

‘HOME SWEET HOME, THAT WORD SINKS DOWN DEEP IN MY SOLE’: A SELECTION OF LETTERS HOME FROM FAMILY ABROAD (P173 ELVYN M. BALDWIN FAMILY FONDS)

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In the course of my work at the ETRC, researchers frequently ask me to help them add to their family tree. As they trace their family's travels and actions, researchers are often hoping to find a narrative for their family's history that goes beyond simple names and dates. They want answers for their questions, such as why did these relatives leave their family and move to a foreign place? What kept them from going back? Did they keep in contact with their loved ones back home? Did they find what they were looking for? Unfortunately these questions often remain, many of the answers having been buried with their relatives long ago. However, every so often, they are lucky enough to stumble upon correspondence, or other similar gems left by their ancestors, that give them a unique opportunity to help them understand their emotions, experiences and influences.

One such case is that of the Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, which was recently donated to the Archives Department. This fonds consists of documents created by the Baldwin, Stevens, and May families, who settled in Baldwin's Mills, Stanstead, and the surrounding areas in the 1800s. The materials donated include a large collection of correspondence as well as numerous photographs and postcards, and date from circa 1860 to 2005.

Without a doubt, the Baldwin family itself is an interesting and influential family in the region's history. However, the earliest documents contained in the Baldwin family fonds come primarily from the May and Stevens families. They are fascinating for their description of life during the latter half of the nineteenth century and for this reason are profiled in this article. Given the complicated nature of these family trees and the large number of people mentioned in the letters, the May, Stevens, and Baldwin family trees are included in an annex at the end of this article.

Setting the Context of the May letters

In 1832, Sylvester May moved from Stanstead Township to Baldwin's Mills, where he purchased land and established what the locals would come to know as 'May Farm'. While Sylvester apparently had ten children by his three wives, record of only eight can be found, and only five lived to adulthood.¹ In 1863, his son Lyman moved from the family farm in Baldwin's Mills to Lynn, Massachusetts and his daughter Melvina (for she went by 'Melvina' rather than 'Amanda') followed in 1864. While the letters never explicitly state the reason for their move, it seems likely that they went in search of paid work. Their youngest sister, Ida, also moved to Lynn to work in 1873-4, but only lived there for approximately a year before returning home. Both Lyman and Melvina remained in Lynn until their respective deaths and, as a result, we have a wonderful collection of their letters written to their father and brother, dating from 1863 to 1885. However, what really makes the letters interesting is their mention of a variety of topics, which include employment opportunities and wages, the economy, children, presidential elections, health and sickness, the Civil War, the Fenian Raids, and religion. While each letter alone is frequently brief and the content is often forthright, when taken together, they paint a fascinating narrative of the lives, experiences, and sentiments of these people, who lived more than 100 years ago.²

Amanda Melvina May Taylor

Melvina, a dressmaker, spent some time in Boston before finally settling in Lynn. In a letter to Darius, who remained back home on the farm, Melvina describes her brief and discouraging time in Boston. She writes, "I almost made up my mind to go home before I left Boston. I was not very well & my boarding Mistress dismissed all her borders & is going to move onto N.Y. [...] I think I can do better here [in Lynn] than I could to do up there."³ It is unclear if Melvina ever intended to move back to Canada but, in the end, she stayed in Lynn until her death in 1900. In an early letter home to her brother, she inadvertently provides readers with an interesting perspective on the effects of city life on her and Lyman, as well as its contrast to rural life.

June 11th, 1865

Dear Brother

After a long delay, I write you to let you know I have not forgotten you. I am quite well at present except I have worked

so steady I feel very tired. Lyman's health is very good for him. He is very lively and cheerful and full of jokes he has changed in that respect very much you know he used to be quite steady and sober. I suppose you work as steady as ever and do not go visiting much, have you been to see Carrie since I left home. If you have not, you had not better put it off much longer. If I could go as well as you could am sure I would go to see her quite often. We have had a very early spring here, had some very warm weather. Sunday 18 I will now try to finish this letter. I went up to Boston last Tuesday. I saw Cousin Martha Marsh, she tends store there, she is in the same Store she was last Summer. She is a very Smart capable Girl in the Store & is liked very much. I suppose you would laugh to see Girls tend Store up there, it is very common in Lynn & Boston in some Stores they are 25 or 30 Girls all buisy [*sic*] selling goods. There will be a grate [*sic*] celebration here at Lynn the 4 July. I wish you could be here. I expect they will have a grate [*sic*] time. I expect you will see Lyman up there the first of August if nothing happens to prevent. I think some of going with him, I have not decided yet. I would like to go very much, if I can spend the time & money I shall go. I do not think of any thing that would be interesting to you. I hope you will be good, be kind to Father, *improve?* your leasure [*sic*] time in searching good books. Please write as soon as you receive this not wait as long as I have. I want to hear from home, respects to all. Good by

Your affectionate Sister,
A. M. May⁴

Two years after her move, in 1865, Melvina married Hollis Taylor. Interestingly, Hollis was also from the Eastern Townships. He was born and raised in Hatley but had moved to Lynn sometime before 1853, when he married his first wife, Elvira Marsh. Before her death in 1856, Hollis and Elvira had one son, Julian, who became Melvina's stepson. Melvina and Hollis never had any children of their own and Julian died young, probably in his late teens or early twenties. Melvina describes his death in a poignant letter back home. Unfortunately, only one page of the letter survives and, thus, we have neither a date nor a complete account of the event but it is heart-rending nonetheless:

"[...] say here that in a few moments after [Julian] woke and called for his Father. He said the Lord has been good to me.

