

Letters of  
1854 & 1855

relating to  
Candidature for  
Professorship of Nat.  
Nat. - at Edinburgh  
with Article relating  
to it in Scottish Press  
& 2 Copies of Fests  
monials. printed for  
this purpose -

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SELECTIONS

FROM

CERTIFICATES

IN FAVOUR OF

J. W. DAWSON, Esq., F.G.S.

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J. W. DAWSON, Esq., F.G.S.,

AS A CANDIDATE FOR

THE CHAIR OF NATURAL HISTORY

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

EDINBURGH :  
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1855.

[MR J. W. DAWSON, OF PICTOU, NOVA SCOTIA, having been strongly urged by his friends in this country to offer himself as a Candidate for the Natural History Chair in the University of Edinburgh, vacant by the death of Professor Edward Forbes, at once acceded to a request so much in keeping with his own ambition,—and the following documents will shew the position he occupies as an applicant for the vacant Chair, and the opinions formed of his fitness by persons who may be considered competent to advise. The appointment being in the hands of the Crown, will account for there being no formal application prefixed to the Testimonials,—Sir Charles Lyell having most obligingly acted as Mr Dawson's medium of communication with the Government,—while the Testimonials themselves, hurriedly selected, are to be regarded rather as specimens of what might be obtained, than as exhausting Mr Dawson's case. They are presented in their present form, and copies respectfully transmitted to the Members of the Town Council and the Senatus Academicus, because of the deep interest which those gentlemen must feel concerning the future occupant of the Chair, and of the respect in which Mr Dawson, and the friends who act for him, hold the Patrons and Professors of the University.]

## SELECTIONS, &c.

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*From J. W. DAWSON, Esq., to SIR CHARLES LYELL, M.A.,  
F.R.S., L.S., G.S., &c.*

Pictou, January 2, 1855.

MY DEAR SIR,—I beg leave to solicit your good offices on my behalf, as a Candidate for the CHAIR OF NATURAL HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, and send herewith a statement of my scientific training, employments, and publications, and certificates relating to these subjects, and also to my personal character.

You will observe that my first systematic lessons in Natural History were received from the late Professor Jameson, in the winter of 1840–1, which I devoted wholly to the study of Natural Science, availing myself of all the aids that I could obtain in Edinburgh (*see certificates and tickets attached*). I was then 21 years of age, and had finished my academical course in Pictou Academy (then under the superintendence of the Rev. Dr M'Culloch), including the study of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry.

Before visiting Scotland, I had taken lessons in Drawing and Taxidermy, had visited several of the most interesting coast sections in this country, and formed a considerable collection, and had read extensively in Geology. I was thus better prepared than most other students to profit by Professor Jameson's lectures, which were of great service in systematizing my store of knowledge and course of study and observation, and in instruct-

ing me in the principles and method of the determination of species.

With the Geological labours in which I have employed myself since 1841, you are well acquainted, as I had the pleasure of accompanying you in your tour through Nova Scotia in 1842; and since that time it has been principally through your kindness that my papers have been brought before the Geologists of Britain.

Other scientific and literary pursuits, of which you may perhaps not have been informed, are mentioned in the attached statement and certificates. Among these are two Courses of Lectures on Natural History, delivered in two of the Collegiate Institutions of this province; the Superintendence of Education in Nova Scotia, including a tour through the New England States and New York, with the object of collecting information on the schools of those countries; the delivery of Lectures on Education and Agricultural Chemistry; and the preparation of extended reports and statistics. I resigned the office of Superintendent in 1853, chiefly because it required almost continual absence from home and consequent neglect of the interests of my family.

I may also mention under this head, the collection and determination of the plants, shells, birds, and other natural productions of this province, assays of coal and metallic ores for several persons and companies in this and the neighbouring provinces, and surveys of mineral districts. To qualify myself more fully for work of this last description, when I revisited Scotland in 1846-7, I studied Chemical Analysis in the laboratory of Professor Gregory.

