

**Early Letters #12 and #67**

Monroe<sup>1</sup>  
December 4, 1866

[#12]  
Tuesday evening

Friend Tom,

I seat myself to acknowledge the receipt of your kind letters, three of which I received yesterday and one this evening. The two that were addressed to Rohrersville<sup>2</sup> I presume lay in the office some time. Having no opportunity of sending down to get them until yesterday, I was rather expecting a scolding in the one I received this evening, but was agreeably disappointed. I hope now that I have again become settled that you will have no reason to complain of my tardiness. I suspect the trouble will be a surplus.

Presumably you would like to know how I am flourishing in my new situation. The first week I was so homesick I thought it was impossible for me to stay. I suppose it was moving. I thought when I was going I should go on home. Then I did not get any letters from home, and everybody here was strange. I tell you I had the "blues" terribly.

The family I am boarding with is very kind. Mr. Thomas<sup>3</sup> is very talkative and Mrs. Thomas is almost perfection. I go over to see friend Mollie very often. She is as kind to me as a sister and Mr. Thomas, Mollie's husband, is the nicest man entirely. The folks here say Mollie and I look enough alike to be sisters. I think it is strange. I never heard anybody say before that we resembled each other.

I must tell you how I have been passing the time since I came here. Well, in the first place when I came, there was a big meeting going on in the Benevola<sup>4</sup> chapel. I attended Sabbath night and Tuesday night, spent the days in the schoolroom training the young ideas, and have entered twenty-eight scholars. I like the little urchins tolerably well, but they are very noisy and very troublesome. They are nearly all boys about nine years old. By the way, I have one fellow eighteen setting out large. As I never was famous for smiles, and do not have much trouble in assuming frowns, I have the reputation at present of being remarkably cross. I do not think I will like this school as well as I did the one at Oak Grove. I did love the pupils there. But I have a much better home here, and my boarding place is more convenient, not more than two hundred yards from the school house.

Last Saturday night a week the United Brethren<sup>5</sup> commenced a big meeting in my school house. It is still going on yet, and no prospect of it closing. I would not care if it would stop soon, for it puts me to a good deal of inconvenience, not to say trouble, putting things right in the mornings. I attend the meetings pretty regularly, but fear I am not much benefited.

The preachers stay here very often. There is a young man by the name of Hott<sup>6</sup> on the circuit. He makes a full team himself. I never saw such a preacher.

Ewing<sup>7</sup> is thought of greatly for a minister, but he is nothing to Hott.

I had an encounter on Sabbath night, something similar to Lettie's<sup>8</sup> the previous Sabbath. This Rev. Hott stops at our place very often, and on Sabbath evening he was here and, of course for politeness, escorted me to church. One of my Rohrersville friends was there. And just about the time the Reverend was thinking of offering his services to escort me home, this friend kindly offered to bring me home. So I thought I would save the reverend divine of the trouble, and so came with the friend. But I tell you I had to do some fancy talking to beat the preacher. He commenced on me as soon as I got home, told Mr. Thomas that I had treated him so badly. I had rather a watch on him though, for he waited for me at the door. And I would have it that he tried to play off on me, for he had started first. We talked away till Mrs. Thomas got a light and told Hott to retire. He said if there was a cord on the bed he would hang himself. I begged him not to, for if he did I would grieve myself to death. And he said he believed he had got his match for once.

This evening he is here again, and went with me to meeting. I was expecting he would leave me to come home alone, but he brought me back when we got home. He said that I might thank my stars I had met with a gentleman this time, and he would advise me never to trust a gentleman's politeness so far again as to take him the second time after slighting him once. Ha, ha. But enough of this.

Last Thursday was Thanksgiving day here, too. I did not have school and spent most of the day in Boonsboro.<sup>9</sup> My school teacher friend Mollie Hunter was to see me last Saturday. She is gay, and her visit went far toward banishing my homesickness. I am now enjoying myself tolerably well. Hopefully King<sup>10</sup> will carry on the meeting at the Gap. Then Mrs. Minick's<sup>11</sup> daughters may be benefited by it. I think theirs must be a convenient kind of repentance, that they can become Christians whenever their mother says they shall.

I have the greatest time you ever heard of defending the Calvinistic doctrine. Mr. Thomas teases me nearly all the time. He said yesterday I was as slippery as an eel. Whenever he thought he had me, I would advance some idea that no one else would have thought of. He of course talks for talk's sake. They all think, and may be they are half right, that I am homesick. And everyone is teasing me to keep me from being lonely. But I am of a very quiet disposition and would sometimes rather think than talk.

But I must close, for it is growing very late. I wrote this after meeting. Please excuse all mistakes as I am so sleepy I can scarcely see.

From your friend,  
Mattie

PS Don't think you will get off with such short letters all the time. I am going to write you one as long as the Mormon law and twice as tedious some of these days when I have the necessary time. Good night.

