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Article Summary: Chancellor Benton recorded his reactions to his new position at the University of Nebraska in nineteen letters written to his father from 1871 to 1876. The letters tell as much about their writer as about the city and the university to which he had come.

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Photographs / Images: University Hall, early 1870s; Allen R Benton

CHANCELLOR ALLEN R. BENTON COMES TO NEBRASKA

BY ROBERT N. MANLEY

ON February 15, 1869, Governor David Butler signed into law a legislative bill giving legal form to the University of Nebraska. While this University charter had passed both houses of the Legislature with remarkable ease, putting the University into operation proved more difficult. Nebraska in 1869 was still a frontier region where political and economic instability predominated. Many state leaders argued that a university in such a setting was premature and unnecessary. Nonetheless, plans for opening the University went forward, and in January, 1871, the University's Board of Regents announced that Allen R. Benton had been elected Chancellor of the University.¹

Benton was born in Cayuga County, New York, in 1822. As a young man he developed an intense interest in

¹Louise Pound (editor), *Semi-Centennial Anniversary Book: The University of Nebraska 1869-1919* (Lincoln, 1919), p. 14.

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education and religion. Despite a physical breakdown caused by overwork, Benton graduated from Bethany College, New York, in 1847 at the head of his class. Subsequently, he pursued graduate work at the University of Rochester, received ordination in the Christian Church and served as principal of Fairview Academy in Indiana. In 1854 he received an appointment as professor of ancient languages in Northwestern Christian University in Indiana, rising to the position of president of that institution in 1861. In 1867 he resigned to accept a position in Mount Union College, Alliance, Ohio and two years later was named president of the college.²

Benton came to Nebraska as a result of the efforts of the Reverend David R. Dungan, a member of the University's first Board of Regents and, like Benton, a minister in the Christian Church. Although the Regents hoped to engage a nationally-known educator, Dungan was able to carry the day for Benton.³

Many Nebraska editors were disappointed with the selection of Benton, the *Omaha Daily Herald* referring to him as "the great Unknown from Indiana."⁴ When it was announced that Benton was to receive a salary of five thousand dollars, a truly magnificent sum for the day, editorial criticism of the Regents' action increased.⁵ But negative appraisals of Benton diminished noticeably after he arrived in the state, for apparently he possessed a winning manner. The editor of the *Brownville Advertiser* noted Benton's arrival in Brownville for a brief visit and commented after his departure, "The Chancellor-elect made an exceedingly favorable impression upon the people here."⁶ The *Omaha*

² *Ibid.*, p. 119, and A. L. Biehn, "The Development of the University of Nebraska, 1871-1900," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Nebraska, 1934), pp. 21-22.

³ James J. Hannah, "The Ideas and Plans in the Founding of the University of Nebraska, 1869-1875," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Nebraska, 1951), pp. 39-40.

⁴ January 28, July 18, 1871.

⁵ *Brownville Advertiser*, January 19, 1871.

⁶ *Ibid.*, February 16, 1871.

Bee endorsed Benton, and even the skeptical editor of the *Omaha Daily Herald* admitted that many of his doubts concerning the University and the new Chancellor had vanished following an interview with Benton.⁷

On September 6, 1871, the day before classes began for the first time at the University, Benton was inaugurated as chancellor. The ceremonies took place in the large assembly room at the back of University Hall, the University's only building. The room, following the style of the day, was called the chapel. Tables at the front of the chapel were covered with beautiful bouquets, and the room was filled with interested, enthusiastic citizens. Acting-Governor William H. James opened the ceremonies with a brief welcome, the choir sang "How Beautiful Art Thy Dwellings," and the Reverend L. B. Fifield "pronounced a fervent and appropriate prayer." The Chancellor was then formally inducted into office, and Governor James turned over to Benton the keys to University Hall. A speech by J. Sterling Morton, one of Nebraska's leading political figures, and Benton's inaugural address concluded the day's events. The University was ready to open.⁸

Chancellor Benton's reaction to Lincoln, to Nebraska and to the University are recorded in nineteen letters which he wrote to his father from 1871 to 1876.⁹ The letters give us an insight into the nature of the man who guided the University through the crucial first years, as well as revealing a great deal about the frontier society to which Benton came.

From the letters it is apparent that Benton looked forward to his work in Nebraska. He was particularly thrilled

⁷ *Omaha Bee*, June 5, August 5, 1872; *Omaha Daily Herald*, July 30, October 21, 1871.

⁸ *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1871*, pp. 51-2.

⁹ The letters are in the archives of the University of Nebraska Library, Lincoln, Nebraska. Microfilm copies are located in the library of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

by the prospect of earning five thousand dollars a year, a rather substantial increase over the fifteen hundred dollars he had received at Mount Union College. Even though the Regents slashed one thousand dollars from his salary before he arrived in Lincoln, Benton was not dismayed. The smaller amount still represented a handsome salary, and he believed it adequate to pay off his debts (especially the sizeable amount owed his father), to provide for his family and to leave surplus funds for additional investments. Like many men of this era, Benton was intensely interested in real estate and land. He hoped that his Nebraska salary would allow him greater freedom to pursue speculative schemes.

Accompanying Benton to Nebraska were his wife and three children, Grace, Mattie and Howard. In the Chancellor's letters the name J. Stuart Dales appears regularly. Benton had known Dales when the latter was a student in Mount Union College. After the Benton family moved to Nebraska, Dales followed. His motives were obvious, and in due course he married Chancellor Benton's elder daughter Grace. Dales enrolled in the University of Nebraska and in 1873 was one of the first graduates of the institution. He joined the administrative staff of the University shortly thereafter, and for more than fifty years served the school in a number of posts.¹⁰ Chancellor Benton approved of the marriage, but he could not refrain from making several pointed remarks to his father concerning the extravagant tastes of the younger generation.

