

“Very Truly Yours”

The Eliza Ann Woodard Hurd
DeWolfe Letters, 1860-1862

BETHANY K. MATHEWS

INTRODUCTION

Eliza Ann Woodard emigrated to Olympia, Washington Territory with her extended family in early 1853. She married respected butcher James Hurd in 1855, and the couple had two children before James died in the fall of 1857. In the spring of 1859 the Hurd's infant daughter Alice died. Eliza lived independently with her young daughter Ella, renting out her properties and working as a dressmaker. Eliza's father Harvey Rice Woodard served as Ella's guardian until 1859, indicating Eliza or her family may have worried about her being a single parent or that Eliza herself was ill.

Eliza's grief did not crush her optimism. She found solace in Spiritualism, a new religion which encouraged communication with the spirit world.

By early 1860, Eliza befriended fellow Spiritualist Seattleite Sarah Burgert Yesler. Sarah, wife of Seattle millwright Henry Yesler, had arrived in Washington Territory in the summer of 1858 after being separated from her husband for seven years. In her absence Henry had a long-term affair with the Duwamish hereditary

chief's daughter Susan, and the couple had a daughter. Sarah's only son Henry George died at the age of twelve in the summer of 1859.

With less than one-thousand American women residing between Olympia and Seattle it is easy to see how Eliza and Sarah would become fast friends: Like many mothers of the time, they both experienced devastating loss in their families. They were both Spiritualists from the Midwest, and would go on to become suffrage leaders in the 1860s. And perhaps because they were not hindered by oppressive traditions and sought happiness and health, they were both the subject of local gossip. The pair exchanged letters and visits from at least March 1860 to June 1862. Historians have suggested Eliza and Sarah had a romantic affair but their letter exchange only truly reveals a close, supportive—and occasionally naughty in a Victorian kind of way—friendship between two intelligent ladies.

In the course of their letters, Eliza met and married Charles Henry DeWolfe, a sensational character in Northwest history who was not accepted by Olympia's conservative society. The DeWolfe family left Olympia only days after the marriage.

Over the next twenty years, the Yeslers continued to build their industrial empire and became highly influential Seattleites, while the DeWolfs lectured around the Northwest and maintained water cure establishments in Victoria and San Francisco. As Sarah frequented San Francisco for business in the 1860s to 1880s, it is possible that the pair maintained their relationship until Sarah's death in 1887.

Sarah saved at least a dozen letters from Eliza and her friends and family written in the 1860s. The letters are archived at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle and the Washington State Historical Society in Tacoma.



THE LETTERS

March 17th, 1860	Salome Woodard, Olympia
July 23rd, 1860	Eliza Hurd, Olympia
July 29th, 1860	Eliza Hurd, Olympia
August 19th, 1860	Eliza Hurd and Rosa Bushnell, Olympia
August 26th, 1860	Eliza Hurd, Olympia
Undated [August?], 1860	Rosa Bushnell, [Olympia?]
October 7th, 1860	Eliza Hurd, Olympia
March 11th, 1861	Eliza Hurd, Santa Cruz
October 6th, 1861	Eliza Hurd, Olympia
June 18th, 1862	Eliza Hurd DeWolfe, Olympia

SALOME EATON WOODARD. 1865



Olympia March 19 1866

My dear Friend

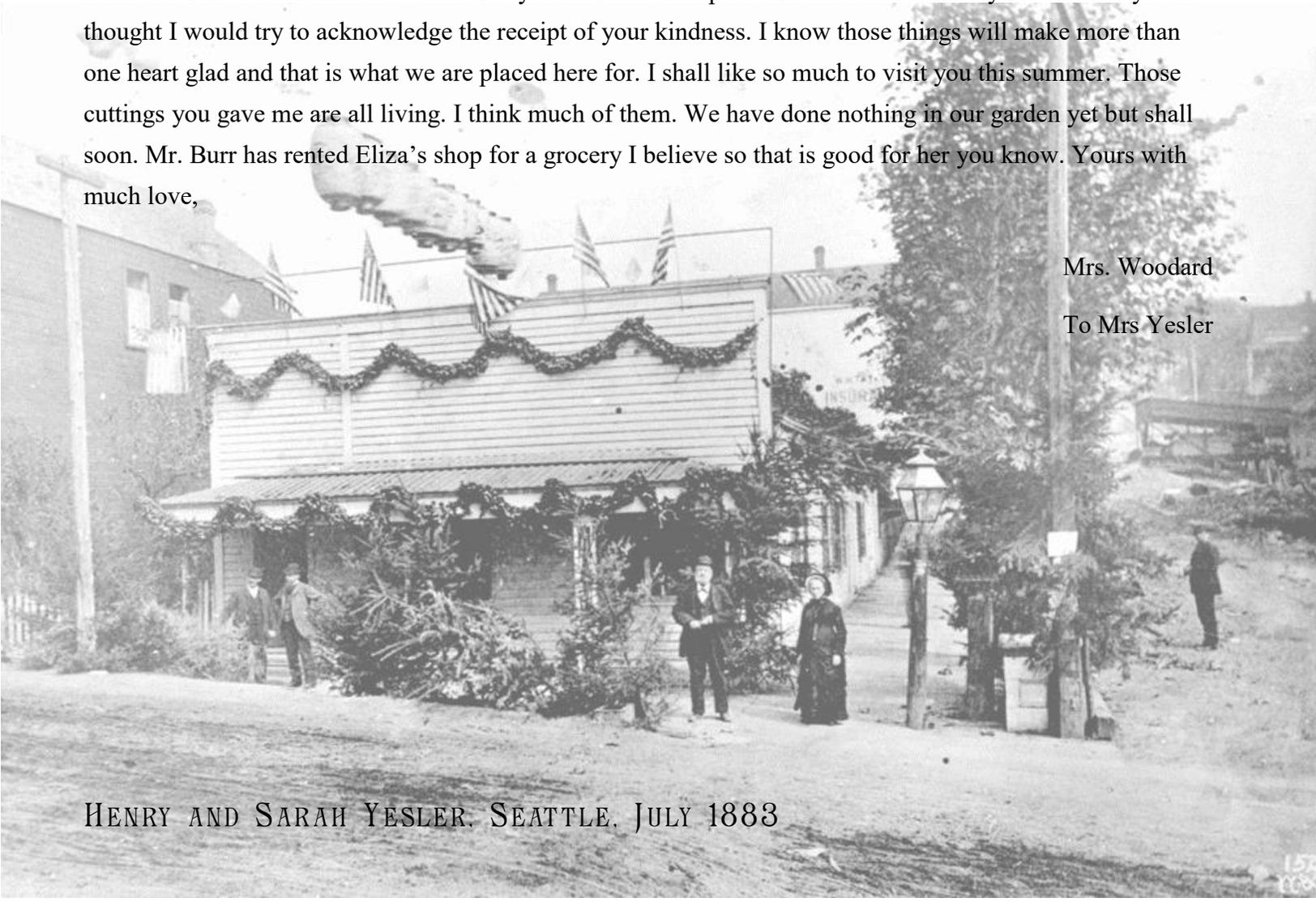
I received your kind favor one week ago, was glad to hear of your safe arrival at your quiet home. I know Mr Zesler must have been very much pleased to see you come looking so healthy, I fear you will work off all the good effects of the water-cure treatment before you are aware of it, I know you must have had a great quantity of work to do to put your house in order, &c I also rec'd those packages you sent by the last Steamer they all came safe was glad to see the quantity of things you sent for I well know they will all be useful to Mrs Gordon I have given her a part of them already I did not tell her how I came by them I thought perhaps she would feel hurt if

