

2018

Letter to Mary Cabot Wheelright 1930

Fannie Hardy Eckstorm

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Recommended Citation

Eckstorm, Fannie Hardy, "Letter to Mary Cabot Wheelright 1930" (2018). *Fannie Hardy Eckstorm Papers*. Submission 29.
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MRS. FANNIE H. ECKSTORM
173 WILSON STREET
BREWER, MAINE

orig. M. L. L. & T. L.

August 4, 1930

Dear Miss Wheelwright:

I have this moment got your letter of the 2nd., mailed in Newport, and will not risk losing the earliest mail to you. The ship letter has not come at all.

I think it would be better for you to write Mrs. Littlefield, for then she would be sure that I was not an intermediary, working for profit, and that she was getting all there was in it.

The silver she has is good and it is old. The brooch bears an inscription in Indian which shows that it was probably pawned in 1823, and most likely it was fairly old then. George Washington and other presidents sometimes gave silver brooches, or medals, to the Indians, as we well know, so that the style was set certainly as long ago as the Revolution. I should think this might be 125 years old. It is rather light weight, partly from wear, and slightly cracked at one place on the edge. I consider it a good brooch for its size. The girls' wristlets are also old and in good condition, though, being small and light, there is not much weight of silver.

My impression is that Mrs. Littlefield will set her own price and that you may save money by letting her do it. If she does not ask more than \$25 for the brooch and \$15 for the wristlets, I think you will be satisfied with the bargain; for when I last saw them the pieces were in excellent condition and would be hard to replace. I do not think fifty dollars should seem excessive to one who really wanted just that things. Mrs. Littlefield explained that she would sell for a "good price", but her ideas may not be so high after all, as most likely she will consider the weight of metal in the articles rather than their rarity.

The letter from Lewey Mitchell which I enclose came some weeks ago. He did not sign his name at all and perhaps left off a part of the things he has. A man he knows has a very old sealskin shopping bag and three very old decorated breastplates, (brooches), three wooden plates and a very old crooked knife and an old-fashioned toboggan. Also a string of very old coins of all nationalities. He himself has two breastplates, three powder horns and the prehistoric wampum which he has been talking about for some time.

Did I tell you that these "stone beads", which I suppose must be crinoid stems, since I have found from geologies that such fossils occur near Eastport, are thought by the Indians to be the work of the little fairies, mikumwessuk, who make the writings on the rocks. They also make writings and pictures on paper, concerning which he tells quite a yarn in his letters to me, which are in your parcel.

While I should like to see Lewey Mitchell and examine his goods, I should hesitate to take the responsibility of buying for you. It is quite unlike buying at one's own risk and taking the chance of selling again at one's own price. You would be obliged to take them off my hands even if I had made an error in judgment. And I fancy the old man is keen after the money and will not hesitate to place his price high.

Then, too, my trip could not be made upon the most economical basis, by train travel. It could be done in one day, if one were to leave here at 4.04 A.M. and get back at about 10.00 P.M. by train, it would be a cheap enough journey. But I am not well enough this year to take any such soul-racking journey, and I have no automobile. To hire one and a man for a day even would cost considerable, and it might require more than one day, with hotel bills

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and extras. The hotel at Eastport is not fit to go, and Calais is the nearest place to Pleasant Point for suitable accommodations. I am afraid that even by giving my time, you would find you were paying a very good rate for your collection, though I do not doubt that given a few days time and a car, I could collect some good things for you in Pleasant Point, Princeton, Hewey's Island and Jonesport. I happen to know well the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity for this state and her influence would open to me any convent or Catholic influence in any of these places. A letter from her would be the best of introductions.

If you could only go from Southwest by car to these places, what a good time we could have! Just now I am free of guests and have nothing on hand which could not be put off and could leave on short notice. But for me to go alone, in a hired car, would be a frightful expense to you, and trains are all but impossible. There are but two a day from Bangor to Eastport and Calais, 4.04 A.M. and 3 P.M., and it takes about six hours to cover the few miles between Bangor and the end of the route.

Wouldn't you like your parcel of manuscript sent to Southwest Harbor, in care of Miss Bentley?

I have picked up a quite small basket of the stamped type from New Hampshire, and have left with me a small porcupine-quill box, about the size of a post-card, not less than a hundred years old and a tiny toy birch canoe, wrought with colored moosehair, which I know must be seventy years old. I have been told of an especially fine basket in this town, of the bandbox type, brilliantly colored, but have not seen it.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Fannie H. Ekstrom