The Lord has done everything for me. How good the Lord has been to me. I have put my trust in God and he has saved me. I am soon going home. Jesus is with me, he is here now. How I wish you all could see him, he looked so happy. He talked some more during the evening and night. His Father read to him in the Bible in the evening. At 3 o'clock in the morning as Hollis was moving him a little, Julian put his arms around his Father's neck and kissed him and said Father how much you have done for me, you have done everything you could. That was the last words he said, and passed sweetly away. He was carried from the Church Tuesday and a discourse was preached by Rev. J. Burnham Davis from 2 Corinthians 5 chapter first verse. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved [*sic*] we have a building of God's house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. I would say here that Julian seemed better for the first week after we got home. We felt some time encouraged as the weather was very pleasant. We thought perhaps the change would be a benefit. He soon began to fail and gradually failed the whole time. His Father got him up and dressed him as long as he could bear his weight on his feet. After his Father had raised him up he was only entirely confined to his bed but 10 days and for the last week of his life was obliged to lie in one position. He was" [end of page]⁵

A few themes are recurring throughout her letters: children (her nieces and nephews) and a longing for her family back in Canada. After her marriage to Hollis, Melvina does mention Julian on occasion but, after Lyman's children are born, she writes of them in detail in almost every letter. Similarly, after Darius' children are born, she consistently asks for news about them. After receiving word that Darius' first child had been born, Melvina even provides her own input regarding what fashionable name Darius and Emma should choose for their baby girl:

Lynn Mass. July 5th, 1874

Dear brother and sister,

I will now try and answer your kind letter which was dually [*sic*] received. We was [*sic*] glad to hear from you and to hear that you was [*sic*] well. My health is quite good. Hollis is quite well, Lyman is very tired staying in the store he has so much to look after. I think he has too much business to see to. I think he ought to have a rest, his head troubles him consider-

ably when I think of how hard he works and how much head work he has I don't wonder that his head troubles him so much. We are all glad to hear that you have such a nice little girl we would like to see her very much if she lives she will be a great deal of company for you. I think that Gertrude is a very pretty name but I think that Maud is a homely name with May. I think it sounds very well with some surnames Maud May I think is not pretty. I should call her Gertrude Maud if you have decided on the names, if you have not, I think that Ada or Laura or Elvira are pretty names, either would be pretty middle name[s] if you call her Gertrude. Maybell I think is a pretty name. I know five or six little ones named Maybell. It is called a very pretty name. No more of this, I wish you could see Frankie he is pretty and cunning as he can be, he can talk quite plan [*sic*] he can mimic most anything. I wish you could see our garden we have some very nice vegetables. I have some very nice flowers. How I do wish you could come see us. I would like to step into your house unexpectedly and have a

MAY & WITHEY,
DEALERS IN

Crockery, China, Glass & Plated-ware,
Lamps, Gas Fixtures. Table Cutlery. Bird Cages,
STOVES, RANGES, FURNACES,
AND HOUSE FURNISHING GOODS,
141 Union St., Lynn, Mass.

Tin, Sheet Iron and Copper Workers. Plumbing in all its branches.
DRAIN PIPE.


If you are smart then don't buy trash,
But get your goods for ready cash;
We sell goods cheap where we abide,
As you'll observe on the other side.

good long visit with you.

July 12, I will now try and finish this letter, Laura has a daughter born last Wednesday July the 8, weighed 9 pounds, it was as fat as a butter ball and has a thick head of hair and very black, and deep blue eyes and its skin is quite white. I think it is pretty for a little baby. Laura is quite smart, Franky is 19 months old, he is very much pleased with baby. We have picked 25 boxes or quarts of strawberries [sic] in our garden and they were sweet and nice. We have new potatoes very good. Tell Father we have been hoping [sic] to see him this Summer, tell him to make up his mind to come in the Fall if not before, he ought to see is [sic] grandchildren. Please give my love to Ida and tell her to write and come and see us as soon as she can. Good by,

From your affectionate sister, A. M. T.

From Melvina's letters over the years, it seems as though she never really stopped missing 'home' and her siblings, even after she had been in the United States for over a decade. In one letter, alone, she writes that she "would like to see [Darius'] Girl and Boy very much. I want to see you all, but I do not know when I shall," "I wish [Father] could come and stay with us a good while," and "I received a letter from Carrie a short time ago. I began to think she had forgotten she had a sister in Lynn, it was so long a time I did



after Sept. 1st, 1871 - - at No. 3 Pearl St.
 Laura A. Fernald. Lyman A. May.

not hear from her. You don't know how much good it does me to hear from you and from my Sister".⁶

Lyman Albert May

When Lyman first arrived in Lynn, he found work in a shoe factory, which was where the majority of Lynn residents were employed during the mid-nineteenth century. In early letters home, Lyman sent the family some of his impressions as a Canadian living in an American city:

"I have changed my boarding place, to a minister's house. I like the place very well. They have three boarders besides me. They have a good many books & papers & I have considerable time to read. Their living is good, & plain, like farmers living; which I like very well. The queer questions that they ask about Canada make me think of what you said about the questions they used to ask your brothers when they were down here. They think that they are all canucks & fools in Canada. I am ashamed to tell them that I am Canadian sometimes. But, then, they do not make much of it, for I generally give them an answer. [...]"⁷

However, it was not long before he was "sick of working in doores [*sic*]" and found other work as a peddler, selling house wares door-to-door.⁸ Over the years, Lyman went from fairly humble beginnings to owning his own store selling glass- and plate-ware, stoves and other home furnishings. From inferences made throughout the correspondence, it appears that Lyman was able to establish himself as quite a successful businessman in Lynn.

