

# “Remember Me to Friends If I Have Any” The Patriot War Letters of W.W. Dodge to Dr. Charles Osgood

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Article abstract

*Colonel W.W. Dodge, an American citizen in the Canadian Rebellion, was among the crew of a schooner captured by Canadian militia off Fort Malden on the Detroit River. He was wounded, imprisoned at Fort Malden, Toronto and Quebec in succession, and made a daring escape from the latter location with Dr. Edward A. Theller. One or two of his letters, written while incarcerated in Canada, were published in a few newspapers at the time, but now new letters have been found. These documents, which are presented here, enhance our understanding of the Patriot War.*

# "Remember Me to Friends If I Have Any"

## The Patriot War Letters of W.W. Dodge to Dr. Charles Osgood

by Robert Beasecker

### Introduction

Colonel W.W. Dodge literally sailed into Patriot War history seemingly from nowhere. His brief participation as an American citizen in the Canadian Rebellion is known primarily from a few contemporary newspaper accounts and other nineteenth-century sources. The standard elements of Colonel Dodge's story include the following: he was among the crew of a schooner captured by Canadian militia off Fort Malden on the Detroit River; wounded by a musket ball in the eye; imprisoned at Fort Malden, Toronto and Quebec in succession; and made a daring escape from the latter location with Dr. Edward A. Theller. One or two of his letters, written while incarcerated in Canada, were published and republished in a few American and Canadian newspapers; however, since the originals no longer exist, it is not possible to determine whether the published versions were printed in full or redacted.

Intriguing new documents concerning Dodge's role in the Patriot War were recently uncovered among the papers of Dr. Charles Osgood, a Monroe,

### *Abstract*

*Colonel W.W. Dodge, an American citizen in the Canadian Rebellion, was among the crew of a schooner captured by Canadian militia off Fort Malden on the Detroit River. He was wounded, imprisoned at Fort Malden, Toronto and Quebec in succession, and made a daring escape from the latter location with Dr. Edward A. Theller. One or two of his letters, written while incarcerated in Canada, were published in a few newspapers at the time, but now new letters have been found. These documents, which are presented here, enhance our understanding of the Patriot War.*

*Résumé: Le colonel W.W. Dodge, citoyen américain engagé dans la rébellion canadienne, fait partie de l'équipage d'une goélette capturée par la milice canadienne au large de Fort Malden, sur la rivière Détroit. Blessé, il est emprisonné successivement à Fort Malden, à Toronto et à Québec, d'où il s'évade audacieusement avec le docteur Edward A. Theller. Une ou deux de ses lettres, écrites lors de son incarcération au Canada, ont été publiées dans quelques journaux de l'époque, mais de nouvelles lettres ont été retrouvées. Ces documents, qui sont présentés ici, nous permettent de mieux comprendre la guerre des Patriotes.*

Michigan physician who was a friend of Dodge.<sup>1</sup> The materials consist of four let-

<sup>1</sup> In April 2019, the sizeable collection of correspondence and papers belonging to Dr. Osgood was

ters written by Dodge to Dr. Osgood as well as three from other correspondents who wrote about Dodge and his adventures and predicaments. The enhancement and improvement of the historical record are always welcome, especially for an individual whose background, biography, and subsequent activities have remained obscure until now.

William Wallace Dodge was born in Marietta, Ohio, on 25 October 1816 to Oliver Dodge (1789-1836) and Eudotia Wing Dodge (1796-1835). Oliver Dodge, the son of the first settlers of Marietta, was a tanner and later became a riverboat captain on the Ohio River. William Wallace had one sister, Mary Wing Dodge Holden (1815-1837). Nothing is known about his educational attainments, although the few examples of his correspondence sent during his imprisonment in Canada would indicate, based on vocabulary and literary allusions, that he had had more than just the minimum of frontier learning.

What event or events inspired Dodge's move from Marietta to Monroe, Michigan, is not known, nor is the specific date of his arrival there. It is possible that the deaths of his parents and only sister between 1835 and January 1837

provided the impetus to leave his Ohio birthplace. His destination was not a random choice: four of his mother's six siblings had relocated to Monroe or Detroit between 1815 and 1831, so close family relations were near to hand. These relatives included Austin Eli Wing (1792-1849), Electra Wing Deane Bulkley (1793-1871), Elizabeth Symmes Wing Noble (1802-1885), and Warner Wing (1805-1876).

In 1838, Monroe was a growing and prosperous city and township of nearly 2,800 inhabitants, located near the mouth of the Raisin River at Lake Erie. Across the river to the north was the older settlement of Frenchtown, established in the late 1770s by French families from Detroit and Canada; it was the site of the 1813 Battles of Frenchtown during the War of 1812. Favourably located forty miles southwest of the territorial (and later state) capital of Detroit, Monroe was an important nexus of commerce and transportation. The Territorial Road ran through it, making Monroe a convenient halt for the daily stagecoach travelling between Buffalo, New York and Detroit. It was also a well-known stop for steamboat traffic on the Great Lakes, and in 1840 the Southern Line railroad

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consigned to a New York auction gallery and subsequently acquired by Grand Valley State University Libraries' Special Collections, located in Allendale, Michigan. Most of it—about 900 items—document Osgood's time spent in Monroe, Michigan, from 1835 to 1841. Upon receipt of the collection, it was determined that the Osgood papers had been largely untouched since the 1840s: letters addressed to the doctor had been uniformly folded and banded with paper wrappers and arranged by date. His correspondents amount to more than 190 individuals and businesses, mostly from Monroe and Connecticut. Among these are the four letters written by William Wallace Dodge that directly relate to his participation and incarceration during the Canadian Rebellion of 1837-1838 and his ultimate escape; in addition, there are a few letters from Dr. Osgood's friends that mention Dodge and give other details of the events associated with him and his Patriot War companions.

opened its route thirty-seven-mile route from Monroe to Adrian.

