
584 8/4/1855

From: O. O. Howard

To: Mother [Eliza Gilmore]

OOH-0535

Watervliet Arsenal

Source: Bowdoin

Watervliet Arsenal

Aug 4th 1855

Dear Mother

I have hastily made a sketch of the Arsenal Grounds and of the relative position of Troy & West Troy. Tell me if you can form any idea from this of our location. I will try to get you up a drawing of our house, the store arsenal and the Majors house with the scenery in front. Lizzie thinks this last would have been more acceptable to her than a plan of the grounds before she came. She says in a plan, you can form no kind of idea of the trees & shrubbery or of the actual appearance of the houses. I would have sent you a good drawing of the grounds in full, but the paper necessary is too heavy to send by mail and I hope you will be able to visit us before we are ordered away from this Post.

Rowland and Charles must be at home by this time. The boys must tell me how their examinations were got through with. I want to know how many questions Charlie missed, how much he has to make up, where they took him to examine him &c. Did Professor Upham give him any serious advice? Dellie is at home I suppose and working hard. Tell Rowland it is too warm weather for him to do anything else but write to me. I know I don't deserve it, but for the sake of former punctilious behavior, he should forgive recent procrastinations especially to a man who has a large family to look after.

Mr. P. S. Perley came here about a week ago or more on his way to Maine. He was only intending to stop the night and leave in the morning train, but I wouldn't listen to it. It did me good to see his face once more: for if there is anything that remains in status quo as to externals, it is Peleg himself. He arrived the other day when I found him on my front steps waiting admittance like the very same lisping boy I saw for the first time eight years ago on the steps of Ole North College. But he has changed - he looks you full in the face now. He may have called to see you. His accounts of his own good fortune in the land of his adoption, almost made me discontented with the slow accumulation of riches hereabouts.

Last week on Monday night I went to N. York in the Steam-boat Commodore & returned in the same the next night. I saw Aunt Ann, Sarah & her boy ten weeks of age. Sarah was not very well - had a head-ache the day I was there. Aunt was in good health. I stopped with them to dinner - staid at the house two hours - I went in the afternoon to the Arsenal on Governor's Island. There I met Capt Whitely of our department. I was never more <impressed> in a man's favor at first sight. He seemed a whole-souled man as well as a perfect gentleman. He has been stationed for a long time in the West at Baton Rouge and at St. Louis. He has a very large family, one or two grown up children and the rest small.

I left for Troy about 6 o'clock P.M. passed the night in a state room with a sick stranger, who reminded me forcibly of the days of thorough-wort. Poor man he kept me awake somewhat, but he had the "worst of it".

My love to all. I wish the boys could visit me, but good sense must prevail. I have one scholar, who recites to me every day in Latin. William Thornton, the son of the Major, who is on his way to New Mexico.

Lizzie sends love to all.

Your affectionate Son
O. O. Howard

585 8/15/1855 *From:* Otis [OO Howard] *To:* Brother [CH Howard]

OOH-0536 Watervliet Arsenal N.Y.

Source: Bowdoin

Watervliet Arsenal N.Y.

Aug 15th 1855

My dear brother,

I have just received Rowland's letter and am glad to hear from you all. His accounts of his journey and his doings generally are very gratifying to such quiet people as Lizzie and myself. It must be pleasant to mother for Rowland to take her on such an expedition. Her health must be better this summer than usual.

Uncle Ward's death came very suddenly upon me. Soon after I dispatched Rowland's letter I received the paper which I transmitted immediately to Maine. I have received no further intimation - no particulars. I don't even know if his daughter Elizabeth was with him. I wrote at once to Chicago and have not yet received a reply. I felt badly to think I had written as I did to Rowland, touching upon Uncle's peculiar weaknesses, when I was so soon to learn the sad news of his death. He always treated me with the utmost consideration and kindness; visited me at West Point when I was lonely and a stranger, received me with a warm welcome and cordial hospitality at his home in Peekskill, came to me when I was so very sick at West Point as to be almost despaired of, and at several other times spent a social hour with me at the Hotel of the Post or on the plain. He never would take me from any duty, rejoiced at my success, he gave me much wholesome council. All these remembrances appertaining to times when I sensitively appreciated any show of kindness or sympathy now come thronging back upon me to reproach me for the idle words I have used, and to awaken warm feelings of regard for him that is gone. He was so much like Grandfather Howard that he seemed near to me from the moment I saw him first. I have had vague impressions of his faults and could not sympathize in the ultra political & social doctrines that he maintained at all hazard but with these I was not brought in contact and I cannot do otherwise than draw the veil over them.

