

Jonathan Keith Esser Collection, 1899-1920
(Correspondence Series)
J. Keith Esser Letter, no date

Transcription

[Transcription of a letter Jonathan Keith Esser (1893-1963) wrote to his mother, Isabelle Simpson Esser, while he was a Biltmore Forest School student on a class field trip to Michigan, ca. 1910 or 1911. The original spelling and formatting of the letter has been maintained in the transcription without any editorial correction. Digital scans (150 dpi; maximum pixel limitation of 600 pixels) of each page of the letter are included at the end of this document. The letter is part of the [Jonathan Keith Esser Collection](#) held by the Library and Archives of the Forest History Society in Durham, North Carolina.]

In Camp #7 – Cadillac, Mich

Dear Mother:

Today (Sunday) is the first opportunity I have had to set down and make an effort at a letter since leaving last Sat.

The trip up was very pretty but uneventful as I imagine most lake trips would be.

The first place of real interest was the Island of Macinac where I stopped an hour and a half. From there I took a boat to the Mainland in the north of Mich and from there straight down by train (about 5 hrs) I was glad when I finally reached Cadillac.

At the hotel I found a number of men and old men.

The Dr. and some others being out here in camp – about 16 miles distant. We came out by train bringing us right into camp.

However Cadillac is a thriving manufacturing & lumber town of about 10,000 people – very up to date.

We are encamped through the kindness of the owners. Cummers and Diggins (the lumber magnates of this section) in the midst of their lumbering tracts of immense acreage.

Consisting of beautiful primeval, elms, beeches, hemlocks. Very, very beautiful.
The first few nights I slept in the large bunk house occupied by most of the students.

However I followed the suit of a number of others and hired a tent in which another new student and myself are finally (today) getting settled. We bought two cheap folding cots; expecting to get about ½ again by selling.

This way is more desirable than the bunk house, quieter & more secluded. Our tent colony consists of about 10 tents.

The meals as I said before are very good & wholesome. This lumber company having I believe quite a reputation for their good food. Owing to getting settled & fixed I just begin to feel that I could get down to work.

The school is larger than heretofore consisting of about 54 fellows. Some of them being older others young.

We have one student married his wife being with him as is Dr. Schencks. (both tenting) following Mary's example.

The nearest home student is a man from Easton, an instructor in Pennsylvania Forestry School. The country itself after being cut over (timbered) is a bare level expanse like Jersey. In the forests however, it is beyond description. Dr. Schenck resembles somewhat Emperor William, with a broken accent. A very pleasant agreeable man. A thorough gentleman, standing probably highest in estimation in forestry, outside of the government bureau. Our work consists of lectures in a country school house – 1 mile from camp – lasting 4 ½ hours – dinner and then an afternoon of field work.

Applying the morning lectures to practice work in the afternoon, so this adds much interest to the classroom work. As a lecturer the Dr. I think would be hard to beat. Intensely interesting, interjecting enough humor and practice problems in the work to prevent it from getting dry.

You can tell Gallatin our summer rambles have stood me in good stead. I can not help telling you how impressive my first impression of the school were.

We arrived Tuesday morning at camp from Cadillac and found those already there had gone right out with Dr. Schenck. We finally located the crowd by the echo of Doctor's stentorian voice, for noises in the primeval forests reverberate like a large cathedrals. Scrambling through the underbrush we found probably 30 of the fellows standing, sitting, etc all craning their heads upwards, toward the top of a gigantic elm tree, noting various points pointed out by the Dr.

My room mate is a new fellow from near Pittsburg, younger than I am but a clean cut, little gentleman whom I like very much.

The days have been pleasant & the nights cool.

By next week things will have straightened themselves out so that everything ought to run smoothly. Some farmer's wife does our washing – just got it back today and is done fairly well.

For clothes have been wearing my riding trousers, which is the uniform of the camp, mostly in khaki. I forgot to tell you I found the book I asked you to send – am looking for the blanket. Most of the students have gone into Cadillac so camp is nearly deserted. I am taking the day to fixing up & writing.

We must keep a complete diary of class room & field work, handing it in weekly.

We shall be here until Oct. 1st get to NY Oct 3 – and leave Oct 4th from Hoboken – S.S. New Amsterdam Holland American line so I will have a chance to see you all. And have time to make change of clothes & eliminate what I don't want.

I have engaged a state room passage costing about \$60.00; special rate.

If I can preserve good health & incidentally spirits I don't see why I can't do all right.

This afternoon I will repair to a little pond near here to bathe. Can't get a hot water bath until I go into Cadillac.

