

Trent University Archives

Medd family fonds

Accession 81-001 Box 12 Folder 4

Letter: John Thompson (Toronto on Smith Creek (Port Hope)) to a friend [in England], 23 June 1819

Notes regarding the transcription:

In this transcription, most misspellings and grammatical anomalies which occur in the original text have been maintained. For example: verry is very, likewise is likewise, etc. The following symbol was changed to ease reading of the text: '&' changed to 'and'. Occasionally, commas and periods have been added to assist in clarifying the sentence structure. Square brackets [ ] indicate indecipherable text. The following is an example of a symbol which represents a measurement of currency: 's' is shilling. Also, 'h' is hour.

#### TRANSCRIPTION

Toronto on Smith Creek June 23, 1819

Upper Canada Lake Ontario in the township of Hope

Dear Friend,

In compliance with your kind request when we parted in Eastington Church yard, I gladly set down to write to inform you a little of our feelings when we entered on board of the [ ] not knowing when or where we should land and our Friends bidding fairwell not knowing that we should ever meet again in this world. These things with a many more that crowded in upon the mind was almost ready to counterbalance the desire that we had to see America but after the bustle was a little subsided, and the ship got on her way and a few reflections passing through the mind we became a little more composed, and a desire sprung up there that we might through the blessing of God be wafted safe through the watery element and land safe on the shores of America and our desires was so far fulfilled, [fulfilled]. For while we was in great danger and striking first one field of ice and then another and a large ship going down close by, from which we took the Captain and crew and two passengers, he still made a way for our escape. A breeze sprung up and the ice opened and we sail, [sailed] out and left a fine ship and rich cargo for the boisterous waves to swallow up. I hope before this time you have received the few and little presents sent for children and likewise I expect you have seen the letter wrote to my Father Thompson which gave a short account of our passage up the country to this place. So I think its needless to say any more about the passage so I shall give you a few hints about the climate, country, people and place. And likewise what sort of Birds and Beasts

inhabit the same. This climate seems to me to be a great deal more productive to the vegetable creation than our native that is Yorkshire. For here the Farmer can grow any thing he pleases and with half the labour, I have seen all sorts of grain grown here except beans & [ ]. These would be very valuable in this country. We wonder what sorts of weather you have had in England for we have had verry fine and verry hot so that they can grow melons and squashes and cucumber to a verry great size so you may judge the heat. The thermometer stood at about one 100 in the shade, about the middle of July and at this time it has been as low as 25 in our room, not more than three yards from the fire. We have had some [keen] frosts but verry little snow. I have been told by one of the oldest settlers of this place that he never knew the frost penetrate so deep in so little time since he knew the country and that is about 20 years. This country chiefly consists of a light loomy soil and well water'd, for fine springs are numerous. It is rather Ridge but not to be call'd [called] mountainious. The little hills are in a general way covered with a loome of darkish yellow about 12 or 14 inches thick and below that begins small pebles mixt with a rich greasy [ ] earth. When taken and mixt with water it will be for tougher then lime mortar and when dry verry near as white. I shall just mention one thing that came under my notice. I went out into the new Township to look for land as here is 100 acres for every old country man for nothing and meeting a country man of the name of Dawson. A very nice old man indeed. He has 3 sons and two daughters. The sons and himself has drawn 400 acres of good land and they only came into the woods in May month and they have got 6 acres here of land cleared and a fine garden and one of the young men was under the necessity of sinking a well here not amany in this country and coming to some

Page 2 of the letter

curious soil about 5 or 6 feet from the surface which was very [marley] mixed with very rough gray sand and pebles on which he had planted some cabage and they then look very growing like. I have seen him since and he told me they had got too an immense size since that. I have not noticed the soil so much, only there be a soil, for I considered that the Almighty made the clime and he had made the soil to suit it and he could make the cabages to grow. Every thing growes here with more vigour then in England. Trees and plants and shrubs of the same kind that you have in England make longer shoots and has larger leaves. I have seen an Ash tree leaf not much short of 12 inches in length and breadth in proportion. Here is the white thorne here but rather scarce and not so prickley as the English. It bears seed as large as the English [ ]. Apples are uncommon sweet but not so large as the English Apples are. They never sweeten them in use; they are sweet enough with out. The trees are all rais,d from the pippin. Here is no grafting. As for Peartrees, here are none. I have not seen one all the way through the lower Province nor I do not know that there is one in all the upper Province. Therefore, it would be