I have now nearly ready for the press a popular account of the Geology of this and portions of the neighbouring colonies, intended to attract more general attention to their useful minerals and to the many interesting illustrations which they afford of important geological facts, and especially of the plants and animals of the coal period.

I have had the honour of being appointed, in the last autumn, by His Excellency Sir Edmund W. Head, a member of the Commission on King's College, Frederickton; and had the privilege in that capacity of discussing with Dr Ryerson of Toronto the

subject of university reform, and aiding in the preparation of a report, of which, when published, I shall endeavour to send you a copy.

With respect to the merit that may attach to my labours in the above departments, I may refer you to the published papers with which you are already familiar, asking you, however, to bear in mind that they were written in circumstances which debarred me from access to libraries of reference and public collections, and therefore under great disadvantages as compared with naturalists resident in Great Britain. I may also refer you to the annexed certificates, for evidence that my educational efforts and public lectures have been highly appreciated by the people of this country.

If successful in attaining the important and honourable position to which I aspire, I need not assure you that I shall exert myself to the utmost to advance Natural History both as an instructor and as an original enquirer, and that nothing will give me greater pleasure than to aid and encourage those who may love the study of nature, and who may possibly be destined, in isolated positions and remote parts of the world, to contend with the difficulties which I have myself experienced. I may further assure you that I shall do all in my power to carry forward the important improvements in the course and appliances of instruction which I know were meditated and commenced by the late lamented occupant of the chair.—I am, yours very truly, and with sincere respect,

J. W. DAWSON.

Sir Charles Lyell, &c., &c.

*From SIR CHARLES LYELL, to Sir Henry De la Beche, C.B.,  
&c., &c.*

BERLIN, March 17, 1855.

MY DEAR SIR HENRY,—I have just heard from Scotland that the friends of Mr Dawson are desirous of printing all the certificates written on his behalf as candidate for the vacant Chair of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh. Among other documents, they wish for a copy of a letter which I addressed to the Secretary of the Home Department (Sir G. Grey) on this subject; but as I do not return from Germany for some weeks, and have no copy of my letter at hand, you will, I am sure, have the kindness, when you have read this, to forward it to Edinburgh, if you think it will serve the same purpose.

I know that you appreciate highly as I do the printed papers of Mr Dawson on the Coal Fields of Nova Scotia, and other subjects, in the Journal of the Geological Society of London. I have twice had an opportunity, when travelling with him in North America, of estimating his great powers of original observation in the Fields, many of the results of which he has given in his published papers. I can also state that Dr Hooker is of opinion that the views and occasional speculations on the structure and probable relations of fossil plants set forth in several of Mr Dawson's Memoirs on the Carboniferous Strata, display much acuteness, sound judgment, and botanical knowledge. Mineralogy has been a favourite pursuit of Mr Dawson, and he has made no small progress in Zoology.

That any man should be eminent in all the branches embraced by the Edinburgh Chair, especially one under the age of thirty-five, is of course impossible; but with due reference to Mr Dawson's age, I consider his attainments as very remarkable, and combining them as he does with zeal and enthusiasm for science and a philosophical mind, he is, I believe, one of the few who would, if elected, prove a worthy successor to our late lamented friend, Professor E. Forbes.

Mr Dawson has had considerable practice in public speaking when officially employed in Nova Scotia as Inspector of Schools, and he has been successful as a lecturer.



The Governor-General of Canada, Sir Edmund Head, who is personally acquainted with Mr Dawson, and who appointed him to some post connected with the improvement of public education in New Brunswick, has written a letter in his favour to the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

On my return to London, in a few weeks, I shall be happy to give any additional information which may be desired.—Believe me, my dear Sir Henry, ever truly yours,

CHA. LYELL.

Sir H. De la Beche, C. B., &c. &c.

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*From* LEONARD HORNER, Esq., F.R.S. L. & E.