When he was not discussing family affairs, personal debts or politics—he was particularly exercised by the 1872 Presidential campaign which pitted the Liberal Republican Horace Greeley against Ulysses S. Grant—Benton described in glowing terms the wonderful land of Nebraska. For one who had lived in Indiana, where continual chilling dampness in winter and humid heat in the sum-

¹⁰ *Daily Nebraskan*, April 2, 1931. *Nebraska Alumnus*, Vol. 28 (September, 1932), p. 3.

mer were the rule, Nebraska's climate came as a tonic. Mrs. Benton's health, precarious at best during the years in Indiana and Ohio, seemed to improve in Lincoln; and from the point of view of his family's well-being, the move to Nebraska was most salutary. Benton's buoyant optimism is evident in the letters as he reflected upon the great agricultural potential of Nebraska. He marched in step with the "booming" spirit of the early 1870's.

Nevertheless, Benton soon came to suspect that his days in Nebraska were numbered. He confided to his father his fear that political intrigue, either in the Legislature or in the Constitutional Convention of 1871, would create problems for his administration. He repeatedly expressed his desire to remain in Nebraska—at the fine salary of four thousand dollars—but he hedged against the possibility of his being forced to leave by expanding his investments in Indianapolis. By the summer of 1874 he talked about an eventual return to Northwestern Christian University in Indianapolis.

His disenchantment with Nebraska resulted from a combination of distressing developments. First grasshoppers laid waste to the farming regions of the state in 1874 and 1875. Enrollment dropped and Legislative support for the University practically vanished. The financial crisis which gripped the state as a result of the 'hopper raids also touched Benton personally when he found it impossible to collect money he had loaned. Hard on the heels of the grasshopper disaster came a second problem which precipitated his resignation—a heated religious controversy involving the University.

Almost from the moment the University opened its doors, there had raged about the institution a religious storm. The greater number of Nebraskans wanted the University conducted in a manner consistent with Christian principles. Upon this there was general agreement; but there was absolutely no agreement upon which religious denomination should have the commanding voice in the

affairs of the University. Various churches openly struggled for an advantage. Whenever faculty posts were vacated, for example, each denomination submitted its candidates for the empty chairs. While the controversy between the denominations raged unchecked, another faction coalesced, the so-called "broad-gaugers" composed of Unitarians, "free-thinkers" and Universalists, who wanted to secularize the University by removing compulsory chapel and recruiting faculty members who were not ministers. Benton found himself squarely in the middle of the controversy, for while he would have no dealings with "broad-gaugers" he could not win the support of the "narrow-gaugers" either, for each of the denominations wanted to obtain exclusive control of the University.

Then, in 1875, the crisis came to a head. Since under the terms of the University Charter the Regents were elected by the State Legislature, it was a relatively simple matter for three clever "broad-gauge" members of the Legislature to secure their election to the Board of Regents. A bitter newspaper battle illuminated every aspect of the sordid struggle for power; and finally, in December, 1875, Benton, who if his letters are to be believed had already made up his mind to leave Nebraska, offered his resignation to the Regents.¹¹ Perhaps he hoped that his actions would rally public support behind him, but this proved a futile expectation. The Regents immediately accepted his resignation.¹² The ground cut from beneath him, Benton could do nothing at this point but name the date when he would leave the University. This he fixed at the end of the school year, June, 1876. Benton's remaining months in the University were free from further agitation and excitement; and the Regents, in announcing his resignation, issued an effusive, complimentary testimony to his fine work.¹³

¹¹ *Daily State Journal* (Lincoln), December 17, 1875.

¹² *Ibid.*, June 24, 1876.

¹³ *Ibid.*, December 17, 1875.

Benton's administration of the University of Nebraska has been described as "careful, conservative and in harmony with the old rather than with the new ideas of education."¹⁴ Trained in the tradition of the Christian liberal arts college, Benton based his administration upon this tried and true tradition. He condoned co-education because this had become an accepted practice in the East. Moreover, he stoutly maintained that the study of liberal arts was the heart of proper University work, a concept which he perpetuated in the seal of the University of Nebraska which he himself had designed during a trip by train to the East. In general, Benton struggled with practical problems—defending the University against its many critics; arranging classes; and maintaining a shoddy, poorly-constructed building which periodically threatened to collapse. Although he had little time for reflecting upon educational philosophy, it is clear that during his years in Nebraska, Benton perceived that a land grant university required a new educational philosophy. By 1875 he indicated a growing concern for agricultural and mechanical education.¹⁵

There is little doubt that Benton was devoted to the University. On one occasion, when the professor of natural sciences was overburdened with classes, Benton asked the Regents to hire another staff member. Told that no funds existed for the salary of a new man, Benton gave five hundred dollars of his own salary to provide the needed money.¹⁶ He was also close to the students of the University. He taught classes and attended to instances of student misconduct, of which there was no shortage. He actively recruited students, and several men who later be-

¹⁴ Howard W. Caldwell, *Education in Nebraska*. Circular of Information No. 3, 1902, of the United States Bureau of Education (Washington, 1902), p. 30.

¹⁵ Hannah, "The Ideas and Plans in the Founding of the University of Nebraska, 1869-1875," pp. 40-44; and Pound, *Semi-Centennial Anniversary Book*, p. 26.

