

**1869 Letters #121–131**

Amberson's  
January 10, 1869

[#121]

Good afternoon Dear Tom,

May you be happy and in perfect health this beautiful spring-like Sabbath day. And may you be blessed with that peace and comfort that comes from God only. Today finds me tolerably well. I do not know what is the reason, but I feel irritable and nervous and can't sleep well. That is something unusual for me, as my trouble heretofore was sleeping too much. The weather has been so damp, foggy and disagreeable. I guess I have taken some cold. My face is troubling me slightly, and that always makes me nervous. But I am not seriously ill, and hope to be quite well soon.

I did not go to church today. I thought probably I should feel better to remain home. Mr. Crouse, the Radical Methodist<sup>1</sup> preacher, preaches today at 10 1/2 o'clock a.m. The last time I heard him I did not enjoy it much and don't care much about going again. I am seated in my room up stairs, without fire, but I feel quite comfortable. Today is warm.

I shall try to reply to your kind favor of the 3<sup>rd</sup> instant, but I do not feel much for writing and fear this will only be an apology. I should have written you last week, as yours were read on Wednesday evening, but did not. And so Tom would receive no letter yesterday eve. I wonder if he would be disappointed. I hope not. I should be sorry to think so. Yet I almost fear he would be, for I felt slightly disappointed when the mail came up yesterday evening and there was nothing for me but a paper with the proceedings of the county Institute sent by cousin Rob. I suppose Tom has been very busy and had no time to write in the middle of the week. Well, I would rather forego the pleasure of receiving the letter than to know it cost Tom an extra exertion of nature already wearied, or perhaps stole hours that should have been devoted to sleep.

I do not compliment you too highly in classing you among my best friends, who have ever had my best interests at heart. Why, dear, you are my best friend, or at least I think so. Ha! ha! Thank you dearest for the assurance that any words of mine have comforted or strengthened you spiritually. I am unworthy of such high pleasure, but God is worthy and He doeth the work. Your influence with me has been quite as strong as mine with you, especially for the last year. And I am happy to say that it has ever been for good. O how infinitely more happy we are now than if each should be compelled to say, You influenced me to sin." How merciful is our kind heavenly Father, who has thus lead us in wisdom's ways and blessed us above many of our associates who are left to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. May He still keep us in the path of virtue and happiness. And thus may we be bound together by love, united in tastes and principles. And may the link of earthly affection be gilded and strengthened by immortal hopes. And may we lean the more entirely, dearest, on the only arm that can uphold us for ever,

and we will be raised far above all weakness in the hour of temptation.

Dearest, I am glad to know you are learning to trouble less mentally about the cares of life. I have some times thought you trouble too much about business. I would be sorry to check a spirit of diligence and enterprise, but one may be too careful about the things of the world. We should rather strive to "lay up treasures in heaven." Let us, dear, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and believe all things necessary will "be added unto us." Why should the mind be distracted by taking thought. Are we not in the hands of a kind heavenly Father. And can we not trust him for this life as well as for that which is to come! Surely He is a covenant keeping God, and has spoken good concerning us.

Yes dear, we will do what we can and be assured God will bless us in so doing. But we have just commenced our Christian course, and are very imperfect. I hope we may become more consistent, and be sanctified day by day until we attain perfect holiness and belong no longer to earth but heaven. It is so glorious to know that we have a Father in heaven who is all powerful and whose ear is ever open to our cry. It is delightful to feel that our Saviour will wash all our sins away and clothe us with his own spotless righteousness. It will be so pleasant when life is drawing to a close to lie trustingly in his loving arms and see by faith the mansions of light and crown of glory beyond the tomb.

You are right, dear. The sin of idolatry is committed oftener than we have any idea of. Thus, insensibly, does sin creep into the weak heart of mortals before they are aware of its presence. Love is commendable. This world would be a hades without it. But we must not allow a love innocent in its nature to become so absorbing and engrossing as to overshadow that higher love due to the One who alone is worthy of a perfect and entire devotion. I felt, dear, that I needed the admonition. That is why I penned it you. I am in the habit of writing you whatever interests me. What an unpardonable presumption for a creature to bow down before the Creator as if to worship, and the heart filled with other thoughts. It is nothing short of "taking the name of God in vain." We are weak and insufficient of ourselves, but our Saviour is all powerful and will certainly assist us to do right if we ask him. Dear, the evil from which we have most to fear is a hard and stubborn heart, alienated from God, which is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." But God will give us new hearts if we ask Him, and He has promised to overcome for us. I so often fail to do right I some times fear I have not experienced that change of heart. Pray dearest, that I may not be deceived with regard to my hopes but "may be enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness." I miss our good catechism very much. I did not bring any with me. And the folks here would not read one, I suppose, if they had it.

Thank you for the anticipated present. I shall be happy to receive it when you have read it. I have been reading last week a book entitled *History of Revivals*.<sup>2</sup> It is very interesting and instructive. I have commenced to read the Bible through this year. I have been reading two chapters in the Old Testament

and one in the New every week day, and five chapters on Sabbath. I want to become familiar with the Bible. Here I don't have the benefit of any notes. At home we have explanations that one can look at if we meet with anything that is not clear.

Would you have the presumption to anticipate my question? Ha! ha! But I shouldn't be very cross, as your surmises are correct and I am saved the necessity of making a statement. You think the new house will be completed before harvest. How much before you don't say. So I suppose you mean about the last of June. Am I right? And you wish me to decide how long before going into house keeping we shall be wed. I have had a fancy, dear, that if ever I married it should be in May. That is my favorite month. But I am fearful it will not be a very practical time to go to house keeping in June. It will be too late for garden making. We were talking once that it would be better to go to house keeping as soon as possible after marriage. I don't know how soon that would be. I have been thinking some about it since, and suppose one could not be ready for some time – perhaps two months at least. I know it will take me some time to fix. And if we are to be wed in May, I will give up my school at the end of this month – which will close the 2nd week in February. Please write me unreservedly on this subject as I have done you.

Monday: Dear, I shall close this morning – as I may not have an opportunity of sending this to the office if I wait until tomorrow. Bye, bye. A good morning kiss.  
Your Mattie

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Amberson's  
January 15, 1869

[#122]

Good morning Dear,

I shall spend a few moments in replying to your kind favors of last week and Sabbath and Tuesday. I must write today for fear you "kiss Norrie." Don't do it, will you? It will make me feel so badly to think of your kissing her when I am so far away. I'll kiss Jacob, if you do guess I will. May be he will let me, if I coax hard. John wanted to give me a kiss for a Christmas gift – so if Jacob won't let me kiss him, John will.

I have a large school today, thirty-two. Jim Eckenrode is here. He puts me so much in mind of your brother Jim. I suspect I will have some trouble to keep him still in school. He only comes a day now and then. He is very fond of sleighing, and whenever it is good sleighing he enjoys it.

There are two ladies visiting my school today, but I don't know them and will leave the pupils to entertain them while I write you. It is now noon. I suppose Tom has had dinner by this time. I still bring a luncheon along and

remain until 4 o'clock. I do not like to leave the school room at noon. I have so many little pupils that I fear some of them might get hurt. Large boys are always rough. I would enjoy the walk to my boarding place, for I do not have much exercise.

My pupils are very anxious for me to have spelling school some night, but I don't like the responsibility of carrying it on. I think day school is enough for me. Strangers always gather into spelling school, and I don't like to take the trouble. We have singing twice a month. I think that is enough night gathering.

Thank you for the kind wishes for my health and happiness. My health is better than when I wrote you last. Indeed, I am quite well I think. My spirits are better and I am almost happy. I guess I get home sick some times, and that makes me feel badly. But I am not home sick today. I had a long letter from sisters yesterday eve giving me all the news. Papa says if I tell him when I am coming to Dry Run, he will come over that far to see me. I guess Papa thinks more of me yet than Tom. You think you have a companion in misery, and comfort yourself with the thought that I am thinking as long to see you as you do to see me. You might be mistaken. I have not suffered from cold this winter while making the fires. The house is closed and remains warm all night, and often there is fire in the stove in the morning. Being so far away is a formidable excuse. I wonder if it wouldn't be too cold for you to make the fires if you were more convenient. Ha! ha!

Tom is kind, and I must thank you for writing me. I do feel just a little disappointed when I do not get a letter every mail. I wonder why I did not receive your Thursday letter on Saturday p.m. It has been delinquent again, I suppose.

The hoop business must be flourishing this season. You appear to be dealing in them pretty largely. The farmers in this county are storing their wheat for a higher price. Some of the Path Valley farmers are hauling theirs to Shippensburg now while the sleighing lasts, but are not selling. They think it will be a higher price before next harvest. Mr. Stewart's wheat did not turn out so well as he expected, and Papa says ours does not turn out well either. So I think grain will be scarcer than expected.

You compliment my letters too highly. They are often very indifferent and scarcely deserve the reading, but then you do not know that until you have read them. But then I remember you view them through rose-colored spectacles and appreciate them for the sake of the writer. You should not let your thoughts dwell on unpleasant subjects. We were never intended to be unhappy. We should try to be as happy and contented as possible. If we trust implicitly in our heavenly Father, we may be as happy as a little child who confides in its earthly parents.

The M.E. meeting must be interesting, when it is kept up so long. I am glad to know they are successful. I hope many may be converted. I presume the M.E. church is the strongest in Mt. Union, is it not?

