



1893-01-05

## Letter from [Willia]m H. Mills to Robert Underwood Johnson, 1893 Jan 5.

William H. Mills

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*(R. W. G.)*

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan'y. 5th. '97 <sup>3</sup>

Robert Underwood Johnson Esq.  
Care of the Century Magazine,  
New York , N.Y.

My Dear Mr Johnson:-

I have before me your esteemed favor of Dec. 7th., and in return I thank you very sincerely for the courteous manner in which my friend Steffens was received by you and for the very efficient service you rendered him in securing a foot-hold in journalism. I believe in my young friend. He comes of stock that has been successful. His father is one of the wealthiest men in Northern California, but young Steffens is determined to have a career of his own. He is exceedingly grateful to you for the kindness you have shown him, a gratitude which is not exceeded by my own.

Concerning Yosemite affairs. I was a member of the Board of Yosemite Commissioners for nine years, and I perceived from the first that as a rule the Board would be composed of party politicians who had performed party service, or placed the Executive making the appointment under obligation; and that just as soon as he took his seat in the Board, he began to find out what he could do for his friend. But this is not the greatest evil attending the management of the Valley. The trouble is that the Valley is as much the private property of the Yosemite Stage and Turn Pike Company as if it had been granted by the Congress of the United

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States to that corporation. It costs too much to go to Yosemite. In a straight line, it is not over 100 miles from San Francisco, and yet I have never known any one to go in and come out, unless they had some favors in the way of free transportation, for less than \$110., if they stayed in the Valley two or three days and did the sights generally. So when a gentleman, accompanied by his wife and three members of his family, are found at the Palace Hotel, desirous of making the trip to the Valley, they are told that

the fare for the round trip is \$45. or \$50. That is not so very formidable, but if they find any one candid enough to tell them the truth, they are told that it will cost their party of five at least \$600. to make the trip, and it will every time. The people holding privileges in the Valley are constantly complaining that the season is short and that they do not have much to do. If things were cheaper they would have a great deal more to do, and a lower rate of charges would yield more profit all round.

I am just as familiar with this subject as any one, and I am disposed to be dogmatic on the proposition that the Yosemite Valley will never amount to anything until the cost of transportation to and from the Valley, the cost of entertainment, and services in the Valley generally, are made less.

As an enthusiastic admirer of the Valley, I frequently talk of its beauties and wonders in social life, and find that scarcely any of my associates have ever seen the Valley. Inquiry reveals



the fact that it costs too much.

The proposition to recede the Valley to the Government of the United States and put it under Government control is one upon which I have not now an opinion. The success of Yellowstone Park management is certainly a very strong argument in favor of the proposition. I will give the matter you suggest some thoughtful consideration, and with your very kind permission communicate with you again.

Again thanking you for your courteous treatment of my friend Steffens, I remain, with high respect and esteem,

Yours very truly,

*Wm H. Miller*