

# THE LETTERS OF DAVID RUSSEL HASWELL

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and

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DAVID RUSSEL HASWELL, whose letters to his father and brother in Bennington, Vermont, between 1808 and 1831 are the focal point of this article, is a name that will not be found in many history books. But the Haswell family has left its imprint on history in such widely diverse places as New England, Pennsylvania, and Burma. David's father was Anthony Haswell, a Revolutionary war patriot, balladeer, member of the Sons of Liberty, and probably a participant in the Boston Tea Party. The elder Haswell printed and published in excess of two hundred books and pamphlets. In the days before Vermont joined the Union, Anthony Haswell was that Commonwealth's first and only postmaster general.<sup>1</sup> David's half brother, James Madison Haswell, was a longtime missionary in Burma and the grandfather of Gordon Seagrave, "the Burma Surgeon."<sup>2</sup>

David Russel Haswell, born in Bennington, Vermont, September 3, 1784, was the fourth of ten children born to Anthony and Lydia Haswell.<sup>3</sup> As a teenager he plied the printing and publishing trades and later became a bookbinder.<sup>4</sup> He married Lucinda Beaman of Bennington on December 6, 1807, and left shortly thereafter for Pennsylvania. According to family oral history, Haswell and his brother-in-law, Joseph Beaman, accompanied by their wives, made the winter trip on sleds. This may have been true for there is evidence of other

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1 Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1932), 8: 390-91; John Spargo, *Anthony Haswell, Printer, Patriot, Ballader* (Rutland, Vermont, 1925); Marcus A. McCorison, comp., *Vermont Imprints* (Worcester, Vermont, 1963), 504-5; "Fourth Estate: Beginnings of the Printed Word," *Vermont Life* 3 (Autumn 1948): 50.

2 Family genealogical records; "Herbert James Vinton," *Mission* 36 (Oct. 1945): 443.

3 *Record of the Family of Anthony Haswell by His First Wife*, printed by their sons in June 1799, reprinted by Anthony Haswell, Jr., in June 1815, and reprinted by Benjamin F. Haswell in 1881.

4 McCorison, *Vermont Imprints*, 506.

Vermonters making the journey to Pennsylvania in a similar fashion.<sup>5</sup> The brothers-in-law settled on the northern border of Columbia Township, Bradford County, Pennsylvania, "where they engaged in farming for the remainder of their days."<sup>6</sup> They were among the earliest permanent settlers in western Bradford County.<sup>7</sup>

A large proportion of the settlers in the county were from New England<sup>8</sup> and had established themselves on lands granted by the Susquehanna Company, a Connecticut-based land company. Bradford County was part of the northern tier of Pennsylvania that was claimed by both the Keystone State and Connecticut. The controversy, which resulted in the Yankee-Pennamite wars, was finally resolved in favor of Pennsylvania in 1807. The New England influence is readily evident in the duplication of Vermont, Connecticut, and Massachusetts town names in Bradford County — Albany, Windham, Burlington, Cabot, Canton, Springfield, Troy, Warren, Glover, Orwell, Monro, and others.

In the early years of the nineteenth century the pattern of development in Pennsylvania was similar to that in the remainder of the young nation. The United States was attempting to establish its economic, political, social, and cultural independence from England. It was also a period marked by the onset of revolutions in agriculture, industry, transportation, and communication, with Pennsylvania leading the rest of the nation.<sup>9</sup> Out of this surge of economic development came the beginning of urbanization, the rise of unionism, and significant developments in medicine, science, education, and the arts. America went from an "era of good feelings" to an "era of bad feelings"<sup>10</sup> as political parties rose and fell. Western expansion and an aroused national consciousness also characterized this age.

Coinciding with the revolution in secular life was a revolution in religious life and practice. Prior to the War of 1812, religious life stagnated because of deistic tendencies. According to one historian, it was "the period of lowest ebb-tide in vitality in the history of American

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5 David Craft, *History of Bradford County Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1878), 297.

6 *Ibid.*, 303.

7 Clement F. Heverly, *Pioneer and Patriot Families of Bradford County Pennsylvania, 1800-1825* (Towanda, Pa., 1915), 2: 158.

8 Clement F. Heverly, "Bradford County Chronology, 1800-1815," *Bradford County Historical Society Annals* 10 (1917): 36.

