The letter of your Father's allows a correspondence but says that nothing more can be thought of in your present state of health. I could have wished for an *unqualified* assent but I suppose we must “take the good the Gods send and watch the clouds”— this is the old maxim... How much I always gain by being with you. I never go away from you without feeling that my heart is *fuller* and *stronger* and my hopes *firmer* and *fonder*. The seed that is planted needs the sun every day. Cover it up, the earth grows dry around it, it may sicken or die. Let it have the dew and sunshine of each morning and it will spring up in life and beauty. Don't think that I am sentimental or that I fear that our affection will die. I only mean to say that the oftener we meet the better we shall love each other. But you are the best judge of this and I shall yield to all you say. Your wish in this matter shall be my law, and I shall school myself as well as I can, and this is best after all, for from your Father's letter is it not certain that he will ever consent that you may leave him for me... It is now March— let the spring pass away— April and May— *long long* months they will be to me. And then I think in all propriety I can come and see you early in June. And the fond greeting may have the double joy of long absence. It is hard for me my dear Kate to bring myself to this, but I see by your suggestions that you would rather it should be so. In the meantime we can keep up a correspondence as often as we have during the past six months. My sheet is almost full and I must close... —Good night my own dear Kate. More than ever your *Frank*.



Cambridge, March 28, 1848, Friday evening, 9 o'clock.

My dear Frank— Friday you know is deemed an unlucky day, but Friday last proved a perfect gala day to me— and why? —Just because I received such a good letter from you. It was almost four weeks since I had heard from you, and that is a long time for me. I have read your letter a dozen times or more, and not once without feeling sober enough. I think that you must have been sad from some good cause, for you saw only the *darkest* side of the present and future— and this is unusual for you always have said *hope on* to me. Now do not think Frank that I wish your letter had been different, no, I love you the better for it, sad though it made me. I only regret that you do not look upon things concerning us as I do just now. I think my exposition will be better than yours. We will see. You say that Father's letter allows only a correspondence now— you wish that it had been different, and finally almost concludes that Father will never consent for me to leave him for you. I understand it very differently. Perhaps because with my parents all the time and know them better. Had Father entertained any objections in my respect whatever he would have talked with me on the subject. As it was, he said nothing to me directly. Nothing more than a sly insinuation occasionally. Again, he allows only a correspondence now, and not even that unless it has its "origin in mutual affection." You cannot believe Frank that a *kind* Father would sanction a correspondence prompted by reciprocal attachment only, and at the same time intend to give a death-blow to all the hopes of happiness which might arise from that intercourse...

When Father wrote, he and Mother both thought that my health was such, that he could not think it best for us to meet frequently unless I got better— (When he sees me eat now I wonder what he thinks.)— I honestly believe that a headache, once in two weeks, will be a sufficient excuse in Father's estimation to ward off the consummation of affairs until the proper time arrives. Not that he will make any objection in the end, if I am well, but he thinks that I cannot be spared, and that the only way to keep me will be to allow of little intercourse between us. I have not heard him say this, but I know that he thinks so. However, I think we can convince him that we may meet occasionally, and be happy in the performance of duty. You say that Father's letter and suggestions in mine have made you conclude not to come until June. Now my dear fellow, I do not know what I wrote you except that I thought you had better not come in two weeks as you spoke of, but I had not the least idea of waiting until June. My heart aches when I think of it, and even now it seems as if I can hardly consent to it... When you come here the weather can be talked over, and I think that Father can be made to believe that we are in no haste to change the even time of our lives, except it may be in seeing each other more than once in three and a half months... It is not pleasant for me to be separated for so long a time, but if it is best, it must be so. 'Tis true the oftener I see you the more I wish to be with you— but my affection Frank, while I have the right and privilege to cherish it, will neither "sicken nor die" —as you say. —Your *Kate* always.

April 16, 1848, Sabbath evening, 10 o'clock.

My dear Frank— ...I believe too as you say that there need not be, perhaps should not be any restraint in our intercourse but Frank I have more

than once told you that it was a long time before I would believe that there was one living, who was dearer to me than my own Mother, and now since *I can doubt it no longer*, I can hardly grant it to myself, except when necessity requires me to speak in regard to our matters, and then courage comes easily... I cannot tell you the half of what I feel towards you. I cannot even tell myself— but I can “sit and shut my eyes” and think of you until my heart bounds with gladness— until it seems that to be with you would be happiness without alloy... Expression teaches us that joy and sorrow are ever mingled, but I believe that he has least of sorrow who acts “heart within and God o’er head”... Well my dear fellow just excuse this essay, and I will trouble you with no more this time. Ed leaves home tomorrow for Ohio. I shall send this by him to you. He is to be absent three or four months. I feel lonely already, for, of all my brothers, he seems most to me like a sister, I can go to him with less restraint than to my other brothers, and he has ever been so very, very good and kind to me, that it is very hard to bid him good bye. I fear that I cannot write to you as often now as I have done, unless I mail my letters at our Office, which, you know that I hardly like to do. But be assured that your Kate will send you a scrawl as often as she can. She only wishes that they could contain better matters. In regard to July instead of June as the time for you to come up, I shall hear nothing of it now. June, *to me*, is a *long way off*. We shall see when summer comes, something new may appear... —I only wish you were here, *Kate*, more than ever.

Most of the entries in the diary are seven lines long, but this entry is sixteen lines long and very difficult to read. There are first eight lines written regularly, and then the diary was turned upside down and the next eight lines are written in-between the first lines.

*May 1, 1848.* Pleasant, wrote up books in AM... About 1/2 past 9 heard a cry of fire... burning every building on River St... whole amount of loss will be 150,000 dollars. We shall lose about 1,500 over insurance. About 3 o’clock another fire broke out in the upper part of the city, at both fires 34 houses burned...

*May 4.* Fine weather. We are now all settled in our new office & ready to do business...

*May 5.* Beautiful weather, the pleasantest day of the season so far. All nature is putting on her green robe & the trees are in bloom. Amount of loss over insurance is \$3,691.25 according to statement made out this day... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, May 7th, 1848, Sunday evening.

My own dear Kate— ...I suppose you have seen an account of the terrible fire we had here last Monday night. I will not dwell on this subject for it is by no means pleasing to me. Our store was completely destroyed, saved only our most valuable books and papers and a few articles which we threw out of the back doors and windows, a part of which were stolen before we could carry them to a safe place. Luck another time I hope never to see. Our loss over insurance will be \$1,500 or \$2,000. We have taken another store (No. 159 River Street) and shall go on with business just as though nothing of the kind had happened. I felt “sorter” bad for a while but I am all over it now. Lost my dog & cat, both were burnt. I worked so hard that night that it made me almost sick. Am now much better in health and *spirits*. When are you coming down here? I heard that you was here a few days ago. I don’t believe you would come to Troy without letting *your own Frank* know it, would you? *I reckon not.*

Cambridge, May 8th, 1848.

My own dear Frank— I have just received and read your letter of last evening, and it seems to bring you nearer to me. When I think that you were

writing to me so few hours since, and that now, I can talk to you again... You say that you heard a few days since that I was in Troy. I have not been in Troy since last November. I shall probably be down in the course of three or four weeks and shall try to see you if I can... By the way, did you ever hear the story that I was married to a somebody who had lived here about the time that Islando Lee was married? It seems that my name was confused with hers, and I had the credit of the affair to a considerable extent... —Your *Kate*.

May 27, 1848. Beautiful weather, could not be more so. Busy at my desk all the A.M. When Bills came from dinner told me that Kate McKie had been at his home... I immediately went to Mr. Bills' & waited till Kate came back 1/2 past 2. Spent 3/4 of an hour with her...  
—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

May 28, 1848, Sabbath morning.

I am sober tonight and indeed have been all day, and just for this reason I wished to see you and could not, for you are not here... The earth is turning with life and beauty, the skies are bright above all day long, the air is filled with fragrances and melody, and the cheering voices of kind friends are ever in my ear and yet amid all these my very heart is far away... One word in reference to your last best letter— It came in the evening: after reading it again and again, I watched the stars awhile, (*we will study the Geography of the heavens together*), left the blinds open and laid down to sleep. I had pleasant dreams that night, and was wakened in the morning by two doves tapping on my window with their beaks. I called it a good omen, and believe me I was gloriously happy that day. So good night to you dearest Frank, thoughts of you tonight will bring a bright and sunny morrow.

—Monday morning. I told you that I should feel better this morning, and so I do. All things look fairer, and two weeks does not seem an age to me. After leaving Troy Sat. eve, my thoughts were all with you, but you know that it would not do for me to have your company home, oh no, that would *make a talk*... Now Frank, this letter is done. I just heard a knock at the door, and have received an old acquaintance of Mother's, a Miss Richards, who has been South teaching some ten years or more, has not been here in some fifteen yeas, and of course must and should receive every attention we can give her. Mother is not well... Goodbye— Do write me once more before you come. —Your own *Kate* as always.

June 16, 1848. Very warm & sultry. This is my dear Kate's birthday. She is 21. I wish I could celebrate this anniversary by being with her... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Monday morning, July 17th, 1848.

My own dearest Kate— Your good letter of Saturday morning came to hand in the evening and would have been answered last night but for the reason I had a *horrid* headache, and no lover ever sought the idol of his heart more eagerly than I did my pillow last night. I wished a thousand times that I could give you a better letter to read tonight but I could not. So of course you will excuse me 'till next Sunday evening as I shall be alone in business this week and may not feel in the right mood to write you a long letter after working hard all day in the office... My friends in Hoosick are all getting better. Adin is able to ride out. Lib & Port just able to sit up in bed a few minutes.

I now think I shall go home to make my summer's visit in about two weeks. Will write you more about that in my next... —Your own affectionate  
*Frank.*

Troy, July 23, 1848, Sunday evening.

My own dear Kate— You remember dearest what I said to you in my last, and now I shall fulfill and you know with how much pleasure I always write to you... I well remember the severe thunder-storm we had a week ago last Thursday eve. My thoughts were with you constantly and if I could have been with you in person I would have taken you by the hand and drawn you close to my side and said to you— Remember Dearest Kate that there is One who watches over us in storm and in sunshine and let us put our trust in Him and all will be well with us... High-ho, a week from next Wednesday I intend to leave these brick walls and stone pavements for a ten-day visit in the Country. And where do you think I shall go— Well I will tell you for I reckon that you are somewhat interested. Wednesday go to Hoosick. Thursday P.M. come up to see you. Yes, you my dearest Kate. Friday proceed north to Glens Falls, Lake George etc. and return to Hoosick the first of the next week... Do write soon, very soon and be very careful of your health. More than ever your own *Frank.*

*August 14, 1848.* Very hot...

*August 15.* Weather continues very hot, about 90°...

*August 16.* Hot as blazes...

*August 17.* No let-up on the weather. Hot as ever... Terrible fire in Albany, 5 or 600 buildings destroyed, loss estimated at 2 or 3, 000,000. The whole city was threatened with destruction. 6 o'clock it commenced raining and checked the fire...

*August 18.* Rainy AM...

*August 19.* Cool & pleasant... went to Albany to look at the ruins and such a vast field of ruin and devastation I never want to see again. —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

DREADFUL FLAGRANTION — *Most of the business portion of the City in Ruins. Hundreds of building and millions of property Destroyed. Our city is literally desolate.* A fire broke out at about noon yesterday, in a stable in the rear of the Albion Hotel, corner of Broadway and Herkimer St., between Broadway and the river. The wind was a gale from the south, the heat of the weather and the fire intense, and everything dry and combustible. In an inconceivably short time, the fire spread over a wide surface, prostrating everything before it. The efforts of the firemen, aided by the Troy, West Troy, Greenbush, Arsenal, and Schenectady companies, were directed as well as they could be under such appalling circumstances, but they were powerless against such an amazing force of flame, of raging wind, and the fierce hat of the wide-spreading and all-consuming element... Full four hundred buildings are consumed, and property probably not less than two or three millions, although no estimate of value is yet attainable... The area of the fire embraces many acres, perhaps fifty or sixty, of the most compact and valuable part of the city... —*Albany Argus, August 18, 1848.*

*The Burnt District* was visited yesterday by throngs of citizens, and many from abroad. It is a scene of desolation never before witnessed here, and we trust we many never look upon the like again. A view of it from the roof the Exchange presents a vast field of ruin and devastation. —*Albany Argus, August 19, 1848.*

Cambridge, August 27, 1848, Sabbath evening, 10 o'clock.

