

RALPH LYON  
530 WEST 27TH STREET  
NEW YORK

January 15, 1925.

Dear Mr. Deane:

Mrs. Lyon and I want to thank you for your kind letter of congratulation. Our little Joan is doing very nicely now, but she was sick with pneumonia when a week old, which accounts for the delay in sending the card.

Tim and Betty are very well and have grown so large that you would hardly know them. For the past two Summers Tim has gone to a boys' camp at Weld, Me., and Betty to a girls' camp at Center Lovell, Me. That is the reason you have not seen us at Shelburne, although we did stop two years ago late one afternoon and saw young Mr. Philbrook. We hoped to remain for a few days but every room was taken so we hurried on to the Ravine House.

Tim always has your humming bird picture hanging in his room.

Many, many times Mrs. Lyon and I have spoken of you and wished that we could express to you personally our appreciation of all you did to interest us in the Northern woods, and by the time you finish this letter I am sure that you will feel that you have two most enthusiastic pupils.

We returned from Shelburne in 1921 to our new house at 83 Booth Avenue, Englewood, N. J. Although our lot is but 75 by 165 feet, the first thing to secure was trees.

We had read the advertisements of Hicks Nurseries, Westbury, Long Island, N.Y., who specialize in evergreen trees, so went down to Westbury and met young Mr. Hicks.

At the time white-pine could not be sent into New Jersey on account of a quarantine, so I asked Mr. Hicks about red-pine. We had admired these trees at Shelburne, especially the specimens on Professor Emerton's lawn. It seemed that red-pine were hobbies of Mr. Hicks and he took me all over his nursery and showed me acres of wonderful evergreens. It ended by my ordering seven five-foot red-pine and a few ornamental evergreens.

When the trees were delivered, I found that Mr. Hicks, because of my interest, had sent me seven beautiful red-pine over eight feet tall.

Again, a year ago, the lot to the West of our house was sold and a grove of old apple trees cut down, to make way for a house. I again visited Mr. Hicks and he sold me some Jack pine, twenty feet tall that with a few hemlock make a wonderful wall of green along the narrow strip to the West of our house.

From Hicks Nursery I learned the use of rotted leaves and wood in order to make the soil acid for evergreens. I believe however, that these play an even more important part in holding moisture in the soil during the dry spells we have when we will be without rain for a month or more at a time.

In the last three years we have brought home about three hundred bags of rotted wood and leaves from the woods. We live near the Palisades and there are swamps where the oak leaves collect in the Fall and remain under water until the driest part of Summer when the swamps are dry and the leaves well rotted and light to carry.



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Well, with these trees from Hicks Nurseries as a background we have constructed a wild flower and plant garden extending along one side of our house for over fifty feet. Through this runs a little path and between the path and the house is a bank in which we have inserted rocks from the woods.

We have over 200 small evergreen trees and shrubs, many of which we have grown from seed and numberless wild flowers. The wild flowers seed themselves so quickly that I have trouble keeping them thinned out and we are now scattering seeds in the woods where certain varieties have been exterminated. We are very proud of our trailing Arbutus that blooms very well and our Wintergreen plants that bear berries.

The native evergreen trees in our vicinity are now limited to white pine, pitch pine, hemlock and red cedar. A few laurel bushes are left and among the evergreen plants, the Pipsisiwa and spotted variety, rattlesnake plantain and one variety of Christmas vine.

We have brought home seed and seedlings where there were plenty as well as specimens from further North.

Not far from our home we discovered some rocky ledges facing West on which we found rock pink, columbine, white saxifrage, pale coridallis, ferns and a number of other plants. A few specimens have now spread all over our little rocky bank and we collected from our plants lots of seed to give away or scatter in the woods.

During the Winter we plant seed in pots of rotted wood in pans of water in our cellar. In this way we have grown wintergreen, laurel, arbor vitae and Austrian pine. In the Spring we will set the plants out of doors.

I cannot tell you how much pleasure we and our friends get from this wild garden.

At least once a week Mrs. Lyon and I go for long tramps through the woods and we can lead anyone interested to groups of interesting trees or plants.

The greatest enemy of plant life with us is the woods fire that usually burns part of the woods Spring and Fall and sometimes all of the woods for miles around Englewood.

Not only do these fires destroy the evergreen plants and trees but by destroying the fallen leaves make the ground unfit for their growth and germination of their seeds.

However, in our little wild garden we will be able to keep some varieties from local extinction.

This has been a long letter but from it you can obtain some idea of what your influence has been in bringing an interesting and healthy hobby into an otherwise peaceful family.

Trusting that we will have the pleasure of seeing you this coming Summer and with best regards, I am

Very sincerely

Ralph Lyon.

with Jan. 15, 1925  
letter.





W. L. LOUGHEY  
N. Y. C. 118 W. 44th St.  
F 381

Taken two years ago  
shortly after we started  
our wild garden (Jan. 15/1925)



Lyon, Ralph. 1925. "Lyon, Ralph Jan. 15, 1925." *Walter Deane correspondence*

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