In 1871, in Lynn, Lyman married Laura F. Fernald, who had grown up in New Hampshire. Although Darius was invited to the wedding (his invitation can be seen below), it does not seem that any of the Canadian Mays were able to make it down for the wedding. Unfortunately, Lyman does not mention Laura in any of his letters leading up to their wedding, but he does ask Darius about Emma as early as 1870, two years before their marriage.⁹

Lyman and Laura had four children: Frank, Cora, Phillip and Rachel. Interestingly, Lyman wrote of his children frequently in his letters, in often endearing passages that give us a window into a nineteenth-century paternal perspective of children. A few of these passages are quoted and transcribed below.

Lynn Mass. June 21, 1874

Dear brother,

I have just been reading the letter from you and Emma to Melvina. I am glad to hear from you if it is not direct, and know that you are all well and prospering. Was not much surprised to learn that you had a newcomer a little one to bless your home. No home is complete without the little ones. We are all well and healthy, Frank Lyman May is a great healthy boy one year and six months old the 10th of this month. He is a very active little fellow and makes a great deal of noise about the house, he talks quite plain and will run away down the street every chance he gets. He is not afraid of the men but is a little shy [sic] of the women. He is quite a favourite with his uncle Hollis. In fact he is a remarkable child as all fathers are apt to think their first children are. Without doubt you think so yourself. You will find enclosed a photograph (small one) of Frank that was taken when he was three months old. [...] We call it a very good picture for so young a child. I do not mean handsome but natural. It is difficult to get a good expression in a picture of a three month old baby but this is very good. You will also find enclosed a large picture of Frank taken when he was sixteen months old. It is very difficult to get them to sit still at this age. He had to sit six or seven times before getting anything that would do. It is a very good picture and shows him to be a fat healthy boy. His hair you will notice points every which way and looks like his grandfather May's. His aunt took him to the barbers and had his hair cut which improves his looks very much. I threatened to do it and she took him to the barbers as a joke on me. I hope that this will not be broken and damaged in coming through the mail. You also find another picture in this package which you will doubtless recognize as your brother taken about one year ago. In comparing [sic] this with one taken about the time that I was at home last you will see quite a difference between the lean and the fat. It is said that Frank looks very much like me but you can judge for yourself. [...] Tell Father I have been expecting him down hear [sic] and have not given it up yet. Laura sends her love to all. Write a long letter and give us all the news.

Yours truly,
Lyman A. May

P.S. Show this large picture to Mother & Father, see what they think of their only boy grandchild. Would like to send a picture to them but we only had 6 taken and have to be verry spairing [*sic*] of them.

L. A. M.¹⁰

Lynn Sept 15 1878

Dear Brother

I take this opportunity to write a few lines. We are all well and prospering. My wife is away to Quinsey about 20 miles from here on a short vacation. Cora is with her. And the hired girl with Frank and Phillip (the baby) and myself are keeping house. We are just weaning Phillip and I have him to take care of nights. [...] ¹¹

Lynn April 28th 1885

Dear Brother

Yours of the 19th was received, and it was with great sadness, I learned of the death of your little one. It is hard to part with them for they bring a great deal of sunshine with them and take a great deal away with them. May God's grace strengthen you and your wife, and may it be the means of drawing you nearer to God, who doeth all things well, she had only gone before. We know nothing by experience of your loss but our little Rachel is just your baby's age, fourteen months, and if she should be taken from us, from the oldest to the youngest would mourn and miss her. [...] ¹²

Letters from Cora Lovell to Ruth May

Skipping to the next generation, there is another set of engaging letters, which are addressed to Ruth May. Ruth was the youngest surviving daughter of Darius and Emma May, who would eventually marry Harold Baldwin in 1921. Before her marriage, she worked as a school teacher in the Townships and helped her older sister, Rose, manage the May household. Similar to the above correspondence, these letters come from a Barnston family that also chose to move the United States; in this case, to California. However, these letters were written by a young woman during a very different time period and their content is vastly different from that of the May siblings.

The letters were written by Cora Lovell, who was born in 1893 to Hazen I. Lovell and Adelaide May. She grew up in the Coaticook area and attended school with Ruth May; from some remarks in the letters, it appears they were also distant cousins. In October 1912, along with her parents and siblings (Martin, Artemissa or 'Artie', Alta, John and Allen) moved to Glendale, California. As a young woman, Cora worked as a telephone operator and, possibly, as a secretary in an office. Around 1916, she married Paul Dilley and they would have two children together: Pauline and John.

Although the letters transcribed below date from the 1910s, other correspondence in the fonds shows that Cora and Ruth continued to write to each other until at least the 1940s. Like Lyman and Melvina, the Lovells seem to have gone California, possibly following other friends or relatives, in search of a better life than what the small town and rural living could offer. However, unlike the Mays in Lynn, Cora never seemed to miss Canada very much, with the exception of missing some of her old companions. Nonetheless, many of her later letters mention money troubles for the family, stating, "It sure is tough to be poor. The last two years have been rather bad for the Folks and me. Surely hope '49 will prove better."¹³

Taken as a whole, Cora's letters back to Ruth are an opportunity to catch a glimpse of what it was like to be a young, working woman in California during the 1910s – with dreams and the world at her feet.

115 N. Central Ave.
Glendale Cal.
Dec 11th [1913]

Dear old Snukums:-

Pearl has gone home and I am alone again. There is not much doing so I will start a letter to you.