My own dear Frank— Your very excellent letter written a week ago this evening lies before me— as yet unanswered, and now it is 10 o'clock— and Mother's "Don't sit up late Kitty" is even more in my ear... I should have written you last week if I could have found an opportunity but company at home and the sickness of friends used up the week so closely that you were neglected, but not forgotten night or day... You say that you have never been "so happy and so sad, as since you last visited here—" and ask me if it is not so? Now my dear fellow, you have by your own acknowledgement been convinced of the truth of what I have been telling you for some time about frequent visits. I have always told you that it was better for me not to see you often, with all the uncertainty of the future before us. As you say the pang comes not with the last word or look, but 'tis when sights and hearing fail to bring the idol near— when I am left to myself, that such a *dreary loneliness* rising from the very depths of the heart serves to cast a shade of melancholy over my mind. Of course I *shake it off* as soon as possible and guard against it again as well as I can, but *these are hours* when it seems to me that I can hardly wait your coming... Yesterday I received a letter from Uncle James. He says he is coming for me a week from Tuesday— that we are to visit Salem, and attend the wedding of a cousin in Argyle, and what more I cannot tell... I do not write a very long letter tonight for I must be up early in the morning. So good night to you dearest and nearest... —Your own *Kate*.

Troy, Sept 3, 1848, Sabbath evening.

My own Dear Kate— Your *most admirable* letter of last Sabbath evening came to hand Tuesday eve and now it shall be answered. It was a good letter Kate, and not only *good* but *kind* and *loving*— such a letter as I think you like to write to me and such as I am sure I like to receive... When I look around among those of my acquaintances who have been coupled together I cannot but think that some of them are "unequally yoked together." There does not seem to be that strength of affection, that overflowing of happiness, which I am sure will be exhibited when you and *your own* are brought together. From all that I have observed in my intercourse with those who are pledged to each other, I am led to believe that we love each other better than most others do. *Has this idea ever struck you?* You ask me if I recollect what I was writing two years ago— Yes, my dear Kate, I well remember that letter which revealed to you my *love*. I shall never forget the 27th day of Aug and the 19th of Sept 1846. The time between the above dates I will not speak of now. Only to say that whatever passed between us is all *settled and promised to be forgotten*. Yes dearest, you have since made it all up. Notwithstanding all our *reasoning* and *good judgment* I cannot deny myself the happiness of seeing you oftener in the future than I have in the past... My own dearest Kate I would not be *guilty* of visiting you *too often* and on the other hand I wish from the bottom of my heart that I could visit you as often as once a month. I know that you would be glad to see me every day and it is only for our *mutual benefit* that you would have me use a little more *discretion for awhile*. What say you to my coming up Saturday 16th Sept! Nothing I am sure would suit me better... I have been to Church twice today. Heard one of Mr. Halley's best in the A.M. and it's *equal* from Mr. James of Albany this P.M. Dr. Berman is out

of town so I have a *perfect* right to run away to other churches... I must now close... —Your own *Frank*.

*September 11, 1848.* Delightful weather. This is my birthday, 26 years old— good health, bright prospects and everything around me to make me happy and indeed I think I am as happy as any one that I am acquainted with... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Cambridge, Oct. 1, 1848, Sabbath evening, 9 o'clock.

My own dear Frank— I have just learned from Bro. Henry that he is going to Troy tomorrow. He made me acquainted with his intentions before the whole McKie clan, adding that if I wished to send a letter, I had better write it, for he intended to leave early. I said yes... It is often said that girls seldom fully appreciate the kindness and comforts of home until forever separated from that home— that few justly estimate the value of a Mother's advice and encouragement even in the most trivial affairs— and I fully believe it. I know that it is so in regard to myself. When here I do not know my own dependence, but if I am from home a week, I have scores of questions for Mother when I am home again... I have just been looking over your letters and find one dated Oct. 1, 1845— a very good letter written just three years ago tonight. You say in one place, "It would please me greatly to hear from you now and then." Well I hardly thought it all time then, and will not say that I think it time now. As I did not answer the letter at the time, I will just notice it now... I have not been to Church today, have spent most of the time reading... —Your *Kate*.

Cambridge, Nov. 12, 1848, Sabbath evening, 9 o'clock.

My own dear Frank— I have taken a letter sheet and yet I am inclined to think that I should have commenced on note paper; and why?— for this reason— It is now 9 o'clock and I must be up early in the morning. You and the promise I made you a week ago have been in my heart and before my mind in every waking hour... Mother has not been able to sit up today, is somewhat feverish and chilly by turns. I have been trying to do something for her during the day, but she is much the same this evening. I hope she may be better tomorrow. Since I have returned I notice that Mother coughs a good deal in the morning— she tells me that her lungs seem somewhat oppressed. I shall not be easy a moment until her cough is removed. Oh, my Mother I could not live without her... We have had two or three very cold days and now the ground is white with snow, as *one I love too much to tell wished*. I am very careful, and am perfectly well, never as well in my life as for two months. A week ago this very hour we were alone and tell me, was I not happy? With you I am always so— What would I give to bring you here tonight? I believe our spirits commune with each other, and that is joy... I would rather see your own dear self, than all others, I love you better after every greeting and good-bye. Now Frank, do not scold me if I stop writing just in a minute. I do it out of kindness for you, and besides Mother's, "Do not sit up Kitty, for you will have to be up very early in the morning," has some influence on me, just excuse this perfectly awful scrawl and when I write again I'll try and do better... —Your own *Kate* always.

Troy, Nov. 19th, 1848, Sunday evening, 10 o'clock.

My own dearest Kate— Two hours & a half ago I came to my room for

the purpose of writing to you. I had hardly got my fire fixed & seated myself before Gil Robertson came in, and I have had to make myself as agreeable as possible under the circumstances. Every minute I wished he would start, but no go. I suppose if I had told him that I wished to write to my own dear Girl he would have left me alone much sooner. Well Kate, as late as it is, you see I have commenced at the top of the page and, if I have *good luck*, shall fill up this letter sheet with something and if it is an awful scrawl I hope you will excuse it. You will won't you? ...I am grieved to learn that your dear Mother is not as well as usual. I hope that I shall soon hear that she is much better and I pray God that she may live many long years in the enjoyment of health & happiness. I found my friends at Hoosick all well and happy. Three hours I passed with them the day I left you... What a political hurricane we have seen since I last saw you... The tall oaks that had stuck their roots deep in the soil of corruption have bent before the storm of popular vengeance. I trust the good Whigs will use their victory like men— they have labored like good soldiers to obtain it... —Once more good night, Your own *Frank*.

*political hurricane* Zachary Taylor was elected President on November 7, 1848.

December 6, 1848, Wed. afternoon.

My own dear Frank— I have just leaned from brother Peter that he is going to Easton for Ed's lecture... Well, as to how we are, Mother has suffered very much with the pain in her shoulders all this week, had a very bad night last night... As for myself, I suffered a good deal Monday night with the pain in my side, yesterday could not sit up at all, but have been up nearly all day today. Otherwise I am perfectly well... I am happy to say that the rest of the family are perfectly well. It has rained here for the last forty-eight hours. I am glad that I do not depend on the bright blue sky for my enjoyment. I never wanted to see you as much as I do now. I think of you all the time. I think we are doing very well now as regards the sick. Edwin makes Mother's bed, and Henry makes mine. The Irish girl does up the cooking in *French style*, so you see that we are doing very well. When we all get well and can make you comfortable I shall say "*come*," with many thanks for your kind offer. Peter has come and I can write no more. Your *Kitty*.

Troy, Dec. 7th, 1848, Thursday P.M.

My own dear Kate— Yesterday morn your *precious* letter of Sabbath eve came to hand and I cannot *begin* to tell you how much *joy* it gave to me. I hope and trust you will soon write me that you are all well again and then I shall come and see you. My own dearest Kate— What a happy meeting that will be for I can *hardly* wait for the time to come, but as you say, "I must make the most of my present comforts"...I haven't time this P.M. to answer your dear good letter and if I had plenty of time I haven't the power to write what you deserve for that most *excellent* letter. Write soon and remember that I am your own *Frank*... I have *strong* hopes of seeing you in a little more than one week and may not write you a long letter before that time... Goodbye for this time. Your *Frank*.

Troy, Dec. 10th, 1848.

My own dear Kitty— This has been a very dark, rainy, gloomy day corresponding with my feelings for I expected a note from you this morning and was disappointed. I fear that you are worse or you would have sent me

a word... You wrote me a note Wednesday P.M. containing the good news that you were better than you were the day before. My own dear Girl, you do not know with how much anxiety I look for a word from you concerning the state of your health. I think of but little else these days and can say with you "I never wanted to see you as much as I do now." You need not write long letters, no Kate I would not have you sit up to write me as late as you did a week ago tonight. I was fearful that the pain in your side would come on again after writing such a long letter... There is a good deal of talk here about the Cholera in New York. Up to yesterday morning about 30 cases had been reported and nearly half proved fatal. The dreadful scourge seems as yet to be confined (with the exception of one or two cases) to the ship *New York* which brought it to our shores. I pray that this awful calamity may not come upon us. I heard yesterday & today that there was three cases of small pox at Miss Willard's Seminary. About half of the scholars have left and such a state of excitement never was known in the institution before. I hope the young ladies are more frightened than hurt. Did you ever see such weather as we have had for the past week? Nothing but rain, rain, rain and mud, mud, mud. I am sick of such disagreeable weather and hope for a change soon... My dearest Kate I would give anything if I could see you tonight. Do let me hear from you *soon very soon*. Good night Kitty. I am *more than ever* your *Frank*.

Cambridge, Dec. 12th, Mon eve.

My own dear Frank— Your good letter of last evening has just been rec'd. I need not tell you that I am much cheered by these letters and kind notes from you, coming when words of love and comfort from you are more than ever welcome. You say that you expected a line from me by Fri's mail. Thurs I exercised too much, and had a night of suffering to pay for it. Had I been well I should have sent you a remembrance. Mother has suffered more pain every day since I wrote you last until today. She has rested better the last three nights. Today she has been easier, has not set up any since she was first taken. She can walk, but a sitting posture brings on the most excruciating pains in her shoulders. Dr. Hale from the Bridge, in whom we have much confidence, says that it is neuralgia and perhaps something of rheumatism, that it will be some time before she can be well because so worn out body and mind during the last four or five weeks. In regard to myself, you need not be alarmed... —Your *Kate* always.

Troy, Dec. 14th, 1848.

My own dear Kate— Your very kind note of Mon. eve. came duly to hand Tues. eve for which please accept a *thousand thanks*. I am *right glad* to hear you say that you are going to be *lazy* and get well as soon as possible. Now my dear Girl do not, as soon as you get a little better, throw off that *lazy* fit (which I know is so unnatural for you) and go to work and get down sick again. You won't will you? I think I hear you say *No...* The cholera excitement seems to be *totally eclipsed* by the "Yellow fever" or rather Gold Hunting in California which is all the rage nowadays. I haven't taken the fever yet— shall give you due notice before I leave this part of the country... Four to six new cases of Cholera occur at Staten Island daily. Only one case in New York City yet and this one was immediately sent to the Hospital... I hope this dreadful pestilence may be arrested before it hurries thousands of human beings to the grave. No more cases of Small Pox at the Seminary since I last wrote you and

*Gold Hunting* The discovery of gold in California was first reported in the *New York Herald* in August 1848. By 1849 over 100,000 gold seekers from all parts of the United States and many foreign countries had gone to California.



of course the great excitement somewhat abates... I cannot close this letter without telling you that you must be *very very* careful. I hope and pray that you and your dear Mother will soon be well. Your own *Frank* always.

