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Joseph Worcester Manuscript Collection

**Letter of Rev. Grant Powers to Joseph E. Worcester. February 22, 1831. PDF images and transcription of original handwritten document in Joseph Worcester Manuscript Collection.**

Joseph Emerson Worcester, 1784-1865, was a lexicographer and textbook author who was both an employee of and later a competitor to Noah Webster. Along with Webster, Worcester became embroiled in the so-called Dictionary War after Webster accused Worcester of plagiarizing from his abridgement of Webster's seminal 1828 dictionary, which he was hired to edit, in Worcester's own 1830 *Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory English Dictionary*. Both privately and publicly, Worcester denied the charges.

Some of the letters in the Joseph Worcester Collection touch on public and legal matters stemming from this issue, while others deal with personal and family matters. He wrote and received letters from a variety of individuals. Many letters were to his brother, Samuel. The letter below is one of the letters in the collection.

An image of the original letter is followed by the transcription. For easier comparison, I suggest that the reader print out the document and the transcript for side-by-side use and to bring any discrepancies or questions to our attention.

David Vancil, PhD  
Curator and Department Chair  
July 22, 2009

Goshen Conn, Feb, 22<sup>d</sup> 1831

My Dr Friend,

Yours of the 2<sup>th</sup> Ult, arrived this morning with your generous Remembrance accompanying it, for which I tender you very sincere thanks. This revived a thousand tender recollections, which carry me back to early years, and to scenes, which arose in your Father's family, and which can never be obliterated from my mind. From circumstances which will readily occur to you, our intimacy was not so uniform & entire, as that which subsisted between me and your much lamented Brother Jesse, but such was the interest I felt in your family, and so numerous were the obligations imposed on me by their attentions and kindresses, that they have individually possessed my confidence, love and esteem, to the present moment, & I can say, that they hold a place in my affections, which no other family in Hollis class, my dear and honored Mother excepted. Your Father and Mother have ever met me at their house, and else where, with a Paternal and Maternal affection, and they seem more like Parents than mere friends and benefactors. I shall ever feel the obligations I am under to your Father for his judicious Administration upon my Father's estate, and that at a time, when it required all his coolness, and decision, and perseverance of character, to quell the turbulent, and to support the weak & timid. I am sensible, that he has never received a pecuniary consideration for one quarter part of his time and services, and, probably, never will, but he has the consolation arising from the reflection, that he discharged a trust reposed in him by one who was his Friend in life & in death.

You speak of my Address at Holles in Sept, and are disposed to give me a compliment for which I thank you; but really, I feel that if there is any thing valuable in that performance for posterity, the Public is more indebted to your Father than to me, for had it not been for his unrevered assiduity in collecting the facts, I should have "made feeble fight, and lost my eyes."!

You speak of Personalities in the Address. In that respect, I found myself in a novel situation, and a very delicate one. It devolved on me to perform the office of Historian without the advantage of writing exclusively of the deceased, and that at a time, when party feelings and jealousies were lively and strong. If I omitted the living, the history of the town would be essentially defective, and the close of an other Century could not have supplied the deficiency; and I was sensible, that as soon as the present excitement should subside, all parties would regret the omission! On the other hand, if I gave the facts as they had, and did exist, I apprehended, some would feel as though they were neglected, and that I wrote under strong partialities. I had then but two courses presented for my election, either to omit what I considered essential to the history, or to assume an independent attitude, present facts, and throw myself upon the surges, and although you may wish it had been otherwise, yet I do not regret, that I pursued that course, and I had the satisfaction to learn, that it was approved by the best judges in the Town, and those of all parties. When I spoke of Justice, I spoke my real conviction, yet I felt such a strong emotion, that I gave latitude to my feelings, and adopted a figure, which, I was conscious, a critic might pause at; still I preferred it should stand, and it has attracted more notice and created more interest than any other paragraph in the Address. I this day received a letter from Judge Burtlett of Flowerhill, N.H. in which