9 Sylvester K. Stevens, *Pennsylvania, the Keystone State* (New York, 1956), 307.

10 Dexter Perkins and Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The United States of America: A History to 1876*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1968), 1: 330-31.

Christianity.”<sup>11</sup> By the end of the war, a revival or “second awakening”<sup>12</sup> had begun. The resurgence, starting in the northeast, spread rapidly to Pennsylvania and other sections of the country. This new awakening, which peaked in the 1820s and 1830s, reinvigorated the churches and resulted in widespread evangelism, increasing membership, the creation of voluntary societies, and a wave of missionary and benevolent activities. The evangelistic spirit was so fervent that some areas were referred to as “burned-over districts” because of the great number of evangelists’ bonfires.<sup>13</sup>

The increase of religious spirit is evident in the Haswell letters. The first letter (1808) was written during the deistic period and is entirely descriptive in nature. The other letters (1830-1831), which were written during the height of the revival, tend to be homiletic and are a reflection of the piety of the time. Haswell’s religious fervor is also evident in his “death bed” instructions to his children (1834).

In the earliest dated letter of this aggregation, Haswell wrote of his farm and of the first planting. On the back was a note by his wife to her kin in Bennington. In the second letter dated two weeks later, he told of his winter journey from Vermont, gave some additional information about his farm, and sent news about himself and Joseph Beaman. Haswell appended some brief notes to this letter several days later and then it was finally posted. The first set of letters, addressed to “Anthony Haswell, Printer, Bennington, Vermont,” are the only ones in the collection from David to his father.

Cabot  
June 5, 1808

Dear Father,

Your letter of the 24th of April was received about the 16th of May, and though we had not the pleasure of seeing Mr. Follett the letters gave us much pleasure for we had not heard a word from Bennington till we received them, and I am sorry to say we have not heard from you since,—I should have written you immediately on reception of yours, but having written a few days previous, and having nothing important to write, I thought it best to omit writing for a few days, hoping in that time to receive a line from you of a later date; I

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11 William Sweet, *The Story of Religion in America* (New York, 1950), 223.

12 H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, *American Christianity* (New York, 1960), 1: 428.

13 *Ibid.*, 2: 12.

did not however intend to delay it so long as I have, but I have been very much hurried in preparing my ground for corn;—I have planted near an acre and an half of corn, some potatoes, mush-mellons, water-mellons, cucumbers, squashes, beans, &c.—I have set out thirty two little apple trees, and have a good bed of lettuce growing, this is the beginning; what the end may be I cannot tell you, but I hope if life and health are preserved to be able to pay for my land, and to get a comfortable living — The farm that is run out for me consists of two hundred acres, exclusive of the allowance for roads &c is six acres to the hundred, but Joseph takes one half of it, mine will cost me one hundred bushels of wheat, exclusive of what I have paid for the work done on it;—Joseph's will cost him one hundred and fifty bushels, wild.—My chance I consider better than his, and he saves fifty cents to every acre—The county road from Tioga Point<sup>14</sup> to Cowneica is to be run this week, it might run through about the center of our farm——

June 19

Since writing the above, I have had the pleasure to receive your letters forward by Mr. Clark, likewise those forwarded by Davis & Hunter;—the information which they contained was in general pleasing, and they should have been answered before this, if I could have had the opportunity to send a letter to the post office in Newtown<sup>15</sup> we live twenty miles from Newtown, our opportunities of sending are not at this season of the year very frequent.—In your letter of May 14th you request me to be more particular with respect to the progress and events of our journey, and of our purchase &c.—I cannot tell what the exact amount of our expense were, but they were heavy, we were able to pay a considerable part of them with our books, paper,<sup>16</sup> &c, and when we got to the end of our journey we had about \$1.50 left in cash.—You ask how we done for provision on the road? We had plenty except of bread which ran short in a very few days, we were however able to purchase a supply, and got thro' in fifteen days, more at our ease than could be reasonably expected, every creature in our team doing well.—With respect to our purchase, I bought the lot and pd. my waggon and horses for it, that is, pd. that sum for work done on the lot, and for the privilege of getting my

14 Now Athens, Pennsylvania.

15 Now Elmira, New York.

16 This and several other references to paying with books probably indicates that Haswell brought a supply of books from Vermont to use for bartering purposes, both on the journey and in Bradford County.

land at the same rate that the old settlers got theirs, Joseph takes that half which comes out a bushel and a half per acre, I take that half which comes out one bushel; all the improvement belongs to me; because I paid for it so that I can have one hundred acres, about eight acres badly washed and I am not able to till them, I have one acre corn planted and hoed for the first time besides my potatoes.