There is still an occasional wedding in that vicinity. How very foolish people are. When will they learn wisdom? Quite a hoist indeed for Mr. J. Scott.<sup>3</sup> I suppose he will be the first U.S. Senator from Huntingdon, will he not?

I am glad to hear you speak so hopefully of your spiritual state. I hope you may advance in the spiritual life day by day. Jesus will never leave nor forsake any who trust in him. It should be our greatest delight to be engaged in his service. We are serving him when we discharge faithfully the duties of life. Thus we can serve him at all times.

I am sorry indeed for David Baker. How sad to think that his prospects for life have been blighted, perhaps, by his disease. But God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. Do you think he should not get married? Scrofula is a dreadful disease. The patients suffer so much, and it can not be cured after it becomes once seated – almost worst than consumption. The latter disease is so mild, and often so lingering, that the patient has abundant time to prepare for death.

What a wonderful dream! And so your sleeping thoughts are some times of Mattie. But I have heard people say dreams always go contrary. I have not much confidence in dreams myself. I suppose it is because I am no dreamer. I can scarcely ever remember my dream at all, unless it is something that frightens me. My mother is always relating her dreams, and some times they come out fully correct. I guess your dream is accounted for from the fact of your not sleeping well when Blair is with you.

Cousin Jimmy Goshorn came to visit our place. Annie did not. Mollie says Kate and cousin are putting in a full time with Annie. I really pity the poor girl, for cousin is a great mischief and he and Kate will have no mercy. The evening they wrote me Kate says, "I do wish you were here to help me laugh. Annie and cousin Jimmy are in the room. Jimmy asked Annie for a kiss, and she kissed him." She said George was in the room. He and Jimmy were at Shade Gap and had got candy, but it was none now. And she had left but would have to go back soon, as she thought from appearances the gents were in for a spark. Ha! ha! A wholesome spark I should say. Had I been there I should have enjoyed that part, for of course Kate would have to entertain George. Cousin Jimmy said if the sleighing had been good, he would have come to see me. I wish it had been, for I would like as much to see him.

One of my aunts in Indiana died a short time since with spotted fever. I had a letter from cousin Rob not long since. He said he seen Tom as he passed through Mt. Union on his way to school, and he thought you did not look as happy as when you were coming to Shade Gap. Ha! ha! I guess Tom likes to come to see his Mama too, don't he?

I must stop writing. Mrs. Stewart says it is no use in me spending so much of my time writing you. She ought to know. Ha! ha! Bye, bye.

Your Mattie

Amberson's; January 17, 1869: Again the holy Sabbath has dawned upon our world. All nature is clothed in a mantle of white, and the pure white flakes are slowing descending upon mountain and valley – still enshrouding them more

thickly within its icy folds. Last week was warm and pleasant, and nearly all the sleet and snow had disappeared. But this morning bids fair for more sleighing. There has been sleighing here nearly all the time since November, though some times it was very poor. I would like to see good sleighing this week, as Mr. West's communion is at Spring Run next Sabbath and I should like very much to attend. And I think I shall, if it is sleighing.

Mr. West preaches at the church in this valley this p.m. I shall go if I have an opportunity and it don't snow too fast. I so much need spiritual food and get to church so seldom. I don't think a little snow will hurt me. It does me so much good to hear Mr. West. He always appears to know just what I need. I am always refreshed and comforted after listening to his earnest Christian words.

You think it wrong to doubt the genuineness of my conversion. Perhaps it is. I have too little faith and confidence. I fear my doubts and fears come more from unbelief than any other source. When I can look away from self and cast myself entirely on Jesus, I am happy. And I believe Jesus will give me grace sufficient for my day. The Christian course is described as a warfare. And mine appears to be a continual one, though I am less exposed to outward temptations than most others. My greatest enemy is my own sinful heart. But we read, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Every day, every hour and every moment he is waiting to bestow salvation on sinners. May we accept of this Saviour. O create our hearts anew, and cleanse us by thy blood.

I had the extreme pleasure of reading your kind letter of Thursday and Friday yesterday evening. Thank you for its kindness. You will be anxious, I know, to hear from me as I was not very bright when I penned my last. You will see that I wrote you on Thursday but could not get the letter to the office until Saturday morning. Then it was too late for the mail and I concluded it was just as well not to send it until Tuesday. It is too bad, and I am sorry.

But Tom, you must not be anxious about me. I was not very unwell and should not have said anything about such a slight indisposition. I never write to Mother if I am sick, because she is excitable and would be almost crazy if she knew I was sick away from home. I must be more careful in the future and not cause Tom unnecessary anxiety. I am careful of myself. I have suffered so much pain that I am perhaps too careful now. I am old womanish some times, but care is pleasanter than cure.

You think your irritation is attributable to ill nature. Well, perhaps mine is too. Ha! ha! But only in a degree. My nerves are not strong. And if you observe, any one who is nervous is irritable. Things appear to jam on the nerves like a saw grilling on iron, or a horse fiddle. I don't want any one to speak to me when I am feeling so. If they do, they are not likely to receive a civil answer without my making considerable effort to be civil. Kate still says such moods are the sulks. Some times her teasing is worse to me than either of the afore named annoyances. I think it was entirely owing to the damp foggy weather that I did not feel well.

The doctor used to ask me if the changes did not make me feel badly.

I hope you are very well and happy today. I suppose you have attended church and Sabbath school. I almost wish I was with you. But no, I am better here. I have been reading in the Bible, and read the history of Joseph and part of the history of Moses. I have read Revelation through this year. You will think it strange that I commence at the last book in the New Testament to read it through. But I think I told you my method this year is to read three chapters a day and five on Sabbath. It don't make any difference where I read, only so I remember what I have read. I shall get through in a year.

I have no doubt Lottie Stoner would be very much frightened, but I don't suppose the Darkie had any thought of molesting her. But I know how frightened one would be to see him in the door without any previous knowledge of his presence.

The Price you speak of must be fond of romance. I presume his wife would not enjoy it so much to be left with a family of children to support. Such men ought to be hung, and the "widow" made to balance him. But I presume their happiness will be interfered with considerably by the constable and father-in-law.

And are you boarding with Lida? Ha! ha! I shall have no anxiety now about you. I know Lida will be more kind and thoughtful for your comfort than I could be. Of course I know Norrie was kind, but then I don't believe she is so thoughtful as Lida. I wish you much pleasure and comfort in your new boarding place. I think you had almost forgotten to give me the important information though. Just to think, you have been boarding with Lida two weeks and only just told me. Well, well.

That school marm you speak of was bound to maintain her rights. She was in the right of it, too. But there is few who would have been so determined. I think if she is as persevering in the school room she should be successful. My article is so that the directors may dismiss me at their option, and I have the school only one month at a time. The directors were very particular that I should understand that part of it. So if I wish to give it up at the end of this month, I can do so. I suppose I must soon decide whether I will or not, as if I do the directors may have time to engage another teacher.

I think I shall go home if you come for me. Tell me in your next if you will come. Bye, bye.

Your Mattie

Amberson's  
January 24, 1869

[#123]

Dear Tom,

The beautiful Sabbath finds me all alone except Mr. Stewart, who is resting on the bench behind the stove – I presume fast asleep. There is M.E. preaching in the church today at 10½ a.m. The young folks have gone there. As there was no convenient way for me to go, I remained home. I shall devote part of the time to answering your kind favors of last week which were read, one on Thursday and the other yesterday evening. I do not know what is the matter with my writing materials, whether the ink is bad or the pens – or whether I can't write any. But some thing is wrong, for I can scarcely make an intelligible letter.

Today is bright and pleasant but I feel disappointed, and my feelings are in pitiable contrast with the day. Perhaps visiting Tom will drive away the gloom. I think I wrote you that there is communion at Spring Run today. I wrote home also and told them I thought of going over the mountain yesterday and remaining over Sabbath. Well, the snow went off the valley roads, and there is no sleighing. And there is too much snow on the mountain for bugging, so I could not go. And yesterday evening I received a letter from home stating that Papa and Ma were coming to Dry Run to meet me and attend the meeting and I should be sure to come. But perhaps they could not come either, if the snow is as much gone there as here. But I did want so much to attend the meeting. And then to know my dear parents were coming to see me if all was favorable, renders the disappointment double.

But I must not allow my thoughts to dwell on the unpleasant subject. "All is for the best," though I may not be able to see it to be so now. Our kind heavenly Father disposes of all things, and he knows the end from the beginning and will give us what is best. My heart is restored, and I am content and happy as I think any one could be in my situation.

Thank you very much for your Christian counsel. I believe it is wrong to doubt my conversion and favor with God. Your words caused me to think more of this, and to examine the foundation of my hopes. And though I still rejoice with trembling, I believe my sins have been pardoned and I have an interest in Jesus. But it is alone by grace that such a sinner as I can be saved.

I attended preaching last Sabbath p.m. Mr. West preached from Revelation 15 and verse 4: "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" He said the word fear here meant "reverence and obey." He spoke of all nature praising and glorifying the name of the great Creator. He also spoke of the attributes of God being wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth – and of His being infinite eternal and unchangeable in all these. He spoke of the changes that take place in all material substances – and then what a comfort it was for us to have a God reconciled in Christ that is the same yesterday, today and forever.

