



*Lovingly,
Mother*

Lovingly, Mother

**A Peek at Life in the
Early 19th Century**

The Letters of
Bellzora Eliza Poundstone

Lovingly, Mother

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Edited by Dennis Ver Mulm

Dedication

To the memory of Bellzora Eliza (Ostrander) Poundstone,
her ancestors, and descendants.

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Introduction

Belle Poundstone was born Bellzora Eliza Ostrander on March 4, 1855 in Grand Rapids, Illinois. She was the daughter of John Barber Ostrander and Nancy Elizabeth Latham. Belle had seven full siblings and six half siblings (by way of her mother).

On September 9, 1874, Belle was married to John Poundstone in LaSalle County, Illinois. Their union produced five sons and one daughter. One son died at the age of four years in 1881.

In 1902, John and Belle moved from Illinois to Wright County, Iowa where they began farming 320 acres in Dayton Township south of Clarion.

In July 1913, John was diagnosed with inoperable cancer, and he died on July 18. Belle stayed on in Clarion, and in later years, began traveling to visit her children who, by this time, had spread to different locations in Ordway, Colorado; Mora, Minnesota; Walnut Grove, Minnesota; Grand Ridge, Illinois; and Clarion, Iowa.

Spanning the years until her death in 1923, Belle maintained an active correspondence with her family and friends—particularly with her only daughter Helen Mary who, in 1909, married Mariel (Ell) Silas Scott. Ell and Helen farmed near Walnut Grove, Minnesota.

Helen preserved many of the letters she received from Belle, and upon Helen's death in 1974, this cache of personal correspondence passed to Helen's daughter, Doris (Scott) Coke. With Doris' death in 2017, the correspondence passed to her three nieces, Beth Harker, Janine Hebner, and Martha Ver Mulm.

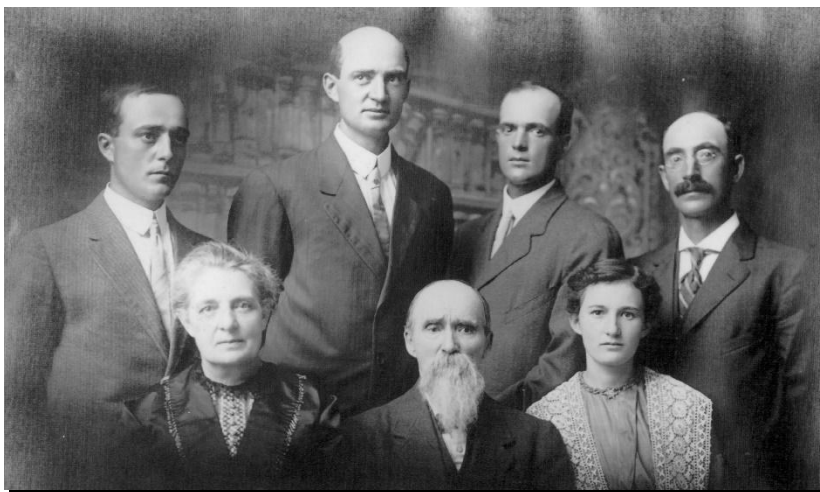
Thanks to the capabilities of modern speech recognition software, the letters have been read into a computer and reproduced here. They shine a light into the dimly-lit corners of life and the challenges of living in the early 20th Century—and into the unique personality of Bellzora Eliza (Ostrander) Poundstone.



Bellzora and her daughter Helen Mary



A young Bellzora Eliza (Ostrander) Poundstone



The John and Bell Poundstone Family

(L-R) Herbert Melvin, Bellzora, Harry Elbert, John,
David Russell, Helen Mary, Wilbur Manning

The letters reproduced in this book were written by Belle to her daughter Helen. Many of the letters contain references to one or more of Helen's four siblings shown in this photo – Herbert, Harry, David, and Wilbur (often referred to in the letters by his middle name Manning).

Chapter One

1916

Grand Ridge, Illinois

February 25, 1916

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter yesterday and will answer right away as I know you are quite anxious to know how Dot is. Her life hung by a thread for a week, and then she got better and seemed to be getting along all right, and then she had a relapse and has been quite sick again. I just phoned Ethel to find out just how she is before I wrote you, and she said her temperature had been up to 103° yesterday but she seemed a little better. Dr. Smith was at Harrison Wakey's yesterday, and Ida said last night he seemed quite worried about her. I told Ethel you sent love for I knew you did or would if you had known whether she was still living or not.

Harrison has been pretty sick with neuralgia or something worse in his face for three weeks. Frank Rutan's boy was buried last Sunday p.m. She was 17 months old and had some kind of poisoning caused by nursing too long and cutting teeth. Vic Walters have a baby sick with the same trouble. Chaz Miland Barrickman died very suddenly in Chicago last Sunday. I think you will remember that we met him at Cornell the time we were there for a picnic. He is Davis's brother. The funeral was held Wednesday noon in Streator at Carrie Coe's house. All the brothers and sisters were there except Rudy Coe. She is in California. I saw Ruth Wayman. She lives in Cornell and has four children, all boys—the youngest three or four months old and the oldest not quite as old as Eldon. There is just 17 months between each child. All of Carrie's children were there, and Willis's wife and three of their children—Winnifred, Wade, and Walter. Do you remember Robert--Dan's boy? He is studying medicine and was in St. Luke's Hospital working in the laboratory when strangers brought Willy to the hospital and he recognized him. He died of apoplexy. Robert is a fine-looking man and will graduate in June, and then he will be an intern in the hospital.

Two of Davis's children go to either the Madelia or Mankato to high school--I forget which, and one of the boys is in Ames. Ralph is married, has a boy, and lives in South Dakota. John is in Canada and has straightened up, and they say he is doing well. His wife is still teaching

there. Dora Baker is still in California, and the children are here, and that is all I know about them.

Charles is very devoted to Miss Barr one of the teachers here, and I suppose he will marry her as soon as the law will permit. He has to be divorced for two years, and he just got his divorce within the last year--last summer I think. I suppose Uncle Al will make a trip east soon as Robert is packing to move. The Lewis's house is repaired and redecorated. Manning has been working there nearly all winter and he is going to put up a cottage down there for the hired man, and he will remodel the barn.

Clarence Moore and Grace McNeil are to be married soon. There is to be a shower for Grace at Hermanville tomorrow night. They are going to live in Fred Parmalee's house. Alice has gone to Michigan.

I am sorry Wayne has not been so well. I hope he does not get down sick. As it is all the poor little chap can do to hold his own, and if he should get sick it would put him back so. I wish I could see them all.

Does Opal go to your school? Or to town? It will be nice for you to have company and a little help. Manning is going to Clarion Saturday or Sunday night. I saw in the Monitor that Rose had a boy I'll bet Myrtle was as mad as a hornet.

How is Mrs. Scott? I saw in the Monitor some time ago that she was visiting at Morris's and thought maybe she would come and see me but suppose she had so many to visit she did not have time.

Bert Ostrander is in Chicago for the federal grand jury. Bert Sale was at Helen's a week or so ago. He was in Chicago to get some wallpaper samples. Nelly thinks she could make some money selling wallpaper from samples, and they have a nice large window to display them. He is getting \$70 or \$75 a month but she will not say what he was doing. They have four children—all girls I think.

Well, I have written nearly all I know except that we had a splendid lecture in the M.E. church last night by Elmer Lynn Williams pastor of Grace M.E. Church of Chicago—the "Fighting Parson" who has done so much toward making a better Chicago. He is fine, and if you're ever have a chance to hear him, do not miss it. I have been loaded up with work at the church since I wrote my letter. I have a Sunday school class, am treasurer of the W.F.M.S, also treasurer of the W.C.J.U. I guess I will abscond with all of the money. (There isn't much though.)

Love to you all and try and keep well. Kiss the kiddies for me.
Am glad Marge is going to visit you and wish I could see Heather.

Loving,
Your mother

P.S. Myrtle Dooley has a little daughter and also Mrs. Walter
Poundstone a daughter.



Grand Ridge, Illinois

July 12, 1916

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter dated June 26, and was glad to know all are well and prospects for a crop were better. We need rain here now. It is very dusty and everything needs rain. Lots of corn moving and elevators are quite busy. Oats look fine, but will need rain to make them fill out well. Sorry you lost so many chicks.

Wish I could have been there to help eat the fish. I haven't had a taste of fish this spring—only those we had at Dayton the day the children and I were up there. We haven't had a taste of chicken since New Year's except when I was at Bert Udell's, and they had chicken for dinner. And we had steak once since Ella came the first of February. He cured one hog in the winter, and that is all the meat we have had and that is all gone but one little piece of bacon. We do not have eggs to use more than half of the time, and then it nearly kills him to pay 21 cent for them. And I got a calling a week ago Sunday for cooking asparagus, and said I was cutting it too long, and I told him I didn't have anything else for dinner but potatoes and he just lit into me and said he'd heard that ever since he was born and that we had as much to eat as anyone else. He was around a good deal and no one had any more than we do and I was always complaining about not having enough to eat. I told him I didn't say a word about not having enough to eat and I suppose I got more than I earned. That shut him up as dumb as a clam.

We had a pint of milk a day, no canned vegetables at all before the garden came in and all the canned stuff he buys is salmon. When I have to finish anything for church suppers I buy it myself. I haven't had any money even to buy what the children need since last October. Except the five dollars you gave me for their Christmas. He is grouchy all the time scarcely speaks a word to any of us and when he does speak, it is a growl. I am mostly awful tired of it and will be glad if he can find a decent woman who will be fool enough to marry him. And I shall pity the children there unless he gets someone who can make him come to time. I got a few things at Porter and Company for the children and had it charged to him and that makes him mad. The poor kids haven't had new hats or shoes this summer. I won't buy them if they never have any. I have to spend enough on them as it is.

Yes, I asked Robert about the picture, and he said he would take another. He thought he had destroyed the old film. Robert is sick in bed now—I do not know what the trouble is. Al is still batching it—do not know when he is going to get a housekeeper. Dora is living at home as usual and Lou is in New Jersey with horses.

Helen is home now, (you know she has been in Chicago taking music lessons on the pipe organ) and she is keeping house for Charles. Ellsworth seems about as well as usual, but I guess his health isn't the best. Aunt Myra and Esther started the fourth for Montana. They had a home seekers ticket over the Burlington with no stopovers—went by way of Omaha. Esther will probably know all there is to know about the West when she returns.

Her friends in Grand Ridge are few and far between. She has had no beau now. I do not know what went wrong with her and Cecil McAtee, but she hasn't been coming for six months or more. She has a school out west of town.

Dave has a new Auburn car. Uncle Charles and Aunt Helen came down to Ottawa in his car Monday and they were here for dinner yesterday and went to Aunt Jane's in the afternoon. They were going to Bloomington this morning, and will take dinner with Molly and returned to Aunt Jane's this evening and here again tomorrow.

Helen will go back Friday on the train, and Charles will stay for a longer visit. Jamie belongs to a company of militia, and he has gone with the other boys to Texas.

I had a short letter from Molly yesterday. Molly is able to sit up a little. Molly says she is improving slowly but such wounds do not heal in a day or week either. Her operation was not serious, but I guess there was a good deal of it—one or both ovaries to remove, the appendix, and a lacerated uterus.

Franco has sold his bungalow and is building another and may sell that before he gets it done. Charles says Mabel's baby is not doing well. I told him to put it on artificial food, but he thinks that is not what it needs. He says she seems hungry all the time.

I am thinking a good deal lately about buying one of Chris's lots and putting up a little for or five room bungalow. I have the dearest little plan here for a four-room house with a bath and an attic and full basement. I asked Manning to figure out the estimates but he pays no attention to it.

Frank gets around on crutches. I do not know whether he has his limb out of the cast yet or not. He was out to church Sunday.

Well, I do not think of anything more. If I have forgotten anything you can put it in some more. Oh yes, Joe Porter's boy was buried a week ago Sunday. Joe Jacobs' mother died in South Bend Indiana a few days ago. Joe is coming back to Grand Ridge to live. When you haven't anything to write about would you tell me all about the boys and what they are doing and saying? Kiss them for me.

Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

P.S. Robert was better yesterday.

Ma



Grand Ridge

August 28, 1916

Dear Helen and All,

I received your card Saturday evening and was so sorry to hear that Ell has such a bad sore throat. I hope he is all right by this time. It has surely broken before now. Write and let me know how he is. I hope you

can keep the children from getting any infection from it – if there is any to get. I do not know much about Quinsy, but I am terribly worried about any kind of sore throat while infantile paralysis is so prevalent.

Dorothy Strait, one of Harriet's twins, has just recovered from it – she has the use of her hands, and we hope she will regain the use of her limbs. She was paralyzed in both. We haven't had any cases any nearer than Ottawa or Streator.

I went to Mandy Harris's funeral Saturday afternoon—she was nothing but a skeleton. But her face looked nice. I will send her obit. Forrest Jones's mother was buried yesterday and old Sam Patterson a week or so ago.

It is Monday morning, and I haven't time to write a long letter but will write you again soon. If I can get away, I am going to see you sometime next month. Take good care of yourselves, and let me know right away how Ell is. Kiss the kiddies for me and gargle their throats with peroxide or Listerine. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Have you thrashed yet? I was glad to hear that Ell had his tonsils out but have been anxious to hear how he got along. His tonsils must've been in pretty bad condition were they not?

I'm going to try to get away in a couple of weeks if the children keep well. Violet has a cold and a pretty bad cough, but hope to get it broke up soon.

Chris is not home yet so I cannot tell you anything about his trip. Uncle Dave spent about 10 days in Wisconsin at Maud's. They like it up there pretty well. They went to Indiana in their car a few weeks ago too. Well goodbye.

Mother

Grand Ridge, Illinois

October 10, 1916

Dear Helen and Ell and Kiddies,

I feel sort of guilty; for I believe it has been a month since I wrote you a letter. I think I wrote about the 10th of September.

Al Poundstone was married the 9th of September, but none of us knew it until it came out in the paper the next Wednesday the 13th, and I wrote you after he was married but before I knew of it. He met her in Morris with his car and came home across country, and Robert did not even know it until he saw it in the paper. They were pretty cute about it. She seems like such a nice woman, and I believe he will be much happier than when he lived with Robert and Edith. I do not think Edith was any too good to him— at least I have heard so.

School commenced October 2 and is running along smoothly. But in Streator yesterday, a boy died in school, and that school is closed until the room is fumigated for fear it was infantile paralysis. Ella just called up Nelly Wakey, one of the high school girls, and she told her the boy was in school last Wednesday and to a class meeting after school and that night his hand became numb and it spread to his arms, his limbs, his bowels, and finally his throat so he couldn't speak, and he died yesterday morning. They had five doctors, but nothing could be done for him. His father is a doctor, Dr. H.C. Hill, an ear, nose, and throat specialist. We heard at first that he died in school, but that is incorrect as he has not been to school since last Wednesday, but they are going to fumigate the building.

We lost our preacher this fall. He was sent to Hale Memorial Church in Peoria. Our new man is George H. Thorpe. He was a classmate of Jesse Poundstone. He has a wife and two children and a boy and a girl of 11 and 18. He preached for the first time here last Sunday, so I am not prepared to say how I like him, but this one thing I am sure of, he has not the force of Smith. He may have as much ability.

I do not know whether I will go home or not. It seems as though everything is against it. We are not through cleaning yet, and I have not made any chili sauce or piccalilly. We did not get so very much fruit put up. Strawberries, raspberries, peaches, and grapes is all, and I haven't made a glass of jelly yet. I have some juice to make some, and I'll have to get busy and make it for we are nearly out. We haven't had an apple this summer or fall.

Dad Rinker has bought the house and lots that Fred Parmalee lives in, and Manning is going to build them a new bungalow on that corner lot. Fred has already built a garage and put a concrete walk around the lots. Manning is pretty busy; that hardware store keeps him pretty busy all the time, and then his contract work besides keeps him on the jump. Bert is going to send a car load of potatoes for Manning to sell for him and expects to get a \$1.30 or a \$1.40. I think he will get at least a \$1.50.

I went with the ladies aid over to Bureau Junction in autos the week before last. Robert Jackson's family moved over there last spring, and we went over to see them. There were about 40 of us so we took our dinners and had a fine time. It is about 40 or 45 miles. Last Thursday we went down to Mrs. Snooks in South Ottawa and quilted a quilt for her, took our dinner, and had another good time.

Mrs. Gardner was buried the week before last, and Bert Hayes is very sick. They took him to California Sunday evening. They would have him operated on him here, but it could be done so much better in Los Angeles, and he would get so much better care. You wouldn't know Oscar. He is as fat as a policeman. Barbara looks just the same only stout and no prettier. Anna (Rinker) Northdurft is expecting the stork soon. This will be the third. She has two pretty little boys. They moved this fall from Buckingham over near Kankakee to Alpha over near rock island—clear across the state.

O.P. Graves, DD (he is a Reverend. Dr. now) is in the Kewanee, and McVey is in Watseka. The man who was in Hale Memorial, Peoria, S.P. Archer has come to Streator. There were 10 or 11 preachers died in Central Illinois Conference last year and has made a great many changes. Mr. Dunlevy went where Mr. Moots was – Grand Ridge, although he got a fine promotion and an opening for a great work.

Aunt Helen Tunic has bought a cottage near the reading room and has probably moved by this time. Ruth was to go back in her own home the first of October. She has not called Dr. Stork yet or at least I have not heard of it.

Gus Rinker has bought the Julian Hess place—100 acres 2 ½ miles west of town. Clarence Broek bought it a year ago (Vera Wakey's husband you know), but they are going to Ohio where they have bought land. I think you know the place just across the road from Alfred Offered's. Mrs. John Ramela has sold her new house to Charles Raymer or rather to Cora and they are going back in the old house. She is anxious to get out of debt.

Uncle Chris went to Iowa last week, do not know whether he is back it or not. They took him to Fort Dodge in the car and he and Harry were going to Waterloo in the car to a stock show. Ada's father is in Iowa and

is going to stay several months Blanche says. He is helping Dave with the work. Dave let his hired man go and found the work was too much for him so invited Mr. Farmer out, and he is quite a help.

Floris Chapel and was ordained a deaconess at conference this fall. She is here now for a couple of months. Cora is not teaching this year and she has a sweetheart. Do not know if they are going to get married or not.

Manning's store and two of his elevators were robbed several weeks ago. They got several dollars' worth of knives and scissors but no money from the store and only a few cents from the elevator. They got the bloodhounds but did not catch the thieves. Will close now. Write soon.

Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother.

PS - Hope you are all well. Suppose Eldon is learning fast. Burton is in school. Kiss the kiddies for me. Hope I can see them soon.

Chapter Two

1917

Grand Ridge, Illinois

January 8, 1917

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter this morning, and will answer once, as I have not written much very lately, and I suppose I owed you a letter before this one came.

I suppose you will all be sorry to hear that old Newt died last week and was buried at Dwight. I was going to send his obit but cannot find it.

My eyes are about as well as ever.

I am glad you liked your Christmas presents. Mine were all nice. Manning gave me a box of stationery – very nice in a Christmas box, Ella gave me a box of correspondence cards and envelopes, Aunt Molly a pair of silk stockings, part silk at least, the upper part in cotton, Aunt Sarah a bath towel and washcloth, Aunt Jane a huckaback towel trimmed with crochet, Ada and Dave a lovely bathrobe, Ellen and Rachel each handkerchief, Aunt Jane also gave me a little ribbon jabot, and Bell Smith a pretty bag – tan stripes probably just like yours.

Charles sent Molly, and Bert, and I an Ingersoll watch. It would be very nice for a boy or man but what Molly and I would want of such a thing is beyond me. Molly wonders if he is losing his mind. He did not send Frank anything—do not know what he gave Helen. I have not heard from her at all. I sent her a centerpiece like Margaret's, but have not heard from it. She has had the Round Robin since before Christmas but does not write. She must be sick.

I will enclose the cake recipe. I know you will like it. I do but we cannot have cake in our house. Eggs and butter and sugar and milk are too expensive to indulge in such luxuries. He has been getting meat once in a while lately, when he goes to Ottawa or Streator. He won't buy it in Grand Ridge. I suppose he expects the grocers to buy their hardware and Ottawa and Streator.

Our snow is all gone and we are having rather mild weather.

Ed Farnum's family are going to live in Texas. He has gone with the car, and the family will stay here until he builds a temporary house. Edna Farnum went to Texas in the summer to stay with an aunt, and she has married a few weeks ago. Lathe Sutton says to a drunken fellow. Frank Schober's have a new boy at their home.

Emma Peuli is very sick. I do not remember if I told you that. Mr. Shape is dead. He died before Christmas Manning told us at noon that a man at Oglesby killed his wife and three children with an ax last night –

haven't heard the particulars – a drunken brute I suppose. Oglesby is south of LaSalle near Deer Park –a mining town.

Tell Eldon to speak his piece for me— I'd like to hear it.

Art and Bert Woodward are here but I have not seen them. Helen Hibbs has a music class. The nine-year-old boy of the family by the name of Jenkins, who lives in uncle Al's tenant house, died of diphtheria last Monday or Tuesday, I guess it was. He was taken sick in school on Thursday—so the school is closed. We are all well and hope you are all over your colds.

Jesse and Violet got their coats and sweaters for Christmas. I went to Streator and got them, and he paid me for them. I got Jesse and Violet a blue corduroy coat and Jesse a green and Violet a red sweater. Manning got Violet some new underwear Friday in Ottawa.

Well, I have written all I know so will quit until next time. Hope you will write sooner next time, and I'll try to do better. Remember me to Miss Doble, to Farber's, and also to Miss Stein. Sorry I did not see them all.

Kiss the kiddies for me love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Got a card from Molly Sale today. She says she is not a bit well – has not been since she got home from here. Just one cold after another and not enough vitality to throw it off.

Ma

Grand Ridge

March 6, 1917

Dear Helen and All,

I received your card and the package Saturday evening. It is lovely, and I thank you very much. Suppose I shall spend all my spare time manicuring my hands now. But I feel like scolding you girls for spending so much money on me so soon after what you did at Christmas. I thought that was enough to last a year or two.

Aunt Jane sent me a handkerchief with a crocheted edge (she did it herself) and a little cake of maple sugar. Rachel Palmer sent me a lavender crocheted bag – quite pretty – and Ella brought me a flowering plant from the greenhouse Sunday evening – a cyclamen with crimson blossoms. Ella's folks live in Streator now, and she goes home every Sunday. They moved the week before Christmas. She was home the Sunday before Christmas and stayed for Christmas and has only missed one Sunday since – there was a blizzard and she couldn't go.

Mrs. Farnum came home yesterday. Ed Farnum's family have moved to Texas. Edna is married and lives in Texas. Mrs. George Hook has been very sick with pneumonia. She has lost her mind, and they are afraid if she gets well she will be insane.

How are you getting along? Is the snow melting? Or is it still cold? It is rather cold here but the weather is nice. The roads are dry – have had no snow or rain for some time now.

I am going to try to have your quilts ready to send by the last of the week. Hope you will like them. I was disappointed in one of them. I didn't have quite enough of the tan to finish out the border so put a blue strip on it. I could not get any more of the tan.

Well, I cannot think of any more to write. I believe we had better start a Round Robin letter as I won't tell the same things over every time I write. Writing to so many, I forget whether I have told you something, and then I expect I repeated. I had a letter from Aunt Hannah last week. She is at Chester's now, and they are all well. She has eight great-grandchildren now—seven of them are Chester's grandchildren, and Ida has one.

I must write to Blanche and Margaret. I sent Ada a letter yesterday when I was writing to Dave. Hope you are all well. Violet is better and in school this week. I suppose you are getting lots of eggs now – wish I was there – we haven’t had any scarcely to use this whole winter.

Love to all and write soon. Kiss the boys for me.

Lovingly,
Mother



Grand Ridge, Illinois

September 24, 1917

Dear “Sis”,

I suspect you looked for a letter from me last Tuesday – I intended writing last Sunday but we went out to Aunt Jane’s and spent the day. Aunt Hannah, Clark Ida, and Ben Luther and their son Muron on were there – they were here for supper on Friday before – that is they were all here but Aunt Hannah— she was not able to come, but Hilda and Uncle Jake came with them. So, I had to go out there to see Aunt Hannah – she had fallen and hurt her leg or ankle and thought she was not able to come here. They came through in their Buick from Madrid, and I think they were going back by way of Laurens and Aunt Hannah was going to stay at Chester’s this winter. All of Chester’s boys had to register and Floyd was in the first draft but was exempted until next June I think they said.

