

4-9-1849

Letter from Thomas Coke Wright to James B. Finley

Thomas Coke Wright

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Recommended Citation

Wright, Thomas Coke, "Letter from Thomas Coke Wright to James B. Finley" (1849). *Finley Letters*. 1120. <https://digitalcommons.owu.edu/finley-letters/1120>

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This Historical Collection. He marched out with and
keel such portions as he could not find room for. It is always
best to have enough to pick and choose from. While I am on
the subject I will request you to send me a few lines and
inform me what size your book will be? what will be the
nature of its contents? what embellishments will it have if any?
When will it be issued? How soon will you require some of my
manuscript to be sent up: for I can send two or three sheets
at a time as fast as I copy it.

I told Richard W. Sale what you
desired me and he agreed to comply. I will attend to these family
sketches about my parents as soon as I can. Col. Samuel D. Owens
a grand son of that good old man you formerly knew is now and
has been many years county surveyor of this county - he is also a
local preacher. He is an active business man possessing genius and
talents to fit him for most any thing he might turn his attention to.
Write a post rate letter and is withal a warm hearted, whole souled
man, who has a tear for pity and a hand open as day to melting
charity whose heart is a fountain of generous humane feelings and
sympathies. Heavens blessings on him he would wipe away every tear
of sorrow and pain consolation into every despairing bosom if he had
the power to do so. He is the very man of all men to write on account of
his Grandfather for your book. I told him he must and should do it.
But I think if you will write and tell him he must and shall he
will. I think, mind you better than me.
Let me hear from you
as soon as you can
Yours sincerely
Thomas Coke Wright

Kennel April 9th 1849

My Dear Uncle
I have written 36 pages of Book copy
on every other line like this letter about A. J. Hamilton. To this
will be added the pursuit and capture which occupies some two
or three columns of a newspaper which being already printed is not
copied in the manuscript. To this will be added his account of the
manner in which the burglary was effected which is so well remembered
that when I come to it in copying my manuscript for the press
that I can write it down correctly so as to require no revision or
copying. Then his speech occupying 4 pages is to come in, then his
letter No 1 dated August the 29th 1845 addressed to the Sheriff and
myself containing more than 17 pages giving his views upon
the Christian religion and concluding with an account of the
internal management of the Penitentiary and the Presbyterian
chaplain his style of preaching &c. Then letter No 2 of two pages
dated Decem: 19th 1845 addressed to our Sheriff informing him
that he thought he had found a Jew which would lead to the
detection of the murderers of Steel and Kenney and making some
remarks on that atrocious transaction. Then letter No 3 of 7 pages nearly
giving an account of his having "received a pardon, not from the
Governor of Ohio, but from the Governor of Governors - the Great Prince
of the universe" - an elegantly written letter and a curiosity of itself.
It is dated August 2nd 1846 and addressed to the Sheriff. Then
Letter No 4 of 14 pages dated August 19th 1846 an answer to one from
one

in which I inferred from that the murders perpetrated here had made much against obtaining signs to his petition for a reprieve, the feelings of the people being so much heated and exasperated. In this last letter he laments that he should be affected by murders in which he had no agency and pleads for an attempt to be made to obtain signs and giving directions in what manner to proceed - expresses much horror at the idea of dying in prison &c. This is followed by some concluding remarks about his education, talents character &c. and about whether this was his first crime or not and all concluded by his Phrenological character taken from a printed sheet now in my possession and which was taken by a Professor of Phrenology while he was in jail - the truth of which in the main he did not pretend to deny. Now whether Phrenology be true or not it is believed by thousands of persons and most any ^{one} whether a believer or not after reading an account of him would like to see what a Phrenologist would say of his head. I think it would make an interesting conclusion of the whole matter.

I have procured suitable paper - large square sheets and have commenced copying my first rough sketch for the press in as plain a manner as I can write. When I come to his letters I shall leave out such portions as are uninteresting copying only only the finest portions and such as will throw light on his character. Mr William B Fairchild thinks the whole will make 60 pages of manuscript. He is a practical printer as well as a

good writer himself and will look over the manuscript for minor errors which a person situated as I am writing in a public office liable to constant interruptions is sure to make. A person can correct the composition of another better than his own because his attention is directed to that alone.

I have introduced some collateral ideas which the subject brought up and made some remarks, along, which are intended to relieve the sketch from being a mere dry detail of incidents with an occasional quotation to give it a little literary touch. When I am engaged in composing perfect quotations swarm round the point of my pen like moths round a candle and I can hardly help using some of them. I attribute this to the fact of my Mother requiring me to commit such to memory as soon as I could speak plain and when some friend visited the family would have me stand up and recite. So this early beginning I have added much more in the course of a pretty extensive reading for one of my opportunities. Ben: Collett - a great lawyer and scholar in his day and to say he believed I could find a suitable quotation from Shakespeare to use in a speech in a case of trespass against sheep killing dogs.

When you receive my manuscript which you see will make a little book of itself. You can draw lines round and leave out such parts as you in your better judgment may think proper putting in the necessary connecting words at the hiatus or gaps. That was the way our mutual friend Henry Howe did with what I sent him for