



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Newly Acquired Historic Collection of Letters at Avon Lake Public Library

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Avon Lake, OH: Take a fascinating journey to America and experience life for one of the first residents of Avon Township, OH. through this newly acquired collection of letters of John Ellson, spanning from 1849 to the 1880's. This collection was shared and acquired from the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland in Wigston Magna, Leicestershire, England and now are available to view at the Avon Lake Public Library.

The story about these letters begins almost two centuries ago when on June 11, 1849, John Ellson and his family of eight boarded the ship Liddons in Liverpool, England, and left their homeland in England forever for Avon Township, OH. joining many other English immigrants who had come from their native county of Leicestershire. More than two dozen of the letters Ellson wrote over almost three decades from Avon Twp. to his brother William, who resided in Northamptonshire, England, survived and were donated in 1995 to the Record Office for Leicestershire where they were catalogued and preserved.

Original and transcribed copies of those letters were recently sent digitally to Laura Ploenzke, Local History and Genealogy Specialist at Avon Lake Public Library, by Francis Howcutt, a resident of London, England, who moderates a Facebook group dedicated to the history of the area in England where many families who settled in Avon originated.

Howcutt began corresponding with Ploenzke in 2021 when he discovered information she had posted about early Lorain County families from England on FamilySearch.org, a genealogy database. He mentioned that he had recently learned of Ellson's letters and offered to travel to the record office, almost a three-hour trip from his home, to take pictures of them and send them when he was able. In May 2023, he made the trip and photographed the letters thanks to a special arrangement with the records office made possible by the office's senior archivist Laura Taylor.

Ploenzke has compiled the printed images in a binder that will be added to the library's local history collection for the public to use.

"This is an invaluable addition to our collection," Ploenzke said. "To have such a detailed, first-person account of what life was like in Avon Township in the mid-1800s is extraordinary. I am so grateful to Francis and Laura for their generosity and assistance in making this acquisition possible." Ellson and his family were one of more than a dozen families from central England who settled in Avon Township. Economic hardship was the primary reason so many individuals and families left England in the mid-1800s, according to an article published in the Leicestershire Mercury on August 7, 1852. People continued to leave for the United States (as well as Australia, another popular destination), encouraged by their relatives and friends, who wrote letters back home describing their great prosperity and independence.

Only a few weeks after the Ellsons arrived in Avon, in a letter dated August 8, 1849, Ellson wrote to William, "America is much such a place as I expected have no doubt we shall like they seem to be a happy people as regards living this world I have not once regretted leaving Old England with all her charms"

To view the letters, you can visit the Marybelle Arnold North Coast History Room at the Avon Lake Public Library (<https://alpl.org/>) during regular hours or call the library for more information at 440.933.8127.

For more information about this new collection at the Avon Lake Public Library, contact Shea Alltmont, Communications Manager at [salltmont@avonlake.lib.oh.us](mailto:salltmont@avonlake.lib.oh.us) or 440-933-8128, ext. 244.