My dear Friend,

I received your kind favor one week ago, was glad to hear of your safe arrival at your quiet home. I know Mr. Yesler must have been very much pleased to see you come looking so healthy. I fear you will work off all the good affects of the water-cure treatment before you are aware of it. I know you must have had a great quantity of work to do to put your house in order, etc. I also received those packages you sent by the last steamer. They all came safe. Was glad to see the quantity of things you sent for I well know they will all be useful to Mrs. Gordon. I have given her a part of them already. I did not tell her how I came by them. I thought perhaps she would feel hurt if she knew I asked you for them so I shall deal them out by littles as I see she wants. The veil I sent to Sarah Knott this morning, also those little doll fixings to the little girl. Mrs. Knotts family are now in town. She has been failing all the time since you was here. Her husband intends starting on the Anderson for Victoria tomorrow morning and from there to California or the Dalles with the whole family. Some think if she can go acrost the mountains she may get better but its doubtful. I have not heard from Eliza since you was here. The people in town are all well as far as I know. They had another party in town last week. Theodore was present, saw Charly Weed and sister. Please excuse this short badly written letter. I have been afflicted with sore eyes for some time past. Are not so I can hardly see to write yet but thought I would try to acknowledge the receipt of your kindness. I know those things will make more than one heart glad and that is what we are placed here for. I shall like so much to visit you this summer. Those cuttings you gave me are all living. I think much of them. We have done nothing in our garden yet but shall soon. Mr. Burr has rented Eliza's shop for a grocery I believe so that is good for her you know. Yours with much love,

Mrs. Woodard
To Mrs Yesler

HENRY AND SARAH YESLER. SEATTLE. JULY 1883



Olympia July 23rd 1860

My darling Sister Sarah,

The Capt has just awakened me, saying it is 6 o'clock and half past, - I jumped out of bed as soon as he left the room and caught my Portfolio, that I might scribble a few lines, to you. I should have written yesterday, but we all went to Church in the forenoon, and had company the remainder of the day, in the evening Mr Barnes sent for us to come there and sit. We went but didn't get anything very satisfactory as we have not sat for a long time previous. By the way we were all martyred completely yesterday. The Methodist Church was to be dedicated and we supposed Mr Lippincott would officiate, (they have it all seated nicely now) but we were doomed to disappointment, for the first thing which met our gaze was Mr Doane's sharp visage, really seeming to me that he might split daylight into well he commenced and belabored us for the hours, by that time from surrounding me

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The Capt has just awakened me, saying it is 6 o'clock and half past. I jumped out of bed as soon as he left the room and caught my portfolio, that I might scribble a few lines, to you. I should have written yesterday, but we all went to Church in the forenoon, and had company the remainder of the day, in the evening. Mrs. Barnes sent for us to come there and sit. We went but didn't get anything very satisfactory as we have not sat for a long time previous. By the way we were all martyred completely yesterday. The Methodist Church was to be dedicated and we supposed Mr. Lippincott would officiate, (they have it all seated nicely now) but we were doomed to disappointment, for the first thing which met our gaze was Mr. Doane's sharp visage, really seeming to me that he might split daylight in two, well he commenced and belabored us for 1 ½ hours. By that time from surrounding magmatisms I had acquired the sick headache pretty severely. So I had the impudence to get up and leave. You ought to have heard Rosa spout when she came home. It was with worth hearing.

Oh Sarah I wish to say so much and I cannot say anything. I want to sleep with you again! Hey! I look back to my visit at your house with a great amount of pleasure. Mr Yesler too was so kind. And that darling horse, how I love him. I shall be only too happy to visit you again and enjoy a seat on his back, the noble fellow.

We are going to the Chehalis in the course of two or three weeks, and this week me with Ma's family. Mrs. Warbass and Mrs. Lowell are going down the Sound on a black berry excursion. Shall be gone two or three days. We saw the eclipse in all its splendor and oh Sarah it was grand—sublime. I have not time even to attempt a description now. Louisa says "Tell Sarah to excuse me. I will write a lengthy letter next time." I will get a good supply of rose cuttings for you this week, so you shall have them next Steamer. My highest regards to Mr Yesler, with a big lump of love to yourself.

Ever yours,
Eliza A. Hurd

Ella returns many kisses to Aunty.

Many thanks from us both for your sweet bouquet. Emblem of innocence – indeed. E—



MRS. WARBASS AND FRIENDS AT HOME, 1865

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH, OLYMPIA 1860



First M. E. Church, Olympia, Washington.

Olympia July 29th /60

My dear little friend,

It is Saturday evening, and how beautiful. - The glorious Sun has disappeared behind the distant trees, after diffusing so lavishly all the day its warm, gay, scorching rays; but now has left us that we may enjoy the cool balsam breath of evening. Oh, how gently it entered my window - how soothingly it glided over my face, bearing on its bosom the sweet perfume of pine flowers, and waving verdure. The ^{little} songsters have ceased their warbling, the busy hum of voices are almost hushed, and a sweet quiet steals through my being. The twilight hour! what a time for thought, - how my mind wanders far back through the vista of three long wearisome years, and I behold myself, ~~or~~ - not a thoughtless - but a happy woman. What a crowd of memories come rushing upon my brain, How little I thought three years ago now,

Over

My dear little friend,

Tis Saturday evening and how beautiful. The glorious sun has disappeared behind the distant trees, after diffusing so lavishly all the day its warm, yeah, scorching rays; but now has left us that we may enjoy the cool balmy breath of evening. Oh, how gently it entered my window—how soothing it glides o'er my face, bearing on its bosom the sweet perfume of tiny flowers, and waving verdure. The little songsters have ceased their warbling, the busy hum of voices are almost hushed, and a sweet quiet steals through my being. The twilight hour! What a time for thought. – How my mind wanders far back through the vista of three long wearisome years, and I behold myself – not a thoughtless—but a happy woman. What a crowd of memories come rushing upon my brain. How little I struggled three years ago now, (over)

When folded like a weary child

To rest in love almost divine. – That so soon I must yield to Death's cold embrace all that was tangible of that love in which I so confidently nestled and live alone on its memory.

Oh memory! even thou art sweet. How plainly I see again that bright smile, so fraught with love, which was ever want to greet me, those words of kind endearment, which so oft has thrilled my soul with joy unspeakable. Oh if she would let me rest there; but no; on, on I go till

I see the curtains fold above
Those changeless orbs so true and clear
That all my life with light of love
Had shined upon me kind and dear.

The gentle lips grow hard and stern
I breathe upon them such embrace—
But, oh, no weak, yet strong return
Toils up for me the faded face;
I only clasp a broken vase
The perfume, and the flower are gone
Forever from their empty place
And chilled and withered I live on.

DIED. 1859

Passed away to the spirit land, on Sunday the 6th inst., ALICE LILLIAN HURD, infant daughter of Mrs. J. K. Hurd, of Olympia, W. T.

This pure and tender bud has been removed to a brighter and more celestial clime, there to unfold and blossom,—progress and perfect itself for that life which knows no end. How comforting the thought to that bereaved mother that her sweet child is NOT DEAD. No!

“ She is not dead—the child of our affection,
But gone unto that school,
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,
And Christ himself doth rule.
In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
By guardian Angels led,
Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution
She lives, whom we call dead.”

We feel at times, that lovingly her beautiful spirit lingers near, essaying to soothe our grieved and desolate hearts, speaking to us of patience, and a future bright and promising.

“ We WILL be patient, and assuage the feeling
We cannot wholly stay ;
By silence sanctifying, not concealing
The grief that must here away.”—*Communicate I.*

Thus memory every bears me on her bosom, through scenes bright and beautiful, then dark and fearful, but for Hope's encouraging smile – her words of cheer I should falter, droop and die. Her finger is ever pointing upward to a world more bright to happiness more ecstatic, than that ever experienced in my happiest days. I am constantly endeavoring to profit by her counsel, by pressing onward, and aiming upward to my beautiful home. By the arch of fancy I am often almost there, I see the darling one's beckoning me, as they hasten to greet me, but ere I reach them by some mundane movement I am brought to realize that I am still a creature of this world, governed by circumstances, and before I'm aware, memory holds me in her embrace. 'Tis well; she often brings me cooling draughts as well as burning ones. She is my friend.

