Old Letter January 29, 1856

Williamsville Classical Institute
January 29th 1856

My dear Mother

I take up my pen once more to address you I received your letter stating that you had waited and waited for a letter from me. I wrote you as soon as I got yours the next day after ward, but I thought I would not write this time so soon for I thought perhaps you would come over I get along very well with the exception of one scolding from Prof: Murrell for not getting my geography lesson not to me in particular but to the whole class I and Fanny Hershey was in the class we had a good crying spell and felt better after it but Mifs Conly gives such long lessons that we can't get them, I say can't because it is impossible. I have not received any letter from Harriet Dunn yet I wish she would write oftener than she does. The Methodists have a protracted meeting here now Mifs Baxter the big girl went forward last night I and the other girls go to meeting once in a while we was out last night they had a great time of it. I wish you would bring Mary and my likenesses and the one I had taken some time ago, and if you don't bring Levi bring his likeness. Tell Milton I have not forgotten him yet. How are the folks getting along in dear old Wainfleet. I only have six weeks to stay yet. There the old bell is ringing again I have got tired of hearing it. I have had a side(?) to Clarence we all went home with Fanny Hershey one Saturday we had a good time we had a roast turkey, but before I forget it Julia Hershey is here and says I must give her warmest love to you all at home Elira send her compliment to you. Julia said I should say that she expected you over here. I have been to Mr. Murrell's once when he was away from home. Mifs Richards is there a nice young woman. I answered One one morning but got excused for that I was out at half past six o'clock. I have the - -?--- once in a while, tell all the girls that I would like to see them but it won't be long till do only 6 weeks yet it will go away like nothing we are not near through any of our books but the Grammer and we get along pretty well in that, I have received one letter from Mary Bradt since I have been here I think she must want to hear from me very bad I got a note from her when my brooch(?) returned from the west I believe it had a pleasant time of it. I have near seven shillings yet of my money Julia said just now give my love to your mother and a sweet kiss so I suppose I will have to obey orders. I received a note from Cynthia Forrester she said her mother got home the same night that she left Willmsville.

I don't wear my black dress much it is so short - I wear it Saturdays. Mary and I washed and hung our clothes out the line before that deep snow came and some of our things got snowed under but not so many but what we can get along well without them we have to wash a little oftener that's all. Mr. Murrell talked of getting a writing master I guess you will think that I ought to take lessons I don't see how you could read that other letter I was ashamed of it but I did not think of writing so much when I commenced. I am surprised that Amos should stay away from meeting How does he treat you and how does he act when he is there you can tell him I said. He need not feel so bad about it, it is all past and gone now. I hope not to return but he need not be mad at that for she has nothing do with that, at all, I almost hate to come back to Canada on that account I suppose he won't speak to me any more I dream of being home once in a while and seeing all the good folks there, I am not homesick yet by any means I don't want that you should (think) that but of course I would like to see the folks again Andrew comes over to see me pretty often and I get over being melancholy then He comes much oftener than I expected he would but maybe he gets homesick is the reason. I believe I told you that we had
started a Lyceum(?) called the Electo we have very good times in there. Last Friday I had to write a composition and read it before them all I thought I would never be able to do it but I did not mind at all. Next time I have to declame(?) a piece. Fanny and Mary have to write a piece for the paper and Mifs Baxter and another girl a dialogue We have to pay a(?) cent a week besides our instruction fee (25 cts), but think we will learn enough to pay for it it learns(?) us to write pieces and to declaim and read Our debate went off very well last Friday night the subject was, "Resolved that woman has more influence than man" the affirmative beat. Mary and Julia have gone over to see Rv. Frame while I am writing he is not very well I suppose you know what a fuss they made over Frame when they was in Canada it is all Profr. Murrell now "O think he can beat Rv Frame all out a preaching". Ofc I noticed it right away, but I guess I will have to come to a close and start my lesson or I will get sent Mr. Murrell to give an account of myself and I would feel rather flat agoing there so no more at present -- Write soon as receiving My love to all not forgetting to keep a large share for your self and father

Your aff ate daughter

M J Bradt

if you ever heard tell of her

I sent a letter for Harriet Dunn in yours

Notes:
Oct. 2012 addendum: In an 1855 census of Erie County, NY there is a 14 yr old Fanny Hershey, d/o J and Elizabeth Hershey who were both born in Canada. She married Henry H. Stafford (1820-1900) in 1860, had a son and 2 daughters, and died in Clarence, Erie Co, NY in Sept. 1910.

Oct. 2018: I have tried to duplicate the spelling and punctuation of the original letter.

"Dear old Wainfleet"... Thomas Bradt and family lived on the Forks Road near Wainfleet. MJB mentions her brothers Levi, Milton and Andrew, who are her brothers.

I have not been able to identify the Amos who is mentioned, but it is apparent that he is a figure of interest to the 16 year old Mercy Jane, and that an incident has made for awkward feelings at church.

Professor Murrell was the principal of the Williamsville Classical Institute, a private school at Williamville, NY established by the Disciples of Christ Church, of which the Bradt family were ardent members.

Harriet Dunn later became MJB’s sister-in-law when she married Johnson Price Dunn in 1860.
My Dear Mother,

Again I seat myself to pen you a few lines. I received yours last Tuesday, the 9th of the month. I am enjoying myself well now and have become more used to studying than when I wrote before. It took me some time to get used to it. The vacation was too long. I almost forgot how to study. Money is getting to be a scarce thing with me and I presume they would rather be paid as I go long.