I am glad you had such a fine crop of oats. Hope your corn matures – did you have any frost? We had quite a heavy one about two weeks ago, but it did not do much damage except to the corn in the low places. I think most of the corn here will mature, and I was glad to hear that they had no frost at home. They need a little more time Dave said for the corn. Am glad you are to have a new barn – suppose a new house will come next. They always say “a barn would build a house”, and I believe it.

I suppose you have been thinking I would write and tell you all about Esther's wedding – well you know just as much about it as I do for they were married and got out of town before anyone knew of it

E-X-C-E-P-T Manning. He knew it last May. She was married at home by the M.E. preacher—no guests, and I haven't heard whether there was a supper or not but I think not. She wore gray messaline, and they motored to Springfield to the State Fair. Their announcement came out the day after they were married. I do not know that anyone has given them any presents. I haven't and Chris hasn't and the young people haven't showered them. Yesterday is the first time they have been out to church, and scarcely anyone has seen them. He farms his father's place in Deer Park and has been batching. The house is so old they are going to live in Lowell and build a new house. His name is Al Ott (not quite Ell Scott but pretty close to it). And he is about 6'5"—at least it is the long and short of it. They are certainly a funny looking couple. She met him while teaching in Deer Park.

Manning's store was robbed one-night last week. They broke a plate glass window (about eight dollars) in the rear door and took an electric iron and 15 cents. They also broke into the drugstore and Newman's grocery and to elevator offices but did not take anything, and then they took Ott Payne's Ford car and went to Ottawa and left the car at the Rock Island Depot with the electric iron in it so really got away with 15 cents. Ray Hodgman met them just out of town, and I think they got cold feet.

I will send the cherries now as soon as I can get Manning to help pick them – he says they will get smashed, but I hope we can pack them so they will ship. There are 40 quarts and I thought I would divide them up among you four families – it won't make very many for each of you but will help a little.

I have canned only 14 quarts of tomatoes – I wanted to can 30 or 40 quarts but the pesky things won't ripen. Our cucumbers didn't bear at all, so I have no pickles and not very much of anything else. He hasn't bought a single thing all I have canned we either got out of the garden or out at Al Poundstone's.

I only have a gallon of apple butter, and we had the apples given to us. I got a few blue plums out to Aunt Janes. I have 2 gallons of kraut. We will have to buy potatoes unless Bert gives him enough to do him again.

What is the matter at Bert's? Dave wrote so funny about it; said "It seems to be as queer a case from what we hear." I haven't heard a thing, only that Margaret was sick and it seems Hulda did not stay up there very long.

Write soon and tell me all about it. We have a new preacher again this fall. We all liked Thorpe so well, and it seems terrible to have him go, but so it goes. He goes to Fairbury, and we get a man from Varna – Ivan’s chatter – he preached yesterday. Think he will “fill the bill” all right—he is about the size of Bert. And Myra said he reminded her of Bert. He is about 56 or 60 years old.

Well, I must close. I wish I could see you all this fall, but I guess I can’t if we all keep well, and I hope we will. Kiss the boys for me.

Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Grand Ridge

October 14, 1917

Dear Helen and family,

Received your letter some time ago and have it quite a little to do so have neglected to answer. Have made the girls a gingham dress a piece and try to sew a little for the Red Cross – then I have been canvassing for some books – sent in a \$32 order last week – thought maybe I could make some pin money that way, but I do not like it overly well and shall quit – after the weather gets cold.

Sam Poundstone was buried last week – 86 years old—Herman’s father, you know. Etta (Anderson) Woodruff was visiting here this summer. She looks well. Her mother went home with her and hasn’t come back yet. Edna (Farnum) Dixon has a little daughter – arrived October 3. Faye Arlene is her name. They live at Canyon City Texas. Received a short letter from Aunt Molly a few days ago – they are moving to Rockford. John has a job there, but she did not say what.

I have filled all the fruit cans we have. Manning got a couple of bushels of peaches after I wrote you last, and I made some tomato pickles. I only got 14 quarts of canned tomatoes. They just wouldn't ripen. I am sorry about Margaret – hope she is better and gets up enough ambition to keep better. Bert Ostrander has been having something like sciatica. Edith thinks he lacks ambition. I phoned Mrs. Graves today, and she says he is getting better. He pulled his beets last week. We have some pretty cold weather but I think it will warm up now for a while.

Wes Rinker has tuberculosis and is pretty bad. Violet has been quite sick for a few days – was out of school Friday. She had bronchitis, and I was afraid it was going to be pneumonia – she wheezed so and spit blood. And had some fever. But she is so much better today – but I do not think she had better go to school tomorrow.

I have the pain in my back exactly like it was last fall at your place; I do not believe it has been quite so severe. I have had to keep up anyway because Violet was sick. Manning boxed and sent to cherries last week, and I will send you the bill of lading. Let me know if you do not get them in the course of a week or two.

I will not have time to do much crocheting for Christmas so I thought maybe you will accept the cherries for a Christmas present. It isn't much. Hope this finds you all well. Did you get a new coat this fall? I got me a dark heliotrope cloth coat – but the price was awful— \$26. It sure costs something to live these days. I suppose you have the barn finished by this time. Have you the same teacher this fall? And does she board with you? Will close and write to Bert and Harry. We sent 10 quarts of cherries each to your farm.

Love to all.

Lovingly
Mother

Grand Ridge, Illinois

November 19, 1917

Dear Helen and all,

No! I am not dead, nor sick, nor crazy – but may be very near the latter. I'm trying hard to hold my balance but it wouldn't take much to tip it. I've been trying to do too many things, and they take up so much time I am afraid I have neglected to write to you for some time.

Charles and his wife came down a week ago Saturday and were here for supper. Of course it was quite an ordeal to meet her, but she is really very nice, and I think I shall like her very much. I liked Mollie though, and the whole affair seems terrible to me.

Jamie was discharged from the company when he came back from Texas, and so he changed his name and joined the new national Army and is now in the cavalry department, and is stationed at Newport News, Virginia. His wife is a stenographer for somebody, and his children are scattered.

I think Charles said Mollie has the boy, and the little girls are at Lake Bluff. Mabel had a housekeeper, and she is teaching. Charles is in the "Nixon" school yet, and his wife is teaching in a high school somewhere in the city-- a long way from Hermans. They are living in a flat at 63 E. 46th St. Josie lives in the lower flat of her mother's house and has no kids. Ruth called her baby Rudolph Duane Cope. John's brother is Nathan Lee Udell and Paul's is Donna Jean.

October 29 was the last letter I had from Bert's. They had not got their cherries yet and do not know if they have them by this time or not. Margaret says she feels a good deal better— she is still taking malt and believes it is all right. She still has her girl but said she would be glad when she could do her own work again. She said she could do quite a few things already. She owed everyone a letter and suppose some of them would think she was dead.

I suppose you had heard that Sales were going to move to Rocky Ford. I have not heard from them since they moved.

Manning had a lady friend to dinner yesterday. I do not know where she lives nor anything about her, but she seemed to be a nice woman. I think he introduced her as Mrs. Clara Worthington. I did not ask him any questions. I have learned better – I just wait until he gets ready to tell me. I think she came on the train to Streator, and he met her there. She must live somewhere on the Santa Fe because he was away all day two or three Sundays ago, and he told brother Chatman (our new preacher) that

he went through Varna (Chatman's last appointment). As I put two and two together and decided she lives out west of Varna somewhere. Will tell you all I know about it as fast as I learn.

Katie Reed (Mastin's sister) was buried Friday. The young lady who works with Emma Ackley in China was visiting at Mullins, and she spoke for us in the church yesterday morning. Her name is Jennie Jones, and she belongs in the Des Moines branch but is in school at Evanston at present. She is a lovely girl.

Bert Ostrander was quite sick with rheumatism, but is at work again. This is Edna's last year in high school. I think she expects to teach.

Manning went to Clarion a week ago tonight, but Harry was in Minnesota after a car of hogs to feed, so he did not see anyone but Blanche and Ada and the kids. I suppose he was too stubborn to go to Dave's.

I see by the paper that Lindsay's are going to leave Mora. Well, I must close. We are all fine and hope you are all well. Will send the boys birthday money soon.

Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Just got a card from Margaret today at noon. She is doing her work alone with Bert's help, and they got the cherries.
Ma



Grand Ridge, Illinois

December 11, 1917

Dear Sis and All,

I suppose you will think I am a mean old thing for not writing sooner, but I just keep putting it off because it is so hard to write when you haven't anything to write about. The woman I was telling you about

lives in Washington, Illinois down near Peoria. She seems like a real nice woman. I do not know how he got acquainted with her, but they have been going together since the Fourth of July. Do not say a word about it in your letters. I will tell you all I know as fast as I learn.

I suppose when he begins to put in the hardwood floors he has stored in the garage for one year and get some new window shades that he said he would get when he got ready (when I asked him one day if he had any shade rollers in the store), I shall think it is about time for me to pack my grip, and it can't be too soon to hurt me. I get tired of his grumpiness.

Jesse came home from school sick yesterday afternoon but is all right today. It is zero weather and the cold always hurts her eyes and makes her sick at her stomach. I was sick yesterday too. Something like when I was at your place. I think I have taken a little cold. I feel a little better today. I am glad you are feeling so much better. Hope it continues and you get as fit as I am. I would love to see you all, but the short visits I have made were so aggravating, I decided I wouldn't go again until I could stay a little longer. Why can't you come out and spend Christmas with us?

Esther had quite a severe attack of appendicitis a week ago Saturday, and her mother brought her home for a few days after she got better. I do not know whether she has gone back again or not. Have you folks built your new church yet? I haven't seen anything in the Northwestern about it. I just heard that Aunt Jane got thrown out of the buggy over at Muron's and bruised her up quite badly and broke a rib. She is at Muron's now. I just talked to Della, and she says it was a week ago today, and she is feeling pretty well. She got a gash in her head too.

Well, I must close. Hope you have a Merry Christmas with lots of fun and candy. I have been "cutting out" sweets lately. I have an idea that is one thing that is the matter with me. Write soon. Love and kisses to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Grand Ridge

December 30, 1917

Dear Helen and All,

I will try and write a few lines this morning. I did not go to church as I have a hard cold in my head, and I did not want to carry a suitcase to hold all the handkerchiefs I would need.

Jesse has been sick, too, since Christmas but is better – she went to Sunday school. Christmas always gets away with her. The rest are well. If you think they do not grow you should see them and have some of their clothes to let down and enlarge. Jesse just comes under my chin, and Violet isn't much shorter.

I want to thank you for the beautiful piece of *crêpe-de-chine* you girl sent me. It is certainly pretty and will make a dandy waste. Thank you so much – but you shouldn't have done it. I would rather you would get yourself those pretty things.

Ada sent me a beautiful silk petticoat and the girls each a box of little handkerchiefs. Blanche subscribed for the *Women's Home Companion* for a year in my name. Molly sent me a *crêpe-de-chine* handkerchief and Belle a pincushion. Helen sent one little crocheted candlestick (very pretty) and a dear little jabot of Rose buds made of figured *Georgette crêpe*. Charles sent a fountain pen with my name engraved on it (he sent one to each of the family I think also to Aunt Jane). Ella gave me a book (the *Harvester* by Jean Stratton Porter) and Aunt Jane sent me a pair of the loveliest knit bedroom slippers. Margaret sent a dollar, and I think I will get a reading glass with it. Violet gave me a handkerchief and Jesse a little *Madonna* which she framed at school. Sarah gave me a pretty centerpiece, and Rachel Palmer the inevitable booklet.

I was a little late with some of my presents as I had to help Albert's wife finish up a table cover she was making for her daughter-in-law, but I got a dollar for it and will put it with Margaret's to get a good glass. I made all the things I sent except the books. I decided to give the children books instead of the quarters I usually send for their birthdays and Christmas – except Bobby. He is too small yet for books so I sent him the money.

I sent each of you girls and Aunt Molly a silk crocheted bag – all different. I did not give any of the boys anything this year.

Will Hagie's father was buried a week or so ago. Pete and Mrs. Hagie called on me last week. They were here for the funeral. Walter

Poundstone's have another girl – the fourth. Well, I must close and write some more letters— about 40 to 11, I think.

Write when you have the time. I hope Santa Claus was good to all of you. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – I hope the boys will like the books.

Chapter Three

1918

Grand Ridge

January 17, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I had come to the sad conclusion that you are all buried in a snow bank. You see I figured that you had as much or more snow than we have. I have seen some pretty big drifts in my time, but I cannot remember that we ever had so much snow on the level as we have here now.

We had a big blizzard on the 6th of January that stalled all the trains for a day or two. Manning went to Washington, Illinois that morning and started back in the evening and was on the train that was stuck in the drift at Varna. It was 29 hours before they got out, and he got home about 10 or 11 o'clock Monday night. I'll send you the clippings from the Chicago paper.

They had just fairly gotten the cars and trains to run in on schedule time when another bigger blizzard came last Thursday about midnight. It howled all day Friday, all night Friday night, and all day Saturday and until sometime in the night Saturday night. The sun shone Sunday morning, but no one could go to church or anywhere until paths were shoveled.

There is a drift in front of George Dearth's house eight feet high. They cut a road way through it. Lizzie Cournine climbed up and stuck a flag on top, and they called it Pike's Peak. The train on this road started for Aurora Friday afternoon and got stuck at Wedron. They got it back to Ottawa Saturday and tried to get it to Streator Sunday but it got stuck in the cut just south of Covell Creek Bridge. It took five engines to pull it back to Ottawa. They got the snowplows working, and it managed to get to Aurora Monday and back to Streator Monday night.

The first train or car through Grand Ridge for three days, and of course we got no mail. The mail routes are not all opened up yet for the R.F.D. It was terrible in Chicago, and it was cold Saturday—about 22 below zero.

If you have not heard from Molly and Bell, you probably do not know that they are moving to La Junta. Archie got a laundry there, and he and John are going to run it—will send Molly's last card.

It is too bad Margaret is in such a state of mind that she imagines she is sick all the time. It is very hard on Bert. He has spent \$1000 since August he told me, and none of it wasted either—living expenses and

doctor bills. She seemed to like it there when I was up there, of course I suppose she gets lonesome but we all do, don't we? I am sure you are away from all your folks as much as she is.

I have been having a very hard cold. Came very near if not quite tonsillitis, but got some Bromo Quinine, and it helped me. Have not been to church for four weeks. There wasn't any last Sunday. We changed preachers again last fall. Ivan Chattens is our new preacher. He is a pretty good mixer, and outsiders like him.

Had a letter and card from Harry and Blanche yesterday. Harry Sumner's hired man has the smallpox and was sick in bed for several days at Harry's before they took him to town. I suppose they will be quarantined.

Aunt Jane gave me such a nice pair of bedroom slippers. I wish you had them, but I do not like to give my presents away, so I am sending you the ones we got from Em when I first came out here. They are almost as good as new, and I think will keep your tootsies warm for a long time. I suppose they will be too large as they are too large for me.

Write soon. Don't wait so long whether you have anything to write about or not.

I was sorry Wayne had a headache. Is it a sick headache? Or does he get constipated? I would give him a good physic every time when it comes on. Wish I could see all of you. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Grand Ridge

February 9, 1918

Dear Helen and all,

I will write a few lines this morning as I have not written very lately. There is no news much that I know of. We all are well, and the snow is going so fast that they fear flooding along the river. We have a smallpox

scare in town. Ott Payne's have it. Mrs. Payne is sick now. Ott had it, but did not know it and carried mail right along and is a janitor at the Presbyterian Church. They are quarantined now. A lot of us were there to a prayer meeting a week ago Wednesday, and now the children who were there that have not been vaccinated have to stay at home.

Jesse and Violet were there so they are shut in. I do not feel afraid that they will take it, but thought I'd better write and tell you so if they should get it, you need not expect any more letters for a while. Will let you hear from us in some way though.

Kent Woodward was on the transport that was torpedoed, and they have not heard yet whether he was among the missing or not. The folks are pretty anxious.

Manning informed me a few days ago that he was going to try to get a new housekeeper sometime this spring so that I could go and come as I please; won't that be nice? Well, I must close now. Write soon.

Love to all,

Mother



Grand Ridge

February 27, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter a few days ago and will answer so you will not worry. No one took the smallpox, not even the children in the Payne family – just Mr. and Mrs. Payne had it – the children were vaccinated. They are out of quarantine now, so the scare has all blown away.

But there have been four deaths in the Grand Ridge all within a week. A week ago last Friday a freight train struck Mrs. Ann Proud and killed her. She is a sister of Mrs. Agnes Woodward. Monday night Mrs. Will Woodward died very suddenly of heart failure; worry for Kent was probably the cause. They got a cablegram that he was all right and the reaction was too much for her. Then on Thursday, Bob Davis died in the

Streator hospital following an operation for appendicitis. Gangrene had set in, and the same day, a young man about 16 years old, Stanley McCready, died of leakage of the heart. They took Mrs. Proud to Earlville. The others were buried on Friday Saturday and Sunday.

Uncle John and Aunt Molly Sale have moved back to Ordway. I think I'd let Archie pull me around a little more if I were they.

Your present will be just as acceptable if it does not get here on time. It is nice that you are making it. I know I'll like it.

Hope the boys do not have the hacking cough very hard. This is the best time of year to have it – Eldon must be pretty brave not to miss any school.

I wish you would send me a record of their births; I can remember the date all but the year.

Dinner is ready so I will have to close this time. Hope you are all as well as we. The children were vaccinated and Jesse's took. Violet has been vaccinated the second time. But that hasn't taken either. Jesse was pretty sick but it is all right again. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Grand Ridge

March 10, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter and the beautiful dresser scarf a few days ago and thank you ever so much. I do not know why I should throw it out. It is done as well as I could do it myself. No matter how soiled a piece of work gets, a couple of tablespoons of ammonia in a quart of water will take it all out and make it as white as snow. I did it up last week and it is just fine, and I think more of it because you made it.

Well, Ella is gone and we have a widow woman working for us— Mrs. Vetter. The other deal fell through. I do not know what went wrong.

Ella is going to work for Alice this spring. She expects to be sick in April or May.

Margaret sent me a dollar for my birthday. I think I will get me a nice handbag with the money Blanche and Harry sent and a reading glass with what Margaret sent.

I haven't felt very well for a week – neuralgia or rheumatism, I think.

The boys are on a trade now with Bert Tillman. I told him I was willing so I suppose it will go this time. They will put theirs in at \$220 per acre, I will leave mine in the place on a first mortgage.

Hope the boys are over the whooping cough before this. Supper is ready so I will close and write some more later. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

March 11

I'll try and finish my letter now. The piano factory in Ottawa burned Saturday evening. Grandma Heister was buried yesterday, and Frank Geiger's wife died this morning – tuberculosis.

The farmers are still husking corn. Sam Poundstone of Uniontown, Pennsylvania died last week of Bright's Disease. He was 72 years old.

I will go to Streator or Ottawa as soon as I can and see what I can do for you. I would not advise you to buy a silk dress ready-made – unless you pay an awful price. They are not half made. Ada sent me a blue gingham with white collar and cuffs. I wonder if that would be what you would want. I think I will go to Murray's. Maddie never makes any discount. I don't like Herman's very well. Love to all.

Mother

Grand Ridge

March 23, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter just after I sent the package, and I think the dress will answer your description unless it is too tight— but it was so pretty. I got it in preference to a darker one, and it was preshrunk so will not shrink much more. They always do a little. The waists for Wayne are not very good I know, but thought they would do to wear with his overalls, and that was what I thought you wanted. Ready-made things are so expensive. Unless you can make garments yourself, and then I suppose they are about as cheap as one can hire them made.

I got some goods to make a summer dress – it is a fine gingham or something on that order, and I had to pay 39 cents per yard. I think that will be all the dress I shall buy this summer. And I am not going to buy a hat. I have worn mine for two summers, and I guess it is good for another one. I do not wear a hat more than half the time anyway. I am economizing you see. I am on a deal for a house and lot. But will not say anything about it until I know whether I am going to get it or not. You would be just as disappointed as I will if I didn't get it, so if I get it, I will tell you all about it later.

Russell Riley has the first chance at it. He is trying to “Jew” the owner down so I made him a pretty good offer, and I hope I will get it. I cannot get possession before September, so will work or visit or both this summer. I will not stay here. I do not like the woman he has got.

Well, Spring is here, and we have some real summery weather. But had a cold rain yesterday, and it is quite cold today. We did not have much frost to go out. There was so much snow, and it came before the ground froze up. I got parsnips and turnips out of the garden just a few days before the big snow came.

Aunt Kate Rinker beat you on the chickens – she had five the other day when I was over there.

I certainly do miss Ella. She is worth two or three such women as this one. No, she never worked here before – did you think it was Mrs. Warren? Her name is Vedder.

I am glad the children are over the whooping cough. Be careful of them for the infantile paralysis has made its appearance again in Illinois.

Your dress was three dollars the waists one dollar and postage 11 cents so there are 39 cents coming your way, which I will enclose. I am

piecing some quilts to have when I keep house. I pieced one for Manning. Well, have to get busy so will close for this time. With love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Grand Ridge

April 21, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I have not heard from you for some time, and I suppose you are waiting for a letter. I have had so much to occupy my mind for several weeks that I have not felt like writing. The woman Manning got to keep house for him was such an unpleasant character, that I gave up and rented a room of Emily Poundstone, and have moved my bed and board. I have been here a week now and like it pretty well. The girls come in to see me every other day. Emily and I go half on everything, and cook and eat together, so I think we will get along all right—if other people will attend to their own business.

Walter Poundstone has a new bungalow that was for sale. He wants to go to California. He offered it for \$1800 with everything in it, and I was going to take it when he got cold feet on account of the war – so we are going to wait a while and see how this big battle turns out. He didn't intend to go until September anyway. I think I will go home sometime in June.

Alice Weld (Ella's sister) has a little girl a week-old today. I was out to Aunt Jane's four days the week before last and took dinner with Alice and Ella. Mrs. Jake lucky has a little girl too.

Frank Campbell is very sick with blood poisoning. He cut his hand with a razor while he was shaving. It is doubtful if he gets well, and will probably have a crippled hand if he does. They have a trained nurse.

We are having rainy cold weather. Have had nice weather though. I took the girls to the timber a week ago yesterday. We had a nice time,

and found some flowers but it was early for them, and we got pretty tired.

I went to South Ottawa and stayed all night with Edith two or three weeks ago. Will go to Dayton soon. Bert has rheumatism again. Sarah is busy papering. I got a photo of Harry's boys last week. It is fine. I suppose you got one too.

Well, I must close and write to the other kids. Write soon and let me know how you all are. I would love to see you all and probably will before very long. Have you lots of little checks? Hilda has about 50. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother
Grand Ridge



May 14, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter quite a while ago but have been very busy; we have a nice garden and some flowers to fuss with, and I bought five old hens off Uncle Al, and we are going to set some hens tonight and try and raise some little "biddies."

Was glad to get the pictures. The kids have surely grown and the barn is some fine barn all right. Harry is going to build one this summer. Manning's housekeeper did not stay long after I left – only about two weeks. She went to Cedar Falls, Iowa and is married (she was a grass widow¹).

Pauline Rinker is keeping house for him now, so I hope everything will move on smoothly. I only hope I never have to go back there. The children come up to see me every other day. Jesse says Pauline is cranky – well, she wouldn't be a Rinker if she wasn't.

It was too bad you lost so many hens, hope you raise a nice lot of chicks. Did you build a new barn where the old one was? I am hoping to

make you a visit sometime this summer, but do not know just when I can go. Think I will go to Clarion first.

Did the boys have the mumps? Ada says Blanche has appendicitis. It will be too bad if she has to undergo an operation this summer while Harry is building his barn. Maybe she can stave it off until fall.

Prudie Coe's husband Caryl Marty was hurt a few days ago and died yesterday. He was a musical director in a YMCA Triangle in a cantonment in Kentucky. He was riding his motorcycle with his cornet strapped on his back and collided with a farm wagon and fell on the cornet in such a way that it broke his back. It paralyzed him so he did not suffer, but he only lived a few days. The funeral is tomorrow afternoon.

Everything is so pretty now. The trees are out in leaf, and the lawns are so pretty. We have had plenty of rain.

Well, I must close and write Harry and Bert and Dave and maybe Uncle Charles. I think I will go to Chicago soon on a little visit. Write soon. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Editor's Comment

¹ Could have had multiple meanings in early 20th century. Originally, it referred to an unmarried woman who has lived with several different men. It was also used to refer to a mistress or to loose women who made their living "on their backs in the grass." The most innocent connotation is used to describe a married woman whose husband is frequently away from home. Take your pick!