he says - "Many of your metaphors, so far as I am a judge, are very happily, and judiciously selected, but the one used in speaking of your Friend, Jesse Worcester Jr. struck me forcibly, as very significant, appropriate, and sublime." In respect to the Essay, I sent you, I am happy that you were interested in it, and thank you for your attention to it. Prof. Goodrich was at my house last season, and said he was anxious of the work as he was highly interested he should have it reviewed - It is not, he consequence unless an other Edition as I believe the first Edition is nearly any other production of my own, than at present. There is, however, a dissent - York Farmer, and Horticultural Reporter - entitled: Superior Physical Principles of Government, which I should ed to have you see, if that work is at his life and health should be spared; and I should the advice of many of my Clerical Breth few years give publicity to a course of Bibles - the benefit of the Clergy in giving instructions - but I say nothing of this at present. The 600 Quarto pages in manuscript - I take of every place of note mentioned in the scriptures of the place, the history of all eminent characters, the natural history of animals, beasts, birds, reptiles and insects, which have a place in the Bible - all trees, plants and fruits, the origin of rivers, course and termination, mountains, Plains, hills & vallies - Manners and customs of nations - Diseases - Prophecies and their fulfilment, Doctrines and Duties, with reflections at the close of every Lecture - You will perceive that brevity is regarded as much as possible, and still should I proceed through the scriptures, it will make a considerable volume - When I have lectured here, we have all ages, and ordinarily not less than 200 attend in an evening. I have ex-  
worthy Parish - have been here two years come time, and clo

not know that I have an enemy in the place. Your father writes me occasionally, but have not heard from him or from Hollis, this two months. I am anxious to know how they succeed in regard to illi-ister - I now give you my thoughts of your Dictionary after one hour's perusal - I think it good. and it must obtain in all places where Webster does not, as it seems to me, and he never can be in use with common people. The smaller works, I have not had a moment to look at them - I wish you great success -

John C. Beecher  
July 24

paid - R. D.

Joseph E. Worcester, Esqr  
Cambridge -  
Massachusetts

1831. July 22

Rev. J. Powers

Should you come as near as Hartford or Bristol, ascend this watch-tower and we will give you some Goshen Cheese - I went to St. Haven last week, but did not have a moment to see your Brother, as they threw me right back. Send my love to your Parents when you write them. My Friend, a few more interchanges of affectionate regards, and we are no more on earth - may we meet in glory - Mrs. Powers desires particu-ular regards to be sent - Yours as ever - Grant Powers

Powers, Grant, Rev. Letter to Joseph E. Worcester. February 22, 1831.

[Ms. p. 1, follows]

Goshen, Conn., Feb, 22<sup>d</sup> 1831

My Dr Friend,

Yours of the 27<sup>th</sup> just arrived this morning with your generous Remembrances accompanying it, for which I render you very sincere thanks. This revives a thousand tender recollections, which carry me back to early years, and to scenes, which arose in your Father's family, and which can never be obliterated from my mind. From circumstances which will readily occur to you, our intimacy was not so uniform & entire, as that which subsisted between me and your much lamented Brother Jesse, but such was the interest I felt in your family, and so numerous were the obligations imposed on me by their attentions and kindnesses, that they have individually possessed my confidence, love and esteem, to the present moment; & I can say, that they hold a place in my affections, which no other family in Holles does, My dear and honoured Mother excepted. Your Father and Mother have ever met me at their house, and else where, with a Paternal and Maternal affection, and they seem more like Parents than mere friends and benefactors. I shall ever feel the obligations I am under to your Father for his judicious Administration upon my Father's estate, and that at a time, when it required all his coolness, and decision, and perseverance of character, to quell the turbulent, and to support the weak & timid. I am sensible, that he has never received a pecuniary consideration for one quarter part of his time and services, and, probably, never will, but he has the consolation arising from the reflection, that he discharged a trust reposed in him by one who was his Friend in life & in death.