Shade Valley  
February 26, 1868

[#67]

Good afternoon dear Tom,

I hope you are having a pleasant time. Perhaps you may be sleighing, as there is quite enough snow at present for such exhilarating recreation. But poor me has not had the pleasure of a single ride yet. And what renders matters still worse: Henry was here last evening and invited me to accompany him to Waterloo today, and don't you think he never went at all. He and Sam Book<sup>12</sup> passed this morning en route to Shade Gap and never called to see if I was ready. Wasn't it too bad? Well, well. I think I shall survive the slight. If Henry can stand it, I can.

George and he were sleighing to Shade Gap yesterday evening. George brought your letter from the office. He was anxious to have the Mount Union news. I told him I did not get the Herald.

Thank you for your good long letter of the 21<sup>st</sup>. I was glad to know you were well and apparently in good spirits. I hope you may enjoy the meeting in progress. It is a great privilege to have preaching so convenient. The snow's going away and the road's being so icy prevented our going to church on Saturday night and Sabbath. I believe the meeting closed last Sabbath. There is no preaching in the brick church<sup>13</sup> next Sabbath morning. Mr. Fenton<sup>14</sup> preaches in Pine Grove.<sup>15</sup>

I am rejoiced, dear Tom, to know that you have a hope in Christ and have decided to be a Christian. It is indeed a great and incomprehensible privilege to be a child of God. Mortal minds can never comprehend the great and divine love, which induced the Saviour to leave the bosom of the Father and suffer and bleed and die that (may we not hope) we may live. Oh! how weak and doubting we are, and how wanting in faith. How much I at least need the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith."

Your view of conversion and regeneration is slightly different from our minister's.

He spoke of regeneration first as being an act of the Holy Spirit in convincing of sin and drawing us by the cords of love to the Saviour, and enabling us by faith to believe on him. Regeneration, he would have us believe, is entirely the work of God's spirit and is instantaneous and complete. In a word, as our Saviour explains it, it is being "born again."

Conversion is the fruit of regeneration. The love of God constraining us, we grow in grace day by day and endeavor to obey the Saviour's commands and walk worthy of our calling until at last we arrive at a state of sanctification in glory.

Yes, Tom, I do believe in embracing religion instantaneously: that is, our affections and pursuits are changed in a moment by the influence of the spirit.

Yet our faith may be so faint as to cause us to doubt, perhaps for years. I do not believe all have powerful demonstrations of God's love and acceptance of them. But I think there are some who are in covenant favor with God who have scarcely felt a smile of his love. The timid and humble need encouragement, while the proud spirit must be made lowly.

I wish to ask you a question. You, of course, can use your pleasure as to answering it. Have you connected yourself with the church? What gave rise to the question was: someone told sister Kate you were a church member, and she asked me if you were.

I did not receive your last in time to try my imaginative powers to see you at the wedding yesterday morn. I hope you enjoyed the party, as I have no doubt you did. Brother Rob is here. And he and pa and ma are talking about going to Kansas. I believe brother is in quite a notion of going if he can sell his farm in "Buzzard's Glory." I about half wish he would go. You see: if he does, pa will sell and go, too. And I think we could not possibly get into a worse place. That is a consolation. And I think Rob should go west, for I am tired seeing him working so hard merely to live.

I shall be most happy to see Tom next week. It is not at all likely I should be visiting in Shade Gap. Besides, I prefer entertaining company at home. There is to be a G.T.<sup>16</sup> meeting in Shade Gap on Tuesday evening. I may attend it if the sleighing lasts. George will take a sled load. Maybe Henry will take me. He is not at all angry about the sleigh ride in the creek. He didn't ask Sarah and me to pay the damages. I haven't time to write more now. Bye, bye.

Many good wishes,  
Mattie

PS If you come over in the carriage or sleigh, please bring sister Moll 15 yards of muslin like the enclosed sample. And oblige you don't send it, as there is no hurry. Perhaps we will have an opportunity of sending with some one for it.

— friend Mattie

### **Endnotes for the early letters #12 and #67**

<sup>1</sup> Monroe is a community about 2 miles southwest of Boonsboro on the road to Keedysville. The United Brethren formed a class here in 1851 and met in the school house where Martha McNeal taught. In 1872 the class would erect a church building on land donated by Martha's landlord Solomon S. Thomas.

<sup>2</sup> Rohrsersville is about 6 miles south of Boonsboro on the road to Harper's Ferry. The United Brethren formed a class here about 1832 and worshiped in Clopper's meeting house at Grampton's Gap before erecting Bethel church in town in 1842. After the church building was erected in town, the old meeting house was turned over to Negro slaves. Caucasians living near the former facility occasionally did not travel into town and, in reverse of the usual

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custom, sat in the gallery during the Negro services.

<sup>3</sup> Solomon S. Thomas was a United Brethren layman. He and his wife Mollie lived near the Monroe school house where the local United Brethren congregation met and where Martha McNeal taught. Martha boarded at their home. In 1872 he gave the land upon which the congregation erected their first church building.

