

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, July 17, 1885, with transcript

Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. L AGB's discoveries in Freeport and Orono. Augusta House, Augusta, Maine, Friday, July 17th, 1885. My dear little wife:

I have reached thus far on my genealogical trip quite elated by my success in unravelling the mysteries of the Lovejoy family. I have collected so much material and have it so by heart — that each new fact at once fits into its proper place as a part of the whole.

I managed to catch the proper train from Boston on Wednesday and reached Freeport on time. I at once sought out Dr. Twitchell to whom I had a card of introduction from Dr. Holt of Portland who was at the meeting of the Otological Society in New London.

Dr. Twitchell was a young man and did not know anything about the Rogers family of deaf-mutes — but introduced me to an older doctor Dr. Speare — equally ignorant on the subject. He turned me over to one of the old inhabitants, a selectmen of the town, Mr. Kendall who remembered the first deaf-mutes in the family and gave me their names. He stated that the family left town many years ago. I then went to the town-clerk's office — but the town-clerk was away. His son allowed me to see the old records and I made a copy of all the records of births, marriages and deaths of all persons of the name of Rogers. I was also struck by the prevalence of the names Merrill and Dillingham which are deaf-mute names — and also names like “Luce” and “Coffin” which are associated with Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

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Having exhausted the records and all visible sources of information — I thought I would hunt up the Sherriff or Constable of the place and find out whether there were any deaf-mutes in town — and seek information through them. The Sherriff turned out to be the

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Postmaster and from him I obtained the names of some of the old inhabitants. He hailed one as he was passing and called him in. He turned out to be Mr. Rufus C. Soule. He remembered the deaf-mutes — and gave me the address of Mr. Joseph Farwell — a very old man — whose daughter married a brother of the first deaf-mute. I succeeded in finding Mr. Farwell who gave me full information concerning the immediate family containing the deaf-mutes and an odd theory of the origin of the deafness. The father Chas. Rogers married Jane Pote about 1813 who was the eldest of eight children. Poor Jane Pote was bothered to death by the younger children (her brothers and sisters) — for she had to do the hardest part of the work in taking care of them and she used to often declare that if she should ever be married she hoped her children would be deaf and dumb and not such noisy creatures as those little brothers and sisters who tormented her so. She did marry — and four of her nine children were deaf-mutes!

(the remainder of the letter missing).