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James B. Finley Letters

11-16-1830

Letter from William Prescott to James B. Finley

William Prescott

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Gilmanton (New-Hampshire) Nov. 16th 1830.

Rev. James B. Finley, Dear Sir,

Although a stranger, I have long known you through the medium of the Methodist Magazine, and the Christian Advocate &c. and I now address you for the purpose of obtaining information upon several subjects in which I feel interested.

I received the Degree of M.D. at Dartmouth College in this State in August 1815 since which time I have resided in this place and had an extensive practice in my profession; but this region being extremely hilly, cold, windy and snowy and having been so often called to "buffet the pelting of the pitiless storm", I find that, although but little turned of forty, my constitution fails me when called to endure such extreme fatigue.

This has made it necessary for me to either seek a place where I can practice medicine with less fatigue, or enter into some other business for a livelihood.

I have for many years entertained an exalted opinion of the Western Country, but never till lately held any serious thoughts of removing there myself, having recently had conversation with some individuals who have visited the State of Ohio, and in whom I place considerable confidence, I have come to a determination to endeavour to obtain more information upon the subject, & consequently have ventured to tax your patience with a series of inquiries concerning the Western Country and particularly of the State of Ohio. I shall at the same time address a letter to the Rev. Martin Butler D.D. President of Augusta College with whom I was formerly considerably acquainted and to whom I would refer you if necessary or convenient.

I wish to know what effect the climate of the West has upon an individual from New-England? what parts are considered the most, and what the least favourable? what are the prevailing diseases in spring? summer? autumn? & winter? What are the regular prices of Physicians for a visit in the City? in large villages? and what additional price per mile when called into the country? do the people pay cash, or do they pay mostly in what is here called barter, (such as produce live stock &c.)

William Prescott
Gilmanton N.H.

Wm Prescott

Paid 2.5

Gilmanton N.H.
Nov. 19.

Rev. James B. Finley
Cincinnati

Ohio.

Nov 20
Oct 27

What is the encouragement ~~of~~ for a Physician to emigrate from this section of the country, provided he has been in the practice 15 or 16 years and made good improvement? At what business could he most profitably be employed, and in what most profitably invest a small property say from one to three thousand dollars, would he be most likely to succeed to expend it by purchasing a seat in some City, or village, and depend entirely upon the practice of Physic for his support? or would not the encouragement be greater to expend it in the purchase of land and pursue agriculture, at least in part? and if so, whether it would be most advisable to settle in some new and thinly settled part of the State where the land is cheap? can you give me any information relative to the price of land in different sections, and in different situations from that of the wilderness to that of good cultivation? Is the culture of the Mulberry, and the manufacture of silk been effectually tried, to ascertain whether it may be a source of profit? or has the culture of hemp been attended to? I should suppose that the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois were favourable to the production of both these articles, but probably the southern half is most congenial to the production of the Mulberry and rearing silk worms while the northern part is most favourable to the cultivation of hemp.

I would now observe that there are some privileges which I should consider of great importance in making a selection of a place for a permanent residence. ~~and~~ in the first place a good Methodist Society would be among my first inquiries, next to obtain a situation near some literary institution, and a residence near some large stream of water or what would perhaps be preferable on the border of some canal, would be very desirable. Dayton has been recommended to me as ^{having} facilities and encouragement to an enterprising and skillful Physician, can you inform me sir, as to that fact?

If I were to purchase land, I think I should prefer purchasing that which was cheap, at the same time that it was so situated as to render it pretty certain of increasing considerably in value, and that which is rich and productive

I have been rather tedious and prolix in my interrogatories, but if you will write me your deliberate and unbiased opinion upon as many of the foregoing questions as your means of information will permit, you will very much oblige me, and as you have been stationed in so many different parts of the State, I could think of no one whom I presumed so well qualified to give the information desired.

If the Hon. Joseph Finckley or any other or more of the Members of Congress from your State, are better situated to judge upon some of the above inquiries than yourself I would thank you to refer me to such in your answer to me, and I shall have an opportunity to correspond with them during the ensuing session of Congress, with much greater facility than when further distant, and at home in Ohio.

My family consists of myself and wife & two children, ~~a~~ son aged nine, & a daughter aged five years, I have a collection of minerals consisting of about one thousand specimens mostly from the U. S. States, and several rare specimens of shells and Indian antiquities, which I should like to transport with me if it would not be too expensive, they would be valuable acquisitions to a cabinet of minerals in the west. I have also a few ancient and rare books and manuscripts.

We have ~~our~~ rich mines of Lead, Iron, Pyrites, Copper, Zinc &c. but little silver & no gold has been discovered. We have the best of Greenstone, a valuable building stone, no lime in these States, nor any of the petrifactions which enrich the cabinet of the curious in the West and Middle States, no bones of the Mastodon (or Mammoth) are here to be found, the minerals found here are all of the Primitive Class. I might enquire of the purity of the water, the severity or mildness of the winter, the state of the roads, & the condition of the primary schools, and many other subjects, but I must forbear.

Will you Dear Sir write me as soon as convenient and much oblige your friend

and very humble servant

William Prescott

Rev. J. B. Finckley
Cincinnati (Ohio)