

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, December 3, 1885, with transcript

Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. L Mansion House, Vineyard Haven, Thursday, Dec. 3, 1885. My dear little wife:

How are you? It seems like a month since I left home and yet I only reached this place yesterday afternoon. Monday evening I sailed for Fall River from New York — didn't sleep a wink — went on by early train Tuesday to New Bedford — tired out. Found boat storm-bound somewhere — so went to bed and slept till one o'clock. Thought I would search town records of New Bedford for Chilmark names. Found very few records of earlier date than 1800. Upon inquiry found reason. New Bedford was in last century a portion of town of Dartmouth and the early records were to be found in Dartmouth.

Hired a buggy and drove there about five miles. Examined the records by candle-light and extracted everything of value. So dark couldn't see the ground at all so had to borrow a lantern. Reached New Bedford tired and headachy and went to bed. Lay awake nearly all night — headachy and uncomfortable — all out of order — slept till eleven o'clock Wednesday morning. After lunch caught steamer for Martha's Vineyard. Found steamer stopped at Vineyard Haven so did not go on to Cottage City at all as this is my destination.

The records of the town of Tisbury (the neighbouring town to Chilmark) are kept here. The Mansion House is just opposite Town Clerk's office — so very convenient location.

Telegraph cables to main-land both broken down so had to send my telegram by boat to Wood's Hall so suppose you did not get it till to-day and your answer is probably now at Wood's Hall waiting for a steamer to bring it across and judging by the howling storm it may wait a week.

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I felt so sick yesterday that I had no heart to attack the records (left that for to-day). So instead I thought I would walk to Cottage City (more than two miles from here) to see if there was any letter for me from my little wife for I felt quite homesick and felt as if I had not heard from you except by telegram for a month or two at least. I walked and walked for certainly more than two miles and at last met a man who informed me that I was on the wrong road. This road went to Edgartown. So I turned back in the darkness (it was then help-past four) and the rain — and tumbled into bed — with a thundering big headache.

This morning the first-bell woke me up and the tramping of feet kept me awake till the second bell rang and at last I had to get up in time for their breakfast. I ate an enormous breakfast consisting of one glass of milk and two slices of dry toast. I thought I had better starve as my tongue was furred and general feeling of uneasiness in the lower regions — although headache all gone. Hired buggy and drove to Cottage City after breakfast and found your welcome letter and telegram. It seemed quite refreshing for everything here seemed so dull and cheerless.

Cottage City in summer is a different thing from Cottage City in December. Miles of cottages all shut up and the stillness of 3 a Scotch Sabbath resting over all. The summer population of over ten thousand dwindled to about one hundred. I have spent this day copying early records. The sun came out at three o'clock smiling after the rain and I went out for a five mile walk. Have returned much refreshed but am sick of writing so will stop right here and go in for a novel instead. Please don't criticise this letter — you can see from its tone that I write from a sense of duty not pleasure and I am sure therefore you would rather have me stop. This is a scribble and will give you an idea of my really impromptu writing. The pen sticks — If it was only greased I would write right on.

Your loving, Alec.