Like Detroit, Monroe became a local center for residents sympathetic to the Canadian Rebellion. As elsewhere on both sides of the border between Canada and the United States, these groups met secretly in so-called “Hunters’ Lodges” and actively advocated a revolution to establish a government independent of Great Britain. In Monroe, these meeting places were usually taverns, hotels, or other public buildings. One historian notes the irony that very few of Monroe’s French citizenry took part in either the planning or participation in the ostensible liberation of their former lands in New France.<sup>2</sup>

William Wallace Dodge was a resident of Monroe by December 1837 when he accepted a colonel’s commission in the Patriot Army from William Lyon Mackenzie, one of the chief agitators for the Canadian insurrection. It seems likely that Dodge had arrived somewhat earlier because of the many Monroe friends and acquaintances he mentions in his letters to Dr. Charles Osgood (1808-1881). Osgood, like Dodge, was more or less a newcomer to Monroe, having arrived in

the late summer of 1835 from Lebanon, Connecticut. Although eight years separated them in age, they shared the same circle of friends.

Dr. Osgood, a young physician hoping to establish his medical practice in a less populated part of the country, had relocated to the Michigan Territory and soon became involved in land speculation there. However, with the Panic of 1837, the market for western lands had all but disappeared. Osgood married a woman from Providence, Rhode Island in 1839; by 1840, he had formulated an efficacious fever medicine, “Osgood’s India Cholagogue,” that became very popular and sold widely for many decades. Those two events were factors in his decision to leave Monroe in 1841 and settle with his spouse in Norwich, Connecticut, where he lived for the rest of his life.

### Letter 1<sup>3</sup>

The first letter that the prisoner Dodge sent to Dr. Osgood was dated ten days after the twenty-six-ton, two-masted schooner *Ann*<sup>4</sup> and her complement was captured as a consequence of running aground near Fort Malden. No doubt, due to the wound he suffered

<sup>2</sup> John McClelland Bulkley, *History of Monroe County, Michigan* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1913), 164.

<sup>3</sup> All the letters discussed in this article are so-called “stampless covers” used in the era before postage stamps. They were essentially a letter sheet folded two or three times, sealed with wax, and sent without the need for an envelope. The letters themselves are written in black ink, and the transcriptions are given without correction of spelling or punctuation, although margins and spacings have been regularized for easier reading. When a word is illegible, the best contextual guess is given with brackets and a question mark, with illegible letters replaced with dashes, e.g. “dun[?]” and “—r[?]”.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the ship is variously spelled “Ann” and “Anne” in contemporary accounts. Theller, as its commander, refers to the schooner as *Ann of Detroit*, and indeed such a vessel by that name is listed among the ships that plied the Great Lakes, having been built in Detroit in 1836.

and subsequent loss of his eye, the letter was written for him by what appears to be a John Talc, whom Dodge calls “my friend.” Neither that name nor anything similar matches any of the prisoners held at Fort Malden, so Dodge’s amanuensis remains unidentified. However, he seems knowledgeable of persons in Monroe, so he may have resided nearby and had just been visiting Dodge in prison. It seems odd that Dodge refers to Warner Wing, Austin Eli Wing, and Charles Noble as his “friends”; the first two were his uncles and the third his aunt’s husband. All of them, including Dan Miller, were distinguished citizens of Monroe, serving variously as elected territorial, state, and municipal officials.

Later mentions of a Bill and Charley are obscure and cannot be identified. However, the underlined word *halves* probably refer to the Monroe women, Catherine Haff (1819-1896) and her sister Elizabeth Haff (1810-1840); Dr. Osgood had a dalliance with the former, a relationship that most of his friends were well aware. At the end of the letter, Talc adds his own words of advice about the dangers and likely result of excessive ardour in the doctor’s case.

In a nearly illegible scrawl, Dodge adds a few lines of his own. The handwriting is indicative of the injuries he has recently suffered. On a separate piece of paper enclosed with the letter is a brief note written by the assistant medical officer of Fort Malden, Thomas Phillips, giving a succinct report on Dodge’s condition. It was likely requested to assure Dr. Osgood, in medical parlance, of

Dodge’s probable recovery.

On the whole, the first communication from Dodge exhibits the natural optimism of a 21-year-old despite his dire circumstances, which include imprisonment, the loss of an eye, and possible execution. Additionally, he engages in good-natured teasing of Osgood about his amorous affair with Catherine Haff.

The letter is addressed to Osgood in Monroe. The lack of postal or transit markings indicates that the letter was carried from the prison by someone (perhaps John Talc himself) and delivered by hand. Dr. Osgood’s docketing note on the letter mentions he answered Dodge on 30 January 1838.

Amherstburgh U. Canada  
Jany 19, 1838

Dear Doc,

I feel so much better this eveng and as my friend Talc[?] ~~feels~~ seems willing to gratify me by writing you after[?] this, I am pleased to inform you that I am reported to be in a fair way of recovery—you have doubtless heard before this all the particulars of my misfortune.

My object in writing you is with a view of relieving your mind of any anxiety on my account. I have received every attention my unfortunate situation required. My friends Warner & A.E. Wing, Cha<sup>s</sup> Noble or Dan B. Miller can satisfy any enquiries you may wish to make.

