



“Tell us all the news”:
Letters from Peacham Vermont at
Mid-Nineteenth Century

*As members of rural Vermont farm
families scattered across the country,
they received letters from home
recounting daily activities, giving these
wanderers a reminder of their past life.*

By LYNN A. BONFIELD WITH MARY C. MORRISON

From her Peacham dooryard, Roxana Brown Walbridge Watts waved goodbye from 1840 to 1862 to her children headed west as part of the great migration.¹ In 1840, the year that she, a widow with six children, married Lyman Watts, a widower with two children, and moved to his Peacham farm high on East Hill, her eldest child Martha married and moved west to Michigan with her husband. The household on East Hill was thus intimately touched by the westward emigration that profoundly affected family life for Roxana and for many Vermonters.

Founded in 1776 as settlers moved up the Connecticut River, Peacham attracted families from southern New England looking for cheap farm land. In 1794 the Congregational church was established. Its first minister, Leonard Worcester, preached faithfully for almost forty years, providing a long reign of stability in the institution that “exercised far-reaching sway,” as Peacham historian Ernest Bogart records.² In addition to the church, the county grammar school, known as the Peacham Academy, was chartered before the turn of the nineteenth century; its first principals all had college degrees and its president and trustees represented the most prominent local men. For Peacham, the church and school were the backbone of family life. For Roxana, these two institutions were central to her religious conviction and her belief in education for her children.

In 1840, when at age thirty-eight Roxana returned to Peacham, her birthplace, after almost twenty years in Wolcott where her first husband, Daniel Walbridge, farmed and died, she found a town larger by 149 inhabitants than when she left. Peacham had grown to 1,443, which was to be its population peak. Just as changes were taking place in Roxana's life, Peacham too was experiencing change. Its population began declining through the nineteenth century as family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances packed up and moved west to seek their fortune or improve their future prospects.

Martha's departure in 1840 marked the first time Roxana bid farewell to a departing daughter or son. By her death in 1862, she had repeated the scene at the dooryard of the Watts Farm many times, as a total of five of her children moved westward permanently, and the other six stayed at home in varying degrees of restlessness.

In 1853 Martha's younger sisters, Chastina and Clara, left for California, followed in 1855 by Sarah to the "Minnesota territory" and Charles to Illinois. Son Lyman moved around the West wherever a teaching job called him, and Dustan and Augustus also made extended stays away in California and Minnesota. Roxana's second brood, her Watts children—Isaac, Alice, and Ella—traveled, attended school away from home, and took jobs temporarily in the West.

With Martha's departure, Roxana began faithfully writing to absent family members. In total, close to five hundred family letters survive—in libraries, historical societies, and private collections—many between Roxana and her children, and after her death, many exchanged among her children, by then grown and widely separated, with families of their own.

At the start, Roxana's letters, penned to Martha in the early 1840s, were stiff, full of spelling errors with almost illegible penmanship. Writing came hard to her at first. She was fortunate to have been raised in Peacham where the school-houses were open to girls, but marriage and the long days of work and child rearing left little time or energy for letter writing, and because neither her mother nor older sister—both living at a distance from Roxana—could read and write, she had little incentive to practice. But when her children reached the age of independence and moved away, Roxana drew on her training from school days. Often she received letters from her children only in response to her own, so she put her mind to regularly penning letters, usually late in the evening after the rest of the family had gone to bed.

Gradually Roxana found her own writing style, as she described the activities of her family, neighbors on East Hill, and town events. She used the common expressions of the people of Peacham, making her letters a source revealing the language of the time. Straightforward facts fla-



Roxana Brown Walbridge Watts (1802–1862) posed beside a stack of books signaling her pride in being literate. Her letters full of community reports are the primary sources for this article. Print from a daguerreotype taken about 1850 in St. Johnsbury, Vt. Courtesy California Historical Society, FN-13869.

vored with simple storytelling became her style, and her children appreciated it. In 1856 she boasted, quoting a letter that Charles had written from Illinois, that “he would give more for one of *Mothers* letters than all the rest he has had from Vt.” She continued “dont you think that is *flattering*.”³

Roxana's special storytelling skill may account for the preservation of these letters; they were read and read again, and sent on to other family members. It is known that many New Englanders wrote letters to their western "friends," the word used for family members, but few of the recipients saved the letters for any length of time. Roxana's wanderers, her children who moved west, saved them all and passed them on from generation to generation.

For Roxana the greatest loss to the westward movement came in the spring of 1855 when the last of her Walbridge daughters, Sarah, left Peacham and moved with her husband, John Way, and two small children to Minnesota. The event was not unexpected, as Sarah and John had sold their Hardwick farm, and John had toured the West picking the best place for his family, but the loss went straight to Roxana's heart: "O Sarah you cant think how lonesome it seems to look up where you lived and not see those little frolicksome Children nor hear their merry laugh as they used to be heard last summer but you are *all gone*." Rather than continue in this vein, Roxana went on to describe the forlorn reaction of their pet dog, left behind: "Dick looked all over the house after you went away and finally went into the parlor bed room where you last changed your clothes and laid down fo[r] some time and we thought he had followed you but we found him there."⁴

It was in the letters to Sarah that Roxana developed the storytelling skill that make them a vivid cultural reflection of the times, a storehouse of information about Peacham activities. Perhaps she was less self-conscious with Sarah than with her more educated daughters, Chastina and Clara, who attended the Peacham Academy and taught school for years. Of the four older girls, Sarah had lived longest in Peacham, and when she left, at twenty-seven, she was mature enough to relate to the stories of competitive neighbors, strained marital relations, and bloody deaths.

The Walbridge and Watts children grew, married, and went west, but the Watts household and Peacham community continued their traditional activities centering around churches, schools, agricultural fairs, national holidays, and other celebrations. For those who had stayed behind in Vermont carrying on the familiar traditions, these social encounters brought pleasure and a welcome relief from the drudgery and isolation of their daily work.

When Roxana, and her young daughter Alice, who later took on the role of family scribe, wrote of these special events to the family members who had gone west, their tone varied. Sometimes they wished that distant family members could share "the comforts a kind providence has bestowed on us" and were sorry that they "can not have the priv-

.....



Once she moved to Minnesota, Sarah Walbridge Way (1827–1909) became the recipient of most of her mother’s letters. This portrait taken in 1849 probably accompanied her husband on his trip to the California gold mines. Author’s collection.

elege of society.” Sometimes they expressed the hope that the wanderers might decide to return to Vermont so they could all “have the privilege of talking instead of writing.” Sometimes Roxana expressed alarm

that “every boddy is *bewitched* to sell out and go west but I think we are as well of[f] to stay where we have a good home and enough to make us comfortable.”⁵ At other times the two writers seemed intent on simply giving a taste of Vermont to those gone away.