I am sorry to tell you that this country did not suit Davis & Hunter at all, Davis has taken sick and moved to the Connondaga country;—I purchased his gun, his drag teeth iron ware, and let him have a horse which I bought and paid for in Books, likewise my saddle & bridle.

There has been a house on my lot, and the shell is now standing, but unfit to live in;—we live in the house with Solomon Soper<sup>17</sup> (he was from Manchester). His family are kind to us, we shall build a house shortly.——

I am glad to hear you built a barn, wared house, &c and can only say that if I had been with you I would have lifted the heavy end.——

You ask how Joseph's wheat looks? It looks well and promises great assistance to him, & I may say to me too.—Respecting the books that ask to go to Mr. Wood of New York there was five books to go to him I think.——I took Shank receipt for the books I left with him, I forgot to inclose it, I now do it.

I not[e] in my last that Joseph had taken a farm to tend on chores in Newtown this season, he has been obliged to give it up;—he was at the raising of a barn and has been on a cane a few weeks since having got the great toe on his right foot bruised very badly, by the fall of some timber, he is now able to attend to business, and works on his own land the remainder of the season.—I have been able to get with by books; cotton cloth, for a pair of shirts, shugar in plenty for use, the horse I mentioned, and one or two days work, two bushels of wheat and some other little matters.

You ask how our provisions hold out, that is a question I hate to answer;—our pork is nearly gone, but venison a substitute *and plenty*, grains is plenty, and easy to be obtained, I fear not but we should live comfortably.—Your old friend David Payne has paid me a visit, and appears friendly, he says a line from you would be received with

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<sup>17</sup> Soper occupied the property adjoining Haswell's; see *Bradford County Deed Book*, 2: 458-59, courthouse, Towanda, Pennsylvania. Soper's son Herman was probably the first white male born in that part of Bradford County; see H. C. Bradsby, *History of Bradford County Pennsylvania* (Chicago, 1891), 454.

pleasure.—He lives at Tioga Point. I thank you for the papers you sent, do not miss of sending Smeads<sup>18</sup> paper weekly.

Lucinda and myself have just been to look at our corn ; it looks good, Cinda wishes all the trees cut and piled at your back door and I wish so to, and then I should not have these to chop and you would have wood enough at your feet.

21st June 1808

I have been hard at work today, and would wish that I had even Alvin to assist me, but he is in Bennington and I in Pennsylvania.—Tell brother William in your letters, to write me.—I have not yet got a cane, but Joseph and myself are going out to Newtown tomorrow and I hope we shall be able to get one before we return.— . . . 22—We are now at work in Newtown to pay for some wheat, I quit work this afternoon to carry my letters to the office, it is three miles and I have got to walk it, so I must bid you adue.

In haste, your son  
David R. Haswell

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All of these letters were posted without the benefit of an envelope, that is, they were folded and posted aerogram style. On the same pages as David's correspondence and carried over to the back of the then folded letter-envelope were the following short notes from Haswell's spouse to her kin in Bennington.

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Cabot Mill Creek

20th June, 1808

Dear Mother ;

I received a letter from you a short time since, but have had no time to answer it, and even now it will just make postage, which I am very sorry for ; but I feel much engaged for your welfare, and am anxious to hear from you as often as you have opportunity to write, and I will with pleasure do the same. I think of you every hour in the day, and were it possible I should come and see as often as I think of you.—I want one of the children and hope to have Eliza next winter

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18 Probably reference to a paper by Benjamin Smead, a partner of Anthony Haswell from 1804-1806 and a Bennington printer from 1804-1812. See McCorison, *Vermont Imprints*, 505-6, 552.

if I come to see you.<sup>19</sup> I have bought a good bear skin tippit for you and pd. for it. I have spun for the woman where I live 30 runs of yarn.—I have nothing else important to write, so you must accept as love.