¹⁶ Hannah, "The Ideas and Plans in the Founding of the University of Nebraska, 1869-1875," pp. 48-49.

came members of the University's faculty, including the beloved professor of history, Howard W. Caldwell, traced their first acquaintance with the University to a meeting with Chancellor Benton.¹⁷ The students' regard for Benton was revealed during the commencement exercises in 1876 when without prior announcement, a group of students ascended the platform and presented to the departing Chancellor a silver service. For once the articulate Chancellor was speechless; he found himself barely able to pronounce the benediction.¹⁸

Benton left Nebraska and returned to Indiana to become President of Northwestern Christian University, shortly to be renamed Butler University. In 1900 he retired, concluding a career that stretched over more than fifty years. Following his retirement he spent considerable time in Lincoln, maintaining through his son-in-law J. Stuart Dales and his grandson Benton Dales, professor of chemistry from 1903 to 1917, a lively interest in the school he had helped initiate.¹⁹ On the occasion of his death, at the age of ninety-one, the *Nebraska State Journal* commented, "The longer the university endures and the greater it becomes, the clearer will the state realize the debt it owes to Chancellor Benton."²⁰ The letters which follow help us not only to understand the early years of the University and of Nebraska. They also assist us in evaluating the role played by Allen R. Benton in the development of the University of Nebraska.

June 20, 1871

Dear Father,

Since I left you in Cato, I have seen a good deal and have done very many things to get settled here in Lincoln. I had a very pleasant trip and visit to Ithaca, and on my return stopped at Rochester one day. All this was profitable to me. . . .

¹⁷ *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), January 2, 1914.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1876.

¹⁹ Pound, *Semi-Centennial Anniversary Book*, p. 119.

²⁰ *State Journal* (Lincoln), January 2, 1914.

It was not convenient for me to stop over a day in Cleveland. Our time was too short, and I had fixed the time to be in Lincoln. . . . I reached Indianapolis Friday night and left Tuesday night for Chicago and Lincoln. Spent a day in Chicago looking after University matters.

After arriving here we remained at a hotel about a week. We are now settled in a comfortable house. It will cost no more to live here than in Ohio except in fuel and house rent. Some articles of prime necessity as meat, flour, potatoes are cheaper than in Ohio. Also eggs and butter and lard.

The Board of Regents met at the appointed time, and I was ready with a plan of work. They seemed satisfied with me and my plans for work. They appropriated \$13,000 for furnishing and apparatus most of which I shall expend for the University. This is a large trust.

They advanced me \$500 on my salary which relieves me very much. At the end of this month I think I will send you \$50 from Indianapolis, and as soon as I can pay about \$300 left at Alliance I shall be easy in circumstances. If you shall want the balance sooner, let me know.

Now you want to know how we like Lincoln. In short, first-rate. All the family are pleased, and the climate is charming. We have had a day or two of intensely hot weather but it is over now. A fresh breeze is stirring almost continually during the day, and the nights are perfectly delightful. It is always cool enough, no matter how warm the day, for a coverlet at night. It is the best summer night weather I ever saw.

Our health has been good and I believe it will benefit both Gracie and her mother.

My work is going to be heavy before the opening of the University but I hope to bear it so as to keep healthy. The Board are so far very kind to me.

Our piano came through perfectly safe. I hope to hear from you soon. . . .

July 7, 1871

Dear Father,

Today I sent a check to Indianapolis for fifty dollars, and in a day or two from this time you will receive a Bill of Exchange which you can get cashed at any bank.

Your letter came to hand safely and we were very glad to hear from home.

We are doing as well here as we have reason to expect. I am doing a good deal of hard work just now. Was at a Fourth of July celebration and delivered an oration with success.

I hope during the present year to get my business into a good shape again.

Our Constitutional Convention now in session will make considerable change in our University organization, so that we shall have a new Board of Regents or the control will be put into the hands of State officers.²¹

With the present Board I am getting along finely [sic]. If a new one comes in, I do not know what may happen. I shall try and be prepared for any change at the end of the year. Brother Black is retained in Indianapolis as President²² and I presume that a place will be found for me there in case I wish to go there.

This climate is very fine and I believe it will be healthful for my family. Grace has not been well for a year, but I think she is improving. We are trying to get a pony for her to ride. She enjoys it greatly and I think does her good. We have a nice pony in view.

We are all well as usual. In view of remaining here, I am thinking about purchasing a lot on which to build. I intend to buy so as to make something in case I do not build. Property is going up, up, here. Acknowledge receipt of money.

November 13, 1871

Dear Father,

Your very welcome letter came to hand a few days since, and at the first opportunity I reply. We are very well at present and in our University business, we are do-

²¹ The constitution drawn up by the 1871 Convention deprived the Legislature of the power to elect the Regents. Under the terms of this proposed constitution, Regents would have been elected by judicial districts. In this situation, Benton's fears were unjustified, for the voters of the State rejected the constitution. See "Nebraska Constitutions of 1866, 1871 and 1875." *Nebraska Historical and Political Science Series* (Lincoln, 1920), pp. 128-29.

²² President of Northwestern Christian University.

ing as well as we have any reason to expect. I believe it may be said without boasting that my success here is very marked. I have the confidence and good will of all parties and sects so far as I know and am so extending my acquaintance as to be known pretty well throughout the state.

Our school numbers 100 students of a very good grade, which surpasses the expectation of all.

The city of Lincoln is growing rapidly this summer, and I believe I told you I have bought three lots, beautifully located. I shall try very hard next summer to build a house. I now pay \$600 for the rent of a house not very commodious or nice. I shall not do that very long. I hope soon to have all my debts squared up—then I will take a new stand. About the first of December I expect to send you some money.

I have constant application from Indianapolis to sell some of my property there. But I presume it better to hold on to it. . . . But as long as I have my health and can earn money I intend to let it remain.

