



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1894-08-29

Letter from J. E. Mathewson to John Muir, 1894 Aug 29.

J. E. Mathewson

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MANUFACTURERS OF
SAND BLAST APPARATUS
FOR
SHARPENING & SCOURING FILES,
CLEANING CASTINGS,
FROSTING, MARKING, PERFORATING
AND DECORATING GLASS,
STONE, METAL, &c. &c.

Tilghman's Patent Sand Blast Co.
Bellefield Works,
Limited.

Sheffield, Aug 29th 1894.

Dear Sir

In looking over a volume of last year's "Century" Magazine I came upon an article headed John Muir and underneath the name was his portrait. I remarked to myself, "Why that looks very much like my old schoolmate at the Wisconsin State University, John Muir," & hastily running over the article I found to my astonishment that my conjecture was true. I do not know whether you will remember me or not, but I have a most distinct recollection of you & those wooden clocks and other ingenious contrivances designed to shoot or pitch heavy sleepers out of bed at any hour or minute in the morning whether they would or no. I thought first that we used to room together, but am not clear upon this point, I remember well however that we were great friends, both being of an inventive turn of mind & in similar circumstances financially. My poor mother, who died two years since, kept all my letters written from the University & they are now in my possession. In two of the letters I mention you & the clocks. Have often wondered what had become of you & am now glad to know that you are still in the land of living & have a name which will live. We both attended the University with money earned by our own & therefore was not spent in riotous living by any means. Bread & milk was my staple food during my two years there. We have both been hard workers although your path has been the most rugged. However hard work and perseverance nearly always meets with its reward, which in your case has ^{only} ^{late}. I read with the deepest interest the short account of your labors in the interests of science. If you have published a full account of your travels & work, I would be glad to know where it can be bought. Perhaps you would like to know what I have been up to for the last thirty two or thirty three years & why it is that I am writing in this far off country. Well, after leaving the University I returned home & went to work in a steam saw mill where I had formerly been employed some eight or ten months, when I started east with the intention of going to a school at Troy, N.Y. On the way, however, I made a visit to an Uncle in Madison Co. N.Y. While there I caught the War Fever & joined, (with two of my cousins) Battery A, 1st N.Y. Light Artillery. Went through my three years service & came out without a scratch either on my character

or body. For the last year of my service I was stationed, as a clerk, at the
head quarters of the Dept of Ordnance at Phila. Taking a liking to Phila. I
returned there after being discharged at the end of the war, Aug. 1865. I soon
found work as an engineer at the Office of the "Phila. Enquirer". I remained
there some three or four years. Mr. Harding the proprietor wishing to help me on
recommended me to B. C. & R. A. Tilghman to carry out some experiments, in which
he was also interested, in the manufacture of wood pulp for Paper making. These
experiments turned out unsuccessful & I was placed in their experimental
laboratory where I had ^{valuable} experience in Chemistry as well as engineering.
In 1870 the idea of using sand driven with great velocity by air steam etc.
to cut hard substances was suggested by B. C. Tilghman. I assisted him in
carrying out the experiments & afterwards putting it to practical use. In
1871 they sent me to England to introduce the ^{process} to manufacturers. It was
quickly taken up & a company formed to work it. I was, of course, the practical
man in the business, but was not by any means at the head of affairs. After
two or three years however matters found their level & I came up to the head
as Managing Director & have remained in that position ever since. Am now
fifty three years of age & am ^{as} hale & hearty as when a young man. I married in
Philadelphia & have two children - a daughter Lottie, born in Phila. in 1870 &
a son, Alfred, born in London in 1875 who is now my right hand man in the
business. My daughter has fine musical abilities - her favorite instrument
being the Violin. She often plays Violin Solos at Concerts & is considered the
best player in Sheffield (a city of 350,000 people). She has been in Berlin, Germany
for over a year having the finishing touches given her in Violin playing.
We lived in London eight years & have been in Sheffield thirteen years.
I travel a good deal on business, all over England Scotland & the
Continent, & hope before long to take a Journey to India & Australia.
Have been back to the States several times & am making arrangements now
to go again on the 22nd of Sept. I am sending you by this post a Catalogue
of some Blast apparatus made by us. This will give you an idea of what
the sand blast is, if you are not already posted up. Also send my photo.
You might reply to care of B. C. & R. A. Tilghman, 1116 South 11th St. Phila. Pa.
as there will be hardly time for your letter to reach me before starting for
the States.

Have you ever ~~been~~ visited your native country? Scotland
has great attractions for Americans. If you should come over you
must not fail to visit me.

Yours sincerely,
John Munnery
California, U.S.A.
J. P. Matheson

Sheffield, [England],

Aug. 29, 1894.

Dear Sir:

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[Letter of J. E. Mathewson, Aug. 29, 1894, to John Muir, continued]

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what the sand blast is, if you are not already posted up. Also send my photo. You might reply to care of B.C. & R. A. Tilghman, 1116 South 11th St., Phila., Pa. as there will be hardly time for your letter to reach me before starting for the States.

Have you ever visited your native country? Scotland has great attractions for Americans. If you should come over you must not fail to visit me.

Yours sincerely,

J. E. Mathewson

John Muir, Esq.,
California, U.S.A.

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