Grand Ridge, Illinois

June 9, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

It has been sometime since I received your letter, so I guess I better answer it this p.m. while I have a chance and am alone. I went to Gibson City two weeks ago yesterday and stayed a week. On Sunday we went to Rantoul in a car with some of their friends. You know they have built an aviation school just south of Rantoul – Chanute Field. It is sure great. We did not see any aeroplanes that day because they were not maneuvering, but there were eight that flew over Gibson a few days later, and I saw four of them. We drove all through the camp but were not allowed to stop.

Last Sunday Manning took us all to Starved Rock in the afternoon. I was up there for dinner, and he asked us if we did not want to take a little ride and then surprised us by taking us to Starved Rock.

Today was children's day, and they feel fine – and I think (and I hope) it is my last Sunday in Grand Ridge for a while at least. I am pretty homesick and think I will go home the last of the week or the first of next week.

Esther has a little girl two weeks old last Friday. She rode in the auto too much, and it was a little premature.

I thought if I went home now maybe I could help Blanche out a little with her extra men. Yes, she has been bothered with her side again this summer. I expect it is appendicitis.

So, Prudie Coe did not have any children. She will probably live with her mother or sister Madge. I think they never had a home for very long anyway. They traveled a good deal. The funeral was in Streator, and I went. It was fine. I never saw so many floral offerings.

I will not write anymore now, but hope to see you before very long. I want to buy me a little home somewhere. I cannot find just what I want here, so maybe I'll buy in Clarion. Love to all and kiss the boys for me.

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

July 8, 1918

Dear Sis,

I received your letter a few days ago and will try and answer this morning before the mailman comes.

I am very much better than I was, (Blanche says she told you I was sick). I hadn't intentioned to say anything about it until I was better. The doctor said it was gallstones and an infected gallbladder and that caused the shingles. I did not stay in bed at all, but was up and down and slept so much. Bert said it was the gall bladder poisoning in the blood that made me so sleepy. I do not want to go to Minnesota until I get able to do a day's work. Will go as soon as I feel able to do that.

Ada says Adalyn Tiffany had those enlarged glands and tonsils, and they painted them with white iodine. I am sure if you get some and paint his glands the swelling will go down. It usually comes from taking a cold. It settles in the glands.

We were sorry you could not come down the fourth. There is going to be a celebration at Eagle Grove. I do not know whether we will go or not. Harry has the mason work all done on the barn and is putting in the concrete floor. The carpenters do not seem to be ready to put the roof on yet.

Crops look good here in spite of the big rains. Of course there are spots that were drowned out. Dave has sown buckwheat and millet in his wet spots. He canned seven roosters this week – 15 quarts. She is washing today. It is cloudy and looks as though it might rain. I did not get to see Esther's baby, so I don't know whether it looks like it's Pa or its Ma.

Manning wouldn't let the girls come with me. I was sorry for them for they wanted to come as badly.

The crops in Illinois are fine—they needed rain when I left. It had been very hot and dusty, but Jesse wrote they had a good rain, and the lightning struck the elm tree just north of the kitchen window and shattered it all to pieces. They're going to cut it down. The old colored woman died a week ago Sunday and was buried Tuesday from the Methodist Church. Don Carter died a couple of weeks ago.

Well, this is my last sheet of paper, and it is about time for the mailman so I will close. Hoping to see you again. Try the iodine on Wayne and when I come, I am going to try some oil I have that I think is fine.

Love to all. Kiss the boys for me. I wonder if they will know grandma.

Lovingly,
Mother



Mora, Minnesota

September 12, 1918

Dear Sis,

At last, I am taking time to write you a few lines. Margaret washed Monday, and she finished the ironing yesterday afternoon. I ironed Tuesday while she went to town. She made 14 quarts of piccalilly Saturday. Bert got a crate of Oregon prunes yesterday, and she is going to can those this morning. Two of the musk melons got ripe before the frost, and they were pretty good. We had a dandy watermelon this morning for breakfast – one of Bert's, it was fine – wish you had a piece.

Margaret asked about those brown shoes at the store, and they have no more of them. What kind of coat did you get, and what did you have to pay? Has Blanche and Harry come up to your place yet and are they coming up here? If they do, I will go back with them. It is getting pretty cold and I have no warm clothes up here.

Well, I suppose Ell will register today as everybody else will. It is to be a regular holiday – all the stores will be closed all day. I suppose Minnesota will be a “dry state” today.

Were you pretty ticked when you got home? You must have nearly frozen if it was as cold as it was here. We had frost while they were away that killed the pumpkin, cucumber, and tomato vines. I covered up the tomatoes, and we picked them after she came home. We had two or three messes of green peas and one mess of Bush lima beans. Bert has a fresh

cow – a dandy little Holstein heifer. The old white cat has three kittens—one white just like yourself, one Maltese, and a black and white one.

I haven't heard from Jesse since I left your place. We are planning on going to the Kennebec County fair next week. Wondering if Blanche and Harry will get here to go.

I suppose Eldon and Wayne are in school now. How does Wayne like it? Did you have any frost? And did it hurt your corn? I mean the sweetcorn. Bert has his corn all shocked. He will dig his potatoes as soon as the fair is over. Bert and Margaret are still thinking of going up north in the woods.

Robert was sick again this week, threw up, but did not have any bowel trouble. He was all right while they were gone and just as good as he could be.

I got along fine with George and Carolyn. They ate breakfast with me every morning. We have a stove in the living room now. It felt pretty comfortable night before last as it was pretty cold. Well, I must close. Margaret says hello.

We all send love to all. I hope Wayne will like school so he can learn to write Grandma a letter. Let us know if Blanche and Harry are coming here so we can get our best bib and tucker on.

Lovingly,
Mother



Mora, Minnesota

October 6, 1918

Dear Sis,

Well, I am still here. Thought Harry was coming up here and had waited until I heard from them, which I did yesterday. I am not in much of a hurry to go back now as I had a letter from Manning last week, and he assured me that he did not want me to come back to keep house for him. But I think I will go home (?) sometime this week (to Clarion). Manning has shipped to my goods, and I will try and find a place to hang out as soon as I get back.

He wrote that “If everything went okay”, he expected to be married last Wednesday – he did not say to whom or where but left one to guess. He said they would be at home Thursday night. So, I suppose Mary is your sister-in-law by now.

Bert received the apples last Monday – they were in pretty bad shape, but we made 16 ½ quarts of dandy apple butter and some jelly out of some of them. Dave had sent a barrel of Wealthys, but they have only used them to eat and make pies once or twice.

Bert dug his potatoes the week before last – had from 3 to 10 pickers for nearly a week. He paid his potato pickers \$104.10 – about three dollars apiece for a day’s work. It cost him \$40.44 per acre to raise and deliver his potatoes, and he has got \$111.07 per acre so far and has a few more to sell. That is from the field north of the house. Altogether he had between 1500 and 2000 bushels and he gets \$.75 per bushel. He hasn’t got his beans all thrashed yet, but thinks he will have about 800 bushels.

I have not received the Round-Robin yet and am wondering what has become of it. Had a letter from Aunt Jane since I came up here. She had the Robin, so it must be at Helen’s. I got a letter from Blanche yesterday. We kept looking for them all last week. I was quite disappointed as I had expected to go home with them. Margaret may go to the Cities with me when I go home.

What is Ell’s registration number? Was his number in the in the first 100? Bert’s is 542.

Cream is worth money up here now. Bert took two cans in the other day and got \$16.46. He sold over \$24 worth last week. I suppose Blanche popped off at a great rate about Manning and Mary. I suppose she thought she could put a veto on his getting married. I think she would feel kind of silly now. If they are married, Mary has a nice little home, in some respects even better than Blanche. I did not consider it was any of my “funeral” so kept my mouth shut. I liked Mary, and she may do fine, anyway she can learn. She seemed like a very nice girl, and Blanche seem to like her too, but she just can’t keep her nose out of other people’s affairs it seems.

Well, I must close and get this in the mailbox before the mailman gets here. I suppose Wayne can read and write by this time. Tell him I will be looking for a letter soon. Kiss them all for me. Love to all. Write soon to Clarion.

Lovingly,
Mother

Mora, Minnesota

October 22, 1918

Dear Sis and All,

I received your letter forwarded from Clarion a few days ago and will try to write a few lines this morning before the mailman comes.

Bert got a "Ford" car a couple of weeks ago, and they persuaded me to stay a little longer so they could take me around some. They have (or at least Bert has) been so busy since I came that we had not gone anywhere. Then Blanche wrote me not to come while the "flu" is so bad down there, and I came to the conclusion that it was best to keep off the trains for a while. I think I will go the last of this week or the first of next, but do not know for sure.

I had a letter from Jesse. She said she had a new "mamma" and that she was awful nice. Hope it continues so. We are having a much-needed rain this morning. It has been so dry they couldn't plow.

Mrs. White had a birthday party for "Jim" a week ago Saturday night and some friends of theirs from Beroun (over near Pine city) were there. They came from South Dakota where Whites came from, near Big Stone Lake. Last Friday Whites and us went over to Beroun to see them. Took our dinner as they were not looking for us and had a lovely time and a fine trip. Then Sunday we went up to Nutts after dinner (we took dinner at Whites). Whites went with us. Nutts have moved up in the brush. We went up on another road part of the way – a splendid road. Too bad we did not know that road the day we went to Mille Lacs. Nutts had gone to Mille Lacs, so we did not see them but we went in the house and looked around. Of course it is comfortable, but not very pleasant. Only two rooms and a lean-to that they cannot use when it gets very cold. He has 160 acres up there, and it is balsam land and Bert says they tell him that kind of land has no soil. Everyone thinks Nutt is "nutty". I guess Margaret is "cured" of wanting to go up there.

Bert had 2050 bushels of potatoes and got 75 cents a bushel for all he sold. He put some in the cellar. Today is Eldon's birthday. I will send their money all together someday.

Margaret says hello! Hope you are all well as we are. The big fire did not come very close to us. We heard it came down as far as Wahkon, but it didn't. They had a little fire at Isle, but it was not the big fire. We may go up to Moose Lake this week. Bert got a second-hand Ford with the dandy trailer with "Ford" wheels. He has a new manure spreader, too. He traded his liberty bond for it.

I have made Margaret's Christmas present. Got some "Indian Head" and made some covers for the dresser she got of me. And one for the wash stand with a narrow-crocheted edge all around (yellow) and enough of the edge for a towel, pillowcases, and sheet sham. I didn't make them though. That is, I made the dresser and stand scarf but not the others—just the crochet.

Well, I better close or the mailman man will not get this today. I had a letter from Aunt Molly after I sent their birthday presents (money), and she wrote about the same one that she did to you. I have not received the Round Robin yet. Cannot imagine what has become of it.

Bert bought 11 head of young Holsteins since I came. They have had three fresh cow since I came.

Well, I hope you got your threshing done without any mishaps. How much did you have? They looked pretty heavy to me.

I did not know the lady Manning married, but hope it will be for the best for the children's sake. I do not think anymore to write so will close hoping you all keep well. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Missed the mailman, and Robert got a hold of this letter and tore it open so I can add a line. I got a new hat, a gray turban, and a pair of gray shoes, also a night dress (for outings) and some underwear. I also got a cute dresser set (blue with white Kewpies) with money Blanche gave me on my birthday. Margaret gave me a little teapot.

Mother

Mora, Minnesota

October 30, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I have not heard from you since I wrote but thought I'd drop you a few lines this morning as I am planning to leave here Friday morning. I have been wondering if you (any of you) have had the "flu".

We are all well, and they are all well at Clarion the last I heard. I had a letter from Manning Monday. They have all had the "flu" and are over it. Jesse was in bed three or four days.

I had a message from Manning last Friday noon telling me that Aunt Edith was dead. She was taken with pneumonia a week ago last Saturday and died Thursday at 11:30 PM. I did not get the message in time to go and couldn't very well go anyway as the funeral was Saturday afternoon.

Two of the Grand Ridge boys have been brought home in their caskets from Camp – Si Gallup and Clyde Bacon.

I got a letter from Aunt Molly too, but there was nothing in mine that wasn't in yours except that she wanted me to spend the winter there. I suppose they have another debt on their hands. Too bad Archie cannot support his own kid. There have been a few cases of "flu" here – two young men, one a soldier and the other working in Mankato – were both home. There is not much of it in Clarion but Minneapolis is full of it. I will enclose some letters and a clipping from the Streator Free Press that may interest you.

I do not know what Blanche tore off the top of Manning's letter unless to save space. She sent a letter that came for me – nearly all my mail lately has been forwarded from Clarion. I have been here two months today and didn't expect to stay more than four or five weeks.

I had to get a winter hat, a pair of high shoes, and some underwear and a nightdress. It has been pretty cold. I have wished a hundred times that I had my sweater.

Margaret got her new sweater quite a while ago. It is very nice. She sent to Sears and Roebuck for a cap to match it. She got a black skirt and ripped it all up and made it over – might as well have bought the goods and made it in the first place. We had a little snow last week which went off with rain, and there was a little snow this morning when we got up but it is all gone now. It is certainly fine weather to propagate the "flu".

Well, I must close. Write soon and let me know how you all are. If nothing happens, I will be in Clarion Saturday morning. Love to you all. Kiss the boys for me.

Lovingly,
Mother



Clarion, Iowa

November 10, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

Haven't heard from you but will write anyway to let you know where I am at. I came a week ago Friday morning, left Bert's all well and found them all well here. There is lots of "flu" here now. There have been over 40 deaths in Eagle – not many in Clarion, but there are a good many sick. Alex Dow was buried yesterday and Mrs. Raslow today. Had a letter from Jesse yesterday. John Moore's wife died of "flu" and Ralph Crosby died on the train while on the way to Ohio – heart trouble. Rev. G.P. Graves and his son Glenn died of "flu" about the same time. Mr. Graves in Kewanee and Glenn in Onarga. Blanche (Jones) Jacobs died with the "flu". I have forgotten if I told you of Aunt Edith's death, but think I did. I haven't heard from Frank, but Manning wrote she was taken sick on Saturday and died the next Thursday of pneumonia. Uncle Charles, Helen and Nick, Paul Udell, and his wife came down to Ottawa to the funeral on Saturday and all but Charles were out to Mannings to dinner on Sunday.

The girls like their new mamma fine, and I am glad they are getting along so fine. Had a nice long letter from Aunt Jane last week. They are as well as usual – which isn't very well. Aunt Jane has such a distress in her stomach most of the time. Hilda had all her teeth out and has a new set which cost her around \$60. One of Bert Udell's girls died October 18 (I suppose of the "flu"). Aunt Helen did not say. Chester and Lizzie Clark were at Jane's in September. They had been visiting in Indiana and several places in Illinois and Iowa.

I got my things from Manning. I haven't opened the barrels of fruit and dishes nor the boxes of books. Everything else was okay.

Blanche said you wanted to know what to do with the pickles. I said if they couldn't bring them, they could be shipped sometime this fall to Clarion— If it is not too much trouble to pack them, unless you were coming down in the car and had room for them. They better be shipped pretty soon as they might freeze if we waited too long. Albert Clark is in a hospital in England. He has had the "flu" and pneumonia and was pretty bad but was better when he wrote.

I hope you have all escaped the "flu". It is certainly terrible. Aunt Edith's was the 50th death in Ottawa.

Uncle Bert is working at Great Lakes training station carpentering— gets around \$49 per week.

There will be an increase in Albert Thompson's family about June. Mrs. Borel had a fine boy last week and surprised even Mrs. Bell and everyone else. I haven't seen Mrs. Taylor yet. I haven't been any place except that we went to Mrs. Davis is today. Well, I must close. Write soon. Tell the boys Burton and Richard have a bicycle and they surely keep it busy in the dining room and kitchen. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Clarion, Iowa

November 27, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I received your short letter a few days ago, and received a card from the agent yesterday saying the box had arrived. I thank you very much; hope I will be in a position next season to put up my fruit and pickles in my own home, so I will not have to bother anyone else. I have not unpacked the barrels of fruit and dishes that came from Grand Ridge, but the other things were all OK.

I have not decided yet what I will do, in fact, I cannot do much of anything until we sell the place and I get some money to do with. My income will not buy and furnish a home, so I will have to wait. I hesitate about going to Colorado while the “flu” is so bad—would not go until after Christmas anyway.

I thought maybe Uncle Frank would want me to keep house for him, but he has sold off everything but the house and will sell or rent that and go south this winter. Harry says for me to stay here this winter and then build a cottage here on the farm and he will take it off my hands for a tenant house anytime I want to give it up or when I do not need it any longer. There would be some advantage in that and not so much expense as buying or building in town. I will think about it for a while. Dave is shredding.¹ They were here for dinner and supper yesterday and will be there for dinner today. Boyd will have them this afternoon. Ada intended to have us all over there for dinner Thanksgiving, but will postpone it now until Sunday.

I hope you do not get the “flu”; it certainly is the most terrible epidemic that has ever struck this country and seems to be all over the world. It is getting worse in Clarion now than it has ever been. George Mattson died yesterday, and Isel is very sick. Otis day has been very sick, but I understand he is better. Mr. Glazier, the school janitor, is down with it, and I heard one of the teachers went home sick the day before yesterday. Blanche, the children, and I went to town Saturday and took the “serum” treatment. Harry went up Sunday and took it may help, we think so. All the Great Western employees had to take it.

I haven’t heard a word from Bert’s since I left, but Dave had a business letter, and Bert did not say how they were, but I think they were all right or he would have said so. Blanche, his mother, died a week ago Monday, and we have not heard a word since she would’ve gone to Benson Saturday, but her father sent a message not to come—that she was better, and she never knew she was worse until she got the message that she was dead. We did not think it was safe for Blanche to go to the funeral as the weather was so bad last week, she would’ve been almost certain to have taken it. I hope she gets a letter from her father today for she is worrying herself sick about it. I do not think he is sick, or he would have someone write unless he was sore because she did not go to the funeral.

We’re having beautiful weather this week—rather cold today, but the sun shines, and that is more than we had all last week. I will send you some items I clipped out of an old paper that came in one of the boxes Manning sent. Ada heard while she was in Illinois that Helen was

married, but she forgot to tell me until the day before yesterday and then yesterday I found these items.

Tell Eldon and Wayne to write to Grandma, and then I will try to write to them.

What do you want for Christmas? It will be so much easier for us if we know what you want, and then you will not get a “white elephant”. Well, I must close and go over to Ada’s, or I will not get my “name in the pot.” I do not think of anything more. You can see by the item about Manning, that the clippings came out in August paper. Love to all and write soon.

Lovingly
Mother

Editor’s Comment

¹ In 1918, the term shredding might possibly refer to snow skiing or possibly to a technique of pruning trees to harvest firewood while preserving the main part of the tree. Given that the letter was written in November, the reader may decide which is most appropriate.



Clarion, Iowa

December 5, 1918

Dear Helen and All,

I cannot imagine why you do not write, unless you are all down with the “flu”. There is so much of it here. It worries me when I do not hear from you once or twice in a while. If you do not have time to write a letter, a card will do.

We are all well here. We are all taking the “serum” treatment. All of Harry’s and I have had two treatments and Dave and Ada have had one.

We have to take three treatments. All of Harry Summers' family are in bed with it. Dave Bell, Floyd, Samuel and Jean, all have it. Floyd is quite sick, but not serious. Three of Snyder's are in bed, and Mrs. S isn't very well. It's hard to get anyone to go in and take care of the sick. Summers have a nurse.

Frank Ostrander has sold off everything and will go south for the winter. Have you heard from Bert's? I have not had a line from them since I left. I guess they must have been glad to get rid of me. I do not see why they cannot write and let a fellow know how they are.

What size did you want your ecru centerpiece? The same as mine? Or larger? I am just finishing one in white for Manning and Lizzie. I made it of number 20 thread, and it isn't quite as large as mine, but almost.

Cannot you come down for Christmas? The "flu" situation may be better by that time. They all want you to come. I just talked with Mrs. Scott, and they are all well. And Clarence is feeling better. His finger is better so that he is able to work a little.

Blanche is out this morning helping Harry get his load. They will have one day after today to husk. The snow has hindered a good deal. We all had Thanksgiving dinner at Dave's on Sunday and had a good dinner and a nice time. Mr. and Mrs. Davis were there.

There is no school now—everything is closed up but the picture show. That is where Snyders got the "flu". Harry had a letter from Robert Poundstone a few days ago. He wanted the plans of the barn. He is going to remodel or build one this season. They all ate Thanksgiving dinner at Mannings. Robert says Elizabeth is a fine housekeeper. Manning is in luck. I suppose he has someone now who can take care of things. When I asked him to get some tablecloths, he said he would get some when he got someone who could take care of them. Ella and I managed to get along with two tablecloths for nearly 4 years.

Well, I must close and write a few lines to Bert and Margaret. I guess that is the only way to hear from them. Write soon, and let us know if you are all well and through husking. I hope so. Love to all,

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

December 13, 1968

Dear Helen and All,

I received your card this evening. The roads are fierce, and the mail did not get here until after 4 o'clock. He has not been making all the route for several days. It is hard for the doctors to get around, too, and there is so much sickness. All of Summers had the flu and had a nurse. All of Bells but Bertie have had it, and all of Snyders but Mrs. S. All of Bensons, Mrs. Davis, and two hired men are down with it. All of Floyd Thomas except a lady who is visiting there.

Byrd got word this evening that Art and Dode are both down with it. There were two funerals in town today with two little girls—one a Mexican, the other a Kellogg child in Walnut Grove addition. Celia (Henley) Smith died Wednesday. She gave birth to a boy baby, 12 pounds, Sunday in a paroxysm of coughing, she burst her appendix and, the pus scattered over her bowels and poisoned her. Her husband is very sick with flu. And I heard this evening that he died this afternoon. Mrs. Alec Dow is not getting along very well. She is in the hospital at Eagle with one lung gone and the other affected. A little girl at Holmes died today. Bert Clark came home Sunday with the "flu". It is pretty hard to tell how many people he exposed on the train. Ada Clark took sick Monday and died of pneumonia this morning. Floyd Thomas was sick, and they called it the "flu" but none of the others took it. Well, I guess I have talked about sickness and death long enough. I will try and change the subject. Oh yes, before I do, Dr. Sams was sick last week, but just worn out. He did not have the "flu". I had a letter from Manning or at least Harry did, and he said all of Robert's was sick and all of Elvin Wakey's had the "flu". It has broken out there again as badly as ever. And in Streator, everything is closed but schools, and a nurse visits each school every morning. The situation is worse in Clarion now than it has been yet. Mrs. Bernard has been critically ill but is improving now. There are so many sick that I cannot mention all of them. Myron Hill has been sick but is better. Tillman's have all been sick, too.

You asked about the fruit. I was not going to say anything about it if you hadn't asked, but the box that was on end leaked all the vinegar off and soaked things up generally. I took them all out of the cans and soak them in hot water and made another syrup and sealed them up again, and I guess they will be all right. The other two boxes were okay. None were

broken. I opened up the barrel of fruit Manning sent, and they were all okay too.

We phoned to Scott's that you were planning to come down Christmas. Mrs. Scott thought it was pretty risky just now, but do as you think best. It isn't safe anywhere now, not even at home. She said if it was very cold, Mr. S could not drive the car as he cannot stand the cold. It is pretty hard to tell now how the roads will be than; they may be fine but right now a car could not make it. Maybe you had better come to Eagle and come over to Clarion on the Great Western. That train runs an hour later now, and I think unless you get into Eagle awful late, that you could make that train.

We are all well. Harry's and I have taken the three treatments of serum. Dave and Ada have taken two treatments and will take the third Sunday.

Cream is 72 cents now. Harry gets almost 43 eggs a day at \$.59 per.

Hope the flu will let up pretty soon. I haven't been to church since I came back from Bert's. Nor anywhere else much—only to town to take the treatments.

I tried to trade my watch for a wristwatch, but could only get \$5.50 for my watch, and I decided it was worth more than that to me, so I decided you would have to wait for your wristwatch till I get rich.

If you decide to come, be very careful. Wear plenty of warm clothes, and get plenty of fresh air. The "flu" germ cannot live in fresh air. They kept the cars well aired when I came down from Bert's, and I did not feel at all afraid of it. They use disinfectants in depots and all public places.

I haven't heard a word from Bert's. I wonder if they are sick. Well, I have spun quite a yarn, and it is bedtime, so I guess I better ring off. Hoping to see you or hear from you soon. write and let us know when you expect to start.

Mr. Burton is batching. He has not got his corn all husk yet. He is trying to rent his farm. Manning wrote that Eliza Center is sick in bed. They think she has a blood clot on her brain. John Harris (the auctioneer) and Doc Evans died of "flu".