Your friend,  
Lucinda Haswell

To sister Susan,

Dear sister,—I received your letters by the hand of Mr. Clark and to do justice to you, I must say I never read more sensible letters from a person of your age;—they found us in good health so this leaves me fine as I pray God this may find you and the rest of my dear brothers and sisters. I cannot write you much of a letter on this sheet but you must take will for deed, I hope I shall see you in the course of the next winter, but I do not know whether I shall be able to meet the expense.—Tell little Benjamin that Isiah has burnt a whole heap of bough.—I am glad to hear that you are learning to spin;—go on my sister and fit yourself for a good housewife.

Sukey, if I had twenty bonnets here I could sell them all, I could get you good ruffles and tippits for them, if you could have a chance to send a quantity of chips or braid it would turn to good amount. Give my love to all the children and kiss that little rogue.—Longing for your affection as brother and sister.

Sincerely,  
Lucinda

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Only scanty information is available about the life of David Russel Haswell and his family in the intervening years between 1808 and 1830, the date of the next letter in this collection. During the interim he apparently was a frequent sojourner in Bennington. As already noted, his first child was born there. Also, according to one source, he plied the printing-publishing trade in Bennington until 1820.<sup>20</sup> Haswell probably returned to Vermont each winter after the crops had been harvested on his Bradford County farm.

In 1810 he fulfilled the purchase requirements of his deed,<sup>21</sup> but

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<sup>19</sup> This wish came true, for Lucinda's first child, Susannah Haswell, was born in Bennington, March 11, 1809.

<sup>20</sup> McCorison, *Vermont Imprints*, 506.

<sup>21</sup> *Bradford County Deed Book*, 2: 458-59 (acknowledged June 1810, recorded Feb. 22, 1817).

for some unknown reason he sold a large portion of his land to Joseph Beaman in 1817<sup>22</sup>

During the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Haswell family grew in numbers with the birth of a son and two daughters. Susannah, their first child, died in 1810, but two more daughters were born during the 1820s.

Haswell and his wife Lucinda were both active in the affairs of the church. Lucinda, along with Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Hyde, formed a "praying band" which others soon joined, and prayer meetings were instituted.<sup>23</sup> David Haswell and Joseph Beaman were co-founders of the Columbia-Wells Baptist Church. Haswell served as deacon and clerk of this church for a number of years.<sup>24</sup> He also served as a delegate from this church to the annual meeting of the Chemung (New York) Baptist Association for the years 1821, 1826, 1827, 1829, and 1830.<sup>25</sup>

Haswell's active concern for the church is very evident in the remaining letters of this collection. While the first group of letters was basically descriptive, the remaining letters were both homiletic and descriptive of life in Bradford County.

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Mr. William Haswell  
Post-master  
Bennington-(Vt.)

Columbia  
March 25th 1830

Dear Brother, I wrote you a few weeks ago—and have nothing very important to communicate to you at this time, but as a few moments of leisure occur I thought I would improve them in writing, not in answer to any letters I have received from Bennington for a considerable length of time (since Decr,)—I think Anthony concludes my letters to yourself, Susan and Elisa<sup>26</sup> lay him under no obligation, in as much as they are not directed to him,—My ideas of religion in particular I always want him to remark upon and answer; and I generally design my letters to the family—but one letter in a year I guess is more than Anthony writes to me.—I am quite remiss, but I write twice to every letter I get from Bennington.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 459-60 (Feb. 25, 1817).

<sup>23</sup> Craft, *History of Bradford County*, 305.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-34; Heverly, *Pioneer and Patriot Families*, 158.

<sup>25</sup> *Chemung (New York) Baptist Association, Minutes, 1821-1830* (hereafter cited as *Minutes*).

<sup>26</sup> Haswell's siblings.



When I wrote you last I recollect I felt somewhat low spirited and did not in one respect state exactly as I ought; I told you we all well;—I had at that time for two weeks been attending as much as I could stand it, on one of Mr. Edsall's sons who died—the stench was awful and but few could do for him; I took severe cold, my stomach got out of order and I have not been well since the 1st of Feb—I have every day kept at work a little, but much of the time in pain, and courage at times runs low—I cannot to any advantage use the axe, beetle, or Land spike;—I seem to have a loneness at the pit of my stomach, that is at times tedious and much like what I complained of some years ago—We have commenced sugaring and made about 100 pounds—

