

A History of the Cranberry and Blueberry Development at Whitesbog, New Jersey

By: Elizabeth C. White

The writing of this was started in 1950. The dates and most of the facts in regard to the Howell family were secured from the book, "Genealogical and Biographical Memorials of the Reading, Howell, Yerkes, Watts, Latham, and Elkins Families — Josiah Granville Leach".

Most of the letters written by James A. Fenwick in addition to other papers were given to Elizabeth C. White by Marian Willing, wife of the architect Charles Willing of 154 Hillcrest Avenue, Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania. Mrs. Willing had sorted these from a truckful of old papers left by Andrew Moore Jones in the house he had occupied at Delancey Place in Philadelphia. This house was later occupied by Doctor William Johnson Taylor, a grandson of Andrew M. Jones' half sister, Margaretta Jones, who had married John Madison Taylor.

After Doctor Taylor died his widow wished to throw out the truck of old papers, but her daughter, Mrs. Willing, asked the privilege of examining them. By the time they were sorted the name of Elizabeth C. White was somewhat well known in connection with the growing blueberry industry, in consequence of which she was blessed by this gift.

The letters written by Doctor Frederick V. Coville and carbon copies of those by Elizabeth C. White are from the original correspondence, and have been carefully kept. The accounts given by the letters are strung together on the thread of Elizabeth C. White's memories.

By: Elizabeth Coleman White

The young Mr. and Mrs. Cashell crossed the Atlantic from Ireland to Philadelphia about 1825. Either on shipboard or shortly after their arrival in

Philadelphia, a baby girl was born to them and named Mary. This baby became the Grandmother Fenwick of Elizabeth Coleman White, who was forty years old when her grandmother died in November of 1911 at the age of eighty-six. During all of her life, up to this date, Elizabeth had lived in the same house with her grandparents. These recollections of Elizabeth White are written down for the benefit of her nephew, Thomas Brinton Darlington, the great grandson of baby Mary Cashell.

Both of Mary's parents died before she was six months old and she never knew her father's Christian name. Her mother's first name was Catherine, but whether the name was spelled with "C" or "K" the writer does not know. After the death of her parents the responsibility for the baby fell to her mother's brother, Charles Thursby, who hired a wet nurse for her, i.e. a woman who could breastfeed her, for baby formulas were then unknown.

There must have been considerable money in the Thursby family, and possibly also the Cashell family. There is now, in 1950, belonging to the grandchildren of Mary Cashell, a very beautiful miniature of her "Uncle Thursby", as she always called him. (It was) painted on ivory about four inches high by three inches broad, the oval is set in gold with a loop at the top by which it could be hung on a ribbon. It portrays a young man with large blue eyes and exquisitely modeled features. He wears a plum-colored coat with fine linen ruffles at the throat and his hair, drawn back in a queue, is heavily powdered white. Mounted on the back of the pendant is a braid of his own dark brown hair.

When I was a young woman the lips and cheeks of this miniature were delicately tinted carmine, but my wish was indulged to have this lovely thing freed of its careful

wrappings and placed on the mantle where it could be daily enjoyed. Several years of exposure to the light caused the carmine tinting to fade away.

When Uncle Thursby died, as I remember, at the age of twenty seven, little Mary Cashell and her property were left to the care of a guardian who boarded the child with a woman in Trenton, N.J., with whom the little six year old was very unhappy. When this woman, whose name I often heard but have forgotten, wished to dispose of her house she found as taker Mrs. Coleman, who took little Mary Cashell with the house.

Money for the keep of the child was supplied by her guardian as before, but with Mrs. Coleman, she found love and happiness. As I knew Grandmother she spoke with almost reverent love of "Mother Coleman" and of her children as "Brother Pierson" or "Doctor Coleman", "Brother James", "Sister Lizzie", and "Sister Mary Anne". Mother Coleman often tucked a rose under her sheer Quaker kerchief before she went to meeting. Grandmother liked to tell the story that before she went to live with the Colemans, the mother had shortly before told her children that she had seen a little girl whom she would like to adopt. She had been playing on the sidewalk with a pair of toy andirons and some buttonwood bark; strangely enough, the child was available with the house.