Well so long kiss everybody for me. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Saturday morning:

Will add a few lines before the mailman comes, which will not be very soon I fancy. Swingers are all down with the “flu” and Dr. O’Toole of Eagle got stuck in the mud on his way out there yesterday. In fact, all the doctors have been stuck. St. Clair had 20 patients, and he got stalled between Zastrow’s and the corner and then walked to Somers and Bells. Little Dorothy Jackman died this morning. She took the “flu” and, of course, was not strong enough to throw it off. Mrs. Alex Dow died last night. Edna Yocum has been having sinking spells following the flu. We heard Stanley McCullough’s little boy died, but I do not know whether it is true or not.

It is a beautiful day today but the roads are horrible. Wish they would either dry up or freeze up so the doctors could get around faster. They couldn’t get a doctor for little Dorothy until last night. I think they did not realize she was so bad. Mrs. Clark was very bad—from the first, the doctor said the day before that she couldn’t live. Mrs. Teruin(?) is pretty sick, and Harding Thomas is laid up with a headache and a backache this morning, and they think he is taking it. It is pretty sad to think of Celia Henly’s children being left without a father or mother. And Alex Dows, too. I suppose Mrs. Moore will take them. Snyder was here this morning. They are all better but Bessie. She does not seem to be getting along very well. Well, I will close again for the mailman. May not make all his route today.

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

December 17, 1918

Dear Sis,

Thought I would write a few lines this morning to correct a couple of statements in my last letter. We heard from two sources that we thought reliable that Mr. Smith was dead, but Blanche saw him on the street yesterday and so I guess he is a pretty lively corpse.

Elmer Stromquist told Byrd that Mrs. Dow was dead, but she wasn't. Her lungs are bad, but the doctor said he thought he could bring her through all right. I expect it made my letter sound pretty blue to tell of so many deaths and so much sickness. Mrs. Clark went right into pneumonia, and there was no hope for her.

I haven't heard of any other deaths and will be slow about telling what I hear next time. Elmer Stromquist went down to Art's Saturday, and he phones to his wife how they are, and yesterday he phoned that Dodi was better but Art is worse. His bronchial tubes were filling up. Haven't heard yet today how he is. I haven't had any word from Grand Ridge, so I suppose they are getting along all right.

Dave has lost three calves in the last week—the doctor said it is the same among cattle that cholera is among hogs. Hope his older cattle don't get it. I read in the paper that cattle were dying of the "flu". It may be that is what it is.

All the folks in this neighborhood that have been sick are getting along all right now. They all, with one voice, pronounce it terrible and say they do not want it again. Albert Clark is home on a 20-day furlough. He had the "flu" twice and nearly croaked. I haven't heard from Bert yet. I do wonder if they have been sick.

Yesterday was a bright, beautiful day. The sun shone all day but today is foggy and damp but not very cold. Wish it would get cold and freeze up.

You had better come to Eagle for then you will be sure of getting to Clarion sometime before morning. If you come to Goldfield and the roads were too bad for anyone to meet you, you would have to stay there all night. Little Dorothy Ever (?) was buried yesterday. It is a blessing that she is gone for she was such a little cripple and such a care.

Well, I must close and get busy. Hope you can come, but we do not know whether to send your presents or wait till you come. I will not get yours done for Christmas, but will send later. Hope you all keep well. We are all well yet. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Tuesday p.m.

I just phoned Mrs. Scott. They are all well. Clarence has been having a bad time for a few days but is better again. They have three men husking for Clarence today and will finish. She says it will be nice if you can come for Christmas, so come if you are all well.

Chapter Four

1919

Clarion, Iowa

January 16, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I suspect you have been looking for a letter – how the time flies – here it is the middle of the month and we have not written to you since you left. I guess all we thought about was hearing from you, and we were glad to hear that you got home without getting the “flu”. My! Wasn’t it a cold day and the trains all late? Harry came in about 6 o’clock or a little later and said your train had just gone. I phoned Mrs. Scott and told her and she said “No, your train went early.” She heard. It was just too bad. The children must have got awfully tired and cold. Hope you had enough lunch. The Amos baby has been adopted by the cigar man and his wife. She does not know much about taking care of babies and is having quite a time with it. They were feeding malted milk and it didn’t agree with it. But I guess it is getting along all right now.

Mrs. Hagie is better; she looked got up last Thursday. One of the Loux boys died last week, and we heard another one of them had pneumonia, but Harry saw old Joe at Kemper’s sale the other day so I guess he must be better. Today is Grattidge’s sale. Mrs. G. was so sorry she couldn’t see you. I saw Madge Henley in town yesterday, and she was so sorry, too, that she couldn’t come over the day Blanche invited her. Byrd is still on her feet and hasn’t taken the “flu”. Maybelle and Dale both had it lightly. Lily Wilson has been called to Traverse City Michigan so Byrd will have to find another nurse. I suppose it will be up to me to help out at the first. She asked me a few days ago if I would come if she called on me, and I told her I would if I didn’t have the “flu”. She invited us all over when they had corn shellers.

I had a nice letter from Ella a week or so ago. Ernie came home from camp of the day before Christmas and Jim is in France. He was in the fighting at the very last. They haven’t heard from him for some time, just after the armistice was signed, I believe, but he isn’t in the occupation army so they look for him home soon. Ella is not working at Al’s now. Manning says they were glad to get rid of her but I don’t believe it. I’ll bet she goes back there in the spring. Manning says the girls think so very much of their mamma that he has to “walk chalk”¹ when he is around the house.

Blanche is making herself a kimono and is crocheting around the collar. I am glad you like your centerpiece. I haven’t gotten Blanche’s

done yet. I had to wait for thread. Thank you so much for the edge. I am going to sew it on the handkerchief Edna sent me that has a pink flower.

I had a letter from Sarah since you were here. Bert has a team and is hauling now. Frank was in Louisiana and is going to Florida. Edna's teaching 10 miles northeast of Ottawa. Eugene is in Wisconsin working. He went up with someone who was moving up there. Sarah says she has papered every month since last February.

Well, I must close and get busy. I'm making a little doily for Miss Davis for her birthday February 12. She gave me such a pretty little handkerchief for Christmas, and I wasn't expecting anything from her and didn't have anything to give her then.

What do you want for your birthday? Speak up! I suppose the kids are busy in school. It must be hard for Howard. Tell Mrs. Syverson I congratulate her, and she ought to name the baby Helen. Give my love to all the neighbors whom I met. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Editor's Comment

¹A colloquialism originating in the 18th century. Originally, it referred to someone who was made to walk a chalk line to prove to police that they were sober. By the early 20th century, it had come to generally mean someone who acted very carefully and correctly in a specific situation.

Clarion, Iowa

February 21, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I guess I had better get busy and write you a few lines or you will think I am a "slacker". I have a fairly good excuse this time though. I have been sick for a week or more with gall trouble again. Was pretty sick for a few days, but am getting better now. I was so mad because we were all invited over to Bruhl's yesterday, and I couldn't go. They had a farewell reception for Curly's and Mrs. Soult. Blanche, Ada, and Byrd went and had a lovely time. Mrs. Will Hagie expects a visit from the stork sometime in June. That is why she was so bad when she had the "flu".

Mrs. Walt Pletcher is looking for the stork in May. Dr. Best was out to see me Monday, and Blanche asked him to examine her side, too. He found the appendix quite sore but told her if she had her tonsils out, he thought, she wouldn't have any more trouble with her appendix. So, she is going up tomorrow to have Dr. Best take out her tonsils.

George Snyders are going to move to Eagle Grove. Davis is having his sale today. They bought a house in Eagle Grove, but I do not know whether they will ever move into it or not. He said he bought it for speculation and paid \$6800 for it. I wonder how much more he expects to get. I guess Rose has decided to go home for a while. I have been wondering if it could be possible she is pregnant. I hope not poor girl; she certainly has enough to think about now without that.

Mrs. Tiffany (Ada's sister) had an operation for gallstones about three weeks ago. It was pretty serious and she is still in the hospital with a tube in her side.

Manning and Elizabeth are in Chicago this week. They went up Monday for a week's visit and to a convention and banquet. I suppose a hardware convention but do not know. Do not know whether Jesse and Violet stayed. I do not care what you get me for my birthday. You do not have to get anything. My wants are so extravagant that I am ashamed to mention them. You might get me a house and lot or something like that.

The old Perry Hogt farm was sold the other day to Charles Speight for \$200 per acre.

I cannot think of anything more to write and feel like lying down so will close for this time. Write soon and let us know how you are getting along. Alice said John was having headaches again. Do quit burning a lamp all night—rob the air of oxygen—that would give me a headache all winter. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Blanche is sending your sleeve pattern.



Clarion, Iowa

March 1, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I have been intending to write you every day this week, and here it is – Saturday – so I will write a few lines.

Blanche had her tonsils out a week ago this morning, and she is just beginning to feel like herself again. Her throat got awful sore and stiff. Dr. Best used anesthesia – injected it into the tonsils with the hypodermic needle. It did not hurt much to have them out, but I think the anesthesia was what made her throat so sore and stiff, and she has been miserable all the week and looked so bad.

It is been a pretty full week. Snyders moved Wednesday, and we had all the children here for dinner. Thompson's moved out Thursday, and Flannery's moved in, so we kept the baby here until they were ready to start, and we got dinner for all of Flannery's men – seven of them.

Albert did not take his cattle Thursday, and we had a blizzard yesterday, so Otis came down to take care of the stock and stayed here last night. I think they are going to take the cattle today.

I am so glad Wayne got along so well. I hope he will have better health now and get fat and rugged. I hope you can keep from getting the "flu" until he is real strong again. It is breaking out here again, and I suppose our turn will come this time.

I do hope Lillian is better. Had a letter from Margaret a few days ago. They have all had hard colds. Margaret's foot was better but she has to wear old shoes. She had some kind of growth on the ball of her foot, and the doctor cut it off (the growth, I mean). It was something like a bunion.

We have been having pretty severe winter. It snowed Wednesday and again yesterday, and the snow drifted quite a little.

I hope your head will be better now. I have been having sore eyes for a few days. I suppose I have been reading too much. Well, the mailman just went past, and Harry has gone to town, so I suppose this will not get in the mail before Monday. So, I will close now and add some more before I send it. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Monday, March 3

Well, I do not know any more than I did Saturday except that Zashows moved and Davises didn't. They had a truck from Eagle to move them, and it broke down, and they had to unpack some of their things and stay over here Sunday. Gary Holmes came in Saturday morning with two car loads, and Dave helped him move out. He is going to live where Louis Hahn lived. Halls are moving today.

Ella Watson is at the point of death – may be dead – but we haven't heard of it. Ada got gingham for a dress for my birthday – blue – plain. I am going to make it up with white collar and cuffs.

Haven't heard from Grand Ridge for a week or two. Manning and Elizabeth had a nice time in Chicago. Saw Charles, Helen, Ruth, John, and Paul. He didn't say that they visited them, but I suppose they did. The sun is shining today, and I hope we will have some nice weather this week. We are all well again. Blanche is able now to get around and do the work. Hope this finds you all well and Lily much better. Write soon, and let me know. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Burton (W. L.) has rented his farm and sold off everything. Supposedly will be down here in a few weeks.

Clarion, Iowa

March 6, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter with enclosure on my birthday. Thank you very much; suppose you would like to know what the others gave me. Ada gave me plain blue gingham for a dress – eight yards. Blanche the dresser scarf she was working on when you were here. Margaret a beautiful camisole made of white ribbon filet lace. Aunt Helen a pair of black silk stockings and Aunt Molly a dollar. A card from the Dixon girls yesterday said to look for a package in a few days – so I am looking for another “booklet”.

I was so glad to hear that Wayne is getting along so nicely but so sorry to hear of poor Lily’s death. It must be pretty hard on her mother.

I had a letter from Jesse a few days ago. She said Wilford Wakely was dead. They were all well, and they stayed at grandma Rinker’s while Manning and Elizabeth were in Chicago. A letter from Aunt Helen said John and Nell have a new little girl—not named yet. A letter from Aunt Molly said Craig is well physically, but when he gets tired or excited, he gets off again. Archie has been sick with an abscess on his lungs.

Dave had a letter from Matthews a short time ago; he said they had one of the finest depots anywhere on the line. It is on the north side of the track. They are all pretty well now. Lon says Belle is a big, fat, healthy looking woman. Blanche is all right again. She is washing today, so I haven’t time to write much and don’t know anything anyway. Write soon. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Editor’s Comment

Written on the back of the envelope in which this letter was mailed is the following additional note:

“Blanche wanted to know if those two people in Walnut Grove who had the pneumonia after taking the serum treatment had it very hard. Please tell me the size of the top of your buffet. Also, the china closet.

Lovingly, Mother”

Clarion, Iowa

April 1, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

You may think this is an “April fool” but I assure you it isn’t – it’s a bona fide letter. It didn’t seem long to me since I wrote you last, but perhaps it is. There has been as much to do that time goes pretty fast and since the government turned the clocks ahead, it seems to go faster. Blanche is getting along as well as anyone could, I guess. She ought to with the care she has and the money she is spending. She has had Mrs. Kirkpatrick up there all this time at Harry’s expense. Their board before she got into the hospital was \$21 per week. It’s a good thing she married a rich man. We had a girl for a couple of weeks, but she went home Saturday night and phoned yesterday morning that she wouldn’t be back this week, so Harry engaged another one to come this afternoon.

I forgot whether I told you that Bert and Sarah have separated and have a divorce. (It is very easy to get a divorce nowadays it seems). Bert has sold off everything is going to work in Champaign and Vermillion Counties for the Economy Oil and Grease Company of Cleveland Ohio selling oil and grease and all kinds of paints. Eugene will work for a Mr. Masters just west of Dayton beginning April 1 at \$40 per month and two-week days off each month, board, washing, and mending. He is working on the section now at \$2.96 per day. Edna is teaching, and Ruby is with Sarah who stays with an old couple in South Ottawa—Mr. Charles Moore and sister.

John and Bell Udell have another little girl born on Nathan’s second birthday. Harrison Wakey he is in Rochester for an operation on his jaw. Uncle Chris is not very well. Aunt Eliza is some better, but her mind is bad. Wesley Rinker is very bad. He had the “flu”. Mrs. Jim Redman died some time ago Jesse said, but she forgot to tell me. The girls are going to have some new dresses. Their mamma is going to get someone to make them.

Harry is getting about 12 dozen eggs a day – some days he gets over 160. He sold \$84.48 worth in March besides setting aside 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ dozen we washed yesterday, and I am pretty tired and stiff today. Ada has come over to help me out a little, so I will cut this short. Harry says he will write to Ell in a few days and send them some of those soybeans.

Hope the boys are better of their colds. Mrs. Terven died quite suddenly.

We are all reasonably well. We've started up the Round Robin again. Frank is back in Ottawa. Love to you all and kisses for the kids. Write soon.

Lovingly,
Mother



Clarion, Iowa

April 12, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I was so sorry to hear that Howard had pneumonia. I do hope he is better and that none of the rest of you get it. How I wish I was there to help you. I suppose you are pretty tired. If he does not get along well, I will go up if you need me.

Blanche came home yesterday, and she is not very strong yet, so I suppose it is "up to me" to stay here a while longer. If everybody keeps well, and if Howard is better, I want to go to Fort Dodge for a few days and to Madrid to see Aunt Hannah and then to Laurens. I have got to go someplace pretty soon to get some clothes, or I will not be able to go out at all. Have had nothing new for so long, I am getting shabby.

We have been having some pretty wet weather. Today is the first day this week that the sun has shone bright. Harry got his oats also sowed before the rain, but some are not done and Seifert's haven't sewn an oat yet I guess.

Blanche looks a little thin and peaked. She says she isn't to do any hard work for three months. Pity me if I have to stay here all that time. We've had quite a wind the day of the cyclone at Omaha, and one corner of the windmill tower came out of the ground nearly a foot, so they guyed it with ropes, hitched a team to it, chopped off the posts, and let it go. So that's another old landmark gone.

Harry got Blanche a Hoosier cabinet¹ while she was gone; it is pretty nice but hasn't got the roll curtains. It is white enameled inside and has a

porcelain top. I think I will go up to Bert's this spring some time and take that trip over to Walnut Grove with them the fourth. I'd like to see the country up there in the spring and summer.

We did not hear from you yesterday, so hope Howard is very much better. Let me know right away if he gets any worse. Mrs. Sidwell has pneumonia, and is a pretty sick woman. Madge said yesterday that Doris wasn't very well – has bronchial trouble.

I went to church last Sunday, and it was the first time since I was in Walnut Grove. (Do not fall in a fit) Cecil Graves has another daughter—making five girls and one boy. Well, I must close and frost my cake, and make some salad dressing. I made an angel food cake. It looks fine. Write as soon as you can if it is only a card. Lots of love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Editor's Comment

¹A freestanding kitchen cabinet/cupboard that also functioned as a workstation.



Clarion, Iowa

May 20, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I have forgotten when I wrote last, but I think a letter from Mamma will be appreciated anytime. Read the letter Ell sent to Harry and am rather glad you have sold – have worried some about those neighbors of yours fearing they might burn you out sometime or something else just as bad or worse.

I suppose you know we have sold, too, at \$238 per acre. The contracts are all signed, and Dr. Martin, the man who bought it, has paid

\$1000 down. I was talking with Mrs. Scott yesterday, and she said your Uncle Ole Scott's place was for sale, and I heard yesterday that Hartshorne's place (where Carter lives) is for sale. Land is moving. Grattidge bought the Miss Strawn place last week – 320 acres at \$248 per acre. Hartshorn's is priced at \$190.

Mrs. Hagey's baby boy was born Sunday night and died yesterday afternoon – funeral this afternoon. We are going. Mrs. Hagey is getting along as well as could be expected under the circumstances.

Florence (Grattidge) Brooks is expecting the arrival of Dr. Stork almost any day. Laura is not coming home this summer. I had a date with the dentist last Tuesday and spent the rest of the day with Mrs. Grattidge and called on Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Zastrow. Mrs. Scott was not at home, so I really didn't call. Mrs. Davis came over Saturday and stayed one night with Blanche and one night here.

Had a letter from Manning and Jesse last week. Emma Brule was buried a week ago last Sunday, and Manning thinks I had better come back there and buy her home. Aunt Eliza Center's mind is very bad. Mrs. Rowe is married and came home from Florida with a man, and Ida Hodgman and Carl were remarried.

Club meets tomorrow with Mrs. Summers. Haven't had any club meetings all winter. Had to get six spoons this winter and sent flowers several times in the club is owing her around \$8.39. Mr. Willie was here for several days this spring. It rained nearly all the time he was here.

Manning said they might come out this summer. I will try and plan my trip to Michigan so that I can come with them if they come in the car.

I have had no letter from Aunt Molly or Belle for some time, but Dave has had several letters from Lon lately, and he says Aunt Molly isn't very well. Uncle John is janitor at Yuma. It must be hard on him. Have we told you that Dave bought the Zinn 40 acres? He paid \$165 per acre. He thinks he will move to Colorado, and if he does, I will probably go, too, as Harry is talking some of selling, and I do not want to stay here alone unless you locate here. You had better go to Colorado, too.

Mrs. Zinn is married again (the old lady Zinn) soon. Well, I must close write soon. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

June 19, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I received your card this morning, and as I am in the letter writing mood, I will answer at once as it has been sometime since I wrote or heard from you until now. We have been wondering why you didn't write. I have already written three long letters, and I will try and write you all I know.

I went to Fort Dodge a week ago last Friday and came back Monday—10 days. Dave was plowing corn when I got to Clarion, so I went up to Zastrow's and stayed there until Tuesday noon. It rained Monday night, so he couldn't come after me, but I had a nice visit. Harry and Dave went to Mora Tuesday, so I didn't see them. Roy Davis took them to the train and brought me out.

We have been having lots of rain, too, but not enough yet to hurt — only to keep men out of the field. Most of the corn is pretty well cleaned up now though. Frank Scherer sold his farm while I was down there for \$325 per acre. Lots of land changing hands at prices almost beyond belief. The 40-acre farm near Fort Dodge was sold to a firm in the city for a home for \$600. Manning writes that Chris has been offered \$226 an acre for his half section here. Manning says it will take \$250 to buy his.

Uncle Jake Tombaugh was buried last Thursday — one lung was entirely gone. Ada's father has a cancer on his lower lip and cannot last long.

I have a piece of news for you unless Blanche got ahead of me. There is going to be a young Dave (?) at our house sometime in September. As I told you before, I am planning to go to Michigan and think of going via the lakes. Margaret wants me to meet her at your place the fourth, and they will take me home with them and then to Duluth. If it is certain that they will go down to your place the fourth, I may go that way. If not, I will go to Chicago and take the boat there. They do not begin to run until July 1.

I got me some "glad rags" while in Fort Dodge. Don't faint when I tell you the prices. A midnight blue surge suit — \$40, a mulberry taffeta dress \$34.50, a Georgette waist (cream) \$7.45, and goods for a voile dress at 75 cents a yard. My hat, which I got some time ago, is a white Milan braid with a wide white ribbon band for \$7.50.

Do not know whether I will have enough money left to take me to Michigan or not. Mr. Burton is at Blanche's now but is not going to stay

long. It is too bad you are having so much rain. Hope it does not damage the crops too much. Manning is talking of coming out here the last of August. If he comes in the car, I think I'll get there in time to come with them. You never wrote anything about the buildings on your new farm. Are they good, bad, or indifferent? Let us know how you get along with your crops. How did your chickens come out and did any drown. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Friday morning: Had another big rain last night.



Clarion

July 2, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I hope you are not going to be disappointed, but Margaret wrote me that the hay was going to crowd them so that they could not go to Walnut Grove for the fourth, and as it would be pretty expensive for me to go around that way, I have decided to go to Michigan the shortest way and save expense. My “duds” cost so much I'll have to economize as on carfare. Shall stop in Grand Ridge and hope (?) I shall see Rasters and all the rest of the old widowers and bachelors as well as the kiddies.

Frank Ostrander is here – came a week ago yesterday and think he will go to Oglesby in a week or two. Of course, I shall not start for Michigan until he leaves.

We are all well, and the crops are looking fine. The boys are haying. They both liked the land 10 or 15 miles south of Mora, but did not buy any.

There isn't much news. I think I told you Uncle Jake died a few weeks ago. Had a long letter from Aunt Jane Monday. They are all well and will divide the estate up equally. Hope you will not be any more

disappointed than I am that I cannot see you this summer. Maybe this fall.
Hastily, love to all.

Lovingly,

Mother



Grand Ridge

July 11, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I arrived in G. R. Wednesday morning – three hours late, but Manning was there to meet me. And he seemed quite glad to see me and the kiddies were tickled to death. Elizabeth is real nice and good to the children, nice-looking, brown eyes and hair, about 35 years old, medium height and weight – and she dresses the children real pretty.

I do not expect to stay in Grand Ridge more than a couple of weeks, and then go to Chicago for a few days and coax aunt Helen to go on to Michigan with me if I can. There isn't much doing in G. R. just now. They had a good Chautauqua¹ last month. I should like to have been here for that, but couldn't make it. I was so long getting my clothes ready. I haven't seen Rasters yet, but I saw Mary and Ida yesterday. I phoned to Aunt Jane – they are all as well as usual.

We did not go to Goldfield the fourth as we had quite a hard rain the night before, and it made the roads pretty sticky, and it was cloudy nearly all day. There were crowds there of those who were not afraid to get so far from home with their cars. We took a long ride in the evening over east around Galt and Solberg². Frank Ostrander was with us, and we all had dinner and ice cream together at Dave's. Then Sunday we went to Renwick Park and had a picnic dinner and drove up to Corwith in the afternoon. Harry's car got clean through and they were at Krauses in a little while and saw Lizzie and her two children. But Dave had an awful blowout – about a mile southeast of Corwith, and when we got a new tire and inflated it, it was so late that we went home and did not see Krauses

at all. I was quite disappointed about it, but lived through it. I went to ladies' aid yesterday and to prayer meeting last night and saw lots of the Grand Ridgers.

I forget if I told you Emma Brule died a while back. Her house is for sale. Walter Poundstone is ready to sell now. But I do not know what to do. If Dave and Harry should both sell out and leave Clarion, I do not want to locate there, so I am in hot water and you may advise me what to do.

Everybody is well as far as I know. Write soon and address me at Grand Ridge until you hear from me again. My letters will be forwarded if I leave here before you write. Love to all.

Lovingly,

Mother

Editor's Comment

¹Lectures, concerts, and public events of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Typically, they were held in an outdoor setting under tents.