I frequently wish I could catch a glimpse of your friendly phiz, but this, at least for the present, is a pleasure I am doomed to forego—however I have the consolation of knowing I share your sympathy—Give my respects to all friends, to Bill, Charley, to the halves and the whole ones.

As you are so decidedly a ladies man, it may not be amiss to say that the fair dames in this region, have personally administered to my every want with a kindness and attention for which at some future time I hope I may be able at least to show my gratitude.

I should like much to hear from you and as of course all letters to me must necessarily be opened, please to direct † any to the care of Co<sup>l</sup> Ratcliffe<sup>s</sup> Commander of the Forces in the Western Dis<sup>s</sup> U. C. If any letters for me should be lying at the P. Office and no opportunity of forwarding them by private individuals should present itself, send them on in the same way—

Yrs respectfully &c

W. W. Dodge  
by his private Secy  
John Talc[?]

[In another hand, probably that of W.W. Dodge:]

Teller<sup>6</sup> says that you must get married before you can deliver any of the n—[?] Ladies of our good city

[In John Talc's hand:]

D[ea]r Doctor—

My patient is doing as well as r—[?] my sanguine temperament can desire. you will perceive[?] by his scribbling he is anything but a “dead man”—Indeed if —ise[?] worse things than these occur very frequently— Joking apart, I believe his advice to you is wholesome & necessary (who by the by is a nice little woman) does not take good care,

I would not be at all surprized to see in due time a “miniature likeness” in the shape of a little responsibility.

believe me truly yrs

John Talc[?]

[Hand-written enclosure:]

Report of the case of W.W. Dodge.—  
Head Quarters

Amherstburg 18 Jan<sup>y</sup> 1838

No particular alteration has taken place since Doctor Pritchard left. Mr Dodge is free from pain—the inflammation is gradually subsiding—pulse is good—there is no fever—he rests well at night—the appetite good—

Tho<sup>s</sup> Phillips  
A P M O

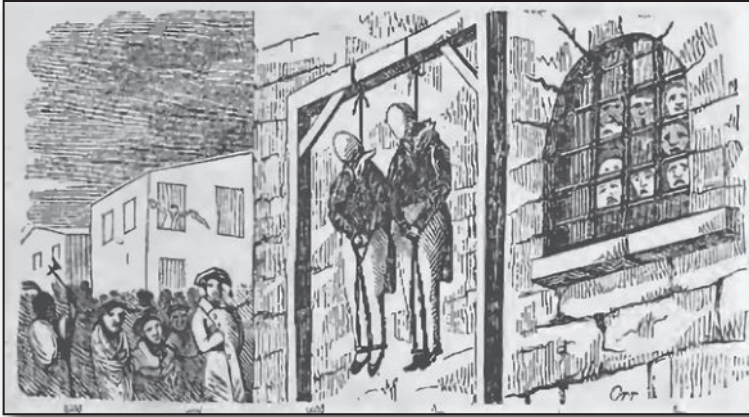
## Letter 2

**I**n the 100-day interval between the first letter to Dr. Osgood and his second, Dodge had been transferred from Fort Malden to Toronto with several other Patriot prisoners, including his schooner *Ann* compatriots. The tone of his letter has changed considerably. It was undoubtedly influenced by the seriousness of his predicament and the fact that he and his companions had just witnessed, just outside their cell, the hanging of the Canadian rebels Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews for high treason. In

<sup>5</sup> Colonel Thomas Radcliff (1794-1841) had been placed in command of the western Canadian frontier on 1 January 1838 at Fort Malden. His name is also spelled “Radcliffe” in some contemporary accounts.

<sup>6</sup> I.e., Edward Alexander Theller (1804-1859). He was the commander of the Patriot forces in the schooner *Ann* that attacked Fort Malden at Amherstburg on 9 January 1838. He and the others were captured when the schooner ran aground.





[*Hanging of Lount and Matthews in Toronto*] by Orr. Probably John William Orr (1815-1887). Wood engraving. In *The Caroline Almanack, and American Freeman's Chronicle*, for 1840. (Rochester, N.Y.: Mackenzie's Gazette Office, 1839), page 3.

Dodge names his fellow Americans who share the cell

the first paragraph, Dodge has lost his excited attitude fresh from the high adventure at Fort Malden to one filled initially with gloom and self-pity and complains that, to all appearances, his friends have forgotten him.

Dodge relates all the current rumours about their ultimate fate and mentions Edward Theller's narrow escape from the gallows with Dodge's friend Stephen Brophy. Brophy (born ca. 1819), a fellow resident of Monroe, was a lawyer and civil engineer also aboard the schooner *Ann*. He was apparently condemned for treason under the same rubric as Theller, both being born in Ireland and at one time British subjects. Dodge's natural good humour returns in sharing Brophy's statement that the latter would prefer living in the land of Martin Van Buren—the United States—over being sent to the penal colony at Van Diemen's Land. Both Dodge and Brophy enjoin Dr. Osgood to enjoy all the favours of the women of Monroe in their stead, once again making specific reference to Catherine Haff.

In addition to Theller and Brophy,

with him and reports that the others are in other locations within the jail, and some are in poor condition. Dodge closes with contemplation on imprisonment and hanging and demonstrates his familiarity with current popular literature by alluding to a line from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Paul Clifford* (1830). He also notes a visit to the prisoners by Aaron Vail (1796-1878), a special diplomatic agent sent by President Van Buren to determine the veracity of reports of alleged American citizens being held captive at various places in Canada.

This letter was carried from the prison by Ann Platt Wilson Theller, the wife of prisoner Edward Theller. It was finally posted from Cleveland, Ohio, on 12 May. Dr. Osgood, in his docketing notation, did not indicate that he sent a reply to Dodge.

