

## TWO HARTMAN LETTERS

**Introduction.** *A recent accession to the Society's manuscript collections is a copy of two letters sent—more than 160 years ago—by residents of Catawissa Township to their relatives in Canada. The senders of both letters were Casper Hartman and his wife Deborah (Carr); the addressees in Canada were Casper's younger brother John (in 1824) and John's son, Lot (in 1840).*

*Casper Hartman was born 13 June 1777 at Catawissa, son of pioneer German immigrant settler Johann Wilhelm Hartman (born 1748 at Baden Baden, Germany). The immigrant father, known as William, had married Frances Reemy, who was of a Friends family in Berks County. After settling at Catawissa the Hartmans were associated with the early Quaker Meeting at Catawissa and, according to one account, members of the family were buried in the Friends burial ground (though no Hartman inscriptions remain visible there).*

*William had a large farm on River Hill just above Catawissa which remained in the family for four generations; the 1876 Beers Atlas map of Catawissa Township shows, in the "Hartman [School] Dist.," farms of four Hartman families with first-name initials "J.," "M.," "M. T.," and "N."*

*The two letters illustrate the point that soon after Columbia County was settled, the second and third generation children began to head out to other areas to stake their own claims to fruitful, low-cost land. Quite a few of them headed not West but North, to upstate New York and to Ontario.*

*The letters also remind us that at this early American period there were few orphanages and almost no extended-care facilities for invalid elderly persons; the only refuge for those who had no family to care for them was the home of a neighbor.*

*As usual with letters of the era, there are reports of the weather and crops, of illnesses and deaths, pious exhortations to Christian steadfastness, and various indications of the difficulty of travel and communications.*

*The letters are transcribed verbatim but with omission of such details as the distribution of an estate. Identifications of individuals are provided in square brackets; many of these identifications were kindly provided by the donor of the letters, Pat Hartman. For permission to print, the Society wishes to thank the Hartman family.*

LETTER #1

August the 19 1824  
Catawissa Columbia County Pen

Dear brother and sister [*John Hartman 1779-1834 and Mary (Webb) Hartman, married Jan. 1, 1804*]. We are glad to have an opportunity to write a few lines to you to let you know of our welfare. Through the mercy of God we are all alive and in reasonable health at this time and I hope these may find you and yours enjoying the same. We have had no opportunity to write to you in a long time nor heard from you, only a letter that you sent to brother William [age 38, 1786-1851] dated May the 30 which was a great satisfaction to us to hear that you were alive and well.

There has been many called from time to eternity in our part of the country since I wrote to you last and the Lord is still visiting our land with many complaints. That flux is very mortal in some places of our country not a great distance off. We hear almost daily of deaths and we know not how soon the Lord may visit us with that same. And it is written, "Be ye also ready", which is a matter that ought to be our gracious concern.

I had the ague and fever this spring awhile but I have been shut of it this some time and I have got my strength reasonable well again. Father (*Wilhelm, age 76, 1748-1831*) and mother are reasonable in health as according their age. They have been both ailing with a sore leg. Father got one of his hurt a little and got cold in it and it got very angry and sore so that he could not get a boot on for some time, but it is some better now. And mother's leg that has been sore this long time has been very bad this summer but it is some better now.

Father and Mary [*Casper's sister Mary, age 27, 1797-1843*] and myself was to see our relations in Bucks County in February last. Uncle Maties [*Mathias, died 1825*] wrote to father that he was struck with the palsy and wanted him to come and see him if he could for he thought his time would be short and we went to see him and the rest and we found him rather on the mend and perfectly satisfied with his situation and he seemed to be resigned to the will of the Lord. He had lost the use of his left side but his faculties was otherwise not hurt and we have not heard but he is living yet.

Our family connections are all well as far as we know. We have heard from brother William's family lately and they were all well. Sister Sarah [*age 32, 1792-1825*] and sister Nancy [*age 28*], they have been blest with an increase in their family this summer. They have both had daughters. David Woodin [*married Sarah Hartman in 1819*] lives on a lot of Jacob Shuman adjoining me and he works at his trade. . . .

