

SOME LETTERS OF JAMES MATHEWS AND CAROLINE MATHEWS STONE

[The following letters were found by Edgar B. Nixon in the course of a search for materials relating to the Separatist Society of Zoar, Ohio, and copies were sent to the State Historical Society of Iowa for publication in 1937. These four manuscript letters, written by James Mathews¹ and Caroline Mathews Stone to Christian Wiebel,² are in the possession of Dr. Nixon, now Assistant Director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, at Hyde Park, N. Y. Of these letters Dr. Nixon wrote: "They afford a glimpse of the Iowa scene of three-quarters of a century ago as viewed by members of a prominent family of the State, and as such are submitted as being of some interest. James Mathews was the father of Caroline Mathews Stone, wife of William M. Stone, Governor of Iowa from 1864 to 1868. Little comment other than that necessary for the use of the documents has been attempted." Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling have been retained as they appear in the copies submitted by Dr. Nixon, who also provided the footnotes.—THE EDITOR.]

¹ James Mathews was associated with William M. Stone as a law partner in Coshocton, Ohio, from 1851 to 1854, when the latter removed to Knoxville, Iowa. Mathews came to Knoxville the following year, and his daughter, Caroline, was married to Stone in 1857.—Benj. F. Shambaugh's *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. III, pp. 3, 4; *United States Biographical Dictionary*, Iowa Volume (Chicago and New York, 1878), pp. 573, 574.

² Christian Wiebel was an officer of the Society of Separatists of Zoar, Ohio, a religious community founded by a group of Germans from Würtemberg in 1817. It was dissolved in 1898. For accounts, see George B. Landis's "The Separatists of Zoar" in the *Annual Report of the American Historical Asso-*

JAMES MATHEWS TO CHRISTIAN WIEBEL

Knoxville Iowa

June 1st 1857

Friend Weible;

Since I came to Iowa two years ago, I have scarcely heard from my old friends in Zoar for whom I shall always entertain the warmest feelings of regard and friendship — I hope you still continue to be prosperous & happy — We have here a fine country, in all respects, except that our winters have been very cold & tedious — The two past winters have destroyed nearly all the peach trees & other tender fruits — Pear trees, many Kinds of Plums, & all sorts of cherries except the different varieties of Morellos have also been Killed down — Apples are scarce here yet, like all other new countries, but orchards are being planted out, and in a few Years they will be plenty — For all Kinds of grain & vegetables, no Country can beat this; nor have I ever seen a better country for Stock — Any of our prairie lands will produce from 60 to 100 bushels of Corn per acre, and wheat oats &c, in the same proportion — Sweet potatoes are as easily raised here as the Irish varieties, and produce as much per acre — Some places in the State, timber & Stone are Scarce; but in this portion of Iowa we have Abundance of wood, Stone, coal &c, and abundance of good water — That is, we have springs & streams furnishing a good supply of Stock water, and by digging from 20 to 30 feet we obtain water for family use, of the best quality —

Improvements and business advance here at a rate which would be almost incredible to an eastern man, who had not witnessed the progress of things in the West, and any pru-

ciation, 1898, pp. 165-220; E. O. Randall's *History of the Zoar Society* (Columbus, 1904); Edgar B. Nixon's "The Society of Separatists of Zoar" (doctoral dissertation in the Library of the Ohio State University, manuscript).

dent man coming here with Two or three thousand dollars of capital, can Soon have a competence, although every Year of course diminishes the chances for large speculation — To give you some idea of things, & the rapidity with which they advance, I may state, that when we got here two Years ago, the town of Knoxville numbered a population of 700 — Now we number 1700 to 1800, & are still rapidly progressing — We are building a Court house this season which is to cost \$20,000 —

The fall before I removed, amongst other property which I purchased, I bought 50 Acres of land adjoining the town on the east side, having about 7 acres under cultivation, & a frame house 18 feet square, with one room below & one above, about half finished —

I paid for the property \$1.400 — which was then thought to be a high price — I got here in April 1855, & in October following, I sold off the North end, & poorest of this land 30 acres for \$3.300, which was sold off in acre lots — in April following, I sold 4½ acres in town lots, which brought me \$2.250.—

This spring I sold a similar quantity which brought me the same \$2.250 — so you see I have Sold in all to the Amount of \$7.800,—

What I have left exclusive of Streets & alleys, is 8 Acres — For this (including a new dwelling I have just got finished at a cost of \$3.000) I could get \$7.000 — This added to the amount of Sales would make \$14.800 — From this deduct the original price & cost of building \$4.400 & it leaves a nett gain of \$10.400, in two Years on a Capital of \$1.400 —

On the lots sold by me, there are now about 50 dwellings erected already, & others on the way —

This was a good purchase, of course better than the average; yet I know quite a number, who have done as well as I

have, & some who have done better — of the 8 Acres I have left, I have enclosed 2 Acres with my dwelling for a garden, & reserved 6 on which I am planting out an ornamental nursery, various Kinds of Evergreens & hardy Kinds of Shrubbery — I have now about 6000 of these planted, which I shipped from France last spring & this, all of which are doing well — I shall order 20.000 for next spring, which will fill out my lot —