The Coleman family, with little Mary Cashell, moved from Trenton N.J. to Juliustown N.J. where Grandmother Fenwick had recollections of gathering arbutus on Juliustown Hill. From there they moved to Pemberton N.J. where they owned and occupied the house still standing just north of the drug store. Both of the Coleman sons studied medicine, James set up practice aways from the family. Sister Mary Anne died in early womanhood. Sister Lizzie never married, and with Doctor Pierson Coleman,

continued to live in the Pemberton house until their deaths. *(There are some handwritten notes that would perhaps add to this paragraph, however they are too faint to make out as the only known copy in the Whitesbog Preservation Trust's possession is a less than stellar photocopy.)*

When Mary Cashell was about sixteen plans were completed for her to go to St. Mary's Hall in Burlington N.J., one of the first schools in the country for the higher education of women. Before these plans could be put into effect her guardian "absconded", *left quickly and/or secretly*, with all of her available property. The fact that she was unable to go to St. Mary's was a life-long grief to her.

Some two years later she married James Athanasius Fenwick and went to live at Lisbon Farm. A short time before Mary Cashell's marriage her adopted brother, Doctor Pierson Coleman had married a first cousin of James Fenwick's, Anne Emlen Salter, with whom he had grown up on brotherly terms. For many years there was the most intimate connection between the household in Pemberton and the one at Lisbon Farm three miles away.

There were some "Western Lands" belonging to Mary Cashell that her guardian could not appropriate *(take (something) for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission)*, and a few years after their marriage James Fenwick went West on this good horse "Selim" to find what value there was in them. James Fenwick's connection with these "Western Lands" is graphically described in the following letters to his guardian uncle, Benjamin Jones, and to his uncle's son and executor.

*** James Fenwick to Benjamin Jones

Lisbon Farm, June 25th, 1843

“Dear Uncle,

I suppose you have heard of my attention to a certain young lady in Pemberton, and must of course know that I have strong inclination to be married if the young lady will have me and she appears to favor my hopes. The ladies character you have heard, (I) expect, well spoken off and of course my opinion of her is that her character and etc. make ample compensation for a little misery about her birth. Her fortune I know nothing about though I have heard of some land in Kentucky or some other place near Cincinnati but there is no dependence, or do not know what dependence to put in the value of them.

I love the lady and wish to have her if she will have me.

I remain as ever etc.

James A. Fenwick”

By the following December they are married and James writes:

Lisbon Farm, Dec 7th 1843

“Dear Uncle

We have written to James Coleman for the papers relating to my wife’s property, but have not yet received any answer from him, but we expect one tomorrow or next day.

With love to all I remain yours as ever

James A. Fenwick

N.B. I forgot to mention that my little wife and me get on most admirable well together.”

The next two letters, written two years later, are reproduced in full because of the interesting description of the “Western Lands” therein contained. What became of the horse “Selim” while James traveled by stage I do not know. During my girlhood “Selim” was frequently spoken of with great affection as a horse that had lived to old age on Lisbon Farm, and in his youth had accompanied James Fenwick on this adventurous western trip.

Hickman or Mills Point Dec 7th 1845 (KY)

Dear Uncle,

I take this rainy day as an opportunity to write to you what I am doing in these backwoods. I arrived at this place last Tuesday night and Mr. Atwood introduced me to Major Davis who resides but a short distance from my land and I rode out to his place with him the next day. I remained at his house two nights and Mr. Caldwell one night and took dinner at Dr. Applegates’ a person who came from near Shell Town, N.J. * I found them all very hospitable indeed, and with Mrs. Davis and Caldwell I rode over the 2,500 acre tract which is very fine land and has several little farms opened on it. Some of them have been opened 8 or 10 years, long enough to pay the laborer for all he has done to it and they are all anxious to purchase but none of them wants to pay cash, but to pay by bi-annual installments which is the most universal rule in this country.

