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3-15-1837

Letter from William Walker to James B. Finley

William Walker

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Upper Sandusky, March 15, 1837.

Dear Sir,

Your kind letter dated the 20 ultimo, I have received, & can assure you we are glad to hear from you and the family. It has refreshed the recollection of by gone days and old associations, to which it is pleasing (to me at least) to revert occasionally and peruse and scan a few pages of our past lives with a view to profit withal - to examine the proof sheet for the correction of errors and inaccuracies, for the purpose of being prepared to prevent the occurrence of similar ones.

Thro' the forbearance and mercy of the Lord, we still continue in the land of the living, favoured with good health and it so with all our family connection. Mother, has for the last two years enjoyed, and now enjoys unusual good health, and considerable bodily vigor.

Numerous and various have been the changes, some for better and some for worse, in our little community since your last visit; many of your old friends and acquaintances have "pushed off this mortal coil" - among them more recently was Isaac Williams, (Mannoc's Brother) Tho' it is a general time of health throughout the nation and the country generally, yet the usual fatality seems to follow our nation - dropping off without any apparent disease, except premature old age and dotage.

I could wish, if wishing would do any good, it were in my power to give you a flattering account of the condition of the Mission. I am almost constrained to pass it by, without any remarks, except simply to say, that a something bearing that cognomen, still exists, at least some few fragments

or remains of it are yet to be found reminding the passer by, that it was ^{once} comely and fair, and that it was ^{once} kept and superintended by people of civilized habits. It now looks more like a den of robbers or land pirates, haunted by Owls, cormorants, and satyrs. "O what a falling off my countrymen." I know how deep an interest you have in its prosperity, of course you will expect me to say something about it.

I will do it briefly, and say at once, it is in a most deplorable condition! I should not be surprised if the nation should take every child from the school. The school Committee has done all it could do to keep it up and assist the Missionary with aid and advice, till they found they could do nothing with him; the Committee then called upon the Chief, for aid from the Council; the Chief, appointed a Committee from their own body, to cooperate with them; they jointly met the Missionary and Presiding Elder and adopted certain rules for the future government of the Establishment, especially with regard to the School; but I find the Chief, can do nothing with him. Complaints do not proceed from severity in punishment or labor, it is rather the reverse; ~~there~~ ^{no} government, a want of system, order, regularity. Their living is horrid, no bedding, no clothes, and as dirty as swine. Of all men who have had charge of that Establishment (and there have been many) the present incumbent is, without a single exception, the most unfit in every point of view. By the way, he is a very clever fellow as a man (rather an odd chap tho') I like him well but as a Missionary he is, not worth three continental

coppers.

You state, that, the Church has adopted measures preparatory to the publication of a "History of the Wyandots and the Mission amongst them", and that ~~they~~ ^{it} has appointed you to collect the material for the work, and you request my cooperation and aid. It is, as you remark, "a Herculean task", and I have proved it to be so, from the little collections I have made from time to time, as I have had leisure. Occasionally I have occupied my leisure moments, when sources of correct information were at hand, in collecting historical facts, and incidents, interesting and worthy of preservation; small and limited as they are, they have cost me much labour and research. Two principal difficulties I have met with; one of which, is insurmountable and the other embarrassing in the extreme. The first is to obtain a complete connected history of the nation thro' all their various wars, revolutions, migrations and reverses of fortune; ^{*} (the latter appears to have done @ attention to the notion, very faithfully,) with the appropriate dates; and the latter is correct accounts of their various battles, victories, negotiations, treaties of peace and amity, alliances &c, free from fabulous and superstitious embellishments, with which all their traditions and mythology abound.

The history of the Wyandotte nation must necessarily include histories of the early Catholic Missions amongst them, and the Presbyterian Mission of the years 1808 '9 '10 '11 & '12, as well as the present Wyandotte Mission.

* Prior to the arrival of the French in Lo. Canada.

(4)

I have seriously and candidly pondered this matter over in my mind and viewed it in all its bearings and the conclusion I have arrived at is that, the Church ought not to touch this or ought not to publish this work, ~~and~~ I cannot prevail upon ~~myself~~ myself to lend my effort, or aid to this work in its present aspect. Now, allow me to say, and I hope you will believe me, when I say it, that such are my obligations to yourself personally, that if it were for your own private good, nothing in the compass of my power would be withheld. I am of opinion the Church ought not to undertake this work from several reasons; one I will here mention.

No Church having Missionary establishments in an Indian Nation can write an impartial History of the nation; especially when writing of the merits of Missions which may have preceded them and been discontinued or given up; nor can strict impartiality be observed in writing of its own operations whether successful or unsuccessful. There is an immediate, direct and controlling interest at stake which will invariably swerve the pen of the historian from strict fidelity. I do not intend these remarks to apply to the M.E.C. alone, far from it. I intend them to be general in their application. Instance "Hechawelder's Narrative":— what gross misstatements are there made to the respective parts borne by the Wyandots, & Delaware in the great Drama of that eventful period! gross injustice has been done the Wyandots, in that work.

(5)

March 15/1827

I do not say this was deliberately done, I hope not. It was doubtless caused by a want of a thorough and intimate acquaintance with the views, plans and sentiments of the Wyandots themselves. All the information he acquired, it is presumed he gathered from the members of his own flock in regard to the Wyandots. Some of these misstatements have been controverted and opposed by Gov. Cass.

As to writing a History of the Wyandott Mission, the Church has a perfect and clear right to do so, and to this I have not the least objection. I will remember, ~~that~~, some years ago, of being employed to collect the material for a Biographical Sketch of the late John Steward, — and well do I remember the severe flagellations I got from various quarters for so doing, especially, from those occupying high seats, in the Synagogue. I thought it strange that, even the Chiefs must come in, ^{for} a share of the censures of the Church. I thought then, others thought so, and I still think, we were hardly treated.

In conclusion, I will say that, I will throw no obstacles in your way in the undertaking; and as for my aid, perhaps, it will be of little importance either way. I beg you will remember us all, as a family, to ~~you~~ Mrs. L. to Mr. Brook & Mrs. Brooke and to all enquiring friends. I am very respectfully yours

Rev. J. P. Finley
Ridgville O

Wm. W. Walker

William Butler
Apr March 15
1897 —