#### March 28th

We have had a very severe snow storm for the season,—but is now more pleasant and our sugar trees are running smartly—At this season of the year I always like to know how your fodder holds out—I think I could part with a little this spring, my stock however is smaller than usual—We have only the old gray mare and her two colts, one yoke of oxen, 4 cows, 4 yearlings, and 32 sheep.—

Our winter school was not the best, and our children will have to be woods children do the best we can—I want to know if you have heard from Anthony's son George—A poor, very poor widow woman who had no portion left her but seven orphan children has prevailed on me to let her little son of six years old come to my family for the present, I have sent him to school this winter, clothed him in new homemade pants and a good little pair of laced boots, and if he leaves us the poor little fellow is very welcome to it all; he was naked almost—

Ms Beaman's health is about as when I wrote you last, she keeps about the house most of the time but can attend no business—

#### April 3

I should destroy this letter, and not send it but I fear I should be tedious if I were to begin again—I am ashamed to have so many dates and so far apart—I feel much better than when I wrote the forepart of this letter;—We have worked night and day for the week past; sugaring and nursing the little flock; &c, &c.

You have told me nothing in your letters with respect to Mr. Hyde—Is he better than when I was in Bennington?

Let me now enquire how you get along in your pilgrimage, and Anthony also ;—Brethren, do you watch and pray?—Is your conversation as becometh the gospel of Christ?—Do you strive to the utmost to get the better of the man of sin?—The life of a Christian is a war-faring life,—*No strife, no Christian!*

“Because they dwell at ease—  
And no sad changes feel—  
They neither bear nor trust thy name—  
Nor learn to do thy will.”—

“But I with all my cares,  
Will lean upon the Lord ;—  
I’ll cast my burden on his arm,  
And rest upon his word.”—

“His arm shall well sustain—  
The children of his love—  
The ground on which their safety stands,  
No earthly power can move.”—

To Elisa, I would say, watch against the attacks of the adversary, watch and pray. To Alva, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.—

Here is my rest, my joy, my hope, “*No earthly power can move.* The king of kings and Lord of Lords has said—I *will* be unto them a God, and they *shall* be unto me a people,” Oh how should Christians love him for that promise? Though the mother shall forsake her suckling; Christ will not forsake his people—He will love them, he will chasten them, he will purify them, & bring them safely to that Haven of eternal rest, where himself is, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.

“I’ll praise him while he lends me breath,—  
And when my voice is lost in death—  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers.”

To die, what is it but gain, to the soul that loves the Lord.—The apostle said, but to depart and to be with Christ was far better—better than a stay in this world.

Susan, how do you feel, are you discharging the duty of a Christian? Did you ever read in the scripture like this

“Come out from among them and be ye separate.”

“And they that confess me before men, I will  
confess before my father and the body of angels.”

“Take my yoke upon you—for my yoke is easy and my  
burden light.”

Are you seeking a sign.—Oh, *Dear Susan*, do not question the truth and veracity of God, do not my sister, my heart is pained for you, I love you to much, I know I do;—I want to see you in the ranks engaged for God—

“The fearful soul that tires and faints—  
And walks the way of God no more—  
Is but esteemed *almost* a saint—  
And makes his own destruction sure.”

What could he have done for his vineyard that he hath not done.

Give our respects to all friends;—*Old Mrs Clark & Sarah*,—And my mind is not at ease till I have said a word to Darius. I don't know how he will receive it;—but I am strengthened by the recollection of a scripture—“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy land, for thou knowest not which shall prosper *this* or *that*”—Shall we see God in peace my dear brother, if we do not love and serve him in this world? Almost every man says he believes in Christ—But have all men a belief as the scripture has said? I think you will not say it—The revelation did not think so, for he said—“They also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”—You and I must look upon him, and the time is not far distant—Let us be wise, and go to his word for instruction—May God bless you my brother—and your little ones—

D. R. Haswell

William Haswell  
Postmaster  
Bennington (Vermont)

Columbia  
August 1st, 1830

Dear Brother—Elisa's letter of June 27th is before me, & was received three weeks ago, but I have not seen time to answer it, neither can I devote much time to writing at present, and therefore shall not pretend to answer her—You mentioned your confinement to the house and that Sarah was unwell, we shall feel anxious till we hear from you again—At the time I wrote you last I was quite unwell myself,

but I am more able to work hard in my hay which is very good—Baldwin assists me for ten days, he and his wife are well.—You told me you would give a short history of your church difficulties,—I am sorry they exist;—But do you remember William what I told you the afternoon when the vote was passed to hire Mr Peters, I was there in Bennington (I don't claim to be a prophet) but I thought the shift that exchanged Mr Marsh for Mr Peters not of the Lord.