I think from all I hear the Land could not be sold for a cash payment without sacrificing a considerable (amount of) money. Caldwell tells me that a man can girdle the trees (*cultural technique to yield larger fruit or to set fruit*) and raise 50 bushels of corn to the acre and a crop of tobacco, and have money enough from his first crop to live and pay his first installment. I find the country is improving very fast, and it suffers very much on account of being held in tract so large that the laboring man cannot get hold of them. The products of the country are corn, tobacco, and wheat, and grass does fine when they sow it. They cultivate cotton in the neighboring countries, but in Obion it is cultivated but little on account of the soil being more of a clay, and it is to far north to do well on such a soil. I intend sending you a newspaper with this letter which gives some description of this place you will mention in it the Reelsfoot Lake which divides the county of Obion in two parts, and one of my tracts of lands lays on the east side of this lake beyond the hilly ground that is next (to) the Lake, and to get from one to the other I had to come to this place to get round the head of the lake. I wish tomorrow to visit the 1,900 acre tract on the river bottom 30 miles from this place which the owner of this hotel, who is a property holder that way says is worth \$10 per acre, and is valuable for the Cypress and Ash timber that is upon it also for the fertility of it's soil which (he says) is above the great floods of the river. Every person out this way knows my land and call it the Thursby land. I think it best to establish an agent here to sell the 2,500 acre tract in small pieces, but the 1,900 acre tract I shall hold as yet, for it must certainly in a very short time become very valuable.

The river is now very low and full of ice, but I shall start home the latter part of this week by stage, if I can get through my business. I have not heard from home yet. I remain yours as ever.

James A. Fenwick

N.B. Not a word about Gold Mine Lands, no person knows anything about them.

J.A.F. (on outside of the letter)

(* Shell Town, ~~Juliestown~~ Jacksonville, a short distance north of Mount Holly.

Louisville (KY) Dec. 27th 1845

Dear Uncle,

I wrote to you once since I left during my stay at Mills Point when I wrote I think I had only seen one tract of my lands with which I was much pleased. The boundary lines well marked and everything as it should be about it, except that the taxes had not been payed last year, but understanding that the 1,900 acre tract had been partially or perhaps never surveyed. I procured the county surveyor, and he Major Davis, who is now my agent, and myself went down and surveyed it. The beginning corner makes a call for the oldest established corner bottom. I loose 60 or 70 acres by one corner coming into the lake and I include a 175 acre tract which other man claims but as my entry and Grant are the oldest I have the best right. Besides his grant calls for my east boundary line as his west boundary and if he goes that far, he must be in the lake. I also found one fellow with a small farm (on) it to whom I gave a lease. The track is a ridge of cane land extending east and west with a strip of dry cypress break of some three or four hundred yards wide on either side and is all except a few acres entirely

about the highest flowing of the Mississippi and was valued for taxes at \$1,400, but it is worth about 5 dollars per acre, and the wood is worth something for to sell to the steam boats. I have come to this conclusion that one of my tracts is worth \$5,000 dollars and the other from 7 to 8,000 dollars, but it would be hard to make sale of them at any price in anybody (?), and for that reason I appointed Major James Daves esq. Agent to divide and sell the 2,500 acre tract and there are a number of Virginians in the country to purchase land who no doubt will be purchasers.

After attending to all my business I got a steamboat bound for this place, but after getting about 40 miles of Shawnee Town we had to go back to the mouth of Cumberland River on account of the ice in the river. I then took a boat for Nashville to meet the stages to this place, and when I got there the stages were full a number of days ahead, so that I could not procure anything but an outside seat, and during the passage the rain, snow, and sleet and cold brought on a violent attack of looseness of my bowels, and I was obliged to stop at a little country house 65 miles from this place, and after spending several days there I got well enough to come on to this place, where for two reasons I shall have to stay several days. The one to get over my complaint was to ride from here to Cumberland in stages as the river is frozen and the other is that out of \$38 dollars I saved to come home I have but \$3 dollars in my pocket and if Mr. Galt's house's people say put up your money Mr. Fenwick must lodge in the street. In this emergency I have written to Benjamin Burton to give me a letter of introduction to some merchant in this place, and I will then make use of Mrs. Taylor and Pauldings and draw a draft on them.

I arrived here last night so that I shall have to stay several days for an answer from cousin Ben. Please do not let Mary (Fenwick) know of my sickness.

I remain your affectionate nephew

James A. Fenwick

Now let us go back to James A. Fenwick's childhood, the better to understand his relations with his guardian, Benjamin Jones, and others mentioned in his letters following.