²A now defunct Wright County town, Solberg was platted in 1904 and named in honor of Austin Solberg. It was located on the Chicago Great Western rail line midway between Clarion and Rowan. The town was formed as a cooperative project started by a farmer's co-operative society.



Lotus Ave., Chicago, IL

July 24, 1919

Helen and All,

Aunt Jane and I came up to Aunt Helen's yesterday and found them all well. We will go up to Highland Park in a few days. Do not know yet

when I will start for Michigan, but do not think I will stay here more than a week.

It is nice and cool considering it is nearly the first of August. Aunt Helen has a nice cottage – six rooms and bath and full basement and attic.

Mr. Farmer is very poorly. Ada came to see him Monday evening. We got here Tuesday morning. She will stay a week. The folks at home are all well and have all their oats cut by this time.

Uncle Frank was Aunt Molly's when I heard from him last. Will send his letter so you can have the news without me repeating it. There isn't much to write about as I haven't been anywhere yet.

Think we will go down to the Municipal Pier today. That airplane accident¹ the first of the week was a terrible thing. The upper story of the bank was offices, and so many girls were killed. Well, I must close. Hope this finds you all well. Write me in care of Mrs. F. Amick, 325 N. Lotus Ave., Chicago, IL, and if I am not here, it will be forwarded. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Write and let me know how Mrs. Scott gets along at the hospital.

Mother

Editor's Comment

¹ On July 21, 1919, the "Wingfoot Air Express", a dirigible owned by the Goodyear Company caught fire at an altitude of 1200 feet above Chicago in the area of Jackson Blvd. and La Salle St. The dirigible plunged through the rooftop of the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, injuring 28 and killing ten bank employees and two crew members. The bank employees were all burned to death in the fire that started when the dirigible's flammable hydrogen exploded.

Travis City, Michigan

August 3, 1919

Dear Sis,

Well, you are a sly one all right. Hope you're feeling fine and get along okay. You must let me know right along how you are. Had a letter from Ada. She was going to start home the same night I left Chicago for Travis. I am visiting my Uncle Fred Latham and my cousins Mary Reed Herriman, Pete Latham, Harry Latham, and Everett Latham, and their families.

Travis City is on Saginaw Bay, an arm of Lake Huron. This is timber country (cleared of course) and reminds me quite a little of the part of Minnesota where Bert lives. I like it here in some respects. The houses are mostly old and unpainted.

Pete Latham has a most interesting family. They have four pairs of twins and two single boys and have lost one boy. There is a pair of twins 18 years old – Gladys and Doris. Then a boy 16 years old Fred, then a pair of twins 16 years old Phyllis and Francis, then a boy that died at birth. Then a pair of twins Howard and Harold about 10 or 11 years old, then a boy Guy nine years old, then twin girls Mary and Louise about five or six. They are certainly nice, healthy, well-behaved children. Their mother is going to the hospital this week for an operation. Hope she gets along all right. She is a lovely woman.

They all have cars up here, so I expect to have a few rides. We went to Travis City and East Travis on Saginaw Bay yesterday – had a lovely view of the bay. We took dinner at Pete Latham's and supper at Harry Latham's. Today (Sunday) we took a long auto ride west and north up to the Prescott farm where they have 2100 acres under cultivation and a herd of the finest stock in the country.

I do not know how long I will stay up here, two or three weeks perhaps. Had a nice time in Chicago. Went to Highland Park last Tuesday. Took dinner at Ruth's and supper at Paul's. Well, I must close as I think supper is about ready. Write often, and let me know how you are. Love to all. Kiss all the children for me.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – I came from Chicago Thursday night.

Grand Ridge, Illinois

September 11, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

Congratulations. I got off the train in G. R. last evening and heard the good news before I got home. The girls met me, and told me that Manning's and my cards came on the noon train. The name is pretty; he must have been a bouncer to weigh 9 ¼ pounds – no wonder you thought it would be twins. I wish I could run in and see you both, but if you are getting along so well, I guess I'll have to wait a while. Ada is in Streator now and expecting a call from Dr. Stork anytime. Lizzie says she is quite large, and I am so worried about her on account of her age. I hope she has a boy. I did hope yours would be a girl, but I know just how you feel about it. I was always satisfied. You are following in the footsteps of your mother all right.

I left the folks in Chicago all well. Uncle Charles took me to the train in his car. Aunt Helen and Elizabeth were with us, too – it was a nice ride. I had several fine rides in the city. Charles came home a week ago last Saturday and their schools begin on Monday. They had a lovely time in Rainer Park, Washington. Lottie (Rutan) Redman has a new boy – arrived yesterday (August 10) morning about 5 o'clock. Flo Gallup is not expected to live from day to day. She has cancer of the bowels. Mr. Farmer is still suffering; his cancer is spreading all over his face. Death would be a blessed relief in both cases. I think I'll go down to Streator this afternoon to see Ada. I dread to see Mr. Farmer though.

Did the doctors decide Mr. Scott had a cancer? I hope not. He has suffered enough, and they are such terrible things. Well, I have been in Chicago and Detroit but have found nothing for the new babies yet. Wish you would tell me what you would like to have.

I am a little slow about getting back home – I expected to be in Iowa by this time to keep house for Dave while Ada is away. I am so glad she came to Streator where her folks can look after her.

Take good care of yourself and little Donald; wish I could see him. I'll bet Ada will be surprised. Love to you all. Write soon.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – What do the boys think about it? Were they disappointed because it wasn't a girl? - Mother

Clarion, Iowa

October 19, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter just before I left the Ridge. It came last Tuesday night. I am sorry you had trouble with your breast – you must have taken cold. Be careful and not let it happen again. I heard of a very simple remedy for caked breasts a few days ago. Heat a bottle and hold it over the nipple, and it will draw the milk as well as a breast pump.

Do you know Lanna Roberts has a new boy? I didn't until I came home. I went to church this morning – we have a new preacher. His name is Walker. This was his second Sunday. His family just came last week. They came from Alta.

Have you a teacher yet? I hope you will not try to board the teacher this winter. You will have enough to do to take care of little Donald. Who does he look like? Any of the other boys? What color is his hair?

Dave's baby is a little dandy. I went down to see him the day he was born and again when he was a week old. He is so bright – he looks as though he was a month old. His hair is (red) Auburn otherwise. I think he looks like Dave. I got a letter from Aunt Molly last week. She says Craig is getting to be such a strong boy since his sickness. When Frank Ostrander was there in the summer, he took Craig up to Greeley to see Archie, and he said stayed up there five weeks.

Have you heard from Margaret? She said she was going to make us all a visit after they got the potatoes dug but I haven't heard from her since. We think Ada will be home in a couple of weeks. She was to leave the nurse's care and go to Mattie's today. She had a pretty hard time. The water broke nearly a week before she had any pains. When they did come, she was sick from Sunday afternoon until Monday night or rather Tuesday morning about 1:30 AM. The doctor was just about to take the child – had the instruments all ready – when he came. He had to take 13 or 14 stitches. She will have to be careful for a few weeks.

Aunt Hannah is very low. Aunt Jane had a letter from Ida just before I left the Ridge. Chester and Lizzie were down helping to take care of her. Ida was sick, too. I guess she has been a great trial to them all. Mrs. Seifert is down in bed. She is a crazy old thing and sets the rest of them nearly crazy. Well, I must close and go to bed. Dave and I are going to wash in the morning. Dave is husking more than 80 bushels of corn a day.

Love to all. Kiss the baby for me. You did not tell me what you wanted me to make for him. How do I know what he needs?

Lovingly,
Mother



Clarion, Iowa

November 20, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I didn't think it had been so very long since we heard from you or since I had written; but time flies I know, and I am answering your letter of October 26. The last one before that was written while you was still in bed. So, I do not believe you write much oftener than I do. I've had only the ones since I came home.

You surely did have a narrow escape from fire. I'll be so glad when you get away from that railroad. It has been a worry to me ever since you moved there, but I suppose danger lies all about us whether we live near a railroad or not. I am so glad it did not happen in the night – it would have been serious then.

I wonder if your baby is growing any faster than ours. We have not weighed him, but he is filling out fine. He was such a long baby (25 inches) and thin in his body and limbs, but he is as plump as a partridge now. We were afraid he would have to be circumcised – the doctor in Streator dilated him – but he seemed so tight. But we can work it back so much better now that we begin to think he will be all right.

Why does Eldon go to the other school? I thought maybe he was the only one in his grade at home. Yes, I'll make the rompers and anything else you want me to. I haven't sent him his dollar yet. I am I am so slow – but I will send a check – a dollar for baby and \$.30 apiece for the three boy's birthdays. I wish you could all come down for Christmas – can't you? If you cannot, I think I'll go up after the sale, which will be December 2, if it doesn't get too cold.

Willie Jackson's death was so sad – the more so because it was carelessness. The first train stopped at Harlan for water and knew the other train was behind yet they ran in on the switch and left the caboose in the main track. Frank Stockwell was the engineer on the last train and his fireman must have been blind that they could not see it.

Mrs. Jackson is a sister of Mrs. Frank Lehr. Their baby is only a month older than Marion. We have a new preacher here too and I think he is fine—and the preacher they have in the Ridge, too. I hated to come home – I liked his preaching and his prayer meeting talks so much. He is the same one they had last year, and some of them are tired of him already. I never saw such a “bunch”. His name is J. C. Crane. Ada came on November 3. Dave is not through husking yet. He couldn't get a man to help him, but Fred Ramsey is going to come and help him finish as soon as he gets through at Lewis Bell's. They would like to get through before Thanksgiving so he can get ready for the sale. Send your yoke along and tell me something about the style of romper you would like to have. Have you anything special you would like for Christmas?

Love to all,
Mother



Clarion, Iowa

December 18, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter a week or so ago, and will try and answer it before the mailman comes.

The yoke is pretty, and I will get the material after Christmas to make it up for you. We are all well; baby is growing fine and getting prettier and cuter every day.

Dave went to Colorado a week ago Tuesday. We expect him home around the 20th. The trains were so slow, and he was so long getting there. He went to Des Moines and took the Santa Fe to Kansas City and Rocky Ford and then to Ordway by jitney.¹ Got to Ordway Friday

morning about 10 o'clock. He says Molly looks well but thinner. John looks about the same. Belle has two nice little girls. They had the finest school building he has seen anywhere. A man he met said it beat anything in the way of the school building in Denver.

I suppose he will stop in Colorado Springs to see Robert's family. They are located at 324 Custer Ave.

Ada says she does not know for sure whether they can go to your place or not until Dave comes, but she will drop you a card to let you know just as soon as he gets home. Had a letter from Bert and Margaret saying they could not go down to your place as they have so much hauling to do.

Hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Love to all. Kiss all the kiddies for me.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Ada says if they go, they will bring the Christmas box with them so if it is late. tell the boys they will get shipped.

Editor's Comment

¹ An unlicensed taxicab or shuttle.



Clarion, Iowa

December 27, 1919

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter containing the check and thank you very much for the box, too. Ada says thank you for the things you sent for her, and Marion, and Dave. She says she will write in a day or two. Dave did not

buy in Colorado, so they do not know where they will go and gave up going to your place as the weather is changeable and cold most of the time. I am so sorry the baby is not doing well.

The doctor in Streator told Ada and Josie both that a small baby ought to have a teaspoonful of castor oil once a week. It acts as a sedative, makes them sleep, and heals any irritation in the bowels. It is worth trying for I'm sure it will cure your baby's indigestion. Have you put him in on the bottle? Perhaps your milk isn't good for him. But of course, your doctor will see to that.

We all had Christmas dinner at Harry's – chicken and all the fixings, and we all got some nice presents. Molly and Bell sent your presents by Dave, so we put it in the box we sent you.

Blanche gave me a lovely cameo pen, Ada a lovely back black jersey and silk skirt, Margaret a pair of slumber slippers. Bert three dollars, Aunt Helen one dollar, Aunt Molly and Bell a nice bath towel and washcloth, and a handkerchief, Rachel D a handkerchief, also Mrs. Davis a handkerchief, Boyd Thompson a pair of gray silk lined gloves (just lovely), Ella Moore a pretty square ecru doily, and the one you sent so I think I got lots more than I deserved. I gave Ada a library table cover like the one I gave you last Christmas, Blanche the centerpiece to the lunch set I am making her, Margaret a lunch cloth and Lizzie a table scarf. I have yours done and will send it in a day or two.

Davises were over to Harry's for Christmas, and Blanche and the kids went home with them and will come back today.

I am going to send Ell the book, and I remembered he didn't care for books, so I sent it anyway to the family.

Hope the baby gets over his indigestion and you do not have to wean him. Try the castor oil. They have a kind of that is tasteless and odorless. Hope you're all well as we are. Love to all and kisses to all the boys.

Lovingly,
Mother

Chapter Five

1920

Clarion, Iowa

January 30, 1920

Dear Sis,

Guess you think I am “dead and buried”. Well, I am almost. We have all been about sick with the grippe – all but Dave. All of Harry’s have been under the weather, and Ada and the baby and I have been sick for a week and have coughed until my whole chest feels as though it has been pounded to a jelly. It is a miserable feeling, and if the flu is any worse, I hope I do not get it. I have been awfully slow about writing. The week after New Year’s, I was over to Martin’s and stayed 10 days. Had a little lovely time but caught cold while I was there and haven’t been very well since.

Last week we entertained the club – the men, too. Had a covered dish dinner and had a good time. Ada had creamed chicken and biscuits, and there were four kinds of salad brought in, so we had a pretty good dinner. There were about 25 here. Dave hasn’t decided where he will go yet (may move to Clarion). I think he will go to Colorado, though.

I hope you have escaped the “flu” with all your boys. There is a lot of sickness here. Poor Maud Fairbanks – she gave birth to a child on Friday and died that afternoon. They say Mrs. Milo Swanger is expecting the “stork”. We had plenty of snow all winter and no January thaw yet. Next Monday is Groundhog Day.

George Miller is coming on the Stanberry place. Hope we will like him better for a neighbor than the Flannery’s. They are going to town. He will run the oil station. Some of the families west of us have scarlet fever. There is smallpox in town two. Mrs. Pearl (on Zastrow’s place) has been quite sick with the flu. They thought she had smallpox at first – her temperature was 104°. I haven’t been to town since November, so you can see I have been completely shut in. The folks in Grand Ridge are all well so far as I know.

There isn’t much to write about, so I guess I will have to bring this to a close. Hope to hear from you soon, and that you are all well. We are on the mend and hope to be as well as usual in a few days.

You can tell Donald that our bad little Marion has learned to suck his thumb. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

March 2, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter a short time ago and intended answering it right away but didn't. I also received the pictures of little Donald yesterday, and thank you so much. He is so pretty and cute, I can scarcely wait till I get up there to see him.

I hope you're having as fine weather for moving as we are having here. The sun has shown all day both yesterday and today. It is fine, but we have lots of snow yet. There have been some drifts in the roads that make the roads bad in places – that is – up and down like the “rocky road to Dublin”. But Harry says where there hasn't been any snow, the roads are getting dry. There isn't much frost, for this snow has been on since before Thanksgiving. I tried my best to get a man to go up and help you move. Fred Ramsey thought he couldn't go, but Mrs. Clark told me last Thursday at the Farmer's Elevator meeting that if Luther had been at home she was sure he would've gone just for the trip, but he was down to Dows to her uncles.

I got a letter from Dave today, will send it to you. Had a letter from Ada, too, a short time ago. She got to Streator O.K., and Marion was so good on the train. She had quite a wait in Ottawa for the interurban.

Burton had a birthday party Saturday. He invited all the boys at school to come Saturday (his birthday was Friday) and didn't tell Blanche until afterwards, and she told him she did not see how she could have them come as she had been papering all the week, and she couldn't get up a party, so he told the boys to eat their dinner before they came and promised them a piece of his birthday cake. So, Harry got some ice cream and Burton was the most surprised after all. They had cake and macaroons.

Mrs. Swanger has a baby girl born last Thursday forenoon January 26, weight 8 ½ pounds, named Dorothy Eileen. Mr. Swanger's mother who lives in Eagle Grove had a stroke of paralysis about the same time and died yesterday. The funeral is tomorrow. Mrs. Milo S. Is getting along fine, and the baby is pretty good. Henley's are getting along alright now. Madge was not very bad, but Art was pretty sick. Little Helen was

bad from the start. She did not have pneumonia. Luther Hunt has moved where Dave lived. They have three children, Eunice 10, Mildred nearly 6, and Albert six in September. We like them very much. Miller hasn't moved yet. Well, kiss the baby for me and all the others. Love to all.

Lovingly,

Mother

PS – I'm enclosing some items Ada sent. Jesse Scherer married a preacher. Mrs. Will Lewis died some time ago, and Mr. L. and Edith brought her back to Illinois.



Clarion, Iowa

March 16, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

We just received Ell's letter, and I will write you a few lines this morning. We got some pretty bad news Sunday about 2 o'clock from Grand Ridge. I would have written you sooner, but we were waiting for details, which we heard this morning. Aunt Hattie died very suddenly Sunday morning about 10:30. She got breakfast and washed the dishes and about 8:30 she talked to Madge. Chris was out doing some chores (they have some chickens), and when he came in she was on the floor unconscious and died about 10:30. I suppose Eliza was not up yet. She does not get up until about 11 o'clock usually. Harry and Pete Seifert went to Grand Ridge Sunday night, and the funeral was Tuesday at 2 o'clock. Harry has not got home yet. We look for him tomorrow (Thursday) morning. Seifert's are taking it pretty hard. I expect Harry will bring some papers with the obituary, and I will send you one.

Uncle Dave is not very well. It will be a pretty hard blow to Uncle Chris as Eliza's health is so poor, she is hardly able to keep house alone. I have written you all we know about it until Harry gets here.

I am so glad you had such a good day to move. George Miller is just moving in today. He has been coming out every day and bringing a few things and cleaning, frescoing the walls, and painting, etc. The family will come today.

We had the same blizzard you had on Thursday, March 4, which piled the snow up in great shape – the worst blizzard we had this winter. But we have had several days of bright sunshine and three days of winds from the south and southwest, which has taken all the snow except where the largest drifts were.

I will try to go to Walnut Grove soon. If you would like to have me come right away, let me know as there is nothing in particular to keep me here. Let your sewing go until I get there, and I will help you out on that. I have not made the little rompers yet, as I thought I would wait until I went up there and fit them on the baby. I did not suppose you was in much of a hurry for them, and I have always forgotten to mention them when I have been writing.

We saw Mr. Scott the day of the Farmer's Elevator meeting, and he is looking pretty good now. So much better than I expected to see him looking.

We have not heard from Ada since she first went to Streator, and do not know whether she is there yet or has gone to Ordway. They can only get two rooms in their house until school is out, and cannot get them until April 1. Ada sent me a gingham house dress for my birthday. Blanche gave me a French ivory comb and brush tray, and others all sent money with which I got a brush and mirror. Ell says you are not very well since you had the "flu". It takes a long time to get over it. I cough pretty hard yet, and my back hurts me pretty, but otherwise I feel pretty well. Take good care of yourself and I will come soon and help you as much as I can.

Love to all,
Mother

Ordway, Colorado

March 20, 1920

Dear Wayne,

I received your letter and was glad to hear from you and that you like the game I sent you. There are lots of little boys and girls in this town. I see them going to school every day, and they have some school here, too, believe me. And I live in the house next to the one where your mama stayed when she went to school in Ordway. Ask her if she remembers "Cutie". Ilgenfritz owns the Winfree house now. There is to be a Sunday school convention here Thursday and Friday in the High School auditorium. I hope when you go to Iowa this summer that I will be there, too. You must let me know when you are going. I suppose you can all ride "Rip" now and make him go some. The boys here ride "burros". You ought to see them and hear them "sing". Ask your mama to show you some pictures of burros. I think she has some. Uncle Dave says he will write to you boys someday. Write again when you have time.

Love to all,
Grandma



Clarion, Iowa

April 14, 1920

Dear Helen and all the Others,

I believe it has been sometime since I wrote or heard from you, so will try and write a few lines this morning. We are all well as usual. Millers have the scarlet fever across the road from us. Marjorie has been sick for about three weeks. Max has not taken it yet. They are quarantined, and we have been pretty careful to keep the boys away from Max, so I do not think they will be exposed. They have been out of

school most of the time since March 1 as the teacher they had was married and went to housekeeping March 1, and they haven't been able to get another until now. They have one to begin next Monday. They went over to the Meacham school for a couple of weeks – rode Babe and put her in the Meacham's barn. Then Art Meacham's daughter came down with scarlet fever at Emmett Meacham's and Blanche was afraid to send the boys any longer for fear they would get it, so they have been out of school for about three weeks.

I suppose you had a nice visit with Margaret. How long was she there? I had a letter from Bert saying he looked for her home last Friday or Saturday. Had a letter from Ada a few days ago. She likes Ordway fine and seems well satisfied. The baby is so good. Mrs. Osberg (the lady who lives in their house) says he is the best boy in Crowley County. He has cut two teeth since his arrival in Ordway. Dave has worked every day since Ada got there except one half day he laid off when Robert visited them. Robert P. and his family have been in Colorado Springs since last September and are going to stay (that is Edith and the children are) until school is out. Molly told Ada that Bert Sale was going to be married last week. Molly was tickled about it, because she thought it would be better for the children. Well, I hope so. They will live somewhere in Nebraska. Bert has been out in western Nebraska for some time. Must have married a Nebraska woman. Dave got her an electric iron for her birthday.

Blanche has no little chicks yet. Her hens were late in setting, but she has 33 setting and 15 to come off next week. Harry has 47 pigs from six sows and four more to report. Have one little calf. They average a little better than \$6.50 a day for milk. They do not separate.¹

The roads here are fierce. Cars have to be pulled out of the mud. Had a little rain Saturday night – not a heavy rain at all but that 2 miles north of Harding's is in an awful condition. It has been so cold the farmers are not through seeding it.

Have not heard from Grand Ridge since the funeral. Lizzie had an operation on her nose in the winter and had her tonsils out just a few days after the funeral. Got along all right.

Well, I cannot think of any news, so guess I will close. I may go up there in a week or two. We'll let you know. I have your napkins done and will either send or bring them. Hope you are all well and have a good girl to help you. Kiss the children for me I am so crazy to see little Donald. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Charlie Peterson is selling land in Virginia. Muron Tombaugh went out on the last trip and bought 100 acres.

Editor's Comment

¹Many early small-town dairies did not have the facilities to separate milk from cream and would pay farmers a bonus price for separating the components of whole milk before delivering it to the dairy. This was performed using an electric milk separator – basically a machine that spun the whole milk in a centrifuge, which allowed the heavier cream to be drawn off or “separated.”



Ordway, Colorado

June 13, 1920

Dear Blanche,

Received your letter some time ago and will scratch you a few words this morning. I guess Dave will tell you all the news that we hear about Robert and family. They were here Saturday and left about 7:30 Sunday morning. I don't know where Dave will jump out and take the train. I guess it depends on how crowded they feel I am. Sorry I didn't get some little thing to send to Burton and Richard, but I didn't know he was going until late Saturday, and then it was too late. I hope he thinks of them along the way.

We have been cleaning house. I guess I told you about my curtains. Have new ones for two bedrooms and the parlor, brown drapes for the windows and double door of the parlor, and a creton with a satin finish for my front bedroom. It has considerable blue and pink in it and is real nice. I have enough left for a dresser scarf and sofa pillow.

I stayed all alone last night and wasn't afraid either. I was real tired, fell sound asleep and didn't get up until 8 o'clock this morning. I told Dave I was going to get someone to stay with me, but I have so much

sewing and mending, I want to get done, that I would rather do that. If I have to fuss three times a day with meals, that is about all I would get done.

I suppose you are real busy now. Marion is just fine. He walks from one end of the bathtub to the other now. He got to bumping his head against the wall yesterday—liked the sound and kept it up.

I invited Uncle John to dinner yesterday. I told him Robin, Robert and family would be here, but they had come and gone so we had dinner together. Aunt Mary and Craig are at Greeley. Craig had his tonsils, adenoids, and two growths in his nose removed. He is getting along fine.

I wrote to Lizzie and told her to tell Uncle Chris to wire Dave if he could meet him in Clarion. You and the boys better come along with him. Harry, too. Let him do the work. I would love to see you all.

Belle



Mora, Minnesota

June 14, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter, the Monitor, and the thread. Thank you for all of them. It was alright for you to open Blanche's letter. I will not have to tell you what was in it now. Bert Fisher came up from Clarion Friday, looking for land. He wants an improved 80. Just went home this morning. Found two or three pieces of land that he liked and may take one of them. The people next to Bert are anxious to sell. He likes it here, and thinks a man can do better on an 80 acre farm here than in Wright County.

