

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

MEADVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

DIVISION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

July 5, 1941

Miss Ida M. Tarbell
Bethel, Conn.

Dear Miss Tarbell,

Among other things, the one thing about the summer which I like is the fact that I can usually catch up with my correspondence. It is one means of visiting with people when a personal visit is impossible. A great many times during the year I have thought of you and wondered how you were. Every now and then someone here would speak of having heard indirectly from you and about your health. Finally, I have reached a point where I wanted to send a word of greeting and express the hope that you were feeling very well.

All of the Giddenses have been well during the year. Perhaps you knew that our second boy arrived last October so that we have been busy getting him properly started in life. Now, he is a husky fellow, like Jackie, and seems to have all kinds of pep and energy. So far as one can tell, they say he looks much like his father, even more than Jackie did. Mrs. Giddens has been very well ever since the baby was born, and all of us have been having a good summer together.

The year has been unusually busy; maybe it is a fact that the older one grows the years get busier. I have been busy with a great many things. First of all, throughout the year I attempted to give a course on Lincoln, using the materials in your collection as a basis. I had twelve in the course and each week we met to discuss a different phase of Lincoln's life, ending with his death in 1865. Everyone seemed to enjoy the opportunity of reading widely upon Lincoln. It is a type of thing I hope to do every other year. Personally, I felt like an amateur, but we all shared our experiences in reading and seemed to get along splendidly. Each time give the course it ought to be that much better. In addition, we have made some valuable additions to your collection through the money donated by Mr. Scheide. I think it is a fine thing to have this in order to keep adding to the valuable material already there. Personally, I am very enthusiastic about the possibilities of using the Lincoln material with students. One of my boys got very much interested in Lincoln's assassination and made a special study of it. Two of the girls got interested in Mrs. Lincoln and made special studies of her. As time goes by, others will become more and more interested in the work.

This spring I finally finished for publication, "The Beginnings of the Petroleum Industry: Sources and Bibliography." It will be published by the Pennsylvania Historical Commission in the fall. I have already read page-proof on it. As you may remember, I took all the bibliography left from writing the first book,

put it into classified form, and prepared it for publication. Finally, it amounted to about 1200 items. With this material I put fifty-three letters to Dr. Brewer from Eveleth, Bissell, and Sheldon, telling about the organization of the Pennsylvania Rock Oil Company. I felt they were important in showing the details of this transaction and ought to be preserved in this way. I sent the manuscript to the Historical Commission in December. While I was in New York attending the American Historical Association meeting at Christmas time, I called on the grandson of George H. Bissell and he loaned me about twenty more letters, principally from Sheldon in New Haven, so I prepared them for publication and inserted them in the manuscript. When it comes out, therefore, I shall feel as if a considerable contribution has been made to the knowledge of the organization of the first oil company, for none of these letters have been previously published. The volume will run about 150 pages. I shall see that you get a copy.

I have not done any "digging" for new material on oil history, for time has not permitted any extensive work. I managed to work out a paper on the subject, "Pittsburgh and the Petroleum Industry to 1866," which I read at a spring meeting of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society. Whether I can do anything more in the way of research on oil history remains to be seen. There is very little I can do during the school year because the regular work is pressing. It not only takes time but money to go to the material and work. I have often wished that Mr. Scheide, or Mr. Scheide and others, might be induced to set up a permanent fund at the college, the income of which should be devoted to research and writing on oil history during the summer. This is too much of a dream to be good, however.

Right now I am reading Maybee's new book, "Railroad Competition in the Oil Trade 1855 to 1872." It is written by one of Nevins' students. No doubt he started the student working on it in connection with his Rockefeller. It is pretty good, though he misses much by failing to consult the sources in the oil region--newspapers, etc. I have to prepare a review for the Mississippi Valley Historical Review.

As many others, I have been quite absorbed by the war and attendant events. We had a small British Relief Society here in Meadville and we undertook during the winter to raise enough money to buy a mobile field kitchen for civilians, which we did--\$1500.

Last summer I had a good visit with Mr. Locke of Titusville. I went over one morning and took a stenographer; we started in at nine in the morning and stayed until five, and he told us all about his experiences in drilling the oil well in China. As a result, I got about forty pages of manuscript on that episode. I thought I might write it up someday. It was a delightful day's visit and he was in good spirits. I haven't seen him since.

As a climax to the year, I am sailing from New York on July 18th---just a few days now--via the Grace Line for South America. I shall visit the West coast in particular spending much of my time in Peru and Chile. If possible, I should like to find out what I could about George H. Bissell's activities in Peru in 1865 or 1866 in opening up an oil field there. I am not hopeful, but there might be some available data. This is not the purpose of my trip, however; I am going for educational purposes---to observe, absorb, and learn what I can about those people. I hope, of course, to know more about their feeling toward us. I shall arrive back in Meadville on September 22nd, the day college opens. Mrs. Giddens and the two boys will go out to the grandparents while I am gone.

I have wondered if you have had an opportunity to add any items to the bibliography of your writings, which I prepared and sent to you over a year ago. I hope you have been able to supplement it considerably.

Another year has rolled around and it is about time for Macmillans to report on the royalties of the oil book. I doubt if there is much to report this year. In any event, the original edition of 2500 copies should be sold out before many years pass.

I hope that you are feeling very well. Mrs. Giddens joins me in sending our best regards and good wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Paul H. Giddens

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