This business is going to be very profitable in this Country — All the trees which I have brought on which were large enough for sale (about 1000) I Sold at a fine profit, about 200 per cent —

All I lack now for Success in this business is an experienced man, who understands the cultivation of trees & Shrubbery, including roses &c, which I have not been able to get as Yet — But I will try in the Course of this Year to get one, and then I shall build a small green house — My time is devoted to the Collecting business, except what is required to superintend the garden & nursery work — Of this branch of my professional business, I have as much as I Can possibly do — My family are all in good health, which they have enjoyed ever since we came to the Country — They all like Iowa — Tell the girls that Caroline is married — She was married about 3 weeks since to Judge Stone, who is now the presiding Judge of this, (the 11th District)³ Caroline will travel this Summer with him — She often speaks of her old Associates in Zoar, to whom

³ William Milo Stone (1827-1893), after his removal to Iowa from Ohio, was successively editor of the *Knoxville Journal*, Republican presidential elector, judge of the sixth and eleventh districts, and officer in the United States Army during the Civil War. He left the army in 1863 with the rank of colonel, and served as Governor of Iowa from 1864 to 1868. He was brevetted a brigadier general on March 13, 1865. In 1889 he was appointed Assistant Commissioner of the General Land Office, and shortly thereafter was made Commissioner.— Shambaugh's *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. III, pp. 3, 4; Francis B. Heitman's (comp.), *Historical Register of the United States Army*, Vol. I, p. 930.

she desires to be remembered — I shall be glad to hear from you when you have leisure — How is the prospect for fruit with you this year? — If I make a remittance in the fall, can you send me by Rail Road, a few barrels of green, and one or two of dried Apples? We Shall like to get Some green Apples from the Zoar Orchard, & Some dried ones of your own manufacture, or drying —

Remember me to all my acquaintances in Zoar —

Jas Mathews

[Endorsed] Jas Mathews Knoxville Iowa, June 1/57 replied, July 13/57.⁴

CAROLINE M. STONE TO CHRISTIAN WIEBEL

Knoxville Iowa

Jan 19th 1860.

My Dear Friend.

You will perhaps have almost forgotten the little American girl from Coshocton, who lived with you as one of your "Society" for many months, and who visited your *Store* almost daily for *toys* and *candy*. However it may be with you, I still kindly remember the people, who were so watchful over me during my stay with them, and for whom I had *many strong attachments*.

You are perhaps, aware that I came *West*, with my Father almost five years since, and two years after our arrival, was married to Judge Stone, with whom, I believe, you are not personally acquainted.

We like Iowa better than Ohio, and have never regretted our removal. One thing we are sorry for — the winters are too severe for fruits of many kinds, and indeed few varieties of apples will bear the severe freezing. Almost every season since our residence here the trees have been "winter killed", more or less, until we are entirely without peaches.

⁴ This reply was not found.

How are your orchards bearing now? When I lived in Zoar, you had plenty of fruit, and that, that was *good*. You know Horticulture is my Fathers cheif delight, and here he cannot satisfy his ambition — he has a beautiful garden where he lives, and a large and choice nursery of trees, but he is not pleased because every variety will not succeed. If we cannot raise fruit as some of our Sister States can, we raise more grain, and have plenty of money to buy their fruits, which they send to us every year.

I am now talking of going to Zoar in the Spring to spend the Summer.— My health has been very poor, for the last three years, so poor that that I have not been able to leave my room but little of the time. I now think I am slowly gaining and if I recover sufficient strength I would like to go to *Zoar* about the first of May or June and remain till the last of October. I believe that such a change, would benefit me much. Should I go, could you let me board in your family, or if not I could get boarding in a private house, as I shall be alone, and stopping at the *hotel*, would not be so pleasant. I will try not to make you any trouble, and will want to be one of the family, as nearly as possible.

Are your Sulphur baths in operation now, or have you quit using them? I think the water would benefit me, at any rate I should like to try it. If you will be kind enough to answer my enquiries, and write me upon the subject, immediately, I shall be pleased to hear from you. Tell me all about the people. I want to hear of them.

I have forgotten much of my *German*, and I want to learn it again, and think I can very soon. Have you a good school now?

My Father sends his kindest regards, and I sincerely join in wishing you health and prosperity

Your Friend
Caroline M. Stone.

Mr Christian Weibel

[Endorsed] replied negatively, Febr. 9/60. Caroline. M. Stone Knoxville, Iowa, Jan. 19/60.⁵

CAROLINE M. STONE TO CHRISTIAN WIEBEL

De-Moine Iowa

Feb. 7th 1864.

My Dear Friend.

Being anxious to know how you are prospering in the beautiful village of *Zoar*, I have concluded to write you a short letter of enquiry.

No doubt many of those persons in your society with whom I was wont to mingle have passed from that to another home, & very many little faces have appeared since my sojourn with you, who would look strangely to me, yet I have a claim upon the inhabitants of Zoar which I cannot express.

