

Glenbow Archives, Bell family fonds
M-9377-1

Creelman, Sask.
May 12, 1916

Dear Marjorie,

Your letter received in good condition, news likewise. Kind of a surprise to hear Aubry had signed up, but I suppose it is time we did now. Happy tried to get me, but I told him I was going to try for the 100th. I had no less than three fellows after me in Saskatoon. This has got to be a note as I am writing it at noon. Uncle Arthur is going in this afternoon. He is getting all kinds of orders for eggs. Somewhere between \$110 and \$125 for eggs so far. We finished seeding wheat on Tuesday, and are starting plowing for oats today. Uncle Arthur's finger is getting better, but is very slow as the bone is badly bruised. Gray's have their car now. It came on Monday sure some car I can tell you. Mary is staying in Creelman learning to drive it. I don't wonder they got a car after seeing Mary. It was on account of her they got such a big one as a small one wouldn't hold her. We went over to see them on Sunday. Couldn't get near there for snow. They can't take the car any nearer the house than the well for snow. There is about three feet in one drift under the trees here yet but is going fast. Grandma called Uncle Arthur up on the phone the other night. Uncle Leslie is bringing her up here for a while or possibly to stay as her legs are bad with the sores from the dropsy. Say about getting a man. I was talking to John McCullough in Drumheller and he said he would be willing to go out and work, so the best thing Father can do is to try and get him as I think he is a pretty good man. I don't know when I will be back, as I won't promise what I can't fulfill. I think you could get John pretty easy as he is not doing anything. There is about 80 acres to plow for oats here yet so it will take a while and I promised to see Gray's for a day or so. And I certainly intend to go to Bellevue. Well, must close this narration of events and sign my name or you will think it is Jessie Carson.

Raymond

How does it feel to have soldier brother?

Creelman, Sask.

May 24, 16.

Dear Marjorie,

Just got your letter last night as I have been over at Troy's with Lester since Monday but got back to here last night. We are going to hit the ties for Eastern points this morning. You had better get Aubrey to look after that base [?] business as I don't expect to be going back for some time. I am almost certain you can get John McCullough if you offer him decent wages. If you can't get him I think you might get a man from Rosedale. If you do, try and get a fellow by the name of Chambers. Mr. Roper will know him. That Long John that works in the cars is an excellent worker too. I expect to go down to Winnipeg with Leslie about Saturday, will write again from there. Uncle Arthur has a Ford now, is able to drive it well too for so little practice. The Gray kids all have colds and as full of old Nick as ever. Grandma is in bed yet but hopes to be out before long. I can't write much more as I will have to get ready. Bob Lothian of Pipestone was killed in April in France. He is Wm's son. Leslie thinks the army is great altogether, wouldn't miss it for anything so I guess it will be the same here. Sorry to disappoint you about not going back but I think it is my duty to go now. There have been 46 enlisted from here already. Will let you know soon if I get in.

Yours,

Raymond

Camp Hughes, Manitoba

June 18, 1916

Dear Marjorie,

I am afraid I will not be able to make such a literary effort as you did in that epistle of yours. I am glad you were able to get a man; I sincerely hope he is of some use. What breed is he anyway, and what markings, black with white face, red, roan, pure black, or jersey color? I don't understand McCullough acting that way as I understand him to say he was out of work. Glad to hear there are a few colts safe anyway. That was too bad about Wanda after mother bringing her through safe that long. I was glad to hear Beelzebub did something in her county as it is pretty near time. I suppose the flower garden is coming on pretty good by now. I intended to send some creeper up to mother when I was at Huttons but forgot all about it. I have broken my pencil and sharpened it with my fingernail as I am writing this under a tree a short piece from camp. I can't very well borrow a knife and am too lazy to go back for one. Speaking about Huttons that place

has gone back an awful lot that is the appearance of the place I mean although he tries to keep it up. An awful lot of the trees have died, and the sand has drifted in amongst them. Both the house and barn need paint and fences put down by the snow, but he will have that fixed by now I expect. He hasn't a large crop of wheat in this year as he is summer-fallowing most of 20 and sowing a lot of barley. It is certainly getting after the wild oats and no mistake. They have four colts and will have about 14 calves, so I think they will make it go alright. You would be surprised to see the grain in stooks there yet, as much as a quarter section in one field. Dermin (guess the name) has a field of barley just north of Belleview that was partly cut last July. The wild oats are grown up 1/3 as high as the stooks already. We were all inoculated for typhoid this week. I am just over it now. My arm is still a little sore. I had a nice little headache last night though it did [illegible] today.