Toronto Prison  
29<sup>th</sup> April 1838

Dear Osgood,

I write you from a concern cal[1]ed a room 18 by 20 feet square, which in the day contains 20 men, with beds. Aliment, ~~and~~

cooks and cooking utensils—and at night the same quantity of persons and things strewed either hickely pickledy—or in any other manner that will remind you of the tribes of Israel when spread out on the plains of Abram—if you can conceive any such idea; in the continued round of pleasure and enjoyment that must have awaited you while some poor devils of your acquaintance have to figure as above in filth and wretchedness with liberty to luxuriate on the blessed prospect of enjoying a pound of bread and pint of soup distilled from a beefs head that might once have adorned the carcass of an ass for all I know—This picture of our situation may appear ludicrous but it is not the less true—To descend into the realities of the world, I will observe what sometimes occurs to me, that all old friends have forgotten my condition—as I have heard nothing from a living soul in the shape of a letter since Mr Miller came in the shape of an angel to visit us—but when I recollect the severe system of espionage that is kept up on all the inmates of this prison, I am inclined to excuse the severest neglect that I may be obliged to suffer, believing that some good fellow has written me, but which is not allowed to reach me.

In relation to my situation I cannot say any thing in certainty about it. A D<sup>e</sup> King,<sup>7</sup> one of the Alderman of this goodly city tells me from a conversation he has had with the Governor that I will be sent to England—He did not state for what purpose[.] Nothing official from all I can learn can be had on it—and this is all I can tell you of my precise whereabouts in perhaps another week. Which perhaps may develop more of my good fortune. Friend Brophy with whom I'm located and try to make our condition as tolerable as it can be, has high hopes for a solitary existence in Van Diemens land, tho'

he says he should much rather spend his time in Van Burens Land. But over which he has no control, as his case rests in common with that of many others—with the Executive and Governor—He was rescued for [i.e. from] execution with D<sup>e</sup> Theller, but owing to some classification of names the Governors signature was attached to ~~his~~ a list on which his name was written, either from mistake or design, and thus he ~~only~~ escaped having sentence of death pronounced upon him—The Court not being yet over sentences are not yet pronounced, until then, he cannot determine the time or place of his punishment, but he tells me to say to you and Wadsworth<sup>8</sup> that when death brings round his final release he will haunt every soul in Monroe (the ladies excepted) if the good folks in your city does not get him out of this scrape. He has been arraigned for High Treason on the ground of being born a British Subject but if he ever should,—as it is said in the scriptures that some men will be born again, he is determined that it shall not be in Ireland.

We have everything as ready in our apartment, and near at hand as you have in your domicile, as we eat, drink, sleep and    !! in the apartment. Tho deprived of a mixification with the ladies we are not quite forgotten by them, being kept in remembrance of their favor by some of those little matters that ladies know how, so well to under affection[.] By the way you must do my share of the kissing on the sweet lips in Monroe, and Brophy thinks you will do Haff of it in recollection of him. My general health is good, being confined for such a length of time you will be aware that I cannot have any occasion for ~~the~~ a physicians services—Brophy and myself play chess considerably—cannot you come over and play a game? You will then see how we are

<sup>7</sup> Dr. John King was Alderman in St. George's Ward, Toronto.

<sup>8</sup> William Murray Wadsworth (1812-1840) was a Monroe lawyer and close friend of Dr. Osgood.



situate[d]—It is a painful position for one who had hitherto been as free as liberty itself, and who knew nothing comparatively of restraint to be caged within such a habitation as I possess, and only sufficed to see the pure light of day through the grated bars of a prison—Make what comments you please on this—It proves the principle that we only know our happiness when deprived of it—

Theller, Sutherland<sup>9</sup>, Brophy—Claude Campeau<sup>10</sup> of Brownstown A D Bordneau<sup>11</sup> from Huron and Henry W. Johnston<sup>12</sup> are the only portion of the American prisoners in my room—The remainder are in another apartment—and in a pretty severe condition—You should not be without some correspondence from me as long as you have been, if what I would write you would be allowed to go out of prison—This I am enabled to send you through the kindness of M<sup>rs</sup> Theller and only for which opportunity you would have as much chance of seeing myself as this said letter—

We were obliged to witness the execution of two fine and noblehearted men, within 20 yards of our window—They were the only persons executed, and from all we can perceive at present they only will remind

us of Paul Cliffords apothegm, that the worst use to make of a man is to hang him!<sup>13</sup> A Mr Vail from Washington visited us, I know nothing of what may turn up from his enquiry.<sup>14</sup> Give my respects to Wadsworth[,] Ford and all good fellows—Personally wait on the ladies of our acquaintance and do the same[.] Say to the ladies if any of them should hold any innocent birds in cages in the shape of prisoners in our behalf to let them fly! Should I receive any good news you shall have it as soon as it can be sent—No letters can reach me unless addressed to care of M<sup>s</sup> Kidd Jailer, which he reads and if the contents are satisfactory, I will get it, not otherwise. I thank you for a letter to Malden.

Farewell

Yours truly  
W.W. Dodge

### Letter 3

**D**r. Osgood received no further correspondence from W.W. Dodge for more than seven months. During that interval, Dodge, Theller, and other Patriot prisoners had been transferred from To-

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Jefferson Sutherland (ca. 1801-1852) was a General in the Patriot army. He was captured on 4 March 1838. Originally sentenced to transportation, he was freed in May 1839.

<sup>10</sup> Claude Jacques Campeau (1785-1856) was a farmer; eventually pardoned and returned to the United States.

