Dear Friend, Northampton, May 8, 1843
Well, I am at length located in the looked-for heaven. I will not say for rest, for I have never anticipated rest here either for the mind or body. Business is abundant that everyone might be abundantly supplied, but to whom to apply for a judicious request of this abundance is not so immediately visible. Order is heaven’s first law, but as we have reason to suppose the earth existed in chaotic state at first before order was established, it is not to be expected that communities in their infancy will attain it.[[1]](#endnote-1) This is becoming or has already become quite a depot for fugitives. One left her in Thursday and another arrived the day following who will probably tarry a short time. He is quite intelligent, speaks of having been kindly treated by a Mr. Adams of Providence some day last week who is presumed to be your father.[[2]](#endnote-2) He says that slaves escape so frequently that their masters say that abolitionists must have a railroad underground and that many more would run away were it not for the belief that they are taught to cherish that abolitionists in the north would treat them poorly.

I attended a party and walked a mile to call on David L. Child and Lady at their country seat having learned of their arrival a few days previous—to our regret her ladyship was so entirely merged in domestic concerns and overcome with cares and fatigue as to disappoint our hopes for an interview. Mr. L entertained us for a brief space quite pleasantly and we enjoyed the talk around the domicile of the famed author of the “New York Letters.” She returns to New York this week to pass this summer for the purpose of attending to some publications which she enjoyed before leaving there – something which her husband thinks will be much less trying than the post which she has resigned. [[3]](#endnote-3)

Again and again have I been desirous to request your presence at Northampton as early as possible, a request that I doubt not you intend to comply with and have repeatedly said it was your intention so to do. But what makes it particularly desirable that you should be here now is that Mr. Judd is very much out of health and must transfer his care and labor to someone else – This they may have assigned to you, as it is such as you would be preferred to any other.[[4]](#endnote-4) And I hope they will not be obliged to make choice of another before you can arrange matters to come. The season here is backward more so than farther East, but as it is away from the chill of the east wind, vegetation is said to progress more rapidly than in the vicinity of Boston.

You can have no idea how important GWB (George Benson) is to the Association; his long absence seems to be an apology for all sorts of delays and postponements.[[5]](#endnote-5) Since he left, Mr. Adam has resigned his office as secretary and his dictatorship of the educational department. I do not fully understand his reasons, but it appears he has implied the idea that a prejudice against him – therefore refused to hold any office. His temperament is rather peculiar, but as I am not perfectly initiated in details, it is best not to attempt them.[[6]](#endnote-6)

Mr. Mack was immediately deposed of the presidency and appointed his successor. G W Benson chosen to fill the vacancy of the presidency – We expect some more members although in one sense full now.[[7]](#endnote-7) James Boyle and wife will come, they say, when Mr. B returns; the former to tarry but a short time however.[[8]](#endnote-8) Mr. Garrison has written to have board obtained for himself and family as near the community as possible and as a convenient situation is found. Little doubt remains about their passing the summer here. He is much out of health.

I heard today what I hope is true, that Lucinda Whitmarsh intends abiding among us.[[9]](#endnote-9) Enough of Community! Our Fall River friends are now in the full tide of happiness, as the saying is. I should like to make them a call and to offer them some specimens of our beautiful flowers for our inspection.[[10]](#endnote-10) There are already a great many in bloom-most splendid and I trow (believe) they will be acceptable there where such beauties are restricted.

We were all highly gratified with John’s short visit in Dedham, but I fear the pleasure was all on one side for midst such jargon of confusion to strangers. He could enjoy nothing but the satisfaction of obliging others.

It is time I was abed and I will hasten to dream you are soon to be here.
Adieu, Sophia F.
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1. Foord is referring to the Northampton Association of Education and Industry. This organization was founded in April 1842 as a community that sought to blend capitalism with the ideal of social harmony. Ten families joined together by a constitution to found the Northampton Association of Education and Industry section of town (later renamed Florence). The plan was to staff an extant silk mill (an alternative to slave plantation-produced cotton) with community members who would also participate in educational experiences in support of abolition, women’s rights, and reform of the wage structure of capitalism. See https://davidrugglescenter.org/northampton-association-education-industry/ [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. I believe that Foord is confused. The Adams the fugitive refers to is likely Robert himself, as he was the only Adams family member who was actually active in transporting runaways from the New Bedford and Fall River docks to shelter in the houses of local abolitionists. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Here Foord is referring to Lydia Childs and her husband David. The Childs were committed abolitionists who had moved to the Northampton area in 1838 where they established a sugar-beet farm, hoping to provide consumers with an alternative to slave plantation-grown sugar cane. At the time of the writing of Foord’s letter, Lydia Child was on the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society and had just resigned as editor of the society’s National Anti-Slavery Standard. In the summer of 1843 Child expected to return to New York to compile weekly “Letters from New York” columns she had written for the Standard to be published in book form. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydia\_Maria\_Child [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The Mr. Judd that Foord mentions was Hall Judd, one of the founders of the Northampton Association for Education and Industry. Judd was born into a prominent Northampton family. His father was a local editor and historian and his brother a Transcendentalist Unitarian minister. Judd worked as a farmer and clerk in Connecticut and Western Massachusetts and his abolitionist principles led him to help establish the NAIC where his business experience enabled him to assist the management of the Association’s silk manufacture. See Christopher Clark’s The Communitarian Moment, p. 22-23. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. George Benson was the son of a Providence merchant and anti-slavery activist. As a young man, he worked in the leather and wool trade and after his sister married abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, George became a fervent opponent of slavery. In 1841 Benson and others purchased the buildings and property of the defunct Northampton Silk Company and for the Northampton Association of Education and Industry. See https://www.emergingamerica.org/exhibits/radical-equality/cast-characters/george-w-benson [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. William Adam was born in Scotland in 1793 and became a Baptist missionary in India. During the next decade he worked as a mercantile clerk, ran an Anglo-Indian school and was confirmed as a Unitarian minister. When is recommendations for Indian schooling were rejected he left the sub-continent and sailed to Boston where he became a founder of the NAIC and the head of the Association’s education program. See Christopher Clark’s The Communitarian Moment, p. 31-32. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. David Mack was the son of an Amherst merchant who studied at Yale to become a lawyer. In the 1830’s he worked as a Quaker schoolteacher and was drawn via his reformist sympathies to communal living initially at Dedham’s Brook Farm. However, wary of signing on to a community led by an unpredictable charismatic leader (George Ripley), Mack and his wife chose in 1842 to affiliate with the NAIC. See https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f77daa5675df4b699d4192058818cefb [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. James Boyle was an itinerant lecturer who, with his wife Louisa joined the NAIC community in early 1843. An Irish-ancestried Canadian and inveterate abolitionist agitator, Boyle went on to become a labor activist and an advocate of land reform. See Christopher Clark’s The Communitarian Moment, p. 176-177. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. I believe Lucinda Whitmarsh is the daughter of Thomas Whitmarsh, a New York merchant who helped found the Northampton Silk Company in 1837. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. One postulates that here Foord refers to Elizabeth Buffum Chace, a lifelong campaigner for abolition and women’s rights in footsteps of her father, the first president of the New England Anti-Slavery Society. And when her family moved to Valley Falls, R.I. after Samuel's business failed in Fall River in 1840, Elizabeth and her husband Samuel provided a depot for escaped slaves who had secreted themselves on shipping to New England from Virginia. Robert Adam often brought escaped slaves to the Buffum-Chase home. See https://www.rihs.org/mssinv/Mss1002.htm. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)