How comforting is all this. If our dearest earthly hopes are blasted, and at length the time comes when we must bid adieu to earth and all our earthly friends, we still have an almighty Friend who is ever near and unchanging. And in Him all fullness dwells. And with Jesus for our Saviour we may be happy though we have not another friend in the world. Without him for our friend, all the world would fail to satisfy us. But Jesus is our redeemer, mediator and surety. And as he is God and man, he alone is capable of performing the great work of man's redemption. Man can suffer, but he can not satisfy. God can satisfy, but can not suffer. But Christ being both God and man can suffer and satisfy too. And thus Christ, having assumed my nature into his person, has satisfied divine justice for my sins. I am received into grace and favor again with God. O wondrous plan of redemption. Who can fathom the wisdom and goodness of God! It becomes such a poor, ignorant, insufficient worm as I to wonder, believe, and adore the God who has shown me so much mercy.

I am sorry to hear that Lettie Caldwell's<sup>4</sup> health has failed. But I do not wonder at it if she has such a large school to attend to. Lettie is not naturally strong. I presume it is mental over exertion that caused her indisposition. School teaching will break down a naturally strong constitution – i.e., in a female. I don't pretend to know anything about male teachers, but there is much to demand on the nerves for a female to conduct a large school without being unpleasantly, and often seriously, affected. I never suffered much myself, but know something about it. Then, I do not profess to be of the nervous kind.

School teaching affects sister Kate much more seriously than it does me. My plan is to do my duty as nearly as I can, according to my own notions as to what that duty is. Thus I discharge my duty conscientiously, and then don't trouble about things that I can't help. Of course many things are annoying, but if I can't better them I just let them pass as smoothly as possible.

Every one that I have heard express themselves very well satisfied with my teaching this winter, but it is far from satisfying to me. The large scholars do not improve rapidly. The small ones do better, but I think might learn more if I could interest them. My trouble this winter is I can not interest myself enough in the school, but will hope to do better in the future.

Thank you for your kind suggestions with regard to my closing my school at the end of four months. I have not decided yet whether I shall give it up or not. I will think about it. My health certainly does not require any thing of the kind at present. If I give it up at the end of this month, I shall give the directors notice next week. They will then have an opportunity of employing some one else.

I had spelling school last Tuesday night. It was tolerably good sleighing and there were about 100 persons present, 30 of whom participated in the spelling. There was a male teacher there, but he was so much of a sheep I could not get him to pronounce for me. So I had to do all myself. There was very good order and every thing passed off pleasantly. But I shan't have another, as I do not think it in place for a female to conduct a night gathering.

I attended singing last night in my school room. It was conducted by Mr. Culbertson. They are poor singers in this valley. The ladies (Miss Stewarts) got beaux, they did. It was the first time I saw their fellers. I didn't fall in love with either of them, but if they quit them I have no objections. I do get so lonely for some one to talk to. They may talk here from morning to night, and afterward I can't recall a word worth remembering. Such stuff worries me. Last winter, Mr. Thomas<sup>5</sup> was always ready for a talk. Whenever I felt like it, I could enjoy a useful and interesting conversation. And Mrs. Thomas was intelligent and interesting.

You speak of Ash Fraker<sup>6</sup> being in the lock up. I had not heard of it. Why is he there? What has he done? I am sorry David Baker is so afflicted, and am loathe to attribute his sickness to the cause you name. I do think David sober and moral. Of course I have not much acquaintance with him, but thought him a gentleman. I am real sorry too if they are embarrassed financially as it will also involve McA,<sup>7</sup> and I should like to hear of him succeeding well.

Thanks dear for giving me the advantage of some of your explanatory notes on the New Testament. It would be very pleasant indeed could we study them together, and I have no doubt beneficial. I know it would be to me! My ideas would not benefit Tom much, I dare say, but of course he would hear them if I was near enough to study with him.

Time passes rapidly, and it will be only six weeks at the longest now until I shall bid adieu to Amberson's and return to my home. And of course we can afford to wait just as long as it is necessary. We hear from each other frequently, and that is a great pleasure certainly. Besides, we must not depend entirely on each other for pleasure. There is many a disappointment in this world, and there is nothing certain in life but death. But dear, we will not depend on any thing in this life entirely for happiness.

I see by your favor of the 21<sup>st</sup> that my last Sabbath letter was received. I should like to write you twice a week, but it appears impossible for me to get my letters to the office. However, I shall try to write you more frequently in the future. While the sleighing was good the folks would pass in such a hurry one could not get to the road in time. So I had to send my letters only when some of Mr. Stewart's were down.

But I think I did not tell you I was down to see Mrs. Eckenrode, my old acquaintance. She treated me very kindly and pleasantly. I like her quite as well as when she was a maid. I guess getting married has not changed her for the worse. Her husband too is quite pleasant, as much so as one could expect a man to be. Ha! ha!

The folks in Amberson's must needs learn wisdom in the school of experience like the rest of the human race. They will not listen to those who would willingly give them the benefit of their dearly bought wisdom under the matrimonial yoke, except a few brave females who have I see withstood the seductions of wily man and are still enjoying the blessings of single life at a good

old age. Yes, and Mr. Stewart has two brothers who think I will live and die in single blessedness. One of them they say is very rich. If it wasn't that I am opposed to marrying, I might try to captivate him.

I am glad to know that Jake Flasher<sup>8</sup> is trying to do some good for himself. I hope his impression may be lasting, and that he may be converted. It would no doubt be a great comfort to his wife if he would become religious. McKittrick<sup>9</sup> must be a desperate wicked man, when he dares such a presumption.

I shall tell you if I am really unwell, but must not awaken your anxiety unnecessarily – especially when so far away that you can not hear from me for a whole week. Ha! ha! I hope my health may remain good until school closes. I generally have better health when teaching than at home. But this winter you know the reason I do not get lusty as I used to in Mt. Union. Ha! ha!

I am glad your new clerk is on hand. I hope he may prove satisfactory in all respects, and that Tom may now be more at liberty.

I have no doubt you would spend a pleasant evening with Miss Charlotte. She is a very pleasant lady. She visits Reading often. I think she used to go to school there perhaps.

The folks have now returned from church and we have had dinner. And I shall now finish this, lest it be too late for the mail if I wait to finish it tomorrow.

You ask if you will send Ellie<sup>10</sup> the geography? I think if you have not sent it, you need not get it now. The school will soon close and she may go to high school next summer, and then she can get one. I don't know, but I suppose the schools in Tell will close about the same time mine will. I had a letter from Mat Diven<sup>11</sup> yesterday evening. She apparently enjoys teaching in Cumberland. I am so glad Mattie is getting along so well.

Of course it wouldn't be a paying business for you to come for me. "Like pulling a sled up hill to ride down hill," indeed! Well, now if I ever heard such gassing when I know it would be your greatest delight to be allowed the privilege of traveling twice the distance for the honor of taking me home. Coax you, indeed! Not I! You brought me here, and I shall stay until you come for me. Or if I get tired of that, I won't tell you when I return home. My Papa thinks lots of me and will send for me, I guess, if you won't come.

But this is the Sabbath day and I must stop gassing. I received the papers you sent me. Thank you, they are very nice. I am anxious to see the book you eulogize so highly. I shall be glad to read it, but wish you to read it first.

May Tom enjoy this holy Sabbath day, and may his soul be blessed in waiting on God in the use of the means he has appointed. Please excuse my not writing more frequently. I shall do the best I can. Bye, bye. A kiss in return.

Mattie

Amberson's  
January 27, 1869

[#124]

Dear Tom,

I have just read your kind missive of Sabbath, and thank you so much for writing me often although you had no letter to reply to. I would write every mail we have here, but I can not get my letters to the office. I am sorry to think you were disappointed on Saturday evening. I shall write you this eve, and I may have an opportunity tomorrow of sending it down. I shall do my part. Please do not think I don't write because I don't care. And I am glad to know you did not let the feeling of retaliation to govern your actions, or I should be deprived the pleasure of reading your kind Christian letter this eve, which has done me so much good.

This is such a lonely place. I get so lonely some times I scarcely know what to do with myself. I have become tired of my school, too. My boarding place is most disagreeable. And if I am feeling so badly next week as I do now, I shall give up my school and go home. You can not come for me unless it snows, I suppose, as it is no sleighing in the valleys and too much snow on the mountains for a buggy to get through. I can go home in the hack if I go. I suppose some may think if I could stand teaching four months I might endure it another. But it is the "last straw" that breaks the camel's back. Ha! ha!

Well, well. I shall have to decide soon. But I must tell you my disappointment. Mr. Fagan was down to Spring Run at the meeting, and came home and told me that my Papa and sisters came over to the meeting to see me and I was not there. O I know they would be so much disappointed, and I wanted to see them so much. I just took a good cry all to myself, but it did not do me much good. I feel as badly about it this evening as ever. But this is a damp, dull evening and may be that accounts for all depression. Ha! ha!

But dear I fear our dream of connubial bliss must terminate quite differently from what we had hoped. My question with regard to a D. Baker had a deeper interest than mere curiosity. You will remember your reply.

Thank you for giving me the benefit of you Sabbath exercises. I spent all day at home. And it was such a beautiful day I longed to be at church, but enjoyed myself in my room. God is ever near. We do not meet Him only in the public sanctuary, but the throne of grace is ever accessible. Yes, by the help of the Holy Spirit we will grow in grace day by day. We are but babes in Christ, but he will assist us and carry on the good work he has begun in our hearts until we are perfected by grace through faith unto salvation. I am still reading the Bible, but have so little time to myself. That is, I have to spend my time with the family so that I can not read as meditatively as I should like. I can not command my thoughts when others are talking, but still I can read and catch some ideas.

