

Wolfe3
Letters of Billy Wolfe

Vermilion
4.9.10

Dear Mother:

As you will have guessed, I have quite a bit to tell you this week. I went into town on Monday to get plots showing the open land north of the river. The subagent could not give them to me as his district only extends to the river. I asked him to telephone to Edmonton and get them down by the night train for me. He consented to do it although of course it was not his business. We found then that there was a storm on between Vegreville and Edmonton, so he could not get through. So I went to the telegraph. Next morning I rode in as soon as the office was open and got the [plots. In the end it was about 1 o'clock on Tuesday before we got away. We had two bags of oats and a box of provisions and my rugs and two double blankets, two horse blankets, a buffalo robe, a waterproof shirt, tea pail, pot, basket and a little axe.

At about 5 o'clock we had tea at the house of a half breed; we had our own provisions but got hot water from them to save lighting a fire. We started out again at about 6 and at 7:15 we came to an Indian encampment and tried to get directions from them, but we did not make much hand of it as they only knew Cree and French. Just as it got dark we got lost altogether and for a long time we could not find a trail of any kind. It got cloudy so we could not see the sky, and as we kept coming to lakes and having to go round them, we nearly lost our sense of direction. I had Mr. Waldron's compass and that corrected us a bit. I proposed camping out, but as it was showery Mr. Sullivan wanted to find a house. About half past eight we came to one where a young American lived alone. He let us put the horses in his stable and gave them some hay and let us sleep on the floor, near his cooking stove. I got up at five and found everywhere covered with hoar frost. I gave the horses some oats and lit the fire. Then as the American or Mr. Sullivan were not up, I took the gun and went after ducks. I shot two but they fell in a lake so I took off my boots and stockings and rolled up my trousers and drawers and waded for them. The mud on the edge was frozen and the sun was not up so it was mighty cold. The water felt quite warm when I got to it. I got the ducks but stepped into a hole and got wet nearly up to my waist. When I got out I wrung the water out of the legs of my breeches and put on my boots and socks again. My legs did not dry till about 5 in the evening so that I had an uncomfortable day. We started on again at a little after seven. At the first lake we tried

to water the horses, but the wretched things suddenly broke through the bottom and began to sink, so we had to get out. Luckily the crust on the mud was strong enough to hold us up. So we got the horses untacked and they were able to founder out. By this time all four wheels had sunk just up to the axles. However, I hitched the strongest horse to the back axle with a middling long rope and by pulling a bit and (spoking) the wheels we got it out. Later on we came to a well where we got water for the horses. Mr. Sullivan wanted to go see George (Kamras) the Galatian who did some of the breaking here, so when we got to the Galatian settlement we tried to find his house. Most of the Galatians don't know any English, so we were soon in difficulties again. Luckily we came to a Mr. (Ros..?) place who told us that George was called Carmelite so we kept saying Carmelite, and tried Carmelite and gesticulating till we found him. About two miles before we found him, as we were crossing a boggy spot, the horses suddenly sank again and they fell. Then the tall mare was pulling across the other one's head and holding it under water. I jumped out like a shot and managed to get the top one a little sideways so as to get one nostril of the bottom one clear. They did not struggle so I was able to keep them that way while Mr. Sullivan opened the straps. The top mare then floundered away and got out of the bog herself and he went after her. While he was hunting her I got the other one out. We then had to hitch on to the back side again and haul the rig out. There must have been a special providence watching over us as we did not even break the pole. The only damage done was that the buckler on one martingale tore out. It was an awfully tight squeak for the smaller mare. I was full sure she would be drowned. I got out the axe then and chopped some willows and laid them on the softest spots, and we walked across and drove the rig. We were both a bit wet, but we were thankful to get out so well.

