Thomas Hopkins Webb to Martin Franklin Conway

Thomas H. Webb, secretary of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, wrote from Boston, Massachusetts to Martin F. Conway, general agent for the New England Emigrant Aid Company in Kansas Territory. Webb gave instructions to Conway on several New England Emigrant Aid Company business matters including the potential sale of the mill in Lawrence, Kansas Territory. Webb comments on the decline in real estate values in Kansas Territory in the aftermath of the Panic of 1857.

Creator: Webb, Thomas H. (Thomas Hopkins), 1801-1866

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Thomas Hopkins Webb to Martin Franklin Conway

Webb, Thomas

N°. XXV.

Office of N. E. Em. Aid Co.
N° 3 Winter St. Boston.
Aug. 28th. 1858.

Dear Sir.

I am in receipt of the following unacknowledged Letters from you; viz. three bearing date Aug. 4th., one of them numberless, the second marked N° 26, and the third 29; also N° 30 of Aug. 6th., N° 31, of same date, and N° 32, dated 19th. inst.

The first above refered to, (as well as a portion of one or two others,) relates to the Lawrence Mill Property, for the whole of which, as we understand the best offer you can get, in these times, is but $1.000. Hardly the value of the Mill, exclusive of the ground. Unless I err very much in judgement, that portion of the Mill ground abutting on Pinkney & Vt. Sts., or the Levee just beyond, is among the best, if it does not constitute the very best land, now remaining to the Co. in Lawrence, and in prosperous times would bring several thousand dollars. My idea was & still is to reserve all bordering on those Sts. for house or store Lots, selling with the Mill as small a section of the tract as possible. This however, is my individual opinion only; it will come

before the Ex. Com. for consideration, by special appointment, on Friday next, the 3d. prox., and as soon after as practicable, I will advise you, whether to sell now, or wait for better times; if now, whether or not by auction, &c. &c.

You allude to "cutting off from the Reserve the Lot of 50 by 117 ft." On what St. 50 ft.? I presume Ve. Do we not own enough to make several such building Lots, & should they not all be appropriated, or reserved accordingly?

In N° 26 you inclose your monthly statement, a paid draft in favor of A. Lyman, & Note to Leonard, all of which have been turned over to the Treasurer. The Kimball indebtedness, I suppose has been liquidated, or as you suggest, put in process of collection by law."

Your N° 29 relates exclusively to the Wabonsé Mill business, which very clearly has long been suffering from unjustifiable neglect, and demands prompt action, and close attention, until brought into satisfactory shape. I wrote Mr. Pomeroy in relation to this, at once, and urged his immediate cooperation with you in adjusting matters. There is evidently something wrong. All the charges should be subjected to a rigid examination, and no bill al-

lowed that is clearly exorbitant in amount, or unaccompanied by a voucher. I know not, what manner of person Mr. Fadder may be; perhaps, & I trust, he is perfectly fair & honest, yet for the want of a good memory, or for some other not very clear reason, there are great discrepancies in his Accts as rendered, and statements furnished from time to time. Thus, under date of Jan. 14th. /58. Mr. Branscomb writes— "Mr. Fadder informed me that his bill against the Mill amounts to $7.000. He promised to send the vouchers next week." Under date of Jan. 29th. following, Mr. B. says, I have recd from Mr. Fadder a letter "in which he states that the expenses of erecting the Mill amount to $3901.09." In yours of Aug. 4th. you observe "I ascertained from Mr Fadder that his charges against the Co. would amount to about $8.000." —— These alarming variations show the importance & necessity of adjusting a settlement as speedily as possible. — As regards the number and size of Town Lots we were to have, &c. I would refer you to Mr. Pomeroy or Mr. Branscomb, there being no copy of Contract on the Office Files here. — The statement made to you, that we were merely to have a lease of the Mill Site, is perfectly absurd. No proposition of the kind

would have been entertained for a single moment by any agent of sane mind, even had an association or individual been so insane as to suggest it.

Your N° 30 has reference to the Manhattan Mill busines, and the proposed new Lease to Butterfield; the latter embraces the points, and is drawn up in the manner and form that were deemed desirable here, and it is thought that no alteration should be made in it without good and urgent reasons. None such are known here; whether any actually exist you are the better judge. The whole matter is entrusted to you for you to do in regard thereto, what in your opinion will best subserve the true interest of the Co. It may be advisable to procure new tenants — if you think so, proceed accordingly, & insist upon the lease as it is; on the other hand, it may be important to allow the present one to remain, in order to increase the probability of his Notes being paid at maturity; if so, it would perhaps be well to modify the lease, so as to allow its being abandoned on three or six months notice. — I yesterday recd from Messrs. C. E. Clarke & Jno. Pierce of Manhattan, a Copy of an application made to you for the Mill. I shall refer them again to you, as hav-

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ing full power to act. May it not be possible to dispose of the Mill to them, to the sons of Prof. Smith (of Brunswick Me.) who reside in or near St. Joseph to erect machinery, or to some one else. Good judges have pronounced it, one of the best in the Territory. It is highly desirable, indeed quite important, if possible, to effect a sale of this property, and for Cash. Therefore, at the Executive Committee meeting yesterday, you was authorized to sell the Mill, Machinery, and one acre of ground for a Mill yard, for $5.000 <u>Cash</u>; if after diligent inquiry, you cannot find a cash purchaser, you are then authorized to dispose of said property, for any other larger sum, of which $2500 must be paid down, and the balance on as short time as can be agreed upon; the price asked, varying with the credit given; the longer the time, the larger the amount. The Notes given to be on interest at ten pr. ct. pr. annum. Deed to be furnished when the last payment is made. Judgement must be exercised in selecting the acre so as to do the least injury possible to the balance of the land, which will probably be converted into building Lots.

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No. 25.

Your No. 31 has regard to Topeka matters, & more especially to the manner in which the Mill site is deeded to us, and Mr. Bowen's application for a lease of the School-House. Mr. Thornton's course strikes us, in the same unfavorable manner that it does you. It seems a little singular that he cannot "afford" to grant us a right of way, when the chief value of this Claim is owing to the circumstance of this Co. having established a Mill there.

As Col. Dickey is so soon to be here, it was thot advisable to consult with him before taking any action about Topeka.

I have rec'd a letter from Mr. Houston inclosing a notice from the Pelletheller Town Association of the arrival out of the Mill Machinery, which they wish the Co. to set up, immediately. We can take no action, until the estimates are sent on, which I have requested from you & Mr. Houston. Every thing must be done in the most rigidly economical manner. It is calculated that the whole cost, of foundation, covering, machinists' work, &c. &c. will not exceed one thousand dollars. If any thing more durable involving greater cost be wanted, it must be deferred until the earnings of the Mill warrant the incurring of the expense. Ascertain as early as possible what is missing, that there may be no unnecessary delay in supplying it.

The Legal instruments of Conveyance of Real Estate which are sent us from different sections of the Territory vary very much in phraseology, & some of them are loosely drawn, & not in conformity to the requisitions of the Statutes. To insure uniformity & legality it is requested that you draw up a suitable form for us to have printed for use. I return herewith, as requested, the Butterfield lease.

Very respectfully

Thomas H. Webb, Sec'y

P.S. I have written Mr. Bowen, & informed him of your answer to his application; if you have any objections that you wish to make, please write me for our guidance.