wisdome to bring the seed of the Peartree. Here is the wild grape in the woods and I veryly belive the true vine would grow to great perfection. Here is the rasp and the strawberry in the wood, and the lilack, current and the goose berry. Here is no speses of the Plumbe kind excepting the wild [ ]. No Peaches nor Apricots, therefore any person coming would do well in bringing the seed of the above trees, for after the Oarchard has been planted 8 or 9 years it brings fruit to very great perfection. January 9th at this present time we have very fine mild weather and the snow is all about gon for the sun has greater power than it has in England. On the shortest Day the sun rises 31 [minutes] after 7 o clock and sets 29 after 4. On our longest day we have about 15 h sun, so of cource we are nearer the sun. But it is hotter back in the woods than here as our place is situated on the mouth of a creek on the Lake Ontario famous for fish, chiefly salmon. Since we came there has been 100 caught in one night. The instrument they have to catch them with is a spear fixt to a pole about 8 or 9 [feet] long. They always fish in the night. They say the darker the better as they have a grate on the bow of the vessel where on they burn pine which casts such a light that they can see to dart the fish. A man can dart [40 or] 50 in one night. The old inhabitance of this place are mostly of them Yankys or Americans. We have amany old country people and likly to have amany more as this place is the principal place on the road betwixt Kingston and York and the nearest to the two new townships known by the name of Cavan and Monagin named after 2 towers in Irland on account of some Irish being the first settlers. The townships are laid out about 10 miles [ ] and I believe the land is chiefly taken up so I believe we shall waite a while. There in another township laid out as that will be this spring. These townships are situated about 12 miles North of this place be hind the Rice Lake which is famous for fish but not Navigable for any vessel except canoes. It is about 40 miles long and 5 in breadth. Be hind these townships begins the Indian hunting ground where they kill great numbers of Beavers and other animals

Page 3 of the letter

of the Forist. Here is one Indian; we know him by the name of Captan Potash. He kill,d in one season about 3 hundred Beavers the skins he sould [sold] to the Indian trader who resides here for about 30s each. They go out in the fall to hunt and they are returning now. We shall have hundreds of them in alittle time. We see them in the day time and at night they run into the woods to sleep. These Indians are known by the name of [Massasaga] tribe. They are a stout race of men and well behav,d and harmless but they are great lovers of whisky so that if they make ever so much money with hunting they spend it all in whiskey and trinkets as the traders provide plenty of these articles such as [ ] jewels earrings and bracelets for the neck. I have seen the said Cpt Potash wife or squa as they call them with 7 rings in each ear and the men such as Captan and other officers wear 2 or 3 nose jewels at one time and their faces painted two or three different colours. Here

they have one most horrid practice. When there fathers or mothers get so old that they are not capable of traveling with them in the woods they murder them and bury them head downwards with all there armour and jewels but the poor mortals generally know when there glass is nearly run and if they have anything valuable they pawn it for wiskeys or other spiritous liquors. Here is another tribe of Indians called the Mahawk Indians which are a little more civilized and they reside more back North East from this place and some of them have got large clearings and part land under cultivation. At the present, I shall not say much more about these Indians excepting one thing and this you would like to know more about them then I can tell you at present, for I have ingaged some of them on the subject and I find it a verry hard matter to lern any by them about it for I believe they strive to conceal [ ] things from white men. But what I have learnt from a neighbour they have a moad of worship, as they believe in a bad spirit and likewise in a good spirit. They pray to the bad spirit and they say the good spirit will do them no harme. Sir I shall just leave this subject and tell your young people sort of wild animals inhabite this part of America. Here is the bear, the wolf and the purcupine, the rackoon, the fox, the buffalo, and the deer and amany more small animals too numerous to mention but most of these animals go back except the wolf and she stops about the door. For here is a neighbour who had 12 sheep kill,d in the night close by his [ ]. The Wolf is the only wild animal of any consequence that I have seen and she seames to be frightened of man. We have no dangerous serpents here though here is great numbers and some are verry beautyfull. The people say that very few are venomous. They have the rattlesnake on the Bay of Cantay but that [ ] has not been seen here. Sir as I have given you a short account of the country and all things of a short duration and though this climate be ever so good and the country ever so improving soon we shall [ ] have to make a voyage to a land unknown (not like this) unpeached by humane blood and may the Almighty grant we may more then ever be determined to get prepared for that voyage as we may have to sail when we little think. But I will assure you we are much out of form for these preparations. For this place or part seames to be almost unknown to any preacher of the Gospel. We have not heard a Methodist Preacher since we left Montreal. I believe a many of the people would gladly set under the sound of a Methodist preacher but they with us have not the Opertunity. Bibles and other good books seam to be scarce hear. We bought 3 Bibles of Capt Minnitt as he was bringing some for sale and we have sold them. Had we so circumstanced we would have given them, but the people seam,d glad to buy them.

Page 4 of the letter

Give our kind love to Robert and Mary Fielder and tell him if he has a spirit the perils of the Atlantic and come over as a Mission and preach the ever lasting Gospel. How glad we should be. I have no doubt but he would be the instrumentality of saving some souls from destruction and if one single soul be saved through the

instrumentality of his preaching great will be his reward in that day when all Nations shall stand before there God to give an account of the deeds done in the Body. Here the inhabitants pay little or no regard to the saboath Day and the great reason is here is no [one] to tell them the consequence of breaking the saboath. I am fully sensible here is as much need of a Mission been sent here as there is of being sent into the interior of Africa. Now my paper is full and I must conclude, but my heart is not emty [empty]. May sir remember us to all relations and friends and favour us with a letter and say how mother Belt is for my wife is very unhappy about her and she wishes to know she is and where she is for she scarce ever goes to bed but she dreames about her.

John Thompson uper Can