



1883-02-19

## Letter from J[ohn] M. Vanderbilt to John Muir, 1883 Feb 19.

John M. Vanderbilt

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Williston near Sitka Alaska  
February 19<sup>th</sup> 1883.

My Dear Mr. Main

Your long looked for and very kind  
welcome letter of December 3<sup>d</sup> reached  
me too late to reply by last steamer,  
it having been delayed in the Sitka  
Post Office. We were very glad indeed  
to hear from you again - When the  
"Corwin" was here several other officers  
called on us, among them Woodbury who  
spoke of your trip to the Arctic on the  
"Corwin" & of the officer calling on you at  
your home in Martinez, we were very  
greatly entertained by him in conversation  
description of your northern trip & your ranch  
life. I cannot realize that you are  
settled down to a civilized farming life,  
such a life in California must be perfect  
and joyful and a constant summer day.  
Such I have never experienced, always having  
lived where winters is bleak and cold.  
I certainly would enjoy visiting you &  
so would my wife, no doubt a little leisure  
time passed in California would do all

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of my family much good and some  
day. I will endeavor to spare time &  
means to make such a trip and will  
certainly call on you and partake of  
your very kind offer of hospitality.  
Winter is now our busy time as then  
herring fishing is the best.

The account given in the newspapers  
of the trouble here was quite correct &  
I am glad that your way of looking at  
the affair coincides with mine. Capt Morrison  
of the "Adams" & Capt Healy of the "Corwin" both  
deserve much praise for the active & energetic  
manner in which they stopped the trouble  
& punished the culprits - you have travelled  
among these people & know what a mean  
miserable lot they can be when under  
the influence of their miserable liquor and  
at all times when they think they master  
the situation. Capt Morrison's course will  
benefit this whole section in future and  
make enterprises & investments safe from  
further molestation from the Indians.  
They behave well now & liquor is also  
unknown to them, the consequence is

that they are now industrious, sober, well  
dressed & well behaved and ask for schools  
& churches. A garrison was kept up here  
by the Navy up to five weeks ago, we  
are now alone & feel lonely without  
its company.

Fishing is still going on with me &  
we have taken about twenty thousand barrels  
of herrings since opening of the season -  
I think it will last quite another month.  
All of the herring are converted into oil  
which is sold in San Francisco. Things  
have not worked to good advantage this  
season, as the expert who came out from  
the east to erect works & organize the  
outfit for fishing proved eventually unfit  
for the business & the result is that much  
has to be done over in order to do good  
business. The field is certainly exceptional  
for extensive fishing & is far beyond what I  
had anticipated. The "Havonite" is being used  
entirely this season for fishing purposes,  
fishing since October has been carried on  
in the Kooknahoo Lagoon running in back  
of the village towards the centre of Admiralty Island.



I am sorry that Young did not come up to visit me as he promised to do. I hear from him as ever, he is very busy now with mission work at Waukegan. If all the missionaries were like Young much good would be done among the natives.

The Rev. Sheldon Jackson D.D. comes around regularly every season & appears to be a permanent fixture in Alaska missions, he is expected at this summer to erect a church at Chitkahl.

Our Co. contemplate putting up a Salmon Cannery at Chitkahl this spring. Three months prospecting was done there last summer & salmon produced equal to Columbia River & very numerous.

Extensive excursion parties are coming this way in the summer & the new steamer "Queen of the Pacific" is spoken of for the summer trade, the new owners of this route (P.C.S.S.Co) are doing their best to build up the route & induce tourists to make the territory a resort.

We would like very much to see you come this way again and hope that

you will find time to come.

Ann & Johnnie are growing fast & fat  
& are calculating already on their  
future school training - it hardly seems  
possible that our children are growing  
so fast. Annie is the same sweet little  
thing that she always was - we would  
so very much like to see your dear  
little girl as well as yourself & wife.

My wife joins me in sincere regards  
to you all and best wishes -

Sincerely Yours

J. M. Vanderbilt

Many thanks for your kind extension of my  
note -

Do you still contribute to the "Century" Magazine?



Kilishnoo, near Sitka, Alaska,  
February 19th, 1883.

My dear Mr. Muir,

Your long-looked for and very kind and welcome letter of December 3d reached me too late to reply by last steamer, it having been delayed in the Sitka Postoffice. We were very glad indeed to hear from you again. When the "Corwin" was here several of her officers called on us, among them Mr. Doty, who spoke of your trip to the Arctic on the "Corwin" and of the officers calling on you at your home in Martinez. We were very greatly entertained by him in conversation descriptive of your northern trip and your ranch life. I cannot realize that you are settled down to a civilized farming life, such a life in California must be perfect and joyful, and a constant summer's day. Such I have never experienced, always having lived where winter is bleak and cold. I certainly would enjoy visiting you, and so would my wife -- no doubt a little leisure time passed in California would do all of my family much good, and some day I will endeavor to spare time and means to make such a trip, and will certainly call on you and partake of your very kind offer of hospitality. Winter is now our busy time, and then herring fishing is the best.

The account given in the newspapers of the trouble here was quite correct, and I am glad that your way of looking at the affair coincides with mine. Capt. Merriman of the "Adams" and Capt. Healy of the "Corwin" both deserve much praise for the active and energetic manner in which they stopped the trouble and punished the culprits. You have travelled among these people and know what a mean miserable lot they can be when under the influence of their miserable liquor, and at all times when they think they master the situation. Capt. Merriman's course will benefit this whole section in future and make enterprise and investments safe from further molestation from the Indians. They behave well now, and liquor is also unknown to them; the consequence is that they are now industrious, sober, well dressed, and well behaved, and ask for schools and churches. A garrison was kept up here by the navy up to five weeks ago; we are now alone and feel lonesome without its company.

Fishing is still going on with us and we have taken about twenty thousand barrels of herrings since opening of the season. I think it will last quite another month. All of the herring are converted into oil, which is sold in San Francisco. Things have not worked to good advantage this season, as the expert who came out from the east to erect works and organize the outfit for fishing proved eventually unfit for the business, and the result is that much has to be done over in order to do good business. The field is certainly exceptional for extensive fishing, and is far beyond what I had anticipated. The "Favorite" is being used entirely this season for fishing purposes. Fishing since October has been carried on in the Kootznahoo Lagoon, running in back of the village towards the centre of Admiralty island.

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Sincerely yours,

J. M. Vanderbilt.

Many thanks for your kind extension of my note. Do you still contribute to the "Century" magazine?