My darling sister, I am forced to arouse myself from my worries, as the shades of twilight are deepening, and the soft-mellow rays of the moon does not give me sufficient light. Happily for your sake methinks. That something should arouse me. My lamp lit, now I proceed. (Tho not in the same strain).

I wrote a short letter for your perusal last Monday morning but while waiting for the Captain to come home and get it; I fell asleep and the Steamer had been some time gone when I awoke. So much for not getting up at the darker hour, for health, longevity, etc. I was very sorry you did not receive some acknowledgement from one of us at least, but you see you get a good supply this time, as a reward for past neglect. Rosa says she intends to write you too. I believe there was nothing transpired during the week to relieve the usual monotony of

the place, save the arrival yesterday of three or four Steilacoom rowdies accompanied by the polished gentlemen Mr. Libby who took a very active part in disturbing the quiet of our little four. He seemed bent on fighting somebody—very profuse in his boisterous remarks about his money, etc besides much vulgar talk which I would not use up paper to repeat. I think him as great a rowdy as I've seen lately.

Tomorrow morning we start on our berrying excursion, how we wish you were here to accompany us, as we anticipate a good time. Rosa is really giving to housekeeping and no mistake, I think she will be happier than she now is, but I shall not be as happy. I would like to step into your bathing room tonight and take an ablution, and you might shower me too, and I would not squeal so bad. I would like to tell you how I spanked the Captain last night but haven't time now. Please write as often as possible. My love to Mr. Yesler.

Sincerely your friend,
Eliza





Altopia Aug 15th 160

Dear little Sister Sarah,

Shall I tell you what we are doing today (Rose & I) & where we are? Well, we are in Rose's cozy little home, she is on the bed and I am sitting beside her, endeavoring to act in the capacity of Private Secretary to Rose; for she feels quite unable to write, herself as she is just recovering from quite a severe bilious attack. I just returned from Chehalis Friday, & have been with her most the time since. She went with me to Chehalis but returned after a weeks stay, expecting to find the Capt in waiting for her, but to her surprise, the business had called him below, is expecting him to return or send for her next Steamer, but; wishes me to say to you, if she should not go next Steamer that she will come down & visit you, without fail, that is, if she becomes convalescent, which I mean she shall, for I am putting her

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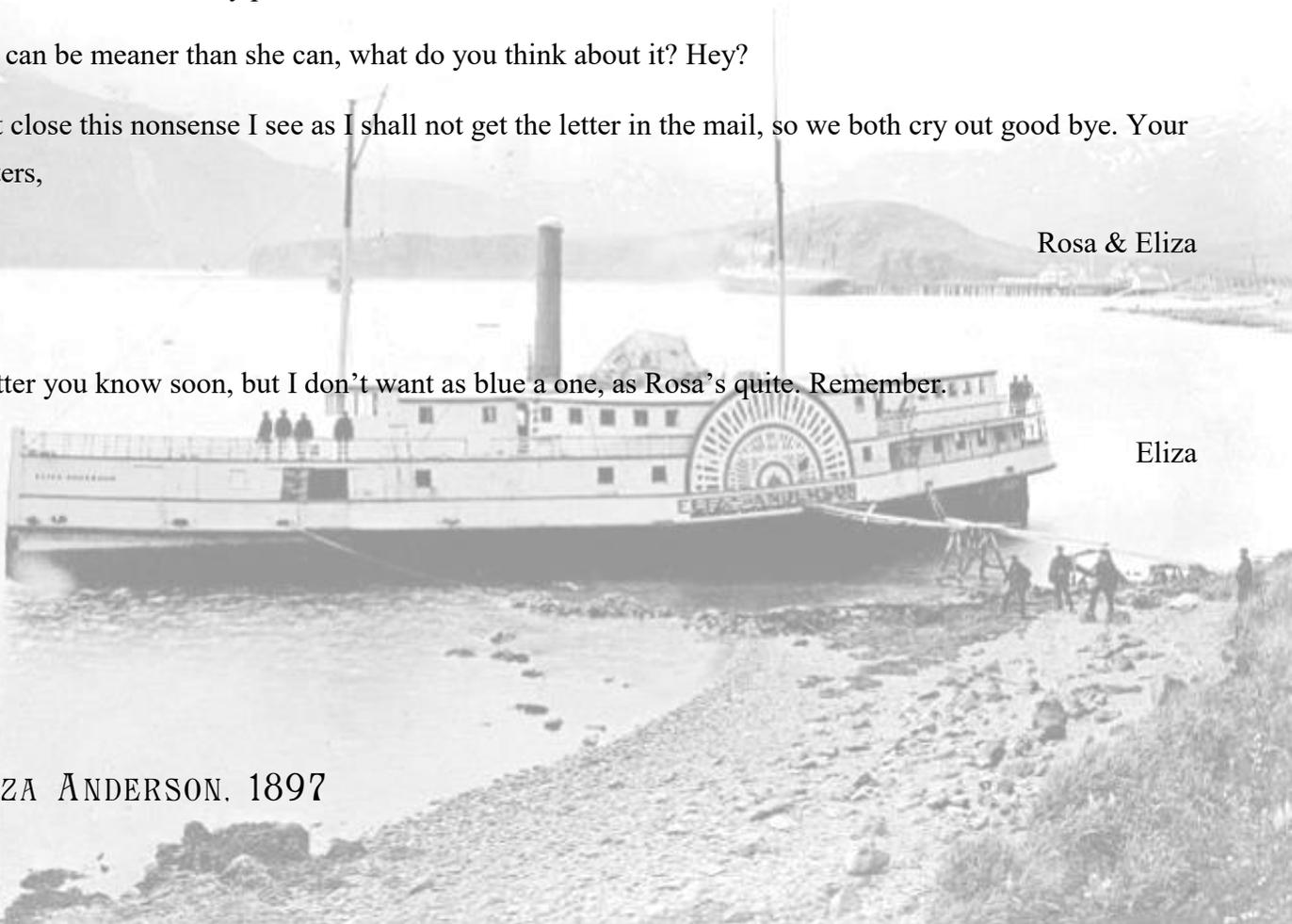
Rose says I can be meaner than she can, what do you think about it? Hey?

Well I must close this nonsense I see as I shall not get the letter in the mail, so we both cry out good bye. Your Loving Sisters,

Rosa & Eliza

I claim a letter you know soon, but I don't want as blue a one, as Rosa's quite. Remember.

Eliza



At home - Sunday evening Aug 26th/66

Dear Sister Susan,

Your letter was punctually delivered by Mr. Hemming, the receipt of which conferred happiness on both your sisters. Rosa is no better I fear, she seems very weak, and the least move brings on a chill - slight headache, but enough to keep her reduced, confined to her bed most of the time. How we do wish you would arrange your affairs so as to come up by return steamer, & stay until she goes back at least, if you do not I fear you will not see Rosa before she leaves for Frisco. She rec'd a letter from the Capt stating she should come next steamer, not knowing she is ill. We will feel very bad when he gets my letter, he is so sympathetic you know.

I think it so does Rose that her illness has been brought on by overwork when she went to house keeping. Every thing must be dispatched, you know, tho' it jeopardize her health, no matter, she was strong - it would not hurt her to go to work and do a big washing alone

Dear Sister Sarah,

Your letter was punctually delivered by Mr. Flemming, the receipt of which conferred happiness on both your sisters.