Cambridge, Dec. 17th 1848, Sabbath eve.

My own dear Frank— It is now after 11 o'clock and yet I must say a word to you as Ed goes to Troy tomorrow morning... Your dear good letter, just like yourself, was received this eve or aft, rather as we had the mail earlier than usual from the Office. Your letter does me a *world* of good. I cannot tell you how charming they are to me... Yesterday morn, Mother said for the first time that she felt better, and today she says that she really thinks that she is a little better... Until yesterday she has had no appetite. Now, she eats a little and I hope and pray she may soon be well... I have been looking at your *likeness* and how have I wished that I had the *original* by my side. *My very heart aches to see that original* but it cannot be yet... Oh, how wisely is the future hidden from us— how well that we may not raise the veil, and see the joy and sorrow with which coming years are laden... I do not know when I may say “come” to you. I only know that it will be as soon as I can do so. All fear of the Small Pox with us is over, yet few can come home— in reality there is *not the least* danger— the house is thoroughly purified. Would that New York were as free from cholera. I pray God that the awful disease may be arrested now in the bud... —*Kate*.

Cambridge, Dec. 31, 1848, Sabbath evening.

My own dear Sam— ...My heart tells me tonight that I have not much improved the past year, of a hundred things done and undone— all wrong. I wish I was a better girl— that my heart, my very thoughts were all right in the eye of that heavenly Father who has so graciously watched over me thus far through life. I have had countless blessings— the comforts of home, of parents, of kind friends, have been around me, and last but not least I have, I *trust*, been blessed with your love, thoughts of which shed joy around my heart, not only when all is sunny overhead but most, when this my light of life is dearest— in the lonely hour of sickness, when the heart must receive rather than give consolation. I wish you my dear Frank the happiest New Year you have ever seen. If you could be with me tomorrow I *think* I should be thrice happy... and believe me when I tell you— you are dearer to me than *ever before*. Yes I never loved you as I do now. —Your *Kitty*.

*Sam* Francis Thayer's middle name was “Samuel,” but it was seldom used.

Troy, Dec. 31st, 1848, Sabbath eve, 9 o'clock.

My own dearest Kate— We gave the parting hand and *kiss* without making any definite arrangement who should write first. Now Kate if you should wait for me and I should wait for you to write it would be more than “six weeks” before we should hear from each other by letter and such a state of things would be *intolerable* for us. Mr. & Mrs. B— might get along with it, but we can't. I have written you so much nonsense of late perhaps it would be nice in me to keep silent for a fortnight at least, But my dear Girl you are so near & dear to me I cannot let this last morning of 1848 pass without saying a few words to you. In the first place let me tell you “*Frankly*” that I love you more than I ever can begin to tell and the knowledge that you love me as well as I do you makes me happy, thrice happy... Here I am comfortably seated in my pleasant room (no smoke tonight) and I thought it would be as sweet a fare-

*Mr. & Mrs. B* Mr. Bills was Francis Thayer's business partner.

well to the Old Year as I could have to commune with you for a few moments. How I wish that I could spend the first day of 1849 with you... Yesterday I went down to Albany to witness the presentation of a magnificent gold sword (cost \$1,700) to General Wood by Gov. Young. All the military companies turned out here and in Albany and such a turn out of citizens must have been very gratifying to the Old Hero. I volunteered to go down with the City Corps as Paymaster. I put on the uniform of an officer and it was remarked by not a few that I never looked so well before in my life. I guess they didn't see me when 18 years old & Captain of that Company of Green Mountain Boys. We now have firm sleighing and should it last two weeks you may expect to see me... Now a Happy New Year to you my own dear Kate. May you always love me as well as you do now and may many many years, long and happy, pass before we live in another world. I have no doubt that we shall love better there than we do here but this love on earth is dear, is sweet— is it not Kate? Now dearest let me hear from you soon very soon and often and let me have good tidings too and once more a happy, thrice happy new year to you with all the love of your own *Frank*.

—I broke my gold pen the other day so I had to take an old quill pen which will account for the perfectly horrid appearance of this scrawl... If you can't read this letter send it back, and the next time I write you I will take a little more pains. I must now say good night and wish you again a happy New Year. Your own *Frank*.

A Summary of 1848:

*Jan 9.* Snow for sleighing, cold.

*Feb. 14.* F. S. Thayer

*Feb 15.* Bro. Niel went to Troy... F. S. T. left

*Feb. 16.* A very bad headache, could not sit up at all.

*March 17.* A very pleasant quiet day.

*March 19.* Alone all day.

*April 17.* Ed went West.

*May 26.* Headache all day.

*June 10.* F. S. Thayer

*June 11.* Went to Cam— to Church

*June 12.* F. S. Thayer left in the morn. A bright & beautiful morning.

*June 15.* ...Br. Niel came home.

*June 16.* My birthday...

*June 19.* Br. Niel left in the morning.

*August 10.* F. S. Thayer

*August 11.* F. S. Thayer left in aft.

—*Excerpts from the 1848 diary of Catherine Sophia McKie.*

1849

Cambridge, January 7th, 1849, Sabbath evening, 10 o'clock.

My own dear Frank— It is late to begin a letter to you, for I have a world of thoughts for you always and now I have a heart full of the warmest thanks to offer you for your last best letter written a week ago tonight... I have been to Church today. Mr. Scales' text from Ecclesiastes (11:9): "Rejoice, O young

man in thy youth and let thy heart cheer thee.” His sermon was good and so plain that I easily think I could give every idea advanced by him. Henry says that Allison B— took notes— I cannot think it, and I pity the head not capable of taking in that sermon. I call it good because it would be *generally* understood, and better appreciated than a discourse pondered by real thought and study. Perhaps I do not see this in a proper light. The truth is that he, being a young man, a Minister of “great promise,” fills the eyes of all the scheming Mothers in the congregation, and no one can receive too frequent visits from him. I am much amused by the remarks I hear... In regard to your coming up here before you go home, which will be in the course of three weeks, you say, I would like to ask you one question: Did you not *know* what I would say about your coming up here this week? Now Frank I think I need not tell you that I should be glad to see you every hour. You knew that long long ago and yet I think that I must wait until the month has passed away and then you will make my heart glad on your way to or from Hoosick... Br. Ed has gone to bed sick with a cold. I have done everything for him that he would let me do, and I hope that he may be better in the morning. He tells me that the reason I wait on him so willingly is because I want him to carry a letter to you tomorrow... I’ll write no more, or rather one thing more—that Mother continues to gain strength... Your own *Kate* who loves you so much.

Troy, January 21st, 1849.

My Own Dearest Kate— ...I hope Kate that you have concluded to go with your own Frank to his sister Liz’s wedding. Don’t, my dear girl, mind what the gossiping community may say. But let your own good judgment be your guide. I would like *very very* much to have you go, still I shall not urge the matter. Do as you think best and I shall be satisfied. I hope I shall not feel as bad at Liz’s wedding as I did at Mary’s. I well remember my feelings more than six years ago when my sister Mary was married. All at once it rushed upon me that I must bid her *good bye* for a long time and that she was going far away to a new home and could not be what she had been to me— a sister at home. And I tell you when I took her by the hand and said good-bye to the Dear Girl, my heart and eyes were fuller than parting with friends ever made them before. It came upon me all of a sudden. I let the feeling have its way and in a short time I was quite in a different vein thinking what a fine fellow she had got for a husband and how instead of dropping tears in the opening path of her love and happiness, I should ring a merry round in her bridal ear and wish her all the happiness this world can afford. I hope to see this dear sister next summer. Our folks at home will feel bad to have Liz leave home, and no doubt there will be some *wet eyes*. As far as I am concerned I am glad that she is to be married and coming here to live. I shall then have a place something like home to go to, such a place as I have not been accustomed to visit often for many years. It is now ten years since I lived at home, and I must say that I am getting *dissatisfied* with this way of living. And often *long* for that happy home of *ours* where we shall be so happy. Won’t you take pity on a poor fellow without a home? Did you ever think of the happiness that will be ours when we shall live together? I have thought of this much and only wish that the time was nearer at hand. I am ready any day. I think that I have heard you say that you don’t believe in long engagements. I don’t either *so we agree*... Now don’t fail to take care of yourself and always remember that

I love you better and better every day of my life. *Adieu* my own Kitty for this time, —Your own *Frank*.

Troy, February 1st, 1849.

My Own Dearest Kate— Your charming little note of last Sabbath eve came duly to hand Monday eve for which please accept many thanks from the heart that loves you above everything else. *I love you more and more...* My Sister Liz and her husband (how strange that sounds) arrived here last Monday and have taken rooms, at Mrs. Roberts', No. 30 2nd Street. I have called on them every evening thus far and it really does my heart good to see them so pleasantly situated and so happy. I only regret that I am not a *married man* myself... About 5 o'clock this morning I was awake by the bells ringing for fire. I looked out and saw a very bright light in the immediate vicinity of our store and I assure you I was a little *frightened* and not many minutes elapsed before I was here on the spot and found all safe. The fire was on the block below us— destroying a "ruin hole" and three or four old wooden houses. A number of poor families were turned into the street, houseless and penniless. One poor man I heard begging this morning for fifty cents to buy his children some shoes, saying that he had lost everything— scarcely had time to escape with their lives. I have just this moment heard that a negro boy had been found in the ruins, burnt to a crisp— this is horrid... The appearance of this scrawl is good evidence that I am in a great hurry. Would write more if I had time. —*Frank*.

*February 19, 1849.* At Mr. McKie's. Very cold, up 8 o'clock. Niel & Ed went to the Point to take the stage for Troy. Spent the day till 6 o'clock with Kate & nothing wanting to make me happy but Kate's good health. Hope & pray that she will be better soon. Spent the eve at home with my good Mother. Had the *blues*. —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer*.

Troy, March 9th 1849, Friday evening, 1/2 past 11 o'clock.

My own dear Kitty— ...Kate you must let me know when you go away from home and remember and write me as soon as you get back and what do you suppose I would like to have you say to me? Something like this— "My own Frank never mind about staying away *the eight long weeks* but just come up and see your own Kate who wants to see you 'not a bit' but 'a good deal.'" There is my sentiment... I think of you the whole time and long for the time to come when we shall live & love together. Next Sabbath eve I will try and write you a letter as I promised, *not merely to fulfill a promise but because I love you dearly, tenderly & truly*. Good night Dearest Kate. —Your *Frank*.

Troy, March 11th, 1849, Sabbath evening.

My own dear Kate— Now for another letter and really, to tell you the plain simple truth my dear girl, I am somewhat puzzled to know what to say first. If I could have a seat by your side this still quiet Sabbath eve I could tell you much more than I could put on paper from this time till tomorrow morning— and in a better style too. I would in the first place take you by the hand and give & receive the same sweet kiss of love and then we would talk of love and what we are to each other, which is nothing more nor less than all in all... Kate— I imagine that you are now (1/2 past 8 o'clock) engaged in writ-

ing to me one of your sweet letters. Now Dearest, just think how much paper, ink etc. we might save if I could just step in and spend the eve with you. But this cannot be so we will go on with our letters... I have ten thousand things to say to you but it is getting late and I must close this scrawl and take it to the P.O. My dear Kate just give me one kiss— there I have it in imagination. When shall I have it in reality? You will of course be very careful & take good care of yourself. Your own *faithful* Frank says truly that he loves you more and more every day. Good night Dearest Kate. More than ever your own *Frank*.

Cambridge, March 11th, 1849, Sabbath evening, 9 o'clock.

My own dear Frank— Are you really writing to me now? If so, is it not to be regretted that we are separated by twenty long miles— for were you here, I should be relieved from the burden of writing. (*You know that I hate to write letters.*)... I regret to hear that Charlie V. Scharnick is married, and particularly to the woman he is united to for life. I attended school with her in Poultney, and understand her character exactly. I only hope that she is changed, for unless she is, she has little claim upon the affections of *his* friends, and none upon their respect. I will say no more just now, perhaps I have said too much already. But of the woman I attended school with, I *all but* hate her for this reason— Her father a minister, she a daily listener to his teachings. Her Father sent her to school, and while there she was only a disgrace to her friends, and her sex. I was in class with her and was obliged for my own sake to teach her civility, while at the same time I felt degraded by the association. This may account for my dislike. I know that it is not a proper feeling... Should I not rather pray for any one than give way to weakened feelings in regard to them... I am perfectly well now. Mother has been sick today, but is better this evening— only a headache... Your *Kitty*.