That evening we crossed the North Saskatchewan at Hopkins ferry and went on to Caskeyville. We put up near there at the house of a Mr. Joe (Mabily). That was the best farm house I have seen in this country. We started out early next morning and explored a bit on our own hook till about eleven, then I hired a Mr. Charles J. Markstead to ride one of his horses and show us land. \$2.50 from then till 9 p.m. Of course we had maps, but I thought it was better to get someone who knew the trails to show us round as it would save getting caught in bogs again. It was well worth the money too, as he saved us a lot of time and also showed us what he thought were the best quarters. Of all we saw there were only 4 quarters which would be at all likely to suit us. The first decent one we saw was S.E. 3-57-6. The soil of this is good, the surface is a bit rolling like the big stone field. There is a fair lot of wild hay on it. There is no water; that is, there

are two small lakes which would freeze right to the bottom in the winter, so that to water cattle we should dig a well. I could plow about 40 acres of it with a brush breaker right as it stands. The rest should be cleared with an axe.

The next was N.E. 34-56-6. This contains almost the whole of a lake of about 60 acres extent. This did not freeze to the bottom last winter. There is lots of hay on this quarter so that it would be fine for stock. There is only a little land suitable for grain growing.

Then there was S.W. 35-56-6. There is about 100 acres of this quite clear of bush and almost flat. The soil is about 4 inches of black loam, then a subsoil of a mixture of fine gravel and sand. There is almost no hay on this and no water at all. One corner of this touches one corner of the last vertical quarter. So that if we get the two, we would have a good combination but either alone would hardly do.

The last nice one I saw was S.E. 34-56-6. On this there is one piece nearly square of from 25 to 30 acres quite clear of bush. The soil of this patch is fair but a bit light at the South East corner. The subsoil is clay in the north and gravel in the South. There is a small slew or lake near the NW corner round which some hay grows. The west side is covered with poplars, under which there is good soil.

If I was only looking out for a quarter for myself alone, I would prefer this of all I have seen. All these quarters are situated relatively to one another as shown in this sketch. The narrow parallel lines show the space reserved for roads. *[There is a sketch here of the 4 quarters]*

The North Saskatchewan river runs about a mile south of the south line shown in my diagram. The main advantages of these quarters, besides what I have mentioned, are that they are on the old Edmonton to Battleford trail which is of course a good one, the best in that country. The Government telegraph line runs near and the nearest telegraph office is at Moose 6 or 8 miles away. Wells dug near give good water, a bit hard but free from alkali. If the railway runs that way as I think it will, there will be probably stations at St. Paul about 12 miles to the North West and at Moose about 8 miles South East.

The drawbacks are that the soil is only moderately deep and is a little apt to be parched up in a dry year owing to the character of the subsoil. And that at present they are about 50 miles by a good trail from Vermilion, the nearest railway station.

I am enclosing a township map so that you can see pretty well where they lie. I put ink crosses on the two townships I mentioned. You can guess pretty well what part of the township the sections lie in from the numbers.

I don't know quite what I ought to do, but in any case I shall have to wait till I get the proxy form back before I can file for either of us. Meantime, I guess I will go up to Edmonton and see if I can see some more land. Of course this will cost a bit, but still it may be worth it. And it will be better to look before you leap. I wish you or Uncle Harry or Tom were here to talk to about this as I don't like acting all alone.

Besides, I may not see any I like better, and yet when I come back these may be taken by some one else. Of course I saw lots more land, but as most of it was unsuited to us, I don't see the good of telling you about it.

There are two other advantages of the land up there that I forgot to mention. One is that it is near the finest building logs I ever saw, Tamarack and Spruce, and that there is a post office where there is a weekly mail within about 5 miles. Of course you had better write to Vermilion till I give you a new address.

On Thursday night we slept on the kitchen floor at Mr. Markstead's and on Friday morning I got Mr. Sullivan to go back to these quarters again, and I hunted up the survey posts or some of them, and dug holes every here and there to see what sort the soil was. We started from there at about 10 o'clock on Friday. We got to Hopkins ferry at noon where we got dinner and some hay for the horses. On Friday night we stopped at the house of a half breed named (Isere Lobaquin). They only talk a mixture of French and Cree so that we could not talk much. He had one son 14 years old who talked English well and his old father could talk good French.