We are going onto the ranges this week so will let you know how I make out next week. Martin Bland and Billy Mills from Pipestone are camped right near us. Martin used to work for Leslie you know. That little dude, Louis that worked for him, was killed this spring. I don't think there is much change for us as it is doubtful if we ever get farther than England. We still lack about 100 men, get about two recruits a week, and discharge one. Tell Mother I paid Uncle Andrew for the rifle. There will be that much off his mind anyway. It is hard to get pass here now, but if she could get as far as Creelman I think that [illegible] give me a pass alright. Grandma is counting a lot on seeing her so I think she should promise to come that far anyway. And perhaps could get Grandma to go to Uncle Arthur to stay by promising to meet her there. I think she should stay with Uncle Arthur for good.

Well so long. The address was alright but need of putting in [illegible].
[no signature]

Camp Hughes
July 12, 1916

Dear Marjorie,

We are having some heat at last and it is coming in great big chunks. There has been a great deal of rain up to the last few days, and now the heat. We are getting all kinds of drill, and then some. We had a night march last night nine to twelve. We didn't go more than about six miles, but had full kit on. That means overcoat in knapsack, two bullet pouches, water bottle and haversack. We have the same stuff on in the afternoons too. It is very hot drilling with so much on. We are to have another inspection tomorrow morning. It is supposed to be the final one but we hear all kinds of stories like that. I don't know if I can manage to get a pass just now or not as it is very

hard to get one. They will only allow 5 percent out at one time, and 10 percent week ends. I may try for a week end pass.

I wasn't on parade today as I was on wood splitting fatigue, it is quite an easy job. I was glad to be off this afternoon it was so hot. I went down to the 196th Western University Battalion on Saturday, and hunted up the Calgary bunch. I only found one boy I knew, and a man that was a school teacher at Munson for two years by the name of King. They told me that Rusty Lang has been wounded. I think you know him. Aubry does. Ray McKay is in the same Battalion but I haven't seen him yet. I also met a fellow that worked on the farm next to Uncle Andrews for two years. He is in the 152nd. Glad to hear everything is going well at home. I hope to be home before I go but have no idea when that will be. The British are doing things at last aren't they?

Well bye bye,

Raymond

Camp Hughes

July 19, 1916

Hello Kid,

You are making it go with the old lady away? Lots of work I suppose anyway. I got a letter from Mother today written from Uncle Mervyn's. I am going up there on the 22nd and come back Monday. That is all the time I could get. Leslie got a pass for a day and a half to Brandon Fair. I don't think he will be able to get to Belleview though. The weather has been very hot but is cooler today with quite a wind blowing sand in to everything. I feel more like a sand heap than anything tonight. We have been marching all day with our packs on. We had two hours for dinner though. Went about twelve or thirteen miles altogether. Took lots of time and went slow but had to carry rifles this morning, not in the afternoon though. We were inoculated for the third and last time last Friday. It didn't bother me in the least. I met Ray McKay the other night. He is in the 196th Batt. I also met some Calgary boys, I think I told you about them. I noticed in the paper that J. Dart from Rosedale was drowned. Is that the same man we know or not? Say, did you ever send those papers Mother said you were sending? It seems very hard to think of anything to say as all is very quiet here at present. There are still some Battalions coming into camp. There are 27 here now I think outside of Mounted, A.S.C, etc. I don't think we are going yet for a while. At any rate not until after the 1st of August. It is still doubtful if we are here for harvest there are so danged many rumors.

Well Bye Bye, R.C. B.