EDUCATION

With good education uppermost in the minds of the early Peacham settlers, more than twelve district schools providing elementary education to both girls and boys had been established by the mid-nineteenth century. Roxana’s interest in the schools was high at this time as her three younger children, born between 1842 and 1847, attended the East Part district school, located almost directly across the road from the family farm. Hardly a letter went west that Roxana did not mention which of her children were going to school, so strong was her commitment to the benefits of education. Occasionally she would mention the teacher who often boarded at the Watts Farm. In July 1855 Roxana reported to Sarah: “Our school does not seem to amount to much the teacher is sick almost all the time she did not keep at all last week and but one day and half this week rather small potatoes.”⁶

Adults also formed their own groups for education and entertainment. Singing schools—in 1860 Alice noted three singing schools in town each week during the winter—art classes—in 1849 sister Chastina attended classes at the Corner—and the weekly Sabbath schools were all common in Peacham at mid-century.

Most winters a series of lectures was delivered in Peacham by noted inventors, professors, or philosophers. In 1856 prominent local men were asked to speak, among them the oldest son of the family, twenty-four-year-old Lyman. Roxana, obviously pleased, wrote Sarah in March: “He delivered a lecture at the Academy . . . it was called the *Second best* that there had been out of a course of 10 that had been delivered by Drs Lawyers Ministers and others His subject was, The young men of our Country.”⁷ Alice wrote about the same event to their brother Charles in Illinois, noting that the bad weather had prevented the family from going to Lyman’s lecture so “last night he read it to us [at home]. We had invited Mr. Way’s folks Mark Varnum & Uncle Elijah’s [Sargeant] folks, so we had quite a lecture. After it was over, Mark broke the silence with ‘*That’s first rate.*’”⁸

Possibly as part of this 1856 lecture series, William Mattocks, a lawyer and son of former Vermont governor John Mattocks, spoke out against the great western migration that many families were experiencing. Roxana reported: “Mr Mattocks has been here this month he gives his opinoon that there are many gone west who had better staid here . . .

he has sold out at Kenosha [Wisconsin] and some think he will return East again.”⁹ Debate was ongoing in all Vermont towns in the 1840s and 1850s between those who planned to stay and those who prepared to leave.

Spelling school was a community event that all ages enjoyed. Each town in northern Vermont set aside at least one evening a year when the pupils of the district schools spelled against each other. The first step took place in the district schools as scholars rehearsed the event among themselves. At the end of 1857, Roxana wrote to her daughter Clara in San Francisco to report on Julian, her seven-year-old grandson, who had returned to Peacham that previous summer to be raised by his grandmother after the death of his mother in California: “To day is his birth day and he has had fine times with the Boys at school. They have all gone to Spelling school this evening, he with the rest he said when he went out he wished he could spell the school down and when they get home I will write you the result.”¹⁰ (No postscript is attached.)

A spelling school in nearby Barnet a few years later attracted between one and two hundred people and was written up in the local newspaper, *The Caledonian*, naming the best school and the individual winners (all girls).¹¹

WORK AND AGRICULTURAL FAIRS

Farm life required a demanding schedule that had to be followed seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. Each season brought special tasks in addition to the rigorous daily routine. A dozen or so families lived on East Hill, all farming through each long day. Only active farmers lived up on the hill; professional men or retired farmers, who had made good on the sale of their farm, lived two miles west at Peacham Corner, where the church and Academy stood. Farm couples like Lyman and Roxana were dog-tired after a day of constant physical work. In 1861, a year before she died at age sixty, Roxana expressed this to Sarah: “I think some times that I am almost used up with hard work and seems as if I ought to rest a little but there is just as much to do as ever and I dont see any place to *Shirk*.”¹²

For those working on farms, sometimes success was measured and satisfaction described through listing in letters or diaries measurable amounts produced. In the years between 1856 and 1860, for instance, Roxana noted in her letters: 300 pounds of sugar made; 500 pounds of butter sold; 440 bushels of potatoes grown; 40 bushels of apples picked (a poor year); 12 cheeses made; 12 gallons of preserves made, “some Raspberries, some plumbs but mainly blackberries.”¹³

A sense of accomplishment also came through participating in agricultural fairs. In September some farmers geared themselves up for the

.....

annual Caledonia County Agricultural Fair, although there is no mention that Roxana or Lyman participated either in the competitions or the judging. But in 1856, when the farmers of the western towns in Caledonia County—Barnet, Cabot, Danville, Groton, Ryegate, and Peacham—started their own “People’s Fair,” Roxana described the excitement to Martha’s family in Michigan: “The display of oxen was very large there were 251 yoke of oxen besides 2 and 3 years old steers in abundance.” By this time most farmers had begun using horses rather than oxen, but in this period of transition good oxen continued to be valued. With a note of pride Roxana concluded: “We gave a dinner to more than 2000 people free of any expense to those who ate. We all cooked and carried in victuals we set tables in the two vestrys to the meeting houses there was room for 350 to sit at once and the tables were all filled five times and more to[o] but they did not *eat us out clean* for we had a great deal left.”¹⁴ The number of people served is one indication of the size of the population in and around Peacham at mid-century.

Each September the Caledonia County Fair attracted large crowds, including Peacham folks, who often won premiums. In 1860 Roxana’s neighbor, “Mrs. Jacob Way,” was named for “Best hearth rug.” Early the next year, the Caledonia County Agricultural Society held its annual meeting in January and again Peacham took the day, winning many prizes, including \$3.00 to Jacob Way for “Best acre of wheat, 44 bushels.” At the same meeting the Society’s Committee on Butter granted \$3.00 to David Currier, another East Hill farmer, for the “Largest amount of butter in a dairy of not less than five cows.”¹⁵

COMMUNITY HOLIDAYS

Holidays also provided a time for social gatherings, and the Peacham community took advantage of these days for celebration. The most community-oriented holiday was Independence Day on the Fourth of July, which caused much excitement, especially among the children. It fell just after haying time and most parents could be “teased” into leaving the fields for Harvey’s Lake or the Danville Green, the common sites for celebration. As Isaac, Alice, and Ella grew older, they were allowed to go to the celebration by themselves. In 1855 Roxana described that event to Sarah: “We all staid at home on the 4 except the Children and they all three went out to their uncle Parkers [in Danville] the first time they have ever rode out together the girls wore their blue linen dresses and their new white aprons that you gave them for the first time they have got their Capes done and they are verry pretty and I have got them some poplin dresses and had their Bonnetes trimmed new.”¹⁶ Thir-

AGRICULTURAL EXHIBITION AND CATTLE FAIR

OF CALEDONIA COUNTY will be holden at **Lyndon Corner** on **Wednesday, 30th September**, and at **Peacham** on the day following.