April 13, 1849. Cloudy & very little rain. Went to Waterford to see about some flour barrels... George McKie took the *Empire* for NY to seek his fortune...

—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, April 16th, 1849.

My Own Dearest Kate— I have just seen Ed who tells me that he is going home tomorrow morning and I have no doubt he will think it a little strange if I don't hand him a note for you... Do you have any idea of what I am going to say? Well my *own* Kate— 'tis nothing more nor less than this. I love you with my *whole heart* and am *well satisfied* that that love is returned. And my dear Girl as long as you give me such *proof* as you have for more than two years I shall never doubt you.— Doubt you my *own* dearest Kate, *no never* and I trust that you will never think of such a thing again... Did you ever see such weather as we are having now a days? I never did. You must be *very careful* and not get cold. You will, won't you? When we parted your Mother promised me that you should be careful. A week ago today we were together and *O how happy*. It seems to me more than a month since we gave the parting hand and *kiss before the eyes of your Mother*. I hope to hear from George in a day or two and then I will write you again. You must let me know from you *often, very often* and I will do the same by you a *thousand* times more than ever. —Your own *Frank*.

Troy, May 20th, 1849, Sunday evening.

My own dearest Kate— Here I am in my own room for the purpose of fulfilling the promise I made you last Thursday when I saw you but a moment. It was too bad that we could not have a longer time together— wasn't it? ...A week ago this very hour we were together, *all alone* and O how happy. My heart is full when I think of those happy thrice happy hours. We are together in thought tonight and I imagine you up in your quiet room writing me one of your good long letters. I only wish that what I may write tonight will give you one tenth part of the real solid comfort your dear good letters always give your own Frank. Enough of this. 'Tis Sabbath evening and is it possible that we are twenty long miles apart— methinks that I am with you even now and perhaps you are thinking of me. You are surrounded by dear and kind friends but I must think that you sometimes feel lonely because I am away... Last Friday morning our normally quiet City was thrown into a state of the most intense excitement by the news of the awful accident to the Steam Boat *Empire*... You cannot imagine the gloom that was in every heart. The downcast look of the citizens as they passed along the streets and the low tone of conversation as they met in groups, here and there, all gave painful evidence that there was grief in every heart. My feelings were not such as I experienced when the ill-fated *Swallow* was wrecked for then I had a near & dear sister onboard and knew not for a while whether she was among the saved or lost. I was sitting at my desk Friday noon when a man came into the office and told me that the *Empire* was run into by a sloop and such and from 50 to 100 lives lost. I thought of Niel the first thing and the first question I asked "was she going down or coming up" and when told that she was coming up I was somewhat relieved. Up to yesterday P.M. nine bodies had been removed from the wreck and it is feared that many more will be found when the boat is raised. Just one week before this terrible accident the awful riot in New York took place. Truly, "In the midst of life we are in death."... I will now seal up this scrawl, read my Bible and go to bed. Good night Kate. I here seal it with a kiss. I shall have a letter from you Tuesday evening. —More than ever your own *Frank*.

THE EMPIRE *Steamboat Empire Sunk. Great Loss of Life.* The first serious steamboat casualty upon the North River which it has been our duty to record this season, occurred last night by the steamer *Empire*, on her way from this city to Albany. About ten o'clock last evening, when opposite Newburgh, she discovered a schooner on her starboard bow, loaded with lumber, beating down. The wind was blowing fresh and the schooner under rapid way, when danger of collision was first apparent. The pilot of the *Empire*, Mr. Levi Smith, called out to the schooner to halt, but no attention was paid to him.

—*New York Evening Post*, May 18, 1849

*The Wreck of the Empire* — The following graphic and impressive account of the earlier particulars of the loss of the *Empire*, were addressed by a prominent physician in Newburgh to a friend in this city, and not intended for publication. The intense anxiety felt to learn anything that can be known of this disaster, has seemed a sufficient excuse for laying this communication, from an eye witness, before the public without waiting to obtain the permission of its writer. Newburgh, May 18, 1849 — 6 o'clock A. M. Gloom rests upon our village... I had just returned to my home from a professional visit about ten last evening, when a scream— nay, a mass, a column of shrieks reached me from

off the water... We made our way to the steamboat landing... We soon made our way down to the railroad crossing, and from thence to Wells's dock. We were just in time to behold the splendid *Empire* yield herself a prize to the remorseless water. What a night! ...Imagination can not convey to you our feelings; standing in safety on the shore, without any means in our power to render assistance, we were the lookers on, in this sad tragedy... At the United States Hotel we had a large number of rescued passengers. One lady with two children was lamenting the absence of two more, whether drowned or not we did not know. Another was clasping a fond little girl to her bosom, having lost one on board the boat of the age of ten months— she sat in mute but agonizing silence. We made her as comfortable as possible. One family of Ladds, from Stonington, Ct., had lost four sons, young lads— no tidings of them last night...

—*New York Evening Post*, May 19, 1849.

Troy, May 27th, 1849, Sabbath eve, 7 o'clock.

My own dearest Kate— I have just returned to my own quiet room from a long pleasant walk on the hill east of the City and now for a letter to my own dear Girl... How delightful it is in Spring to go out into the woods when the eye is refreshed by the sight of flowers and green foliage that adorns everything around you. The ear greeted by the melody of nature's choirs warbling forth their sweet songs and the other scenes delighted by the sweet fragrance and the rich luxuriance of the season. I know that you enjoy all this, and I hope and pray that the time may soon come when we can together go out into the woods... and then if our hearts are right we shall be happy. I have thought much about what you said in regard to those two birds you saw a week ago today. Truly it was an important lesson & may we profit by it... I hope Uncle Sam will do his duty and take this to you in due course... Write often, very often. More than ever, your own *Frank*.

Cambridge, May 31, 1849, Thursday evening, 11 o'clock.

My own dear Frank— It is not early you see, but I will not rest my head on my pillow until I have written you a word... Mother has gone to Cousin Robert McMurray to sit up with his Grandmother, my Mother's Aunt you know. She has been sick some ten days— we suppose her last sickness, she is ninety-five years of age and Mother's nearest relative. Brothers George & Peter are away fishing and I feel quite alone. I only wish that you were with me and I should be more than happy... —Good night, your *Kitty*.

Troy, May 31st, 1849, Thursday evening, 10 o'clock.

My Own Dearest Kate— I am always thinking of you and ever keep in mind that you have a mail every Monday and Friday. I have nothing new or interesting to communicate tonight, but write I will a few words, knowing as I do that you are always happy to hear from this fellow who loves you so *well & truly*... One thing more I must tell you that is my good Mother went to Church last Sabbath for the second time since she lived in Hoosick which is almost ten years— *this is one of the wonders of the age*. There is a great deal of talk here about the Cholera. I try to think as little about it as possible, live temperately and hope for the best. No cases here yet... This is the last day of May 1849, a month which will long be remembered, a month in which many disasters have taken place. Riots in Canada. Riot in N. Y., wreck of the *Empire*, Great fire in St. Louis, flood in New Orleans and last but not least the appear-

*My Mother's Aunt* Margaret Robertson, 1754–1849, who had married John Whiteside, 1752–1841. Margaret was the sister of Ann Robertson who had married Peter Whiteside. Ann Robertson Whiteside was Catherine "Kitty" McKie Thayer's grandmother. Here there is a genealogical nightmare: It is the story of two sisters, Ann & Margaret Robertson, marrying two brothers, Peter and John Whiteside. Each couple had a daughter named Catherine. The two Catherines, double-first cousins, married two brothers, John and George McKie. After the death of "his" Catherine, George McKie, a widower, married Catherine's sister, Sophia Whiteside.

ance of Cholera in New York. Who knows not what is before us— ... *Write soon.* Good night Dear Kate, sweet dreams to thee. —*Frank.*

☞ Newspaper stories:

*Reports of the Cholera at Richmond* — The members of the legislature, having become considerable alarmed about the reports of cholera in this city, have made a proposition to adjourn to White Sulphur Springs. It however was not adopted. A Committee of Health has been appointed, with orders to report to the House from day to day. Several respectable physicians have assured the members of the House that there was no Asiatic cholera in the city. —*New York Evening Post*, May 31, 1849.

*The Cholera in Philadelphia* — The Board of Health reports three cases of Cholera, all of which have proved fatal. Two of them occurred in the Richmond district and one by Southwark. The latter was an Irish emigrant, said to be from New York. —*New York Evening Post*, May 31, 1849.

*Reported Cholera* — Baltimore, A case of Cholera was reported in this city, but it was not authenticated. —*New York Evening Post*, May 31, 1849.

STEAMBOAT EXPLOSION — LOSS OF LIFE — CHOLERA St. Louis, May 30. The Steamer *San Francisco* collapsed a flue last evening while she was leaving this port for Missouri. Mr. Parker, the mate, was badly scalded, and many persons were blown overboard, several of whom are supposed to have been drowned. The steamboat *Cora*, lying alongside, was much damaged, and the captain and the crew were more or less injured by the explosion. The cholera is disappearing from the towns of the Upper Missouri, although it is said to be making sad havoc among the California emigrants on the plains. The health report of this city for the week ending the 28th has created some excitement—286 deaths having occurred, 118 of which were cholera. —*New York Evening Post*, May 31, 1849.

No new cases of cholera have been reported this morning. Cholera in Troy. A young man named Norton, a printer, who had worked in the office of the *Troy Daily Whig*, died of the cholera today at 1 o'clock, P.M. He was first attacked with dysentery on Saturday, which assumed the form of cholera, with violent spasms, &c. He suffered great agony. This is the second case of cholera in this city. —*Troy Budget*, June 4, 1849.

CHOLERA New York. The Sanitary Commission reports 39 cases and 11 deaths as having occurred during the last 24 hours. Of these, 10 cases and 3 deaths occurred in the Hospital, and 29 cases and 8 deaths in private practice. —*New York Evening Post*, June 5, 1849.

Troy, June 3rd, 1849, Sabbath eve, 10 o'clock.

My own dearest Kate— Your last *most excellent* letter of Thursday eve was rec'd last eve about 8 o'clock and here let me say to you my own dear Kitty that you have all the thanks & *love too* of the heart that loves you above everything else... You say that you may be in Troy an hour or two during the present week. Now Kate I don't think you can do a *wiser* thing than to come down as early in the week as you can & stay till Saturday and then I will be most happy to carry you home and such a ride as we would



have no two lovers ever had yet. No matter if we are *six* hours on the road think of this my dear Girl & do if possible come down & stay here two or three days at least... We have had no cases of cholera here yet. A public meeting is to be held tomorrow eve for the purpose of adopting some plan by which the City may be thoroughly cleaned and a fine use can be made of disinfecting agents. 13 cases were reported in New York yesterday... I hope and pray that you are well and happy this morning. —Good-bye for this time, your *Frank*.

June 9, 1849—

I do hereby faithfully promise my own Dear Kate that ever after this date under no circumstances whatever will I use intoxicating liquor except in case of sickness. Signed with my hand, sealed with my seal, and dated June 9th 1849. —*Francis S. Thayer*.

Written on a card in an envelope.

June 8, 1849. ...took Kate... called on Mrs. Jermain. Had a fine time...

June 9. Pleasant AM and cloudy PM. Attended to business till 5 o'clock, then took Kate & carried her home— *had one of the rides* such as does my very heart good. Started 6 o'clock arrived home 1/2 past 10. Passed a *thrice* happy evening.

—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer*.

*Jermain* The reader should remember this name.

Troy, June 11th, 1849, Thursday P.M.