In a few days our Inaugural address will be out of press and I will send you some. You will see from it how the day was spent by us.

My work here has been very responsible. I have handled about \$4,000 for the University, and given orders for as much more. This involves pretty large business transactions. A little less of this would suit me better, and after our purchases are made it will gradually become less. All send love to you and all at home. Please write soon and let me hear how matters are at home. The bell rings and I must close.

January 2, 1872

Dear Father,

Your letter acknowledging the receipt of \$100 sent as interest is received. To-day I sent to Indianapolis to the Bank to send [illegible name] \$42.00. I would have sent you the balance \$35.00 but I did not have a statement of my rents for December, and did not know whether I had enough in Bank. I will send it before long.

I am making plans for beginning a house in February. It will cost me about \$2500, I expect. Of course this

will keep my finances pretty close for the next year, but when I get my house, my property here will be worth \$5000. I shall have a beautiful house.

By building I shall save \$600 a year rent. This soon pays for a house and I want to build so that I can sell, or rent to good advantage, in case anything should remove me from my place. Unless the Legislature interferes this winter I am persuaded we shall get along well. I do not believe any man is more popular in the state than I am, when acquainted.

We kept open house New Year's day. Had about fifty calls. Was from home making calls.

Our weather has been exceeding cold and yet the air is dry.

After the present year it will be as convenient to pay you every six months as in any other way. If everything goes well, I hope to be out of debt for my house by next Christmas.

We all send our New Year's greeting, wishing you not only a happy new year, but a happy year.

April 17, 1872

Dear Father,

Your letter enclosing a draft for \$267 was received by yesterday's mail. You did not say in your letter how I should obligate myself for its repayment, by note or otherwise. You can tell me in your next letter. It will help me very much. Indeed more than I supposed when I first remarked that I should have to borrow, for they are grading the street in Indianapolis along my lot which will cost me I presume \$200. But if matters go on well with me here for another year I shall work it all out with something to spare I hope.

My house is ready for the plaster, and will be done in about one month. It will be a very nice property. Mattie shall make you a picture of its front as soon as I can get the plan from the carpenters. I think it would sell when furnished for \$5000. If I have to pay some interest, it will be better than to pay for another year \$600 rent. But I shall only have to borrow about \$200 or \$300 more besides the amount you sent me. I could get it all at the bank but at 12% for short times. I got \$500 for a month some days

ago to accommodate my builder, he paying the interest. I got it without indorsement of any one. But I do not like to borrow at Bank much. I like to have money in Bank to my credit rather.

The weather here is unusually cold, as the winter has been but we have had no rain. The air is dry and cool. Spring wheat is sown and preparations made for planting. A great deal of tree planting has been done already, and more will be done.

Our town is very lively. A great amount of building is going on. I like the town, the business here and the climate. I have had an offer to return as President of the Northwest Christian University [in] Indianapolis. But for the present I must decline. My salary here and work are too good to abandon now.

After we get settled in our new house I wish you would come and spend the summer with us. We have delightful cool nights for sleeping. You will grow young. And we have the finest roads in the world. Good carriage driving all winter. Three weeks ago I went out 20 miles to lecture. Drove two horses and buggy, the most delightful ride. I must have a horse and carriage as soon as my house is paid for.

August 12, 1872

Dear Father,

I have been expecting to hear from you for some time, but your letter is not yet at hand. Perhaps it is on the road. Since the close of the College year I have been busy in a Teachers Institute and our State Associations, which lasted four weeks. Since that time I have been traveling. Been to Omaha, preached for the Methodists and lectured on Temperance. They gave me a cordial reception. Next Sunday I go to the Southern part of the State.

I am trying to make acquaintances in all parts of the State, and hence do not have much rest this vacation.

We expect to visit you next summer if all things are favorable. I had an invitation to go to the Northwestern Christian University as President. But their \$1500 was rather small beside our \$4000 here. I may go in time, but I prefer to remain here for some years if I can. The climate here I like, and also the prospects of the University.

We are now in our house. It is elegant and convenient and we feel like staying here always. We have never before had half so good a house.

Should I remain here two years more with health and success I will get my affairs into a very comfortable shape. I expect to get out of debt this year. My property here is worth \$5500, which is something worth laboring for.

I will send you my report and Address as soon as published.

Mattie has been ill with a fever for more than a week. She seems to be improving now.

All the rest of us are well and enjoy the world as well as anybody. We look forward to next summer with anxiety. It will do us good to travel. There will be only *four* of us.

How are politics? Is it thought that Greeley will carry it? I hope not. This is a Republican state. But this election will test it. Write soon. Love to all at home.