Marie and Fred Elfstrom were here all last week helping with the work. They cut over 100 bushels of potatoes to plant. Bert will plant them this week if the weather permits. Have had lots of rain since I came, but it doesn't seem to stop the cars from running. We went to Grasston Saturday morning with the cream (Fisher was with us) and to Mora in the afternoon. It rained quite hard while we were in Mora, but we came

home without chains. They have two very nice stores in Grasston – one double store larger than anything in Mora or Clarion either. It is remarkable the number of large barns that have been built since I was up here two years ago. Margaret says to tell you that she will write someday.

I am sending you a package in today's mail – a little coat for baby Donald's birthday present. Thought I'd send it now so he would get the good of it this summer. Hope you will like it and that it will fit him. If it is too long, you could rip it open at the bottom and turn it in and later let it down again. I wouldn't cut it off. I was going to get pique and make him a coat but found this and thought it would look better than anything I could make.

I'm glad you could get the thread. I tried to find it in Grasston Saturday. They keep Bucilla thread but did not have that in color. So, I was going to try in Mora Saturday afternoon, but the ball you sent came in the mail Saturday noon so I didn't look for the thread in Mora.

I suppose you have been over the corn once or maybe twice. I'll bet it looks nice. Fisher says corn looks good around Clarion. It looks good here, too. Oates, too.

Well, I must close and find something to do. We had ice cream last night. Yesterday was a terrible hot day and not much air stirring. It was 94° in the shade. Write some time. Love to you all, also to Mrs. Hainsel and Farber.

Lovingly,
Mother



Mora, Minnesota

June 22, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

Received your letter and the Monitor, and I didn't mean for you to send the Monitors but just to cut out any items you thought I'd like to see.

Am glad Rose is married. I think it was the best thing for her. Am glad Mr. Scott is feeling so well. Sorry you lost so many chicks and that you got such a cold. You ought to have put on Ell's rubber boots. Margaret has a pair of her own, and she needs them, the grass is knee-high and such dews.

Have had several letters that didn't come through Walnut Grove and rather than repeat any of them I'll send them in this and called it a Round-Robin.

Have made ice cream every Sunday since I came, and last Sunday we had an angel food cake. Am glad you liked the coat. Was it too large? I hope not. Bert had more potatoes cut than he wanted to plant so he sold them to the man that lives where they did for two dollars per bushel.

Where are you going the fourth? We may go to Ann Lake. Whites were here for dinner Sunday, and Williams called last week. How did you come out with your "roosted eggs?"¹ And about how many chickens have you now? I forget if I told you Bert Fisher was here for two or three days a week ago. Write when you have time love to all.

Lovingly,

Mother

Editor's Comment

¹While the word is clearly spelled "roosted", Bell may have meant roasted, in which an egg is first hard-boiled and then roasted in the oven until its shell turns brown.

Mora, Minnesota

July 13, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

I wonder if you realize how long it has been since I heard from you. I would have written anyway but have been about sick with a cold or cough that has me about torn to pieces. Robert got it first, and we thought it was whooping cough, but it was a bronchial trouble, and we all had it. But I haven't been able to get rid of it. The others are all over it, but I cough about all the time. I went to the doctor Saturday, and he said there was no temperature and there is no pain except in the muscles of the chest and abdomen. They are pretty sore from coughing so much. Then a week ago I had a touch of lumbago but got a porous plaster and put it on my back, so I feel better of that.

There has been so much rain that it is a wonder everybody isn't sick. Two weeks ago Saturday and Sunday night, we had two big rains. It rained about 9 inches altogether and drowned out lots of potatoes. There will not be more than half a crop. Then it rains a little more every few days, and it is hard to get the cultivating done in the hay made. Bert hasn't tried to make hay yet.

How are you folks faring down there? Did you get some of that cloudburst that struck around Pipestone and southeastern South Dakota? I saw in the Minneapolis Journal that the Black and Yellow trail was almost impassable west of Lambert and that Shetek was very high. I guess the wet weather is quite general. They had a dry spell around Clarion but guess they have had plenty of rain since.

We are planning to take an auto trip over to Rice, Lake Wisconsin as soon as Bert gets his hay up. We are not going to Itasca Park this summer. Bert hasn't time. It keeps him busy to get his work done between rains.

Did you get another man? And is Gladys with you yet? How did you come out with your chickens? Where did you spend the Fourth? We went to Pine City Saturday and to Ann Lake on Sunday. Took a picnic lunch both days and had a pretty good time.

How are all the kiddies? I will send you some letters I have received. It is easier than writing what they said. Hope this finds you all well and that you are not having it so wet as we are. Love to you all. Write soon.

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

July 28, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter yesterday (Tuesday) noon and will send a reply by return mail as you requested. Will try and give the information you wish. John B. Ostrander was born May 31, 1824, died January 10, 1911, aged 87 years, died of old age and was never sick a day in his life since I can remember. Nancy E (Latham) Ostrander was born February 21, 1834 and died March 4, 1901, aged 67 years. She died of pneumonia. Arthur W. Ostrander was born January 6, 1864 and died of tuberculosis as a sequel to measles, August 22, 1885. No other member of the family ever had tuberculosis on your mother's side. I do not know the dates of your father's parent's births nor deaths, but his mother died of tuberculosis at about the age of 35 or 40, and his father died of typhoid fever at the age of (about) 58 to 65. No other cases of tuberculosis ever developed in the family.

We could use some of those beans all right, although we have had several messes and more coming on. Have plenty of peas and the cabbage is heading. I told Margaret yesterday or day before that I'll bet you had cabbage already. Wish we had some of your cukes, ours aren't doing well at all. We have raspberries every evening for supper, the red ones. She gets 18 quarts from a neighbor to can. I canned 5 quarts yesterday for her. She is working in the hay with Bert. She drives the team on the hayrack and Bert operates the loader, and she drives the team to elevate it in the barn. They use a fork and slings and have about 28 loads in the barn and will have as much more. The barley is ready to cut, and the oats are all turning and will be ready in a few days. He said he would be all through with haying and harvesting by the last of next week weather permitting. Then we are going over to Maud Scherer's for a day or two.

I am not going to Michigan. I had such a hard cold and cough, it made me almost sick, and I had no ambition to go anywhere. I would have stayed longer at your place if I had not expected to go to Michigan. Could have stayed a month longer just as well or not. And I would just as well go back home that way.

Could you meet me at Florence or Marshall? Whichever you think would be best. I dread that long wait in Minneapolis with the night ride and getting into Walnut Grove at 3 o'clock in the morning. Bert said if he had time he would take me over as he would like to go himself. So, if

he isn't "rushed" too much, he may take me over. But I wrote to Jesse that if Manning came to Iowa in his car this summer, to let me know, and I would go home with them. So, you see I am making too many plans to carry them all out. I do not expect Manning will go to Iowa this summer though as he is "rushed to death". So, I might as well go home via Walnut Grove. I'd like to see you all again. I'll bet Donald is a corker.

I haven't heard from Ada for a long time. Dave wrote that Bert wrote a short time ago and said they had a hard hailstorm in the valley that practically destroyed the melons.

I will send you some stamps for the postage on those papers. Thank you so much for them. Blanche does not write very often. I finished her set and sent them over a week ago but haven't heard from her. We'll probably hear today. I hope you can read this. I have written in such a hurry that you will probably have to get a Dutch lawyer to interpret it and it may take a Chinese lawyer.

I keep forgetting to tell you that Margaret was correct in her surmise last spring. She has given me the privilege of naming it – but I prefer not. Hope this finds you all well as it leaves us. Love to all. Write soon.

Lovingly,
Mother



Mora, Minnesota

August 5, 1920

Dear Sis,

I received your letter and card Tuesday and would have answered it yesterday, but we went to Grasston right after breakfast and had to hustle the work when we got back as we had a man for dinner. Bert had to hire a man to cut his oats (\$1.50 per acre) as he has no binder. Finished the oats yesterday and cut some Timothy this morning, so he is all through but a little shocking. Hope you got all yours in the shock before it rained. Saw in the paper they had their first rain for four weeks at Pipestone and wondered if you got any of it.

Bert couldn't get away to go to Wisconsin until he got his grain and hay all out, so we are going next week for three days, and then I can go to your place. And it may be Bert will take me. Margaret will stay here and see about the chores. But if he cannot take me, I will go to Marshall on Sunday, so you will not be put out with your work. Hope I can get there before you thrash as I can help a little – maybe. I can at least keep the baby out from under your feet. Have had no rain here to amount anything since before the fourth, and it is pretty dry and dusty – the potatoes begin to need rain.

Margaret is washing today. She only washes every two weeks and generally has a big one – but not to compare with yours.

I suppose Blanche will think I ought to get home to keep house for her while she is in Colorado. I think she would wait until September, and then Robert and Edith would be there. They talked of going to Ordway this fall to put the children in school.

There isn't much to write, so will close for this time. Will write you when we get back from Maud's, just when I will start for Walnut Grove. I hope Bert can take me as he wants to go pretty bad himself. But he has a lot of work to do this fall. A silo and chicken house and a kitchen to put up if he can get the concrete. So, he may not want to take the time. Love to all and kiss the kiddies for me.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Just my luck—they all either get married or die.



Mora, Minnesota

August 18, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

I expected to be with you last Sunday evening, or I would have written you last week. We went to Maud's last Thursday and came back Saturday and Bert intended to take me over Sunday, but the threshing

machine started up Saturday, so he was right in the midst of work. He had left a man here to do the chores and expected him to get up some threshing work, but he didn't get around to it so Bert had that to do on Sunday, and he has not had time to take me to the train since I thought I could go Monday, but he could not go to Mora in time to catch the train, so I packed my suitcases and expected to go Tuesday, but he couldn't take me then either, so here I am yet.

The machine is just across the road and will be here by 10:30 or 11 o'clock. We will have them for dinner. Bert says he will take me if I wait until he gets the foundation in for his silo. He wants to go pretty bad himself, so I suppose I had better wait. If I do not, I will come to Marshall and phone Jon, and Jon can meet me in Tracy or Walnut Grove. There is no Sunday train that goes through, just a local to St. Cloud, or I would have gone last Sunday. We had a nice trip over to Maud's. We went by Taylor's Falls, and figured it was about 130 miles. We left Maud's Saturday morning at five minutes after nine and drove in here at six after five – just eight hours, and we stopped in Balsam Lake for gas and water and in St. Croix Falls for dinner, and to fix the brake, which wore out on a long hill. Then we stopped a couple of times to inquire the way as we got off the road we went over on. So, in all, we lost about an hour. Will tell you all about the trip and the visit when I see you.

I have been wondering how you are getting along this hot weather. We had a nice rain on Wednesday last week, so it wasn't so dusty part of the way, but we ran into places where they hadn't had rain for weeks, and it was dry and dusty.

Well, will write again if I do not see you soon. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Margaret says hello.

Mora, Minnesota

August 26, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

I received your card a few days ago, also a letter from Ada, which I will enclose. It seems that Harry is thinking of coming up here after me. Blanche wrote to Margaret just before she went to Ordway that they might drive up here after she came back, which would be August 21. So, we have been looking for them all this week. If they do not put in an appearance by Friday night, I think I will go over to Walnut Grove Saturday. But as there is nothing certain about it, do not try to meet me until you hear from me. I will phone you either from Marshall or Tracy, and if you happen to be threshing, do not try to meet me at Tracy either because I can either wait there for a train to Walnut Grove or stay all night. If they come, they may take me over to Walnut Grove.

Bert has given up all hope of being able to go. Cement is slow in coming, and he hasn't got his silo up yet, and it is time to be at it. He has his gravel hauled and is digging the trench for the foundation, and as soon as it is finished, they will have to begin filling. There has been no frost here yet, but we were up to Mille Lacs Lake last Sunday and saw lots of corn nipped with frost. Then he has his chicken house and kitchen to build, besides his fall plowing, so he thinks he cannot go.

I wish now that I had gone a week ago. I may take a notion to go by way of Minneapolis, too, so do not worry nor look for me until you hear from me. I am old enough to take care of myself, and I will get there some way. Or else go home with Harry if they come and cannot go to Walnut Grove.

Ada is expecting me soon as I told her when she left that I would be there for melon day, but I do not care if I do not go until November or December now. Would like to spend a month with you, if I can, before I go. This is so mixed up you may not be able to interpret it without a lawyer, but I must close now. Love to you all and hope to see you soon.

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

September 12, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

We found so much to do when we got home, that I have only just found time to write. Harry went to town Tuesday and bought out a crate of pears, and there was even a bushel of tomatoes to can, so they went to it and canned 18 quarts pears, 15 quarts tomatoes, 14 quarts of plums—44 quarts Tuesday afternoon. Washed Wednesday, rained Wednesday and Thursday, and did not get the clothes dry until Thursday afternoon. Had wood sawyers Friday for dinner and three visitors besides – 14 in all with ourselves. Ironed Friday afternoon and made about 14 ½ quarts of plum and apple butter in between.

Uncle Chris came Friday morning and was here for dinner and went to Seifert's in the afternoon Friday and Fort Dodge Saturday and came back here to dinner today (Sunday) and started home this evening.

Now, do not imagine I did so very much of all that work, for my back was nearly killing me. I went up to see Best Tuesday afternoon, and he said it was gall trouble and gave me some medicine, but the pains never left me until Saturday. I never had an attack that lasted so long before. He said most of the pains were neuralgia or neuritis, and they certainly gave me the Dickens. On the way home, the pains stopped before noon, and I began to think I was all over it, but they came back that night and never let up until Saturday.

The lunch was fine and thank you so much. We got a watermelon in Mankato and two musk melons – ate the musk melons with our lunch. The stores were all closed in Mankato on account of Labor Day, so we did not do much shopping. Had good roads until we passed Ledyard, then they were not so good and before we got to Renwick we struck muddy roads. Went to Goldfield, and they were working the road east to Clarion, so as soon as we could, we got onto a side road and got along pretty well until just west of Florence. We got into three bad mud holes. We thought we were in two of them for keeps, but managed to get out, but we all had to get out and push and got pretty muddy. Lost a bolt out of the spring (back spring), and one of the stirrups or clips came loose and kept banging the floor of the car every time we struck a rut. But we got here. Am anxious to hear from you to know what kind of weather you have been having.

Did Clyde come back? The Bill Baker that works here putting in tile is his brother. Clyde is an adopted son. Bill says his mother has always humored and pitied him. How do the boys get along at school? Has that Wilson boy been as mean as he was last spring? Tell Mrs. Haensel I was sorry I did not see her but hope to go again sometime. Write soon. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Am feeling pretty well now. Byrd and family were here to dinner today. Uncle Chris is going south this winter.

Monday morning,

I found a clipping in one of my Northwesterns about the preacher who composes the Chautauqua Preachers Quartet, which I am sending you – also an article from one of my magazines which may be the means of curing your headaches if you will “go and do likewise”, not that I think you are a “nervous wreck” or have had a “breakdown”. But the exercises are fine for anyone who has as much to do as you have. I am doing the deep breathing myself.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – You might send it on to Margaret.

Fort Dodge, Iowa

October 4, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

Harry, Blanche, the boys, and I came down here Saturday, and they went back yesterday evening. I am going to stay a week or so, and think I will go down to Madrid the last of the week and stay over Sunday. If you want to write me while I am here, address me at 1806 11th Ave. S., Fort Dodge, Iowa C/O Art Woodward. I am at Scherer's now.

I had some items at home to send but forgot to bring them with me so will send them later. Jesse Offert's man (Roy Gill) eloped with Otto Wollenhaupt's wife. He is about 24 and has three children, and she is 45 or more. She has a son married (Arthur Deffenbaugh). Her first husband was Johnny Deffenbaugh—guess you remember him.

The folks at home are all well. Haven't heard from Bert's since I left. I sent Robert's birthday present last week, so maybe I'll hear from them. Had quite a heavy frost the night of September 30, and another the next night. Killed nearly everything that wasn't protected. The leaves are all coming down fast now.

Blanche sold nearly \$20 worth of tomatoes. Am sorry you cannot come down now while the weather and roads are so fine. I do not think that I will go to Colorado until after Thanksgiving. I haven't been downtown yet. Do not think I'll buy much when I do go—only a pair of shoes and maybe a corset. Did I tell you Jonah Hibbs was dead? Perhaps that is one of the items I was going to send you. I think he had cancer.

I hope you are much better than you were. Kirks phoned us when they got home, and she said you had no girl, but had one in view. Hope you have one by now, so you can gain some strength and not be so tired and nervous all the time.

Will close and get this in the mail. Love to you all. Kiss the kids for me. Ada wrote that Marion began to walk soon after Blanche was there.

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

October 25, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

Your letter was received a few days ago, and I will try and answer it this afternoon. I came back to Clarion a week ago today, was gone a little over two weeks. I went to Madrid on Friday and stayed until the next Wednesday. Had a lovely trip and a fine time both in Madrid and Fort Dodge. Got me a pair of shoes, brown leather, \$13, and \$.35 war tax. I also got a crib blanket for Margaret, so don't you go and get another.

I hope Eldon liked his book. I read it and didn't think it very suitable for him and wanted Blanche to exchange it while I was away, but she didn't, and when I came back it was time to send it so I let it go. It's such an impossible story, or at least improbable.

Dan Barrickman's wife was so badly hurt in an auto accident in Mankato that she died – she lived a week with her skull crushed. A hand car ran into them on a crossing sometime near the middle of August. The account of her death was in the Streater paper on August 20.

Six or seven of us are going to Eagle with Mrs. Summers in their big sedan tomorrow and go to Mrs. Davise' for dinner. There is a big club meeting or convention on.

I will just have the interest on what I have loaned out. I do not expect any of the boys will want to pay off their notes. If I could sell my bonds at par, I would let you have that, but I do not suppose anyone will buy them at par. I do not know just what my share of the mortgage will be, but am afraid I will not have enough to let you have \$500 and live on, too. I will try to sell the bonds if I can get anywhere near par for them, but do not like to let them go at a sacrifice. I think grain prices will pick up after election; do not worry anyway – that won't help. If I can do it, I will help you out. Blanche thinks Uncle Chris might have some to loan. Harry got \$1000 of him this fall to put in his electric lights.

I forgot to tell you that Don Barrickman lives in Mankato. I thought they lived in Madelia you. Are you coming down for Thanksgiving? Gertrude Dearth adopted a baby. I heard Mrs. Manly did too but do not believe she has it now. I must close and get to bed as it is after 10 o'clock. The folks had been to an Edison phonograph recital at the M. E. Church, and they are just coming in. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Clarion, Iowa

November 17, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

Haven't heard from you for so long, was afraid you had got lost in the cornfield. Have you been husking? I wonder if you have been having the same kind of weather we have. Snowed a little last Sunday, and we went to church. Mrs. Pinion and asked me if it took the storm to get me out, and I told her it did. The snow melted as fast as it fell and did not snow long – since then we have had lovely weather but a little cold. But it looks today as though we would have a storm soon. Have only been out to the revival meeting once. The evangelists are pretty good, I guess.

Harry told me this morning he would be able to pay me at least part of what he owes me, so I can let you have \$500 if you want it and maybe more if you need it. It depends on how much he pays on his notes. He owes me \$1618.

I suppose Wayne got his game? I sent by Blanche for it – I wanted Flinch, but she got this. I hope he will like it. It seems you can play several games with the game deck.

Blanche is sending your Christmas present today. It is so bulky, she thought if she waited until Christmas, it might get crushed or something. Hope it goes through okay and that you will like it. I haven't finished your pieces yet that I was making, but will soon.

Had a letter from Margaret a few days ago. They have their chicken house built but not the kitchen. Marie Elfstrom is going to keep house for her while she is in the hospital. My, but I would like to see Robert when he first sees the newcomer.

We looked for Dave – he thought he might come up and husk corn, but he hasn't come, and I hardly think he will now unless possibly he might be up to your place. How are you getting along husking? Harry has about six days for two teams. There is about 12 acres. The corn is making around 70 bushels per acre.

Are you coming down for Thanksgiving? Hope you can. I may go to Illinois for Christmas and go to Colorado from there on the Santa Fe to Rocky Ford.

Hope you are all well as we are. With much love to all and plenty of kisses for the kiddies.

Lovingly,
Mother

Mora, Minnesota

November 25, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

Well, this is the first time I have had a chance to write to you since I came up a week ago tomorrow in answer to a message "Come to Grasston Friday morning. 9-pound boy arrived." Got the message about 5:30 and left Clarion at 1:06. Arrived in Minneapolis about 8:30 and left there at 9:36. Arrived in Grasston about 11:30.

They had a regular surprise party Thursday. Couldn't get to the hospital, and the nurses were all busy, and the girl they had spoken to could not come until this week. I had told them if they got in a pinch and needed me, I would come, so here I am and have done all the work and took care of Margaret and the baby until last night. Marie Elfstrom came.

Margaret is getting along fine, and the baby is fat and good. He is fair, and his hair is light – not quite red – but almost. They talk of calling him Melvyn LeRoy.

I have got along fine. Bert carried all the water and wood, so I do not have to go out of doors much. Bert has installed a Hudson water system in his barn, so he has an up-to-date equipment, has 21 stanchions, and 11 drinking cups, and a faucet to draw water for the horses. He began feeding silage last week and got an extra pail of milk at each milking. He will get the tank in place tomorrow and expects when the cows get the warm water, the flow of milk will increase still more. His milk check for the last two weeks in October was \$70.

I think I can go back to Clarion by the last of next week. I would like to go to Illinois before I go to Colorado, but do not know whether I will or not. Will you folks be able to come down for Christmas? Had a letter from Dave. They have to lay all the chairs down as Marion can climb on the table in about a minute. They were expecting Roberts for their Thanksgiving dinner. I suppose Donald is quite a boy, too, by now. Wish I could see you all again, but I think it would be a hard trip to go that way again. Write soon. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Will answer Eldon's and Wayne's letters as soon as I get time.

Clarion, Iowa

December 12, 1920

Dear Helen and All,

I thought maybe I would hear from you while I was at Bert's, but didn't as I did not stay quite two weeks. Margaret got along just fine, still in bed 10 days, had a good girl, so I came home the first day of December. Went to Grasston from Minneapolis, and had a short wait and quicker trip, as I got there at 11:30 AM. Robert is tickled to death over the new brother and says babies ought to be boys when there are boys in the family – so he was satisfied that the baby was a boy whether anyone else was or not. Margaret would like it to have been a girl, but was satisfied. I guess Manning was disappointed that his plans for a family reunion miscarried. But he is going to get a new car next spring, and when school is out, they are going to spend a month on the road visiting you all, and will make you twice glad.

Blanche liked Lizzie real well. The girls did not come, did not want to miss any school. Wes Rinker was buried last Wednesday. I came down to Ed Russell's this evening. Myrtle is going to help me make over a dress. I think now I will be ready to go to Illinois the 22nd and go to Colorado sometime in January from Streator, and Dave will meet me at Rocky Ford. Wish you was going, too. Roberts are in Colorado Springs again this winter. They bought a house just two doors from Mrs. Mathis, so I am planning on a few days at least in the Springs.

Have you got your corn out yet? There is lots of corn in the field yet here. There is a bumper crop – hardly cribs enough to hold it.

Ruth Cope's new boy baby (the third) was born November 18 just about two hours before Margaret's. There was a notice in the Ottawa paper that I was going to send you but forgot to bring it down here. A marriage license was issued to Sarah Ostrander and Oscar Weiss. He was a harder drinker and poker player than Bert ever was. I will send your Christmas package before I go to Illinois. Write before I leave, and let me know how you all are and how the work is coming on, and if you think you can come down before Christmas. Hope this finds you all well and with love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Chapter Six

1921

Grand Ridge, Illinois

January 2, 1921

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter last week. Spent most of the week with Aunt Jane in Streator. She is keeping house for Lee's two girls and Muron's boy who go to high school. They have five rooms upstairs at 215 South Park St. and are real cozy. The children were home for their vacation last week, and it was a good time for me to visit her. I also called on Carrie Coe.

Thank you so much for the check you sent. You shouldn't have done it. I haven't seen very many of my Christmas presents yet. Ada did not send hers here, and Margaret sent what she had for me to Ordway, and Blanche hasn't given me anything yet – was waiting until things got cheaper. Aunt Helen sent me a book, (Scriptural Healing). Ellen and Ray sent me very pretty embroidered centerpiece, Aunt Jane gave me a dollar, and Hilda a handkerchief. I think Blanche was planning to give me something in ivory, and the prices were terrible in Clarion – begin to drop even before Christmas.