Farmers, Mechanics, Manufacturers and all others, are respectfully invited to present for examination specimens of their products, industry and skill, their fine cattle, &c. Pens will be provided for such animals as may be present; at **Mr Hubbard's** tavern at **Lyndon**, and at **Mr Brown's** tavern at **Peacham**, their **Hall's** will also be appropriated to the reception of domestic and light articles, where it is the request of the Committee, all such articles should be left; and it is hoped the **Hall** may be adorned with many rare examples of the skill, taste and industry of the ladies of Caledonia. And in addition to this, the ladies are particularly requested to appear personally with their **Linen** and **Woolen** wheels. The Committee would be highly gratified to have the common at **Lyndon** and at **Peacham** adorned with 300 ladies spinning at one time. It is all in vain for a husbandman to expect to prosper without asking his wife, next his daughters.

The Committee of Arrangement need not remind their friends of the utility of Societies like this, since they are acknowledged to be highly important agents to the promotion of the science of agriculture, of the arts, and of improvements of the breeds of animals; and all those who attended the last annual Fair cannot have forgotten the several objects of interest on the occasion.—Farmers from each town are expected with their long teams of oxen. The **Ploughmen** will not forget the ploughing Match.

The following named gentlemen appointed Committees, are requested to meet at **Hubbard's & Brown's** at 9 o'clock, and make arrangements to proceed to the discharge of their respective duties:

COMMITTEES.

OF OXEN.
HAZEN MERRILL,
JOHN CAMERON,
OTIS EVANS,
AMOS KINNED,
SPEARS,
R. C. BENTON,
ROBERT LANCE,
WM. GRAY,
THOMAS FERCE,
WELCOME PERKS,
GOPS AND NEIFFERS,
F. E. FULLER,
PETER LAIRD,
JOHN DAMAN,
JUDE KIMBALL,
A. H. JOBLEY,
OF BULLS,
L. P. PARKS,
WM. WHEELER.

LEONARD HARRINGTON,
ISAAC DENISON,
BENJAMIN WALKER,
OF HORSES,
STEPHEN DOLE,
CLOUD HARVEY,
HIEL BRADLEY,
LAMBERT HASTINGS,
ALONZO BEMIS,
OF SHEEP,
ELMATHAN BRONG,
JACOB BLANCHARD,
GEO. W. DENISON,
JAMES WORKS,
ABEL CUTLER,
OF SWINE,
LETHUR CLARK,
AMNER FARRINGTON,
JOHN GILSON,
ELIAS BEMIS.

JOHN PHILLIPS,
OF BUTTER'S CHELSE,
TIMOTHY FIERER,
E. C. CHAMBERLAIN,
WM. HATCHOP,
DANIEL FRENCH,
BENJEL BRADLEY,
PLOGGERS & FLOUGHMEN,
SALMA DAVIS,
THOMAS FORTMAN,
WM. STEWART,
CHARLES ROBERTS,
JOHN NELSON,
OF EGGS CROPS,
HENRY STEVENS,
NILES UNDERWOOD,
SIMON BLANCHARD,
ALPHUS STODDARD,
EZEKIEL CUTLER.

OF FARMS,
E. B. CHASE,
FRANK BASTMAN,
JOHN CAMERON,
LAMBERT HASTINGS,
DOMESTIC MANUFACTURES,
PERRAIN PADDOCK,
ROBERT HARVEY,
OLA CROSBY,
JOHN HOULTON,
SAMUEL FEAR,
WOMAN MANUFACTURES,
MULHAB PADDOCK,
ISAAC HARRINGTON,
SERGUS CARR,
GALUSHA BUNDE,
LEONARD W. JONES,
MERRILLAS,
NILES HOUGHTON,
NEHEMIAH BRADLEY.

COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.

**Henry Stevens, Ezekiel Cutler, Isaac Denison, E. B. Chase, John Cameron,
F. E. Fuller, Joseph Nickerson, Jacob Blanchard, Stephen Dole, Hiel Bradley,
L. P. PARKS, Secretary.**

Barnet, September 14, 1840.

"Agricultural Exhibition and Cattle Fair of Caledonia County," Sep-

.....

teen-year-old Isaac must have been proud as he held the reins for the fourteen-mile trip there and back.

Three years later in 1858, Alice wrote Sarah:

About the 4th of July . . . The folks at Danville Green got up a “buster of a 4th.” Had the Fire Companies from Danville and St. Johnsbury and a Rifle Company of the former place march about and perform their various accomplishments for the amusements of the various spectators. I believe there was a ride to Plainfield and a great celebration. As for my celebration, it was confined to firing a bunch of Crackers [at home].¹⁷

The major family holiday of the time was Thanksgiving. Until 1870 the exact date of the celebration of the harvest was set by each state. In November 1853 Roxana joked about the date in a letter to Sarah at their Hardwick farm purchased with gold Sarah’s husband John Way had mined in California: “[Augustus] thinks the new Governor rather lazy in not having Thanksgiving sooner he wants to come home [from Lyndon where he was a wheelwright apprentice] and is waiting to come then . . . I wish you could be here too for I shall be very lonesome as it will remind me of the many years you have all been together on that day and now! O can it be that we are so far apart.”¹⁸

Hardly a Thanksgiving went by that Roxana did not note the empty places at the table. In 1857, when Dustan and Augustus were visiting the Ways in Minnesota, she complained to them: “I spent a very lonely Thanksgiving as there was no one with us but our own family and [cousin] Elizabeth Parker. Well do I remember the many times when you Children have all been at home together and come around the family board But Oh how changed. I cannot dwell upon it for tears blind my eyes and I must stop.”¹⁹

POLITICS

The Watts family letters mention almost no political themes. This may be due to the fact that most of the letters were written by Roxana, whose main concerns were health, religion, daily life on the farm, and her family’s economic survival. In the spring of 1856, worrying over the difficult time Sarah and John Way were having in Minnesota, Roxana expressed her fear that the Ways would move to Kansas, where many New Englanders went to increase the number of residents who would vote for Kansas as a free state: “There is now in many places in new England Clubs forming to go to Kansas I *pitty* them with all my heart when I think of the privations they must suffer in going to that place I hope John will never go there but I have been afraid if he is not satisfied where he is that the next *move* will be there.”²⁰ She must have been well

aware through the local newspaper of the dangers facing the new settlers in Kansas, often called “Bleeding Kansas,” but she couched her concern in terms of the suffering her daughter would have to endure if they relocated there.

