

Sussex County,  
State of New Jersey  
December 2, 1895.

Dear Mr & Mrs Belden

We are, as you know, living on a lot near Branchville. I have <sup>had a</sup> hand & team helping me & the delay thus caused in answering your ever welcome letter. Today is raining a favor we can fully estimate the drouth has been so long the streetlights of Branchville operated by Charles Crissman's mill could not supply the power; notwithstanding he built a long dam from his millpond, above his house back to the field at a cost of three thousand dollars, for a reservoir. Mrs Fountain lives in Branchville & so does Mrs Mattison, Mary Mattison is teaching at Rutherford N. J. & Stella Rae is teaching there, she also sings Sundays in a church in Jersey City. Sister Thebe of Pa with the two above named sisters all widows, Mary Mattison, Mattie Mackerly, Mary's half sister, spent Thanksgiving at our home. Mrs Mattison very highly appreciated your good feeling & pleasant comments about her husband.

from  
Branchville  
Pa  
W.H. B. 157  
dash

The Presbyterians of Branchville could not be fully satisfied  
you left until they got Mr Lloyd back. Mr Stephenson grew <sup>unpopular</sup>  
& Mr Fitzgerald was worse; but since they have gone all seem pleased  
with Mr Lloyd's very able sermons & while there is not many additions  
of the older ones the young have an interesting Christian endeavor society.  
Mary Mattison was sent to Boston as a delegate from Rutherford.  
We have a good attendance at our church: Mr Bathgate a Newark  
man, owns & makes it his summer home on the farm where John  
& Jake Cross lived, (John died some years ago) attends our church &  
his large family including his visitors & the interest they take help  
very much. The Methodists too are active they have their epworth League both  
have good Sabbath schools: but altogether they cannot counteract the  
evil effects of the rum demon George Bowman Stewart Layton <sup>and</sup>  
John Sherred died, & John Henry where Jim <sup>Bowman, he is dead,</sup> kept beside Elmer Snook's  
beer den holding forth to greater numbers than the churches, our church Ladies  
too are trying to hold their own they are going to reseal & refresh our church.  
Why is it that the church of the Living God does not stamp out dram selling?

Branchville has two large general merchandize stores, one hardware, two  
drug & one grocery, two clothing, one tin & stove & one meat market; besides Mr  
Keopkins has built a palatial residence on Heaton Heights above a Larson Decker  
When Mr Fitzgerald left the old elders all resigned & squire Dalrymple & Obadiah  
Fuller were elected & served until squire died then John C Hunt, squire Dillistin  
& Boyd Ely were elected & act with Mr Fuller. Donie Hunt is all right now her  
sister Nancy in Illinois is laying very low. I think we have gained somewhat in our  
religious lives & feel so thankful that you have your mind so stayed on God. We often  
think of you & Mrs Belden & the help you have been to us & I would be pleased to  
have you visit us; we always like the society of God's dear chosen ones. We are so  
thankful that you remember us in your prayers there has been an unconscious  
influence telling us we should render to God an implicit obedience. You are doing  
a good work. Leonard Irving is with Grant 160 Broadway N of Mrs Everett is with  
Boyd & Fred Jessup in Harlem our boys board with Mattie & Mr Cooper next  
door the twins are there, Nancy is teaching in Connecticut. My wife sends best wishes.  
To Mr & Mrs Belden Yours very Respectfully J G Rae  
Mr Virgil Crissman died as he lived