<sup>11</sup> Augustus D. Berdneau was a seaman, possibly operating out of Port Huron, sixty miles northeast of Detroit. He was eventually pardoned and returned to the United States.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Johnston was a laborer; eventually pardoned and returned to the United States.

<sup>13</sup> The correct quotation is: “[T]he very worst use to which you can put a man is to hang him!” Another point of comparison to the Patriot prisoners is that Bulwer-Lytton’s eponymous hero had his death sentence commuted to transportation.

<sup>14</sup> Vail visited and interviewed prisoners held at Montreal, Kingston, and Toronto, including those captured on the schooner *Ann*. He determined that there was insufficient evidence for legal proceedings against only eight of those confined in Canada. His report to the then U.S. Secretary of State John Forsyth was not released for publication until 1841, in answer to a House of Representatives resolution to release information pertaining to the American prisoners held by the British in Van Dieman’s Land. See U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *American Citizens—Prisoners in Van Dieman’s Land*, 27th Cong., 1st sess., 1841, H. Doc. 39.

ronto to the citadel in Quebec on 2 June. Unwilling to submit to their sentence of transportation to a penal colony, Theller, Dodge, and two others cut through

*Manuscript signature, W.W. Dodge, letter of 29 April 1838.*

the bars over the cell window, avoided the various sentinels, and escaped from the citadel on the rainy night of 16 October. Although the other two were recaptured within a day, Theller and Dodge outwitted their pursuers with the help of French-Canadian sympathizers and, by means of carriage and horseback, crossed the American border and entered Maine on 6 November 1838.<sup>15</sup> The pair made their way to Augusta and, after a short stop in Boston, arrived in New York City by 14 November where they appeared before enthusiastic crowds. Theller seems to have gone on to Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia without Dodge, who remained in New York for a number of weeks. From Philadelphia, Theller travelled west to Cleveland, finally arriving in Detroit on 4 December 1838.

Dodge's extended stay in New York City was not intentional. There he had unexpectedly been arrested for debt,

thinking those financial obligations had long since been paid. His short letter seems to have been written to apprise Dr. Osgood of his improving health and unexpected detainment by the New York City authorities. He opines that his arrest may also have something to do with his activities with Patriot forces at Fort Malden. Again, he asks to be remembered by Monroe friends, including Catherine Haff, and hopes to return to Monroe within a couple of months. He evidently heard the news of Osgood's engagement, possibly from New York acquaintances, and asks for confirmation. Addressed to Dr. Osgood at Monroe, it was carried to him by a M. Martin (or Maton). Osgood's docketing note indicates that he replied to Dodge on 3 February 1839 and sent it to Buffalo, New York.

New York Dec 6 – 38 –

Dear Sir

After having passed through fire and sword[?] I arrived in the city and was arrested on debts contracted in this city town[?] for goods—which I supposed long since set-

<sup>15</sup> The flight of Theller and Dodge from the allegedly escape-proof citadel of Quebec was indeed a remarkable feat of planning, audacity, subterfuge, and luck that was greatly assisted by efforts of French *habitants*. The first published account was Theller's own 3,300-word "Escape of General Theller and Colonel Dodge from Queen Victoria's Fortress at Quebec" in *Mackenzie's Gazette*, 1 (28) 17 November 1838, 221, which was reprinted in a number of other newspapers, e.g., *Kalamazoo Gazette*, 8 December 1838. The most authoritative, and greatly expanded version, appeared in Theller's two-volume *Canada in 1837-38: Showing, by Historical Facts, the Causes of the Late Attempted Revolution, and of Its Failure...* (1841).

tled.<sup>16</sup> I shall have to remain here some eight or ten weeks—when I hope one morn to get under way for home—My health which for a long time has been poor is gradually improving and I hope soon to enjoy my usual health st-[?]

There was considerable excitement created here at the time of my arrest—many supposed it was on account of the part I took in Canadian affairs last winter—which I presume was the case as there can [be] no possible good accrue[?] from keeping me here—Remember me to all the good folks S.B.B and miss haff—W. Wadsworth &c. Brothersson<sup>17</sup> is here and sends his respects—My spirits are quite good—and I hope soon to have the pleasure of again seeing you in your snug office[.]

You may write me here I write again[.] wish you to remember me to all friends—

I am sir your most obedient sv

W.W. Dodge  
C. Osgood

I hear you are to be married is it so (inform me)<sup>18</sup>

N.B. I must try and make those good friends of mine, who have me here, pay dear for the whistle—(what do you think) Some advice from you on the subject would be acceptable.

D—

## Letter 4

In the event, W.W. Dodge returned to Monroe in late February 1839. In June, Dodge, Edward A. Theller, Stephen B. Brophy, and two other Patriots were indicted for violating U.S. neutrality laws. In Detroit, U.S. District Attorney Daniel Goodwin (1799-1887) prosecuted the American participants in the Patriot War for the U.S. government. On 28 June 1839, Theller was acquitted of his charge, while Dodge and Brophy were freed when the prosecutor declined to pursue their cases.

It is unknown how long Dodge remained in Monroe after his court appearance, but he seemingly departed for the western frontier sometime in the late summer, probably August. By the end of the year, he and a companion, whom Dodge does not name, were in Burlington, the capital of the Iowa Territory.<sup>19</sup> From there, on Christmas Eve, Dodge wrote his final letter to Dr. Osgood, in which he describes his present uncomfortable financial circumstances that are at least partially due to the indifference—or outright hostility—of his relations in Monroe as well as his so-called friends.

