



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1910-02-08

Letter from Elmer E. Gilmore to John Muir, 1910 Feb 8.

Elmer E. Gilmore

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Recommended Citation

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Lennox, S. Dak. February 8, 1910

Mr. John Muir,
Martinez, California.

Dear Sir:

It has been so long since I received your kind, and welcome letter, nearly a year ago that I am almost ashamed to write, but office duties have crowded in so thick and fast that I have had but little time to attend to personal correspondence, but as I have a little time at present I shall answer yours first of all.

Unless you are of a sensitive nature, like myself, you little realize the thrill of pleasure it gave me to hear, and know for a certainty that I had at last discovered the whereabouts of my old school-teacher whose peculiar scientific experiments left such a deep impression on our young minds that, I at least, have never been able to erase them even if I would; for instance, your weekly lectures on philosophy, your experiments with mice placed in jars containing hydrogen and nitrogen gases; your firing corks out of a funnel shaped receptacle which pleased Wesley Stevens so well that he wanted to keep you at it all night; your clock constructed out of a common water-pail; your other clock made out of wooden wheels hung on a burr-oak bush shaped in the shape of a scythe which hung on the wall of the old log school-house, and last but not least the clock which took the whole of the old black-beard to serve it as a pendulum which hung in the back part of the school-house on the evening of the close of school; these and many other impressions come crowding into my mind whenever I think of that winter.

Father and I often spoke of you and wondered what ever became of you.

Father died in the spring of 1888 and often spoke of the arguments which you and he used to have over the subject of perpetual motion. Do you remember about it?

With regard to the scholars who attended the school that winter, I can furnish you but little information I am afraid, as we moved away from there to Iowa a short time afterwards and, while we kept track of a few of them for a while, still there was so many changes going on that we finally lost track of them all, except our immediate relatives.

My oldest sister is now living in Wadena, Minn., is married and her husband is County Treasurer of that county, of course she was

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small at that time, still she can call to mind a great many of the incidents of that winter.

About eight, or nine years ago I was back there to visit the old scenes, and although I had not seen the old homestead for forty years, I had no difficulty in recognizing all of the old places, but none of the old neighbors were left except Mr. Nangles people, but their children had grown up and I had difficulty in recognizing them.

The old log school-house has long since been torn down, and a new frame one stands on the corner across the creek to the west of it.

I had no difficulty, however, in recognizing the place where the old one stood, although it is overgrown with a thick growth of jack-oak underbrush.

The house in which we lived when you were there has been torn down, and I was unable to find out what became of it.

Just before leaving there, I happened to meet Mr. Aalgaard, one of our old neighbours, who lived two miles south of us, but he was unable to give me much information with regard to the old settlers as he said that it had been simply impossible to keep track of them, but he stated that the Fay, or Harper family as you possibly knew them, had all gone to the bad, except Lucius who was, at that time manager of the Wisconsin Democrat, and was living at Madison, Wis. but he died about two, or three years ago.

I wrote to Mr. Aalgaard once, or twice after I came back but as he was pretty well along in years, I suppose that it was too much of an effort for him to answer, and I doubt very much whether or not he is living yet.

I note that you are very much interested in the conservation of our public parks, and beauty spots, and I bid you a hearty God-speed in your noble work in this direction, as I have no sympathy for these "land-grabbers" who would sacrifice every beautiful place in our fair land for the sole purpose of enriching themselves.

Well, just a word with regard to myself and I will close.

I am a married man with a wife and three grown up children, two girls and a boy, and am, at present Postmaster at this place receiving a salary of \$1200. per year. My eldest daughter filed on a claim in the western part of this state last fall and is going out to establish residence on it this spring.

Wishing you the best of success in your noble work,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Elmer E. Gilmore, P.M.

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