After supper Mr. Sullivan wanted to know what way the house faced, and as the young chap had gone to shoot some ducks, we had only the old chap to ask. Mr. Sullivan tried him with north and south but he only said ne comprend. I could not think of the word for rise and didn't like to chance arrive, so I said le soleil se couche, and pointed to what I thought was west, and he said bein le soleil se couche so then to make sure, I said nord and pointed north and he nodded again. It really would be nice to talk to these French half breeds if I only knew more French. If I knew more French words and didn't have to think of them,

I could get on with them without knowing Cree.

There is some good land in the half breed settlement, but as I guess you are like me and would prefer white neighbours, I didn't do any special looking round there.

The same is true of the Galatian settlement. Still, both the breeds and Galatians are nice people. We got back here at about half past twelve yesterday, all right after all our adventures but feeling a bit tired and glad to get back.

Most of the crops round here had to be out before they were quite ripe owing to the early frosts. The crops up north are as a whole nearly a week later than those here, but on the other hand they did not get the early frost that we got.

Their first frost was on the night of August 31st, about a fortnight later than the frost here. Tom seems to be doing well with his calves. I am very glad (Pindy) is going to Killarney as she will have that to look back on all her life.

This letter will probably not be much good as I am naturally a bit upset about this homesteading business. I don't know quite what virtues I expected to see in the land, but somehow it looks a pretty big job to tackle land that has never been touched before. Mr. Markstead says that you get to like it a bit better when you have worked on it a bit and I expect that is so.

By the way, Mrs. Markstead, who is the only Methodist in the immediate vicinity, told me to tell you she hoped to have you for a neighbour. Most of the others are Presbyterians.

Although I got your letter (saying Mr. James S(?) had sent on my gun) last Tuesday and today is Sunday, yet I have not got an invoice from him yet. I bet he forgot to send it. I guess if he did I will have a job to get it from the Customs officials.

I shot 9 grouse on the way back, so we had a great Sunday dinner today. They taste just like rabbits, and not much like birds.

I don't think I shall get a spirit stove. I intend to get a stove pretty much like the little range at home, except that it must have a wood crate, not a coal one.

I can't have a cow this winter as I won't be able to have enough hay. Hay is very dear, about 1 pound a ton and it will cost quite a bit to feed two oxen; besides if I go near the river I could easily buy milk as the next door neighbour Mr.

Tom Arbow(sic), a Norwegian, keeps about 30 cattle.

P.S. Don't be put out if I don't write for a fortnight as I may go on a long trip from Edmonton. I don't expect to, but one never knows.

P.P.S. Mr. Sullivan's opinion of the land was curiously enough about the same as mine. The boys think me hard to please.

*Letter written on letterhead from The Hotel Cecil, Corner Fourth and Jasper,
Edmonton, Alberta*

Sept. 7th, 1910

9 p.m.

Dear Mother

As I hinted in one of yesterday's letters, probably Sally's, I went down to Tofield today to see the (Muntins). After quite a hunt round the town I found that they had gone to Innisfail last June or July, so my trip was all in vain. I got to Tofield at about 11:15 and as it was a damp cold day, I turned into the Queen Hotel for dinner at 12. It cleared up then, so I started out for a good walk round after dinner. There is only one train a day each way, so that I could not leave till half past six. I walked a good bit east and south and came quite close to a big lake. I think it was Beaver Lake. This is a big one 12 miles by 6, so you can easily find it on the map if you wish to.

I got back to the town at about 5 and went to the hotel again and asked if I could get supper before train time. The owner said yes that supper would be ready at a quarter to six, so I waited. While waiting I overheard two men talking about the probable route of a railway in the country North of the Saskatchewan river.

So I joined in and told them that I was up there last week and what the people up there said about the chances of the railway. This served instead of an introduction, so not to lose any chance of getting news, I asked if they knew the country west of Edmonton. It turned out that one of them had done quite a lot of railroad work out there, but he seemed a silent sort of man and didn't talk. However, the other man had spent from March to July in the Peace River

country and he told me quite a lot about it. He had been to both the Grand Prairie and Spirit River Prairie.

I hope you won't think I am getting too forward with strangers, but you see I won't get information if I don't ask for it.