[Ms. p. 2 follows]

You speak of my Address at Holles in Sept<sup>r</sup>, and are disposed to give me a compliment for which I thank you; but really, I feel that if there is any thing valuable in that performance for posterity, the Public is more indebted to your Father than to me, for had it not been for his unwearied assiduity in collecting the facts, I should have “made feeble fight, and lost my eyes.” You speak of Personalities in the Address. In that respect, I found myself in a novel situation, and a very delicate one. It devolved on me to perform the office of Historian without the advantage of writing exclusively of the departed, and that at a time, when party feelings and jealousies were lively and strong. If I omitted the living, the history of the town would be essentially defective, and the close of an other Century could not have supplied the deficiency; and I was sensible, that as soon as the present excitement should subside, all parties would regret the omission! On the other hand, if I gave the facts as they had, and did exist, I apprehended, some would feel as though they were neglected, and that I wrote under strong partialities. I had then but two courses presented for my election, either to omit what I considered essential to the history, or to assume an independent attitude, present facts, and throw myself upon the surges, and although you may wish it had been otherwise, yet I do not regret, that I pursued that course, and I had the satisfaction to learn, that it was approved by the best judges in the Town, and those of all parties. When I spoke of Jesse, I spoke my real conviction, yet I felt such a strong emotion, that I gave latitude to my feelings, and adopted a figure, which, I was conscious, a critic might pause at, still I preferred it should stand, and it has attracted more notice and created more interest than any other paragraph in the Address. I this day received a letter from Judge Bartlett of Havenhill, N.H. in which

[Ms. p. 3 follows]

he says – “Many of your metaphors, so far as I am a judge, are very happily, and judiciously selected, but the one used in speaking of your Friend, Jesse Worcester Jr. struck me forcibly, as very significant, appropriate, and sublime.” In respect to the Essay, I sent you, I am happy that you were interested in it, and thank you for your attention to it. Prof. Goodrich was at my house last season, and said he was anxious [ . . . ] of the work as he was highly interested [ . . . ] he should have interviewed – It is not had [ . . . ] consequence unless an other Edition [ . . . ] as I believe the first Edition is nearly [ . . . ] any other production of my own, then [ . . . ] at present. There is, however, a dissent [ . . . ] -York Farmer, and Horticultural Report [ . . . ] -be- [ . . . ] entitled Superior Physical Principles [ . . . ] principles of ] Government, which I should [ . . . ] ed to have you see, if that work is at hand [ . . . ] life and health should be spared, and I should [ . . . ] the advice of many of my Clerical Brethren [ . . . ] few years give publicity to a course of Brethren [ . . . ] the benefit of the Clergy in giving instructions [ . . . ] es – but I say nothing of this at present. It has [ . . . ] 600 Quarto pages in manuscript – I take [ . . . ] of every place of note mentioned in the script [ . . . ]



[Ms. p. 3 continues]

of the place, the history of all eminent characters, the natural history of animals, beasts, birds, reptiles and insects, which have a place in the Bible – all trees, plants and fruits, the origin of rivers, course and termination, mountains – Plains, hills & vallies – Manners and customs of nations – Diseases – Prophetesies and their fulfilment, Doctrines and Duties, with reflections at the close of every Lecture – you will perceive that brevity is regarded as much as possible, and still should I proceed through the scriptures, it will make a considerable volume – When I have lectured here, we have all ages, and ordinarily not less than 200 attend in an evening. I have a worthy Parish – have been here two years come June, and do

[Ms. p. 4 follows]

not know that I have an enemy in the place. Your father writes me occasionally, but have not heard from him or from Holles, this two months – I am anxious to know how they succeed in regard to a Minister – I now give you my thoughts of your Dictionary after one hour's perusal – I think it good and it must obtain in all places where Webster does not, as it seems to me, and He never can be in use with common people. The smaller works, I have not had a moment to look at them – I wish you great success – Should you come as near us as Hartford or New Haven, ascend This watch-tower and we will give you some Goshen Cheese – I went to N. Haven last week, but did not have a moment to see your Brother, as they than [sic] sent me right back – send my love to your Parents when you write them – My Friend, a few more interchanges of affectionate regards, and we are no more on earth – may we meet in glory! Mrs. Powers desires particular regards to be sent – Yours as ever – Grant Powers

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Notes:

A detached, no-longer extant folded portion of the letter containing the missing text is indicated by brackets with ellipses followed by a large blank space. Below the address portion of the letter, there is a hole in the paper that obscures some words. Nonetheless, if missing letters can be deduced, they have been included in brackets. The author writes “than” for “then” in one instance. This is noted by brackets surrounding “sic.”