James' forebears had come from Northumberland, England to Maryland with Lord Baltimore's adherents. They had been Roman Catholics for generations and his father, Colonel Athanasius Fenwick, an only child, had been educated for the priesthood. Instead of being ordained he fell in love with and married Susanna Howell, a Philadelphia Quakeress, and was thereupon disowned by the Catholic Church.

Susanna, born about 1788, was the eleventh of fifteen children of Samuel Howell Jr. and his second wife, Margaret Emlen Howell. Susanna died on the 7th of August 1824, shortly after the birth of her fourth child, an unnamed little daughter. Slightly over two months later, on the 13th of October, her husband, Colonel Fenwick died of a "broken heart", so said the children of his contemporaries when I was a little girl.

Their eldest child, James Athanasius Fenwick and his two little sisters were thus left orphans before James, born November 2, 1818, was six years old. Thereupon Benjamin Jones, husband of Susanna's elder sister, Mary, fifth child of Samuel Howell Jr. and his wife Margaret, was appointed guardian of the Fenwick children.

Benjamin Jones had three sons by his first wife before he married Mary Howell in June of 1805. One of these, Andrew Moore Jones, some twenty years older than James A. Fenwick, became the executor of his father's estate, and it is to him that the following letters are addressed. Though no (blood) relative of James he was always spoken of during my childhood with the greatest affection and respect as "Cousin Andrew". He outlived James and acted as a banker and business advisor for him and his sisters.

James thus grew up in affectionate brotherly relations with the children of his guardian. His own first cousin, Richard Jones, was six years older than him, while Sam Jones was only a few months older, (and) Ben, a younger son, figures slightly in the letters. Richard and Sam inherited a large acreage of land in Burlington and Ocean Counties, New Jersey, including what is now the Whitesbog property and vastly more.

While James and his sisters, Margaret and Emma, were at home with the Jones family they also spent much time away at school and with their Aunt Margaret, next older than their mother, Susanna, in that huge Howell family. Margaret Howell had married John Salter, a sea captain slightly over three years after her grandfather's death, and lived at the Howell "seat" at Tacony, near Frankford, Pennsylvania, about where the Diston Saw Factory now stands at the western end of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. Both Samuel Howell Sr. and Samuel Howell Jr. had lived and died there, the son on November 3rd, 1802, and the father not until December 14th, 1807, five years later in the eighty-fifth year of his age.

Samuel Howell Sr. left a large landed and personal estate, the latter alone as shown by the account of his executors, amounting to over two hundred and eighty-four

thousand dollars. His will is on file in the first book of wills in the archives of Philadelphia.

While the Fenwick children stayed with Uncle and Aunt Salter at Tacony, bills for their expenses were sent from John Salter to Benjamin Jones. Uncle Ben also received bills from the school attended by James, and others from the school attended by his sisters.

To the home at Tacony, the Fenwick and Saltar children, and others, of the circle of 52 first cousins who visited there grew deeply attached. James and some of his mates played "tickly bender" by jumping from one floating cake of ice to another when the river broke up in the spring. One cannot imagine that their elders allowed this to happen often. The household was annoyed by the odor of the great sturgeon that fishermen pulled to the banks of the river and left to rot after having taken from them a few choice steaks.

Plants from the Tacony garden were carried to new homes established later by the grown children, among them to Lisbon Farm. James Fenwick lived at Lisbon Farm, and farmed it for his Uncle Ben, with Sister Margaret as housekeeper for several years before he (Fenwick) married, and it was Margaret's headquarters for at least ten years after Mary Cashell became its mistress.

When I was a child remnants of my Great Aunt Margaret's flower beds still existed, with plants which I was told came from Tacony: strange double tulips, Lilly of the Valley with tiny flowers, but such heavenly fragrance, and Pyrus Japonica with near scarlet flowers which I was never allowed to pick I was free to do with the white and purple lilac blossoms and the spicy, sweet smelling, yellow flowers of the Missouri

Currants over which the white faced bumble bees zoomed and darted, stopping now and then for a draught of nectar. Then a little girl could sometimes catch them in her hand for the astonishment of playmates who were not sure (aware) that the white-faced bees had not sting.

While we have been taking this little journey into the background of James Fenwick, three and a half years have passed and his Uncle Ben has died in May of 1849, about five and half years after his ward married Mary Cashell. Until about this date Richard Jones had been running Hanover Furnace and producing iron from the ore of the bogs. The fuel used was charcoal made from the wood of the surrounding pine forest.

