

Ann Arbor April 13<sup>th</sup> 1838

Dear Brother. I could not find time to write last week, somehow, and must write this week, or you will wonder: though I have been so much behind hand lately that you will have hope and patience, that a letter will be along. January was a warm month for winter except the last week of it which was cold enough. February was a very cold month, the morning of the Sunday 20 degrees below zero, which is the coldest morning we have on record. The beginning of March was cold the middle and last part of it very fine. It rained all day the 8<sup>th</sup> of this month moderately; raised the Huron two inches which continues the backwater at the mill. We have been backwatered four weeks. The Melling in February was pretty good and we have as many logs in the mill yard as we want for this summer. We have agreed to <sup>get</sup> about 100,000 feet for the Rail Road at \$10 per thousand. If it had not been for the making of the Rail Road this summer lumber would have been dull. About three hundred men have been a month or more to work on the route: principally embanking and excavating, Hands have been plenty. The Canada war, I believe made hands more plenty. When that foolish war was given up the poor fellows hardly knew what to do with themselves, as many of them were without money and but little clothing. There was an host of lies told about that war: which I believe was the most remarkable circumstance in the war. The whole is a complete failure. At the close of all effort by the Patriots in this <sup>quarter</sup>: the Adjutant General of the Michigan militia, ordered the Militia to train once a week, that is three times in March and four times in April. But strange as it might seem no attention was paid to the order in this quarter. The pretence was that we might be involved in a war with Great Britain. I believe I told you in my last that Forty two Banks came into being under the General banking law of Michigan since the suspension of specie payments. About the first of January it was said that some of the Banks had not given proper security, and of course the bills were called bad and money would not take them. They become more current afterwards. But about the middle of March confidence was lost in those suspected and some others were said to be no better which made quite a panic. And some of the Merchants refused to have any thing to do with any of the "Wild-cat" money and others would take the bills on some few of the Banks. And the mass of the community hate the very name of Wild-cat. I don't know what Bicknell says of our Wild-cat Banks, could you inform me. The Wild-cat Banks are those that came into being under the General Banking Law. It is a very appropriate name easily spoken, and as easily understood, carries the idea of something wicked, corrupt, of which it is best to beware. And this currency is as wicked as ~~is~~ as the sound of the name. But it has done some good. I will tell you now that Robert will not take any of the Wild-cat money for grain and for nothing that he sells. I still take some of it but take care not to have much on hand: pay it out when I can. The good it has done is that it will in all probability overthrow the Democratic party for they cannot shake of the responsibility of passing such a law and raising it up afterwards as if it was passed as something purely Democratic calling the other Banks <sup>monstrous</sup> ~~others~~

The Township election held in this State on the first Monday of April: has resulted in Ann Arbor in the election of the entire Whig ticket by an average majority of 60 votes. In Detroit the Whigs had a majority of 331 on the Mayor: the rest of the ticket something like the same. In Washtenaw the Whigs elected thirteen out of the twenty Supervisors, and tied on one. In Ann Arbor the Tories were confident they would carry the day and were considerably chagrin'd at their defeat. I feel pretty confident that we will have a majority in the Legislature next fall.

The election in Wayne, Washtenaw, Oakland and Lenoire was so close last fall that only a few votes is wanting to make them decidedly Whig. And there are other counties with few inhabitants that run very close, which this Wild Cat system will influence as it is a general evil of great magnitude. The Legislature of this State have adjourned and have not extended the suspension law. Consequently the 16<sup>th</sup> of May the Banks of Michigan must resume specie payment: how it will work will soon be seen. Our currency is so wretched that it <sup>cannot</sup> get worse. The Wild-Cat is good for nothing out of the State and miscable in. And the chartered Banks are considerably below par at the East. So that our Merchants hardly know what to do. Indeed the two thirds of them will <sup>not</sup> go East this spring. As soon as the Banks resume. The Merchants <sup>will call</sup> for specie or funds that will go in New York. They will call with the amount of Bills they hold against them. To borrow money from the Banks of Michigan this spring will not be expected. The contractors on the Rail Road are to be paid every month but the 12<sup>th</sup> of April has come and no money yet except a little Wild-bat and that of a poor kind. Those that do the work have not been treated with good faith as chartered money was promised them the beginning of every month, for what work they had done, reserving ten percent until the section was completed; then the whole to be paid. There was no fairness in letting out the the job in first place and the same meaness still continues. One man has the whole contract from Ypsilanti, to Ann Arbor, what he is to get is not known. There is a mystery round the contract from the beginning and that villainous mystery still continues. As the why he does not pay the men is difficult to account for without thinking the contractor is one of the very meanest of men. He is a Van Burenite. The Van Buren party <sup>in such men</sup> excel, has an host of scoundrels in power. I received probably six newspapers from you previous to your last letter none since. The newspaper you sent the day before your letter, arrived in Ypsilanti four days ahead. Wheat is \$1.50. Corn 1.00 Oats .50 Potatoes .50. Sugar 18<sup>cts</sup> per lb. Candles 18<sup>cts</sup>. The Rail Road cars from Detroit to Ypsilanti make a trip back and forth every day, Sunday not excepted. The fare is 1.50 for a passenger for 30 miles. I think one dollar is plenty. I took one ride to Detroit and back to Ypsilanti the beginning of February. I went free. Ypsilanti and vicinity was offered a ride. And I was one amongst many: we were two hours going to Detroit a few minutes more returning. It is a fine way of going. The Rail-Road cost \$12,000 per mile from Ypsilanti to Detroit. It is said that it collects 1000 per week. Mr Ewers and family were well.