Rosa is no better I fear, she seems very weak, and the least move brings on a chill -slight to be sure, but enough to keep her winced. Confined to her bed most of the time. How we do wish you would arrange your affairs so as to come up by return steamer, & stay until she goes back at least, if you do not I fear you will not see Rosa before she leaves for Frisco. She rec^da letter from the Capt stating she should come next Steamer, not knowing she is ill. He will feel very bad when he gets my letter, he is so sympathetic you know.

I think and so does Rose that her illness has been brought on by overdoing when she went to housekeeping. Everything must be dispatched, you know, tho it jeopardize her health, no matter, she was strong—it wouldn't hurt her etc. Went to work and done a big washing alone after moving her things & cleaning house then the ironing, the next day we started for Chehalis, which would have been beneficial no doubt had she not been so exhausted—her system by this work, as it was the trip did not do her any good. She was very billious too with all the rest, but it is all right, she thinks it will teach her a lesson. I hope it may, but I tell her she will do the very same thing again, if she is similarly placed. Yes, I scold, and at the same time pet her and rub her, etc but I think all the time she needs a good spanking. No, a poultice wouldn't do her any good.

I am sorry for you my little sister, that you are so dull of comprehension. I always knew you was small but I thought you pretty well along in years, but to my surprise I find you an innocent unsuspecting child. Come to me darling & I will tell you a few things. I think it high time you were made acquainted with especially the philosophy of Poultices & the manner of applying them?

Rose lays here on the bed reading and fighting flies, says tell Sarah to come for I don't think I can possibly come to visit her. Now you will come won't you, do try, for it may be the last time we three can be together.

I am glad to hear the mines are promising so well. Seattle will be much beautified by them certainly. We know you must look very nice all painted up, would both be very happy to pop in tonight and see you & Mr Yesler. Hope you enjoyed the dance. How is my noble Jim. We had plenty of horse back rides at Mr. Davis. Wished for you, it is a pleasant country out there, beautiful prairies covered with the nicest of crops, besides hospitable people who made us very welcome.

Mrs Huffman has been visiting Olympia again, stayed at the Washington Hotel most of the time. Mrs Gallagher was just in saying that she was down on every one here but Mrs Warbass and the ladies of Seattle were no where didn't like them at all, but you know how much weight her gossip has.

Well I must close, now try and come. Our best regards to Mr Yesler, also my respects to Mrs Butler.

Yours Ever,

Eliza

Monday Morning in Cal

Dear Sister Sarah

I have no doubt's but you felt disappointed, not receiving a word from me. I wrote you and William failed to give it to Sam and I did not know it until Thursday. I was coming here, but for a resator this week - perhaps I will go on the execution if I do I will stop off with the Capt. he wants to see you so much before going away - we were a horse back riding with Saranton yesterday and I was so tired I could not write you last evening, so was Eliza she would like to receive a letter from you - your mass is growing I will bring it too. you will anticipate a pleasant visit with you I am a friend she will sail her & Aloats with the much fit -

I am sorry I had not take the time to write you on Saturday I have so much to say to you. Now the Steam is blowing

OLYMPIA, AUGUST 27TH 1860

Dear Sister Sarah,

I have no doubts but you felt disappointed not receiving a word from me. I wrote you and William failed to give it to Sam and I did not know it until Thursday.

I was coming down but for a visator this week. Perhaps I will go on the ecurtion If I do I will stop off with the Capt. He wants to see you so much before going away. We were on horse back riding with Sara[illegible] yesterday and I was so tired I could not write you last evening. So was Eliza. She would like to receive a letter from you. Your moss is growing. I will bring it to you.

Nell anticipated a pleasant visit with you. I am afraid she will soil her cloaks with so much filth.

I am sorry I did not take the time to write you on Saturday. I have so much to say to you. Now the Steamer is blowing her blast again, and Will says hurry. I can tell her all if I go.

We all missed you, and felt quite disappointed but all is for the best. If I was well I could come to day.

I have a powerful affinity for you and so has some one else – he says I love that little woman. What do you think of that. There goes the whistle. I must wait and tell you the rest. Eliza would say a word she promised me so last eve but I cannot get her awake so excuse her this time. She is in love with you too.

I will give you a thousand if you can read this.

My love to your husband and remember I am
yours forever

Rose



Mrs. Rose Bushnell, of San Francisco, gives through the *Light of Truth* her experience with the medium Mrs. L. F. Tuley. When Mrs. Bushnell has a good thing, she has a happy way of telling it. We will give it to our readers just as she relates it:

"A seance was held at 31 Fell street, San Francisco, Cal., on the evening of September 15th. Mrs. L. F. Tuley was the medium; many readers will recollect her as Mrs. Lizzie Fulton, the slate-writer. She has attracted spirit physicians, who have developed her powers of healing to a degree that is marvelous. She removes the most tenacious forms of cancer without pain, and other diseases that the M. D.s have abandoned as incurable. She takes the long-suffering patients to her own house, and restores them to health, her husband being a graduated physician. The seance began at eight o'clock. A few invited guests were seated in the parlor, not dreaming of the glory that was in store for them. In one corner a black cambric curtain was hung across, leaving just room enough for a chair. In this chair was seated the medium dressed in black—her underwear being black also, as I can attest.

"She laughingly took her seat, with the remark, 'I don't feel that we will get much to-night, but, however, we will give our friends a chance.' She had hardly ceased speaking, when a radiant being appeared, with 'Good evening, friends.' The light was down quite low, but her own emanations gave a beautiful tint of mellow light that, in its softness, rested on everything in the room. The aroma of flowers floated over and about us, and as she receded, she whispered, 'I am Mabel.' This lovely one was the medium's daughter.

"Next came two spirits in their own light that were recognized at once. As they retired, there came three gentlemen and two ladies; and while they were out talking with their friends, a lady and little child came; all could see its dear sweet face and hear its prattle of greeting. Little Loney, the medium's guide, saw a doubt crossing over the heart of one of the guests, and sought to remove it by materializing, and leading the lady into the cabinet to show her the medium; all were called to the cabinet, and beheld three forms. Then the spirit disappeared into thin air; the next that was heard was a voice near the ceiling saying, 'Didn't I do that fine?'

"The next who came was our own beloved arisen one. He was in radiant white. With arms extended he came towards me. I arose and met his embrace. His dear arms were about me, and his head on my breast, as he whispered these words: 'Mamma, mamma, I am not dead; I live, and love you more than I did in earth life. O mamma dear, you are so dear to me. I have a home of roses for you, my sweetest of mothers, when you come home. Tell papa that I can come, and that I will soon come to him.' He then led me to the cabinet, where stood my mother and her sister, who have not been over long, I having then been thirty-seven years old. Their lightness was so bright that

the medium's face was radiant. My mother smiled, and said, 'Dear child.' Then they were gone. I lingered to catch one echo from that enchanted land where love and beauty abides forever. I called for just one word more. It said: 'Beloved, be at peace; I am with thee.' When, behold, my friend and counselor was beside me. He placed his hand upon my head, bade me rejoice in the light thereof, and was gone.

"Others came, glorified ones, who have washed in the river of everlasting life, came and blessed every one of them. The happiness that pervaded the room and nestled on the hearts of all present, will never be forgotten. The seance was a harmonious one. No one was seeking fraud, therefore fraud staid away. There was no opportunity for collusion. There was absolutely no chance for confederates. None could have entered the door, and the bay-window was in front, and the cabinet in the back part of the room. Our pity extends kindly towards those who are not blind, yet refuse to see the light. We heard a mother not long since wailing over the body of her child, saying, 'Farewell, my boy, farewell till mother meets you in heaven.' The child had long been suffering, and begged to be permitted to die. Thoughts of our almost forgotten lines, written when our own desolate heart sought light, and obtained it thereof, came back in love, and I longed to give her consolation.