My school is larger this month than any time since I commenced teaching. I think it will average 30. And I have visitors every day. Yesterday I had five gentlemen visiting the school. I was almost frightened. And today there were two

ladies and one gent. Last month I had about twelve gents and three ladies. I like visitors some times, but every day it becomes annoying! Then the pupils become excited and can't study as well.

Why is Annie Kough<sup>12</sup> changing her school? I thought she was teaching in Cromwell township. I guess she likes it better at the upper end of the county. I am very sorry for Lettie Caldwell. Indeed, I hoped she may be quite well ere this, but fear she will not be well for some time if the cold has settled on her lungs. I will now stop writing for this evening as my eyes are paining me. Perhaps I may have time to write more in the morning. Good night, pleasant dreams, and sweet slumber.

Good afternoon, dear: I shall write you only a few lines to let you know that I am thinking of Tom and feel brighter this evening than yesterday. I guess it must be because the day is so bright. It is like a spring day. I guess I got some of the sunshine into my heart and it has thawed. They say old maids have frozen hearts, but mine was never very warm. At least I could never be so lavish of my caresses as some are.

But Jacob is ready to go to spelling school and I must close this. The director was at my school today. And instead of letting me give up my school, he wants to engage me to teach out the time of one of the teachers who could not get along well. Bye, bye. Best love and a kiss.

Your Mattie

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Amberson's  
January 31, 1869

[#125]

Dear Tom,

Again it is the holy Sabbath. We have been kept in safety through another week that has passed into eternity with its burdens of joys and sorrows: good and bad deeds, which have been experienced by the sons and daughters of men. And we have spent the time, I presume, much as other weeks have been spent. And so thus our lives slip away. Many who spent last Sabbath on earth are now in eternity. What a solemn thought, perhaps this may be our last Sabbath on earth. We have no assurance that it may not be. O may it be spent in the service of our divine Master and in preparation for that blessed happy life which commences at the close of this. Our present life is but a moment in comparison with that which is to come. Then what is the trials of this life compared with the glory of that which is to come.

And what thanksgiving should fill our hearts this morning that such poor unworthy creatures as we may, through the merits of our Saviour, rejoice in a hope of glory when we have fulfilled our mission her. How highly we are

privileged above many, who are as good by nature and better by practice than we. Our salvation is alone by grace. We have been "snatched as brands from the burning" and our feet placed on the "Rock of Ages" – not because we are better than others, but by the distinguishing grace of God, who has power to make from the same lumps of clay one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. There is a reality in the religion of Jesus. May we not be deceived with regard to our hopes, but may they be grounded on Jesus our Saviour.

Today is cold and stormy. The wind howls piteously without, but I am sheltered and comfortable. I hope Tom may not be exposed. I presume he is not, as he will probably spend the day at church or quietly in his own room. May he be happy and enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit in his heart. And may His grace be in lively exercise, that he may spend a pleasant and profitable day.

There is no preaching in this valley today. The M.E. and U.B. preachers are attending conference. I suppose there will be new preachers appointed for this circuit for this year. I don't know, may be the old ones have another year to stay.<sup>13</sup>

I have been reading some in the Bible this morning. I read the mode of worship under the Mosaic dispensation. They had so many ceremonies to perform. How much more simple is the religion under the Gospel dispensation. We are highly privileged to live in the present age and have the gospel as our guide to the heavenly Canaan. Yet the Israelites were highly favored of God and had so many manifestations of his presence and glory. One some times while reading their history wonders how they could turn from the worship of the true God. But we have all these things recorded for our benefit, with the addition of a Saviour's life and miracles, and yet our faith is as weak as that of the Israelites. And we as often fall into temptation.

We have a powerful foe with which to contend. And the greatest foe to grace is the flesh, and our own hearts. May our hearts be changed and made fit for heaven by the Spirit of God. Christ has declared he is more willing to give his spirit to them that ask than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. I would enjoy hearing a sermon today, but I believe I may be blessed at home and feel my Saviour near.

Just now Beckie Stewart wanted me to go with her to visit some of her friends, but I do not think it right for me to go visiting on Sabbath. My thoughts wander and I can not spend the day as it should be spent, in serving God, when I am in company.

I have no letter of Tom to reply to today. I wonder why. I hope he is quite well. May be he was too busy. I did not get one from home either, and I feel almost lonely today. My friends are all far away. But I guess they are thinking of me some times. Yes, I know they are. My Papa and Mama loves me too well to ever forget me. And my sisters are loving and kind. Yes, all are wishing me well and happy. And Tom! He may forget me if he tries.

I have forgotten whether there will be preaching in our church at Shade

Gap today or not. If there is, I presume our folks will be there.

I wonder when Tom will come out home again. It is now five weeks since he was home. Dan, I suppose, has nothing to do now but recruit his health and wait on the ladies. I hope his eyes are better. It must be some disease of the eye when it is so long getting well.

I suppose Mrs. Montague thinks if Allie goes west she will come back soon. But Mattie<sup>14</sup> she could not expect back for some time, and then only to leave again. It will soon be a year since Mattie went west, and I suppose is a year now since she was married. I would like to see her. Mattie and I were more intimate than Allie and I. I hope she is happy in her western home. And I have no doubt she is, for she was of a happy disposition and was married happily, I think. Reese was not a Christian, which was one drawback, but I think Mattie would likely have a good influence over him.

Later: It is now evening and I shall spend a short time in finishing this. The day has been spent pleasantly, and I hope profitably. I was reading in the Bible some, and finished a book entitled *The Life of Samuel Huber*.<sup>15</sup> He was the first U.B. that ever preached in this valley. He was a quaint old Dutchman, and I often heard Papa speak of him. He was a very peculiar man. He thinks no one has any religion unless they shout and make a noise. He pretends to have converted several Presbyterians who had been church members for a long time, and one had been a ruling elder in the Presbyterian church. The whole thing merely sounds forth his own praise, telling how much good he had done in the world.

Then it contains the religious experience of several men. One told how he had been called to preach the gospel, said he was plowing in the field when he thought he heard a voice pronouncing his name. He stopped, looked around, but could see no one. This was repeated several times. At length he asked, "What do you want?" Then the voice replied, "You are called to preach the gospel." Well, this made a deep impression on his mind, but he still was not sure that he should preach. So one day he was out in the field praying under a mulberry tree, and he asked a sign from heaven to know of a certainty whether he was called or not. And he asked that this should be the sign if he was called: that the tree he was then praying under that was green and thriving looking, should die. He left, and returned in a few days, and found the tree dead. I don't believe it. Do you?

There is company down stairs, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart and Mr. and Mrs. Culbertson. This is a great place for Sunday visiting. We scarcely ever have a quiet Sabbath to ourselves, but I spend most of the time up stairs when we have company. Mrs. Culbertson had the loan of your history. She brought it home today. Miss Fagan wants to read it. Shall I loan it her? I wish I could send it you, or home. Mother would like to read it.

I have written you a long letter. But I know you take a deep interest in every thing that concerns me, for I have felt how very much you love...

Your affectionate Mattie

Amberson's  
February 6, 1869

[#126]

Dear Tom,

I wrote you on last Wednesday and Thursday in reply to your kind favors of last week and Sabbath last, but could not get it to the office. So Tom will be disappointed this evening. I am sorry but can not help it, so there is no use in worrying about it.

It is Saturday p.m. I have spent the day thus far very pleasantly. The girls are quilting and I was sewing. We were having some sport. I felt in a talking humor and was acting dumb, and was amusing myself at the credulity of the young ladies. I enjoy such sport sometimes. But all is quiet now, and I shall write my thoughts to Tom.

In the first place I think I should give you a piece of my mind for neglecting me so far: as to coolly allow me to remain in Amberson's without ever thinking of coming for me today. Don't you know that it is four months since you left me here? And didn't I tell you I would go home if you would come for me? You say you enjoy yourself so well you did not think four months could pass so rapidly? Well, well. There is no dependence to be placed in any man, I see. (my Papa excepted always.)

Why if this had been the wedding day, I have no doubt you would not have come. Ha! ha! This shows how much you think of me. It is always best to experiment on a small scale first. Just to think it is now sixteen weeks since you have seen me, and you never once think of paying me a visit. And you are only 40 miles distant. And last winter you came more than twice that distance, when I did not care whether you came or not. Ha! ha! Well I think that will do for lecturing at one time. I must not make it too long for fear you won't read it.

This is the coldest day in Amberson's Valley, but I am not exposed. I went out this morning to take a short walk, but came back in a hurry and have been afraid to go out since. There is a little bit of snow on the roads here and some of the people are trying to sleigh, but I think it must be very rough. Mr. Stewart's folk have gone for limestone with two sleds. Last night the *aurora borealis* was brilliant. Did you see it? I stood on the porch at least one minute to look at it, but the winds blew bitter cold and froze my sentimental feelings.

There is singing tonight in my school house. Won't I go and catch a beau from among the Amberson Valley swains. No, I won't either. I will have nothing to do with such fickle material as men are made of. And do you know a man who is not a "bear?" I wonder where he is to be found. May be in imagination, or estimation. Well if he is not a bear, I suspect there is some fox about him.

