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Paul Vaugtler to Dr. Silver, 16 February 1962

Paul Vaugtler

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UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY
February 16, 1962

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Dear Dr. Silver,

By now I should already have thanked you for your help in getting this position. But I have been busier than the proverbial bee, and am just now getting completely settled. My classes are large, 60-70, but they are on the same days and both in the morning. Therefore, I have plenty of spare time and, according to your exhortations, have gotten my ass busy with languages, bibliographies, etc.

I will be down to get Eleanor and the family about the 24th, but don't expect to see anyone. I will get there and we will leave sometime in the dead of night. After tramping all over Lexington for a week, I finally found a house close to the campus-- and one I could afford.

Thomas P. Govan was here this week; he is working for the Episcopal ~~in~~ Church in some faculty education program, but will be teaching at NYU this fall-- taking Ralph Flander's place. Eaton, Clark, et al. went to his lecture at the Episcopal Chapel, had supper there, and went to Dr. Nagel's house for drinks afterwards. Govan ~~is~~ a fascinating person. At least, he appeared so to me. He, Clark, and Eaton provided the assemblage with some humorous moments.

Everyone has been very helpful and considerate. You were right about Bennett Wall, he's been a real boon; I borrowed his car a couple of times and found out some other things about life at Kentucky-- things everyone ought to know.

Holman Hamilton and I had a long conversation today. He's writing a book on pre-Civil War politics, and was interested to know about the reading I had done on slavery and abolitionism. He's a very personable fellow-- takes a lot of interest in graduate students, and runs an informal session of kindred spirits in the cafeteria at noon.

Dr. Clark does not seem to be so much of a prohibitionist; he drank a beer at Nagel's the other night, and admitted to the crowd that he developed a taste for retsyna(wine) while in Greece.

This probably doesn't need to be said, but I got the feeling that Heywood didn't have the vaguest idea of what I was talking about. I guess it is like having sexual intercourse or jumping out of an airplane-- you have to do it before a description of it has any meaning. Tell him to sign up for Historiography.

As for the actions, etc. which took place when I left, I am putting the whole mess out of my mind-- with some effort. My memories of Mississippi will be will be restricted to coon-hunting, drinking whiskey with Avent, and talking to you and Gibson. Wish I'd gotten to know him better.

My office facilities are great. I have a private office, telephone, and the department has two full-time secretaries. I can get anything typed or mimeographed I want. We even have a Thermofax machine to copy manuscripts and documents--free.

I guess this letter sounds pretty exuberant. Well, I am greatly impressed by most of what I find here at Kentucky. The atmosphere is relaxed but energetic; something going all the time. Several German Embassy officials were here this week for a meeting. One of the history faculty, Dr. Kraehe, was responsible for setting up part of the program.

Bennett Wall says to ask you what he gave you for Christmas last year. This, I guess, is a private joke.

Sincerely,

Paul Vangilder