Ask Gallatin to give you the address of the "outlook" magazine a weekly rehearsal of events, which will be just what I want. Kindly send address to me.

Lots of love, Keith

Digital Scans

Camp #7 - Cadillac Mich.

Dear Mother: Today (Sunday) is the first opportunity I have had to sit down and make an effort at a letter since leaving last Sat. The trip up was very pretty out west but as I imagine most lake trips would be. The first place of real interest was the Island of Macinac where I stopped an hour and a half. From there I took a boat to the Mainland in the north of Mich and from there straight down by train (about 7 hrs) I was glad when I finally reached Cadillac. At the hotel I found a number of new and old men. The Dr. and some others being out here

[page 1 of 8]

in camp - about 16 miles distant. He came out by train bringing us right into camp. However Cadillac is a thriving manufacturing & lumber town of about 10,000 people - very up to date. We are encamped through the kindness of the owners. Summers and Higgins (the lumber magnates of this section) in the midst of their lumbering tracts of immense acreage. Consisting of beautiful pines, spruce, alders, beeches, hemlocks, very very beautiful. The first few nights I slept in the large bunk house occupied by most of the students. However I followed the suit of a number of others and hired a tent, in which

[page 2 of 8]

Another new student and myself are finally (today) getting settled. He ~~has~~ bought two cheap folding cots, expecting to get about $\frac{1}{2}$ again by selling. This way is more desirable than the bunk house, quieter & more secluded. Our tent colony consists of about 20 tents. The meals as I said before are very good & wholesome, the lumber company having I believe quite a reputation for their good food. Owing to getting settled & fixed I just begin to feel that I can get down to work. The school is larger than here before consisting of about 84 fellows. Some of them being older others young.

[page 3 of 8]

We have one student married his wife being with him as is Dr. Schencko. (both tenting) following Mary's example. The nearest home student is a man from Easton, an instructor in Pennsylvania Forestry School. The County itself after being cut over (timbered) is a bare scrub exposure like Jersey. In the forests however, it is beyond description. Dr. Schencko resembles somewhat Emperor William, with a broken accent. A very pleasant agreeable man. A thorough gentleman, standing probably highest in estimation in forestry, outside of the government bureau. Our work consists of lectures in a country school house - 1 mile from

[page 4 of 8]

⑤ Camp - lasting 4½ hrs -
dinner and then an afternoon of field
work.
Applying the morning lectures to practical
work in the afternoon, so this adds
much interest to the classroom work.
As a lecturer, the D. I think would
be hard to beat. Extremely interesting,
integrity, much humor and practical
problems in the work to prevent it
from getting dry.
You can tell Gallatin our summer
traveller, has stood me in good stead.
I can not help telling you ^{how impressed} my first
impression of the school was,
He arrived Tues morning at camp
from Cadillac and found those things
there had gone out with D. I think.
He finally located the road by the

[page 5 of 8]

⑥ Echo of ^{D. I think} stentorian voice,
for whistles in these primitive forests
reverberate like a large cathedral.
Scrambling through the underbrush
we found probably 30 of the fellows
standing, sitting etc all craning
their heads upwards, toward the
top of a gigantic elm tree, noting
various points pointed out by the
D. I think.
My room mate is a new fellow from
near Pittsburg, younger than I am
but a clean cut, little gentleman,
whom I like very much.
The days have been pleasant &
the nights cool.
By next week things will have
straightened themselves out so that
everything ought to run smoothly

[page 6 of 8]

⑦ Some farmers wife does our
washing - just got it back today
and is done fairly well.
For clothes have been wearing my
riding trousers, which is the uniform
of the camp, mostly in khaki.
I forgot to tell you I found
the book I asked you to send -
Am looking for the blanket
Most of the students have gone into
Cadillac so camp is nearly deserted.
I am taking the day to fixing up +
writing ^{copy}
We ~~use~~ must keep a diary of class
room & field work, handing it in
weekly.
We shall be here until Oct 1st, at
get to NY Oct 3rd and leave Oct 4th
from Hoboken - S.S. New Amsterdam
Holland American line so excel

[page 7 of 8]

⑧ Have a chance to see you all.
And have time to make change
of clothes & eliminate what I
don't want.
I have engaged a state room
passage - Coaling about \$60, special
rate.
If I can preserve good health &
incidentally spirits I don't see why
I can't do all right.
This afternoon I will repair to
a little pond near here to bathe.
Can't get a hot water bath until
I go into Cadillac.
Ask Gallatin to give you the address
of the "Outlook" magazine a
weekly rehearsal of events, which will be
just what I want. Kindly send ^{address} it to
me.
Lots of love
Buck

[page 8 of 8]