You think any time during the year I close my school it will be time enough for you to come for me. I shan't depend on you any more. I will get Jacob to take me home, or may be I will stay with him.

Old maids covet charms lost. And for what, pray, should they covet

charms – personal charms, I mean? No one notices their appearance. They are known and loved only for their kind actions and pure life. There is a class of females who never marry and yet can not be strictly called old maids, though they are generally classed with them, who are a disgrace to womankind. I have nothing to say in defense of them. But I ever shall respect a pure and good old maid. As for their not marrying, and consequently that their life has been a failure, I never believed that a woman's only mission on earth was to be a wife. The men imagine what the ladies are thinking, or perhaps that they have fallen in love with them, when nothing is farther from their thoughts.

Quite a mistake with A. Fraker, I beg your pardon. Ha! ha! And you were attending a social party? Did you escort Lida? My question is pointed, but you need not conclude from that that it is a pointed question. Please remember me to Miss Norrie. I should like to see her sweet bright face. It is like a ray of sunshine. I am sorry so much of my gloomy feelings were conveyed in my last week's letter. I had a fit of the "blues" then, but it did not last long. You are mistaken. I am not really unhappy at any time, though at some times I am lonely and home-sick. I have no real cause for unhappiness, and my imaginations don't last long. Think no more about it. I am now feeling bright and happy and have made up my mind to remain another month. My boarding place is of course not the most pleasant place in the world, but perhaps I can contribute some toward making it more pleasant. I shall try.

And dear, your kind thoughtfulness has contributed you can never know how much to my comfort and happiness. You certainly could do no more, and I thank you heartily. My unhappiness arises chiefly from loneliness, and perhaps some times from discontent. But I shall try to content myself now until my school closes and hope to escape another attack of the "blues."

My school does not progress to satisfy me, but I try to discharge my duty. And some things of course I can't help. The director says I have given satisfaction so far to patrons and the board, but that don't make any difference with me. I know better what progress should be made than they do. I don't think any body will be sorry when I leave Amberson. I am sure I will not. You know the old adage "Love begets love," and I think it is true. So if I am not sorry to leave my pupils, I can not expect them to be sorry. It would not be reasonable.

Allow me to thank you very much for the beautiful Christmas gift. I have no doubt it is as interesting and instructive as beautiful, and will afford me many happy hours that otherwise might have been lonely and sad. I have not had time to examine it much yet, but shall read it tomorrow – if well. I am much obliged also for the package of papers which arrived at the same time.

I presume the railroad in question will be completed by the time I get home. Then won't I go to Mount Union in less than no time. Ha! ha! I should have been pleased to have heard that "spirited speech" said to have been delivered by professor Kuhn<sup>16</sup> in Milnwood<sup>17</sup> Hall at the rail road meeting. He is such a spirited young man. I would suppose the speech would be spicy.

I am glad to know Lettie recovering. I hope she will soon be well. I think with you she was not intended for a school teacher, particularly a vulgar public school marm. They have a great deal to bear, which must be repulsive to a refined sensitive lady. I suspect Lettie would be happier in some other position. May be Tom could devise some means by which she would be rendered comfortable. Ha! ha!

I read a letter from sister Kate Wednesday evening. All were well. She said they were all very much disappointed that I was not at Dry Run. When they came to see me, they remained at Stark's for dinner. And then when I did not come, they went home the same evening. Ellie came too, to see her Aunty, but was disappointed. Kate says she and George are coming to see me whenever there comes sleighing. I wish it would snow.

I wonder whether I shall get a letter this evening. I hope so, but shall try not to be badly disappointed if none comes. I will now stop writing for this evening. May be I will write some more tomorrow. Good afternoon for this time.

Later: The young folks have gone to singing and I am left with the old folks. The girls wanted me to accompany them to singing, but I did not feel like going. I had to frame several excuses, one of which was I would get no beau if I did go. Young Mr. Fagan was in and said if I would go he would see me home. Very kind of the young gent, but I couldn't see it.

Thank you for sending me "The Age." It is very seldom I get to see a Democratic paper. Mr. Culbertson gave me the *Valley Spirit* to read tonight while he is at singing. There is some gay pieces in it.

I wonder how Tom is spending this evening. I hope pleasantly. I fear you are anxious about me, and imaging that I am gloomy and unhappy. But dear, I am not. But I am happy as usual. Please do not allow yourself one anxious thought on my account. I am not one of the desponding kind, and have always been able to get through life so far. And God is ever near and has assured us that no evil shall come nigh those who fear him. But good night. May sweet sleep, pleasant dreams, health and happiness be Tom's.

Good afternoon: I shall write you some more today in reply to your very kind favor of Wednesday and Thursday which was read last evening. Thank you so much for still remembering Mattie so substantially, but I feel you stole your allotted hours for repose in writing me. Did you not? I fear it is Tom now who is feeling unhappy. I am so sorry dear, that I thoughtlessly caused you a moment's anxiety. Of course had I been talking to you it would not have affected your peace of mind, but when I am far away you imagine half. Ha! ha!

I am surprised that you had not received my last Sabbath letter when you wrote. I sent it down in time for the Tuesday's mail, and you should have received it on Wednesday. I suppose it has been overlooked somewhere. I hope it has reached its destination ere this, or you will think I am neglecting you sadly – as I could not get my Wednesday letter to the office.

I am sorry you were not feeling as bright as usual when you wrote. I think I understand your feelings at the time and can sympathize with you. We have much to contend with in life, and meet with many disappointments, but they last but for a moment. Our trouble here must have an end. I often think the greatest suffering of the lost will be that their misery is eternal. It must last forever without one ray of hope. My greatest consolation is hope. If I am unhappy, or disappointed, I think or hope to feel better soon. It can not last long. And O the blessed comfort of a hope of heaven. Soon our earthly trials must end, and if we are then found in Jesus how happy we shall be. And this happiness can never be marred, but shall last to all eternity. And our burdens are lightened here if we cast our care on Jesus. He is willing and able to keep us. Then why take thought, but trust him with simple child-like confidence.

You spoke in your last Sabbath letter of thinking it was scarcely right that you should be spending the Sabbath alone while I was surrounded by unpleasant company. Dear, I have thought so too, and wondered sometimes if we had not mistaken our duty. I have flattered myself that none else could cheer and comfort Tom so well as Mattie, and that he often feels lonely and sad for want of companionship. As you say, our life is too short to spend the time in loneliness, and in forming resolutions for the future. If we would be useful and happy, we must act. But dear, I am now persuaded that these were idle fancies and it is better as it is. As God in his wisdom is teaching us to depend on Him alone for happiness in this world and the next. And I hope He will grant us grace to submit to His will in all things, and adhere at all times to our convictions of duty. May we ever be guided by a sense of right and not by our feelings.

I attended M.E. church today, enjoyed the sermon very much. The text was in the 89th Psalm, verse 15. Jacob took us all down in the sled. It was rough riding, but better than walking.

I am sorry to hear that your grandmother is ill. I hope she may be well ere this. Jim<sup>18</sup> visits home oftener than you do, I think. But I suppose you will be going to see your grandma if she is still unwell.

This evening is beautiful, so calm and clear, but it will freeze hard. The air is cold since sunset. Thanks for your prayers, dear. May they be answered and may Tom be blessed, double blessed for his loving kindness to his unworthy but loving

Mattie.

Amberson's  
February 14, 1869

[#127]

Dear Tom,

Another week is past and again it is the holy Sabbath and I am seated in my room, as the day is warm, at my table writing my thoughts to Tom. The morning has been spent very pleasantly: in reading in the Bible first, then I have finished *The Course of Time*<sup>19</sup> and closed the book and spent some time in thinking of the great love of God to sinful and rebellious man, and of the great day of his justice which Pollock so glowingly describes. I was very much pleased with the book. And it is most instructive as well as entertaining – more so, I think, than *Paradise Lost*. There is less imagination about it, and more Scripture. *Paradise Lost* dwells so much on what we lost by the fall that it awakens thoughts of discontent with our present state, and the idle wish that our first parents had maintained their innocence. While *The Course of Time* directs the thoughts to a more glorious Paradise that is attainable through Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, and it is sure to all the redeemed forever – not in their own strength, but they are kept through the might power of God. Allow me to thank you again for the pleasure afforded by the perusal of your kind gift.

Mr. West preaches in this valley this p.m., but I shall not attend. I suppose this will be the last time he will preach before I leave the valley, as his appointments are every four weeks and in four weeks from today I shall probably be at home. It appears a long time yet, but it will pass I hope usefully and pleasantly by every day bringing its own duties and pleasures.

The weather for the past week has been very spring like. The roads are muddy, but I have such a short distance to travel I get along very nicely without getting my feet damp or wet.

Your kind favor of last Sabbath was read on Thursday. I am sorry, dear, you were feeling badly. I hope you are quite well today, but fear you are not. You undoubtedly had contracted a cold, and last week would not be favorable to your getting well. But I hope, dear, it may not prove serious and that you are feeling bright and happy today.

I did not receive a letter of Tom in yesterday's mail. I wonder why. Was it because he is sick? I sincerely hope not, but feel anxious and will have to wait four days. Well, I shall hope for the best, though it will appear a long time until I hear.