If the pure doctrine of Christ and the Apostles was preached and lived up to how much *pride* and false religion, or rather Hypocrisy must flee the militant church—The Lord in his wrath is dealing with you as a church I believe—So he is with us, and greater abominations hardly can be found than is in the Baptist churches in this quarter—If we would hug only the humble doctrine of the cross, I believe it would go well with us here, and we know it would hereafter—

How does that little Baptist church get along in the East part of town, tell Anthony to write to me; what is their number and how do they travel? May the Lord keep them humble—Anthony, tell them not to strive for the mastery, but only to excell in good works, and may the Lord add only such to you as shall be saved—

5th Aug.—I have had no opportunity to send my letter to the office—We are engaged in the hay and have got into my old barn, say, 8 tons,—in stacks of 6—2 down—and considerable to cut that is suffering, say 6 tons—a part, say 4 tons of which is in the barn was left of my old hay, the weather has been catching, or showery—If ever I can get a good barn I shall be much relieved, I have the boards paid for more than enough for it—

8th—I last evening received Susan's long letter of May 30th, June 13th, 15th, 17th—I cannot answer her now but will soon as I get through the haying.

We are all well—Susan tells us that Sarah is sick, our prayer is that God may give her grace to bear her afflictions, with resignation to his will. And oh! that she might love him with all the heart—

“God wounds and he only can cure.” *Give love to all friends—*

D. R. Haswell

Mr William Haswell  
Postmaster  
Bennington (Vermont)

Columbia June 12th 1831

Dear Brother, We have received the letters sent by Horace, and had some expectance that Mr. Thomas would have called on us. His

friends live, I expect about twenty five miles from us—I should have gone and made him a visit but for the uncommon hurry of our business and the situation of my moves—We never had a more unfavorable season for getting in spring crops, the whole of April and May was wet, it is now however a beautiful growing time, grass, wheat, & rye are forward—we have planted two acres of corn, and sowed two acres of oats, and half a bushel of flaxseed & a few peas—have also planted 23 bushels of potatoes and a few beans, this together with repairing fence comprises our spring work or the greater part of it—I have however been home considerable and our team has not been heavy enough for the business that we have had to do, which has been a serious put back—

Yesterday it thickened up or clouded for a shower, it thundered and lightened considerable;—the lightning struck a green sugar maple of uncommon size within about twelve or fourteen rods of my door, it slivered the top considerable and split the body from top to bottom exactly through the middle leaving monstrous halves hanging out each way.—

You did not tell me whether you wanted my young mare or not.—I design to let you have her, or her value—I hope to close my matter with Dr. Rose next winter.—I sometimes get the hypocondria, and think any other part of the world would be preferable to this, and any other business better for me than that I am in;—the Michigan fever has raged some time in me; some times I have the thought I would get a set of bookbinding tools & go into some of the fast settling villages and try for a living; but when I reflect on the goodness of God who has brought us through many trials and has often cleared the dark sky,—who has given us a family and enabled us to bring them thus far forward, and enabled us also to clear at least fifty acres of the heavy forest, and convert it to meadow and pasture, I conclude I am not at all times activated by right motives.—

I have sometimes thought if I could pay Doctor Rose, Mr Thomas of Worcester and yourself, my mind would be at ease.—But as it respects Mr Thomas the circumstances were these, I got to the amount of fifty dollars of him, a part of the same I let go to whoever asked on fathers account, the remainder, mostly were entrusted to Daniel Smith (a worthless pedler) that was selling small stuff for father, & he ran away. I soon married and moved into the wilderness where I have had to bear burdens little known or felt by Mr Thomas and have never had it in my power to pay him—What

will be done with the matter I cannot tell;—But one thing I am determined on, that is, for future I will not contract debts.—Ten dollars would clear me from all I owe in this state except my farm debt.—I think it is duty to be squaring of worldly concerns, settle up, and see how we stand.—It is a misery, misery, misery, for a man to be always in debt.—I'll wear cow hyde shoes, coarse clothing, and live poor in my house rather than be dunned for breakfast and supper—I last week had a nasty little dunner for forty four cents, the first dunning letter I ever had in my life—