The Legislature of Michigan have appropriated \$1,000,000 to wards Internal improvement \$350,000 for the Central Route (which is the route passed us) 100,000 for the University to be located at Ann Arbor. The Penitentiary is to be located at Jacksonburgh.

The regents of the University are contemplating to commence building it shortly. The State Geologist has been examining the Salt Springs of Michigan and gives it as his opinion that the Michiganders can buy their salt cheaper than make it. The State Bank of Michigan that was recommended by the Governor has fell through this season. The times are called hard: hands plenty to hire. It is a lucky thing for this vicinity that the Rail road is building this summer. The University too will help to make business lively. And after this summer I am in hopes matters and things will be some better regulated. The Sub-Treasury I hope will not pass: what then will be done? Leave things as they are: the President demanding specie for every thing as he has done any thing to do with. Or will the State Deposite system be tried again. This hostility of the Government of the United States to Banks at this particular state of affairs is an unfortunate state of things, as the Banks ought to have a chance to right again. The Senate have passed the Sub-Treasury bill. It will probably be defeated in the other House. What will then be done? Leave it so until another election. And let the <sup>country</sup> hobble along as it can until the present Congress time is out. I dont see any other way. Since the Cars commenced running there is more than double the travel along here there used to be. There is no Stage on the Road from Ann Arbor through Dixboro to Detroit. The mail is carried on horse back on that route once a week.

My wife brought me a son on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January. We call him Henry for his mothers father. I would have called him Robert but I thought we had Robert enough for the present. We have something like the Chin-cough, or Hooping-cough, amongst the children no appear to be getting better. I am to pay my Downmiller \$26 pr month and he boards <sup>no</sup> self I have hired him for this summer: \$13 pr month is the common wages on the Rail road for digging. James Geddes of Senawee County called to see us a few days ago. They were in their usual health. His Sister Margaret was married last fall to a Mr Emerson Cashier of the Macomb County Bank. This is not one of the Wild Cat Banks. They live in Mount Clemens. I might tell that there are five establishments or Shanties of Rail-Road <sup>men</sup> on our premises: and so far they have behaved very civil. I wrote Uncle James a letter the beginning of February and pray look for one from him before I write to you again. I hope you will have some news from Illinois before this comes. I am trying to fill this side of the letter. I have seen nothing of the revised Constitution of Pa. I saw an extract from the Emancipator that Dr Ely's great property was in the hands of Trustees for the benefit of his creditors. I cant think he has lost all his property but presume that he become embarrassed, and unable to meet his engagements and has, or was forced to take that way to extricate himself which must be done at a loss. If you know anything about his affairs I wish you would inform us. The reason why that the Wild-cat system did not work was that the security given was found not to be sufficient on reexamination, and in some cases the boxes of specie had nails in them in place of specie. Villians set themselves to thinking how they might establish a Bank, and issue Bills to a large amount: and exchange their Bills for others: buy property & Horace R. Jerome. A son of Aunt Lucy's oldest brother was President of the Farmers Bank of Genesee County.

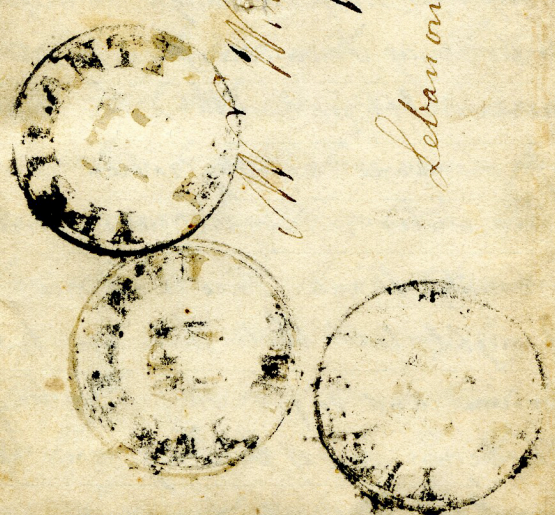
And acted the rascal on as large a scale as any of them. He exchanged, bought property and finally made for Texas. That Bank it is said issued 160,000. And some of the landed property given by him in security: it is said another man claims and has the deed of and that some never owned it. This was a cold morning 20 degrees. Farewell John Geddes  
To Mr William Geddes

~~1838~~  
1838

William Geddes

Palmyra 1838

Lebanon Pa.



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