I have rehearsed the history of your little society again & again, and still have occasion to do it, whenever I speak German. But I have forgotten so much of the language that I speak very poorly — I have concluded to study it again & for that purpose have got some new books.

⁵ A draft of Wiebel's reply was found with the above letter. After expressing his sympathy for Mrs. Stone's ill health, he added: "It is no more than natural, for you at times to think of Zoar, that quiet place where you spent a part of yr juvenile schooldays; — but, in reference to the principal contents of sd letter, after having submitted the same to some of the good people of this place, who remember yr father and yourself, have, upon mature reflection thought proper to dissuade me from encouraging you coming hither for the sake of improving health, as in many respects all things considered a hazardous undertakin — yourself of native american education and feelings; we a german people in language, different in habits, in mode of living and feeling, might render yr sojourn here in the course of a few months hence rather irksome than pleasant, and having no private apartmt to let for the purpose, and no alternative left but to take lodg'g. at the Hotel, might, as you have well said, not be so pleasant, especially during the summer months." The circumstances of Mrs. Stone's stay in Zoar are not known, but the village was widely known in northern Ohio as a summer resort, and it was not unusual for visitors to spend the entire summer in the community hotel.

My Father's family are all well — but are now living at Iowa City. My father was appointed "Provost Marshal" in that district, and his head quarters are at Iowa City.

Since my husbands election as Governor of Iowa, we have made De Moine City our home, & will probably remain here much of the time. It is a beautifully located city, & is fast growing to be a large & populous place. Should you or any of your society visit Iowa & come to this place, it will afford us pleasure to entertain you during your stay. I have never heard of any of you having made a trip west, but you may conclude to do it, & if so you must not pass us by without a visit —

I would not have forgotten my German had I lived where I could have conversed, but there were so few Germans in the places we lived, that I could not retain it.

Did any of your society volunteer? and how many? I would like to know all about it. Mr Stone was in the army over two years, was wounded twice, and was taken prisoner & kept eight months.⁶ My brother was out a year & a half, and at the Battle of Shiloh received a wound in the thigh that disabled him from Service. The ball still remains in his leg, & will probably lame him for life.

When I wrote you last my health was very poor. I have entirely recovered, and am able to walk two miles or more.

I have one little child — a little boy, whom [I]⁷ we call *William Alexander*, — he is now fourteen months old, and perfectly healthy.

I think I will go to Ohio in the spring to visit my relatives, & if so I want to spend a month or two in Zoar to learn a

⁶ Stone was wounded at Blue Mills Landing and at Vicksburg. He was taken prisoner at Shiloh.— Shambaugh's *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. III, pp. 3, 4; *Official Records, War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Vol. III, pp. 193, 194.

⁷ Bracketed portion crossed out in original.

little German — I think it would benefit me a great —
deal —

Hopeing you will write soon, and tell about your people,
I will close as ever

Your friend

Caroline M. Stone.

[Endorsed] Caroline M. Stone (Mathews) Iowa City Des
Moines, I. Febr. 7/64. replied, Zoar, Mar. 2/64.⁸

JAMES MATHEWS TO CHRISTIAN WIEBEL

State of Iowa

Executive Department ⁹

Des Moines Feby. 13th 1866

Mr. Christian Weibel

Zoar Ohio

Dear Sir;

While Sitting in my room thinking over the past, and
the many Kindnesses of You and your Society, to me when
I resided at Coshocton Ohio, I concluded to drop you a
line. I reside at Knoxville in this State, where I have a
good Mansion, and I believe the best fruit, flower and orna-
mental garden in the State. I am cultivating about 100
Varieties of grapes; had Sixty Kinds in bearing this Year.
I wish I could Send you cuttings from Some of them, es-
pecially the "Rogers hybrids," if you have not gotten them.
My family are all yet living, and my children Six in num-
ber, are all Single except *Caroline*, who when a little girl
lived so long at Zoar. She is the wife of Governor Stone.
The Governor also lives in Knoxville, but stays here dur-
ing the Sitting of our Legislature, which is now in Session.
Caroline desires to be remembered to your people, for
whom She entertains the Kindest feelings. I am in the

⁸ This was not found.

⁹ From a printed letter head.

Governor's Office assisting him while the General Assembly are convened. I send you by the same mail that conveys this, a copy of the Governor's "Inaugural" address to the Legislature,¹⁰ which perhaps You may be interested to read. I should be glad to Know how many of my Old acquaintances at Zoar are Yet living, and how Your Society generally are getting along. Hoping that You are all quite as happy and prosperous as you was when we were acquainted;

I remain your Friend

James Mathews

[Endorsed] Jas Mathews & Caroline Stone. Des Moines, Iowa, Febr. 13/66, replied, Zoar, O. Mar. 9.¹¹

¹⁰ Delivered on January 11, 1866. Found in B. F. Shambaugh's *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. III, pp. 65-89.

¹¹ This was not found.