Before her death in October 1862, Roxana referred only once in her letters to the increased tensions leading to the attack on Fort Sumter. Writing to Sarah in February 1861 about the carriage shop Dustan and Augustus “have hired on Railroad street St Johnsbury,” she reported that “since the trouble at the South there does not seem to be so much demand for any thing in their line of buisness as heretofore.”²¹ Once again she revealed no inkling of the enormity of the situation, seeing political events only in terms of their direct impact on her family.

Roxana was also silent about the national election campaign of 1860, although daughter Alice on election day wrote in her diary: “‘Abe’ will get it.”²² It would have been hard for Roxana to ignore the celebration once the results were known. *The Caledonian*, with its strong pro-Republican stance, announced “The Glorious Result” in a lengthy article assuring its readers that “the nation has given its verdict, let the people rejoice.” In the following issue, the weekly reported on the “jollification generally” in the area. The St. Johnsbury scene was described: “Bonfires were kindled . . . the cannon was fired, the church, school, and court-house bells were rung, private dwellings were illuminated, fireworks were burnt, and everybody hurrahed, making altogether *considerable* noise.”²³ Alice must have heard the celebration, for her diary on November 7 reads: “Rejoicing at St. Johnsbury. Light from a bonfire and noise of cannon.”²⁴

Of Peacham’s 186 votes cast that November, Lincoln took 138. This was no surprise in a town described by historian Ernest Bogart as “the birthplace of Oliver and Leonard Johnson, the residence for many years of Thaddeus Stevens, and the home of a vigorous anti-slavery movement.”²⁵

By the close of the Civil War, Roxana had died, her oldest son, Dustan, wounded at Cold Harbor, lay in his grave in Peacham, and her youngest son, Isaac, returning from the battlefields, took over command of the Watts Farm. East Hill neighbors Elijah and Sylvia Sargeant also lost a son in the war; the name of Elijah W. Sargeant (1842–63) is on the Peacham Soldiers Monument. Other neighbors saw their sons return to the farms in East Peacham weakened and ill, like Asa Sargeant (born 1844), who lost sight in one eye, and Mark Wheeler (born 1839), so changed from months in Andersonville Prison that his mother did not recognize him. Alice noted at the end of her 1863 diary that thirty-four people died in Peacham that year, including eight soldiers, “more mortality in town than since 1811.”²⁶

MARRIAGE

Men and women in nineteenth-century Vermont assumed they would marry, or as an historian of American courtship stated, "Women and men saw marriage as their destiny." The roles of men in the field and women in the house were central to daily farm life, and most girls and boys in Vermont anticipated marriage and raising children. There were notable examples of girls working in the fields and of men doing housework, but these usually occurred in times of crisis when all hands were needed at all jobs.

By the end of the eighteenth century, marrying for love was the rule, especially in first marriages.²⁷ In 1821 at age nineteen, Roxana Brown married a man she loved, Daniel Walbridge, who had a farm in Wolcott. When Daniel died fourteen years later, Roxana was left a widow, pregnant, with five older children. Years later, when sympathizing with a woman who had just lost her husband, Roxana wrote remembering her own situation of being widowed at the age of thirty-two: "Tell [her] I know well the loss she has sustained . . . no doubt she feels that the arm on which she leaned is broken and her comforts fled yes and she left alone to mourn for a time yet I trust she looks forward to that day when they shall again be reunited to spend an eternity together."²⁸

Roxana's second marriage to Lyman Watts in December 1840 was what might be labeled an arrangement of dignified convenience. There was no official newspaper announcement of the marriage, and no description of the ceremony or mention of anniversaries in letters. This was not the emotional match that Roxana had enjoyed with Daniel, or for that matter, that Lyman probably enjoyed with his first wife, Esther Sargeant, who died in childbirth. The main concern in second marriages was caring for the children, and Roxana was grateful that Lyman took in her children and provided for them. Once children were born from their union, no differentiation was made between step and half children—they were all brother and sister, Roxana was Mother, and Lyman was Father, or Father Watts.

Another concern, for first and second marriages alike, was the economic well-being of the family which was only achieved when husband and wife worked together for the common goal of providing for the family, and, if possible, producing goods to sell. Roxana and Lyman succeeded in this effort, for the Watts Farm became one of the most productive in Peacham at mid-century, free of debt. Community recognition of Lyman's high place among Peacham residents was evident in his serving as lister, selectman, and town representative to the state legislature for a term in 1858.²⁹

THE WALBRIDGE/WATTS FAMILY

In 1840 Roxana Brown Walbridge (1802–1862) married Lyman Watts (1801–1875) joining her six children with Lyman’s two sons; together they had three:

Martha Walbridge (1822–1846)
 Chastina Walbridge (1824–1857)
 Sarah Walbridge (1827–1909)
 Clara Walbridge (1830–1917)
 Lyman S. Watts (1832–1872)
 Dustan S. Walbridge (1832–1864)
 Charles Watts (1835–1875)
 Augustus Walbridge (1835–1881)
 Isaac N. Watts (1842–1881)
 Alice Watts (1845–1882)
 Ella Watts (1847–1915)

In their joint diary, Roxana’s second daughter Chastina and her husband Alfred Rix noted the marriage of two classmates on June 5, 1850: “Louisa Martin and Luther Parker = 1.”³⁰ Courtships were watched closely, with many of the older women interested in making matches, often by simply spreading rumors. During their courtship, Louisa and Lute were amused to learn that a neighbor woman watched “to see the candle go out,” noting how long it took Lute to leave Louisa’s father’s house.³¹ Roxana’s mother, Olive Brown, who spent the last years of her life at the Watts Farm, was also given to match-making, her most persistent topic of conversation.³²

In 1861 Roxana wrote announcing a marriage in the household of their East Hill neighbors: “Elvira Sargent was married this week to Aaron Wesson . . . [he] is a first rate young man Elijahs folks are all very much pleased with [the] match.”³³

Most often, however, letters and diaries documented the disappointing marriages. In 1859 Roxana wrote to Sarah:

Perhaps you have not heard of the trouble in *Bill* Mattocks family. They have parted and she with her Children have come back to Peacham. She has got a bill of divorce from him. he has given her between 12 and 15 thousand dollars [earned as a noted lawyer]. the trouble arose from the intimacy with Phebe Brock which has been going on for a long time but his wife was not aware of it and finally he

got to be so bad that he even compelled her to get a bill [of divorce] he drinks verry hard and is verry reckless he says now that he shall never marry Phebe she has come back to Barnet to her Father despised by every one for breaking up her sisters family.³⁴

Roxana told the story of another marriage involving a man she identified as “Uncle Lyman Way,” probably a relation to Sarah’s husband, John Way. Apparently he had been to Minnesota, claimed land, and returned to Vermont in 1861:

Uncle Lyman got back safe but not verry *sound* I should think by the appearance of his leg he stayed to Jakes [Jacob Way, a neighbor across the road] about 3 weeks and then one of the boys carried him to Wheelock. his reception was not very cordial after he had been there a little while his wife asked him what was the matter with his *old shin* he told her it was a fever sore. Well said she you may stay long enough for me to cure up your old shin, and then be off she accordingly went to poulticing it and in about 4 weeks he came back all cured so that he has thrashed Jakes oats and helped him get up his wood.

Later Roxana added to the letter: “I talked with him some about his affairs out in Minnesota.” It seems Uncle Lyman’s brother Smith Way was preparing to write John about going west:

I dont blame Smith for wanting to go somewhere for I never see a man that has had so hard a time as he has for the last four years. His wife has been sick all the time besides being a *complete thorn in the flesh* I could not begin to tell you one half of the trouble he has had with her, aside from her being sick, if I should write a week but if you ever see Lime he can tell it Smith would mak a good citizen but I should hate to have his wife a neighbour to me.³⁵

Here was an implicit warning to her daughter not to encourage Smith and his wife to join them in Minnesota.

It is known that many husbands who decided to move west simply announced the decision. For the most part, wives had to be talked into the move, especially if they were comfortably settled in a Vermont house with young children. It might have been relatively easy for someone like Roxana’s eldest daughter Martha, who climbed into the wagon almost immediately after her marriage in 1840 and took her “fixings” with her, fresh and new to Michigan. But for daughter Sarah it was a harder situation. Her husband John Way had a restless spirit—in 1849 he left her pregnant in Peacham when he went to the California gold mines. When he returned with his “pile,” he purchased a farm in Hardwick which he sold five years later, preparing to move west in the spring of 1855. Sarah was right to resist these plans, for once in Minnesota, they lived in a log cabin for ten years before John completed the house he promised—he didn’t even finish digging the well for two years.³⁶



John S. Way (1822–1909) made enough money in the gold fields to buy a good Vermont farm which he sold in order to move his family in 1855 to Minnesota. This portrait was probably taken just before he left for California. Author's collection.

Some husbands went to California alone and found the climate, economy, and prospects so appealing that they decided to stay. They began “inviting” their wives to join them. Often these women had never been more than fifty miles from home, and the idea that they would travel unaccompanied by a man was disturbing. In 1852 when Alfred Rix urged his wife Chastina to bring their two-year-old son Julian to California, she said no. In every letter Alfred listed the good things about San Francisco and once added that “Chester Brown is working away nicely, but says the flat refusal of his wife to come on (which he has just got) has knocked some of his best plans on the head.”³⁷ It is not

known if Chester's wife joined him, but in January 1853, after taking six months to change her "no" to "maybe" to "yes," Chastina left the Watts Farm with Julian and made the trip west. In the end, her sister Clara went with her, agreeing almost immediately when asked, and although Clara toyed with the idea of returning, especially in letters to her mother, she eventually married and permanently made her home in San Francisco. The last view of Roxana the sisters had was her waving goodbye; neither saw their mother again.

Roxana once wrote that "the marriage covenant is in it self a solemn vow that we take upon ourselves we are bound by the laws of God and man to provide for each others needs as long as we both live."³⁸ Roxana understood that her daughters, Martha, Chastina, Sarah, and Clara, had entered the contract of marriage and thus placed the wishes of mother second to the wishes of husband.

RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS

Although Roxana's letters from the 1850s note the activity of more than one hundred people, she most often mentioned her close neighbors on East Hill. Among these were the Curriers, who lived to the east of the Watts Farm with their four children. In 1855 Roxana's hired girl, Elizabeth, was at the Curriers' when Roxana wrote to Sarah: "Elizabeth has not been here for a[l]most three weeks she has been helping Mrs Currier through her seige of workmen on their barn it was raised last saturday I dont know when she will come back again."³⁹ Events like barn building kept the whole community busy.

Neighbors helped out, as when daughter Ella had a quilting in the summer of 1858, just before her brother Charles took a neighbor girl "for better or worse."⁴⁰ During the quilting, the Curriers entertained Grandmother Olive, for at eighty-eight, Olive tended to demand all of her daughter Roxana's attention. When people came to visit the Watts Farm, Olive feigned illness, or whenever Roxana prepared to leave the house, Olive made a scene that did not end until Roxana rode from the dooryard. So having the Curriers take care of Olive during a social event at the Watts Farm was much appreciated.

Neighbors looked to each other to evaluate new technology. In 1856 Alice wrote to Sarah: "Last week there was a man along putting up lightning rods. Mr Way got one; and Mr Currier 2. One on his House; the other on his new barn."⁴¹ It is strange that in this letter there is no mention of Father Watts purchasing this protection, as his own mother had been killed by lightning in the front yard of her Peacham house in 1813,⁴² when her son was only eleven. But then, as Alice knew, her father was frugal and slow to change. Long after his neighbors and his

own children began using kerosene lamps, Lyman Watts “still clings to the old fashioned *tallow dips*.”⁴³

When new neighbors moved in, there was a period of getting acquainted. In 1853 Jacob and Sophia Way and their children moved to the elegant brick house north of the Watts Farm on East Hill. From the letters it seems as if a friendly rivalry, or at least a watchful comparison, existed between the two households.