I had a letter from sister Kate yesterday evening. She said she had written to you, but it was only a business letter as you had not written her since your visit. Kate is a great girl – always gay but never happy, though she appears more contented and truly happy this winter than before. I hope she is learning wisdom, and will draw her happiness from the only true source. She is self-willed and will take her own course, neither stopping to be taught by the experience of others or to listen to the warning voice of love. That would often save her bitter

mortification if she would listen, but she must buy her wisdom in the harsh school of experience.

Sister Mollie is sick. I feel real distressed about her, for she will have so much to do when Kate and I are both away. And I fear she will not take the care of herself that she should. They are making maple sugar at home. I wish I had some molasses, but they will be waiting for me when I go home.

I think the Dublin female teachers are having a hard time this winter. Do you know whether Allie intends teaching her time out? Please ascertain, if possible. If she does not, I think I will be home in time to teach it for her – that is if I would not be afraid to try it. The teachers in this district have had considerable trouble. The directors say they will employ female teachers next winter, as they have no trouble with the schools that are conducted by females this winter. I suppose they were gassing, as most men are fond of indulging in that.

I am glad to know that Lettie has recovered and has gone back to her school. I hope she may be able to finish her term. Three months is a long time yet, and I have no doubt she will think it long when she is teaching. I suppose Miss Sadie Sipes<sup>20</sup> is visiting in Huntingdon. Well, if she has plenty of gentlemen's society she will enjoy it – if not, she won't stay long. Ha! ha! Excuse this. Sadie is a fine lady I have no doubt, but prefers gentlemen's society to that of ladies.

I am surprised to hear of the Captain visiting Washington until the 4th of March, but probably then he will remain in charge – as I believe Tom told me he was going to see Grant inaugurated.

I am glad to know Dan is better. I hope he will soon be quite well. Kate says he and Allie are going west in the spring. I suppose she has only heard the report.

I don't remember of your telling me that Reese had united with the Presbyterian church, but perhaps you did. I am a little absent minded.

Thanks dear for your good wishes for my happiness. I am happy and contented now and am enjoying myself. Jesus is my friend, my strength and my joy. The clouds that were so dark have passed away. My faith has been strengthened and I can now rest on my Saviour, knowing that he doeth all things well. Thank you dear for your prayers and loving words of hope, confidence and counsel. May you be rewarded for your labors of love. Yes, we may indeed be happy when we have Jesus for our friend. We then have the "peace that the world can neither give nor take away." I am surprised that I should have been so discontented. It was very wicked for me to feel so when God has given me so many comforts and blessings while I deserve nothing but eternal wrath. Yes, we have just begun to learn wisdom. Our heavenly Teacher will sweetly teach us day by day. And when we grow careless or rebellious, we must then expect to be punished in some way – for our correction and profit.

It would indeed seem pleasant to us to pass through this life hand in hand, to be blessed with each other's smile and tender loving care, and cheering words of hope and comfort. But it may not be God's will. We might thus depend too

much upon each other for happiness and forget our one best Friend. God knows what is best for us, and will lead us in his own good way. May we know his will and, whatever that may be, let us in all sincerity and truth say "Thy will be done." This is of life but a small part, and it is better to deny ourselves while here than to act in opposition to our convictions of right and spend an eternity of woe.

I hope Tom may be very well today, entirely recovered from his indisposition of last Sabbath, and happy in the enjoyment of the communion of the Holy Spirit. I suppose he will attend church and perhaps Sabbath School today. I wonder how he is engaged while I write, may be writing me. I hope I may receive a letter on Wednesday. If I do not, I shall conclude Tom is sick.

It is now p.m., but we have not had dinner yet. We only eat twice on Sabbath. Don't fear that I will fast. I had an excellent appetite last week: cold buck-wheat cake and blue butter took first rate. I think I will be as busy as ever by the time I get home if my appetite continues.

There was singing last night, but I did not attend. I was fearful I might cut some of the young ladies out of their beaus. But this is the Sabbath and I must not pen nonsense. Mrs. Stewart says I might as well go visiting on Sunday as write love letters. This is not one of that kind, is it?

Bye, bye,  
Mattie

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[#128 is missing]

Amberson's  
February 21, 1869

[#129]

Dear Tom,

I seat myself this afternoon to reply to your kind favors of last week. Thank you for taking the trouble to write one every mail. It is very kind of you. I am glad to know that your indisposition was no more serious than a cold in the head. Of course that is annoying, but not serious in itself. And I hope you are quite well today and enjoying the delightful privileges of the sanctuary, and quiet reading and meditation in your own room. I did not go to church today, but those who did go did not hear any preaching. The minister did not come.

We (that is, the Stewarts) have visitors: Mr. and Mrs. Mower<sup>21</sup> from Oakville, Franklin County – Mr. Stewart's daughter and son-in-law. They have three children with them. The oldest is about five years, the youngest is one year. They are darling little angels, I have no doubt, but rather noisy to please an old maid. They came on Friday and I presume intend remaining some time. Today some of the relatives came in and there is quite a company in the living room. I have spent most of the day down stairs, as it is cold without fire today. The air is

raw and damp. I think there will be rain or snow soon. I have now given up hopes of having any more sleighing this winter, and I shall be very well satisfied now if there is no more snow fall till my school closes. But I shall take things as they come. I presume my wishing or desires will not change it.

Yesterday was Institute Day at Dry Run, but I did not attend. Mr. Fagan my director was over and called for me in the morning to accompany him, but I did not just feel like riding ten miles that morning. I might have gone, I suppose, but didn't. I think I shan't cross the mountain again until on my way home.

So, you did think of coming for me at the end of four months. Much obliged for the thought, though I never found myself much benefited by the thoughts of others without action. Yes, it had been very muddy, though the roads were then frozen. And Mr. Stewart said he never traveled on better roads, the ice making them smooth. But perhaps it didn't freeze at Mt. Union. Then, I didn't care. I am not fond of asking favors, that I should make such a request, and then not care. But as you considered the former "piece of my mind" as cheap as calico, I have written enough on that subject. Ha! ha! I am sorry I made the request, as you were probably annoyed to think you could not politely refuse. Ha! ha! Very unfortunate indeed that the old maids take such a "hankerin' after" you, and you have to submit to so many annoyances. Ha! ha! O dear! This is too bad to write so much nonsense on Sunday, but I have no one here that I can talk nonsense to and I must write it. If any one but my friends at home would see the letters I write home, I don't know what they would think. I guess they would doubt my sanity. Well, I pity any one who can not talk nonsense some times.

You were attending a party. Well, that was nice. I am glad to know you enjoyed it. You did not escort Norrie because somebody else did. A very good reason. The Miss Morrison you speak of I presume is Charlotte R's friend. I have heard her speak of Miss Morrison often. I presume she is an old maid. I think you told me so. It would certainly be very gallant in you to take Miss Lida to Society and then not take her home. I hope the compliment may be returned some time if you do. You are certainly at liberty to use your own pleasure. There is no compulsion. I presume Lida merely asked you to accompany her for the sake of politeness, but the men are so vain ladies should be more careful not to flatter their vanity. Ha! ha!

Thank you for your lavish compliments to an old maid. The greatest compliment I suppose you think you can pay them is to marry one, though I have my own opinions as to the honesty of that part of it. She must be a hickory old maid if she is meditating matrimony. Well, I must really write something more suitable the Holy Sabbath hours.

One of the company who are here today brought with him a *Religious Telescope*.<sup>22</sup> I was reading it, of course, and came across a lengthy argument in favor of [the possibility of] backsliding. One of their weighty arguments in favor of the doctrine was that our Saviour would not have chosen Judas as one of his

disciples if he had not been a good man at the time. And consequently, Judas must have been a backslider, and fell from grace and was never renewed. Now I think this very weak support for it was prophesied long before the event – that he would be betrayed, and Jesus being God certainly knew this when Judas was chosen one of the twelve. It was once argued by a United Brethren preacher that Jesus should have been sacrificed on an altar to have fulfilled the original design, because the Jewish sacrifice was emblematical of the great sacrifice Christ Jesus. Their knowledge of the scripture must be very limited, or else they understand them differently to what others do.

I am glad to hear of the meeting going on in Shade Gap. I hope much good may be done. If I could only enjoy the pleasure and benefit of attending it, but that can not be. The roads are too bad now for me to visit home, and I presume the meeting will close before I get home to stay. Sister did not write me this week, so I had not heard of the meeting until you wrote me. I do hope there may be a genuine revival of religion in our dear old church, and that Christians may be warmed up in the love of Christ and many sinners be brought into the ark of safety. A revival is much needed in our church. Christians have grown cold and appear to think and talk of all else more than religion. I am sorry to hear that Mrs. Montague still distresses herself so much about Dan and Allie. I suppose Dan and Allie will be married before they go west – but perhaps not, as the old lady is so much opposed to their intimacy.

I am not sorry that I will not get to close the Pleasant Hill school. I assume there are as pleasant positions to be had as that would be. I think the school teachers have had a hard time of it this winter from what I hear. I am glad to know Mattie Reese is so happily situated. She will make a good wife, and I have no doubt Reese is a kind husband. One thing I am certain of, that is that they love each other truly. And I imagine that is quite essential to the happiness of husband and wife.