17 QUEEN'S ROAD WEST, REGENT'S PARK,  
London, 19th March 1855.

I have had no opportunity of making the personal acquaintance of Mr Dawson; but I have formed a high opinion of him as a Geologist, from his numerous communications to the Geological Society. They shew not only great accuracy and a well-directed observation, united with a thorough acquaintance with his subjects, but that he has enlarged philosophical views in his most minute researches.

LEONARD HORNER, F.R.S. L. & E.

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*From the Honourable* WILLIAM YOUNG, *Attorney-General of Nova Scotia.*

HALIFAX, December 30, 1854.

I have great pleasure in certifying that having been long and intimately acquainted with John W. Dawson, Esq., of Pictou, I consider him eminently qualified, both by the solidity of his acquirements, and by a peculiar aptitude he possesses in communicating instruction, for the Professorship in Natural His-

tory to which he is now about to aspire. In the year 1848 he made a scientific exploration of the Coal Fields of Cape Breton. In 1850 he delivered a course of lectures in Dalhousie College, on Botany, Zoology, Mineralogy, and Geology. He was then employed for three years as the Superintendent of Education in this province, having visited the schools of New England and New York, and reported on their condition for the guidance of our Legislature; and he has since prepared an elementary work on Rural Economy and Live Stock, which has been extensively circulated at the public expense. In these various engagements he has won for himself a high reputation for real talent, while all opposition has been disarmed by his conciliating manners and modesty of deportment. I speak, therefore, the sentiments of every member of the government, while regretting his separation from his own province, in expressing a hope that he may attain the object of his present ambition, and that his scientific attainments, already favourably known in the mother country, may recommend him to the choice of the electors for the vacant chair.

WILLIAM YOUNG,  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL OF NOVA SCOTIA.

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*From* SIR J. G. LE MARCHANT, *Knt., &c., Lieutenant-Governor  
of Nova Scotia.*

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA,  
2d January 1855.

SIR,

The Attorney-General of Nova-Scotia, Mr Young, having acquainted me of your having accepted an invitation that has been made to you by some friends in England to offer yourself as a candidate for a professorship of Natural History; I can assure you that you have my best wishes on the occasion, and I hope your efforts may meet with the success which your abilities well deserve; for I am confident, from your conduct during the three years you filled the office of Superintendent of Education

in this province, you will gain additional credit in the new sphere of duties which this new appointment, should you be successful in obtaining it, may open for you.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

J. GASPARD LE MARCHANT.

J. W. Dawson, Esq.

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*From the Hon. JOSEPH HOWE, late Provincial Secretary of the Province of Nova Scotia.*

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA,  
28th Dec. 1854.

John William Dawson, Esq., has been long known to me, and has ever been and is now highly esteemed for his gentle manners, sterling integrity, and varied information.

Mr Dawson for several years held the office of Superintendent of Education under the Government of which I was a member. In that capacity he visited the Schools of New England and New York, and lectured upon Education and Agricultural Chemistry in the chief towns of this province.

Mr Dawson's resignation of his place was reluctantly accepted by the Government, whose confidence and respect he still retains.

Mr Dawson's acquaintance with Geology and Natural History is extensive. His style, as a lecturer, is remarkably attractive, from its accuracy and precision.

JOSEPH HOWE, CHAIRMAN OF THE RAILWAY BOARD,  
late Provincial Secretary.

*From REV. A. FORRESTER, Presbyterian Minister and Superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia.*

HALIFAX, December 4, 1854.

It affords me much pleasure to bear testimony to the high attainments of Mr Dawson in various branches of Natural History.

Though I had often heard of the geological researches of Mr Dawson in these provinces, and his contributions to the Geological Society of London, I made his acquaintance only five years ago, on occasion of his delivering a course of lectures on Natural History, in Dalhousie College, Halifax. These lectures were given at the request of the governors of that institution, were largely attended, and highly appreciated. Since then I have enjoyed much friendly intercourse with him, and repeatedly heard him lecture here before the Mechanics' Institute, and also at the late Provincial Industrial Exhibition; and am more and more firmly persuaded that Mr D. is not only a complete enthusiast in Natural History, but possessed of extensive attainments in all its departments, especially in Mineralogy and Geology, both theoretical and practical, as well as a great aptitude in communicating his stores of knowledge to others.