Roxana compared her house renovations with the Ways, and she often felt lacking. In the spring of 1856, she wrote to Sarah:

We are having some painting done this spring we have had the shed kitchen floor painted and just moved in last week I have been getting ready clearing out washing windows ceilings and *things* in the middle room bed room buttery and entry and stairway and expect Nelson Renfrew here this week to commence operations He has been painting to Mr Ways 2 weeks and has got 3 days more Mrs Way got her Back room all painted and grained and varnished likewise her sitting room bed room and parlor she has got 12 new Knob door latches her sitting room floor is going to be led color and marbled . . . you know she never counts the cost of a thing if it only *looks well* He *scolds* and *she teases* all the more and she finally carries the day. I dont expect to come within *gun shot* of her in getting *fixt* up, for you know I am no great *teaser* and if I was it would not do any good.⁴⁴

Lyman Watts also compared his crops and animals to the Ways, even though he had owned his farm since 1830 and Jacob Way had come to East Hill only in 1853. Describing in a letter to his son-in-law and former hired hand the hard times he was having in 1855, Lyman wrote:

Times are hard hear for money oing to two reasons first the hard winter that killd out the grafs [grass] so that we shall not hav more than half a hay crop . . . Jacob Way said that he did not expect to hav anny hay last may but he will hav some more than half as much as he had last year I shall get about one half . . . the other reason for hard times hear is that every mon[i]ed man is collecing all that tha can to invest it in western land or to put it whare it will be the most profitable.⁴⁵

Neighbors had close and quick communication systems. Children were sent on errands, and both the men and women visited on a regular basis. In 1858 Alice sent the neighborhood news to Sarah: “There is a set of thieves around now, robbing people’s houses in the night and going from one town to another. They have not visited us yet but from Asa Sargeant’s they took 120 dollars in money and other articles to make up about 130.”⁴⁶

News of fire always traveled fast. In 1855 Roxana wrote Sarah about such an event at the Watts Farm: “I have just been up to the school house to a meeting there but did not stay long your father set fires in the corner where he got wood yesterday and to day the wind has breeze up

and the fire is running all over sugar place George C [Currier] came in to meeting and the men mostly left to help put it out.”⁴⁷ This must not have been a major fire, although all fires were scary, and unfortunately all too common. Several neighboring farms burned to the ground during these years.

SCANDALS

Two opposing myths express the modern overview of nineteenth-century Vermont rural life—one, that it was simple, well ordered, and innocent; the other, that it was a scene of inbreeding, depravity, and violence. Roxana’s view from East Hill demonstrates that rural life was a mixture of the two—and also that the horrified fascination with which people grieve and dwell on terrible events is a universal trait not confined to place or time. Sensational events summoned up Roxana’s considerable gifts as a storyteller, and knowing that her children would be as interested in hearing her tales as she was in telling them, her prose flowed freely.

One of these events was identified by Roxana in 1859 as “the Richardson affair.” The urge to get rich fast was characteristic of the American Dream and was fueled by the California gold rush. Most young men growing up in the nineteenth century in New England dreamed of “striking it rich.” Some men went to California like Dustan Walbridge, John Way, and Alfred Rix; others joined the trails to what was later called the Midwest, where fertile farm land beckoned. All were tempted by new schemes for making money and new ways to satisfy their dreams.

Son Lyman in an 1852 letter to Ashbel Martin reported on one of their former Peacham Academy classmates: “Almond Richardson has gon out west He is teaching school about 4 miles from springfield the capitol of Illinois He has 25 dollars per month.” Knowing that Ashbel was trying his hand at mining in California where he was “surrounded with many temptations,” Lyman ended his letter: “Let us ‘pray then that we enter not into temptation.’”⁴⁸

Temptation was indeed to hit their friend Almon Richardson. In the West opportunity knocked and Almon realized that with some capital, he could make a good strike at becoming rich in business—though it is not clear what kind. Some time around the beginning of 1859 he talked others into joining him and found at least three Peacham friends who lent him money: John Eastman, George Clark, and Charles Choate. Somewhere along the line, however, Almon “failed up,” to use Roxana’s words. It is not clear from Roxana’s summary of the situation where he went wrong, only that he did. “Almon wrote a letter, or commenced one, to his Father after he had taken the deadly draught told

him he was driven to despair and *Death* by not being more honest and upright and he wrote as long as he could but left the letter unfinished.”

In a second letter, this one to her son Augustus, Roxana detailed the story:

There were rather sad news come to Peacham last week Almon Richardson has taken his own life by taking Opium. The reports are that he was very much involved in money matters had borrowed and hired all he could and finally had recourse to *Forgery*, but to what extent is not yet known John Eastman and Charly Choate loose about \$2000 by him John and Charly had been at home a few weeks and were both sick with the Ague Charly is better and has gone back to St Louis to see about the aff[airs] of Richardson Eastman is very low and probably has got the Consumption.

Almon’s friends who had invested in his business were not willing to let the matter end with his death. George Clark, who had gone to St. Louis for an explanation from Richardson, returned to Peacham in a rage, accusing John Eastman of being a partner in the deception. George, Roxana wrote in September, “came home last week and demanded all the letters that R [Richardson] had wrote to John, he let him see them and not being satisfied he got a *Search warrant* and searched Eastmans house from *top to bottom* to try to find money that he thought John had brought home and concealed. But he found nothing.” Roxana added that John “suffered a great deal in his mind . . . and expected to find a friend in George and he has proved his enemy.”

Having no success with Eastman, George Clark went west again looking for more clues. Meanwhile, Charles Choate and John’s sister Lucy had “started for St. Louis week before last and expected to find George there to assist them,” but of course George had returned to Vermont. Almon’s sisters, too, had gone west to try to clear up the situation. It was not known what happened when these people finally got together, but by the end of the year, two young men were dead: Almon Richardson at twenty-six by his own hand, and John Eastman at twenty-seven of consumption.

Roxana finished the story: “I cannt tell you any thing correctly about the affair becuse it is such a complicated piece of business that I dont understand it.” But she had her opinion of it, and she ended her story with the declaration that Almon Richardson “is now gone to receive a just recompence for his deeds.”⁴⁹ Roxana strongly believed that God punished men’s misdeeds, not men. She never picked up the story again.

Another bit of sensational news went to daughter Sarah in a letter from Roxana written in the summer of 1856. This story sounds very modern, even timeless. It comes from Joe’s Pond at West Danville, about ten miles from Peacham Corner, far by the horse-and-buggy transporta-

.....

tion systems of the time; but it is amazing how the people of East Hill got around—to St. Johnsbury in one direction, or to Cabot or Wolcott in another, or to Barnet and Ryegate to the south, for example. And the word, the gossip, got around even better—and faster—than the people did.

