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## Letters

Gardiner Road  
Woods Hole,  
May 1988

Dear Mary Lou,

As this is the Centennial year of the MBL, I thought portions of a letter written in 1890, from my grandfather, Edward G. Gardiner, to my future grandmother, Jane Hooper of Boston, might be of interest to your readers.

My grandfather, an Instructor of Zoology at MIT, and a close associate of Alpheus Hyatt, was one of a group that met in Boston, in 1887, to consider a permanent location for the seaside laboratory that Prof. Hyatt had been maintaining in Annisquam. This meeting led to the foundation of the MBL in Woods Hole, with Dr. Gardiner as one of its incorporators. He served on the Board of Trustees and was an instructor and investigator until his death in 1907, at the age of 53.

In 1895, he married Miss Hooper, and soon after built a house on a knoll overlooking Buzzards Bay, that still remains in the family.

Sincerely,  
Molly Rudd Dreyer

Woods Holl, Mass  
July 22 (1890)

My dear Miss Hooper,

I hope you won't be annoyed by receiving this letter from me . . . After my vacation this spring . . . I came down here, and plunged into work with the greatest ardor. I cleared up several knotty points which I had almost despaired of solving . . . then . . . I had to put aside work to look after Laboratory affairs. Last winter the Lab became possessed of a steam launch. The Trustees were very doubtful about the wisdom of entering into the expense of running a launch, and hesitated about buying it, partly on account of the cost of having it navigated from Boston, 'round Cape Cod. So, finally I volunteered to bring it around. Owing to the neglect of the boat builder, who was to make the repairs, and bad foggy weather, the voyage of 150 to 200 miles took a long time. When I got here, I found the Lab "Mess" affairs in confusion, and they took time to straighten out. I keep the boarding house this year, so when the meat is tough, they grumble at me. Then the pilot of the launch gave out, proved himself utterly incompetent. So, I had to take charge of her and run her for a few days, 'til I got another man.

. . . The other night here, after one of the evening lectures, Dr. Whitman, the Director of the Lab, called on me for some remarks. When I compared in my own mind, afterwards, what I said, and what I *might* have said . . . I wanted to kick myself. The strange part of it is that frequently when lecturing, I enjoy it very much indeed. In fact, it is generally a positive pain or a positive pleasure. If I am embarrassed, I am miserable, if not, there is a sort of excitement about it, almost amounting to a feeling of

The steam launch,  
*Sagitta*, towing students  
and instructors back  
from an MBL picnic in  
1894. Baldwin Coolidge  
photo No. 7393.  
Courtesy WHHC.



exaltation. It is quite different from the feeling when giving instruction. That is agreeable, if the students are interested, but the agreeableness is of a very different kind. In teaching, there is a feeling of personal friendship, which one acquires towards a student, . . . which makes the task a pleasure, and it is delightful to see the student grow up to grasping ideas, which he but half understands when first stated to him. I think that teaching any general laws, or facts, keeps them always fresh in the teacher's mind, and every time he gives them to another mind, he must himself experience something of the same thrill of mental expansion that he experienced when he first grasped them. Besides that, there is a grave sense of responsibility, which not only keeps one up to one's work, but makes it interesting. One must always feel how much they *might* get, and how much they *are* getting. And then, they are too often so much influenced by the instructor's views, and say to themselves, "if he says it is so, it must be so." All this makes teaching interesting. As to the responsibility, why, I suppose that no work worth doing can be done without assuming responsibility. Probably it is good for him who bears it.

What calls all this to my mind is the attitude assumed by one of the teachers here. He is much interested in some investigation which he is carrying on, and seems to regard his students as so many hindrances to his work, and begrudges every minute of extra time they take. It makes me mad to see it. It is an unholy sight, like a mother neglecting her children for some mental improvement. Surely, if they exist, they must be her first care, and her mental improvement should come through them. So it is, or rather should be, between a teacher and student. He grumbles at the drudgery of it. Of course, there is lots of drudgery in it. To have to repeat the same thing over and over again, and

again, as one must with a beginner . . . If the Lab is the thing I think it is, and is to succeed as I trust it will, it will not be by an instructor shirking the drudgery . . . Personally I have found it almost impossible to carry on investigations when I have students around. The only way it can be done is to have separate hours or days that can be yours for investigation, and not have students in the same room with you when working.

But, all this can not interest you, and I must stop. Perhaps I should not have written you at all, and I don't know whether I shall tear this up, or put it in the post box, but indeed, it is a help when one feels thoroughly blue, and lonely, to know that a friend is thinking of them . . .

believe me,  
most sincerely yours,  
Edw. G. Gardiner