I had heard of the death of Mr. Kelly.<sup>23</sup> I suppose Kate has made up her mind to live an old maid life. Jonathan, I think, must be on the old bachelor list too. Annie is the only one of the family that is married. I believe I just now thought of what you told me about Mr. Kelly wanting you to go into the ware house to speak to him. Ha! ha! What a coward a guilty conscience will make of a person, eh!

I think your brother Jim and Ellen Minick<sup>24</sup> are both fond of romance. I don't believe that their intimacy is stopped. Jim likes to shut people's eyes pretty well. I shall be glad to read the paper you speak of sending me, and shall return it you when I read it. I am cold and shall not write you any more now. Many wishes for your good health and happiness. May you enjoy today, and your soul be blessed, in communion with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Bye, bye.

Be happy ever,  
Mattie

Amberson's  
February 28, 1869

[#130]

Again it is the Holy Sabbath and I shall write you, in reply to your kind missives of the 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> which were read a few moments since. Thank you for their kind words and interesting news. I was disappointed that your last Sabbath letter did not reach me on Wednesday. It should have done so, but it is all right now and I am happy to hear from you.

I guess you do not miss my letters more than I do yours, and sometimes I think not so much, for you have kind friends with whom you can enjoy a good social talk occasionally – while I am lonely. I suppose I have some friends here, but I can't appreciate them as I do your letters. That may be the case with Tom. I am sorry indeed that I have by my thoughtless selfishness sometimes deprived you the pleasure of a letter. I did not think you would miss it so very much, and frequently I could not get my letters to the office in time for the mail. Your love and unwearied kindness certainly deserves a letter without begging for it, and I shall try to gratify you and give myself the pleasure of writing every opportunity until my school closes.

You ask why such a coolness in my letters of late? I don't know whether I can explain. I am sorry if I have pained a heart that, I do not doubt, loves and cherishes me. You have ever been kind and good, most considerate of my feeling, and I know would be very sorry to wound me. I know my letters have lost their warmth, and I like you despise such letters: written merely in form, without one candid sentiment. I see Tom as become too well acquainted with my style and nature to be easily deceived by a heartless mockery.

Deception is foreign to my nature and I despise it. I sometimes think that is why I make so few friends among strangers. My love for you was not awakened in a day. Neither can it be crushed in a day. The only thing that can cause my love to grow less is to find that the object is unworthy. My dear Tom grows more noble every day, and when thinking of friends and home Tom has no second place. But I know you are not fearful of my changing sentiments toward you. Perhaps it would be better for both if we could forget more easily. Please pardon the raillery and sarcasm of my last. I don't remember what I did write, not my thoughts I know.

I was visiting last night at Mr. Fagan's. I remained until about noon today and had a pleasant time. I like Mr. Fagan's family better than any one else in the Valley. My school will close, well I have scarcely decided yet when. The term should close next Friday, but as you know I was not within bounds and could not attend the association at Dry Run. The director gave me liberty to teach to put in that time. I have five days to put in, so if I put them in it will take me another week and my school will then close the 12th of March. I don't think it is fair at all that I have to make up the time, for if I could I would have attended the association. And those teachers who were convenient to Dry Run could attend the

association on Saturday, and their terms will close next Friday and I will have to teach another week or forfeit \$5.00. But Tom will say, "You had better remain; a week will not be long." And perhaps it would be better for me to remain.

I guess I shall not allow you to undergo the fatigue and trouble to come for me. I shall get home nicely if all goes well, and I shall be glad to see you at home. I had a letter from sister Mollie today. She is much better, but not able to do much. I am anxious about her, for she will not be able to take the care of herself that she should – for there will be no one to do the work but Mother, and she is not able to do it. Kate's school will be through about the same time mine will. There is no preaching in this Valley today. I have read but very little, as the a.m. was spent at Mr. Fagan's talking most of the time.

Thank you, dear, for the papers. They also arrived today – or rather yesterday evening, but I did not get them until today. I shall preserve the papers as you wish, until I go home. I must now stop writing for the present. Many wishes for your health and happiness. Best love and a kiss.

From,  
Your Mattie

Later: Dearest, I shall devote the closing hours of this bright but bitter cold Sabbath in writing you. I wish I could see you and we could exchange our thoughts verbally, but that can not be this evening – though I hope we may soon be permitted to enjoy that pleasure.

I am well, but lonely and almost homesick. I have tried to fix my thoughts on my Bible reading, but could not succeed for a long time. I was reading Paul's 1st epistle to the Corinthians. I should think the discourse as to what Presbyterians believe and what they do not believe would be very interesting. Thanks, dear, for your kind wishes for my happiness. I know, dear, you wish me good and happy, and I fear you distress yourself with the idea that I am not. Please continue to pray for me, that I may be blessed and have my faith increased.

But dear God is very near and I am happy in a sense of His love. May Tom be happy today in the assurance of God, reconciled in Christ Jesus, and in communion with the Holy Spirit – and the assurance of Mattie's undivided love and prayers for his happiness.

I am glad to hear that the meeting is still in progress at Shade Gap in our dear old church. May much good be done. I would love to be there. Mollie says they were expecting Mr. Hays<sup>25</sup> and Mr. West there last week. Dear, I hope with you that Dan may be converted. O, that would be joyful news to me. And I know, dear, you have prayed for him and done all you could to do him good, and would rejoice as only a brother can if he would become a Christian. Our God is a covenant keeping God and the fervent prayer of faith will be heard by our Jesus in behalf of loved ones. He is the same now as when on earth he healed the diseased at the prayer of their friends.

Yes, Kate knew it was Washington's birthday when she wrote you, for

sister Mollie's letter was dated the same day. And Kate added a few words saying she has school and asking me if I was teaching. I taught. The directors would not allow us any holidays. I think it is real mean, but I suppose I can stand it.

How could Lida have insulted Mother? There must have been some misunderstanding, likely. The scandal concerning Mrs. Shaver and the M.E. minister<sup>26</sup> is certainly to be lamented. It appears no one's name is safe from attack. I would be loath to believe any thing of the kind until I couldn't help it.

I wonder how Mr. Van Artsdalen<sup>27</sup> got through. I should like to know. Mt. Union must be improving rapidly. I think there will be quite enough of school in place without Kate. I wish she could get a good school for next summer.

Yes, hope certainly is a great comforter. I think one might be always happy if they would hope for the best and confidently trust God to govern the world with all men, without troubling about many things. "Cast thy care upon me, for I care for you" saith the Saviour. May we be enabled, dear, to trust Him entirely.

I wonder what Tom is thinking of, or how employed, while I write – perhaps reading, or maybe thinking, as it is now growing late and he will soon retire. May his thoughts be pleasant and profitable. Perhaps he will think of his Mattie far away and be transported in thought to her side. Yes, we are near in thought and heart. May we love God and be happy in His love.

You did not tell me whether you intend going to Washington on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>28</sup> Bye, bye.

Yours,  
Mattie

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Amberson's  
March 3, 1869

[#131]

My dear Tom,

Your kind favor of the 1<sup>st</sup> has just been read. Thank you for your kindness to remember Mattie so substantially. I feel disappointed when your letters do not reach me every mail, though I am not very punctual in replying. This time I am prompt and, if I can send it to the office in time for Friday's mail, you will receive it on Saturday.

Thank you for your kind wishes for my health and happiness. I am quite well, have a ravenous appetite, and sleep just as long as I can in the mornings. I generally get down stairs about the time the family are sitting down to breakfast. I am generally at the school house by half past seven, so as to have the house warm and comfortable by nine o'clock. The weather has been quite cold for several days, but today was more pleasant. I think it would be a good sugar day.

Last night I was visiting at Mrs. Culbertson's. I had a pleasant time and enjoyed myself very well while there, but it was dark and rough walking home. Today I felt rather dull in school. I almost went asleep. My school is small now, and quiet. The pupils are losing their interest in their studies. They think school will soon close and they can't put their minds to work. I am about as tired as they.

I think that I did not tell you that we have a little pet here now. The Mr. and Mrs. Mower I was telling you about being here about two weeks ago left one of their children, a little girl about five years old. She goes to school to me. She is gay as a lark. I like her pretty well. She makes it more lively here. I like my boarding place better now. I guess I will be sorry after all when my school is done and I have to part with my pupils and friends here.

There is singing in my school house next Saturday evening. Will you attend and bean me home? Ha! ha! I think I shall go, as it will likely be the last singing for this winter – and very probably the last opportunity I shall have of attending an Amberson's Valley gathering. My school shall close on the 12<sup>th</sup> instant. I expect to start for home on the 13<sup>th</sup>. You think you will come for me? I guess you will forget when the time comes. Papa wrote me he would meet me at Dry Run if I would let him know when I would be there. I can go in the hack to Dry Run on Saturday evening, remain until Monday, and Papa will meet me and take me home. It will be much easier than for you to come all the way. I have not spoken to the Board for two months and will have to go today to Dry Run to report, get my money, etc.

I presume you would receive my Sunday letter this evening. I hope you would not be disappointed. Mr. Stewart has a sale the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month. He intends to quit farming this spring. The boys are going to take charge of the farm, I believe.

I had heard of Zook's marriage. They will make a nice little couple. I am glad to hear that Annie is so well fixed. I hope she may be happy.

So you are curtailing expenses. Well, don't impose too much on Tom. Thanks for Miss Norrie's regards. I hope she may be happy, as she deserves. The portrait of John Scott<sup>29</sup> is very life like. I don't remember, though, of ever seeing him. The papers are amusing and interesting. Thank you for your kindness in sending them.