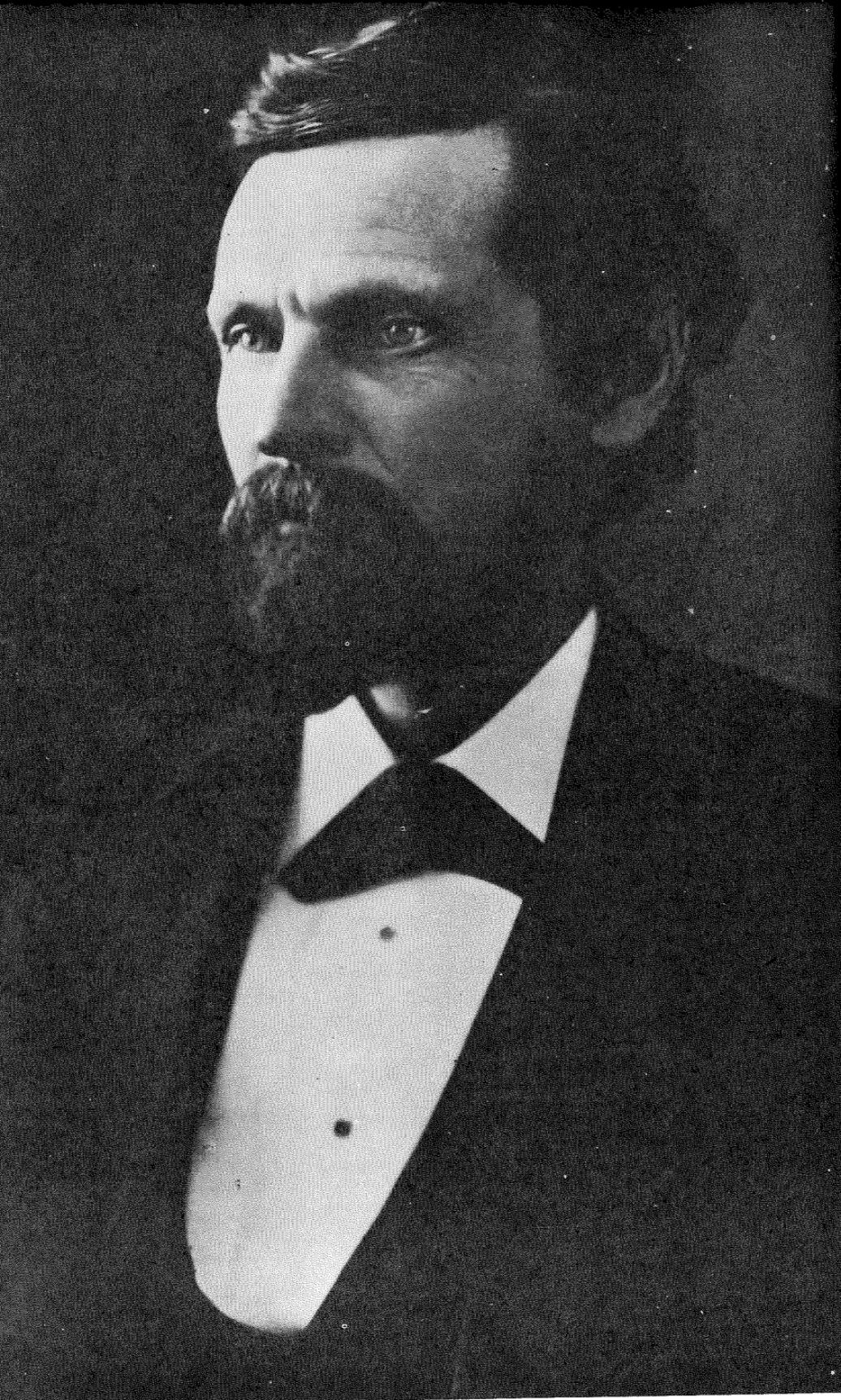
September 21, 1872

Dear Father,

Your letter was received some days ago, and as we were just beginning our College year I had no opportunity of replying until now. We have been sick with slight fevers for the last month or more. First Mattie was sick, then Grace, and now Mr. Dales is just recovering. None of them have been low, or dangerously sick, but have required a good deal of attention. Our University opens with a hundred and others are coming in constantly. This promises to be a prosperous year, and if we are not disturbed by the Legislature, or afflicted with Mr. Greeley, we shall get along very well. And apropos of farmer Greeley, we understand that he heads the Democrats and General Grant does not. We think so out here, because all that Greeley has called liars, blacklegs, etc. by which he means democrats, all these "rah for Greeley" and these same lovely democrats are fierce in their lying denunciations of Grant. Besides, Mr. Greeley like Andy Johnson is swinging around the circle, making political speeches, but more particularly as a presidential candidate he is making a donkey of himself. Even his friends out here are feeling this and talk of having him withdraw—as for example, the Chicago Times the ablest Democratic paper in the west.



University Hall, early 1870's.



Chancellor Allen R. Benton

With Mr. Greeley's financial views, if he were to be elected, I should feel that my property would fall \$10,000 in value, because I think in a year thereafter we shall have a financial crash that will embarrass us all.

General Grant's financial policy has been eminently safe and good for the country and redeems his administration from any blemishes that seem to me to be inseparable from our political system rather than the fault of any one man.

Hence, I would esteem it a pecuniary disaster to the whole nation to have Mr. Greeley elected; and I am intending to put my house in order if possible to weather a storm. I intend to offer my 2½ acres for sale. It is worth \$10,000 or \$12,000. . . . And as soon as Mr. Greeley is elected I intend to sell; if he is not elected I will keep it. But I do not believe he will succeed for I cannot see how sensible Republicans who are not politicians, can ungratefully turn on General Grant and the principles of their party; because he must be very stupid who thinks democrats will carry out these principles as republicans will. On their part it is a pretense for power, especially in the South. Our love to all.

October 4, 1872

My dear Father,

Your letter of the 2nd came to hand today and as I have a little leisure I write you at once. You may tell [illegible name] that I will send the interest of 1st of November. I may send it sooner. I am expecting every day \$400 on a note. It ought to have been paid last May, and the want of it has embarrassed me some. I have also to pay \$279 for street improvements in Indianapolis. But this comes back to me in increased values. My property there is quite valuable. The corner where my old house stands is worth \$18,000. My 2½ acres \$10,000 and my Ash St. property \$6,000. Besides I have a fine property here. Now I do not want Mr. Greeley's financial experiments tried on just now. I have too much at stake.