From all appearances, I will not have any money coming in before March 1. Harry thought he could pay off his note (or a part of it) for \$618 due March 1. I suppose Dave, Harry, and Bert will pay the interest on their notes at the same time. That will amount to \$260, and the interest in the mortgage ought to be about \$500 or \$600. I haven't anything in hand. Had to draw a little over \$100 that I had in the savings department for living expenses until March 1.

I can scarcely say just how much I could spare March 1, but you can have what I can spare. I have been getting along on about \$200 a year for the last seven years, but the way prices have been, and the way car fare has gone up, it is pretty close counting. I may find a home, too, that I will want to buy. Will you want the money before March 1? None of my notes are due until then. I have got along with my old clothes so far. Got a new pair of shoes but am wearing the same coat and hat I had before I left Grand Ridge. I made over a dress, but wish I had saved the money and put it into a new one. Guess I'll have to settle down somewhere so I can save the money it takes to go from place to place. The rates are terrible now. Bert paid my expenses up there and back – about \$20.

Am glad you all had such a nice Christmas. Manning and Lizzie and I were here alone. The Rinker's invited Jesse and Violet to their dinner. It made me wish I hadn't come – it was an added expense for me to come

this way. Sometimes I think I ought not spend the money to go to Ordway. The rates will be about \$35 or \$40.

I hope grain prices will go up before you have to sell. It is pretty tough to get in debt and then have prices take such a tumble. I am going to try to answer the boy's letters soon. I have been so busy through the holidays and for a long time before. Love to you all. Let me know how much money you will want.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – Hope you are all well again. Thank you so much for the kiddie's pictures. They were good but so small I couldn't see them very well. I have some new glasses though, and can see better than I could. Yes, I know Lizzie Krause had a new baby. She sent an announcement to Blanche and asked for your address. That is why your announcement was a little late. I think I told you Ruth had another boy, born the same day Margaret's baby was. I will enclose her announcement card. Manning is putting in the hardwood floors. They are going to be beautiful.

Lovingly,
Mother



Ordway, Colorado

January 26, 1921

Dear Helen and All,

I haven't heard from you for so long, I'll try it again. I left Grand Ridge last Wednesday (January 19) via the Santa Fe to Rocky Ford. Arrived in R. F. about 3:30 Thursday and found quite a delegation awaiting me. Dave, Ada, Marion, and Aunt Millie, Robert, Uncle Al and Agnes. They came over from the Springs on Wednesday and stayed over until Friday morning so they could have a visit with me.

I wish I could see you to tell you something of what I feel about these poor little motherless girls. It is simply awful the way they are being held down, and they have nothing fit to wear. Their underwear even is much too large for them, and you can imagine how their stockings look without any hose supporters – just strings and no skirts but the little old outing ones they had when they were little. Jesse hasn't a decent dress to wear to school even much less to church. A black skirt made of one of her mother's old ones with a white middie to wear with it. Oh, it is pitiful to see Jesse. She looks so sad and heartbroken. Everybody in Grand Ridge is talking about the way they are being treated. Lizzie seems like a good enough woman – she is a good housekeeper and economizer, but she is no mother to those poor kiddies.

I got some more Christmas presents since I came. Ada gave me a lovely white wash silk petticoat. Molly a wash silk (lavender) to make a nightdress, and Belle a lavender yolk for it, and Margaret sent a book "The Sky Pilot of No Man's Land".

Harry wrote that he could not pay off his note for \$618 but would pay \$118 of it – which with the interest on both notes would be around \$218, and he can send it to you before March 1 if you want it. Manning said you wrote to Uncle Chris for money. Did he let you have it?

Did you get your Christmas package Blanche and I sent? She has never said anything about it. We are all well here, and I left everybody well in Grand Ridge. We were all over to Aunt Molly's for dinner Sunday. She had a dandy dinner. They got a hog Saturday, and I went over yesterday and helped her cut up her lard and sausage. Bell calls her girl Mildred. Aunt Molly just got back home from Texas a week ago Friday saying she isn't much stuck on a Texas oil field.

Well, I must close hoping to hear from you soon. The interstate railroad rates are something awful. It cost me \$41 to come from Streator to Rocky Ford via a tourist sleeper. Love to all. Let me know about the money if you want and how much.

Lovingly,
Ma

P.S. – Manning gave me \$10 when I left. I couldn't think of spending it for myself when his children needed it so badly, so I am going to get some goods and make Jesse a dress and send them both some corset waists with hose supporters. Violet has Jesse's outgrown dresses, so she does not need ones so badly, though it wouldn't hurt her to have a new dress, too. The dresses I sent to have made over for the girls she (Lizzie)

is wearing out herself, so when I have anything more to send them, I shall at least rip them up as she can't wear them.

Mother



Ordway, Colorado

February 25, 1921

Dear Helen and All,

Just a few lines this morning. Harry will have \$218 in the savings bank the last of the week, so I am sending you a check for \$220. I was a little bit afraid to send an endorsed check through the mail, so had Dave make out his check to you, making \$360. I do not know whether Bert expects to pay his interest this spring or not. I think it is due April 1. I had a letter from him and Margaret yesterday, but he did not mention the interest. So, I will send you what I have, and you can make a note for \$360. You spoke about the rate – I hardly know – Dave is paying 7%, Harry and Bert 6%. If you do not want the money for a long time, I suppose a lower rate will do – 5 or 5 ½ – the Clarion Savings Bank is paying 5% on savings accounts. Suit yourself.

I will not try to write a long letter this morning as I have several to write. I sent Howard a package for his birthday a few days ago – two tablets and three pencils and a pencil clip. Hope he gets them okay.

The girls write that the package I sent them a short time ago was a week getting there and was pretty well battered up. I think I will try and wrap them in sheet iron after this.

We are all well. Marion is a corker, Wayne, too, wish I could see the two together. They would surely make a team. He has 16 teeth, can climb anywhere if he gets a chance, and can say lots of words, and pretty plain to. He says Bam-ma, corker, doctor good, hot, and lots of others.

Well, I've mainly filled the sheet after all. Hope you get the money all right. Write soon and let me know, and if it will be enough. I might be able to let you have enough more to make \$500, if you need.

Love to you all. Hope you are all as well as we all are.

Lovingly,
Mother



Ordway, Colorado

March 8, 1921

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter Friday or Saturday and will answer today. Thanks for the note and check.

We're having a touch of winter – woke up this morning with the ground covered with snow, and it is still snowing at 1:15 PM. – soft and melting – will not last long, and the sun is almost shining. Ada had a birthday dinner for me Sunday. Uncle John, Aunt Molly, and Craig were here. Had stewed chicken and noodles, mashed potatoes, apple and cabbage salad, peach preserves, fruit salad with whipped cream, and angel food cake. For my birthday, I got gingham for a dress from Blanche, a pretty percale apron and a pair of black silk stockings from aunt Molly, another pair of silk stockings from Aunt Helen, and a book of Riley's poems from the Dickson girls, and a string of beads from Ada that Adalyn made. They are very pretty and something new made of sealing wax, hand-painted and strong on a silk cord. Haven't heard from Margaret yet, but she always sends something. Blanche sent a powder box and hair receiver to match my ivory set for my Christmas. Just got them a short time ago.

Hope you are having good weather yet to get your spring work done. Dave has 22 hens and gets from 10 to 14 eggs a day. He has a hen setting to come off next Saturday – will tell you the result later as we cannot "count chickens before they are hatched".

Aunt Molly hasn't been very well for a week or more, and I have been having a lame back for a week – acts like lumbago and sciatica. Seems a little better today. Am hoping it will soon wear itself out. We came near going over to Robert's a week or so ago, but did not go, and

then we got a letter from Robert saying Elizabeth has diphtheria, so we were very glad we did not go. They are quarantined of course – cannot leave the premises – but think she will get along okay. She was treated with antitoxine, and the children are all treated for prevention of contagion.

Did I tell you Dr. Lewis and Jenny Dearth died a short time ago? Had a letter from Helen Amick Sunday. Mr. A's sister Stella died in Kankakee hospital for the insane. She lost her mind in the fall, and they had to send her to Kankakee.

I was glad Howard liked his birthday present. I couldn't find any toys or games, so had to content myself with the tablets and pencils. Hope they got there in good shape. There were two tablets, three pencils, and a pencil clip. I'll bet Donald is a corker – Marion sure is, and I would love to see them together. Flyover and see us. It seems so easy nowadays to cover long distances in an aeroplane. Perhaps it will not be so very long until they are as common as automobiles.

I will try to find time to answer the boy's letters sometime soon. Hope this finds you all well. Thank you again for my birthday present. Wish you would tell me what you want. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Ordway, Colorado

March 20, 1921

Dear Helen and All,

You poor kid – you surely have had some time with your teeth – wish I had been there to help you. I am so much good to anybody with my lame back. But you are lucky to have it out – it surely would have caused serious trouble soon (the wisdom tooth) I mean. I cannot understand how you could have abscesses on your front teeth. They were never killed, were they? I understand that only dead teeth had abscesses. I hope you are very much better, and that the hardest part is over. Are

you going to have gold crowns or bridges? Or porcelain? My front teeth – or those near the front that show—are porcelain lined with gold. I like them better than to have as much gold show in the front teeth. My, your jaw must have been sore hope – hope you get them all fixed up soon. You surely will feel better, and I hope have better health. That has probably been the cause of all your bad feelings for the past two or three years. I had quite a siege with my back and hip for a couple of weeks – rheumatism, I suppose – but I am okay now.

We want to go to Pueblo soon. I haven't bought me anything new for so long I begin to feel shabby. I wore my old coat and hat all winter and am wearing my old summer hat now. Everything is so high; I hate to pay the price. This trip is going to cost me so much, by the time I get back to Clarion, that I will have to economize on clothes unless I can marry the millionaire Robert has selected for me in Colorado Springs. He is worth \$14,000, and Robert calls him the fourteen millionaire.

We haven't heard from him, and do not know whether they are out of quarantine yet or not. I think I told you Elizabeth had diphtheria. Aunt Molly has all her teeth out and looks so old, and her health is so poor. Craig nearly wears the life out of her. Archie expects to be married again sometime this summer or fall and she says he will have to take Craig. I hope he does. He hardly contributes anything to his support.

We drove out to Crowley last Sunday afternoon. Crowley is a new town on the Mo. P.¹ between here and Manzanola—has grown up in the last five years and is some town. They have a fine consolidated school there. Bell has been having considerable trouble with a wisdom tooth, too. Her baby is growing like a weed. I suppose she will come home sometime this summer. It gets so hot down there she cannot stand it. We are all well now and enjoying the fine spring weather. I hope Ell got over the gripe okay. I suppose everybody is seeding by this time. Marion (Bass) Trainor had a little new daughter. Their other children are boys. She has two and nearly all the Trainor children are boys. So, they are quite proud of this one. Cecil Iles lives in Pueblo, and has no children. The Iles twins are quite pretty girls, and also in the choir. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Editor's Comments

¹Missouri Pacific railroad route

²Included with Bell's March Letter to her daughter Helen were the following two letters to her grandsons Howard and Eldon.

Ordway, Colorado

March 20, 1921

Dear Howard,

I received your letter and was glad to hear from you and glad you liked your tablets and pencils. It doesn't rain here very much, and so the men have to run water over the ground to water the crops and so there are lots of ditches. If you was here, you could wade in them. I hope you can all come out to Colorado sometime when you get your new car. I suppose you have lots of fun gathering eggs now – are you hiding any for Easter? I see by the paper that children are going to roll eggs down the hill at the White House in Washington. Wouldn't you like to be there and help? I think it would be lots of fun. Well, I think I will go to bed. I am pretty tired tonight. We had company from the country today. Write again. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Grandma

Ordway, Colorado

March 20, 1921

Dear Eldon,

You wrote me such a nice letter last fall, and I have intended to write you ever since, but I have a good many letters to write, and so yours was neglected. I noticed that you are improving in your writing – your letter was very well written. I am glad you are getting along so fine in school. Violet cannot understand how you could be promoted from the sixth to the seventh grades. She thinks you must have jumped a couple of grades. I suppose you boys ride Rip to school most of the time. You must all have had a pretty tough time while Mama had such a sore jaw and Papa had the gripe. Hope you have a good man to work for you this spring and that you boys help with the chores and get in the cobs and coal and water and take care of Donald. Marion says lots of words so plain. He is weaned now and eats like a harvest hand. Write again. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Grandma

Ordway, Colorado

April 22, 1921

Dear Helen and All,

Will write you a few lines this morning just to remind you that you have a birthday next Tuesday – I wish you a happy one and lots more of them – wish I could be there to help you eat your birthday cake. I am sending you a slight reminder – keep it “under your hat” or put it in your teeth. How many teeth have you out in your lower jaw? And how many crowns and bridges are you having put in? You are getting them awfully soon after your teeth were extracted. I do hope you will not have any more trouble with them.

We all went to Rocky Ford yesterday. Molly went with us. They have the earth all torn up down there. They are doing a lot of paving. I got me a new waist, georgette – tan, with a little white embroidered collar, it is very pretty – a navy blue satin skirt, and a spring coat. Molly got goods for a voile dress, a silk foulard dress, and a Canton crêpe skirt. Ada got Marion a little hat. She doesn’t spend much money for clothes outside of Streator.

I am going down to Molly’s today – she is going to alter my coat and dress for me, and wanted me to come early so I will have to hurry. Dave got Ell’s letter – am sorry you have been having such backward weather and such poor luck with pigs. We had a heavy rain and hail storm and a little snow last week. The hail wasn’t much bigger than sleet – but it covered the ground at least an inch, but the rain that followed took it all off in a short time. It knocked off lots of blossoms but fruit men think there will be lots of fruit anyway.

They had heavy snow in Denver and Colorado Springs and in the mountains. Trains were stalled and telegraph and telephone lines were down – it was a big storm – the worst of the winter.

Write soon and tell me all about yourselves and your teeth especially. Would love to see you all. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Ordway, Colorado

July 26, 1921

Dear Helen and All,

Your card received and was glad to hear from you and that you had each a fine time on your trip. Bertha went home to help celebrate her mother's birthday. Guess they had quite a party. Perhaps they sent you a paper with the account of it. It has been very dry at Mora. The pastures all dried up, and Bert was feeding his cows on clover hay. Silage all gone. He said the cows were doing fine on the hay. Had about one quarter as much hay to put in the barn as he had last year and was going to cut his oats for hay. Did not say anything about potatoes, but Blanche wrote that Ed Burkholder had written that they were all dried up. But they had a big rain about the fourth, Margaret wrote, that may have saved the potatoes in that neighborhood. Over 600 acres of oats were ruined here in the big hailstorm. It has rained here as much this season that it is hard to blue leave that we are in "sunny Colorado".

Mr. D. C. Roberts was buried a week ago yesterday – had the funeral here and took him to Denver for interment. Francis Stevens has been taking training in Chicago, and is going as a missionary to South America this fall. She said you were schoolmates here. You would not know Ordway now. It has changed so much since I was here eight years ago. The trees are so large, the whole town is like a park. I met Mr. and Mrs. Downey a short time ago, and they were planning to hear from you and wished to be remembered to you. Belle has three nice children – Zelda May is as homely as a mud fence – but she is a real cute kid. They all have sandy red hair – Zelda May's is such a funny color, and she has so much of it. Belle cuts it in rags, and it doesn't look so bad only when it isn't curled. Louise is a cute little kid but Aunt Molly spoils her as she is her favorite. The baby Mildred is just past six months, has two teeth, crawls all around, stands up at things every chance she gets and will be walking by the time she is eight months old if nothing happens to her. John and Molly think they are the smartest kids there are anywhere, but they think that of Craig, too, and he is a regular "mutt." Archie is married and Craig went to live with them in Sterling. He married a woman who is quite well off to hear them tell it – Oh I wonder if it will turn out as he and Lily did.

Have written all I can think of except I got my birthday presents from Margaret about July 4. It was a picture of the boys in a French ivory frame. Very nice. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Chapter Seven

1922

Clarion, Iowa

March 12, 1922

Dear Helen and All,

Mr. Davis was at the train to meet me – train was about 15 minutes late so it was almost 9 o'clock. I called Harry's up this morning to know if they could come over after me, and they wanted Mrs. Davis and I to come over, so we came up to Clarion on the 1 o'clock train. Mr. Davis went on to Minneapolis to buy hogs. We are going back tomorrow, and I think I will go to Laurens Tuesday. I will leave Eagle about 8 o'clock in the morning. It was a pretty tiresome trip, although I did not have any change to make at Burt as we used to. Found everybody well at Harry's, also at Mrs. Dee's. Mr. Burton was not hurt very badly. Mrs. George Pearl had another stroke of paralysis yesterday. I do not think it was a very hard one – they said she was better this morning. Mrs. Davis was just talking to Mrs. Hirschi, and she said Mrs. Pearl is getting along fine.

There is no snow here, and the main roads are pretty good, but the side roads are a fright. You will have to write once or twice in a while now, so I will know how you are all getting along. The family across the way have two children, and prospects. Hulda Zastrow is wearing a large diamond. Mrs. Albert Richardson is very low, all the children are here except Joe, and they wire him every day. I will enclose some Grand Ridge items. I think if you should happen to go to Tracy soon, you had better get another yard of that silk. I will enclose a sample. I will send the money when I know you can get the goods.

Well, I do not think of anything more. Let me hear from you soon how you come out with your hog house and all your extra work. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Laurens, Iowa

April 13, 1922

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter and the package last week and should have written sooner, but have had so much to do.

Aunt Hannah died Saturday morning at 4 o'clock. Had the funeral services here at the house Sunday afternoon and then Monday morning Chester and Ida took her to Madrid, and they had short services at the grave. They went to Marathon to take a train on the C. M. & ST. P.¹ And I rode over with them, and it was so cold and damp and the station was locked, so Ida and I sat in the car (a sedan) until the agent came, and I got strongly chilled. Then when we came back, I decided to go out to Floyd's and spend the day. But it rained so hard, I stayed all night, and in the morning, the ground was covered with snow – a heavy snow storm here. I went out in the rain to the toilet, and fell down in the mud and got myself so muddy, Cora had to wash out some of it with a rag, and I sat by the fire and dried out. I almost went out to see the young hampshires.² They sure are fine, and Floyd will let you have five when they are weaned. To cap it all, I must have taken cold or something else brought on an attack of gall trouble, so bad or worse than I have ever had it. I happen to have the medicine with me that Dr. Best gave me, so with the hot water bottle, I am getting better and will go back to Eagle Saturday, I think. Address me at Clarion next time you write. You can write to Floyd in about eight or 10 weeks and make arrangements to have the pigs shipped. He is going to give them a serum treatment when they are about six or eight weeks old. He gives the treatment himself. His address is Floyd A. Clark, Laurens, Iowa, Route.

I had a letter from Bert Tuesday. He has given up the tractor for this year but has bought 10,000 feet of lumber at the mill for \$20 per thousand and five dollars more for what he has planed for siding. It is 90% white pine and one third the price that he would have to pay in Mora yards. But he will have to haul it 25 miles.

He is going to build a machine shed and hog barn each about 20 x 32, and if he has enough lumber left, he will put up a woodshed and garage. He says there are a few drifts there yet. Frank Ostrander has bought a 4-acre farm in Oregon – Gold Hill, Oregon, and Tom and Belle are going to farm it this year. It has a four-room house with a bathroom sink in the kitchen with hot and cold water, two stoves, fireplace, dishes, silverware, cooking utensils, table, seven chairs, one rocker, one bed, one

cot, one dresser, one writing desk, two dozen cans of fruit, tubs, ringer, boiler and folding bench, one chicken house 60 x 16, one dozen hens, one rooster, one half dozen chicks, one chicken house 10 x 12, one chicken house 8 x 10, one pump-house 10 x 12 with gas engine and power pump, one tool house 10 x 12, one garage 12 x 16, one wood-house 10 x 12 with four cords of wood ready cut, two 100 egg incubators, one brooder, chicken fountains and feeders, one elevated tank of 1500 gallons, piped all over the place for irrigation, hydrants about 30 feet apart, hoses and sprinklers. Bell has gone, and Tom has about an acre of garden planted. The Rogue River runs along one side of the place. There is enough standing timber to last several years. Pine, maple, oak, and holly. Price \$1900. There are two pear trees, two cherries, three peach, a large strawberry bed, one plum. Frank has set out 216 trees – apples, pear, peaches, plums, apricot, nectarine, and almond. There is a berry patch of red and white raspberries, Logan berries, and blackberries, and four grapevines. Frank is going to travel this summer with the folks he worked for in Nevada last year. His place is all fenced with chicken fence. It must be a regular chicken ranch. It is to be hoped that Tom will make good, and I am afraid Belle will not get home quite as often.

I will enclose the amount I owe you for the silk and postage. Many thanks. I am sure of a dress made anyway I want it now. Chester's send regards and want you to come down and visit them. Love to all. You may have to get a Dutch lawyer to read this.

Lovingly,
Mother

Editor's Comment

¹ Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul

² A breed of pig

Clarion, Iowa

July 7, 1922

Dear Helen and All,

We found Harry waiting for us at Goldfield, so we left the train there and came home on the gravel and was very thankful for it. Three and one-half miles of mud was sufficient. It rained hard here yesterday, which assures a good corn crop. The first rain we noticed coming down was above Burt. Hope you get a good shower. The letter I got from Ezra was so full of good cheer. I sent it on to you, but would like to have it after you have read it, as I just skimmed through it once. I must've written him a letter that looked sky-blue to him, as he seems to think I am "scared", which I want you all to know I am not. "To me to live in Christ, and to die is gain". Whether I live longer or only for a short time matters not to me. Life is sweet to us all, but when God calls us home, we know that there is nothing but joy awaiting us. Believe that Wayne is rejoicing today and patiently waiting for a reunion with all his dearly loved ones. There is an aching void, which nothing else can fill, but the dear all Father will send the Comforter to heal all wounds and draw us to himself.

Today I feel as though I ought to have stayed with you, because I know that now it will come to you with more force than during the days when your mind was taken up with the friends that surrounded you. Both of you be brave and strong. So many friends are calling up to hear about it and express their sympathy. Mrs. Bruhl is going to write you. I found the handkerchief I thought I had lost in my silk skirt pocket. But I think I left something else there – just keep it there, for as soon as I am able, I shall go up again.

They had a big time at the picnic the Fourth. It was estimated there were 7000 there. Had good music, splendid speaking, and fine entertainment and everybody behaved splendidly. There was no rag chewing nor disorderliness of any kind. It is quite chilly this morning after the rain.

Blanche is sending a Kodak picture she spoke to you about – also one of me – to kill rats with I suppose. Hope it proves successful. You boys must be good and do your chores well so Papa and Mama do not feel they're lost so much. You know there is a time for work and a time for play, and playtime is much sweeter if the work has been done.

I hope this finds you all well and feeling reconciled. When you feel that you can, write and let us know how everything is going. Love to you all.

Mother

PS – I am sending you the silk stockings.

Editor's Comment

This letter, along with several that follow, hint at a tragedy in Helen Scott's family. On July 1, 1922, Helen and Ell's nine-year-old son Wayne was killed in an accident involving a horse and grain wagon.



Clarion, Iowa

July 16, 1922

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter Friday and will write today and enclose some letters, another picture from Ezra and Minnie, which you can return when you write. Mrs. Carmichael wanted me to tell you that you have her deepest sympathy – also Mrs. Morel. In fact, all the ladies who were here to club Thursday expressed themselves in the same way – especially Jesse Soult; she said she was so glad that you could not blame yourselves in any way for the accident, as that would make it doubly hard to bear.

I know, dear girl, how hard it is to gather up his little belongings and put them away, and that is why I wanted to stay with you to help you bear it. I can realize something of what it must be for you both, for every thought of him brings the tears to my eyes and a fearful wrench at my heart. He was such a dear, lovable boy and was a favorite with everyone who knew him. But God wanted him, and if we can only realize how

supremely blessed he is to be with his dear Father in heaven, it may in time soften the terrible sorrow of our hearts. Oh! Dear children, I know the terrible vacancy in your hearts and home can never be filled, but Jesus can soften the sorrow and fill you with his presence that you will be able to bear it. I hope you are feeling better than you were when I left.

I am gaining some. A test last Tuesday morning showed a B. P. Of 222, so you can see it is coming down gradually. There was a little irregularity of the heart, but the doctor gave me some tablets for that and yesterday he said it was much better. I have some headache and a throbbing in the base of the brain whenever I exert myself, so he told me I must be careful about that. I take a nap every afternoon, and that helps a little, I believe it will come out all right, if I am careful until we get the B.P. down to normal.