It was about this time it was found that iron could be produced more cheaply with ore and coal from Pennsylvania. The forges in the Jersey Pines were closing, no longer able to make ends meet, Hanover among them.

James Fenwick had for years been selling to the workmen at Hanover Furnace much of the produce from Lisbon Farm. There was a great deal of pleasant social intercourse between the cousins and their families.

When it could no longer be made to pay the business was moved to Florence, New Jersey on the Delaware River, which with its branches from Pennsylvania, furnished cheap transportation for coal and iron from that state.

Many of the workmen at Hanover moved with the business. Many of the families were split, and I often heard it facetiously said (*meant to be humorous or funny; not serious*) that those who moved to Florence took along a pocket full of Hanover sand to keep their homesickness with bearable bounds.

Uncle Ben has died, and James has received from his executor a request for a sum of money that his Uncle had loaned him. In his replay we hear of "Thursby land" which according to the custom of the time, as with property of a wife, became "my Western lands."

James Fenwick to Andrew Jones

July 27, 1849

Lisbon Farm July 1849

A.M. Jones, Dear Cousin,

Your Dun (?) come to me through the hands of Mr. Tobey. I should be pleased indeed to meet the payment of My Note and the Interest due your father's estate, but I am sorry to say that an enforcement of the immediate payment of it at this time would produce a stoppage of the business of my farm and my prospects for the year at least. I still have prospects from my Western Lands everyday of receiving considerable more than my debt to your father's estate and rest assured that the moment it comes that debt shall be the first attended to and for these grounds I beg of you to give me time.

I had prospects during the month of March last of receiving the money to pay this thing and in all anxiety I waited for a letter from my agent (having written to him repeatedly). He told me at last but few or any of the purchasers had paid (this 2,000 acres was divided and sold on time in parcels) but that they had improved the land and now sales had been made at better prices.

And again the tract on the river bottom 1,600 acres there was due in June a third of the value of that tract and more. It was sold to a man with plenty of means and can pay if he will but my agent in his last letter dated June 15th says that he has not been

able to see the purchaser on account of the high water in the river surrounding this tract with rapid waters. The gross amount that is in prospects from these land amount to somewhere in the neighborhood of nine thousand dollars. The realizing you can have an idea as good as I can.

I have lived this year or two past in a constant state of excitement about my affairs rendering me in a measure unfit for the constant little attentions to my farm hands and work (sometimes a little too sanguine "*optimistic or positive, especially in an apparently bad or difficult situation*" I am sorry to say, but it would not last long). Improvements were commenced which were considered judicious and necessary to my success by others as well as me. These had to be carried out for a year or two amidst an increasing debt and on this account were not brought to maturity as soon as would have been otherwise. They are now in a great measure finished and will hereafter bring in an income of from \$400 to \$600 per year where formerly that part of my farm produced me not more than \$40 annum. In fact taken all in all is considered by Richard and my neighbors considerable advanced since my coming upon it.

That I have been industrious friends and acquaintances give me credit for it to my face (perhaps for flattery) but I know I could have been more so. I know I have acted foolish in many things but the farm I know I have loved next to my family, in it has been the current of my thoughts and hopes, but as I grow older I feel more the burden of care of an increasing family. The necessity of care in pecuniary "*relating to or consisting of money*" affairs for their sakes, and if my Western affairs do not come up more promptly to my assistance I fear I shall have to sell the farm to pay my debts, and

take what little may be left, go West or somewhere, and as I look upon it now leave a home forever.

Think not I write this to seek any favors of you as your father's executor, what duty prompts you to do in God's name and may I be able to say humbly let his will be done, but for your advice and good opinion I seek for as a friend of me and mine I have looked upon you for several years.

Respectfully your cousin,

James A. Fenwick

More than six years have passed; during these years money has been received from the sale of the "Western lands". Some has been loaned to Richard Jones in the hope that it would be available for the education of the children of James and Mary Cashell Fenwick. These children were a son, James Athanasius Jr., born in 1844, and always called "Thaney" in the family. A daughter Mary Anne Fenwick, born September 21, 1847, who when a tot proclaimed that she was "Minnie Mite". Intimates knew my mother as Minnie 'till the end of her days.