**"Farewell, the music of the spheres
Will drown the wail of earthly woe;
As he passed the boundary line of tears,
His song of joy reached me below.**

**"From out the reef of perished hopes
One flower still blooms alone for me;
I catch a strain of glorious notes,
Which lifts my soul, O God, to thee."**

"As we look around us we see many happy faces, but none of them are Christians; they are all Spiritualists and Free Thinkers"

SARAH AND HENRY YESLER, SEATTLE 1859



SEATTLE,
IN 1859
WN

Olympia Oct 25th 1860

Dear Sarah Yester

My darling little Sister,

Am home - have been since last Monday
Have not yet rec^d, a word from Mosa,
The Steamer did not ^{at} contact, & this
Steamer has not yet arrived, but we
have been expecting her since Tuesday
fear something misfortune has befallen her.

Well now, those questions are an-
swered, do allow me to congratu-
late you in regard to your success
with Mr Briggs, why, I'm perfectly
astonished (& delighted) at your dar-
ing boldness - walk right into the
affections of a man, I hope it
isn't anything bad, for I want to
share in the spoils, & you know I
wouldn't leave to if it wasn't und-
erstand. Ha ha ha, well Sarah I'll talk



My darling little sister,

Yes, I am home. Have been since last Monday. Have not yet rec^d a word from Rosa. The Steamers did not connect and this Steamer has not yet arrived, but we have been expecting her since Tuesday. Fear some misfortune has befallen her.

Well now, those questions are answered, do allow me to congratulate you in regard to your success with Mr. Meigs. Why, I'm perfectly astonished (and delighted) at your daring boldness. Walk right into the affections of a man, I hope it isn't anything bad, for I want to share in the spoils, and you know I wouldn't d-a-r-e to if it wasn't modest!! Ha ha ha, well Sarah I'll talk rational. You are the most bewitching little Muggins I know of. If I only had hold of you I would squeeze you for half an hour. Only to think you have succeeded in your plan, which I had not the least idea you would. You are a darling and a great deal more that I cannot express! Oh, I'm just aching to get down there with you. Won't we have a good time though. In about two weeks you may expect me. I cannot come sooner, for I wish to see Mr. Weed that I may leave my business with him, and he is now absent to Vancouver. Will return in two weeks.

I'll take a stick to you when I come if you do not hurry up with your sewing. What do you mean say for such neglect? I will await your answer. Work now, pleasure by and by, on a more extensive scale, hey?

But, I am real glad you have enjoyed yourself, always improve every passing opportunity. I enjoyed my second trip, or visit at the Chehalis. Done considerable sewing for Mrs. Davis notwithstanding am getting along well with my own. Yesterday I spent the day at Captain Percival's. Tonight I'm going over to Ma's to stay most of the week.

Yes, I see we are no where with Jackson, but don't you know why? I think it is because we don't flatter enough. That is it. I'm sure. I met him this morning on the wharf, said he would be pleased to hand you this letter or accommodate me in any way. It is my humble opinion that Mr. Lowell bought that melon of him.

I regret exceedingly that I was not here to receive that nice salmon which Mr. Yesler was so kind as to get for me, nevertheless I am a thousand times obliged, also for the one I did get this time.

I see Jim most every day but do not get a chance to speak to him.

I am sorry to hear that the Mines do not pay, but my fears are correct. Perhaps by & by the prospect will be more favorable.

Last week there was a little boy drowned here, near Mr. Windsors old stable, by falling into an open well. The child belonged to one of violinist which played at the Theatre the dark complected man. He two weeks since brought his family here from Victoria, and wife and three children. She missed the child about 1 o'clock P.M., looked in vain for it, untill she become alarmed, when Mr. Rutledge raised the town, and a search was



SEATTLE 1874

*The most certain
Ella is well, thanks for the kiss, I here
puts another for you.  I think this is the
hope, not certain.*



OLYMPIA 1876

PUGET SOUND. 1876



commenced. About dark some one thought of this place, found his little hat floating on the surface, upon which they searched the well and found him.

I can only say, poor mother, few know the anguish of thy heart, thy wounded bleeding heart, which no earthly remedy can heal. Oh! These sorrows which weigh so heavily upon the soul. It is well that we can look beyond to a happy reunion, but what a pleasant transition to the little boy. How delighted he must be with the beauties of spirit life.

Hurrah, news from the mail steamer Oregon. Mail just arrived says she was in the Columbia river Tuesday, so she must certainly be here today.

Ella is well. Thanks for the kiss & here puts another for you. * I think this is the shape, not certain.

Well good bye—write soon,

Your affectionate sister,
Eliza



HENRY YESLER. 1870



Santa Cruz - March 11th 1861

My dear Sister Sarah -

There, don't scold me

now, please don't - I humbly plead ^{for} forgive
me - indeed I meant to have answered your
kind letter, that it might reach Seattle
by the time you would, but alas - think-
ing and talking, without acting, never re-
sults in anything wonderful I find so I'm
going to act now. Well how are you, any-
how? Well and happy I hope - in the full
enjoyment of your home - your husband
society and affection. I believe you re-
mark my dear - that your sojourn in the
Great City - has not lessened your love for
home - your attachment, and apprecia-
tion of your husband. Whenever we begin
to draw comparisons - search out the hid-
den causes of discontent which we every-
where find, almost, arising from the
hearts of many - who, to the care less ob-
server seems as serene and untroubled
as a summer sea, we at once find

I read a letter from Rosa soon after you sailed. I told me what a beautiful ship you had, pleased her very much, repeated your departure & I hope big trip for her. The youth she had

to draw comparisons - search out the hidden causes of discontent which we everywhere find, almost, arising from the hearts of many - who, to the care less observer seems as serene and untroubled as a summer sea, we at once find

My dear sister Sarah—

There don't scold me now. Please don't. I humbly plead for forgiveness. Indeed I meant to have answered your kind letter. That it might reach Seattle by the time you would, but alas, thinking and talking without acting never results in anything wonderful. I find so I'm going to act now. Well, how are you, anyhow? Well and happy I hope. In the full enjoyment of your home, your husband, society, and affection. I believe your remark my dear. That your sojourn in the great city has not lessened your love for home. Your attachment for and appreciation of your husband. Whenever we begin to draw comparisons—search out the hidden causes of discontent which we everywhere find, almost rising up from the hearts of many who, to the careless observer seems as serene and untroubled as a summers eve, we at once find that we are not alone walking in the darkness of sorrow and bereavement—we find that our story tho somewhat dimmed with clouds is not wholly obscured. And as we carefully watch and compare, we all at once behold the beautiful sunshine of hope and contentment bursting through the previous gloom. Oh the joyous light, how brightly its warming rays penetrate our innermost beings, telling us still further on, there is yet more light dazzling and brilliant waiting our Progression.

I felt so grieved darling, to know that you would allow that miserable report originating as it must from a miserable source—a contemptible narrow mind which deserved no stronger sentiment from woman of your mind, than pity. I was sorry I say to know that you allowed it for a moment to disturb your eganinity, you who merit no such base slander, for slander it is when undeserved. And I know from my associations with you Sarah, I think I know something of the innermost feelings of your heart – know them pure, enobling and pure. And there are others, perhaps that know you equally as well, and knowing cannot—will not doubt your motive in coming to California, if they do not know why they have no business to pass their judgement. So let it all go as idle chaff, which is not worth sifting.