My own Dearest Kate— I hope and pray that you are well & happy this lovely afternoon... There is nothing new going on here in this quiet little City. No new cases of Cholera this week that I have heard of— In New York from 25 to 40 cases per day. I have yet much to say to you but no more time to write now. You shall have another scrawl next Monday. Write often and I will do the same. —More than ever your own *Frank*.

P.S. Do excuse this miserable scrawl. I am in a hurry, as you will plainly see by the writing. Will do better next time.

Troy, July 1st, 1849, Sabbath evening, 10 o'clock.

My own dearest Kate— ...Our City never was in a more healthy state than at present. Only three or four cases of Cholera during the past two weeks. In New York the Cholera seems to be on the increase a little. I pray God that this dreadful scourge may be averted... More than ever your own *Frank*.

Troy, July 22nd, 1849, Sabbath evening, 10 o'clock.

My own dearest Kate— Only two days ago we were together and passed a *thrice happy* two hours for which I am indebted to our mutual friend Liz. ...How sorry I was that you left quite so soon. You must have got completely drenched and I fear took a severe cold. What a sudden shower that was and how it did pour down for a few minutes— the windows of heaven seemed to have been opened all at once... Yesterday I heard good news from home. Father is much better & will soon go to Saratoga Springs where he always enjoys himself so well. Hought has concluded to remain at home until Sept & then go back to New York to a good and profitable situation... Two good sermons I have heard from Dr. Berman today, A.M. and evening... —Your own *Frank*.

Troy, July 26th, 1849, Thursday evening, 9 o'clock.

My own dear Kate— ... Just five years ago today I was at your home for the first time. Do you my own dear Kate recollect the time? I do. What would you have said then if I had told you that I loved you? I did love you long before that time & have loved you more & more ever since. We have passed through some dark days within the past five years, but all is *bright & lovely* with us now & I pray God that our way through life may be such as will give us much happiness... I wish from the bottom of my heart that you could think that we *should* meet as often as once in two weeks. I have said & written too much perhaps about the propriety of our meeting often. I will say no more about it and try and think as you do. I am *sure* that you love me and would be happy to see me every hour... —More than ever your own *Frank*.

*July 28, 1849.* Very pleasant. Jim (older brother) arrived here this morning & says I must carry him home. Very busy till 1/2 past 3 when Jim & I started for Hoosick. Drove out in 3 1/4 hours, stayed at home about an hour & then left for Cambridge, where I arrived a little past 9 o'clock. A thrice happy time with my own Kate.

*July 29.* (Sunday) Delightful weather. Stayed in house till about noon. Charlie B— drove up and Kate & I took ourselves to the woods where we spent a happy two hours, 5 o'clock Niel & Geo came home from Clarendon. Geo & I went to the Old Whiteside Church, Mr. M— preached.

*July 30.* Very warm. 10 o'clock left Mr. McKie's for Hoosick, Geo in Company with me. Took dinner at home then took Jim in & came back to Troy, came near killing my horse, it was awful hot. Jim & H— took the *Columbia* to NY. Wrote a letter to Geo & a note to Kate. —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, Aug 5th, 1849, Sabbath eve, 9 o'clock.

My own dearest Kitty— ... How much do you suppose I would give to be with you tonight. Why Kate I would give anything but your love for me & mine for you. Just let the mind run back one week & ask your own heart if we were not happy then. Yes Kate it was such happiness as but few, very few, experience... How often during the past week have I thought of those *bright* two hours we spent in our sylvan retreat last Sabbath— that tree which had fallen across the brook, my hat falling off in to the water— killing that snake and many other little incidents... —I am more than ever your own *Frank*.

—Do let me hear from you soon, very soon and often. If I write too often just say so. I will either send a paper or write again in a week.

Troy, Aug 7th, 1849, Tuesday eve, 10 o'clock.

My own dear Kitty— I am just this moment through with the labors of the day and now let me write a line or two to you which I will drop in the office on my way up to my room... You intimate that you may go to Montreal. Now Kate you know that I would have you in the perfect enjoyment of every pleasure which this world & the hope of a brighter & happier one can bestow. But I must say to you Dearest Kate that I do not feel very well about your going to Montreal at this time when there is so much of Cholera there. However if you think there is no danger & you wish to go, why then go & I will hope & pray for your health and happiness... You must keep me well advised of your movements so that I can direct my letters accordingly... —Good night— More than ever your own *Frank*.

Troy, Aug. 19th, 1849.

My own dear Kitty— ...I see by the papers that they are having great times in Montreal— fires, riots etc. Have you been there to witness any of these awful scenes? The spirit of Revolution seems to pervade the whole world and I think the trouble in Canada has just begun. Henry Clay passed through here last Thursday on his way to Newport. A great crowd of good and true Whigs assembled in front of the Troy House to see and cheer the old man who ought to have been made President years ago. He staid here only about half an hour. I never saw him before and it really done me good to look upon him— A Great Man that Henry Clay— A man every true Whig loves. I wish he was in Old Zach's place... I have heard three sermons today— the best one was from a young Unitarian minister who is preaching here on trial... Now Good night Dearest Kitty. Sweet dreams & happy thoughts be with you. I am more than ever your own *Frank*.

August 27, 1849. Very warm. Stayed at Mr. McKie's till 5 P.M. when I started for Troy after having the best visit in my life... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, Sept. 2nd, 1849, Sabbath eve. 8 o'clock.

My own dearest Kate— Just about this time last Sabbath eve we returned to the house from the Old Mill where we passed a thrice happy hour. How I wish that we could be together tonight... "I recon" that you are now up in your room writing to this Boy and such a dear good letter as I shall expect to receive Tuesday eve makes my very heart glad and I only wish that you could take even half as much real solid comfort in reading my letter as I do in yours. I hope to hear good news in regard to the matter referred to your Mother. You know my wishes and what I think is for the best. Now Kitty I would have you weigh the reasons pro & con *candidly* and let me know the decision at your earliest convenience. Again I ask, would it be any easier for you to leave home six months or a year hence than in six weeks? I do not wish to hurry the matter but I do really think that we ought to be married in the year 1849. Every one of my near & dear friends advise me to get married this fall, and as this advice is in accordance with my own feelings & judgment, I think that we should take up with it... We are old enough. In a very few days and I shall be 27 years old and I trust in such circumstances as to be able to support a wife... I have heard two good sermons today... My health is first rate, never better. Haven't had the headache again. How is Ed? You must make him take better care of himself. Good night Kitty. Your own *Frank*.

Sept. 11, 1849.

My own Frank— I am about to say a word to you as I can by Br. Henry tomorrow... I have talked long and candidly with my Mother. She says but this— that she would not be wholly selfish yet she cannot let me go from her before "the time of the singing of birds has come." She says that she has never really thought of my going from home, until within a very few weeks, that she knows that it must come sometime, but she has never allowed herself to think of it... I of course was silent on that one point, and this fact, with her own hopes, made me suppose that at some *indefinite* time away in the future I would, as it were, be taken from her, and she felt, as she has often said to me, that she should not let it trouble her until she was obliged to. And now

she says that she must have time to think of it, to become familiar with the subject. Mother says too, that for years she had no female friend in whom she could perfectly confide, with whom she might share her joys and sorrows, my schooldays passed away, and I was with her, a few short years have hurried by, and now I am almost gone. "Catherine," she says, "my heart will not give you up now. I cannot: I need think of it, in a few months I shall feel differently. Tell Frank that he must bear with me in this one thing if he wishes you with him, then may he know something of the trial before me... Tell him too that I do not, cannot claim you because circumstances require you here. I do really think of that. I can only say that I cannot give you up. Tell him not to think me wholly selfish but to think it all for the best. And in justice to him say that I would not have it otherwise than it is."

Thus have I tried to tell you Frank in few words what you wished to know, my Mother's opinion. It is as I anticipated, but not as you appeared to hope when here. When you too see and know my Mother's grief when she speaks of the matter in question, you could *not ask* her to do as you yourself wish... I feel that it is all truth when she says, "give me time" and shall feel very differently. I shall not look for a note from you by Henry. He will stay no longer than necessary in the City... Now Frank, my dearest and kindest friend, care nothing about what I have written, except to feel that it is all for the best. I believe it is this and I know, that my conscience would not let me leave my Mother while she feels as at present... —Yours *Kitty*.

*September 11, 1849.* Weather continues fine. My birthday, 27 years old, hope to be married before another year rolls around... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, Sept. 30th, 1849, Sabbath evening, 10 o'clock.  
My own Dearest Kitty— I must give you another short letter tonight for the reason it is late. My room is damp & chilly and I have something of a cold— perhaps should take more cold if I should sit up long enough to fill this sheet as I would like to do. I have taken the precaution to put on my thick overcoat & hat so you can see that I am careful... I was agreeably surprised to hear that Father & Mother made you a visit with Mr. & Mrs. Bills Friday. What will folks say now? Well let them talk, who cares? I don't. Mr. & Mrs. B— say that they had a delightful visit at Hoosick and at your home— never passed two days more pleasantly... O it is a joy to think that I shall see you in a very few days, and receive to my bosom the dear good Girl I love so well & truly. Heaven bless you dearest and speed the hour that shall bring us together. Good night dearest Kitty. More than ever your own *Frank*.

Cambridge, Sept. 30, 1849, Sabbath eve.  
My own dearest Frank— ...You wished me to write you this evening, coaxed me saying, "That's a good girl"— Willing to *attempt* to gratify you, I came to my room, full two hours since, intending to commence scribbling at once. I thought that I would look in my box of *written treasures*, and during the last one hundred and twenty minutes, I have been looking over some of your good old letters. I find among the letters of this summer an envelope post-marked June 1st or 7th, and no letter with said envelope. It troubles me a little, I cannot find the letter, neither can I imagine in what way it has strayed

away from its enclosure. Tomorrow if all is well I'll find it, if it is to be found. I cannot bear to lose one single line that you have written me. You said in your letter of Thurs. eve that "you would send the scrawl, I might read it and then burn it." Pretty truly—you know Frank that I could not be induced to destroy a word you send me by way of note or letter. Why then will you say anything about such an impossibility?... Brother Henry is able to help himself better than when I wrote you last. He can walk about very well, for two days has laid down without assistance, but cannot rise alone. I fear that it will be a long time before he fully recovers—and yet we hope for the best. I hope my own Frank that you will find it convenient to come up next Sat eve. I have at times this week thought that I could not wait until that time without seeing you. —Mon. morning. *Patter patter* goes the rain this dark morning. I hope your mind's sky is free from clouds and darkness and I cannot but wish that next Sat aft. may be clear and pleasant! Do you know why? —Surely you do, just so that I may see my own Frank. Good bye until I see you. I hope Uncle James has a long letter for me from you know who. —Your *Kate*.

Troy, October 18th, 1849, Thursday evening, 10 o'clock.

My own Dearest Kate— I am tired and 'tis late *for a man of a family to be out* so I will only say a word or two to you my own dear good girl. What kind of time did you have going home last eve? I hope that you was well protected from the rain and did not take cold. I watched the clouds and wished a thousand times that it would stop raining, but it would come down "just as long as the boy knows his father." After you left I regretted very much that I did not say more to you about staying here until Saturday and I was almost if not quite sorry that I did not just put my foot down to say that you should not go. Wouldn't you like to see me show my authority?... Why is it that you are always in such a hurry when you come to Troy? I hope to make you contented and happy here before next February. I'll try, and think you that I shall fail to do it? Ask your own heart and then tell me. Our love for each other will always make us happy together. Have you talked with your Mother about January? If you have not I trust you will before our next meeting so that you can let me know the result. You don't know how much I think of it... My heart loves you more than ever before 'tho my letters are so *very poor*. I have been very busy today and now have lots of work which ought to be done but I can do no more tonight. If "Mr. Howland" would only do the work I used to do when I first came here my task would not be so hard. I will not complain, no I should not, for I am much better off than those who have nothing to do. I was a little mad yesterday when I found out that Mr. Bills sent Charlotte to the Store and left word with "Mr. Howland" to have me come to the house and don't you think the "little old gentleman" never said a word about it. Didn't I have some cause to be a *little mad*? I had no idea of writing half as much as this when I commenced. The fact is I couldn't stop, so please excuse me. I would give anything for one sweet hour with you tonight. One sweet kiss & then Good Night to you my own dearest Kitty. —Your own *Frank*.