<sup>16</sup> It is possible that his debts in New York City were accrued for his business in Monroe. Among the names of prisoners taken during the rebellion, Dodge's occupation is given as "merchant."

<sup>17</sup> Philip Charles Hamilton Brotherson (1811-1852), from Lewiston, New York, was a land speculator and friend of both Osgood and Dodge.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Osgood became engaged to Sarah Smith Larned (1816-1891) of Providence, Rhode Island, in October 1838; they were married a year later.

<sup>19</sup> It is curious why Dodge did not specifically identify his fellow traveller as Stephen Brophy, who was well-known to Osgood and other friends in Monroe. Brophy's 25 November 1839 letter printed in a January 1840 issue of *Mackenzie's Gazette* relates some details of his and Dodge's travels and an assessment and description of the Iowa Territory.

Although he gives no details of his own occupation, Dodge warmly encourages Osgood to emigrate to the Iowa Territory as a new land of opportunity, much as Michigan had been a few years before. The letter was mailed from Burlington, Iowa Territory, on 24 December 1839 under the free frank of J.J. Clark, probably a member of the territorial legislature. Osgood's docketing does not indicate that he replied to Dodge.

{Burlington Seat of Government  
{Iowa Territory, Dec 24<sup>th</sup> 1839—

Dear Sir,

In commencing this epistle to you under the present circumstances in which we are r/e-litively placed. I must confess myself somewhat embarrassed—while you are enjoying all endearments of social intercourse with an affectionate wife and a happy circle of intimate friends—I am going on with the cold and formal intercourse which we consider necessary with strangers. My present object in troubling you at this time is in relation of to a small matter which from some[?] unfortunate circumstances which it is unnecessary for me to inmi—rate[?] you being already acquainted with them. I have been obliged to defer. You are also well aware of the manner I was treated by my my good friends who had the charge of my property which I must plead in extenuation. You already know the manner in which the dolt[?] I and Studefind[?] was sitted[?] by selling an old gig. I will now state some of the facts which you probably do not know—My Uncle would

not allow me one dollar to pay my house[?] after my return from my estate. I had even to pledge some silver spoons belonging [to] my family to pr—[?] a business[?] for one horse[?—I gave him my watch for a horse to ride—but the subject I will not ensue.

On leaving Monroe I left some things in the hands of E.C. Kellogg<sup>20</sup> as security for the payment of a note endorsed by him[.] The money was sent to A.D. Anderson<sup>21</sup> to pay the note. I refer you to A.[?] E. Deane<sup>22</sup> for an invoice of the things. Could you take them and with the show cause make out all right[?] to pay yourself you relieve my mind from an unpleasant load—I sincerely wish I had it in my power to—nct—[?] the amount to you—Our[?] success has been flater-ing considering the circumstances without mooney[?] without friends—This country is what Michigan was in 34 & 5—and should you not be perfectly satisfied with your prospects in Monroe come west. There are many fine openings for men in your profession. to illustrate which I will stab[?] a can[?]—we became acquainted with a Polish D<sup>r</sup> at Dulicym[?] who does not speak any english—and in looking over the amounts I find he was taking five ten to 15 dollars per day—We had been there 2 months when we first saw him—there are no doubt many fine openings for young men of talent and enterprise. I sincerely hope you will find sufficient property[?] with the assistance of Deane to cancel the small amount due you from me—Should you want information in regard to this country write me and you shall have it.

Although I have not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with your lady,<sup>23</sup> I would wish you to present my resp[ects]

<sup>20</sup> Probably Eli C. Kellogg, one of the managers of Monroe's The Exchange, reputed to be the largest and finest hotel west of Buffalo at the time.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander D. Anderson (1810-1869) was an attorney in Monroe.

<sup>22</sup> Possibly Austin Deane, a Monroe resident and supporter of the Patriot War. He was also Dodge's cousin.

<sup>23</sup> Sarah S. Larned had married Osgood two months earlier.

wishing you all happiness[.] I remain your obedient humble sv W.W. Dodge

Dr Osgood—

I have understood that we have been severely handled by some of our friends in Monroe[.] please give me information on the matter—direct to Davenport Iowa Ter—

The part of this relating to family matters keep to you an dun[?] self, & oblige[.] I have much more to say but have no room—good bye.

N.B. This is franked by an old T-r-man[?] of mine Mr Clark. remember me to friends if I have any—

## Addenda Letter A

Besides the four William Wallace Dodge letters written to Dr. Osgood transcribed above, there are among the Osgood papers a few other references to Dodge in other correspondence that add further details to his life and adventures in Canada.

In August 1838, while on one of his periodic visits to his family back in Connecticut, Osgood seems to have heard news or rumours that Dodge had died from some illness while imprisoned in Quebec.<sup>24</sup> Either on his initiative or with the encouragement of his friends, Osgood wrote a letter of inquiry directly to the governor-in-chief of the British North American colonies, hoping for

some news of Dodge. In the collection, there are very few drafts or copies of Osgood's outgoing letters, except those to his fiancée and later spouse, so the one addressed to Lord Durham is of particular interest. A little more than a week later, Osgood received a reply from the governor's secretary with very good news.

(Copy)

Lebanon, Connecticut, U.S.A. Aug<sup>r</sup> 20<sup>th</sup>  
1838

To

His Excellency, Lord Durham<sup>25</sup>  
Gov. Gen. Brit. North Am,  
Quebec, U.C.