The letters from Anthony and Susan gave us great satisfaction—Anthony and you both said something of the trials of the Congregational church in Bennington; I am sorry that the spirit of our Master, on whom we profess to serve actuates us so little; if the spirit of Christ only actuated us how we should love, how engaged we should be (not each to gain an advantage) but to search diligently for our own faults and confess them—But bretheran how hard it seems to be for mankind to say *I am in the fault*, the more general course is another is more faulty than myself, *I am strait but you are crooked*—We ought to be extremely careful what grounds we urge against our bretheran and also see that what we do wize is done in meekness for this alone is calculated to win—the labor that is taken with a brother should be designed and prosecuted in love, to gain—not in spirit to overcome—Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ—Pride is a killing thing—*Party spirit*, O how killing—it begets jealousy, hatred, strife—Study to know the doctrine and maintain the visable order of *Christ house*—Good men can be mistaken; Christ was under no mistake. I urge you my bretheran to see these things.

We have of late had serious difficulties in our church; I have taken an active part for the exclusion of several members deeming that I could not do less and serve the cause of my master; I have my own trials too bretheran, and my enemies—But this is my consolation, God knows his own—The wrong can never find an approbation with him—Don't let us maintain the truth is unrighteousness but as far as in us lies try to render acceptable service—I do not wish to throw anything into your minds that should be calculated for unhappiness, far be it from me; but I want that we should search and prove ourselves by the word, if we have anything that is not of Christ should we not drop it and recede instantly—I want that long letter that Anthony has promised me—Horace could not find the hymn books in any of the bookstores—

I cannot too much praise God for his goodness in the conversion of our bretheran Thomas and James<sup>27</sup> and for the precious visit of Susan and James, Oh the goodness of God to our household,—it often fills my heart with praise to God, and bretheran, though I see you seldom I often think of you and try in my poor way to pray for you—Yes bretheran and sisters I do indeed love you and desire that you may be kept from sin in the world and saved at last with an everlasting salvation—

Susannah, if I were to study a month I could not find so appropriate words to address you as those of your letter—"How much danger there is in trusting too much to the mercy of God forgetting justice—I wonder how people can depend so much on what they once felt, neglecting their daily duty and a constant watch over their lives."—

It is truly astounding, and I must confess a living wonder to myself—Oh that God would help us get the better of the man of sin—Then we shall watch and pray.—Then we shall not be content to stay where you do.—By this I mean,—having the witness that I think you have of a change of heart we would come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, try to find a place in the Church that we may be in a better situation to do good.—I believe that people cut themselves short of much happiness, light and strength by neglecting duty. It is important that we be established in the truth and strive together for the faith of the Gospel.—And as it respects the various denominations, I shall only say, Christ has gone before and shown the way, and it is enough for the servant to be as his master, and if we can find what his example was, *nothing else should do.*—

Adeline is assisting her mother in doing the house work and weaving, Emiline is teaching school in our district, the scholars are small and only 12 or 14 in number.<sup>28</sup>

We sheared a little over a hundred pounds of wool from our sheep and have sold 48 pounds at 46 cents per lb.—We have added to our stock this season 5 calves, 16 lambs and one colt, our young mare lost her colt at two days.—

13th—We have had a beautiful rain and vegetation is rushing forward.—

Horace tells me you have land in the Michigan,—how much? and where about in that territory? and have you received any intelligence

<sup>27</sup> *Minutes, 1821-1830.*

<sup>28</sup> Adeline and Emiline were Haswell's eldest daughters.

as to the quality and situation?

One more word to Susan—You observe it is important to live so as that we may be able to rejoice rather than tremble at the approach of death—I do desire that we might and I tell you again there is but one example that will do for us to pattern from—and in as much as we are poor creatures liable to wander from the God we love how necessary that we put ourselves under the watch of God’s people, we then share more largely of their admonition, watch, prayer, and goodly conversation; all of which is calculated for the health and spiritual growth of the church—but you will say perhaps, I serve him just as faithfully where I am! No Susan, NO! God has through his son marked the way for his children and said “*This is the way, walk ye in it.*”—If others say stay with us, or lo he is here or there, what is that to you.—*Christ says, follow thou me*, and if we do we shall rejoice when the day of the redemption draweth nigh—May God help you.