November 3, 1849. Charming weather. Indian summer... Wrote to Brother Henry to start for Poultney to school next Wednesday. I have agreed to pay his expenses as long as he will go... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer*.

Troy, Nov. 15th, 1849, Thursday evening.

My own Dearest Kate— Your last dear good kind letter is before me and should be answered by a better letter than you ever received from this Boy... I was thinking today what I should do if I couldn't see you only once in four weeks. You don't now think it best not to meet oftener than once a month do you? I know you don't. Nothing new here save that Mr. Howland has got a new suit of plaid. Liz says he looks like a monkey dressed up to ride on the pony as they do at the circus. You would laugh to see him... I'll just say that I love you more than ever before and stop scribbling. —Your own devoted *Frank*.

P.S. I hope and pray too that you are well and happy tonight. You will be careful. Always remember that we must have health to make us happy. I have written in a great hurry as you plainly see...

*November 19, 1849.* Very rainy day. Could not leave Mr. McKie's and I was not sorry. Spent the day as pleasantly as I could wish— all sunshine & happiness indoors but dark clouds & rain without. I always have been & ever shall be happy when with my own Kate. To bed between 12 & 1 o'clock.

*November 20.* Dark cloudy day. Left Mr. McKie's about 11 o'clock & came to Troy in the rain... Rec'd a letter from Henry in West Poultney. —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, Dec. 6th, 1849, Thursday evening.

My own dearest Kate— Do you know who wants to see you, talk with you, take you by the hand & give you the sweetest kiss you ever dreamed of? I will leave you to answer this question. I reckon you can guess... Well my dear Girl, how are you and what is the news? I haven't heard from you in a whole week and it seems a long month to me... Tuesday Mr. Bills had a very severe attack of the colic & has not been out of the house since. I was up with him till 4 o'clock Tuesday night. Dr. Robbins was with him all night. He is better today 'tho not able to sit up much. I must now close this & go over to Mr. Bills' to stay all night. If I could go to my own room you should have a long letter in place of this scrawl. Will write more Sabbath eve. Hope you will write soon. —More than ever your own *Frank*.

—My love to your dear good Mother. I do want to see you more than ever before. Would that I could be with you tonight— What joy would be ours. One sweet kiss, sweet dreams to thee.

Troy, Dec. 13th, 1849, Thursday eve. 9 o'clock.

My own darling Kate— *Highho!* In a little less than forty-eight hours I hope to be with you. Yes Dearest Kitty, I see nothing now to prevent my leaving this little City Saturday P.M. and you know how glad I shall be to set my face towards your home where my thoughts always are... I have not been home in some time & I now think that I shall go from your house to Hoosick. I would like to have you go with me. Will you? More than ever your own *Frank*.

Troy, Dec. 20th, 1849, Thursday evening.

My own dearest Kate— You will recollect that I left you Monday about 1/2 past 12 o'clock P.M. after having much the happiest time we ever had together. I only wish that I could come up this week and have another just

such time. I cannot, or rather you do not think it best so I shall stay home... I cannot tell you how sorry I was that you had the headache so bad last Saturday & Sabbath evenings and you do not know how gladly I would have taken it from you— this I could not do, but you had all the sympathy a loving heart only knows. I arrived at home about two o'clock & staid till after tea. Had a short but pleasant visit, found our folks all well. My ride to Troy that night was a cold & lonely one. Our folks said that I must stay till morning as it was dark & stormy... I was very sorry to hear at Hoosick that Mrs. Ball was sick with fever... She went up there on a visit and was taken sick. She was better & Mr. Ball went up to bring her home the day I was at Hoosick. Do they not have a great deal of sickness & trouble? ...I am a thousand times more than ever your own *Frank*.

P.S. How have you been this week? I hope & pray well & happy. You must be very careful. I wish that I could be with your own home tonight. How much happiness we could crowd into one short hour. You know I don't like to send you such a scrawl as this but 'tis the best I can do now. —Your own devoted *Frank*.

Troy, Dec. 23rd, 1849, Sabbath evening.

My own dearest Kate— Again I am seated in my own room for the agreeable purpose of writing to my own dear good Girl in whose presence I was so happy just one week ago this very hour... It is true that my letters outnumber yours but when I come to compare their intrinsic value I have not the heart to complain of you for not writing oftener. I could only wish that my scrawls were good letters such as would be satisfactory to myself. In my last I promised to write a better letter tonight. Well Kate I am fearful that I shall not be able to fulfill my promise for I am not exactly in the writing mood... —Your own *Frank*. P.S. Kate do you recollect the last half-hour we spent together up in “my room” last Sabbath night? I have thought of that same time a thousand times. I wish that we could have another just such time now. One thing I am going to do next time I come up to see you— go to bed before 1 o'clock. It is too bad to sit up 'til— (I don't think it would look well to write it down.) I have blamed myself a good deal for keeping you up so late. Now hear me— I am not going to do so any more. Give me just one sweet kiss, there I have it in imagination, once more Goodnight...

A Summary of 1849:

*January 16, 1849.* Frank left in the morning.

*February 21.* ...Brothers George, Jimmie & Peter have gone to White Creek...

*May 17.* ...*Empire* lost.

*May 18.* A bright beautiful moon. Last night the *Empire* sank— a sad accident...

*August 14.* ...at 3 o'clock Mr. & Mrs. T. H—, Mrs. G. H— & self left in rain for Montreal. Reached there 1/2 past 7-eve.

*August 15.* Rose at 4 o'clock. Rode around the mountain before breakfast & visited the Cathedral. Such a prospect over a city I never saw...

*October 6.* Raining a little all day. Frank came at eve. Rained very hard in the night...

*October 7.* Frank left for Glens Falls in the morning. A beautiful day.

*November 22.* Peter and myself went to Grandmother's in aft....

*December 8.* Busy doing nothing all the morning. Mother had some headache...

*December 28.* Finished pants for Father. Uncle John came with word of Grandmother's

*Mr. & Mrs. Ball* Most likely Francis Thayer's grandparents as his mother's maiden name was Mary Ball.

*Grandmother McKie* Elizabeth Wilson McKie, 1765–1849, is now buried in the Woodland Cemetery in Cambridge. See diary of James McKie, October 26, 1865, page 332.

death. I went home with him.

*December 29.* Grandmother's funeral at 1 o'clock p.m. Returned from White Creek with Br. H— and Antoinette...

Grandmother McKie died Dec. 27, 1849— Would have been 85 years of age June 19.  
—*Excerpts from the 1849 diary of Catherine Sophia McKie*

1850

Troy, January 13th, 1850.

My own darling Kitty— What shall I say to you? Let me in the first place tell you that I love you with my whole heart and would give much if I could only have a seat by your side for a few hours tonight... Now we are twenty long miles apart, but do not our spirits commune with each other and is not this joy indeed? I am with you in thought every hour and I pray that the time may soon come when we can live and love together. I look forward with the eye of faith to the coming spring as the *happy* time when we shall consummate our fondest wishes and plans— when we shall be linked together in those bonds which are never ended except by death. We have loved each other for years and every day we live we love better and better... I am sure that we shall be happy, thrice happy together.

The bells are ringing for fire and I have just looked out to see where it is. I should think it was down in the lower end Fourth Street. Well Kitty, as I have nothing to burn up in that vicinity and not being a fireman, I'll keep on writing to my own dear good Girl... Today I have heard two most excellent sermons from Dr. Hopkins of Williams College. Could I take a seat by your side, I would tell you something of these splendid sermons... I do wish that you could have heard these sermons, and I do hope & pray that my hearing them will not be in vain... We have not yet completed the arrangements for keeping house in the spring. We talk about it every day and I am in hopes we shall soon be able to make the arrangements I spoke to you about... I have got an *ugly* boil on the side of my neck and that or something else gives me the headache— so you must excuse this perfectly awful scrawl. Kitty, I'll promise you a better letter sometime when I feel perfectly well. My love to your dear good Mother. Good night. God bless you. —Your own *Frank*.

Troy, January 14th, 1850.

My own Darling Kitty— Your kind brother Ed has gone over to Mr. Hughes' and will be back here in a few minutes. Now as I *haven't* anything in particular to do I'll just say a word or two to you my darling girl... Liz received a letter from home today in regard to our plans for housekeeping. Our folks at home think well of it, and I have no doubt we shall have it all arranged this week. I don't mean that we shall move into the house this week but shall take a share of it. Liz says you will have to learn her many things in regard to housekeeping— you will won't you? ...The weather is cold this week. I wish we had a little more snow to make good sleighing— then I would come up to your house with Liz this week. *You must be very careful in this cold weather. Now remember this* my darling Kitty. Good-bye for this time. Write soon. Your own *Frank*.



☞ A case of the flu:

*January 15, 1850.* Busy at the store all the A.M. & down to Albany as a witness in P.M. . . . Had a cold ride & took a severe cold somehow or other. On going to bed at 11 o'clock took some hot rum. Sick all night, vomited, high fever etc. etc.

*January 16.* Up about 10 o'clock after a sick night. Took a very little breakfast & then dressed myself. . . . called Dr. Thomas in the eve, very high fever, headache & many other things too numerous to mention. . . .

*January 17.* Another sick night, very little sleep; no appetite & I've got the blues. Dr. says I am not going to be sick but what more can he ask to come upon me to make me a sick man. Wrote to Kate.

*January 18.* I am getting no better very fast. Dr. doesn't attend to me as he should, comes only once a day & keeps telling me there is no danger. . . .

*January 19.* Suffered a good deal of pain. Dr. did not come to see me & I don't like it. . . . Ed McKie called to see me & I sent a letter to Kate.

*January 20.* Had a hard night of it last night. Sent Graves for the Dr. this morn. He came about 11 o'clock & gave me some relief. . . . I have to keep my bed most of the time.

*January 21.* Was in great pain all night. . . . Got no sleep till morn. Dr. came in A.M. & made me better. He says I must be careful for a week & then I can leave my room. Wrote a note to Kate.

*January 22.* I feel better this morning, not so much pain & I now think that I am on the road to renewed health. . . . Dr. comes twice a day now & he is determined to get me up soon.

*January 23.* A good deal better this morning. Up & dressed. I shaved myself for the first time in a week. . . .

*January 24.* Still continue to grow better. . . . Dr. says I may go out in two or three days.

*January 25.* Better indeed. I am almost well. . . .

*January 26.* Pleasant. Dr. called to see me in A.M. & said I might go out. Walked down to the store for the first time since a week ago. . . . —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, January 20th, 1850, Sabbath morning, 11 o'clock.

My own dearest Kitty— I did not rest very well last night and I don't know as I am any better today than I was yesterday. I am no worse. The Dr. has just been here and says I must take some medicine this P.M. which will make me sick for a few hours and then I shall be better. I'll take anything if it will only make me well. . . . —*Frank*

—7 o'clock P.M. I have kept this open 'till this time just so I could tell you that I feel better this eve. Hope you will write tonight. Good night dearest— . . .*Frank.*

—Oh for one sweet kiss from my darling Kitty. You are with me in thought every minute.

Cambridge, Jan 20th, 1850, Sabbath aft, 4 o'clock.

My own dear Frank— And you are sick my own good Frank, and I cannot do or say anything to relieve you. I am comforted in knowing you are better. I would have you always well and happy. But I am thankful that you are better. . . . In regards to the housekeeping arrangement, I have only to say on my own part that your kind Sister Liz need have no fears on my account, that is in regard to making me happy. . . . I should like to see Liz at any time

with you. If I do not see you before next Saturday, shall hope to see you then. I trust we will have some snow by that time... I can write no more. Brother Ed is going to Easton and I wish him to take this with him. I hope I shall have good news tomorrow from you. God grant that you may soon be restored to perfect health. —Your *Kitty*.