The business of Richard Jones has been moved to Florence where he was making iron pipe. I believe that this was the foundation of the present U.S. Pipe and Foundry Co.

Early in 1857, when his daughter, my mother, was approaching her 10th birthday, James writes:

James Fenwick to Andrew Jones

January 31, 1857

Lisbon Farm Jan 31st 1857

Dear Andrew,

I arrived here from Florence last night and as usual when I have anything to do with Richard lately his mind is so completely full he had no time to talk to me. Soon after we arrived at his house, a committee from the city of Brooklyn with there engineer and Mr. John Irick from Lumberton, they counted the pipes that he had on hand and appeared to talk favorably to Richard, but they cut off all chances for me to say a word as to my business, except just at parting. I asked him for a definite plan as to how I was to enter into the cultivation of cranberries, he says just as you please. That he would sell me the land for five dollars an acre or any way just as I pleased. I told him that I had thought over the matter since the first of January was confident in the success of their cultivation that it would not do to expect too much as I was afraid he did, that I realized the advantage that I could do to myself that the field was a wide one for me for entering into the business in the pines. That he partial success of the scattered few who had tried it had secretly affected the price of such land as yet although these successes and my own observations made it plane to expect more profits in their cultivation (to my mind) many fold over common farming, but that the cultivation of cranberries over the Savannah of the pines would ultimately reduce the price of the fruit three fourths perhaps, it was proper to consider this in entering into it. When I spoke to him the first of the month it was only for his benefit but since he made the offers of a deed for half the land I had considered the matter on my own account and was desirous to entering into it, but wished to do so in such matter as to

benefit myself and my children after me but in friendship to him wished in doing so to do all the good possible to him, but I wanted a written binding bargain to know on what ground I stood for it was a serious work to me to enter into any work that would take me from my farm at all, but he says as you please, this I consider to indefinite for me so that I know nothing more what I am to do than I did before I saw him, expect that he says I will sell you the land for five dollars per acre, which is double what it is worth without it was for this purpose, but this offer had it not come from Richard I should excepted at once if he had cleared it from encumbrance (so that my feelings were at war with my interest conceiving that the offer was made partly in friendship), but then again if I am successful it will increase the value of their other lands of the same kind and also hold a note against Richard and Sam H. Jones for \$3,283.46 a large portion of which is my sister Emma's money which I had intended to invest on her account as the balance of interest on what she holds against my farm and have not liked to ask him for it as I know his tightness for money. Some of this money I must have his spring to pay some debts, but Emma's money might be secured on the Cranberry Farm should I be justified in investing in anything so new.

One hundred acres of land at five dollars per acre would be \$500, eight thousand rails would be required which would cost \$400, also one house and shed for a horse \$250, and \$50 for putting up fence and you would have \$1,200 for the cost of a farm which would (by spending hourly for labor, \$300) pay nearly if not quite the wages the first three years, and after that yield without doubt \$600 clear of all expenses and if we could count on 25 bushels per acre on fifty acres at \$4 per bushel would make that five thousand dollars. I have heard on good authority that in Massachusetts they

frequently produce more than one hundred bushels per acre, but we cannot expect that here as the system adopted in there cultivation would be so thorough at first. I have been studying the cultivation of this plant in some measure for five years, and have been certain that it would answer in measure for Richard and Sam H. (Jones) to enter into it and have tried to induce them to go into it, but it was too small a matter for them.

Anthony had the mortgage discharged from record on his way up, how I shall be able to repay in this matter I know not it showed an interest in me that I thought no one ever had which to me who never had any success in money matters not heavy losses but a constant wasting away of my means had quite discouraged and depressed and as a natural consequence I thought it but right that I should not enter into this new business without consulting one that I know was my friend, and I trust that I shall be able to merit your esteem.

You would oblige me by giving me your opinion in regard to using Emma's money in the way I have mentioned, and any suggestion you may make about those things will be received with pleasure.

Thaney was very much pleased with his skates; they are plenty large. He thinks all the more of them as your gift and coming direct from the city. Minnie liked her book very much. She will have plenty of time to read it as none of them can go to school on account of the bad roads. We have a case of scarlet fever down in the house by Anthony's mill and we expect to have it as Minnie was there when the little boy was sickening.