This has been a perfectly [*sic*] lovely day and this evening is grand. The moon is shining so brightly, it is nearly as light as day, it seems almost a sin to stay in doors on so nice a night.

I bet your new hat is pretty, I would like to see it. I have a new one too, it is a black beaver trimmed with a persian band a white fluffy maralum feather. It is quite pretty. Artie just got her new dress home to-day, it is out of an alice blue, tirmmed [*sic*] with persian silk, it is just as cute as it can be.

Mamma is having a blue suit and hat.

What are you doing for Christmas? I am nearly ready now.

I got thirty-five cent hand-kerchiefs for all the girls in the office, embroidery scissors, fixed up fancy with brass rings and rubber for Fannie & Gertie, a cute little embroidered apron for Hazel, etc. etc. I am giving Artie a bracelet (Mamma went in with me on that) & [*illegible word*] a watch pin.

I am going to give Mamma a fine dollar gold piece and Papa a jack knife.

I haven't decided what to give Everett yet but I don't think it will be much.

Yes Mollie is still giving me advice. I don't know what she has got against Howard, I have asked her over and over again and she has made me no answer. We are nothing but friends now anyway. He always signs his letters now. "Your sincerely friend" or "Your loving brother" so you see about how things are between us. I don't care what any one says, Howard is a good kid.

Mollie makes me sore, what did she say about it anyway I should worry.

Thanksgiving afternoon Lolita and her father took me Auto riding. We went over twenty miles in and out among the mountains, say but that was great.

Sunday afternoon Pearl & I went again, we were over at the park, imagine sitting under the trees with flowers all around you in the middle of Dec. After that we went for a long ride all over everywhere. In the evening I went to church. There were several baptized, we like our new minister fine. He is dandy.

Say kiddo, do you ever remember of noticing, or of me telling you about the enlargement of my neck. Anyhow something has been coming there for about two years. It does not look any worse on the outside now that it did when we left Coaticook, but it sort of choked me so something I do not know exactly what, but I thought it was time I was having it looked after, so I went to Town and saw a doc. He said it was caused from my heart and must be attended to at once or there would be no cure for it. So now I am at it. I go to Los Angeles every Monday and Thursday for treatment. He treats it with electricity and then injects some kind of *dope?* into it. Believe me it hurts like the old Harry, especially when he put the needle in and again when he takes it out. He told me the first time he thought it would take at least six months to fix me up. I have been going three weeks now. He is also giving me two kinds of pills, all told I am taking nine a day. He says

my heart and nerves are in a terrible condition but I am trying to stay on top of them. I am still holding down my job. I almost feel that I have got to, it is costing me so much. I have been paying my way since I left school so kind of hate to give up now.

I feel pretty well most of the time of course my neck is awfully stiff and sore after the treatments but my general health is good.

Well, my dear, I guess I have talked about myself long enough for this time so will change the subject.

Goodness me, I guess it is time I was changing the subject as the night girl is coming up the stairs so I will say goodnight.

Oceans of love,

Cora

Write soon.¹⁴

December 29, 1913

Dear Ruth,

I am at the office and have no writing paper therefore I am going to use this.

Say Ruth did you think it queer of me to not write you when I heard of your father's death. Mama tried to make me but I wouldn't, I did not know what to say. I thought you would know that we all felt for you without writing it.

It is beginning to rain a little now I hope it won't start in hard until after I get home as I have no hat, rubbers, umbrella, not a thing but my sweater. I will be going in about forty five minutes now. It rained nearly all day for Christmas. I had to work from four until seven, it was awfully busy, kept me jumping now believe me. We were alone all day but had a pretty good time. I got a lot of nice things [...]

I am still going to Los Angeles twice a week for treatment, guess the Dr thinks I am a hard case to manage, he kind of wants me to give up my work, guess he thinks it is a bit to hard on my nerves. He told me to day I aught to marry a rich man then I would never have to work any more but never to marry one who did not have the price. I told him I would not marry one at any price, and how he did laugh. When I got through there I went and got more cloth for a shepherd plaid dress. I think I will have a red silk collar on it.

I hear Irene has a daughter, and that *Fan?* & Hugh are married, in her last letter she [said] not until April, I wonder what

the hurry was.

Well my dear it is time Alma was here so I will say good bye. I haven't an envelope so may write a little more tomorrow. Lovingly, Cora. Write soon.¹⁵

115 N. Central Ave.
Glendale Cal.

Jan 28th/14

Dearest Ruth,

Here I am again writing on scratch paper, with a pencil, at the board, but it will soon end, as right away now they are going to put in a new position & four dials. That means we will each have to ring all our own Los Angeles number while now we simply plug them up and let her answer them. Believe me we are going to have some work. And I think it is going to make the service longer instead of improving it. Howard says their telephone Com. failed or at least the Bell took it over. Poor kid I am afraid he is not very well from what he writes. He has been under the Doc's care for over six months. Mamma says she does not wonder he is sick from the way I use him. Oh by the way did Mollie ever say anything to you about him or me. She has no use for him but I have never been able to find out why except that his sister Jessie used to be very wild and was talked about considerable. I do not know if there is any other reason or not. She seems to think now that I am a little peeved at her. But I do not think I am except I think she might tell me her reasons. Don't you?

We have been having some very heavy rains lately, bridges and car lines washed out etc., etc. I had do wade in the water over my shoes two nights going home. Up north there was thousands of dollars damage done to the fruit growers, tree we all washed out. It was nearly as bad as the first last year. The papers stated it was one of the seven greatest rains the state had ever known.

