

A LETTER
CONCERNING FAMILY HISTORY.

BY ANDREW BROWN.

1812.

JOHN BROWN=ELIZABETH, dau. of Ephraim Minor, October, 1692.
of Stonington.

John, 1693, d. next year.	Jonathan, 1695.	Elizabeth, 1697.	Hepzibah, 1699.	John 2d, 1701.	Ichabod, March 12, 1704.	Prudence, 28 April, 1707.	Jedediah, 25 April, 1709.	Mehitable, 1712.	Mary, 1714.
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Ichabod Brown=Sarah Chapman.
MAR. 12
1704

Andrew Brown=Sarah Cobb.

Edward Brown=Tabitha Hyer.

Andrew E. Brown=Elizabeth S. Nexsen. 1829

Elizabeth S.	Mary A.	<u>1839</u> Frederick W.	<u>1841</u> Annie S.	Frances Clara.	Juliet P.	Hamilton B.
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N O T E .

The concerns of a private family are not expected to excite in general readers, that degree of interest, with which partiality invests them, in the estimation of one, who, while turning over the papers of his forefathers dwells with pleasure on details and illustrations of character, with which his earliest recollections were interwoven, but the gratification arising from an attempt to rescue the memory of one's ancestors from entire oblivion, will be received as an explanation of, if not an apology for, the presumption of putting the following pages through the press. They consist as will be seen of an autobiographical letter, addressed by the writer to his son Silas, then a young man of 20, a clerk in the employ of Peter Van Loon, a prominent merchant in the city of Albany.

BERN, March 30th, 1812.

MY SON:

Agreeable to your request, I send you some of the particulars you enquire after. I was born at Stonington, Conn., Nov. 22d, 1748, old style, answering to the 3d December, new style. My father descended from one of three brothers, that immigrated from Lynn, near Boston, England, perhaps 150 years ago, they were some of the first settlers.

My mother was the daughter of John Chapman, who came from England, and married his wife in this country. My grandfather and grandmother Brown, my grandmother Chapman, and my father's brothers, all died before my remembrance. My grandfather Chapman died when I was about 10 years old, and my father when I was about 8 years old, and left 4 sisters, all married, and had families. My mother died when I was about 18 years old, and left 4 brothers, and 1 sister, all married, and had families. Two of the brothers, I suppose are living yet in Westerly in Rhode Island; the rest of my uncles and aunts, I expect, are dead, although they lived to a good old age, and have left a numerous offspring. One thing is worthy of observation there have been none of my predecessors, or cotemporaries that could be said to be rich, and none (with very few exceptions) that could be accounted poor, but almost a uniformity or mediocrity prevailed, and all were good liver.

Your mother was born September 30th, 1750, old style, her father, Henry Cobb, had one brother

Hallett, who left one daughter only, so that the name of Cobb in Stonington, belongs exclusively to his family, with which you are well acquainted. Your grandmother, Cobb, was the daughter of Col. Oliver Babcock of Westerly, who lived to the age of about 95 years; your mother and I were at his funeral about 39 years ago. Your grandmother, Cobb, died when your mother was young, and your grandfather, Cobb, died when your brother Edward was about one year old (1772).

You will no doubt be surprised when you are informed of the manners and customs that prevailed 50 or 57 years ago. There is more expended in the clothing of 1 child under the age of 10 or 12 years now, than was then expended on 3 or 4 by parents of like abilities, their manner of living, if not cheaper, was different. The common method then of entertaining afternoon visitors was treating them by making doughnuts and pancakes, with sweet cider, and butter, and cheese. Some in the room of spreading tables would spread a cloth on a chair with their victuals on it. Some more extravagant would have coffee and chocolate, but as to tea, tea kettles, tea cups and saucers, they would have been almost as great a wonder, as it would now to see an Egyptian Pyramid or one in miniature formed by a cook for the entertainment of company. Wooden trenchers were then almost universally used in the room of plates to eat from, and many other things were then in practice of a similar nature, too numerous to be inserted in a letter.

By this time, no doubt, you will expect my own

history up to your own remembrance. I informed you that my father died when I was about 8 years old. I then lived with my brother Ichabod, until I was about 16 years old, and worked at farming. The school learning which I had was but small, having no schools only in the winter, and them seldom less two or three miles distant from home. I went to school but little, and as to paper, I do not think I ever had half a quire bought for me, or a penknife, or an inkstand, except what I bought with my own money, which I had no other way of obtaining, but to gain time, and pick up chestnuts and walnuts, and sometimes raise a few bushels of turnips, &c. You may well think that I learned to be prudent, for I then set more by one sheet of clean paper, than I ever done by a ream since I was able to purchase by that quantity.

At the age of 16, I agreed to serve two years and two months apprenticeship at the cooper's trade, and find my own clothing, which term I faithfully served, and with the help of my mother, together with what I earned by gaining time, I clothed myself, although it was not agreeable to the modern customs practiced by boys of the same age, being then 18 years and 2 months old. My mother dying soon after I was left without father, mother, guardian or master. My father left me property to the amount of about \$300, but I was not entitled to it until I became of age. I then went to work as a journeyman, and as soon as my wages amounted to a sum sufficient to lay out, I took an order on a store for goods. Money at that time was so scarce that not one fiftieth part of what was given for

wages, was paid in money. The first thing I took on my order was a bible, and the next a suit of clothes. I dare say you will think it was all proper. My wages were \$7.62½ per month, which was 15 or 20 per cent more than other journeymen had at that time.