Sir,—It is with regret that I intrude upon your Excellency's notice for the purposes of making a few enquiries relative to the fate of a particular friend who has been in confinement in Quebec as a State prisoner, and whose death report has some days since announced. I should have addressed some one ~~individual~~ of less arduous duties ~~than yourself~~ for the desired information had I been so fortunate as to have had any acquaintance in that city or even in the Canadas. I hope, Sir, your Excellency will therefore excuse the liberty thus taken, and regard my assurance in assuming the same as the very natural of asking[?] of your Excellency's extended reputation in general benevolence, urbanity & kindness. The individual, above alluded to is William W. Dodge, one of the prisoners taken at Malden in the Schooner Ann in the early part of Jan<sup>r</sup> last, & who at that time lost one of his eyes. In the course of the winter Mr. Dodge was removed to To-

<sup>24</sup> The source of this news may have been a short notice published in the *New York Journal of Commerce* at the end of July or beginning of August that reported the death of Dodge at Quebec.

<sup>25</sup> John George Lambton, 1st Earl of Durham (1792-1840), was appointed governor-in-chief of the British North American colonies in January 1838.



*Portrait of Charles Osgood, ca. 1850. Lithograph. Dr. Charles Osgood Papers. Special Collections and University Archives, Grand Valley State University Libraries*

ronto where he remained till about 2 months ago, when we heard he was to be taken to Quebec for trial. Almost 6 weeks ago it was reported that he was attacked with inflammation of the brain and died soon after his arrival at Quebec. This report could not be traced[?] & as nothing has been heard from Mr. D. since in corroboration or otherwise, we hope it may prove untrue.

I could discover no notice of the death of any of the prisoners at Quebec in a file of Quebec papers which I examined a few days since in New York. Although Mr. Dodge may seem worthy of but little notice from his unjustifiable conduct last winter, his friends nonetheless feel a deep anxiety concerning him, & it would[?] to them be a sense[?] of high gratification to know his fate—to be relieved from their present unpleasant suspense.

These friends & connections[?], in whose behalf I now write you are of the first respectability, & exacted[?] the utmost influence to deter him from enlisting in an enterprise which[?] he was assured would make him an outlaw of our own Government, & if taken, a felon by the laws of Great Britain. But the offer of a Col<sup>l</sup> Commission, from Mackenzie deafened him to all counsel & blinded his eyes to all consequences.

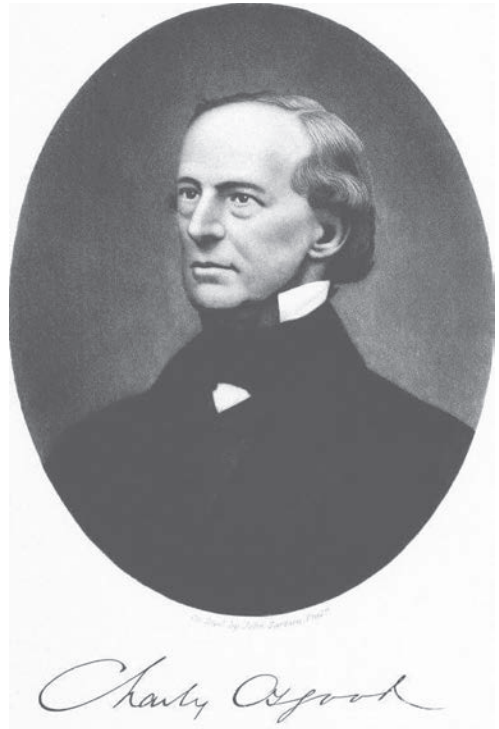
Dodge is about 22 years of age, of light complexion, tall, slender & manly in his appearance. Your Lordship will please direct to "Lebanon Conn<sup>t</sup> U.S.A."

Very Resp<sup>ly</sup> Your Ob<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

Charles Osgood

[Reply]

Quebec  
August 28, 1838



Sir,

I am directed by His Excellency the Earl of Durham to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated the 20<sup>th</sup> inst. making enquiries respecting the safety of M<sup>t</sup> Dodge one of the prisoners here in confinement in the Citadel of Quebec.

I have to inform you that the person referred to, is alive and quite well— The report to which you allude, probably arose from one of the prisoners having been confined with illness in the Military Hospital; I am not sure whether it was M<sup>t</sup> Dodge or not, but he subsequently was enabled to leave the Hospital—

I am

Sir,

Your obed<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

Chas Buller<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Charles Buller (1806-1848), a member of Parliament, became the chief secretary to Lord Durham

## Letter B

Shortly after W.W. Dodge returned to Monroe after his deliverance from captivity in Quebec, Dr. Osgood wrote of the event to his fiancée, passing along details presumably directly related to Osgood by the escapee himself. Of interest in this account is the critically important role played by a Quebec resident, Mr. Grace, and the creative and humorous means by which escape plans were passed along. Grace, whose first name or first initials are variously given as either John or P.S., hid the fugitives at his home and travelled with them to the United States, among other acts of assistance. According to Osgood, Grace joined Dodge in Monroe.