Your letter seems to state that the Democrats at Baltimore and the party are true Republicans. Now I do not believe that the Democrats are in favor of their platform or their candidates. The chief men at the south are not in favor of enforcing the Constitutional amendments by *appropriate legislation*. All appropriate legislation to carry

into effect the amendments was voted against by the Democrats solid up to the close of Congress. Frederick Douglass²³ knows who are the friends of his race and he knows Grant can be depended upon. Greeley would be as powerless in the hands of a Democratic Congress, as a man in the jaws of an alligator. . . . [The Democrats] will reverse the legislation of the past few years, and . . . Greeley is the first step to it. This, in my candid opinion, is the settled purpose of the leaders and to win at all they are compelled to change front. With Grant we shall have steadiness and progress, and none of the tumult of reaction.

Horace Greeley said Andy Johnson, or any other candidate for President, would act disgracefully to canvass for the office of President. Horace Greeley is no exception to the rule. He promised at Portland offices to those who help elect him—a beautiful civil service reformer! Especially when the Democrats, according to Horace, are generally infamous men.

. . . General Grant is not my ideal President, but he has been a great financial success and that is what this country needs just now. He collects the revenue with little loss comparatively and disburses it honestly and everybody is prospering in every branch of business. I am anxious for the country that this continues, but I do not care a fig who has the offices. Grant assures us quiet and prosperity. With Greeley one must reasonably look for commotion and financial insecurity if not a terrible monetary panic. But I hope your prediction will be true that Grant will be elected.

I will not trouble you again with politics, but I have a great interest at stake. . . .

December 26, 1872

My dear Father,

This is the day after Christmas and we are looking over our presents and doing nothing very important with considerable liveliness. I intended to be in Fremont today attending the State Teachers Association, but I was not well yesterday and the weather being very cold, I concluded to remain at home. We have had nights here during

²³ Frederick Douglass was the most famous Negro Republican leader of this period.

the last week when the thermometer was 26 below zero. It was intense, but it is perfectly dry and clear as crystal. We have had perfectly charming weather during the Fall. No mud, no rain, no drizzling weather, clear, cool, and bracing. We have high winds that penetrate into every nook and cranny. But I have a good tight house and we keep comfortable in spite of the elements.

We closed our term last week, and had a meeting of the Board of Regents. We had a good time, and the Board seem satisfied with our work. As for myself, I think my labor is properly appreciated, and if the Legislature do not interfere, I shall probably remain here as long as I may wish to teach. And I prefer to teach here for \$4,000 than for \$1500 at Indianapolis. A few days ago I bought a farm, ten miles from the city, but on a railroad two miles from a station. It contains 160 acres and cost me \$850. I expect I made at least \$400 in that purchase. Should I remain here I will in a year or two open a farm and improve it, and obtain from it my wheat, corn, potatoes, etc. We expect now to pay you a visit next summer. Grace will come in March probably, with a merchant here who goes East at that time. She wants to spend some time among her cousins, so that when I come on she may be ready to go to some place for musical instructions. . . . [I] may take Grace to Boston for three months. She has a fine musical taste, and already performs well, but I wish to give the best advantages in that line. I will tell you more in detail, when we are decided what to do.

Inclosed I send you a Bill of Exchange for one hundred dollars (\$100). I hope it will reach you by new year's day. I have been away from home or I would have sent it a little sooner.

I have just had to pay nearly \$300 for street improvements in Indianapolis. This completes all my improvements in that city. By the next vacation in June I hope to have everything paid up.

Please write on the receipt of this and let me know whether you receive the \$100 enclosed.

We are all well and had a very good Christmas time at our Church. . . . All send their love.

April 11, 1873

Dear Father,

I have been waiting so that when I wrote I could send you \$30 interest money. But I find it not quite convenient yet. I shall send it next month I am quite sure. The 7th of next month I have more than \$800 due on a mortgage in Indianapolis which I am foreclosing. The man took a stay of six months, but gave security for its payment on the 7th of May. So in addition to the mortgage I have personal security and I think it will come. Besides my quarter's salary comes the 1st of June. I hope you will have no inconveniences from this delay. I bought some land, 160 acres, on the strength of the above \$800 and have been compelled to pay for it from other money. Besides Grace is just now a heavy expense, as she is in Indianapolis taking music lessons and is getting a wardrobe for an important occasion. I shall be pleased to know that it is not as expensive a business in the other branches of the family, for in that case it will justify a little grumbling.

This sort of thing was managed better when I was a young man. No one hundred dollar rings, watches, velvet cloaks, silks and other expensive "fixings" to match. I perhaps may as well give them five hundred or more dollars in this way, as it will not bankrupt me, and it seems to do others a world of good. But it makes me feel better occasionally to have my grumble at extravagant expenses.

I have a fine quarter section of land, two miles from Lincoln on a railroad, and intend to have some breaking done this summer, and so on every summer. In this way I shall soon have a productive farm, and when I retire from my present position, if we conclude to remain here, it will give me business and profit. This is to me the best country I have ever lived in. We have had no rain since last October, and not a bit of mud since that time. Our rain comes in the Spring and summer when we need it. But the ground is moist now, and spring grain is sowed some three weeks ago. Think of sowing wheat and oats in March. Then we have one of the richest soils in the world. Nothing to do but to put in the plow. No fences to make and hay and pasture for nothing. We buy hay here for \$4 per ton. We are rather far away from our friends. This is our only objection to living here. I think Mrs. B's health is gradually improving, though she complains of the strong winds here. I do not mind them. In summer they help moderate the heat. Grace says some of the nights now in Indianapolis

are oppressive with heat. We always have cool nights, no matter how warm the day.