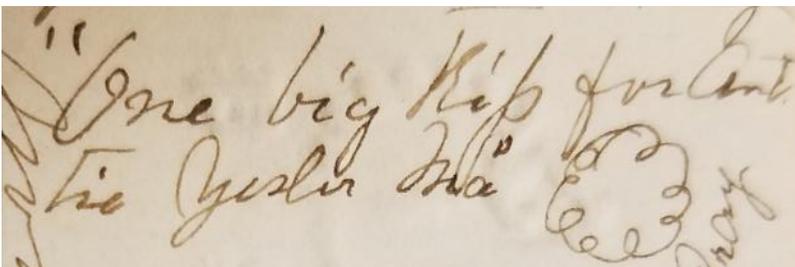
I am still at my sisters—and Sarah I find them still the same—true, noble and good. I love her and her husband with my hearts best love. They are so kind to me and mine—and they tell me so much of him, whom I love more than all the world. Perhaps as many tell me it is only the memory of him that I'm cherishing so tenaciously. An idle delusive phantom; but I believe it not. He lives I know it, because I feel it permeate my entire being, and if he lives he still loves me, and is cognizant of my thoughts, aspirations and whereabouts. Ah, peaceful thought what comfort it brings to my yearning soul.

Well my dear girl I have so much to say, and the limits of a letter will not admit of any lengthy discourses; therefore I hardly know what to say next, as many subjects come up for discussion. I feel that my health is considerably improved—have not had a cold since I came here. Little Ella has been very well until within the last few days from some unknown cause she has contracted quite a cold, but I hope it will not result in anything serious. The little pet she has improved I think very much since I left the City. I fancy that she is a child that requires a great amount of pure air, combined with exercise and regular plain diet—that she not only requires it, but that it is indispensable to an even tone of the nervous system which makes her agreeable and pleasant.

Oh, my sister I wish you could see how I enjoy myself here—what sources of enjoyment with the help of the alarm clock, which sits on my mantle piece, I have become quite an early riser. This morning I was up at ½ past 5 o'clock soon dressed and out on the hill, above the house enjoying the refreshing, invigorating air from the ocean and the mountains, and the charming music of all nature, as it seemed awakening into life. Whenever I thus find myself of a beautiful morning, how I do wonder, that I can ever doze away the prettiest part of the day in bed and resolve that I never will do it again, for there are so many ways we can spend our precious time, by doing good to others, by sharing our minds with the noble ideas of some aspiring writer, or by wandering forth “with the calm blue sky” smiling upon us and studying the wide spread book of Nature, a never ending Cyclopedia of wondrous beauties.

You speak of my contemplated visit at your house next summer. My dear friend you cannot anticipate, more than myself in regard to it. We will indeed try to be harmonious and happy, thereby be enabled to communicate with the unseen world. I fear my advantages for being developed as a medium will be very limited. My friends here are in the A.B.C. of the beautiful philosophy of Spiritualism. We have had some “Table Tip-pings” and “Wraps” but my sister thinks it is not good to have around before the children etc so I do not urge it; but I'm convinced there is at least three good mediums in the family. The last time we sat, it was with the greatest effort I could present the Clairvoyant sleep which I knew I must as they would be so frightened by oh the influenced was so sweet, so soothing to my senses, how I did long for a quiet understanding, harmonious circle, that I might yield myself entirely to its delicious embrace. Why Sarah I must say goodbye tho I'm loth to leave you, but there are many others who have claims upon me. So my dear, Adieu! A kiss! Write very soon.

I rec^d a letter from Rosa soon after your sailed. Told me what a beautiful dress you had, pleased her much, regretted your departure, etc.



"One big kiss for Auntie Yesler Ma"
Mary

“One big kiss for Auntie Yesler Ma.” *

Give my love to Mrs Meigs & Mrs Pray

SEATTLE. 1874



Olympia Oct 6th 1861
At Mrs Wabbs's

My dear - dear Sister Sarah -

Among the
Thousand things I have to say to
Thee, what shall I say first? Ask
you to excuse me for not answering
your kind loving letter rec^d while
in Oregon? Yes! an apology is really
due Thee, & yet I have only time to
say - forgive dear sister! for I was
going all the time from place
to place, visiting old friends, staying
but a day or two in a place, and of
course we had so much talking to
do, that I had to remain silent
to absent ones. Will not that suf-
fice now darling one, as I have so
much to chat about? — — —
I arrived here on the evening of the

At Mrs. Warbass's

My dear- dear Sister Sarah—

Among the thousand things I have to say to thee, what shall I say first? Ask you to excuse me for not answering your kind loving letter received while in Oregon? Yes! An apology is really due thee, and yet I have only time to say—forgive dear sister! For I was going all the time from place to place, visiting old friends, staying but a day or two in a place, and of course we had so much talking to do, that I had to remain silent to absent ones. Will not that suffice now darling one, as I have so much to chat about?

I arrived here on the evening of the 2nd. Felt rejoiced to get home—to meet the old familiar faces, and feel the warm hand's pressure once again. My friends manifest a good deal of heartfelt pleasure at my return—it seems to be felt. I saw Mr. Lowell yesterday. He told me you was preparing to make another visit to San Francisco? Is that so Sarah? Are you really going and I not see you first.

I received last night a letter from Dr DeWolf. He has already arrived in Portland and will be here I suppose in the course of five weeks.

I left the two Roses well. They loaded me with love to give you and a heap of apologies for not writing in answer to long and interesting letters. The Captain was laying up for the John T Wright had stopped running.

I came over yesterday from Ma's intending to return last night but it has rained incessantly since ~~but~~ preventing my going out at all however I am quite content being so hospitably entertained by our dear friend Mrs. Warbass! She thinks a great deal of you Sarah, in fact you seem to be a general favorite up here.

I don't expect to get into my house for perhaps 4 weeks, as I have to precipitate Mr. Flemings all of a sudden. They intend taking Mr. Lowe's—the Captain's house but they will not vacate for a month yet. So I will endeavor to accommodate and do as I would like to be done by.

Oh Sarah are you really going away? Answer immediately do and tell me all about your plans. Mrs. Warbass sends kind regards, and wants to know also if you are going and when, as she has a message I believe that she wants to send Mrs. Coon some money.

My precious Ella is well. How is Mr. Yesler? Give him much love for me. Please excuse brevity and haste, for the mail soon closes. I shall expect an answer by return Steamer—Adieu Adieu dear loving friend.

Sincerely Thine,

Eliza A Hurd

Victoria, June 19th 1862

My dear Mrs Guler,

Your very kind & welcome letter of June 10th came to hand a few days since. Be assured dear friend I was happy to hear from you; an evidence that you are not swayed by newspapers, slang and gossip, which is actuated by nothing but prejudice and malice. 'Yes!' dear Sarah, it made my heart glad, not only to still be able to count you as a true friend, but to ~~mark~~ here the demonstration given me, that there is still another brave soul, individualized, stands up bold and independent against the rushing tide of public, or popular opinion, until it has a reason for acquiescing.

My time is limited. Cannot write but a few words more, the main of which is this - Come! 'Yes!' self and husband come and see and hear for yourselves, then of course you can better decide upon the merits