The last six months before I was of age, I set up my trade, and sold barrels at 50 cents per piece. About the time I was of age, I made an estimate, and found I had made property to the amount of \$300, which was as much thought of at that time, as it would be now for a man to make a thousand in the same time, which established my credit so that it became a proverb when a man was doing well, that he made money as fast as Andrew Brown. Before I was of age I was offered a lot of fat hogs on credit at the market price, and to have three years credit. The pork I took accordingly, and ever since found it more safe to buy on credit than to sell on credit. The same month that I was of age I bought the quarter of a schooner of about 50 tons, and sent her to the West Indies. She made a good voyage, and the next summer she made a fishing voyage. We then sold her, and I bought one quarter of a brig of 120 tons, and she followed the West India trade until about the time the Revolutionary war began with but little advantage. The war lasted almost 8 years, during which time I was about half the time in the state service, as a guard at Stonington, and did but little more than support my family, but we lived in good fashion, and were well respected.

At the peace of 1782, there was such a field open

for speculation that vast numbers of my acquaintance entered largely into trade; but my experience in trade put me on considering the disadvantages attending it, so that I had not courage enough to enter into any larger business than to work at my trade and tend my garden, until 1788, when my interest I estimated to be worth about 3,000 dollars; considering the place in which I lived not enjoying the advantages of the country, or the conveniences of a city, and having a number of sons and not considering myself able to put them in business, and but little prospect of their obtaining any advantageous employment in that place, I resolved to seek my fortune in some other. Believing that God has made all mankind of one blood and appointed unto them the bounds of their habitations, my lot has been cast in this place, I believe for wise purposes; the opposition I met with on leaving my friends and native land was greater than most people met with, but considering that a man without resolution is but a poor creature, I so far overcame all difficulties that I came forward in June, with Edward, Allen, and two hired men, got in about ten acres of grain and returned, leaving Edward and Allen, in the fall, and brought my family to Albany the last of November, and sent out Stanton to Edward who came in after us with three wagons which brought to my mind the case of old Jacob when Joseph sent for him. When we arrived in this town, we found our log house much out of repair, not a square of glass in it, you may well think your mother thought it strange and hard, as she had

been accustomed to live in a good house, well finished, we not having more perhaps than ten English families in this town, and those scattered and in low circumstances, and the Dutch far less polished than at present; but industry soon changed the face of things, a number of English families moved in, and by degrees things wore a more promising aspect; nothing very material took place from that time until your personal knowledge, which makes a further narrative unnecessary.

As to your observations on education, I will observe that it is my wish that every person should have a good common education in order to their being qualified to the care of themselves, and becoming good members of society; and am in favor of their having more, and I care not how much, so long as their learning is kept as a handmaid to wait on them through their lives, but when they suffer their learning to become a mistress, it disqualifies them from taking hold of such branches of business as their age and circumstances in life points out for them to do, it proves very detrimental and becomes their ruin.

Every freeholder is a stockholder in the presidency of the United States, yet it is the lot of but a very few, to be a successful candidate by obtaining that office.

It is our duty to be diligent in our business, and to do our duty in the station we are placed in, and if our circumstances do not suit our minds, to endeavor to bring our minds to suit our circumstances, which is not so difficult as many think

for, it is done by considering how much we enjoy, and how little we deserve.

You no doubt think you would be more happy in doing business for yourself, but believe me, were you to ask the merchants, that 9 out of 10 would tell you, that they never enjoyed themselves better, than whilst they were employed as you now are. If you should conduct so as to become a respectable merchant, there is no doubt but that you will become respectable in other respects. You very justly observed that a man is to be judged by his practice, and principles—and you might farther have added “by the company he keeps.”

You are not yet too old to obey the commands of a parent, nor yet too young to receive the advice of a friend.

As your future prospects under Divine Providence depend on your own exertions, I hope you will consider every transaction, as being a link in the chain of your fortune, prosperity or adversity; and never neglect doing a virtuous act till to-morrow, that may as well be done to-day. Never disclose the whole of your mind, nor show the bottom of your purse; be faithful to your friends, and be cautious of your enemies.

Having thus answered your enquiries, if anything is omitted, at your further request, I will endeavor to satisfy you. We all enjoy usual health, hoping that this will find you enjoying the same,

I remain your affectionate parent,

ANDREW BROWN.

The lamented writer of the foregoing letter, departed this life, 28th of January, 1813, within a year after its date, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, at his residence in that part of the town of Bern (now Knox), in Albany county, where he had by industry and frugality acquired a comfortable estate. His wife, his sons Edward, Stanton, Allen, Henry and Silas, and his daughters Sally, wife of Gen. Paul Todd, Kitura, wife of Dr. Erastus Williams, and Mary, wife of Dr. Moses Brownell, surviving him.^x

Albany Nov. 1859

Andrew E. Brown

The last of the above-mentioned Survivors of the immediate family of Andrew Brown died at the residence of his daughter in the City of Auburn N.Y. on the 7th Jan^y 1874. aged 80 years, his Husband D. Brownell aged 84 years, still living with his daughter at Auburn,

Jan^y 31st 1874.

Andrew E. Brown