April 30, 1873

My dear Father,

Your letter came duly to hand, and reminded me of some business transactions contained in your former letter, which I had forgotten. I have so many things to attend to that I am likely to forget some unless I have letters at hand when I reply. I will see that you have the interest when I come to visit you this summer.

Though I did not mention my anticipated visit this summer in my last letter, I am making all my plans to do so. Unless I am greatly disappointed in obtaining money I shall come to visit you, if life is spared. My salary for next quarter will all be spent here, but I have \$800 coming the middle of May that I expect to use for the purpose of travel. Mrs. B. wants to visit her mother, too, and Grace and Mr. Dales both want to see you, so that I think we shall all come. I expect also to go to Harvard and Yale Colleges, and probably to the National Association of Teachers at Elmira.

To-day is the first rain storm since last Fall. It came down abundantly. We have not suffered at all for water, and have had dry, hard roads all winter. I never spent a winter more pleasantly, though we had some days quite cold. It was so dry that the cold did not seem severe. I should not be surprised if we remained here as long as we live. We have a beautiful and excellent house, and I am opening my farm of 160 acres, and in a few years will have 100 acres under cultivation. My open fields are richer than your garden. It is one of the richest soils I ever saw. We had some good land in Indiana, but *all* this is as good as their best. There is not a swamp or worthless place anywhere, except in extreme northwest of State. I intend to build a small house on my farm for a tenant, and have some new land broken every year until I have it pretty well under cultivation. Then when I become tired of my present business I will have the products of my farm and some money upon which to live.

I think you will like Grace and Stuart. They are both very earnest in the work of life, though they both like elegant things. But they are willing to work and both are good church members. Stuart is a good deal more able in-

tellectually than ordinary. I expect to go with him to St. Louis to look after his property there, and advise him, and we all expect to reach Indiana about the middle of July. Mrs. B. will go directly to Indianapolis to assist Grace about some dress matters. Grace has been in Indianapolis two months and will remain until we go there. She is homesick, but is doing well I judge in her piano music. She is a very fine performer. Grace thinks my old home in Indianapolis one of the finest locations in the city, since the streets have been improved. They have cost me \$700. Did I tell you I have been offered \$20,000 for my old house and lot? I expect to keep it awhile as the city is growing rapidly.

August 18, 1874

My dear Father,

It has been some time since I wrote to you, or since I have heard from you. I have been waiting to send you \$311.00 which I will do the 1st of September. I have been uncommonly free in expense this spring putting \$200 into house furnishings and \$150 in fence, besides other improvements.

I have just returned from Indianapolis, where I have contracted to build four houses costing more than \$7,000. One half of these will belong to Stuart. This will be quite a tax on me, with my other burdens. But I have enough to take me through, if no misfortune befalls me. Indianapolis is growing with great rapidity. It would not surprise me if we returned there soon. They want me in the University there, which soon will be able to pay a good salary. Besides my property is there. I am building so as to have an income in case I am out of business for a time. I attended the National Teaching Association in Detroit. Had a fine time. Made acquaintance of many men, among others A. D. White of Cornell.²⁴ Went home by way of the lakes, by Mackinaw. A delightful trip. It has been very warm here this summer, and grasshoppers have done immense damage in our state. Still our wheat is good.

I am now to be gone a week at our Institute at Fremont and am in haste this morning.

²⁴ Andrew D. White, president of Cornell University, is regarded as one of the foremost educational reformers of the time. He was extremely significant in developing the land grant university concept.

Hope to hear from you soon. All well, and send their love.

September 5, 1874

Dear Father,

Enclosed find Eastern Exchange for \$30. This amount should have been paid some time ago, but it was a little more convenient to wait until the present. Hope it will be no inconvenience and indeed, as I wrote before, you could have had it if you had said you wanted it.

The grasshoppers and drought have made sad havoc in corn in this part of the state. Among some of the homesteaders in the west considerable suffering must be experienced. It will also interfere with the attendance somewhat at the University.

This will be a year with us of great political excitement and it is hard to forecast what will come out of it. It would not surprise me, if we returned to Indianapolis after the present year. I do not especially care to stay but one year after this.

[An illegible name] said to me in Indianapolis that he expected that I would be President of the Northwestern Christian University soon again. At any rate I think I shall be there before long. This will suit my family very well, and if I get a salary that will just pay family expenses, my other property will do well enough to increase my estate with. Stuart and I are putting nearly \$8,000 into houses in Indianapolis this fall. This with my other obligations will make my money matters for the next year rather close, but I hope to get through safely, as I want to increase my income in case I return to Indianapolis next year. I should have no fear of results, but I have more than \$2000 loaned here, which on account of the 'hoppers I may not be able to collect promptly. It is well secured I believe, but some time must be given for a part of it.

The family are all well. Mrs. B. is steadily improving in her condition and will soon I hope be entirely well and strong. . . . How are all at the farms and at home? Write acknowledging receipt of this and give us all the news.

December 18, 1874

My dear Father,

. . . Our Board of Regents have just adjourned, and our session was entirely pleasant, and I think I enjoy their confidence and esteem. I only fear the Legislature may undertake some rash legislation with respect to the University. It may occur that we shall be compelled to return to Indianapolis next summer. A year from next summer I think it will suit me to go there very well. With our present Board I believe I could stay as long as I desire. Having undertaken heavy expenses in building this season in Indianapolis and considerable additions and furnishings here, in all amounting to nearly \$6,000, I would like to remain a year after this, so as to regulate my affairs a little better before I go.

I shall not send your interest money until I hear from you. Should you not be in want of it just now I might find it convenient to keep it a month or so more, to meet building bills. If you are in any special need just now of money say so and I will send it. I suppose it will be a little slow for me to collect \$800 or \$900 that I calculate on for paying for my house. The grasshoppers have been too much for us this year.