Troy, January 21st, 1850, Monday eve. 6 o'clock.

My own darling Kitty— I have just eaten my supper and would you like to know of what it consisted? Well Kate, Liz got me a bowl of cocoa and two Boston crackers which tasted very good. I say that I am better today and Dr. Thomas says ditto and what is better still, he says I may ride out tomorrow or next day if it is pleasant. We have had a heavy fall of snow which will I hope make good sleighing by the time I get ready for it. I don't know what I shall do. I shan't be able to drive my Harry until I get a good deal more strength than I have got now. Suppose you come down and drive for me. If I get along as well as I expect, I shall come up to see you Friday or Saturday this week and then won't we have a time? —*Frank*.

Cambridge, January 25th, 1850, Sabbath aft. 4 o'clock.

My own dear Frank— And you are sick, my own good Frank, and I cannot do or say anything to relieve you. I am comforted in knowing you are better. I would have you always well and happy. But I am thankful that you are better, and doubly so that you were so situated, that your good sister could watch over you. She has all my hearts gratitude for every kind word and deed, yet I know her kindness would be prompted by a Sister's love, not by a sense of duty... A mist or something comes before my eyes when I think of you sick, and sad fearful thoughts are ever coming up to make me but a child... In regards to the housekeeping arrangement, I have only to say on my own part that it "bears acquaintance"— Your kind Sister Liz need have no fears on my account, that is in regard to making me happy... Let her be assured then that it will be the first wish of my heart to do as she would have me in all things. The arrangement would be of advantage to me, yet I would not be the only one to enjoy or be benefited by it. I would not have her feel that my presence would impose a single restraint, or add one to the cares of life... I would like to see Liz very much at any time with you... Now my own dearest Frank, but a word and then good-bye for this time. *You will not forget to be careful*. And we will not forget to thank our God for his goodness, to ask his mercy. I wish I could be with you one hour, all alone with you just one hour. Yet we can say "God bless us when we're parted. God bless us when we're near"... God grant that you may soon be restored to perfect health. —Your *Kitty*.

Troy, January 27th, 1850, Sabbath P.M. 3 o'clock.

My own darling Kitty— ...The Dr. called to see me yesterday morning and told me that I might walk down to the store. I immediately *bundled* up and started on rather a *slow gait*. I had to stop once or twice but finally I arrived at the store— staid there about two hours and then walked back. I stepped on the scales and was astounded to find that I had lost 20 pounds in 10 days. Almost everyone I met said to me, "You have been sick, haven't you?" "Yes a little." ...Kate I want to see you more than I can tell and if we had sleighing I think I should be with you in a day or two but as it is I may put

off coming up 'till the last of the week as I have some writing which ought to be done this week. I feel pretty well now 'tho I haven't strength to do much yet. I am careful and shall get well just as soon as I can. Suppose you come down here this week and I'll carry you home Friday or Saturday. Liz would give anything to see you. She speaks of you a dozen times every day and very often asks me if I think she can visit you in regard to housekeeping. I tell her she must do the best she can and we will find no fault. Liz says she is willing to learn and with your advice and assistance hopes to make it pleasant for all... Now Kate, write soon and often and your own Frank will do the same. My love to your dear good Mother. Liz sends her love... God bless you dearest and may He bless us both in the prayer of *your own Frank* who loves you better than ever before. —Do come down here this week. I want to see you.

Troy, February 14th, 1850, Thursday P.M.

My own Darling Kitty— ... This is Valentine's Day and I cannot let it pass without just telling you in a very plain & simple manner that I love you with my *whole heart*. Now Kitty is not this as good a Valentine as you could wish for? I am sure you will say "Yes Francis my own 'naughty' boy." ... Graves took a leave of the House today. We are to have it put in first rate repair inside & out, and I have no doubt we shall find in it a very comfortable & happy home, much more pleasant it will be for us than to board at any boarding house in the City. I think on the whole we had better take the back chamber— more about this when you come down to look for yourself... —Your own devoted *Frank*.

Troy, Febry. 21st, 1850, Thursday evening.

My own darling Kitty— ... Dearest Kitty, are you well & happy tonight? Would that I could hear that you are so from your own soft lips. I shall expect to hear from you Saturday eve and I pray God that you may be able to say that you are all well & happy... Yesterday morning I went to Hoosick to attend the funeral of my Aunt Wilder who died Monday very suddenly of inflammation of the stomach and bowels. She had been in feeble health for some time, but we little thought she was so soon to be taken away. Last Saturday she was about the house and Monday noon was no more. This is indeed a very sudden and melancholy bereavement. Uncle Wilder and the children are overwhelmed with grief and we all feel her loss more than words can tell. She has left four children... What a loss to those children— a mother who was perfectly devoted to them. Oh that she could have been spared to them a few years longer. "God gave & he taketh away." And we should learn to submit to his will... The mail will close in a few minutes and I must close now. So Good night my dearest darling girl. God bless you and be with us both. More than ever —Your own *Frank*.

—Love to your dear Ma. *Be very careful.*

Troy, March 3rd, 1850, Sabbath evening, 1/2 past 6 o'clock.

My own dearest Kitty— You must excuse me from writing a long letter this eve for I am in duty bound to go down to the Troy House to see Mr. & Mrs. Ball who have been here since Friday and I never knew it until this P.M. when coming home from church... Let me remind you that it is now March— the first month of spring. And what does this bring to mind— why

the most delightful thought and prospect of the season, this, that the *last* of April is near at hand when I hope to claim you as the wife of my bosom. Now Kate, do not start back and feel horrified when I talk about our getting married... I ask you my dearest girl if there ever will be a more favorable time than this spring. I know and feel that your home and home friends are very near and dear to you and it will be hard indeed for you to leave them. But do you not know that there is one who loves you with his whole heart and soul, and here I tell you that it will ever be his highest aim to make you happy. You have known him and loved him for years and have all the confidence in the world in him. You should bear in mind that you are not to be removed far from home and your dear good kind Mother... Yesterday I met Mrs. Stowe in the street and she asked me when I was going to be married. She said she had a particular reason for making the inquiry, said she must know just two weeks before the time. I told her I couldn't give her any information on so delicate a subject. Perhaps you can give her the desired information. I have no objections 'tho I wish you would tell me *first*... I have heard two good sermons today. I suppose you have heard one from the Boy at the Bridge. It is high time for me to close, so Good-night my darling Kitty. Love to your Mother. God bless you and your own *Frank*.

Troy, March 7th, 1850, Thursday P.M.

My own dearest Kitty— Your kind note of Sabbath eve was handed to me by your obliging brother Ed, Monday P.M., and it has been read & re-read time and again. I have it before me now and as my eyes rest upon it my heart longs to be with you my own darling Kitty. I wish you to understand that the note paper is paid for, and all I ask of you in regard to it is to use it up just as fast as you can— always keeping in mind that I shall claim no small portion of it. It was decidedly too bad for Ed & Niel to laugh & talk to you in a *mean* way. Next time they do not conduct themselves as good kind brothers should do, why just send for me and I'll take your part and see if both can't make them behave... It grieves me to the very heart to hear that you dear good Mother gains strength so slowly. I know that she has all the care & attention, duty & affection can give and I hope, trust, & pray that she may be better, yes well soon. A heart full of love to her from your own Frank. When I see you I shall have a few words to say in regard to the *publicity* of our affairs and I hope & trust that I shall be able to *exculpate* myself from all blame. I have always endeavored to be very cautious about what concerned us more than anybody else and I do hope you will not accuse me of being too communicative in regard to our plans for the future... —Your own *Frank*.

*April 7, 1850.* Charming day. Kate quite sick & had to take to bed: not able to sit up a moment. Sat by the bedside an hour or two during the day and all the eve till 10 o'clock when I went out in the kitchen... and to bed near 11 o'clock.

April 8. Up about 8 o'clock. Kate better this morn & able to walk about...

—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, April 17th, 1850, Wednesday evening.

My own darling Girl— I have been very busy indeed all day long and I have only time to write a few words... Enclosed I hand you the key to your

trunk which I will see *shipped* onboard the stage tomorrow morning and I hope & trust that it will reach you in due time and in good order. I had a cold & lonely ride from your house Monday but took no more cold... Now Kitty dear, don't you be *frightened* when you think of the great change that is about to come over us for I'm going to make you happy if it is in my power to do so. You have all my heart's best affections and I'll try to make you the happiest of the happy. I intend to go home Saturday eve and up to see you Sabbath P.M. You'll be glad to see me, won't you? Although it will be only a week from the time I last saw you. Did you ever see such cold disagreeable weather in April as we have had for a week? I long to see a pleasant spring-like day... If you want anything here just write me & I'll bring it... Good night. God bless you & your own *Frank*.

Cambridge, April 18, 1850, 11 o'clock.

My own dearest Frank— Did I promise to write a word to you this week. I believe so, but if you knew how well I have been this past week you would not think a message in reference to health necessary. Did you take some cold last Monday— I fear so, for it was a raw chilly day. You will take good care of yourself, will you not Francis? ...My heart flutters and I want to hide my head in a good resting place when I think of the last day of this month. You know I do not say this for want of love to you, but thoughts of such a change, and more than all my lonely Mother, will come over me, and give me dreams most grave and sober. I can write but a word more now... Mother is pretty well now... God bless us with His love and our own as his children now and always. —Your *Kitty McKie*.

Troy, April 18th, 1850, Thursday evening.

My own dearest darling Kitty— If I am not mistaken I promised that you should hear from me on Friday and now I am seated at my own desk for the purpose of fulfilling that promise... Aaron went to New York tonight to be gone till next Tuesday or Wednesday. Liz will go home with me Saturday and I shall return via Hoosick Monday and bring her back. Should the weather be unpleasant Saturday I shall not leave the City and in that case you will not see me at your house until next week Saturday as we talked of. Today I wrote to Jim, Hought & Port to be on hand the 30th. I hope & trust they will come. This P.M. I rec'd a letter from Henry saying that he should come to the *wedding*. Now Kate, if you think of anything you want here just say so to me and I'll show you that I shall be most happy to serve you. I saw your trunk onboard the stage this morning and ere this I suppose you have rec'd it... Kiss your dear good Mother for me and tell her that I know but little difference between her and my own dear Mother. Good night. God bless you and your own devoted *Frank*.

Troy, April 25th. 1850, Thursday, evening 8 o'clock.

My own dearest darling Kitty— Are you well and happy this charming evening? I only wish that I could take a seat by your side and hear you say "Yes Francis." As for myself I can truly say that I am now better than I have been for two weeks past. My cold is taking leave of me and am I not glad of it! Yes indeed. ...I intend to have our room all in order Saturday and I hope and trust that when you take a look at it you will be fully satisfied with everything

it contains *not excepting the carpet* about which so much has been said. It is a pretty carpet and I'll stick to it notwithstanding what others may say... Jim & Hought write me that it will be next to impossible for them to come up to the wedding. Jim says that his engagements are positive and cannot leave even for a day. He also says that he is well aware that the occasion is one which calls for sacrifices but I am too good a businessman to require important matters to be neglected for any other occurrence except one's own wedding. Hought says he will certainly make us a visit when we get settled in our new home. Port will be on hand. I cannot realize that in five days I shall be a married man. I have for years looked forward to this event with joy and as the time is near at hand I have no misgivings. My prayer is that I shall be able to make you happy and here I tell you again that it shall ever be highest aim to make you happy through life. I hope, trust, and pray too that on the sea of life all prosperous gales may waft us and that we may reach in the end the sure heaven of rest. Now Kitty just keep up good courage and not feel badly about what may happen next Tuesday. Are you careful my darling Girl? Now don't work too hard and get yourself sick— You *must* not. I must close, one sweet kiss. Good night. God bless you & your own *Frank*.



*Francis S. Thayer and Catherine McKie Thayer daguerreotypes, dates unknown.*



New York, April 26th, 1850.