Grandpa has been in bed nearly a week with grippe. He is getting better now but he is so childish. John has a bad cold and I am getting it. Artie stepped in a rusty nail at the factory yesterday, Mamma *doped?* it (her foot) all night and all day to day. I guess it is going to be all right if nothing sets in. Her new brown silk dress is awfully pretty, but my black one looks pretty well to.

I think if it is a good day Sunday (evening) I will go down town to the Temple Auditorium. I have heard the singing is just great. I have never been in any of the larger churches down there yet. There was a great time over at our church at the banquet the other night. I cold [*sic*] not get a relief so was not there.

One afternoon last week I went way out on the west side of Los Angeles to a Kodak exhibit. It certainly was fine, wish you could have come to.

What did you think of Everett going to Stanstead. I wonder what he will finally decide to do for a living. He seems rather changeable now. I had a letter from Ruth England when she was home Christmas, said she was making over all the cloths [*sic*] as she had gained seventeen pounds. I bet she is a pretty girl.

And so Muriel is married to. Who will be next. If we do not luck out soon we will be old maids. (We should marry) Fannie is awfully happy but I don't think I would care to change my place with her.

Well my dear it is time for Alma again so must say good night.

Lovingly yours, Cora

P.S. It rained Monday so I did not go down to see the Doctor. Have not been yet this week, but am going Friday my day off. He seems to think I am getting on fine.

Byebye, Cora

Glendale Cal

April 9th/14

Dear Ruth:-

I am all alone now, waiting for the night girl to come, but she won't be here for nearly an hour. It is slow tonight. I guess everyone is run down and I hope they will stay so for at least a week.

We are having all kinds of excitement these days, as the men are here putting in our new board. I see where we have got to work the same, when it is completed we have about all we can handle now and this is going to make a whole lot more work.

Ruth do you know we were two darn fools not to have gone

to Sherbrooke and take a business course when we left school. *Mollie?* was taking me at that time, we could have boarded with her and think of the times we could have had.

Now she is fitted to draw good pay and we work for starvation wages. I hope you will get on well with your course and get a good position. It certainly is the best paying business I know of. The girl that works in our business office gets seventy-five a month works in a bank in the city and gets a hundred every month. Rob is planning in taking a business course. I wish you and Rose were out here, all settled in a nice little cosy house and had good positions. You don't know how happy I would be. I really do not know of anyone I would rather see than my old man. Wouldn't I have some fun showing you around. We were glad to hear Rose was getting on so well, wish I could say the same about Papa. He is nothing but skin and bones. I don't see how anyone can stay sick in such a lovely place with good things to eat. We have gree [*sic*] peas, string-beans, all kinds of vegetable and even fresh strawberries. We are only paying about six cents a basket now. We get four large baskets for a quarter and perhaps we don't have some nice short cakes. Papa eats almost anything and eats hearty and I don't see why he does not gain faster. He doesn't sleep very wel [*sic*] and coughs a good deal, so probably that is the reason.

Are you having anything new for Easter. I am not having a pesky thing. I have had two pair of shoes, tan & black and a couple of work dresses lately and to-day I got cloth for a little fancy dress. The cloth is a good deal like that blue I had for Harry's wedding only it is tan. If I think of it I will pin in a sample. Oh yes and I had a white skirt to wear with different waists. Well honey I must go now will write a little more tomorrow if I have time. I have a day off and (it will seem) and goodnight. Cora¹⁶

115 N. Central Ave.
Glendale Cal.

May 24th/14

Dear Ruthie:-

Hello Honey did you think I never was going to write to you again. I don't know what excuse to give this time, will it be too busy or just pure laziness. I was just looking at my note book

and find I have been owing Addie a letter since Jan first, Mr. Terry Jan 7, Mrs. Johnson Jan 30, Ruth Chelsey Feb 20th, Ruth E. March 9th, Howard S. April 21st Gladys April 27th, & Howard Wright 25th of April, so you see there are others who do not get treated very well.

I thought my hours were going to be changed about a month ago but if you would believe it I am still working evening hours and don't know how much longer it will be. Sometimes I think I would marry the first guy who came along who had five thousand dollars a nice house and a machine. Do you suppose he will ever come along? He wouldn't if he knew how much I wanted, would he?

I just finished a long letter to Everett, the first decent one I have written for ages. If he gets through his course all right, he is going up to Ontario some place to get work. Did you know that on his birthday which was in April, his father gave him his time and one hundred dollars. Isn't that the limit. I think if I was his father and only had one child I would not be so pig headed. It hurt E. feeling terribly and it made me sore. Don't say anything about it, as I do not know if he wanted me to mention it. I did not to anyone else of course I have to tell you everything. Last Sunday the Sharmans and us took our lunch over to the Park and had dinner. It is just lovely over there. In the afternoon, we younger one climb the mountain. They had a team for the older folks and the grub while the rest of us walked. Coming home a man & his wife came along in their big machine and brought us way home. We thought it pretty nice of them being perfect strangers.

Friday was my semi-monthly day off. So Papa & I took our lunch early in the A.M. and started for the country. We called at a ranch near Burbank, where they were planting sweet potatoes. I could not begin to tell you how they do it, but will show you when you come out. Then we struck for the river and followed it all the way back. It sure did seem good to get out into the country once more.

Say Ruth do you remember how pig headed Uncle Fred's folks used to be when they were living in Coaticook, then how awfully nice they were to us when we first come out here. Well is just as we expected, it did not last. All the time Papa has been sick they never came near, never even offered to take him out in their auto and if you would believe it I have only been in it twice.