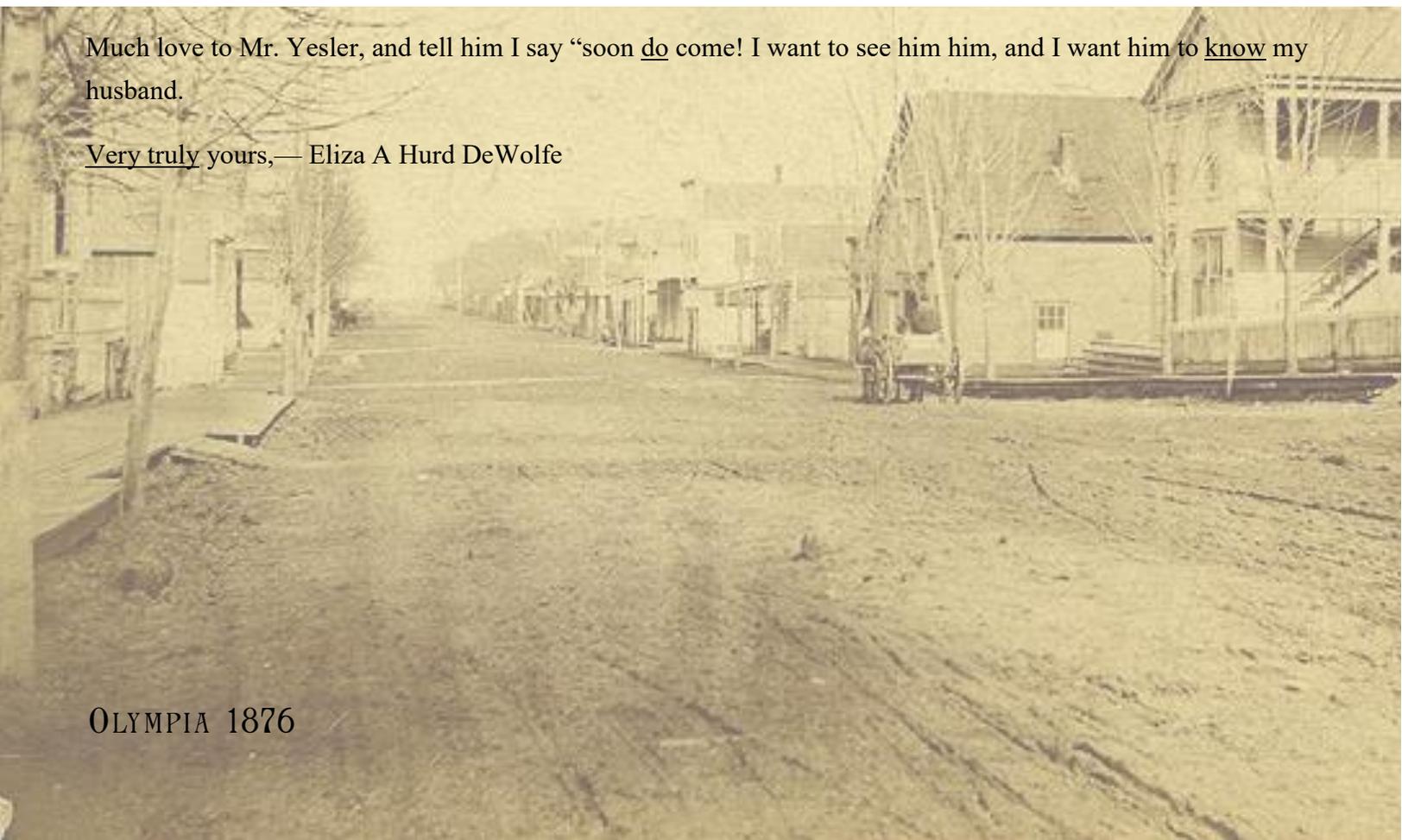
My dear Mrs. Yesler,

Your very kind and welcome letter of June 1st came to hand a few days since. Be assured dear friend I was happy to hear from you; an evidence that you are not swayed by newspaper slang and gossip, which is activated by nothing but prejudice and malice. Yes! dear Sarah, it made my heart glad, not only to still be able to count you as a true friend, but to ~~make~~ have the demonstration given me, that there is still another choice soul, individualized, that stands up bold and independent against the rushing tide of public, or popular opinion, until it has a reason for acquiescing.

My time is limited. Cannot write but a few words hence. The main of which is this- Come! Yes! Self and husband come and see and hear for yourselves. Then of course you can better decide upon the merits or demerits of the case. Yes! Come! The Doctor joins me in sending greetings to you both, with an earnest solicitation for you to visit us—This month- hey? Oh! Sarah I have so many thousand things to tell you – of the wars we’ve passed through for Rights sake and of the sweet repose of my soul, in the atmosphere of love and sympathy that surrounds me—the deep joyous feelings of old have been awakened into life again, and activity. Strange, strange! I marvel still, and at times for a moment start with the thought it is it is a dream—a happy delusive dream. Well! More anon—I feel much at home very much here. We are already doing a nice business, and commenced but two weeks last Saturday. Ella is well and grown much. My health is fast improving. And I am so glad to hear of your improvement.

Much love to Mr. Yesler, and tell him I say “soon do come! I want to see him him, and I want him to know my husband.

Very truly yours,— Eliza A Hurd DeWolfe



Free-Loveism Rampant—The Deceiver Deceived.

The good people of Olympia have been not a little amused and excited during the past week in consequence of two distinct actions in the Justice's court, brought against one Charles Henry De Wolf, claiming to be a practicing physician, who delivered a course of lectures in this place a few weeks ago upon "phrenology," "phrebotomy," "phrelove," and kindred subjects. Before Charles Henry had been in town twenty-four hours our people had taken his measure, and their estimation of him was by no means heightened by the vague rumors of rascalities which had been practiced by the "little joker" elsewhere, but our people being law-abiding he was allowed his full latitude. This clemency towards him, so different perhaps from the treatment he had received from other communities, had the effect to very materially raise Charles Henry's bump of self-esteem, and for several days he appeared to be cock of the walk. In the meantime Charles Henry contracted a "conjugal alliance and matrimonial co-partnership," and the following announcement appeared in the columns of the *Press*:

MARRIED.

At the house of the bride's parents (Mr. H. R. Woodard's) Dr. C. H. De Wolfe, of Philadelphia, Pa., to Mrs. Eliza A. Hurd, of Olympia, W. T., in the following manner:

"We, the undersigned, hereby announce to the world, that we have contracted a conjugal alliance, and entered into a matrimonial co-partnership; believing in the divine right of bonds to dictate their own terms, and the inspirations of 'MOTHER NATURE and FATHER GOD,' as being above custom and priestly ceremony, however long dignified by legal enactment and Christianian dictation. This act we perform (lacking upon ourselves the responsibility) in presence of the witnesses whose names accompany our own, and this public declaration."

Made this 13th day of May, 1862.

Witnesses:

H. R. Woodard,	Charles Henry De Wolfe,
Salome Woodard,	Eliza Ann Hurd,
B. F. Brown,	
Mary Brown,	

On Sunday evening Charles and his "partner" resorted to the "house of the bride's parents," about two miles below this place, intending to meet the mail boat early Monday morning, at Brown's wharf, and proceed on their way to Victoria "rejoicing." But alas! for human calculations—the Fates willed it otherwise. Deputy Sheriff Moxlie, armed with a writ for their apprehension, took passage by the same conveyance, and just as the "happy couple" came aboard, and were felicitating themselves on a "prosperous voyage," the Sheriff steps forward and places the clutches of the law upon their devoted heads. While this scene was being enacted at Brown's wharf, the Olympia wharf was erected into a temporary observatory, and a field-glass, mounted on a tripod, was brought to bear with mathematical nicety upon the mail-boat. Through this glass a large and appreciative assemblage successively strained their eyes to penetrate the mysteries being enacted at the boat.

About one o'clock Charles Henry and his "partner" were arraigned before Justice Bigelow to answer to the charge of having attempted to unite parties in the bonds of matrimony without authority of law—to which a plea of "not guilty" was entered; Elwood Evans, Esq., appearing on behalf of the Territory and the defendant for the defense. The testimony substantiated the notice of "matrimonial co-partnership"—the defendant introducing no rebutting testimony. Mr. Evans opened in a very appropriate, courteous and convincing speech. He was followed by His Rt. Rev., Hon. Charles Henry De Wolf, M. D. and F. F. L. S., who claimed to be a minister of the Gospel, a judge, and a justice of the peace, (and therefore qualified to marry *himself*;) in a tirade of abuse and billingsgate, as though Pandora's box had been bursted within and the ills issuing therefrom were striving to seek their "affinities" in our atmosphere. We frankly admit that we have never listened to a speech that would more effectually write its author as an ingenious, self-possessed, unscrupulous dog—a being in human form regarding neither custom, sanctity, nor decency. The peacock, whose little heart is one beating pulse of vanity is not so vain as he—assuming to desire martyrdom at the hands of the "sneaking, lying, peddling, begging, clerical sons of Ahab"; the "drunken justices" and "besotted judges"; and their "black-hearted and villainous supporters." This style of harangue would not have been attempted in any place where the COWARD was unprotected by the sanctity of a courtroom and the presence of ladies. He knew that for the time being he could free his guilty soul of all the vituperation and abuse it contained, protected by the law. The counsel for the Territory closed in a scathing speech, which caused even the hardened villain under trial to fairly wince.