My Dear Sister— Your favour of the 18th just came duly to hand... I have been rather under the weather with a cold this week but am now better, only quite hoarse. I find it impossible to leave here on Saturday to be with you on Tuesday next as I had intended & much regret it. I am so drove with business it's impossible to leave & be gone so long having to work night & day. The spring has been so cold that business is backward. Kate, God bless you. Tell Father I have not seen Trowbridge yet but do so on Sunday next. He lives so far up Town & never to home, it's hard to find him. My love to all. —Your affectionate Brother, *Niel W. McKie*.

New York, April 30, 1850.

Dear Father— [letter is mostly about a lawsuit but ends—] ...I must close. My love to all. I regret I could not go up home to Kate's wedding. —Your affectionate son. *N. W. McKie*. [Niel Whiteside McKie]

*April 30, 1850.* A more delightful day could not be wished for. This day is one full of interest to me & the dear good girl I am this day joined to for life. Married at 3 o'clock by Rev. T. C. McLorry, started for Troy about 5. Aaron & Liz met us. Mr. & Mrs. Bills & Hatty came in & took tea with us.

*May 1, 1850.* Cold & windy. Up a little before 6 o'clock & over to the store before breakfast. How strange it seems that I am indeed a married man. How dreamlike. Spent the day about my business as usual. Flour market firm & improving.

—*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

☞ Excerpts from the letters of George W. McKie describing his trip to California:

Friend Frank etc etc— After two weeks of steaming we have at last arrived at the Isthmus and right glad are all of us once more to get a firm hold of Terra Firma— although the temperature of this place is a great drawback on the

enjoyment anticipated— boiling heat it is. My health and spirits were never better and if Providence will continue the blessing, will remain so. We stopped in Havana two days but in consequence of the turbulent state of the times, were not allowed to land and consequently cannot write *descriptively* of the place and people. Didn't know at our time, but that we might have something to do with the raid, reports flying of all kinds, none to be relied on and you are probably better informed of the state of affairs than I am. We have about 900 passengers on board and all are acquaintances now... —*May 25, 1850*

Dear Father— After a long and somewhat fatiguing journey I have arrived here (Panama, New Grenada) safe and healthy...

Chagres is a low filthy place, defiled by all sorts and conditions of vice. Gamblers seem to be doing the most lucrative business— the natives having the most uncontrollable passion for games of chance— women and all. All I say and all surely it is as the Priests frequent the gambling table and the altar alternatively. The town is composed of low huts, covered with large leaves common to the tropics— bamboo sides, open as a crib— no floors— and pigs, mules, men, women and children lodge and victual indiscriminately. The children as bare as when born and the adults not much better clad... You cannot imagine the appearance of the forests here— one continuous impenetrable brake, vines clustering about trees in such a manner as to make it perfectly impossible to force a passage through...

...The Gold— silver, diamonds about the alter are valued at millions while the majority of the worshippers are remarkable for nothing but their squalid wretchedness. The priests who officiate number about a dozen and look well fed and sensual. There is a dozen or more services a day for ought I know— or at least a continual squalling— which they call chanting. The population of this place is about 5,000 to 8,000, mostly natives or Indian and negro mixed with Spanish blood— very few pure blooded Spanish. The Governor of the Province held a Subscription ball on Saturday night which I attended— or rather I went about 11 o'clock— walked upstairs saw a little insignificant person bowing at the door, paid him no notice, not even bowed, but walked in. When the interpreter informed me that the bowing individual at the door was the governor, whew— my exclamation was not calculated to win favor of his excellency if he could have understood it— but thank Babel he did not and I was presented to the man that a moment before I had called a *fussy little squirt*. The ball was about over and after stopping a few moments, I again shook hands with the Governor— and thot [*sic*] in my heart that a weak nation had well chosen its ruler and left. —*June 2, 1850.*

Dear Father— The vessel to which I was appointed has arrived and will leave this port (Panama, New Grenada) on Tuesday night and from that out my letters to you and the rest of the family will be infrequent— as it takes about two months to make the voyage, and there is no opportunity of sending by a quicker conveyance than from this place when we return.

My health has been very good so far... The agent has made me second mate of the *Isthmus* and if my qualifications had been good enough— that is if my knowledge of navigation had not become faint from long inattention to it, he would have made me capt of her, he having no confidence whatever in the present Capt....

The officers with whom I am to be associated are ignorant men and of no force or business capacity— which will make it somewhat unpleasant, but I hope to make it a season of improvement.

This place is as remarkable for the inflation that has taken place in the price of goods etc. as California. I paid \$7.50 for the washing of 20 pieces last— almost the original cost of the articles. I am paying \$12.00 per week for board and not very good at that, no butter, no potatoes, no milk, and no cleanliness. On Tuesday last I went on board the *Isthmus* and took [illegible] of coal— was three days receiving— took about 200 tons at \$45.00 a ton— so that you can see what it costs to run steamers on this side as it takes about 500 and over tons to make the voyage. This climate is very much like our August— that is an August day during which you have alternate rain and sunshine. Hot very hot— the rain not cooling the air but making it more close and warm— but nevertheless were the streets kept clean and proper attention paid to diet, there is not a doubt but that it would be healthy. Situated immediately on the lea and sufficiently elevated to admit of drainage, all that is necessary is a will to make it a perfect garden. All grains will grow here— corn is produced in abundance and that too by as indolent a people as the world knows. The cattle are very fine in the bone, clean build, beautifully coated and are allowed to roam at large— each owner having his mark burned on the hip. They do not get fat but still are good eating. Horses are small and good for nothing and are only used to ride— and for that, mules are considered the better and safer riding beast. Animals of all kinds are seen led about the streets here daily. Today I saw a Peccary— or Mexican hog shaped very much like a pig but limbs very slight, and covered with fur or coarse hair like a raccoon. Monkeys in abundance of all varieties and colours. Parrots salute you at every door with an oath in Spanish which may not startle you when I say that all, men, women, and children make use— and that freely too, of an oath equivalent to damn— and consider it rather beautifying to the construction of the language. This place, of all others that I ever saw, is most infested with gamblers, hundreds and hundreds of tables piled high with gold and silver, anxious faces, fixed eyeballs intent upon the game circle the tables about. Many who leave home, with scarcely sufficient to get to California, hear of the success of some fortunate fool and stake a few dimes at first and perchance win— and be betting on their luck changes— but the unfortunate fool plays on to win back what he has lost— and stops when he finds himself pennyless. Many here are in that situation...

I shall look anxiously for letters from home when I return here... —*June 16, 1850.*

Cambridge, July 11, 1850, Thursday morning, 7 o'clock.

My dearest Frank— I have just learned from Niel that he passes through Easton this morning on his way north, and I at once concluded to avail myself of this opportunity to send to Easton as a letter by our mail would not reach you before Sat... Father received a letter from Br. George Tuesday. I was dated June 16th Panama. He wrote that he was well and should leave the next Tuesday for San Francisco. The papers tell us however that the *Isthmus* left Panama the 22nd. He says, "I am looking anxiously for letters from home by the *Falcon* which arrives in a day or two, and shall expect to hear at this place when I return which will be in about three months." How disappointed must he have



been, not one word from the home and friends of his childhood. I have nothing to say in regard to others but this willful neglect of mine in regard to writing is a sin... I must try and do right in this respect. I shall remember that a right course always brings its own reward... I can write no more now as Niel is packing and would like some assistance. So good-bye my darling Frank. Let us not forget that this life is but the beginning of an eternity of years for which our hearts tell us that we should be prepared... My kindest love to Liz & Aaron. Mother send love to you. —Your own *Kitty*.

☞ More from George McKie:

Brother Niel— We have arrived nearly back to Panama... Our voyage had been a successful one as far as the profits of the vessel are concerned— but a mighty uncomfortable one for those on board of her. From the time we left Panama till we arrived at San F— it rained almost continually— night and day and the consequence of that is that I have had the *Erysipelas* all the way back. Don't say anything to Mother about it— but it took the Land from under me for a few days, extended up my arms, down my neck, back, legs, face swelled etc and in fact was much worse than ever before— so much so that I made up my mind to go home at the end of the voyage— but since I left Acapulco have been better and will try one more trip and if the E does not trouble me, shall stay on...

*Erysipelas* inflammation of the skin, sometimes treated at this time by bleeding.

Say to all fever stricken people who wish to see California to stay at home— nine tenths who come here do not make expenses and half, if not all, the yarns you hear in the States are gammon to gull the simple. I saw thousands in S. F. who had not money enough to buy a dinner, men who had been at the mines, hardworking men, not addicted to gambling or kindred vices and not the ghost of a cent to jingle with a button.

I am looking with a deal of anxiety for news from home which I shall receive at Panama I hope. Next to seeing our friends is hearing from them... Give my love to all and ask them to write me at Panama Steamer *Isthmus* care of the American Consul and there will be no miscarriage. This letter I send by Capt Rodgers, a passenger on the *Isthmus* and a fine man. I have not time to give you any descriptive account of the voyage but will do so at my leisure which I have not had as yet. Write of Father's suit etc. Love again to all the family. —August 5, 1850.

Troy, May 30th, 1850, Thurs eve, 7 o'clock.

My dearest Mother— You may be surprised to hear from me so soon from Troy, but you know what Burns says that “the best laid schemes of mice and men aft gang agly”—so with ours in regard to our Western trip. When we arrived here we found Mr. Howland with inflammation in the eyes which prevented his doing anything in the office. Mr. Bills could not confine himself, so Frank and myself concluded to stay at home from necessity and finally thought it all for the best... Monday, coming down I lost my parasol, and we went back two miles and found it in the mud and water. Fortunately no one was cross about it and we had some fun holding up the dissolved thing to dry in the sun. I must not write much more, my eyes ache, but they will be better soon I think. I hope you have been well this week, better than last week or the week before... —With the warmest love of your daughter *Kitty*.

*June 3, 1850.* At Cambridge. Weather pleasant. Took Ed's horse to the Blacksmith, worked in the garden. Horseback ride with Kate up to the P.O. Kate rode my horse & I rode Ed's. Have nothing to do but just eat, sleep & enjoy myself to the best advantage.

*June 5.* At Cambridge. Weather hot. 10 o'clock left Father McKie's for White Creek. Got over to Uncle James' little after noon, all gone to Church except Aunt Almy. They returned from Church about 1/2 past 3... —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*

Troy, July 11th, 1850, Thursday evening

My own dearest Kitty— How is my Kitty this charming eve? I would give anything to know and more than a good deal if I could just be with her for a while. I hope & trust that you have been well and happy this week... I had a pleasant ride with Niel— took the stage at Lansingburgh and arrived here before noon since which time I have been pretty busily engaged— more so this week than usual. The weather has been delightful and I have only wanted my own darling with me & freedom from the toothache, to make all things “perfectly agreeable.” My old stump of a tooth has troubled me nearly all the time... The melancholy intelligence of the death of President Taylor has come upon us so unexpectedly that all hearts are oppressed with grief. God in his Providence has seen fit for the second time to remove by death the Chief Magistrate of the Nation and sadness is upon every brow— A Nation in tears. A great and good man has fallen... What a lesson this sudden bereavement should teach us and may God grant that we who live may profit by it. I send the *Express* in which there is an affecting notice of the death of President Taylor. There was a meeting of the Common Council of our City today and it was recommended by them that all business should be suspended on Saturday for three hours— from 11 till 2 o'clock... Kitty I can hardly bear the thought of not being with you Sat. eve and yet I dare not calculate upon it with too much certainty... Much love to your dear Mother and all my heart's best love to you my own dearest Kitty. More than ever your own devoted *Frank*.

President Zachary Taylor,  
November 24, 1784–July 9, 1850,  
died of cholera and was suc-  
ceeded by Vice-President Millard  
Fillmore.

*September 11, 1850.* My birthday. I am 28 years old in the enjoyment of perfect health & everything around me calculated to make me happy for which I thank Him the giver of every good & perfect gift. Ed McKie brot [*sic*] a note to me from my dearest Kitty.

*December 2.* Very cold stormy day. In the Home all day long reading & attending to the wants of my sick wife. Have now about 20 inches snow which makes firm sleighing. Kate better today so that she sat up two hours. —*Diary of Francis S. Thayer.*