

Concord March 24th 1842

Dear Brother,

We feel concerned about you on account of the small Pox we think you are very careless & you have so full of blood that the small Pox will go every hard with you Uncle Joseph has been here to day he says you do very wrong not to be vaccinated if you should take the small it will go much easier if you have the live Pox & it is said if you diet that is live on very light food eat no meat or any thing greasy but eat milk & light vegetable food you will not be so likely to take it & if you should it will not be so hard we should think you would do well to provide yourself with some good medicine in case you should be attacked with any disease that you could take immediately as you are alone & it is very unwholesome weather if you would some sulphur or some other good Physic as it is spring it would be good for you Plooma wants you to write about the sickness & other affairs if you can get a letter here by next Monday night for she thinks to come up next Tuesday if nothing should prevent she is pretty well

Letter of March 1842 from Almira Thompson, age 35, to her brother Samuel

1842 letter Transcription (with edits for clarity) about the need to be vaccinated for Smallpox

Dear Brother,

Concord (NH) March 24, 1842

We feel concerned about you on account of the small Pox. We think you are very careless as you are so full of blood that the smallpox will go very hard with you. Uncle Joseph has been here today. He says you do very wrong not to be vaccinated. If you should take the smell (innoculation via inhaling smallpox material through the nose or via skin scratch decreasing the onset or at least the severity of the disease) it will go much easier if you have the (kine = kind of) Pox. And it is said if you diet, that is live on very light food, eat no meat or anything greasy, but eat milk and light vegetable food, you will not be so likely to take it. And if you should, it would not be so hard. We think you would do well to provide yourself with some good medicine in case you should be attacked with any disease that you would take immediately as you are alone and it is very unwholesome weather. If you would [take] some sulphur or some other good physic, as it is spring, it would be good for you. Plooma wants you to write about the sickness and other affairs if you can get a letter home by next monday night for she thinks to come up next tuesday if nothing should present. She is pretty well.....

Explanation of the letter belonging to Liz Kirby, President of the Wilmot Historical Society

Recently, I found this letter in a box of papers in the attic of my home on Cross Hill Road in Wilmot. I have chosen to share it because of its pertinence to the global vaccination effort to combat the Covid-19 pandemic we are living through today.

The letter was sent in March of 1842 from Almira Thompson, age 35, to her younger brother Samuel, age 31, who was later to become my Great Grandfather. He was living alone in my home in Wilmot and she was living in Concord. Their Uncle Joseph Thompson was a physician in Concord and said Samuel was "very wrong not to be vaccinated" for smallpox. Almira advised Samuel about diet to prevent the disease. Their youngest sister, Plooma, age 30, planned to come and visit Samuel if she didn't get a letter soon. According to the account of Wilmot's history in [Glimpse of the Past](#) by Florence Langley, Almira died 2 years later, probably of consumption (tuberculosis). She had been unwell since teaching school 14 years earlier in a room with no "conveniences for a fire". Samuel continued to live in the family home on Cross Hill until he was 82 years old and died in 1893.

Smallpox remains the only human disease to be eradicated globally taking 184 years between the development of the first-ever vaccine in 1796 to its eradication in 1980. That victory against the disease was accomplished solely through vaccination. One of history's deadliest diseases, smallpox is estimated to have killed more than 300 million people since 1900 alone. Currently, there is no evidence of naturally occurring smallpox transmission anywhere in the world.