Witley Camp
Goldalming, Surrey, Eng.
Sept. 28, 1916

Dear Mother,

Well we are really in England and enjoying it. We had a splendid trip over. It took five days to reach Halifax, and a little more to come across the pond but very little. I am not allowed to say where we landed nor the name of the vessel. You will doubtless see in the papers what battalions came over with us. The sea was as level as a fish-pond all the way. Struck fog once or twice, and had to go slow for a few hours. I had better start back apiece and let you know the news from the first. I just got out of isolation a day and a half before we left. From Camp we went on the G.T.P. to Winnipeg, where we had a splendid reception. All kinds of eats put on the train as nearly all the fellows had friends. From there we took the Government lines all the way. We were in Winnipeg at six P.M. so didn't see anything for about 12 hours, and then it was rock, trees, and water until we got past North Bay. In fact Renfrew was the first place that resembled Ontario as you described it. It is certainly pretty there. I dropped a card off for Uncle Alf but am not sure he lives there, so he may not get it. The next place was Arnprior also very pretty. Up to this time we had had two small marches. We saw practically nothing of Ottawa as they took us through the railway yards. The next place of importance was Montreal. We had a small route march through the slums there too, and saw nothing of Montreal either. We also struck the first booze just shortly before we reached Montreal. Several of the boys got fairly jolly there. There is a bunch around the yards there just waiting to fleece the soldiers going through. We crossed the St. Lawrence there. It is certainly some bridge that we crossed there. We passed Quebec about 4 a.m. so saw nothing of it. We had a very poor reception through Quebec and were heartily glad when we reached N.B. We began getting into real scenery as we approached N.B. The first town of importance was Campbellton. We had a dandy reception there, made us feel good after passing through Quebec so long. Also a fine route march. I can't say much more of the train journey except that the scenery was splendid. We had to pull all blinds down before we reached Halifax about 3 p.m.[?]

I was very dizzy the first couple of days out, partly through a bad cold I caught on the train. After that I was fine. The sea was as level as a pond all the way across. I wish I could tell you more of the voyage but I am afraid the letter might be held up as there is talk of a censorship, but I don't know if there is or not. When I first saw the English train I certainly laughed as they looked like toys. They certainly move the troops different here. I don't think the people where we disembarked knew we were in harbor until the boat was empty. We didn't know where we were coming to until we were stopped at the station, but we had lots of liberties at the stations, which we certainly did not have in Canada. They can teach us something in changing [sic] engines and getting away again too. It took several hours to get here, but it was worth it, as the scenery was something superb all the way. We are in among the pines here. It is quite a large Camp here, but

not full yet. It is nearly all Canadians, and soon will be entirely. The 137 & 138 are here. I was down to see Orley Loudon. There are quite a few Calgary boys here, but I haven't seen any of the others yet. The Lockhart boys are here too. We came over on the same boat with Ted Cullen and ate in his apartment, and never saw him once so you can see there were quite a few on board. We had to wear life-belts all the time, except of course, when sleeping. It seems funny here to see the little villages. You can't tell very well when you are out of one and in the next. They are all smothered in vines, trees, flowers, etc. Some of them are a very paradise. It is a pleasure to go on a route march here as you are in and out of villages most of the time. My but this is a saddened England, nothing but girls and old men. Every one that is old or at least strong enough to carry a uniform has one on. There are quite a few wounded around here too. The women do all kinds of work here alright. We were all wakened up the first night on account of the Zeppelin [Zeppelin] raid, but it wasn't near here. If they are reported in England, all the soldiers have to get up, dress, and lay down on their beds. We are in huts 33 to a hut but not crowded bad and mattresses to sleep on. I am just over the cold and enjoying myself. We expect to get a 10 day pass in about a week or so. I don't know where I will go yet.

Must close, Raymond

Seaford, Sussex

Nov. 13, 1916

Dear Marjorie,

I got quite a surprise to get your letter on Friday. I wasn't expecting one, as I had just got the registered letter the day before. It certainly seems good to get a letter here, as there is not a great deal to do outside of parade hours. I got the copies of "Life" yesterday, they were certainly good, and a fine change after the English papers. Also the picture. Too bad so many of the faces are shadowed, but it is very good. I was certainly more than pleased to get it. I couldn't recognize the man on the left, nor the kids on the pony. I am not quite sure which is Marion but I think the one behind. That draft we were to go on has been reduced to 300 instead of 675, so Leslie and I were both left out on the new draft, so no telling when we will be going now. The draft will leave within a day or so now for sure as they have been issued with their webb equipment, entrenching tools, etc. The 196th came in Sunday morning about 6 o'clock. All of "B" coy are in the 100th. Roy McKay is in "C" coy here now, but they are not sure if they will stay with us or not but I think they will, as they are scattered around in four Battalions. There has been no rain here lately, but has been fog all day today, and nearly all day yesterday, but it is the first real fog we have had at all. We went up to the ranges to shoot this morning but was so foggy we couldn't see the targets, so we killed time there most of the morning, and by the time we got back it was noon. I expect we will be going up to shoot again as soon as the fog clears. I was down on the seashore