Well I have got some Storyes to tell and so I must begin. There has been quite a tragedy enacted up by Joes pond you recolect the Mrs Porter that went to your house with Zilpha once she has nine Daughters and one of them went to keep house for a man by the name of Whitehill in Ryegate and she got in a bad *fix* he came up several times and wanted to marry her but she would not have him. a week ago last Monday Smith Ways wife watched the movement at Mrs Porters and she was well convinced that there was some thing a going on wrong she wanted her husband to go down by the pond with her but he would not that night but the next morning he went with her and they found a *Child* under a bank with a little brush over it. it was a boy and weighed 10 pounds Dr Woodard was here yesterday and he said he was going by there and they called him to come down he said he went and saw the child and to all appearances it had been left to bleed to death as it naturally would without propper care he said one of its feet was eat pretty much off by something in the woods he advised them to hold an inquest and then follow up according to law accordingly they proceeded and they have taken Mrs Porter to jail the girl is sick and has Hysteric Fits Woodward sais he did not examine her but it was evident enough that she was guilty They both deny it and say it is no such thing how it will come out I dont know.⁵⁰

The Caledonian made no mention of this incident in its weekly column, “Local and State News,” or in its summary of county court cases. It covered many stories, including murders, accidents, fires, drownings, intoxication, suicides, and many other horrible events, but not the tragedy at Joe’s Pond.

WEATHER

The main common subject that neighbors, friends, and all people in the area shared was the weather. Not a letter, not a diary entry, was written without some reference to the weather. Vermonters’ well-being in the nineteenth century depended on just the right balance of sunshine and precipitation. In 1850 Roxana wrote to her son-in-law in Michigan: “We are having the hardest winter that we have had for many years cold enough to freeze us all the time besides the snow is very deep and drifted beyond all calculation.”⁵¹

In his few letters Father Lyman expressed interest in two topics, weather and crops, and his main theme was how these two subjects related. In July 1855, two and a half months after Sarah and John’s departure for Minnesota with its promise of a longer growing season, Lyman wrote: “We hav not had but a verry little rain since the Day that you left

Danville it has been cold & windy the most so that I ever saw the grafs killd out last winter the worst that it has for 40 years & what is a live dos not gro for it is so drie & cold People hav plowd up & sowl oates & planted hundredes of acres whare it was stout hay last year all of my stout grafs is dead or nearly all.”⁵²

Winter weather news usually included the temperature and the depth of the snow. Interest was high in whether the family had begun to use sleighs rather than “wheels” for transportation. In early spring, the questions centered on whether days were warm enough and nights cool enough for sugaring. The important thing always was this critical balance of wet and dry, low and high temperatures.

The spring before her death in October 1862, Roxana spent several paragraphs in a letter to Sarah discussing “this long snowey winter” which was still not over on April 19:

There is some truth in what you read [in the newspapers] about the snow. We never had such drifts since my remembrance as there has been this winter it has not been a very cold winter but heavy snows and every one that come blowed all up into drifts About 5 week[s] ago we had about 2 feet of snow fell in one day and night wind N East and when we went to bed Saturday night we were in hope it would not blow but it did not heed our wishes for when your Father got up in the morning and [tried to walk] out the back door for water *Lo and behold* he could not get out the snow was completely over the top of the door all but one littl corner next [to] the well he dug a little hole through just enough [to] creep out and let it remain untill Monday ever since then we have had snow to wash with that we could shovel into the kettle without going out doors.⁵³

Summers were worth commenting on, too. In 1859 *The Caledonian* reported that there were only fifteen days between the late frost of July and the early frost of August.⁵⁴ In Roxana’s words: “We have had such sudden changes that it has been very bad for taking hard colds three times in June and once in July we have had one or two verry *hot* days and then follow with Thunder showers and clear off cold and hard frosts so that it has killed all kinds of vines and beans has injured the corn badly by pulling it back but has not killed it on high land it is very small not yet begun to tassel.”⁵⁵ Weather has always been a subject of deep concern for most Vermonters—in letters and in speech.

CONCLUSION

In 1852 son Lyman wrote to a friend in California that “all the young people have left” for the West.⁵⁶ But like his mother Roxana writing that “my Children have all left home,”⁵⁷ this was an exaggeration—it just felt as if everyone was leaving. For Roxana’s family, eventually all

but Alice wandered out west, at least for a visit, but only five made their homes away from the Peacham area.

Those who stayed in Vermont experienced and described in letters the whole range of community activity, whether it be school programs, social gatherings, celebrations, scandals, or combating the weather. These were constants in the lives of Peacham families at mid-nineteenth century. In their letters the rural Vermont family members recounted daily activities to their relatives scattered across the country. Letters gave the wanderers a touch of home. “Tell us all the news,” wrote one of Roxana’s wanderers, “for we want to hear.”⁵⁸

NOTES

¹ Most of the letters quoted in this article were uncovered since the publication of Lynn A. Bonfield and Mary C. Morrison, *Roxana’s Children: The Biography of a Nineteenth-Century Vermont Family* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995). The authors are grateful to the Minnesota branch of the family for preserving these newly discovered primary sources; special thanks to Chris Way who shared them with us. For vital dates of letter writers and individuals noted, see Jennie Chamberlain Watts and Elsie A. Choate, compilers, *People of Peacham* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1965).

² Ernest L. Bogart, *Peacham: the Story of a Vermont Hill Town* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1948), 159.

³ Roxana Walbridge Watts (hereafter cited as RWW) to Sarah Walbridge Way (hereafter cited as SWW), 26 Apr. 1856, Private Collection (hereafter cited as PC, referring to one of six collections owned by individuals). Original spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have been retained in quotations. RWW wrote and received her letters from the Watts Farm in Peacham. SWW wrote and received her letters from her home in Northfield, Minn., unless otherwise noted.

⁴ RWW to SWW, St. Anthony, Minn., 20 May 1855, PC.

⁵ RWW to SWW, 7 Mar. 1856, PC; RWW to SWW, 19 Jan. 1856, PC; RWW to Hubbell and Augusta Gregory, unidentified place, 28 Sept. 1856, Walbridge-Gregory Family Papers, California Historical Society (hereafter cited as WGFP).

⁶ RWW to SWW, 27 July 1855, PC; Harold M. Long, “Early Schools of Peacham,” manuscript, 29 Aug. 1971, Peacham Historical Association.

⁷ RWW to SWW, 9 Mar. 1856, PC.

⁸ Alice Watts (hereafter cited as AW; her letters were written and received from the Watts Farm in Peacham, unless otherwise noted) to Charles Watts, Monticello, Ill., 18 Feb. 1856, PC.

⁹ RWW to SWW, 9 Mar. 1856, PC. William Mattocks did return to Peacham—in a casket, as he died in Kenosha of typhoid fever on 22 December 1859, with the burial in Peacham. *The Caledonian* (St. Johnsbury, Vt.), 6 and 20 Jan. 1860.

¹⁰ RWW to Clara Walbridge Rogers, San Francisco, 30 Dec. 1857, PC.

¹¹ *The Caledonian*, 1 Mar. 1861.