I know something of the diversified qualifications necessary for the Chair of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh, and have no hesitation in saying that should Mr Dawson be chosen to occupy that honourable position, he will not only do credit to the University, but advance largely the general interests of science.

ALEXR. FORRESTER.

From W. E. LOGAN, Esq., F.G.S., *Provincial Geologist for Canada.*

MONTREAL, 17th February 1855.

MY DEAR SIR,—It would give me great satisfaction and pleasure to hear of your success as a Candidate for the Natural History Chair in the University of Edinburgh, as, in addition to your general fitness to discharge the duties of the position with credit to the University, you would carry to the other side of the Atlantic a detailed and extensive knowledge of the advance that has been made in the various branches of Natural History on this. In the branch with which my investigations are more particularly connected, you have yourself been a diligent worker, and Nova Scotia stands greatly indebted to you for your valuable and interesting contributions to her geology. The whole subject of American geology is one of rapidly increasing importance, and your intimate acquaintance with it, could not fail to bring a multitude of striking facts from the New World to illustrate and confirm the oft-repeated truths of the Old, and perhaps occasionally to correct some of its errors.

Although so much has been done within the last twenty years to portray American geology, and its features stand out in such gigantic proportions, a correct knowledge of its aspect scarcely yet prevails in Europe; and any one who could instil into the minds of the rising generation a true comparison between the two continents, would confer a great benefit on both, and materially advance Geological Science. Repeating my wishes for your success, I remain, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

W. E. LOGAN.

J. W. Dawson, Esq.

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From HENRY POOLE, Esq., *late Manager of the Albion Coal Mines.*

CHESTERFIELD, DERBYSHIRE,  
20th January, 1855.

MY DEAR SIR,—As you inform me that you have offered yourself as a Candidate for the vacant Professorship of Natural History in Edinburgh University, I have much pleasure

in certifying that you executed several series of Assays of the Albion Coal Seams in Nova Scotia, at my request, for the "General Mining Association;" and the correctness of which were confirmed by subsequent trials made by other chemists and practical men. I can also testify that you have obtained a well-merited reputation in the British North American provinces as a popular lecturer on Natural History and educational subjects, and that the works which you have from time to time published on those subjects have been favourably received and generally read.

Having had the pleasure of your acquaintance during thirteen years, I can also distinctly speak of the high estimation in which your character is held by all classes, and for the upright and courteous manner in which you have conducted yourself towards all parties with whom you have had any intercourse.—I remain, my dear Sir, yours truly.

HENRY POOLE.

J. W. Dawson, Esq., Pictou.

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*From RICHARD BROWN, Esq., Cape Breton, to Sir C. Lyell.*

SYDNEY MINES, CAPE BRETON,

January 1, 1855

MY DEAR SIR CHARLES,—I have just learned from Mr Dawson, of Pictou, that he is a candidate for the Chair at Edinburgh, vacant by the lamented death of Professor Forbes.

I have known Mr Dawson many years, and have no hesitation in stating that he is a most exemplary young man in every relation of life. With respect to his Geological attainments, no one can speak better to the purpose than yourself. He has been employed by the Provincial Government, and at various times by the General Mining Association, in making Geological Explorations, Assays, &c., which he has invariably conducted with most praiseworthy zeal and intelligence.

I cannot but regret his departure from this province, but at the same time shall rejoice to hear of his succeeding in obtaining so honourable a position as the one he is now looking for. If you think my humble testimony will be of any service to him, pray make use of it as you think best, and believe me always, very respectfully, yours,

RICH<sup>d</sup>. BROWN.

Sir Charles Lyell.