Justice Bigelow decided the charge sustained, and debts were bound over in the sum of one thousand dollars to appear at the district court. After much difficulty, Charles Henry's father-in-law filed the necessary bond and released his children from "durance vile."

But the misfortunes of the "matrimonial firm" did not end here. On Tuesday Charles Henry was again apprehended on a charge of "open and notorious fornication." The time for trial was fixed at ten o'clock Wednesday morning, and Charles Henry not finding bondsmen even as plentiful as when his "partner" was to be "bailed out" with him, was treated to lodgings in the block-house, which from all accounts are as "primitive," as was Charles Henry's wedding-cake (*vide Press of Monday*). Charles H. of course turned up his nose at the "accommodations," and still pleaded pitifully that his blushing "partner" be allowed to share them with him! Some believe that Charles Henry don't live up to

what he preaches—others that he merely wished to show her the course that true love sometime runs, and—the trial on Wednesday did not differ materially from that of Monday. Charles Henry indulged in a few malicious flings at the people collectively, and stated that he *never! NEVER! NEVER* would be married by the parties specified by law as competent authority to ratify the marriage contract. "It was degrading to his manhood to think of it!" He would bow to no "fawning, hypocritical, thieving priest"; no "drunken, mercenary justice" nor corrupt judge" for the "senseless" words "I pronounce you man and wife"! He lived in advance of the age! Future generations would look upon him as a martyr and reverence his memory. He did not expect disciples from among the people of Olympia, for they were totally incapable of appreciating the sublime truths which found lodgment in his breast. "The people of Olympia teach morality!" exclaimed he; "why, I have taught more morality in the short space I have sojourned with you than all your priests and ministers have in the past ten years"! Heaven deliver us from such morality.

Before rendering a decision, Justice McGill said that he should ask the deft. a question which would materially bear upon his final decision. "Do you," said the Justice, "consent to take this woman as your wedded wife?" "I do," replied the defendant, unhesitatingly. "And do you," asked the Justice of the blushing "partner," "consent to take this man as your lawful husband?" "Yes," was the reply. "Then," coolly remarked the Justice, "by the power vested in me, and in the presence of these witnesses, I pronounce you man and wife according to law!"

"If you've ever seen a hailstorm,
(Thunder and lightning both included),
If you've seen the briny ocean,
When the waves in high commotion,
Rise like unto snow-capped mountains."

Then, reader, you may form an idea of the tempest of astonishment and rage which filled the breast of Charles Henry, when the sentence was pronounced. "You can't come that dodge over me; I deny your authority!" he shouted frantically; but he was brought to take a reasonable view of the matter by an intimation from the court that if he "indulged" in such "whims" he should commit him for contempt.

The justice decided that as the evidence failed to prove that *one* of the parties did not at the time the matrimonial contract was made consider it a *bona fide* marriage, and that as the parties were *now* joined in lawful wedlock, the charge be not sustained—costs to be paid by the defendant. Thus ended the case. Charles Henry was married by a justice, and his "Free-love" career *was* suddenly brought to a close.

MARRIED.—By Henry M. PUGH, Esq., in the Justice's court, Wednesday, May 21st, 1862, Charles Henry De Wolfe and Mrs. Eliza Ann Hurd.
"Be virtuous and you will be happy."

FROM "GAY SEATTLE"

Additionally, there are stories of sexual freedom among early pioneers in the Northwest. For example, Sarah Yesler, the wife of the same Henry Yesler for whom the Deadline was named, is said by some historians to have had a love affair with Eliza Hurd, who once ran a dressmaking shop and who wrote passionate letters about the two of them sleeping and bathing together.²

Presumably, sexual touch and romance between men and between women also sometimes occurred in Seattle's respectable middle and upper classes, as it may have with Sarah Yesler and Eliza Hurd. Those, apparently, were not discovered, or at least not prosecuted.

It was more common for women who loved other women to frame their relationships as a type of romantic friendship that did not necessarily include sexual affection and did not call itself "lesbian." There was Sarah Yesler, for example, and Eliza Hurd, with Hurd writing passionate letters about sleeping and bathing together, although both women remained in marriages and never publicly used words like "homosexual" to refer to themselves.

FROM "WOMEN IN WAITING IN THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT"

As their friendship grew, Eliza Hurd's passionate attachment to her dead husband was transferred, in part, to a passionate attachment to Sarah, whom she declared to be "a darling & a great deal more that I cannot express," exclaiming, "If I only had hold of you I would squeeze you for half an hour." The women's friendship developed over frequent visits to each others' homes, during which time their affection frequently found physical expression. "Oh Sarah I wish to say so much and I cannot say anything—I want to sleep with you again! hey!" Eliza wrote her "darling sister Sarah" after a visit in Seattle. "I would like to step into your bathing room tonight and take an ablution, and you might shower me too, and I think I wouldnt squeal so bad." Apparently, the passionate nature of Eliza's attachment to Sarah caused Henry Yesler no great concern. Taking delight in the company of charming Eliza Hurd, he not only welcomed her into his household when he was away on business but also took no exception to Sarah's preferring to have Eliza share her bed on visits when both husband and friend were in the house.⁹⁰

While Sarah was enjoying such correspondence with her female friends, Henry Yesler was enjoying with several Seattle men a camaraderie that mirrored the male friendships of his more youthful years. In addition to his closeness to the sea captains who were often house guests in the years before Sarah joined him in the West, he had developed social ties with a select group of area businessmen. He and his cronies made it their business to socialize freely with members of the opposite sex, frequently playing elaborate pranks on prominent women of the city, a practice that Sarah apparently found quite acceptable, despite the obvious element of flirtation.⁹⁴

CONCLUSION

Can or should historians “out” historical figures? Peavy and Smith’s 1994 book chapter on Sarah Yesler turned Sarah into a Northwest lesbian icon. Their melodramatic reading of Eliza and Sarah’s relationship from a handful of letters explores their bathing, bed sharing, and poetry as romantic. Their interpretation concludes with Eliza dumping poor sad Sarah when she found a man, and leaves Sarah healing her heart and reputation by throwing herself into her family business and redirecting her “lifelong interest in women” to suffrage and other social work.

Although it is tempting to empathize with and heroize historical figures, if we want to engage with stories from the past we need to appreciate the historical setting of these characters. Why were these women sharing a bed? Was it practical, romantic, sexual, or platonically intimate? Was their obsession with bathing and self-care sexual, or were these pioneer women excited about indoor plumbing, their newfound wealth, and the fashion of water cures? Were other people at this time publicly romantic and flirtatious, or was this something special between Eliza and Sarah? And why was this early Olympia group of friends so obsessed with spanking their friends?

Did Eliza and Sarah’s relationship truly end in 1862, or is that simply as far as we have taken the historical record? Because of their similar interests and trajectories, it seems more likely that Eliza and Sarah remained close. Perhaps in time some yet undiscovered letters or historical record will provide another chapter.



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BIOGRAPHICAL.

It is a pleasure to the historian, who, by closely following the stream of events, has identified himself with the characters in his work, to observe with what unfailing justice time makes all things even.

The Undertold Histories Project
The Eliza Ann Woodard Hurd DeWolfe Chronicles
Zine 2 / October 2019
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