¹² RWW to SWW, 2 Feb. 1861, PC.

¹³ RWW to SWW, 26 Apr. and 20 July 1856, 18 and 30 Oct. 1859, 12 Sept. 1860, PC.

¹⁴ RWW to Hubbell and Augusta Gregory, Jackson, Mich., 28–29 Sept. 1856, WGFP; Bonfield and Morrison, *Roxana’s Children*, 11.

¹⁵ *The Caledonian*, 5 Oct. 1860, 18 Jan. 1861.

¹⁶ RWW to John S. Way and SWW, 27 July 1855, PC.

¹⁷ AW to SWW, 17 July 1858, PC.

¹⁸ RWW to SWW, Hardwick, Vt., 17 Nov. 1853, PC.

¹⁹ RWW to Dustan and Augustus Walbridge, Northfield, Minn., 4 Jan. 1858, PC.

²⁰ RWW to SWW, 26 Apr. 1856, PC.

²¹ RWW to SWW, 2 Feb. 1861, PC.

²² Diary entry, 6 Nov. 1860, AW, PC.

²³ *The Caledonian*, 9 and 16 Nov. 1860.

²⁴ Diary entry, 7 Nov. 1860, AW, PC.

²⁵ Bogart, *Peacham*, 320–321. The Johnson brothers and Stevens were prominent abolitionists, all raised in Peacham.

.....

²⁶ Diary entry, 31 Dec. 1863, AW, PC. There are forty-three names inscribed on the Peacham Soldiers Monument, although it is obvious from observing the engraving that several were added after the dedication ceremony on 4 July 1870, when Isaac N. Watts named forty-one Peacham men (and two who were associated with the town but who enlisted from elsewhere). For the Watts list and his speech (not reported in *The Caledonian*), see Mary C. Morrison and Lynn A. Bonfield, "The Peacham Civil War Soldiers Monument," *The Peacham Patriot* (newsletter of the Peacham Historical Association) 11(May 1996): 1–7. Bogart, *Peacham*, 322, lists the names of thirty-two Peacham men who died in the war.

²⁷ Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 26–27, 56.

²⁸ RWW to Hubbell and Martha Walbridge Gregory, Jackson, Mich., 27 Sept. 1844, WGFP; Bonfield and Morrison, *Roxana's Children*, 5.

²⁹ Peacham Town Records, Grand List, 1850 through 1876; Bogart, *Peacham*, 467–469.

³⁰ Diary entry, 5 June 1850, "Daily Journal of Alfred and Chastina W. Rix," 1849–1854, Rix Family Papers, California Historical Society.

³¹ Luther F. Parker, Hanover, N.H., to Louisa Martin, Peacham, 5 Sept. 1848, PC.

³² RWW to SWW, 1 July 1859, PC; Chastina Walbridge, Peacham, to Sarah Walbridge, Lowell, Mass., 18 Oct. 1847, PC; Dustan Walbridge, Marshfield, Vt. to SWW, 12 July 1858, PC.

³³ RWW to SWW, 2 Feb. 1861, PC; this marriage on Jan. 31 was announced in *The Caledonian*, 5 Feb. 1861.

³⁴ RWW to SWW, [no day] July 1859, PC.

³⁵ RWW to SWW, 2 Feb. 1861, PC.

³⁶ RWW to Augusta Gregory, unidentified place, 27 July 1856, WGFP; AW to Augusta Gregory Mills, Rawsonville, Mich., 7 Dec. 1864, PC.

³⁷ Alfred S. Rix, San Francisco, to Chastina Walbridge Rix, Peacham, 26 June 1852, Edward A. Rix Collection, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

³⁸ RWW to Hubbell Gregory, unidentified place, 20 Jan. 1850, WGFP; Bonfield and Morrison, *Roxana's Children*, 36.

³⁹ RWW to SWW, St. Anthony, Minn., 27 May 1855, PC.

⁴⁰ Dustan Walbridge, Marshfield, Vt., to SWW, 12 July 1858, PC. For a fuller story of quilting in the Walbridge/Watts family, see Lynn A. Bonfield, "Four Generations of Quilters in One Nineteenth-Century Rural New England Family" in Lynne A. Bassett, ed., *Proceedings of a Symposium at Old Sturbridge Village, June 13, 1998, "What's New England about New England Quilts?"* (Sturbridge, Mass.: Old Sturbridge Village, 1999), 34–47.

⁴¹ AW to SWW, 20 July 1856, PC.

⁴² Old Peacham Cemetery, headstone for Ruth Highlands Watts: "Ruth wife of Moses Watts died July 30, 1813 Aged 54." The Cemetery Card File in the Peacham Town Records lists cause of death as "killed by lightning." This occurred at what is now known as the Farrington Farm on the road from Peacham Corner to the Hollow.

⁴³ AW to Augusta Gregory Mills, Rawsonville, Mich., 7 Dec. 1864, WGFP.

⁴⁴ RWW to SWW, 26 Apr. 1856, PC.

⁴⁵ Lyman Watts (Father), Peacham, to John S. Way and SWW, 29 July 1855, PC.

⁴⁶ AW to SWW, 17 July 1858, PC.

⁴⁷ RWW to SWW, St. Anthony, Minn., 20 May 1855, PC.

⁴⁸ Lyman S. Watts (Son), unidentified town, Maine, to Ashbel Martin, unidentified town, California, 25 June 1852, PC.

⁴⁹ RWW to AW, Castleton, Vt., 25 Sept. 1859, PC; RWW to Augustus Walbridge, Lyndon, Vt., 13 Sept. 1859, PC. See Watts and Choate, *People of Peacham*, 103, 260, for vital dates and family of John Eastman and Almon Richardson.

⁵⁰ RWW to SWW, 31 July 1856, PC.

⁵¹ RWW to Hubbell Gregory, unidentified town, Mich., 27 Dec. 1850, WGFP.

⁵² Lyman Watts (Father), Peacham, to John S. Way and SWW, St. Anthony, Minn., 27 July 1855, PC.

⁵³ RWW to SWW, 19 Apr. 1862, PC.

⁵⁴ *The Caledonian*, 3 Sept. 1859.

⁵⁵ RWW to SWW, 10 July 1859, PC.

⁵⁶ Lyman S. Watts (Son), St. George, Maine, to Ashbel Martin, White Rock, Calif., 25 Dec. 1852, PC.

⁵⁷ RWW to Hubbell Gregory, unidentified place, 29 May 1853, WGFP.

⁵⁸ Chastina Walbridge Rix, San Francisco, to RWW, 15 Dec. 1853, Edward A. Rix Collection.