Did I tell you that Crouse, my next neighbor school teacher, took himself a wife a short time since. It must have been "wedding haste," when he could not wait to finish his school. But bye, bye for this time.

Best wishes,  
Your Mattie

### Endnotes for the 1869 letters #121-131

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<sup>1</sup>The "Radical Methodists" are the Methodist Protestants. Previously, in letter #116, Mattie said of Rev. Crouse that "I enjoyed the sermon very much indeed."

<sup>2</sup>One possibility for this book is History and Character of American Revivals of Religion by Calvin Colton, published in London in 1832.

<sup>3</sup>John Scott (1824-1896) was elected U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania as a Republican in fall 1868, serving from March 1869 to March 1875. He did not seek re-election. An attorney in Huntingdon, he was a very popular and prominent citizen who was active in local politics, organizations and business ventures.

<sup>4</sup>Letitia Mariah Caldwell is the daughter of Samuel Caldwell (1793-1857) and his second wife Mariah Oatman. She is the third of four children born sometime after Samuel's first wife died in 1835 and before he died in 1857. She married an A.W. Green. Samuel and his wives are buried in the Presbyterian cemetery at Shade Gap.

<sup>5</sup>Mattie boarded with the Thomas family last year when she taught in Maryland

<sup>6</sup>William Ashman Fraker (1836-1875) was born and raised in Shirleysburg, where he settled and served on the town council in 1864 and 1872. He married in 1864 had just become a father in December 1868. It appears that Mattie's surprise was justified.

<sup>7</sup>There appears to be a connection between David Baker and the McAninch family, possibly a Samuel McAninch, but the exact identity of David Baker and his relationship to that family remain a mystery.

<sup>8</sup>Jacob Flasher (b. c1838) was a blacksmith and wagon maker. He moved from Shade Gap to Mount Union in the early 1860's, then to Harrisburg for a few years, and then back to Mount Union. He married Rhoda Ellen Stitt (b. c 1838) of Shade Gap. The Flashers later moved westward - to Everett PA and Plymouth OH, before settling in Shelby OH.

<sup>9</sup>Edward P. McKittrick was also a Mount Union blacksmith. It is possible that Flasher and McKittrick were brothers-in-law, as Rhoda's sister Isabelle (b. 1846) married an Edward McKittrick. Since Isabelle would have been at least 10 years younger than Edward P. McKittrick, this may be the "presumption" referred to in the letter. In 1869 (and in 1873 and 1878), McKittrick was a member of the Mount Union town council. He was later an active trustee of the Methodist Church in Mount Union. In 1883, J. Simpson Africa's History of Huntingdon County, page 357, states that "the blacksmith-shop now operated by Jacob Flasher was built in 1854 or 1855 by Charles McLaughlin and Ed. McKittrick, who own and work in the old Sharrar blacksmith-shop on Water Street."

<sup>10</sup>Margaret Ellen Glenn McNeal (1858-1915) is Mattie's niece, the daughter of her older brother Robert and Susanna Ford. She is mentioned again in letter #126.

<sup>11</sup>Martha Diven (1840-1916) later married Sylvester Price (1842-1904) of Path Valley. They are buried in the Middle Tuscarora Presbyterian Cemetery.

<sup>12</sup>Martha Ann "Annie" Kough was born about 1844 and was still single and living with her parents southeast of Shade Gap, near Pleasant Hill and the Appleby homestead, in 1870.

<sup>13</sup>Mattie is mistaken. In 1869, both the Methodist Episcopal

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and the Methodist Protestant annual conferences met in March. The Pennsylvania Conference of the United Brethren Church met in Chambersburg beginning January 21, 1869, and J.P. Anthony was returned to Path Valley.

<sup>14</sup> Martha Bell Montague, cousin of Tom, was about two years older than her sister to Allie (who would later elope with Tom's brother Dan). Nothing more could be determined about her husband Mr. Reese or their move west. Letter #129 confirms that Reese is the surname, and not the given name, of the husband.

<sup>15</sup> The autobiography of Samuel Huber (1782-1868), a copy of which is in the conference archives, was published in 1858 and appears to have been widely distributed and read. Huber also supposedly authored a publication titled the *Mourner's Bench*, of which the archives do not have a copy.

<sup>16</sup> R.S. Kuhn purchased Milnwood Academy in 1867 and acted as its principal.

<sup>17</sup> Milnwood Hall refers to the large 54'x36' recitation facility of Milnwood Academy, a preparatory in Shade Gap that filled the gap between the standard eighth grade education and college. The school was founded in 1848 by James Y. McGinnis who hired teachers and sold stock to finance the operation. At its peak, it accommodated 150 students - many of them boarding in the complex of buildings at the site. A normal department allowed students to receive training to become teachers, and Thomas Appleby attended Milnwood prior to teaching for a year at Weaver's School near Saxton. The academy was several lots south of the Methodist church.

<sup>18</sup> Tom's younger brother James Y. McGinnis Appleby (1850-1907) was named James Y. McGinnis, pastor of the Shade Gap Presbyterian Church from 1844 until his death in 1851 at the age of 35.

<sup>19</sup> The Course of Time by Robert Pollock (c1798-1827) is "a poem in ten books." This once widely-read epic poem in blank verse was first published in 1827 and by 1863 it had gone through 24 editions.

<sup>20</sup> Sarah A. Sipes (b. c1843) is the daughter of George Sipes and Rachael Cornelius. George operated a store in Shade Gap and was a justice of the peace.

<sup>21</sup> Maria Eva Stewart married George Mower. An 1898 letter by a Jenetta Eckenrode supposedly states: "Maria Eva Stewart and her husband George Mower lived this side of Chambersburg along Old Concrete Road. George Mower hung himself and she bought another farm out beyond Chambersburg."

<sup>22</sup> *The Religious Telescope* is the weekly newspaper of the United Brethren denomination.

<sup>23</sup> John Kelly (1794-1869) is the father of Jonathan, Mary Catherine, Ann Elizabeth, and four other children. Mary Catherine (c1838-1887) never married and is buried beside her parents in the Burnt Cabins Cemetery. BY 1871 Jonathan (c1835-c1895) was married and had a child. Ann (1842-1926) had married David Marshall Wible 4/28/1868.

<sup>24</sup> Hannah Ellen Minick (1850-1909) is a sister to the Elizabeth Minick Neely of letter #110 and daughter of the Mrs. Minick of letter #12. She married William H. Zimmerman (1846-1903) from Sylvan, in the southwest corner of Franklin County, who became a Methodist minister in the Kansas Conference.

<sup>25</sup> There are several interesting candidates for this "Mr.

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Hays," but he cannot be identified with reasonable certainty.

<sup>26</sup> A check in the journals of the M.E. pastors serving the charges involving Shade Gap, Mount Union and the surrounding communities does not indicate anything amiss. The tone of the letter suggests this may have been a case of false accusations.

<sup>27</sup> Garret Van Artsdalen (1816-1881) graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1842 and served the Shade Gap Presbyterian charge for six years - from March 9, 1859, to March 18, 1865. During his final year, he was also principal of Milnwood Academy in Shade Gap. The historical record [from the 1896 *Historical Memorial of the Centennial Anniversary of the Presbytery of Huntingdon*, page 244] that "on April 1, following, his connection with these churches ceased" along with the context and comments in this letter suggest that he may have left amid controversy. A similar statement [from the 1859 *History of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton NJ*, page 451] regarding Titusville NJ states: "The first pastor, the Rev. Garret Van Artsdalen, was ordained and installed May 22d, 1844. His pastoral relation was dissolved February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1852." The account of his later years [from the 1891 *Necrological Reports and Annual Proceedings of the Alumni Association of Princeton Theological Seminary*, pages 63-64] states: "On November 11, 1868, he was deposed from the office of Christian ministry and from the communion of the church by the Presbytery of Huntingdon. After this time he resided in Chicago, Ill., where he engaged in buying and selling grain."

<sup>28</sup> March 4, 1869, was the inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant as the 18<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

<sup>29</sup> See letter #122 for comments on Senator John Scott.

## Epilogue

Thomas A. Appleby and Martha S. (Mattie) McNeal were married October 27, 1870. To this union were born John C. and Katherine. Mattie died at the age of 34 on October 28, 1876, one day after their sixth wedding anniversary. In 1878, Thomas A. Appleby married Mattie's younger sister Catherine M. (Kate).

T.A. Appleby was one of Mount Union's most prominent and multi-talented early citizens. A native of Dublin township, he served in the Civil War with Company K of the 202nd PA Volunteers 9/1/1864 to 8/3/1865. After teaching school for one year, he became a clerk in Shade Gap. He came to Mount Union in 1867 as a founding partner in BX Blair & Co. - a general store of which he eventually became sole proprietor. In 1870, he built the double store/home in which he resided all his life. He was postmaster of Mount Union 1869 to 1885. Active in the Presbyterian Church, he was ordained a ruling elder on March 17, 1873, and served as Sunday School superintendent for many years. In 1902 he was one of the organizers of the First National Bank of Mount Union, and the institution's vice president. He was editor and one of the 1903 founders of *The Twice a Week Republican* newspaper. A firm believer in education, his and Mattie's children John and Katherine comprised the first graduating class of the Mount Union High School. His son J. Donald continued the general store.