Sunday and Saturday afternoons. We picked up quite a few shells, shellfish, etc. There was a boat wrecked near here and quite a bit of stuff floated off of it. Some of the boys found a live bomb and several boxes of detonators. They found a few lobsters and clams. Also one or two oysters. I wasn't on the same part of the beach that the others were though so didn't get much stuff. I would have liked to have gone to France with the bunch that is going now, as most of the best fellows are going but some of the poorer ones too. They left a few of the best to drill the new men coming in though, so it won't be too bad here, and may be for the best for all we know. I don't think I will be in England for Xmas, but you can never tell when another draft will go or who will be on it. If you have any more snapshots or paper you might send them on as the boys all enjoy them especially "Life". I will try and answer some of your questions, as I have just been glancing over it. I see you want to know if I was seasick or not. Well I wasn't but was pretty dizzy for a while but not very long. We practically had the freedom of the boat, a good deal more so than if we had been travelling second or third in peacetimes. It was certainly a tremendous vessel. I am glad to see you have the well working good again, and that it works easy. I only hope it keeps on working. Too bad the old cows give you so much trouble. If you have to look after them very long I am afraid you will be calling them naughty names, as I know what a cow is. I might also mention "pigs" while I am on the subject of "naughty words." The boys are coming in now so will close. Drop a line when you are not chasing them some time and give the news.

Ray

I sent you a card but put MH on it so you may think it is for Mildred.

Seaford, Sussex
Nov. 20, 1916

Dear Sister,

I was certainly surprised to receive your letter, as I wasn't expecting one that time of the week, as I got it on Friday. I have been very lucky indeed for letters, as I received one from Toronto. Mother can explain why, one from Aubry and one from Miss J. Bradshaw. The parcel hasn't come to hand yet, but I hope to get it very soon. I took a run up to London over Sunday, but didn't have much of a time as there was a sleet falling when we left here, and it changed to rain soon after we got there, and has only just got finished now, so it made it bad to get around and not knowing any one in there. We went to the Coliseum Saturday night, Leslie, a friend and I. It was vaudeville, but very good indeed. We saw Gertrude Elliott, Mrs. Forbes – Robertson and Marie Ambrose, and several good [illegible]. A man on a huge pipe-organ was splendid, and

Marie Ambrose sang with him part of the time. On Sunday afternoon we went to the National Art Gallery with Sgt. Mellish. We saw some truly wonderful paintings, and some quite ancient. One or two Madonnas were exceptionally good, also some portraits, and some magnificent scenes of landscape, etc. I would have hunted Mrs. Millers' cousin up but the weather was so disagreeable you didn't want to go out at all. That was how we came to go to the Art Gallery as it was only a couple of blocks from where we stayed. We went to the Strand Corner House for Sunday dinner and supper, and we certainly did have a feed, wine and all. We knew it might be our last chance for a feed in London so tried to store up ahead. If I had eaten much more I think I would have been on the rocks as far as eating went, for the next week. They are certainly fooling us with this draft for fair and no mistake. They have taken all the 183rd men that were on, and consequently original 100th men are put on in their places. Leslie and I are both on again. We will not be going for at least a week or perhaps two or more. We hope to get 4 day Kings' Leave first but may not. Am out of paper so will quit. Too thin for both sides.

Ray

Seaford, Sussex

Dec. 14, 1916

Dear Leslie,

I suppose you have pretty well given up hope of hearing from me, but better late than never. The cheque came to hand safely. Will do my best to make good use of it. I am afraid that I will not be able to get a Xmas Pass as there is only 10% allowed away, so you can imagine what chance there is. I haven't sent the badges home yet. I am going to try and get a few more from the Battalions over here, and then send them, so it will be a while yet. I haven't heard from home since a week ago Sunday. I expect the quarantine at the 100th is delaying it. That cake was sure great, perhaps I didn't lay into it. It was the best I have tasted for a least a year and then some. I am out of writing paper so will have to quit for tonight. Have a good time at school as I guess you will have to work next summer.

