

Excerpts from correspondence between Joseph D. Graber and Minnie Swartzendruber, 1921-1923

- J.D. to Minnie, Noble, IA, May 30, 1921
 - “Now if I can keep sensible enough, I shall try to write you a letter. I have been ‘cutting up’ with the little kids for an hour or more and I feel so hilarious that perhaps I cannot keep this discourse within the limits of common sense. But if I think of funerals and other sad events for a while, I suppose I can reverse my mood.”
 - “I wanted to write before school closed but if you’ve ever been in school the last few weeks you can appreciate how busy I was then. Well, I believe I will quit apologizing and begin writing.”
 - “I saw your brother John at Hesston during commencement week. He said you were getting along very well which thing I was glad to hear. Perhaps you will be well enough to visit your uncle and cousins around here sometime this summer. Will you? Ha!
 - “Well, I must close. Hope you will pardon my long neglect of writing by a soon answer. Excuse stationary for it is all I have, and poor penmanship for it is the best I can do under the circumstances. Your friend, Joe G.”

- J.D. to Minnie, Noble, Iowa, Aug. 10, 1921
 - “My dear friend, I shall again try on this rainy forenoon to try your patience with my frightful handwriting. I realize that in the middle of a forenoon is an awful time for a farmer to be writing a letter but, as I intimated, the rain is the reason. Somehow, I always like rainy days; always have! Perhaps the primary reason is that when it rains on the farm it means time to rest...ha! I don’t see however why it is that one likes to loaf and rest so well. Have you ever tried to analyze the reason why people hate to work? I have tried but I can’t decide why it is that one detests work and enjoys rest. But I suppose that is one of those inexplicable things in nature that remains a fact, nevertheless. Well, if I don’t soon quit philosophizing, you will think I made a mistake and sent you a manuscript of a philosophy text...ha!
 - “Wish you could be here on Aug. 20 for the Iowa Hesston Reunion near Kalona. We’ll sure have a time I’ll vouch. But I fear a little Verna and I won’t be able to go for our uncle and family from Illinois are going to visit us on that date and we ought to stay at home. Don’t know yet what we’ll do. On the night of the 21st, Paul is planning a special music program at the East Union Church, where

Kathryn and Helen go to church, and he wants Verna and I to help. I suppose we'll go for that."

- "Say! Did you know that Protus and Ida are married today? They are! More results of the Hesstom Match Factory...ha! Your same friend, Joe Graber."
- Minnie to J.D., Hesston, KS, Sept 8, 1921
 - [Appears that Minnie is in Hesston and Joe is still on the farm in Iowa]
 - "I was sorry when the last week at home was ended. I didn't want to leave for Hesston as much as I thought I did. I missed Martha of course but was so busy the time passed quickly
 - "I made a wondrous mistake this morning. Was in the library reading when Mattie H. came in after choirs and she gave such a sweet smile in my direction and of course I smiled back wasn't any reason why I shouldn't and lo and behold as I was leaving, I noticed John sitting just behind me and the truth dawned upon me. I was claiming a smile that didn't belong to me at all. Of course, I repented my sin (only to myself). Ha!"
 - "I must go down to Mr Camp's now to see about baking an angel food for tonight and then get my Physics. I prefer the first job. Wish you could be here to enjoy the evening with us. I am your friend, Minnie."
- J.D. to Minnie, Hesston, October 27, 1922
 - "Dear Friend, Oh, I beg pardon in sackcloth and ashes!! I almost forgot to mention that birthday box. I enjoyed it very, very much! Really, it was just the thing that made the day enjoyable. Thanks! I'm getting old fast. Will soon be thirty...ha! I hope though, I'll be able to finish college before that. No doubt I will if I don't flunk. Men's chorus met for the first time last evening. I like it fine, only we're a bit short of 1st tenors. Always the same, Joe"
- J.D. to Minnie, Hesston, Oct. 12, 1922
 - "I'm beginning to think of the close. I realize this is shooting back an answer to your letter rather soon but the same 'forever aloneness' somehow haunts me here, too. I thought perhaps writing a letter would help things – and it did...ha! I hope you will be able to pardon. I extend the same privilege to you that I took. As always, Joe"
- Minnie to J.D., Versailles, MO, Sept. 22, 1922
 - "I appreciated your letter very much and the sympathy like that makes me cry yet it makes one better too. Thanks."

- Minnie to J.D., La Junta, CO, June 2, 1923
 - “My wonderfulest friend”
 - “I was with Martha until a few minutes ago (9:00). I wish you and I could be together now. Of course, I wish that lots of times, every time I see something beautiful or unusual and then some. The wind’s howling and the frogs are desperately earnest tonight. Makes me lonesome.”
 - Minnie describes the difficult cases at La Junta Sanatorium – death and sadness - “And I’m going to take nursing? Yes, it begins to look absolutely necessary to me, that is, if we go into foreign work. We.”
 - Ending, “with love abundantly multiplied, Minnie”

- Minnie to J.D., La Junta, CO, June 2, 1923
 - “To my dearest one, With your picture before me, a flood of sweetest memories, pen and ink and the inspiration of Love, I feel rich but I miss you so much. Martha is the oasis of this Colorado desert.”
 - “I’m anxious to get my letter from you. I hope it comes soon. I’m not writing much this time as you see. You know it used to tickle me when I’d see the ending “Always the same”? I had to wonder sometimes whether it was ourselves the same or the ending. I put down now what I never dared before, My truest and deepest love, Minnie”

- J.D. to Minnie, Noble, IA, June 4, 1923
 - “Dearest Love, your letter came today. I was gone away from home and just got it this evening. Minnie, it was inexpressibly great to get a letter like that! However much letters used to be appreciated there is no comparison to what they mean now. Although I never doubt your love, it is so refreshing to have you express it.”
 - “Your observation on our “always the same” of previous times was quite interesting. I suppose it mean that the ending was always the same, for we weren’t. We were growing toward each other, not? At least I’m glad those days are past and that now we write things as they are.”
 - “With much love and affection, Joe”

- J.D. to Minnie, Noble, IA, Aug. 29, 1923
 - “My very dearest, since there’s’ no more suitable and truly truthful salutation I could frame up I’ll use the same one over again. Really, dear, you’re the loveliest ‘creature’! Tonight when I went through Noble here was another letter from you; the one with the above salutation. It’s odd to say it but getting a letter from

you surpasses any joy I've ever experienced except the joys I've had when with you personally."

- J.D. to Minnie, Hesston, Thanksgiving 1923
 - o On upcoming visit together: "But just three more weeks, dearest! That won't seem a bit long anymore. I can hardly wait though. Now seriously and not speaking figuratively nor in a hyperbole, we are going to have the wonderfulest time of our lives when we're together this vacation. Those times together seem doubly precious I suppose because they're so rare. Wouldn't it be great to both be in school together a year again! Is there any possibility that such a thing might occur next year? I do wish for it, but of course I don't know whether our plans would work best that way or not."