I believe his only living son is in N. York City. Mrs Henry lives near Chicago and I presume Elizabeth is with her.

I received your letter from Brunswick. I am sorry I permitted so long a time to elapse between my letters, and I must acknowledge it was laziness in great part. Future separation, or rather immediate separation is ever the best of apologies. After reading what you said of your speedy return home, and of your wish for me to be there to make the family complete, there seemed to come over me more forcibly than ever before, a sense of my separation from you all, "from the home of my childhood," though not from the fond recollections pertaining thereto. Though new interests spring up around me and new feelings arise under new and peculiar circumstances, still my heart must revert to the old place, and I can't make it seem possible I have any other real home but the one that covers my mother's head. The life we are to lead in the army, moving before we get much acquainted with people whose interests don't run in the same channel with ours, never acquiring strong local attachments, will serve to foster rather than abate the old home feelings. When I speak of home I will mean the old place where Mother is living & thinking of her absent boys and where father builds the bright winter fire, and with lighted candle dozes over the Advertiser's columns.

I fear I am getting sentimental - 'Twont do for a soldier.

I went out to the Shaker Community last Sunday. I intended to have given you an explicit account of my visit but I only have this page left and it is getting late. Mr Lansing (our Military Store Keeper and <pay> of the men) invited Mrs Howard & myself to ride with himself & wife to the Shaker settlement and to attend their services. As Sunday was the only day I could form any idea of their religious practices & tenets I concluded to go. We left here at ½ past nine last Sunday morning and after a ride over a rough road of about five miles we reached our destination. Here we found beautiful farms, cultivated with extreme nicety and buildings new or in excellent repair. We passed a large building with the sign Office in large letters upon it, turned around it to the North and followed up an avenue with a picket fence on each side of fifty or sixty rods in extent. This was completely crowded with Carriages of spectators from Troy, Albany and the surrounding country. We left our carriage and walked up the Avenue - passed through a gate and a few yards further on came to the church door. They have two doors of entry side by side - with two aisles separated by a railing, one for the men & the other for the

women. About one third the extent of the church a railing runs completely across the house & thus cuts off the apartment for strangers & visitors. Mr Lansing was recognized by one of the fathers & our party was taken beyond the cross railing through a gate that was closed and fastened at the commencement of the services. The remaining two thirds of the church was surrounded completely by one wall seat and at each end there were two or three rows of seats facing each other. At the farther end and opposite our entrance were two more doors. The entire and extensive interior was a plain unpainted floor - as smooth, pretty & clean a one as you ever saw. Soon after our entrance I was looking towards the opposite end and saw the door open and the women apparition like file in one after another till about sixty had entered. They arranged themselves along the wall on the left side. The men came in at the same time from the opposite side.

What strikes you first is the dress of the women. Each wears a plain quaker cap, projecting slightly over the face, a three cornered white cape or kerchief with point behind extends down to the brief waist. The dress as much like old Mrs Z's night gown as anything - one or two gathers before & behind and none at the side, with a waist up under the arms the dress goes straight down to the feet. Round toed shoes with heels to them complete the attire. All the women are dressed alike in pure white, from top to toe. They each carry a white towel folded & laid across the left arm.

The men are simply dress very much like our quakers. Their broad brims & drab coats were thrown aside before entering, excepting some few old men, who threw aside theirs before commencing the service. So the men were in their shirt-sleeves. They all cut their hair in an oval shape close around the face and left it long behind making it look as bad as possible.

The men & women at a signal from an old man arose simultaneously and arranged themselves several ranks deep - the men facing the women. The old men apparently in the front rank & the younger in rear - so also with the women opposite. First some remarks from the old man - then they all struck up a hymn or chant, swinging the body slightly as they sang. They sang & spoke alternately (some one made remarks). Then all resumed their seats and one man came into the middle of the floor and addressed the congregation showing the people the object of their singularity. He spoke well & to the point. Their doctrines I cannot speak of this time. After he took his seat they resumed their places in the middle of the floor - sang - then a few of the singers separated themselves from the rest and sang while the others danced. They took a simple step, moving forward a little ways, then turning moving back just as far & turning again - all did this at the same instant & keeping time with the song. After this some more remarks were made by an old gentleman to the "saints" & the dancing was resumed. This time they moved about the singers in circles. Every one made motions with the hands up & down in front of the body, palms up. After this another man addressed us worldly people & we separated .

Good night. Lizzie sends love to Charlie, Mother, Rowland, Dellie & all just before she drops asleep. My love to all - to Uncle Ensign's folks when you see them. Write soon.

Your sleepy brother
Otis