[No signature]

North Camp
Seaford Sussex
Dec. 17, 1916

Dear Marjorie,

As usual, I got a whole bunch of letters again today, one from Mildred, Arthur and you. It is the first I have had from home since I came over here two weeks ago today. They seem to hold them up for a while and then send along a bunch of it. Those papers with your photo beat the letter which is very unusual. The weather here has changed a great deal lately as the ground is frozen a little, the air fairly clear, and most wonderful of all no rain. We have been having very little to do lately since the second drivers came in, they help a lot, and we haven't been hauling as much stuff either. I am almost certain that I will not get any Xmas pass now but I might possibly get one in January, but never know for certain. I have not been able to see Leslie since coming over here but am going to try to soon. I sent a little parcel home last mail. There are a couple of handkerchiefs in it. One is for Marion and the other for Dad. Also a handkerchief holder for yourself. One "chief is an A.S.C. but not Canadian, is the Imperial. Leslie's present is still in the [illegible]. It may be spring before it gets there, as it takes a while to pick up different badges. Mildred is coming on fine with the typewriter will soon be a steno fogger [sic]. We all went to church this morning. The C of E to a little church just close to the camp. It looks like an old place but was only built in 1850. They have quite a bit of Holly growing in the Church yard so will try and swipe a bit if I can. May add more later.

Monday night.

I was very lucky in the mail again today as I got your note, one from Gladys, and one from Mrs. Grimm, Montreal. Mother must think that it is I, and not Mildred that has the typewriter the number of people she is chasing up to write to me. I was surprised to hear that Aubry was leaving, as we had a rumor here that they had moved to Red Deer again.

It has been a most mushy day, as it snowed a soft wet blanket over everything and melted most of it as it fell. I would far sooner have the dry cold, because you can get warm at times, but when everything is wet even the air, you can't. I will have to quit for this time as I have to go down town and get some stamps, and the mail closes at 7 is now about 5:30. Also some eats as they are scarce here at supper.

[no signature]

Seaford, Sussex, England
Dec. 20, 1916

Dear Marjorie,

I haven't heard anything of Aubrey yet so don't know if they came to England or not. One of the boys got a letter from Calgary saying that they had left so they must be at the end of their journey by now. I don't suppose he knows. I am in Seaford, so if he writes to Witley it will take quite a while. I sent him a letter tonight c/o the Army P.O. London, so if they are out of Canada it is sure to find him. They may not come to England at all but go some place on Garrison Duty as they don't often bring troops here this time of year.

I am out of luck as far as Xmas pass goes as only 10 per cent got away and that included Officers. I hope to get one after New Years but don't know if I will make it or not. We were paid today, and will not be paid again until the middle of January. I guess you think I am spending a lot of money but I haven't been getting much here as they hold back twenty dollars on account of the assigned pay. I got a big pay today though about \$12.60 that is a month of wages. I have the amount paid up now, or almost so will get more in future. I only got \$2.50 last pay. We get a great dinner here, at least a good one, but the other meals are so poor you can't live on them. For supper we had one spoonful of salmon, bread and margarine, and tea, so we almost have to buy some extras. Breakfast is about the same. I went down town the other night and got two fried eggs, a bit of bacon, spuds, bread and butter and one cup of cocoa. It cost me 2 shillings and 2 d so you see ten shillings soon goes. Candy is very dear too on account of sugar being so scarce. In fact they are talking of prohibiting the sale of it entirely. I had a letter from Mrs. Grimm I think I told you. She is sending Leslie and I some Maple Sugar. I guess I'll have to eat this Xmas dinner in Camp but I hope to eat the next one at home. In fact it begins to look as if the Germans were getting tired of it at last, especially since the French have started doing things. Enough trash for now.

Monday Night

Just a note scribbled in a hurry as I only have a little while to catch the Canuck mail. It was a very rotten morning but was fine this afternoon, actually a little sunshine for a while. There was a great old sea running this afternoon though as there was quite a high wind. It was fine watching the scouting vessels bobbing up and down in the waves, Sometimes over half of the hull showing and at others all the decks awash. We are having it fine and easy lately, as there is not much stuff coming in to haul and with the second driver to help look after the team and harness is really a snap, but of course I have made out in most of my letters to the others that it was pretty stiff. Say I wish in future you would only send \$10 in place of twenty as I would like to get a little ahead for to see a little of Eastern Canada on my return, and I really don't need it, as of course if a

person has it you will always spend it on things you don't need. Tell Mother to be sure and use part of it if she wants anything at all as I would really like her to have a little to spend for herself.

[no signature].

Post Card
Seaforth, Sussex
Dec. 20, 1916

Dear Marion

I am sending you the list of work we have to do here. It is very hard, and takes quite a lot of time, but is better fun than chasing doggies.

Raymond