I wish to inform you that I have gave up that farm of father's to Thomas [*Casper's brother born 1781*]. He has not moved yet on the place on account of house room but intends to move shortly. We have built a smallish house 26 by 18 intended for father and mother and that house is now done, so that they can move in anytime. I have been at all the expense and father is to pay me. The expense will be some over 3 hundred dollars.

We have not heard from Schultz's family [*sister Elizabeth Hartman 1783-1832 married John Schultz and farmed in Ohio*] since Thomas and John was there last fall. They were all well then and seemed to be engaged in the work of the Lord and as to a living they were a-living along without running much in debt.

As respecting the season, we have had no snow barely through the winter and we had a cold and backward spring until the last of May and then

fine growing weather, so that we have a fine harvest and a good prospect for summer crops if the drought does not continue too long. We have had no rain now about three weeks to wet the ground to any depth. So I shall conclude this to you and yours with our sincere love to you all. These from your affectionate (brother) and sister.

Casper and Deborah Hartman

[To:] John and Molly Hartman

NB Please to inform Timothy Miller (and) that their relations are all well here as far as I know. Joseph Miller and family are well and please to remember us to Timothy and his wife and many others that should make inquiry of me. If you should see either of the Gould family [*Joseph Gould emigrated to Ontario in 1804*], be so good as to tell them that their parents are in a sorrowful state. They are not able to help themselves very little more than little children and that old man is a-sinking very fast. I think he cannot live a great while. He is just a-wasting away without any pain. We have had them better than 7 months in our house and had the care of them which was a great trouble and care of mind respecting them but about 11 days ago they have removed them to town again. Jacob Freely has the charge of them now.

LETTER #2

Catawissa Columbia County May the 17 1840

Respected Nephew and Niece [*Lot Hartman 1811-1850 and Jane (Wells) born 1817*],

I wish to write a few lines to you to let you know that through the mercy of the Lord we are all well at this time and all the rest of our relations here as far as I know and we hope that these few lines may find you enjoying the same blessing for which we ought to be very thankful to the Lord, that and every other blessing we receive from time to time.

We have a time of health in general in our country and a time of plenty in the country but still great complaints of the scarcity of many and low prices of grain. As your brothers is a-going to start for home, I have sent the balance that was due from William Hartman, deceased [*his will, probated 1833, bequeathed 1/7 of the estate to each child or their heirs*], to the heirs of John Hartman, deceased, principal thirty-four dollars and eighty three cents, interest on the same for three years, six dollars and twenty-four cents making forty-one dollars. . . . [I]f it should not be right, write to me and I will try to give satisfaction if I can.

Now my dear nephews and nieces I know not that I shall ever get to see you again on this side of eternity or not [*he died the next year*]. Let us try to think of these things as we ought to do, not be putting off thoughts of eternity until a better time, for we shall never have a better time than the present. The longer we are putting it off, the greater the trial and the heavier the cross. Forget not the instructions you had from your parents and forget them not – attend to them and mind not what the world says for everyone must give an

account for himself and not for another and shall receive a reward according to the deeds done in the body.

We have received a letter a few days ago from William [*Casper's brother 1786-1851*] in Ohio. He states that him and his wife has joined the Methodist Church since he had wrote home last and rejoices in better times to come. Our children are all married but the two youngest. Louise got married last fall. Nathaniel got married this spring. We have to keep 2 girls today, one we have had a one year and six months and the other some better than six months and we expect them both to stay with us this season. Your Aunt remains much as she was for some time, still disable of getting about. I have wanted one of the boys to take the farm and that would rid us of a great deal of trouble but we have not got it to bear yet. So no more, but remain your affectionate Uncle and Aunt until death.

[To:] Lot and Jane Hartman

Casper Hartman  
Deborah Hartman