

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

Transcription

[Transcription of a letter written by Jonathan Keith Esser (1893-1963) while he was a Biltmore Forest School student on a class field trip to Europe, ca. 1910 or 1911. A handwritten notation in pencil on one of the pages of the letter indicates that Esser is writing to his mother, Isabelle Simpson Esser. Composed on stationery obtained from a hotel in Darmstadt, Germany, this letter is missing its first page(s); the whereabouts of the missing page(s) is unknown. 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 (pagination of scanned pages begins with 1 even though one or more pages are missing). 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.]

are "ladies" or "gentlemen."

You ask occasionally how I am getting along.

Covering what we endeavor to in a year's work is undoubtedly a big effort – more or less of a strain, and a student here if conscientious in his work cannot help but feel the effort now and again as though constantly pushed. With the resulting feeling as though there was something constantly behind or in front of you – I think you can realize what I mean.

In order to keep in proper balance, physically as well as mentally I have had to use judgement, for I have long since realized that satisfactory school work can only be accomplished through a proper physical condition. On the whole I have felt pretty good, sometimes feeling up & down like the thermometer upon which occasions I have leaned philosophically to ease off some.

Fortunately the most that we absorb here comes through actual contact in field work alleviating somewhat the necessity of obtaining it entirely through "book knowledge" such as is necessary in some studies of forestry as pursued in other American forestry schools.

Additional recourse to books is of course necessary to a broader understanding of any subject, this can not be accomplished as easy as it should be, owing to our constant moving around which has a tendency to make concentration of mind on books somewhat difficult. So you can see some of the difficulties encountered in a so called "practical" school.

In "sylviculture" we have seen & been in actual touch with, more than could be possible in any other Forestry school, on the other hand the curriculum in some other branches is weak.

My whole aim and desire is to fit myself for the government work, for which it is necessary to pass examinations, should I be able to accomplish this I would be supremely happy.

Unfortunately Schenck in the past had a falling out or disagreement with former forester Pinchot so that the Biltmore Forestry School & the government have not been in the best accord.

Those of us (and we are in the minority) here looking forward to government work naturally feel this somewhat of a handicap.

The majority of the students are sons of lumbermen who expect to take up lumbering – to them the theoretical side of forestry does not mean half as much as it does to the rest of us looking to Government work.

In view of the fact that Schenck's working fields in America are all such as Cadillac N. Carolina etc are all upon the lands of lumbering companies he naturally caters to the lumbering companies who on the other hands are not always in accord or sympathy with the government conservation of timber supplies.

Thus a prospective government employees in this school have somewhat of an uphill job. Still we are not discouraged and are endeavoring to get the most out of it.

Recently the unpleasant duty fell upon our honor committee of dismissing 3 students. Naturally this did not please their friends.

So you see there are ups and downs even here. I hope you and Mary & Millard will enjoy your Atlantic city trip & derive benefit from it.

Poor old "Bloss" Yaeger – sorry to hear of his demise. I read over the Esser genealogy not without interest. Some of the localities of the former tribe were according to the documentary evidence located within striking distance of here, some of the seats of their former strongholds & earthly valor being in sections which we have been passing.

One branch it is stated located near Worms where one of them lived & died founding some memorial which still remains.

Should I go to Worms which is near here some Sunday I will of course more out of curiosity endeavor to substantiate this.

Another branch located in Alsace Lorraine which was the principality adjoining Baden where we were January.

Curiously enough there is two towns named Zell in the Baden state in which are located the Black Forest.

The hat from McD & C arrived sure as a da.... [illegible] – quite English in style & warm. I have one more trip which I have planned previously but never yet have been able to get in that is the Northern part of Switzerland, around Lake Geneva & the Alps.

I hope to make it last of February, taking a Sat Sunday & Monday to it. Not so far from here. We sail March 18th on "The New Amsterdam" of the Holland American Line from Rotterdam, Holland arriving if on time March 26th – will stop a few hours in N.Y. probably getting home evening 26th. We will be given 4 or 5 days off so will see you all before leaving for the Adirondacks near Saranac for several weeks before going to Biltmore N.C. for the summer.

Love to all. Keith

A previous postal notified you of my change in address. Letters however sent to old address reach us here O.K.

Digital Scans

Darmstadt.
Siegfriedstrasse 22. 191

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Hôtel-Restaurant
„Darmstädter Hof“
Rudolf Doll
Fenspercher No 111.

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You ask occasional, how I am getting along.
Covering what we endeavor to do in a year's work is undoubtedly a big effort - more or less of a strain, and a student here of Concentration in his work, cannot help but feel the effort you are making as though continually pursued.
And that mental feeling, too though there was something constant behind or in part of you - I think you can realize what I mean.
In order to keep in proper balance, physically as well as mentally, I have had to use judgment; for I have my mind realize that satisfactory school work can only be accomplished through a proper physical condition.
On the whole, I have felt pretty good, sometimes feeling up & down like the thermometer, upon which occasions I have learned philosophically to ease off some.
Fortunately, the most that we do here comes through actual contact in field work, alleviating somewhat the necessity of obtaining, through book knowledge, such as is necessary in some studies of forestry as pursued in older American forestry schools.

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Darmstadt.
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5

Hôtel-Restaurant
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Love them. Dick

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