



“Dear Uncle Joe...I suppose you will be looking for me home tonight but...”
6 letters of Bertha C. Mather to J.W. Mather

The guide provided to docents states that Stephen Mather’s father, Joseph Wakeman Mather left the Homestead to Stephen and to a niece, Bertha Mather. Stephen then purchased his cousin’s share for \$1300. Who was this niece/cousin?

Bertha Carter Mather was the daughter of J. W. Mather’s brother Henry. For a number of years, in the latter part of Joseph’s life, Bertha was an aide, business assistant, and companion.

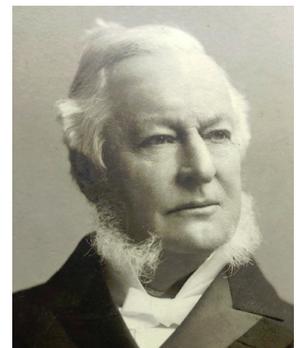
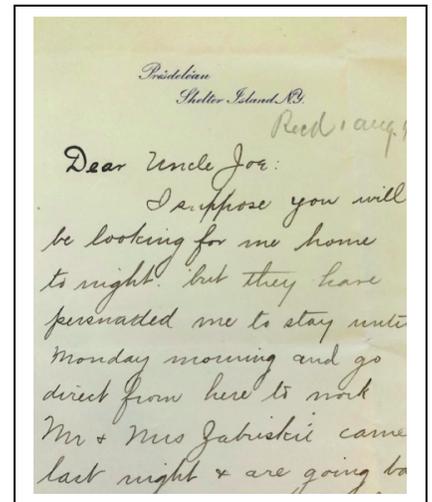
In the Homestead attic a large file contains correspondence received by the senior Mather in the 1890s. There are several letters from Stephen, from brothers and cousins, and six from Bertha...four from Shelter Island, and two from Chicago, all unaffectedly relating her vacation adventures, misadventures, encounters, and impressions.

From Aug 25, 1896 on Shelter Island...“I intended writing yesterday, but an accident made me miss the mail. I was fishing on the wharf with Mrs. Thompson and I tumbled into the water. I went all under, got thoroughly wet and...I clambered up into a boat that was handy so was in no danger but was rather uncomfortable.”

Three years earlier, Bertha had opportunity to go to the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. On September 17, 1893 she wrote “Dear Uncle Joe...in the afternoon went to the Fair and stayed in the evening and saw the fireworks and the electric fountains and the search lights. It was a beautiful sight such as I never expect to see again.”

Four years after J.W. Mather’s death, Bertha married Harry Harris. An entry in the Mather Guestbook shows Mr. and Mrs. Harris visiting in 1914. Bertha Mather Harris passed away in Florida on June 3rd 1926.

Yes, there was a time when communication was less reflexive and more reflective. These letters are proof and add just a bit more to our growing understanding and appreciation of those who made the Homestead home.



Joseph Wakeman Mather



Bertha “Bertie” Carter Mather