*From* REV. A. W. HERDMAN, *Minister of the Established Church of Scotland.*

PICTOU, January 2, 1855.

I hereby certify that J. W. DAWSON, Esq., F.G.S., &c., has been known to me for some years past as an enlightened believer in the great truths of our holy religion, a devoted member of the Presbyterian Church, and a loyal subject of the British Crown; that he is talented and modest, as communicative as he is gifted, justly respected and courted, not only by his native community, but by the province which he has largely benefited, especially by his services some years ago as Superintendent of Education; and that, in short, he is likely to prove distinguished and useful wherever Providence may fix his lot.

AND W. W. HERDMAN, A.M.,  
Minister of St Andrew's Church.

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*From the* REV. JAMES BAYNE, *Presbyterian Minister.*

PICTOU, NOVA SCOTIA,  
January 27, 1854.

This is to certify that John William Dawson, Esq., has been, for several years past, very favourably known to me as a person of very high promise and eminent attainments,—devoted and successful application to the various branches of Natural Science, zealous and able effort in the educational affairs of this province,—maintaining for a considerable period the arduous but honourable position of Public Superintendent of Education,—and that with all his well-known, extensive, and accurate acquaintance with the general principles of Natural Science, and its most intricate minutiae, he unites a remarkable facility of imparting to others the treasures of his richly-stored mind in the most attractive manner.

JAMES BAYNE, PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER.

From W. J. ANDERSON, Esq., *Secretary of the Pictou Academy.*

PICTOU, December 27, 1854.

These certify that at the request of the Trustees of Pictou Academy, Mr J. W. Dawson, during the Session of 1848-9, delivered a course of thirty-two lectures on Natural History, in the Academy.

The lectures were attended to their close, with increasing interest, by many inhabitants of the town, as well as by pupils attending other classes in the Academy, who, at the termination of the course, testified their high gratification by unanimously passing a vote of thanks to Mr Dawson.

WM. JAS. ANDERSON,  
*Secretary, Pictou Academy.*

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*Statement in reference to Mr Dawson's Scientific Training, Published Papers, Lectures, &c.*

After completing studies in Classics, Mathematics, Chemistry, and Natural Philosophy, in Pictou Academy, Nova Scotia, taking lessons in Drawing and Taxidermy, and spending some time in collecting specimens in Natural History, visited Edinburgh at the age of 21 years, and attended the lectures of Professor Jameson throughout the winter of 1840-41, and have his certificate for very regular attendance. Occupied the whole of the winter in studying books and specimens in Natural History, and especially Geology and Mineralogy, and in exploring the Geology in the vicinity of Edinburgh.

1841. On returning to Nova Scotia, contributed to Wernerian Society of Edinburgh a paper on *Meriones Labradoricus* and a species of *Arvicola*, and sent preserved specimens of these and other animals to Professor Jameson; also specimens of the rocks of Nova Scotia.
1842. Accompanied Sir Charles Lyell in his tour in Nova Scotia, and assisted him, as acknowledged in his *Travels in North America*.
1843. Paper on Lower Carboniferous or Gypsiferous Formation of Nova Scotia, pp. 9, six woodcuts.—*Proceedings of Geological Society of London*.
1844. Paper on the Upper or Newer Coal Formation of Nova Scotia, pp. 8, four woodcuts and quarto map.—*Ibid*.
1846. Notice of some Fossils found in Nova Scotia, and remarks on true nature of *Sternbergia* or *Artisia*, pp. 4, and figures.