I shall send the Cranberries down to Pemberton as soon as the roads will let us get there and send them down by Thomas Budd to your office. Mary sends her best regards to Caroline and says she would be pleased to receive that letter even if I should have called in to see you.

I remain your much obliged friend

James A. Fenwick

During the five years that James Fenwick had been studying the cultivation of cranberries his experimental plot had been on a portion of the “Coleman Farm”, north of the railroad, halfway between Pemberton and New Libson. At that time this belonged to Doctor Pierson Coleman, his wife’s adopted brother.

Emma was James’ youngest sister, a beautiful young woman, she was not mentally capable of managing her money. Her brother considered it a trust and asked Cousin Andrew’s opinion as to his being “justified in investing in anything so new”. Apparently Cousin Andrew did not too strongly oppose the plans explained in the above letter for some three months later in May of 1857, James took title to the first one hundred and eight acres on Cranberry Run.

The next three letters tell of the picking and marketing of his first crop of wild cranberries.

For the next twenty-five years the letters of James A. Fenwick to Andrew M. Jones tell of the ups and downs of his cranberry venture, good crops and poor, frosts, floods, and droughts. Always with confidence in the future of his cranberry business, he was timid, sensitive, nervous, worrisome, and very dependent on “Cousin Andrew” for

advice, sympathy, scoldings, and loans whenever things went wrong. Yet, he had the vision, backbone, and independence to push ahead.

Most of the following letters are greatly cut, giving only sentences or paragraphs, telling of immediate family happenings and of his plans and experiences with his cranberry bog.

James Fenwick to Andrew Jones

September 25, 1857

Lisbon Farm Sep 25th, 1857

Dear Andrew,

Last night I returned from the bog where I have been staying for two nights past, and we have about 44 bushels of cranberries picked. I have got along pretty well, but have some women with long tongues to deal with also some giving to quarreling, and women I find are generally more close in a bargain than men. Some have refused positively to work on my terms, although good hands make a dollar a day. I have no doubt that I can get them picked on my terms, if I have the cash. I owe then already about \$25, and probably will own them 4 or 5 times that amount when done, (say in a week or ten days).

Much regards to you and Caroline

I remain your cousin

James A. Fenwick

James Fenwick to Andrew Jones

October 19, 1857

Lisbon Farm Oct 19th 1857

Dear Andrew,

Having received the within order for seventy five dollars I am anxious to know if it will be cashed in these tight times, and being head over ears in business at home had no time to come down to the city. I have taken the liberty (to) send it to you to request your attention to having it cashed for me.

By borrowing from Mr. Morris fifty dollars (which was wonderful favor) and selling off all my lambs, and leaving some small payments due before this unpaid. I have succeeded in paying most the expense for picking cranberries which amounted to near one hundred and fifty dollars.

It has been a wonderful success in the amount of bushels obtained about 250 bushels which at usual rates of a number of years past will amount to ten to twelve hundred dollars, thus realizing at once all I expected at the end of two or three years, but cranberries have been unusually plenty all through the Pines, so that it would be not right to estimate from this an average, and then there some casualties to be looked for.

I have sent my sorghum to Shreves Factory to be made up for half, they say I may expect about sixteen gallons of syrup. I have no doubt it will answer for farmers to make there own, having tested it several times I pronounce it very good. Several hogsheads will be made by young Shreve this season.

Mary unites with me in sending her love to you lady

I remain respectfully yours

James A. Fenwick

James Fenwick to Andrew Jones

February 19, 1858

Lisbon Farm Feb. 19th 1858

Dear Andrew,

I forwarded to J.H. Weaver and Co. today via Mount Holly Railroad.

8 barrels of red cranberries at \$12.....\$96

2 barrels of light cranberries at \$11.....\$22

The bargain was to deliver them at the Mt. Holly Railroad depot so that they have to pay freight, his agent Mr. Gideon Farrow was here and saw the berries so he bought them on this judgment. They are the same berries he saw. Should he take any advantage of these kind of things to refuse payment please mention these facts to him. Not knowing the people I thought perhaps these facts might be of use to prevent them taking a step toward difficulty.