Monroe, March 1<sup>st</sup> 1839

My Dear Sarah,

... I presume you have seen in the papers a notice of the escape of Theller & Dodge from the citadel of Quebec. Mr. Dodge, who was one of our citizens, has just returned, after an absence of more than a year in the prisons of Kingston, Toronto & Quebec. His relations, who are among our most respectable citizens, as well as the young men of the town with whom he was always a familiar, were much pleased to greet his return. The sad experience of the past I think will cure his sympathy for the disaffected Canadians. A Mr. Grace the gentleman who assisted them from the citadel & who was a resident of Quebec was compelled to leave his country & is now here with Dodge. ~~The two prisoners~~ Theller & Dodge were daily allowed to walk upon the Common for their health in charge of the Sentry—but not allowed to speak to any of the ~~citizens~~ town's people. Theller evaded the order by addressing his conversation in French to a Newfoundland dog which belonged to Mr. Grace who was walking near them. The Sentry who did not understand French paid no attention to what he considered mere playfulness with a dog. In this manner the plans were laid which resulted in their escape from one of the most impregnable fortresses in the world.<sup>27</sup> Mr. Dodge gives his friend ~~fr~~[?] all the ~~fr~~[?] credit ~~for his escape~~—He says it was Grace & not r-ks[?] which saved him. ...<sup>28</sup>

Yours ever & devotedly,

Charles

## Letter C

William Murray Wadsworth was a friend of both W.W. Dodge and Charles Osgood. He was born in New York City in 1812, studied law at Yale College, and began his law practice in Monroe in the summer of 1835 at about the same time Osgood arrived at that place. He was active in Michigan territorial and later state politics, making frequent trips to Detroit for that purpose.

upon the latter's arrival in Canada.

<sup>27</sup> Theller's detailed description of the escape in his *Canada in 1837-38...* (1841) confirms and elucidates Dodge's story of passing information to Mr. Grace by speaking in French to his dog.

<sup>28</sup> Sarah Larned responded to Osgood on 19 March. She was amused by the anecdote and remarked, "think with you, that Mr. D. will be contented to remain a quiet citizen of Monroe."

The letter indicates that Wadsworth knew of the serious involvement of Dodge and Brophy in the Patriot War and wanted no part in the court proceedings to convict them. He decided the easiest solution would be to leave town, thus avoiding his potential moral and legal dilemma. The formal indictments would be handed the week after the date of the letter, but it appears that Wadsworth has already been contacted to appear as a witness. As it happened, Dodge and Brophy were freed when the prosecutor declined to pursue their cases, making it unnecessary for Wadsworth to decamp to New York. At the time he wrote this letter, Wadsworth was already ill with tuberculosis which would bring his death in April 1840.

Theresa Place [Monroe?]

[21 June 1839]<sup>29</sup>

Dear Charles

You will be surprised for a moment to hear that I am off for New York.

They had an attachment for me—I hid and kept clear. They seemed determined that I shall go up to Detroit and convict Brophy and Dodge. On the examinations I might either have to give strong testimony against them, or lean towards committing perjury. I will not be in such a situation...

God bless you till we meet in New York

William

## Conclusion

The last letter from Dodge to Osgood sent from Burlington, Iowa Territory, on Christmas Eve 1839, seemed to indicate that Dodge and his companion Stephen Brophy planned to seek their fortunes further west than Michigan and thus avoid any further entanglements resulting from their Canadian adventures, or lingering bitterness toward family and friends in Monroe. However, by the following spring, Dodge had returned to Marietta, Ohio, where he married Harriet H. Holden (1820-1887) on 29 April 1840. She happened to be the younger sister of his brother-in-law, William Holden. The couple subsequently had six children between 1842 and 1857. With one good eye, he managed to become, like his father, a riverboat captain on the Ohio River. About 1852, the family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where, presumably, Dodge continued his career with river transportation, this time on the Mississippi River. William Wallace Dodge died in St. Louis on 27 June 1858 at the age of forty-one and is buried in Bellefontaine Cemetery with his wife and five of their children.

It is of some interest that the two substantial histories of Monroe County, published in 1890 and 1913, respectively, were written by relations of W.W. Dodge. In

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<sup>29</sup> The letter is undated. Osgood, in his docketing, provides the date the letter was received.

the first, the editor, Talcott E. Wing, was Dodge's contemporary and first cousin. In the chapter concerning the Patriot War, Wing recalls "[a] detailed description of [Theller and Dodge's] hairbreadth escapes in passing the numerous guards, sentinels and police, I have listed to with intense interest from the lips of Colonel Dodge."<sup>30</sup> The later work's author, John M. Bulkley, seems to have been a relative of Electra Wing Bulkley, who was Dodge's aunt. In both of these histories, the first and middle names of Colonel Dodge have been inverted to "Wallace W. Dodge."

The subsequent history of Stephen B. Brophy is difficult to ascertain. He has all but disappeared from the historical record since last seen in Iowa Territory with Dodge. The only likely candidate that has come to light appears in the 1855 New York state census record for Brooklyn as Stephen B. Brophy. This entry states that he was born in Ireland ca. 1815, that he is a lawyer, his wife's name is Elizabeth Duffy Brophy (born ca. 1835), and that their son Peter was born ca. 1854. In 1837 Monroe, Brophy's occupa-

tion was both a civil engineer and lawyer. The same Stephen B. Brophy appears in the Brooklyn Civil War draft registration records for June 1863, where he is still listed as a lawyer, but here his birth year is recorded as about 1819. Beyond these two sightings, the trail of Brophy goes cold, nor is he further traceable through his wife or child.

Both William Wallace Dodge and Dr. Charles Osgood, having come to the Michigan frontier to avail themselves of the opportunities there for adventure, building professional reputations, acquiring property and economic enhancement for themselves, instead found disappointments. For Osgood, it was the failure of his land speculation schemes and—perhaps—his unwise relationship with a young Monroe woman. For Dodge, it was the loss of an eye, a narrow escape from British justice, and estranged family members in Monroe. By 1841, both men had left Michigan and returned to Ohio and Connecticut, respectively, where they found some measure of happiness, financial stability, and social respectability, if not prominence.

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<sup>30</sup> Talcott Enoch Wing, ed., *History of Monroe County, Michigan* (New York: Munsell & Co., 1890), 208.

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