

LETTER FROM LAURA BOWDEN TO QUINCY EVERETT ROUTON BEFORE THEIR MARRIAGE

Envelope shows the stamp franked in Judsonia, Arkansas Sept. 31,
year indecipherable, addressed to: "Mr. Q. E. Routon, Paris, Tenn. Henry County." Franking on back
shows date - 1887?

ORDER OF PAGES OF LETTER CANNOT BE
DETERMINED

Judsonia, Arkansas August 27, 1887 (?)

Dear Mr. Routon:

I perceive from the reading of your recent letter that you were, when writing, by no means in a pleasant
state of mind.

I hope I did not say anything in my miserable letter to give you offence,
or wound your feelings, and am sorry indeed to have
caused you any dissatisfaction in mind.

I never thought you penurious, or very exacting and please don't ask me again to allow you to be sincere
as well as myself. It is not only your privilege, but it is your duty (giving yourself justice), to be sincere,
and I shall

.... never think hard of you for speaking plainly.

I remember saying that I thought it would be best for papa and sisters to remain at home, provided we
were married. I think so yet. You asked me in your letter of Aug. 5th to let you know if our marriage

should take place next winter; at my earliest opportunity saying, too, that it would be better to know what would be expected for the other consideration. I

could not have answered in the affirmative without presenting to your views some way of deciding definitely what would be expected,

and I only wished you to consider the matter and say for yourself whether we should be married under such circumstances.

I did not want you to promise anything.

Did you think I wanted you to promise that we take papa?

I don't much believe in promises before marriage; do you?

You are right as to it being papa's misfortune, but don't you think his misfortune proved to be mine too?

I can imagine the young man desiring a home, with the hope of claiming the girl he loves as his wife, and it might do to judge his feelings by hers. Do you think it would?

You speak of papa's being willing, or satisfied with that arrangement.

I have never consulted him about my future; or even told him positively of our engagement, though he trusts me probably farther than you think of; and would not I think, object to any arrangement I should make.

I don't think one of the girls would be disadvantageous, should such a thing ever be.

Though when I wrote I was thinking more about caring for him and saving further expenses; as very little is necessary or of use to him, being confined to his room.

One of the girls could probably remain in the state if not with us. It would be less inharmonious of course for her to be there. One of us always remains at home with him.

Sister Mollie has always told me that if I ever married she would take the girls, and talks of taking papa, but I don't intend that he shall ever come to these bottoms because he could not stand the malarial.

I don't think Arkansas very healthy place, especially for persons having weak lungs. I went to church at Judsonia recently. No Southern young people hardly in the place. The young gentlemen of Northern descent are as a rule very gay, though their style don't suit the Southern girls the best.

I also attended a funeral at Searcy Tuesday. The home of the deceased was at Judsonia. The Search hearse came over after the corpse and was followed back by a very long procession. I dismissed school at noon to join them. It was a slow and dusty drive of near seven miles.

(Later August 28)

Very cool this morning. Am writing on the Sabbath. Is it wrong? I just mean to finish this letter. Wonder what you are doing! Getting off to church?

I shall remain at home all day. Don't you guess somebody would come if I were at my Shadyglen home in Tennessee. Glad you are having pleasant gatherings. It would seem like old times to me to be there.

Do you attend the revivals?

I suppose our friend, Mr. Neal, doesn't remain with his old friend long.

How do you like Miss _____? I never met her but once. At that literary picnic, when I saw her. Guess you remember her that day. Those were jolly good times; don't you think so?

Those literary meetings and singing were sometimes lively, too. The Arkansas folks pretend to think Tennessee girls sing well.

I don't know what kind of memorandums you wrote; please tell me about it.

Don't let all the folks forget me! I was so unhappy when I read your letter. I never heard you talk that way before, and couldn't imagine just how those brown eyes looked when you thought hard of me. It is a

hard matter for a pen to convey the ideas like one's self would do it.

Yes, indeed. You have the consolation that you informed me of your financial condition, etc. before now. I have thought that I had the same.

I am in hopes that you will not again be driven to this source of consolation.

Please don't look on the matter so seriously. I hope, as you say, it is all for the best, and that we may someday be the happier.

Don't think I am hard to satisfy or that I think it a matter of necessity, that arrangements of this kind be made.

You will please be kind enough to correct anything wrong I say, and be assured that I want to do right.

Here is the piece of hair, will you please give me in return just one of those brown wavy little locks that used to stray out on your forehead in form of a singlet.

Keep too these little flowers! They grew near a large stone at the school-house. The one I sit on when I stray off at noon to have my thoughts - all to myself. I pressed them in my bible. I will overlook your long

letter if you will overlook this and write another.

Goodbye, with tenderness affections, Laura

SIDEWAYS WRITING BETWEEN LINES:

Several days later

I haven't started this yet. Have an attack of chills and fever and have not been well enough to get it off.
Hence you will excuse delay. I am much better now and hope to enter school again Monday. Please
now me

dear Mr. Routon don't think I did wrong by writing what I have.

Brother is willing to help me provide for them at home or to take care of them with my help. But I never
intended for papa to come out here.

Yours affectionately, Laura

SIDEWAYS WRITING

(Sunday night)

I forgot to say I will be sure to send you a picture if I have any made. Brother and I went on a boat ride
this eve, went a long way up the river. I gathered some _____ and flowers. You ask about crops here.
They are very good but are damaged - some by the drought.

Brother will start gathering cotton in morning.

Good night. Pleasant dreams