Blanche wasn't satisfied to have the membership of the club present last Thursday so she invited at least a dozen extra, besides a lot of children, and believe me she had a mob. She made nut cakes and coffee cookies and bought four gallons of strawberry sherbet. She used all her own chairs and all that Mrs. Miller had, and if they had all come, I think she would have had to sit on the grass.

We got Chautauqua tickets and went last night, but it threatened a storm so hard that we did not stay to hear all the lecture on South America. It was fine what we did hear. Byrd was down to club and Lola and Marjorie stayed until last night. Ben Latham and wife came Wednesday evening and stayed until Friday morning.

I did an awful thing coming home from Walnut Grove. When I got on the train at Walnut, I hung my beautiful shawl on the back of the seat, and when I got off at Sanborn, I deliberately walked off and left it and never thought of it until at least a half hour after the train had pulled out. I went to the agent and had him wire the conductor, describing the scarf and gave him my name and address, but it has never come, so I suppose I have seen the last of it. You can bet I shed a good many tears over it. I hate to tell Aunt Molly, but I think I'll have her make me another just like it. I cannot understand how I could have forgotten it so long that the train pulled out, as it stayed there for quite a long time. I didn't tell you in the other letter for I thought I might get it again, but it was too pretty—I guess someone else wanted it.

Hope this finds you all well. Cheer up as well as you can. I know it is hard to be cheerful, but you have the others to think of. Kiss the dear boys for me. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Monday evening, July 24, 1922

Dear Helen and All,

Will write you a few lines to let you know I am feeling fine – haven't been to see the doctor since last Wednesday. Had the B.P. Down to 200 then.

We all went to Clear Lake yesterday, enjoyed the ride but didn't go in bathing. Would like to have gone out in a boat, but no one seemed to want to but myself, so didn't say much about it. My shawl came by express Saturday afternoon. Maybe I wasn't glad for my faith in C. & N.W. employees. I wrote them a letter of thanks.

I took a notion to have my picture taken a week ago today and am sending you one. Isn't it a "picture"? If you would like to keep the letters you may, but if you intend to just destroy them you might return them when you are writing.

Wasn't it sad that Harold Grattidge's lost their only child? Mrs. Grattidge had just gotten home from Laura's. I stayed with her for supper last Wednesday evening (I think it was Wednesday), and she said she had written to Laura about Harold's baby (Laura does not take the Monitor), but that she was so full of their own trouble that she forgot to tell Laura of yours. So, I wrote to her the next day, and I suppose you will hear from her soon. She is in her new house now and has changed her address. It is 437 Almyra Ave.

Harry expects to thrash this week. He has all early oats. The crops sure look fine now, and all the way to Clear Lake.

Just as soon as I can, I am going either to Bert's or your place. Would you rather have me come now or wait a while? It doesn't make any difference to me. I can go to Walnut Grove first and to Mora later, if you want me to, or I can be at your place in October – just as you say.

Blanche canned 14 quarts of beans today—cold pack. Her porch box and the tub on the stump are sure pretty now, but the flowers in the flower beds are rather backward on account of the dry weather in June. I had a letter from Lizzie Clark a few days ago – will enclose it – and if you wanted – you can keep it.

There isn't much news that I have heard so will close. If I think of anything more will add it in the morning. Hope you are taking good care of yourself. I know it must be terribly lonely without dear little Wayne, but think where he is and how happy he must be. It must have been for the best, as it surely was God's will, and we know "He doeth all things well". With love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – I am enclosing a few pictures that you may keep if you want them.

Mother

Tuesday morning: Burton and Richard went in bathing Sunday, and Burton's back and shoulders are almost blistered. Have been rubbing it with Mentholatum.

Mother



Mora, Minnesota

September 8, 1922

Dear Helen and All,

Will try and write you a few lines before the mailman comes. We received the Monitors and thank you for them. Blanche sent some clippings out of last week's Monitor. The obituary of Art Grattidge's little boy and the marriage notice of Kurt Corwin. Isn't that great?

There was an explosion of dynamite over at Henriette Wednesday evening. A young man was killed. They found only 20 pounds of him, and he weighed 160 pounds. Must have been blown to atoms. I think I will go over to Walnut Grove about the 15th and spend a week or two with you, more if I do not get sick and be a burden. I will go by way of

St. Cloud and Marshall. I hate to go there in the night for you to meet me, but do not see how I can help it.

Have had several nice rains and the pastures and meadows look nice and green, but the crops are not benefited much.

Today is Donald's birthday – I suppose he will have a birthday cake. I sent him a little suit. It wasn't much, but will try and do better later. There isn't much doing here, and so nothing to write about. We went to the fair Saturday afternoon. It was pretty good considering the hot dry weather they have had. Bert has a carbuncle on his left wrist – had it lanced a few days ago. It is an awful looking thing but is getting along okay. Oscar went to the state fair Wednesday morning for two or three days, and Bert had to get Mr. Kelly to come and chore for him.

Will close as the mailman is liable to come any time now. Hoping to see you all soon. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Clarion, Iowa

October 29, 1922

Dear Helen and All,

Harry, Blanche, and the boys met me in Eagle. Mrs. Davis was with them, to – they had been over to Eagle shopping, so I did not have to wait. My longest wait was in Walnut. The train was three quarters of an hour late, so that cut down the wait at Sanborn quite a little. The trains were so slow though, I thought we never would get through. I got pretty tired, but it didn't last long. I was just talking to Mrs. Scott. She rang up and wanted to know how you all were getting along.

John Larson's youngest son was killed last night. Four young men were in a new Paige car owned by a Mr. Tegland, and they were driving pretty fast and ran off the grade west of town. I think young Tegland was driving, I suppose. Do not know much about it, but it is supposed they had booze. The others were pretty badly hurt.

We went to Seifert's this afternoon. Mrs. S. is pretty bad off, but up and around.

Manning's crib is too close to the road, if he ever expects to put up other buildings. Lockhart helped him. He was here about four weeks. The crib is painted gray. Chris's crib is almost done and is painted red.

Thanks for the lunch. They did not stop in Fox Lake very long. I would hardly have had time to get a lunch.

Manning drove all night going home and got here about 9 o'clock in the morning. His crib cost him \$1000 not including his own time or the old lumber he used out of the old crib.

I got home a little too late in to take in the birthday surprise party Minnie Hagie had for her mother Saturday afternoon. I got two pounds of the Cascade writing paper and two boxes of the Lord Baltimore paper and envelopes, two jars cold cream, and two tubes of toothpaste for a \$1.69. The envelopes for the Cascade paper were all sold out.

Tell Donald to be careful and not hurt little sister, and not to love her to death. I haven't any news that I have heard, so will close for this time. Write when you feel able, and be sure and stay in bed long enough to get good and strong. One day longer in bed is worth two on your feet. So be careful. I suppose you had plenty of company today. Regards to Mrs. Olmsted. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Grand Ridge, Illinois

December 27, 1922

Dear Helen and All,

I received the package you sent me yesterday, and thank you very much for the wonderful little traveling companion. It surely will be a comfort on a Pullman. Ada and Dave sent me an ivory back clothes brush – a little beauty. Margaret and Bert sent me a book "The Sheik"

and a box of chocolate covered cherries- perfectly delicious. Blanche sent an embroidered nightgown, very pretty and just what I wanted. Aunt Molly sent a lavender satin camisole, very pretty. Aunt Helen Amick gave me a book "The Sherrods". Manning gave me five dollars, Lizzie a box of stationary, and the girls a bottle of perfume. I think that is all, so far. I have to hear from Rachel yet and Mrs. Davis. They usually send me something.

Aunt Jane and I went to Chicago the 9th and came back the 18th. We had a wonderful time, and I bought me a plush coat. John has a new Haynes sedan. Ruth has a new Ford sedan and Teenie has a Haynes touring car. We went up to Highland Park on the N.W.R.R.¹, had dinner at Ruth's, and supper at John's, and then John took us back in his sedan. On Thursday, Teenie came after us and took us up to Wilmette for dinner and then took us back to the city. Ruth took us out in her car and showed us the city, and drove up to Fort Sheridan. Charles took us over to his Kelvyn Park school to an entertainment and movie, which was fine (Grandmother's Boy). Charles met us at the train and took us to the train when we came home in the Yellow Taxi and we went to Kelvyn Park in a taxi. We also went to Garfield Park Conservatory and saw the chrysanthemums in Charles' car. Charles also took us downtown to a French restaurant for a 6 o'clock dinner – a \$1.60. Charles and Elizabeth took us down to Marshall Fields on the elevated on Saturday, and we had lunch at a cafeteria. I made a date with Charlie's dentist and went down on Monday morning with Mr. Amick, and had my teeth cleaned and treated for pyorrhea. He told me it would be a crime to extract all my good sound teeth. Thornley had told me I would have to have them all out as they were filled with pus, and that was causing high blood pressure. The tooth Thornley extracted is giving me a lot of trouble. Either left part of the root or broke the jaw bone, and it is pushing out on the side and causing pains in my ear. It has been pretty fierce for several days, and I will have to go to a dentist in Streator and have it fixed up. Dr. Smith is coming down some day this week to bleed me. He says that will help for several weeks.

Hope you are all well. Would like to see little Doris Irene since she is getting so cute. Tell Donald not to let anyone have her because I want her myself. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – I got me a Tricolette dress at Keenan's, navy blue. Are you going to get a new coat? Going to sleep.

Chapter Eight

1923

Grand Ridge, Illinois

January 30, 1923

Dear Helen and All,

It is almost 2 weeks since I received your letter and although I have written cards, I do not believe I have answered all your questions. The last time I had my passbook balanced, the check I wrote for Mr. Schauer had not been returned so will enclose another check, which you can fill out and give him. I have forgotten his initials, so I will let you put the name in, and maybe you will get it spelled right. You asked me what I got from Margaret for Christmas. She sent me a book "The Sheik" and Bert and the boys sent a box of the loveliest bonbons. They were called cordial cherries – maraschino cherries covered with fondant and dipped in chocolate. They were certainly delicious.

Mrs. Miller has been having an awfully hard time I think from what Blanche writes. She has such terrible varicose veins. Has had them lanced or something like that. March is her time, I think. I believe I told you Pearl Wollenhaupt had twin girls. She calls them Mary Martha and Marjorie May, I think. I know Mary Martha is right, but am not sure of the other. Mrs. Charlie Carter died last week at the hospital in Streator. I was in to see her three times while Manning was there, and the nurse brought her down to his room to see him one day. She was in a wheelchair, and they brought her down the elevator. She had cancer of the rectum. There are some cases of measles in town. Hope the girls don't get them. Jesse is doing so fine in school, I'd hate to have her miss any time. Violet is taking music lessons and is learning fast. She plays quite well. I'd like to hear Eldon play his violin. When you asked me why I sent the coat, just because I wanted to. And it wasn't a coat that you need to be ashamed of either if it isn't plush. It cost me more than Mrs. Pack's did hers, and I got a reduction on it. Besides, if Mattie told me the truth, it was a \$42 coat but I got it 1/3 off.

Did I tell you my cousin Prudie Coe died in California? A couple of weeks ago. Mrs. John Cove also died in California a few days ago and was cremated, and her daughter Bonnie Metcalf will be bringing "the ashes" to Grand Ridge February 6 to be buried beside her husband.

Manning is getting along fine, went to Ottawa this morning with Al Ott. Did I tell you all the Lewis's are in Waverley, Washington working on a large fruit ranch? Rodney is in the U.S. Army and is in Virginia, I think. Pete Seifert was here last week and Chris P. went to Florida last week. Ruby Ostrander was married a couple of weeks ago to a young

fellow from Morris – a son of the deputy sheriff of Grundy County and also chauffeur for the sheriff. She is 17, and he is 18.

Dave and Ada have moved out to the Zinn place. Dave thinks he can do better to run the place himself, and he will still have lots of time to do carpenter work. I hope you're all well again and hope the baby did not get sick. Do you nurse her any? Or do you just give her the bottle? It was nice Howard found Mrs. Benson's money. He might never have seen it again if some of the Morrises got hold of it. What are you going to do about the 80? And are you going to get a car this spring? I can let you have some money after March 1 if you want it. Thanks for the Monitors. Chris brought one down before he went away. I do not know what becomes of them while he is gone. I haven't heard from Harry's for some time – I wonder if they are all sick?

Write soon and all the news. Remember me to Mrs. Haensel and Mrs. Farber and all the others I met. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

PS – I have been having quite a bad cold with a cough and sore throat but am feeling much better.

Ma



Grand Ridge, Illinois

April 17, 1923

Dear Helen and All,

I was going to send these clippings without writing a letter, but thought better of it so will write a few lines although there isn't a thing to write about.

Al and Esther Ott are cleaning up their newly purchased property and will move soon, but I wish you could see the house they are leaving. That girl of theirs is a fright – a saucy little piece of humanity I have ever

seen. She stands up and makes faces at them when they try to make her mind. They have been living in one of the nicest houses in town, and it is a shame the way they have used and abused it.

The weather stays cold most of the time – it snowed a little Saturday, and there is frost every morning. Oats are all in. I have been wondering how that Mrs. Schulz that was so badly burned came out? Did she die? Or lose her mind? How have you been getting on with the work? And are you still gaining? I suspect you are heavier now than I am. I weighed 147 ½ pounds the last time I was weighed, which was a couple of months ago. I haven't gained any since.

Hope you are all well as we are. I suppose you have lots of little pigs and calves and chickens by now. Does Eldon help with the farm work? Love to all and kisses for the kiddies.

Ma

PS – Thanks for the Monitors.



Grand Ridge, Illinois

April 21, 1923

Dear Helen,

As this is your birthday letter, I will not add the “and all”, although it is for all of you just the same. I received your letter yesterday with the note and clipping enclosed. Thanks for the note. The clipping is one I sent Blanche with instructions to send it on to you and tell you to send it on to Bert. I suppose she forgot to tell you that, but it doesn't matter as I sent Bert a clipping from the Pueblo Chieftain with instructions to send it on to you, and it seems he forgot, too. I am sending you a package today – the pillow slips are for your birthday – the book is one Rachel gave me to give to you – one of Allen's books. She gave me one, too. Aunt Helen Amick gave me the picture of you, and Rachel gave me the others – she said you children probably did not have them, and she thought they

would do more good to give them to my family, so I am sending them to you, and some of the others can have the ones I have.

Hope you have success with your incubator. I guess Blanche is pretty much “rushed” this spring. Her father isn’t back from Arkansas yet – is coming about May 1, and she has been doing a lot of sewing, and with her housecleaning and chickens, I suppose she has quite a bit to do – but no more than you have with all those things to do and maybe to take care of. Hope Doris Irene is better by now and that you are all well. We are all going to Ottawa this afternoon.

Violet has a couple of teeth to be extracted, and she is dreading it. Manning has some garden made, and lettuce, radishes, and onions are up. The wildflowers north of the house are blooming fine. I think I will go out to Aunt Jane’s tomorrow afternoon. I haven’t been out there yet. I was waiting for warm weather. I just changed from wool long legged underwear to light no legged and no sleeve undies this morning. Don’t know how soon I may have to put them back on as it is cool most of the time. Manning is going to drive out to Iowa in June or July to put in a bridge on his farm, and I think I will wait and go with him. The girls like to have me here, and she isn’t so mean to them while I am here.

Say! Do tell me whether I sent you a Christmas present or not. I have been trying for a week to think what I sent you, and I cannot remember if I sent you anything or not, so I have decided I didn’t.

I am sending materials for Doris Irene’s dress. Would make it, but my eyes are getting so poor I can scarcely see to crochet, to say nothing of doing fine sewing. I hope Florence will make it nicely. Will send the little shoes to match by the time she has the dress done.

Seeding has all been done here for about a week. Mrs. Seifert had a letter from Millie Bruhl yesterday, and they are just beginning up there. They are not far from Breckenridge.

With love and kisses to all, and wishing you many more Happy Birthdays.

Lovingly,

Mother

Grand Ridge, Illinois

May 16, 1923

Dear Helen and All,

I guess it has been quite some time since I wrote you. I was out to Aunt Jane's the last week of April – came back on the 29th, and on May 2, Charles and Elizabeth drove down from Chicago in their car and asked me to go back with them. I couldn't resist the temptation to go to Chicago in a car on the new concrete roads, so on the 4th, we went, and I just got back last night on the Burlington (15th).

Had a very good time but did not get up to Highland Park. All of Helen's children and most of her grandchildren and two of her great-grandchildren came down to see her on Sunday (Mother's Day) and brought her so many flowers – a great bouquet of carnations and snapdragons pink and white, a dozen red rose buds, and a great pot of jonquils. They were certainly beautiful, and some of the grandchildren gave her two boxes of home-made candy. Ruth asked about you and said she would love to see you. She has gained 11 pounds. She now weighs 111 pounds. She is such a slender little woman but a great worker I guess. She has three boys, Walter Junior, Duane, and Billy.

I have had the little shoes done for some time, but haven't got the ribbon for them yet. Will send them in a day or two now. I get got a piece of ribbon, but it was too light for the trimming on the shoes. Hope they will fit her. On our way to Chicago, we stopped in Morris for a half hour or so to see Ruby. Her husband is a son of the deputy sheriff of Grundy County, and is chauffeur for the sheriff. We did not see him. They live in the jail or courthouse. Ruby looks quite fleshy (?) for her. She is so pretty and sweet.

I am sending a piece of my new dress that I got for my birthday, also a piece of the under slip. I haven't got it finished yet – am having it made, but I have been away so much it is rather slow in making. I forgot to thank you for the picture you sent – was glad to get it. Thank you now.

Too bad you had such bad luck with your chicks – I really believe the best way is to buy the chicks already hatched, and of course you would need a good warm house for them. Earl and Lulu Wakey bought 2500 white Leghorn chicks and they are almost large enough now for fryers. They sure look nice.

Hope you have luck with the pigs. Too bad about the lady you wrote about. Can't remember her name. Are you coming down to Clarion for

the Fourth? What are your plans? Hope Doris Irene is better of her cold, and that you are all well. Love to all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Grand Ridge, Illinois

June 26, 1923

Dear Helen and All,

I received your letter a short time ago and will write a few lines this morning and send with the items that have been collecting for some time. We had a badly needed shower this morning. I think farmers are through planting but haven't seen any corn up yet, but I have not been out anywhere for over a week. Robert is going after his family June 1. I think they do not expect to go back to Colorado Springs this fall.

Yes, dear girl, it is a good thing we cannot see into the future – we certainly would do many things so differently if we could see. But God's ways are always best if we could only see beyond time into eternity. Dear little Wayne has had almost a year of heaven while we are still grieving – and will always grieve – over our loss.

I hope your back is much better. It probably is from the cold weather. I have taken a hard cold in the last week and have been pretty "bum" for a few days – a touch of "flu", I think. I missed "commencement" exercises on account of it.

Also, I hope Doris Irene escaped another hard cold. Did her little shoes fit? I made a pair for Mrs. Mullins baby trimmed with pink. They were so cute.

Do not worry about the interest. I am not. It will come just as good one time as another.

It has been so cold and dry here, think we would have had frost several nights had it not been as dry.

Had a letter from Aunt Molly a few days ago. She and John are going to Greeley and Sterling to visit Bert and Arlene June 1. Then she is going on to Oregon to visit Belle about June 13. Poor Belle fell down cellar backwards – no bones broken, but she was terribly bruised and sore. Had to have a girl to help with the work for a while. She is all right now.

Dave is going to Wagon Wheel Gap to build lettuce sheds again. Ada and Marion are going along for a few days. They have asked Uncle John to go with them after he comes back from Sterling. They will leave about the 15th or 16th of June. Henry Catron is going out to look after things on the ranch while Dave is gone. They have been having cool dry weather and water is scarce, so crop prospects are not very good.

I suppose Blanche wrote you about Dick cutting off Babe's tail and part of her mane, also the horse in the next stall cut off his mane, and about a foot of her tail, also cut off some of the cow's tail that has been in the habit of slapping him in the face. I suppose Harry and Blanche thought that was quite cute. I'd have thrashed him good and proper. Well, I guess I have rattled on long enough. Take good care of yourselves. Manning is miserable but thinks he has some medicine now that will help him. He said he is going to Clarion sometime in June or July. I expect to go with him, and the girls are going. Lizzie says she is not going, but maybe she will change her mind when the time comes. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother



Clarion, Iowa

July 13, 1923

Dear Helen and All,

Guess it is about time I was answering your letter. Manning, the girls, and I came here July 2. Lizzie did not come as she "wanted to rest", and she had the cherries and berries and some beans to pick and can. We

came from Grand Ridge to Harry's in one day. Left Grand Ridge at 4:30 a.m. and arrived at Harry's at 9:00 p.m. Made one-stop of three quarters of an hour when something went wrong with the starter, and he had to take the carburetor out and – I do not know what was wrong, but it took three quarters of an hour to fix it and get started again. Then we stopped twice for gas, two or three times to inquire the way, and we had to detour several times, and once we got off the right road and went several miles that we had to come back. So, we surely made over 400 miles – but we went some. I thought I'd be very tired the next day, but wasn't, and we all went to Webster City the Fourth to a big celebration.

Blanche and I wondered if we were going to get a box of candy when you wrote you was going to send "something sweet" – never guessed it. But was sure glad to get the "sweetness". I thank you very much and Blanche says to tell you she was going to write last night but company came and she couldn't but will write soon. She says to thank you for her. "She" (Doris) sure looks like you did when you were her age. Jesse and Violet are wishing you would come down while they are here. I think Manning expects to go home as soon as he gets his bridge in. He wanted to paint the crib, but will not this time.

We are expecting Krauss' down Sunday. We wrote them that Manning was here, and we are looking for them although we haven't heard from them yet. May get a letter today. I haven't seen Scotts yet. Have been to town only twice. One evening and Tuesday to the missionary meeting.

I have always forgotten to tell you that Jesse and Violet sent Doris Irene the little doll. She looks very "sweet" in her little dress and shoes.

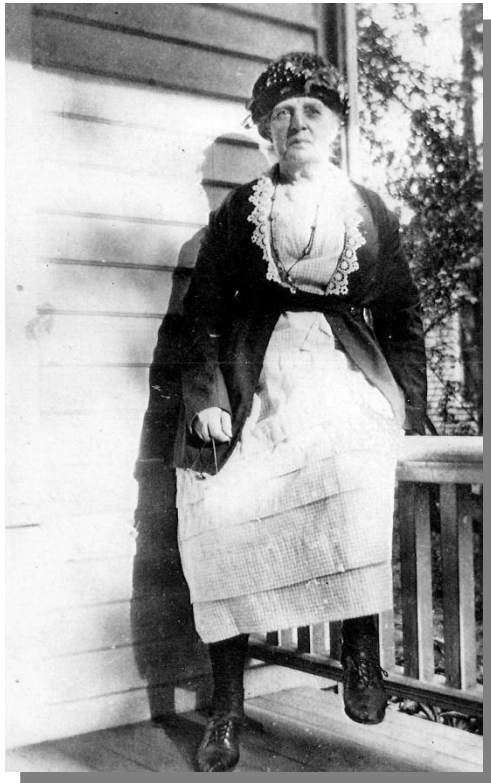
Had a big rain here Tuesday evening, which sure lowered the temperature. It was terribly hot Tuesday. The crops look fine. Harry is cutting early oats, his hay all up. We are having quite a few raspberries. Jesse got a letter from Eileen Schobert saying Ross Wayey's have a baby girl born July 2. Nelly has a real nice boy. Must be nearly two or maybe past two. They call him Donald. Lulu has no children. She is a great big fat slob. Esther gave me a picture of her kids to send to you, so I will enclose it in this letter. The girl is a "caution" and the boy will soon be as bad. Love to you all.

Lovingly,
Mother

Editor's Comment

From 1919 to 1923, Bell regularly visited her doctor, Dr. E.E. Best, at the Bernard Hospital in Clarion, Iowa. During that four-year period, Dr. Best treated Bell for both sigmoid and gastric ulcers.

Dr. Best performed surgery for her condition on September 14, 1923. The surgery was unsuccessful. Bellzora Eliza (Ostrander) Poundstone died at 7:30 p.m. on September 25, 1923 in Clarion, Iowa. She was 68 years old. Her body was returned to Illinois where she was buried next to her husband John in the Poundstone family plot of the Grand Ridge Cemetery south of Ottawa in LaSalle County, Illinois. Her traveling—and writing—days had come to an end.



Bell in her traveling clothes



Bellzora Eliza (Ostrander) Poundstone
1855-1923