(In love—D. R. Haswell)

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David Russel Haswell apparently maintained the religious bent evident in these letters until his dying day. He continued to serve as a delegate to the annual meetings of the Baptist Church, the last of these being October 10 and 11, 1834.<sup>29</sup> Haswell died and presumably went to be with his beloved Lord on December 7, 1834.

This strong emphasis on the Godly life is also found in the following epistle to Haswell’s children found among his papers after his demise.

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Sunday September 14th, 1834

Being deprived of the privilege of attending the worship of God today as usual I thought I would sit down and try to discharge a duty that has for a long time seemed to dwell upon and impress my mind. The matter is that of speaking a few words that may be seen and read by my dear children when my tongue shall have done speaking and my eyes closed in death. When I reflect on the subject before me and what I should be glad to communicate, so many things rush upon my mind that I know not where or how to begin; I drop my pen and weep, I pray that God would strengthen me, calm my mind, and assist

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<sup>29</sup> *Minutes, 1831-1834.*



me to write in the spirit; and that when these few lines shall be read by you, His spirit may accompany the same to your hearts. It is not because I would pursue a system of work to trust therein that I take this course for I know that it is God alone that can perform the work. I so much desire in your hearts; yet my children I am sensible that man in this world is under natural and moral obligation to God but notwithstanding this his heart is opposed to God and he chooses not to be told of the depravity of his nature. And even when God permits them to have the privilege of attending upon his worship and they see that the servants of God agonize in soul for them they seem to be indifferent, light, and vain in their minds, and they become stony ground hearers of His precious word: Oh my children how often has my mind been pained when I have seen this disposition show itself in you; I do not wish to say that I think you worse than others, for by nature mankind are the same; but as a father my bowels have yearned over you; I know at a certain time and more than once, I have seen you, Anthony,<sup>30</sup> Adeline and Emiline weep; and manifest that you were not on a safe foundation. But I ask you candidly how have you dealt with God on this subject, have you gone to him and told him that you were all defiled by sin, guilty sinners that deserved to be cast off and made miserable; and that nothing but His pity and mighty power could save you! Have you like poor Barlimeirs cried "Jesus have mercy on me." Save a poor sinner, and show me the corruption of my own heart! Oh, my dear children my heart is in pain for you, and I don't know but I sin in unreconciliation on your amount. I have thought if the Lord would suffer me to see you bowed to the scepter of Jesus, I would say, "let now thy servant depart in peace." I know that God is good and that I have served him with too much indifference, and my example before you has not been such as I could wish it had; yet I have tried to correct you in your morals, and to lead your minds to a consideration of eternal things; no doubt I have erred in many, very many respects before you; I know I have, but forgive the weakness of your father who perhaps loves you too much, and try to profit by his faults, not by following, but by forsaking them. Never in your lives do a thing for the reason that father used thus to do; or adopt an idea because it was fathers. The Apostle gives a better rule: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Let the word of God and the counsel of God's people be for your instruction. These will lead you to love one another, to try to assist each other in all the

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<sup>30</sup> Anthony was Haswell's only son.

trials of this life, and to feel for each other's woe; this is a world of trouble that we live in, and when brethren and sisters grow cold in their affections toward each other and look with indifference on each other's afflictions how sorrowful is the sight! Let it never be the case with you my children. Never forget the sentiment of the Psalmist here expressed:

“How pleasant tis to see  
 Kindred and friends agree  
 Each in their proper station move,  
 And each fulfill their part  
 With sympathizing heart  
 In all the cares of life and love.”

Strive to adopt a proper principle of self-government; govern your thoughts, be not headstrong, but determine things with candor and by the light of understanding, cultivate a pleasantness of temper, and vanity be indulged, for they will ever sink you in the minds of the candid and judicious, and make you an easy prey to the vulgar and designing.

Be reserved in the choice of your company, for there is a strange aptitude in us to catch the manners of others; and it is better for us to appear awkward in the world than to be corrupted by the bad example of others; and here let me say to you again: Let the word of God and the counsel of God's people be for your instruction. Let this scripture be committed to memory and brought into use by you. “Only let your conversation and company be as becometh the gospel of Christ.”