I have worked with her every evening for a year and we have never had a bit of trouble but just the same they are not as they were at first. About a month ago she gave her notice at the office. She never mentioned to me that she had any notion of leaving. I knew nothing of it until the Chief operator told me. And now comes the finish Thursday afternoon about four o'clock, up they drive, and all come in, the first time they have been in the house for at least four months. After a little Pearl says well I am going East tonight and came over to tell you good bye. Now what do you know about that. Didn't you think they are darn mean.

Don't for the love of make say a word to a living soul that she is on her way for she gave us strick [*sic*] orders not to tell, as she is going to surprise that them at that end as well as this. She is going to make several stops, so will be about fourteen days on the way. Maybe she thinks she is smart, but I don't.

I wish you would come out honey. I would just go crazy over you. Wouldn't we have some old times. I am sure you would not treat me the way our mean cousin has. She certainly has hurt my feelings and I never can feel just the same toward her again no matter what she does to make up. Well sweet heart I must go to bed. Love to all and Oceans of it for your own dear little self.

Cora¹⁷

115 N. Central Ave.
Glendale Cal.

7-31-14

Dear Ruth:-

As I am not working this evening I will write you a line although it is nearly time I was in bed. I have been thinking of you and just had to write.

When are you coming out?

Artie had a letter from Ella Marsh yesterday, she is still in Arizona and is come to make us a visit in Sept. she is going home from here and wants Artie to go with her. I have gotten somewhat over the feeling of going back, don't know why I am certain I would not care to go in the winter time. Really Ruth we are having the finest summer imaginable. Our hottest day so far was ninety. Then there was our refreshing Ocean breeze. I expect we will get some hot weather yet, but I doubt

it will be any worse than it has been in the East. One thing we never have a thunderstorm.

Have you seen Pearl yet? I came out of my mad fit and wrote her a long letter last night. Told her all about the office girls and everything, now she can do as she likes about answering it. I don't even know if she is mad at me, she certainly has no reason to be.

What are you doing this Summer, have you had anything new. Did I tell you that I have had my black silk dress made over and a little blue & white [*illegible word*], beside a couple of work dresses.

Last Sunday afternoon (I worked from six until two) Dorothy Morgan a little friend of mine one of the decent girls who work in the office and myself when out to Eagle Rock Park. We took our books and layed [*sic*] on the grass under the trees and read til all of a sudden we missed John (of course he had to go with us). Well we hunted for him until nearly dark before we found him, we were nearly scared out of our wits as we had to walk nearly four miles before we could get a car. When we finally did get there the power was off and we had to wait about two hours for a car. It was nearly nine when we got home, we certainly had some time.

To day I cleaned my room up, washed the curtains & got them back up, took a bath and got ready to go to town at two o'clock. I went up to the office to get my check. Met one of the [*illegible word*] men & he took me into the Drug store for a cold drink, then I went on to Town, took my treatment and the Dr. asked me to ride home with him, so I went out to the stores, bought me some cold cream, powder, toilet water and a comb, then I went back up to the office. He had to go on a call into the West and therefore I had a nice long ride. We came home by Hollywood. It sure is a pretty ride.

How is Mr. Dale? I never hear any more about him as I very seldom hear from Everett any more. I do not know if he is made [*sic*] at me or just naturally tired and wants a new one. I have come to the conclusion that it matters very little to me, which it is.

I have also cut out writing to Howard Wright entirely. For no reason at all. Had three letters from him and never answered them. I have no excuse, it sure is not other fellow. I am just tired and sick of the whole bunch. Guess I will cut it all out and settle down an old maid.

What do you think of that?

The girls are here now and making so much noise I can hardly hear myself think, so will close and go to bed.

Kindly remember me to all. Oodles of love to dear little Ruthie from your old pal,

Cora¹⁸

I forgot to say I got ten dollars from my boss

115 N. Central Ave
Glendale Cal

Jan 7th 1915

Dear Ruth:-

This is the first time I have written 1915 some lazy eh. If you will excuse this writing paper and pencil. I wil [*sic*] write you a word to let you know I am alive and to thank you for the cut [*sic*] little cap. It is awfully nice if you to think of me at Xmas when I am so far away.

I am just off duty and waiting for one of the other girls to go to the picture show. It is go, go, go, all the time. I actually do not get time to breath [*sic*].

I will tell you some of my Christmas present, those which I can remember. I got two of the most beautiful breakfast caps I ever saw, they were both pink and lace, really you cannot image how beautiful they are. Then there was another on of white trimmed in pink ribbon. It is pretty but more ordinary. I have I got a hand painted hair received and powder box. They are too dear for anything. A pair of black silk stocking, several hand-kerchiefs, two solid silver spoons. A picture of six Harrison Fisher girls in gift frames two boxes of chocolates. A big bunch of holly and another of misteltoe. A [*illegible word*] bin & a picture of Gertrude Barnes. Several very pretty booklets and stacks of cards.

I got twenty five but cannot remember the all. Paul gave me the swellest silver mesh bag I ever saw in my life, if I'd say so. It is a beauty. Real large with a coin purse attached really honey it is a perfect darling. All the girls are wild about it. They all envy me.

We have just the finest time ever when? He comes out two or three times a week to see me and takes me every where he sure is lovely to me and between you and I, I am getting to like him a whole lot. This is all the paper there is so I will they and

finish up to-morrow.¹⁹

Jan 11th [1915]

Dearie:-

Hear it is four days since I wrote the last but this is the very first minute I have had.