. . . Stuart is now ready to go into the practice of law, but hardly wants to make a start here as we expect to go to Indiana soon. He thinks some of going to Indianapolis to begin if he can see any opening.

It's getting near night and I am tired and wait for your answer. Love to all.

March 12, 1875

Dear Father,

I inclose to you a draft for \$50 and will send the other next month. I have been making unusually large payments of money in taxes and for the lots I bought in Indianapolis and on my house building. Soon I will get them out of the way and then it will be easier for me.

It is in the way of probabilities that we shall return to Indianapolis this year some time. We have a meeting of our Board in two weeks, and then we shall know, and I will write you the result. One half of our Board have just been elected by the legislature, and it would not surprise me if we had some difficulty between the two parties. The

half just elected are all Free Religionists or Broad-gauge men. A little ring was formed in the Legislature and they elected themselves. I was intending to leave next year any way, and if I find it unpleasant in any way shall go this summer. Will write you again soon. We are all well. Our weather is fine, but rather cold for the season.

June 30, 1875

Dear Father,

When I wrote you last I think I intimated to you that I expected to return to Indianapolis next year. The health of Grace and Stuart's getting located in the law there as soon as may be has decided us to do so.

But there is some prospect that we may go this summer. The old university you know is to be moved to Irvington 3 1/2 miles east of Indianapolis. The new building is up and the present design is to open the University there this fall. In case they do there will be a complete reorganization of the Faculty and probably the Presidency will be offered to me again with a very comfortable salary. In case it is, probably I shall accept. My property being there chiefly and my family all wishing to return, induce me to accept the position. I had rather stay here one year more, it will probably be better to accept the position when offered though at some immediate sacrifice.

Our Board here have just met and everything passed off well. The broad-gaugers are so much in the minority practically that they can do nothing. They desire, I know, my place of influence and compensation, but I expect to hold it until I voluntarily resign it. I suit the majority and who cares for the rest.

In case I do not return to Indianapolis this summer to live, it is probable that Grace, Mattie and Mrs. Benton will make you all a short visit this summer. I shall go to Indianapolis to build some more, and they will go on. Grace ought to leave here during the hot months. It is on her account they go. Howard is now working in the printing office for \$15 per week. He really earns more but does not want to be idle during vacation, and hands of that kind are numerous. Mattie is very anxious to see Grandpa and Grandma. . . . I will write you soon again, as the matter of money will be decided soon after July 1st, the time of their Board meeting. . . .

August 31, 1875

Dear Father,

I inclose you to-day a draft for Thirty dollars, interest on the three hundred loan. You will please credit me with it and let me know that you receive it. . . .

It is now our plan to return to Indianapolis next summer, and probably I shall go into the University. I was elected President this year, but it was not convenient for me to go now, and their reorganization of the Faculty was deferred until next year, when it is understood I will enter the University. I prefer to go as Professor, but may be compelled to take the Presidency. The University will be quite wealthy when all its city property is sold out. Its new building is very fine and near the city. I spent three weeks in the city and arranged to build a business house on the corner of Ash Street and Christian Avenue. The building alone will cost me something over \$3000, but it will be a good investment. I have leased it already for three years, the first year for \$50 a month, the next two at \$55 a month, by which time a good business will be established there.

The fact is that my taxes are so great in the city that I cannot afford to keep property that brings no income.

Our little religious war continues, the effort being on the part of the "Broad-gaugers" to get possession of the University, and of the orthodox to keep it. Had some of the orthodox been a little more earnest in my support it would have been better for them. But they wanted my place for themselves and now they have a struggle to keep it for any one they like. They now, in the face of common danger, come manfully to my side. But it makes very little difference with me now, as I would not remain here longer than this year on any account.

My folks want to return to Indianapolis. It will probably be better for both Stuart and Howard in their business and my own property interests and my comfort in growing years induce me to return. I shall have been here five years, have got the university nicely under way. Enjoy the highest respect of people here, and this makes a good condition of things to leave.

Love to all at home. We are all well and doing as well as could be expected without Mrs. B.

January 22, 1876

Dear Father,

I have been waiting in order when I wrote to send you the interest money due. I am not quite ready yet, though if you are in pressing need of it I can get it. The 1st of March my quarterly salary will be due and I will send it, unless you signify that you would like to have it sooner.

I have found it difficult to collect either principal or interest of money that I have loaned. On this account my salary and rents have been my sole dependence and my building in Indianapolis has hitherto taken any rents and some \$500 in taxes must be paid. So it takes all the money I can raise until taxes are paid.

Next July we expect to remove to Indianapolis and probably I shall enter the University. They intend now to make a place for me, probably I shall be compelled to take the Presidency, though I would prefer a professorship so that I might take life more easily.

Stuart and Grace expect to remain here. His business promises to be very good here. About a month ago Grace had a violent gastric attack, which reduced her very much but she is now improving rapidly. She will probably go to Indiana with us and spend the summer as she will be in no good condition to keep house. I want to go to the Centennial²⁵ if I can command the money. Mrs. B. will go with me. Our moving and getting ready to open the work in the University, if I am President, may possibly prevent me from going. . . .

Our work here is going forward pleasantly and smoothly and it will be something of a trial to leave it, but in many respects it will be better for me to be in Indiana. My property interests there require my attendance there. Besides it will be much nearer our friends. It takes time and a good deal of money to make a visit East from this place.

Besides my friends in Indianapolis seem anxious to have us return, and I think they feel the want of me in the University.

I shall look for a letter from you soon.

²⁵ The reference is to the Centennial of the United States held in Philadelphia during the summer of 1876.