The girls appear to be enjoying themselves well. I am sorry that I could not take music lessons. I wish I could take half a term at least. Anna thinks it would be a good plan even if I took half a term to keep in practice. Caroline likes her well (illegible--) has three scholars this term. Rather small class. Not enough to pay her board but Anna only has one from the school - vis. Caroline. There is another young lady takes lessons of her, also she does not live in the village but comes twice a week and takes lessons and practices. Tell father he must have my melodeon ready for me to play when I come home or I will forget all I do know about it. I forgot to tell him before I came away. I suppose you have no objections to my getting home safe evenings if I happen to be out to meeting or any other place provided I have good company. I am going to Clarence [a nearby village in Erie County] to see Fanny Hershey and take a pleasure ride but don't tell anybody or it might raise a talk.

Have said all that is necessary and therefore I must close and write to E. H. or she will think hard of it though I hardly know what to write not having any news that would be interesting to anybody in Canada. I received a letter from [illegible] last Wednesday a longer one. There is nothing but politicks talked of now you know [illegible] will be appointed soon everybody is asking who you are for Fillmore or Frémont [1856 American Presidential candidates along with Buchanan, who won]

Write soon.
MJB

MJB filled a page completely by writing up and down the sides and across the top making it hard to read. The underlining is in the original. Transcribed May 23, 2018.
Old Letter Oct. 21, 1856

WmsVille Oct 21st, 56
Well Mother

Once again I seat myself to write to my best of mothers It will not be long until I shall be home and see you all. I will not be sorry when the time comes, you had better believe. I have been well since Father left with the exception of the toothache which kept me from reciting one day but it has not been so bad since if it had I do not know what I should of done. it is one that never ached before he's just commenced decaying the back tooth of all. I had a mind to get it filled if it kept on but it has not since. It did not stop one minute that day all day long it ached away as if it had a patent right to. How did you like the ---?--- I sent for Lady I think it is nice. I got a letter from Mary this eve, they are all well at least she says nothing to the contrary. I owe just 5 dollars and 5 shillings on my board yet and cannot pay it until I get money from home, it will not be needed until the end of term, and also I owe J Hershey 50 cts incidental it is marked on the --?-- I have just 4 dollars and a shilling or so, and that will go (4 dollars) to music she will give half a term of lessons in the rest of the term I like her very well as a teacher I was telling Caroline this in that I almost envied her, her knowledge of music. I wish you and father could her sing and play, she has perfect command of the keys of her piano they appear to give just such sounds as she wishes them to but I must close and write a few words to Andrew

I had not much to say this time, having written so recently But I thought I would write perhaps for the last time this term or any other for that matter

write soon and tell me all

Mercy J Bradt
In 1853 a group of citizens under the auspices of the Christian Church met to discuss the possibility of having a private school in Williamsville beyond the elementary level.

**WILLIAMSVILLE CLASSICAL INSTITUTE** (Academy Street School)

At the formative meeting for the Williamsville Classical Institute, members pledged from $100 to $300 but the cumulative total was insufficient to develop the school. Benjamin Miller then pledged $1500 besides contributing chairs, desks, and benches from his factory and the brick building was planned.

The property on Academy Street was purchased from David Hershey for $700 and a warranty deed was issued to the following trustees: David Greibiel, John Frick, Isaac Hershey, George Gross, Christian Rutt, John Hershey, Timothy A. Hopkins, Samuel L. Bestow, Benjamin Miller, John Witmer, Alexander Gotwalt, Arthur H. Moulton, John Gotwalt, John B. Campbell and James Stevens.

In 1857 the first catalog was issued, containing the names of the officers, teachers and students, some of whom came from as far as the Canadian Northwest Territories, Washington, D. C. and Michigan. (Traveling preachers of the Christian Church publicized the school.)

The faculty consisted of Thomas Murrell, Principal, Professor Modern Languages and Belles Lettres; Joseph King, A.B., Professor of Mathematics and Ancient Languages; Miss Julia Abbott, Preceptress; Josie W. Emmons, teacher of Instrumental Music; and Tobias Witmer, teacher of Vocal Music.

Yearly tuition was charged per each course. English cost $12; Mathematics $15; incidental expense "per session," 50 cents; and "board and wash," per week, cost $2.25.

The course of study was divided into 3 years and 3 terms each ("tri-semester"-100 years ahead of its time). Subjects listed were philosophy, astronomy, theology, trigonometry, botany, rhetoric, political economy, moral science, geology, chemistry and the languages-Greek, Latin, French and German. Special courses were organized for those intending to teach. Each student was expected to attend some place of worship every Lord's Day and to join one of the two literary societies- one for men and one for women.

 Literary debates involved deep study over such topics as (for the Ladies Society) : "Our future husbands should never be allowed to criticize our cooking or say 'Mother made a better pie' " and (for the Men's Society) - "It is more beneficial to saw wood before breakfast than to wait until next week."

The Williamsville Classical Institute, which had become known as the "Academy" closed its doors in 1869. Two men whose names are not recorded, came to Williamsville to rent the building and operate a private school, but the venture was unsuccessful.

For a while the school stood empty except when the congregation of the Church of Christ Disciples worshipped there during the construction of their church on Main Street.