From my own judgment and also that of others from near our coast I may reasonably expect larger returns from the bog and also have some experience about expenses, the marketing, and will realize more next year. It appears that the arrivals of berries from the East take place the latter part of October through November and December if they have a large crop as they had this year the market is glutted and if we send any most likely it would be a long time before they are sold some would rot and they would be sold in a rotten condition like the Eastern berries are before they are sold. It is generally thought to be the best up here to wait until the market gets a little bare of Eastern berries than to resort a lead and send them off to be sold while yet in good condition, and in this way we realize larger prices. Next year if I can provide barrels before head I will try to get some to markets before the vessels arrive with

eastern berries. I mention this as you appeared to think that I had made a mistake in not getting mine off sooner. It required some experience to be confident about the keeping so large an amount of berries. The loss need not be more than 10 percent now thought it was more than that this year. Whereas the advance will be more than 50 percent, and had I not sold any at all 'till now it would 80 percent. Mary wishes me to say that she received a letter with money in it from Caroline and sends her best regards. Please say to Mrs. Jones that if she wants any cranberries, I have some left and would be glad to supply her. Sally Morris and mother have got colds. Sally from going to the Quaker wedding when the groom ordered no fire to be made, and kept them an hour without saying the ceremony. We are all well, and with my best regards to Mrs. Jones.

I remain your cousin

James A. Fenwick

Anthony Morris had married Anne Emlen Jones, a first cousin of James and half sister to "Cousin Andrew". Sally Morris mentioned in the letter of February 19, 1858, is the daughter of Anthony and Anne. This letter records the experience of marketing his first crop.

James Fenwick to Andrew Jones

September 7, 1858

Lisbon Farm Sep 7th 1858

Mr. Andrew M. Jones

Dear Cousin,

I take up my pen to write to you I know not for what reason without it is a sympathy, or want of it. I have spent several nights at Hanover going to my cranberry bog in the morning. My bound boy driving my team and taking wood home with him and I either ride on the wood home or walk. My cranberry bog could be rented now for three hundred dollars per year which would leave \$400 a year for the renter to live upon besides house rent and fire wood and eight months in the year his time might be spent working elsewhere if he would find work, but the chance for improving the cranberries is very great my time is spent in observing their habits and in draining to improve the bog and expect this fall or next spring to plant an acre or more.

The same objection would follow in selling farms for cranberries, they (Richard and Sam Jones) have had several offers since my success. I have advised not to sell because they could not get more price as yet than I gave, but wait a year to two, and my increased success would double that value, or much more, for I am sure of success with a little time and money. The last (of) the cranberries will furnish almost as sure as that there will be grass on the farm from year to year. Although I have a small crop this season, the cause is very apparent. The only fear now is droughts, such as happen two or three in a life time. The cedar logs buried on this branch, I fear are not of much value. Sam has been leasing some of the cranberry bogs this year, and should the tenants succeed as I have but little doubt the rent will increase from year to year and in two or three years form a considerable source of revenue.

Uncle John Salter since he has lost his sight has been failing so fast that I cannot think he can last this winter. The doctor thinks the spinal marrow is affected. Aunt

Eliza Warner has an attack of bilious color old and feeble as she is they fear it may be her last.

Remaining as ever truly yours

James A. Fenwick

In this letter of September 7, 1858, which tells of picking his second crop of cranberries, he writes of spending several nights at Hanover.

At this date there was no road, not even one of the sandy pine trails, between Browns Mills and “My Cranberry Bog”. The only way of reaching the bog from Browns Mills was by way of Hanover, where the Mansion House was occupied for at least twenty years after the date of this letter.

It must have been as long as fifteen years before the nine miles from Lisbon Farm, by way of Hanover, was shortened to seven by the opening of a direct road from Browns Mills to the Bog. I distinctly remember Grandfather’s expressions of pleasure when his frequent journeys were then shortened. In this letter also Grandfather expresses concern over the future financial welfare of Richard and Sam Jones.

The letter following was not among those addressed to his cousin Andrew by James A. Fenwick, but was copied and preserved by James’ wife. She characteristically omitted both date and salutation, but it must have been written not far from this time and addressed to his cousin, Sam Jones, who when the Hanover property was divided, became the owner of the southern portion, including “Pole Bridge”, “Buffin’s Meadow” and “Mary Ann Forge”.

Please note that “A Walk Through Buffin’s Meadow” is a separate entry.