- Reports to General Mining Association and C. D. Archibald, Esq., on the Iron deposits of the Cobequid Mts.
- Papers on the Gypsum of Nova Scotia, and on the Boulder Formation of that Province, contributed to Royal Society of Edinburgh, and printed in abstract in their proceedings.
- In autumn of 1846, revisited Scotland and studied Chemical Analysis in Laboratory of Edinburgh University; also the art of preparing slices of fossil wood for the Microscope, use of the Blowpipe, &c.
- Paper on Destruction and Reproduction of Forests in North America, in Ed. Philosophical Journal.
1847. Letter to Secretary of Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, in answer to enquiries respecting origin of Gypsum of Nova Scotia, published in their Proceedings. Elected a corresponding member of the Academy.
- Paper on New Red Sandstone of Nova Scotia, pp. 9, quarto map and sections. Proc. Geol. Society.
1848. Paper on the colouring matter of Red Sandstones and the white beds associated with them, pp. 6.—Proc. Geol. Society.
- Paper on Gypsum of Plaister Cove, Cape Breton, pp. 5, three woodcuts. *Ibid.*
- Paper on the Wheat Midge (*Cecidomyia Tritici*).—Proc. Ac. Nat. Sci. Phil.
- Report on Geological Survey of Coal Fields of Southern Cape Breton.—Journals of Legislature of Nova Scotia.
- Handbook of the Geography and Natural History of Nova Scotia, pp. 95, and map.
- Delivered a Course of 32 Lectures on Natural History in Pictou Academy, to students and others.
1849. Paper on the Metamorphic Rocks of Nova Scotia, pp. 17, four woodcuts.—Proc. Geol. Soc.
- Paper on Erect Calamites in the Coal Formation near Pictou, pp. 3, three woodcuts.—*Ibid.*
- Reported on Iron Veins of Great Village River for Acadia Mining Company.
- Executed a series of Assays of Albion Coal for General Mining Association.
- Delivered a course of 24 Lectures on Mineralogy, Botany, Zoology, and Geology, in Dalhousie College, Halifax, to students and others, and taught a practical class in use of the Blowpipe and Mineralogy.
1850. Appointed Superintendent of Education; visited schools in New England and New York, and reported on their systems of instruction.
- Delivered Public Lectures throughout Nova Scotia on Education and Agricultural Chemistry, and gave Instructions and Lectures to Teachers' Institutes.
- First Report on Schools of Nova Scotia, pp. 127.
1851. Second Report on Schools of Nova Scotia.—Lectured, &c., as above, and collected information and specimens relating to the Natural History of Nova Scotia.
1852. Third Report on Schools of Nova Scotia.—Scientific Contributions towards the Improvement of Agriculture in Nova Scotia, pp. 100.

- Paper on Nature and Causes of Potato Blight—in Massachusetts Agricultural Transactions, pp. 10.
- Supplementary Paper on New Red Sandstone.—Proc. Geol. Soc., pp. 3, two woodcuts.
- Examined section of South Joggins in company with Sir Charles Lyell.
- Joint Paper with Sir Charles Lyell on remains of a Reptile and Land Shell found at South Joggins.—Proc. Geol. Soc.
- Paper on the Albert Mine, Hillsborough, New Brunswick, pp. 8, seven woodcuts.—*Ibid.*
- Resigned Office of Superintendent of Education.
- 1853.—Paper on Coal Measures of South Joggins, pp. 41, twenty-five woodcuts.—*Ibid.*
- Joint Paper with Mr Poole on Albion Mines.—*Ibid.*
- Assayed and Reported on thirty-three samples of Albion Coal for General Mining Association.
- Hints to the Farmers of Nova Scotia on Live Stock and General Husbandry, prepared for the Government of Nova Scotia, pp. 148.
- Appointed one of the Directors of the Provincial Normal School, Nova Scotia.
1854. Paper on the Discovery of a New Carboniferous Reptile (*Baphetes Planiceps*—Owen.)—Com. to Geol. Soc.
- Acted with Dr Ryerson and other gentlemen on commission on King's College, Frederickton, by appointment of Sir E. W. Head.
- Elected Fellow of Geological Society, London.
- Issued prospectus of a work of 300 pages on the Geology of Nova Scotia and neighbouring Colonies, now passing through the Edinburgh press under the superintendence of Messrs Oliver and Boyd.

February 1855.