I just got your letter about ten minutes ago, when I came in from work. Wasn't it funny about getting your card mixed up with Hazel's. I sent you both a box of hand-kerchiefs but the pattern was not quite alike.

You know I told you about Everett quitting me well I never heard another word from him until New Years. I got a car [*sic*] from him a real affectionate verse on it and signed Pete. Just the way he used to sign his name when were good friends. Wasn't that nervy. Do you think I will answer it? (No, not I) I am done with him forever and ever. Mrs. Chamberlain was down the other day and said she hear [*sic*] he was going to get married, of course to Florence. May joy go with them.

Paul is nothing at all for looks, but he has brains and I think he is all right. I would not give him for a dozen Everetts.

I do not hear from any of the Coaticook girls except Hazel. She is an old stand by. Bless her old heart. She is the only one I remembered at Xmas except with cards. I haven't had a letter from Gertrude for nearly a year or at least I haven't written to her for about that time. Her last two letters never got answered. I am having a new black and white dress trimmed in black silk and I am going to get a suit one day this week. Well honey I must go to bed as I am tired to death, was up till after twelve last night.

Oceans of love,
Cora²⁰

Glendale – 6-5-15

Dear Ruth:-

Papa and I are all alone this afternoon. Artie is working and the rest have all gone to the S.S. Picnic.

I started to write you a letter last Sunday morning while I was on duty but it got to busy and I had to give it up. Artie is on steady now. She goes to work at one-thirty and works till ten, with a hour off for supper. I am still working my old ones Seven to twelve, and three thirty till six thirty and between you and I am getting mighty tired of work. I have been at the

same old place doing the same old work for twenty-seven months with only one weeks [sic] vacation. The work is getting harder every day and it seems like every day they expect a little more of you.

The Company sold out about a month ago. Our new manager is strict as the dickens. Our office is getting so big or at least our business is going so fast we are going to move into a nice big new office down stairs. It will probably be nicer but I will have three or four blocks farther to walk.

I may not work there very much longer, really I am tired, sometimes the very thought of it makes me sick, besides Paul just begs me to quit. He says I have worked quite long enough already.

Ge e honey if we could only get married we would both be the happiest kids alive, but that is out of the question. My luck as usual he is a poor boy, the kind I always get, but I should *not worry?* he is a darling just the same. I would rather have him with nothing than any one else I ever saw with a million. It is so hard to get work. The poor kid is nearly desperate. He is an electrician, but has not been able to get anything to do for a long time. He went down to the Valley in a ranch for awhile, but of course he could [sic] not make anything to amount to anything working in a ranch for anyone else and we were both desperate. We simply cannot live without each other, that is all there is to it.

Now he works in a grocery store mornings and operates a picture show in the evening. He is wearing himself out, getting thin and haggard looking. He goes to work at six in the A.M. and has a little while off in the Afternoon then goes to work at six and does not get home until twelve at night. You see he does not get very much sleep.

All I get to see him now is the little while I am off in the afternoon, sometimes twice and sometimes three times a week. He goes to work at two every Sunday and I work three Sun. a month so you see how it is. He is only getting fifteen dollars a week for it all and does not know when he may lose out on them. He worked in a little *show?* before this one and got nineteen per week see times are getting harder and harder. He is perfectly crazy about a ranch, but do not know if we will ever have one or not.

Well Dear I am sure you will be tired of this Topic but it is uppermost in my mind and I just had to let loose to someone.

You are always the one I spill to.

Aren't you honoured? I don't know very much to write about as I have not been very much lately.

About three weeks ago there was a big electoral parade in the city. A couple of girls and I went. The Parade was certainly beautiful but talk about crowds. I never was in such a bunch in my life. It was too much for me, after I had stood on my feet for nearly three hours, I fainted dead away (the first time in my life). I got to see most of the parade anyhow. I wouldn't have done such a crazy thing but I was dead tired to start with. I went to work at six that day and nearly worked myself dead. Outside of that everything was all right.

My Chum is going away next week, then I will be more lonesome than ever. I wish you were out here to chase around with me.

Well dearie it is time I was going back to the office so bye-bye.

Oceans of love, Cora

Write often, you and Hazel are the only ones I hear from now. Don't for the love of mike let anyone see this letter. C.A.L.²¹

115 N. Central Ave.
Glendale Cal
March 14th/17

My dear Ruth:-

I have not heard from you for so long any afraid I did not address your letter correctly so will send this one to Baldwin's Mills and if you are still in Montreal, Rose can send it on to you.

I am here with the folks now, came last week. I may be here only a few days but probably nearly all Summer. You see I am somewhat unsettled. I have not seen my hubby for about three weeks. He is still working for the same oil Co., since we left Lost Angeles they have been sending him from one place to another so it is impossible to settle down. We are both tired and sick of it. He told them the other day if they did not put him somewhere and give him a house, he would leave them. So he may quit any day. These last three weeks seem like ten years, I sure am lonesome. I wish you were out here, why don't you and Rose or Clara or all of you come. I believe you could

make more here and really I think you would like to live here.

If you did not get my letter I want to thank you again for the pretty little bag. I think a lot of it.

Artie quits the office the last of this month and expects now to be married in June. She is not [sic] marrying a millionaire any more than I did, although I guess he has a plenty. He is a nice fellow and I hope they will be happy. They will live in Los Angeles. My brother-in-law expects to be married soon to. I wanted you to come out and capture him but am afraid it is too late. No doubt you are as good as gone to. Please write and tell me all about yourself. I love you just like I always did and want to see you.