<sup>4</sup> Benevola is about 3 miles northwest of Boonsboro on the road to Hagerstown. The United Brethren formed a class here in 1848 and erected Benevola chapel in 1858. Ministerial son of this congregation Rev. H.J. Kitzmiller (1867-1936), founder and benefactor of the Quincy Home, was born while Martha McNeal taught at Monroe - just two months after this letter was written.

<sup>5</sup> When formed in 1800, the United Brethren denomination was contained in a single conference. In 1830 the original conference was divided into the Hagerstown (later Virginia) and Pennsylvania conferences. In 1866, at the time of this letter, the United Brethren work in the area was part of the Virginia Conference. In 1887 the Maryland Conference was formed from the Virginia Conference, and in 1902 the Maryland Conference merged into the Pennsylvania Conference - where these congregations remained until the 1960's. Although now part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church, the former United Brethren churches in Maryland share a history and pastoral heritage with the Pennsylvania Conference. Originally all of Washington County MD was part of the large Hagerstown Circuit. On March 31, 1866, the 13 appointments on that circuit were divided. The following 5 appointments plus the addition of Hagerstown station remained the Hagerstown Circuit: Mt. Tabor, Bethel (Chewsville), White Hall, Middleburg (State Line PA), Leitersburg. The following 8 appointments constituted the newly-formed Boonsboro Circuit: Rohrsersville, Mt. Carmel, Pleasant Hill (Eakles' Mill), Mt. Hebron (Keedysville), Monroe, Boonsboro, Benevola, Fahrney's.

<sup>6</sup> J. Elkanah Hott was the junior pastor on the Boonsboro circuit. Admitted to the Virginia Conference in 1866, he left to the Old Constitution branch of the denomination in the 1889 split. His father Jacob F. Hott (1821-1884) was a local preacher who joined the Conference in 1857 and worked as an evangelist rather than as an itinerant. Four of Jacob's five sons became United Brethren preachers, and the fifth son died while preparing for the ministry. Rev. J. Elkanah Hott's ministerial brothers include future bishop James W. (1844-1902), Isaac T. (ordained in 1878 and later transferred to the Presbyterian Church), Charles M. (1851-1890), George P. Hott (1854-1914).

<sup>7</sup> The Rev. Ewing to whom J.E. Hott is compared is unknown. Although the letter clearly says "Ewing" this could be a mistaken reference to Abram M. Evers, the senior pastor on the circuit.

<sup>8</sup> This is believed to Letitia Mariah Caldwell, of the Samuel Caldwell family of the Shade Gap Presbyterian Church. She also taught school and is mentioned again in letters #123, #124, #126 and #127. She later married a Mr. A.W. Green of Tyrone and lived there.

<sup>9</sup> Boonsboro is about 10 miles southeast of Hagerstown on alternate US 40. Otterbein, Geeting, Newcomer and other United Brethren forefathers held services here in the 1780 Reformed

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Church. When the Reformed congregation erected a new building, a portion that identified with Otterbein's experiential religion continued to meet in the old structure. The United Brethren formed a class here about 1832 and erected a log church building the same year. That structure had an elevated preaching station (called a "wine glass" pulpit by the Reformed, but a "bird's nest" pulpit by the United Brethren). There was no bell, but a shrill blast from a shepherd's horn called the congregation together. The present brick structure was erected in 1868, two years after this letter.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Reeder King (1832-1895) was the Methodist preacher on the McConnellsburg charge (which then included Shade Gap) 1867-1869

<sup>11</sup> The John Minick family resided in Shade Gap and was prominent in the Methodist church there, Mr. Minick being a class leader and the Sunday School superintendent. He was a leather worker. Mrs. Minick (1810-1880) is the former Maria Kuhn. Daughter Ellen Minick is mentioned in letter #129 as a possible romantic interest of Tom's brother James Appleby. Daughter Elizabeth Minick Neely is mentioned in letter #110.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Book Jr (1842-1928) lived on a farm near Richvale - along present route 35, by the Book Cemetery. The family was German Baptists (i.e., Church of the Brethren).

<sup>13</sup> The brick church in Shade Gap was erected in 1848, replacing an 1800 log structure that stood at the same site. This is where the McNeals attended and where Mattie is buried.

<sup>14</sup> Mr. Fenton, assumed to be the person who usually supplied the pulpit at Shade Gap, is otherwise unknown

<sup>15</sup> The Pine Grove Presbyterian Church is in the community of Neelyton. The present church was completed in 1901 and is located on land adjacent to the site of the 1859 building standing at the time of this letter. Until 1933 the congregation was considered part of the Shade Gap church and referred to as "the mountain foot church." It was incorporated and made independent by the presbytery in 1933.

<sup>16</sup> It is unknown what a "G.T. meeting" refers to.