Have you any new spring clothes yet? I haven't a thing but must get at it right away. I cannot decide what to get for the wedding. Since I have been down I have made some under clothes and two night gowns.

To-morrow I am going to Rivera to visit one of my girl friends for a few days.

Do you remember the times I used to visit you. Gee kiddo I would like to do it again. Do you know that I do not feel one bit older than I did then, but I expect I look a whole lot older. The C. E. convention meets here in Glendale soon. They are expecting at least three thousand delegates. Well my dear it is getting near supper time so must close for now.

Please write soon.

As ever your old pal, with lots of love. —Cora²²

Annex:

Lineage of the May family, Stevens family and Baldwin family²³

Note: All names appearing in the letters above have been bolded.

Sylvester May was the eldest son of the Hezekiah May, who was originally from Strafford, Vermont and settled in Stanstead Township in 1806.²⁴ Sylvester was married three times, first, to Almeda Marsh; second, to Eunice Bean and, third, to Sarah Wadleigh. According to Sylvester's obituary, he had 10 children by his three wives, but we have only found trace of 8 children, which are listed below.

Sylvester May (1808–1901)

(1st) married Almeda Marsh (1813–1842)

Children:

Amanda Melvina (1837–1900)

m., 11 July 1865, **Hollis Taylor**

Sophia (1841–1842)

(2nd) married, 6 June 1843, Eunice Bean (1813–1852)

Children:

Darius (1843–1913) m. **Emma Jane Stevens**

Lyman Albert (ca. 1844–1925) m. **Laura W. Fernald**

Unknown (1845), died when only two weeks old

Wilber (1846–1852)

Caroline S./Carrie (b. 1848) m., 17 June 1873, John Horn

(3rd) married, 11 October 1853, **Sarah Wadleigh** (1812–1902)

Children:

Ida (1855–1925) m., 4 July 1876, John V. Corliss

Fourth son of Sylvester May:

Lyman A. May married, 14 June 1871, **Laura W. Fernald**

Children:

Frank Fernald (b. 1873)

Cora (b. 1874)

Phillip (b. 1877)

Rachel vester (b. 1884) m. William Hollister Pomeroy

Third son of Sylvester May:

Darius married, 3 July 1872, **Emma Jane Stevens** (1852–1894)

Children:

Maude Ella (1874–1947)

Wilbur Lyman (1875–1946)

Rose Nettie (1877–1961)

Julian Sylvester (1881–1956)

John Vining (1882–1971)

Ida/Ada S. (1884–1885)

Clara Emma (1886–1968)

Fred Nason (1887–1955)

Ruth Stevens (1890–1971)

Irene S. (ca. 1891–1893)

Second youngest daughter of Darius and Emma May:

Ruth Stevens May married, 26 January 1921, Harold Ferrin Baldwin

Children:

Ruby May (b. 1921)

Willis Keith/Keith (b. 1922)

Elvyn Mead (1925–2008)

Eunice Ruth (b. 1926)

Alice Lill (1928–1971)

Harold Richard/Dick (1931–1993)

Lester Stevens (b. 1933)

Parents of Harold F. Baldwin, who married Ruth S. May:

Willis Keith Baldwin (1857–1935) married, 17 March 1881, Lill M. Ferrin (1859–1935)

Children:

Harold Ferrin (1886–1975)

Mead Haskell (1891–1921)

ENDNOTES

1. "Obituary: Sylvester May," *Stanstead Journal*, 25 September 1901.
2. Readers should note that additional punctuation has been added to the letter transcriptions in order to improve their readability.
3. Letter, Melvina May to Darius May, dated 24 August 1863 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
4. Letter, Melvina May to Darius May, 11 June 1865 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
5. Letter, Melvina (May) Taylor to unknown, undated [between 1872 and 1875] (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
6. Letter, Melvina May Taylor to Darius May, 6 February 1876 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
7. Letter, Lyman May to Sarah May, 18 January 1864 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
8. Letter, Lyman May to Darius May, 1 November 1863 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
9. Letter, Lyman May to Darius May, 18 December 1870 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
10. Letter, Lyman May to Darius May, 21 June 1874 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
11. Letter, Lyman May to Darius May, 15 September 1878 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
12. Letter, Lyman May to Darius May, 28 April 1885 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
13. Quoted from a letter to Ruth (May) Baldwin from Cora Dilley, 12 December 1948 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
14. Letter, Cora Lovell to Ruth May, 11 December 1913 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).

15. Letter, Cora Lovell to Ruth May, 29 December 1913 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
16. Letter, Cora Lovell to Ruth May, 9 April 1914 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
17. Letter, Cora Lovell to Ruth May, 24 May 1914 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
18. Letter, Cora Lovell to Ruth May, 31 July 1914 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
19. Letter, Cora Lovell to Ruth May, 7 January 1915 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
20. Letter, Cora Lovell to Ruth May, 11 January 1915 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
21. Letter, Cora Lovell to Ruth May, 5 June 1915 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
22. Letter, Cora Dilley to Ruth May, 14 March 1917 (P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
23. Any genealogical information beyond that determined through P173 Elvyn M. Baldwin family fonds was retrieved from the RootsWeb WorldConnect website <wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/>, the *St. Francis District Indexes to the Protestant registers, 1815–1879* and the *Vital Statistics from the Stanstead Journal*, vols. 1–6, (Stanstead, Quebec: Stanstead County Historical Society, 1991).
24. B.F. Hubbard, *Forests and Clearings: The History of Stanstead County*, (Montreal: Lovell Printing, 1874), p. 206.