Some time ago Mr. Sullivan suggested to me to buy a quarter section of unimproved land from the Canadian Pacific Railway by paying about 1/5 of the price down, the balance in installments. The idea being that we could reserve our homesteading rights for the time being, and that when the North West country is surveyed we might prefer it. You see, if you own homestead you can't do it again, whereas we could probably sell the quarter bought from the railway company at any time and not lose on it. The advantage of this is that we could get the land near a small town and station, and in a fairly settled district, not to mention near a church, etc., so that it would not be so hard on you all as pioneering in the outskirts. The principal disadvantage on you all is that your homesteading rights will run out as soon as Tom comes of age.

I did not think much of this plan (as for one thing I didn't like the alkali near Vermilion) until when I was coming back here tonight, it suddenly came into my head when I was in the train that I had not seen any signs of alkali near Tofield, and also that I had walked over some good looking railway lands. The country there is fairly flat, but there are a good many fair sized clumps of poplars about 20 ft. high, scattered about to break the monotony. It would be necessary to bring either boards or brick to build a house up, as there are no building logs to be had. Altogether I rather like the notion, as it would be well to get some experience of the sort of things we would want before going too far away, then if Fan was feeling too much out in the cold, she could run up to Edmonton and have a go on the skating rink once or twice in the year. I went there last night for about an hour and a half; it wasn't half bad, but as I didn't know a soul I felt lonelier than ever.

I think that before finally homesteading I will drop in to the office of railway lands here and enquire what lands are for sale, the price, terms of payment, etc.

Mr. Sullivan said the other day that if you came out and found that I had taken a homestead near the river, that when you found it was about 50 miles from the present railway, you would go straight home again. I don't suppose you would, but there is something to be said on that side of the question. I am very sorry

now that this idea did not occur to me when I was at Tofield, as in that case I would have looked over the land a bit more carefully. However, if necessary I can go down again as the fare is only \$2.10 or about 8/9 return.

I will know better what to do when I get back from this trip west.

I have written this so that you may see some of the different possibilities that are turning up, and so that you won't be too much astonished if I don't enter for a homestead at present. It's really very hard indeed to know what to do.

(The Hotel Cecil letterhead)

Saturday
Sept. 10th/10

Dear Mother:

I got a letter from cousin Eva today partly in reply to one I wrote on Wednesday last, and partly inviting me down to Innisfail to see them.

If I homestead anywhere this year, I shan't be able to go as there is little enough time left now. So I wrote and thanked her, and told her that.

On Thursday I noticed a youngish man and his wife, a baby and a youngster of about 3 or 4, and the wife's father come in to the hotel. Last night the land guide was round here talking to me and he introduced me to them, telling me that the young man is to be one of the party. His name is Arnott and I think the father-in-law's name is Wilde, but I'm not sure as I didn't catch it clearly.

I have not spoken to the Mrs., but I talked quite a bit to both the men this morning and they seem decent sorts. They have brought all their belongings up to Edmonton and intend either to homestead or buy land, and go to live on it at once. I asked if they did not think it a bit late in the year, but they don't seem to think so. They were good enough to say that it would be nice if I settled near them, so you see I must have a very taking way. They seem nice mannered people so that other things being equal, I would not object to being next them, but I guess that it isn't likely to happen all the same.

You may write to Vermilion as hard as you like still as the Sullivans are collecting

and sending on my letters, which is really very nice of them. Did I tell you that Mr. Sullivan invited me to go north to Cold Lake with the 15 wagons of flour which were to start on Tuesday last. It is about 100 miles north of Vermilion and would take at least 4 days up with the loads, and 2 back empty, probably longer when there were so many teams on the way as something would be sure to delay some of them. It would have been an interesting trip, but I thought it wiser to go west instead.

I got a letter from Sally a couple of days ago in which she says you are all quite keen on coming out here. I was awfully glad to hear that as I was a little afraid you might be doing it principally to please me. I think we will have a great time next summer laying out the farm and planning a house and outbuildings and putting them up. I have been planning various parts of the house and altering and improving the ideas for the past few weeks. I guess you and Tom are doing pretty much the same in your spare moments.

You ought to see the lovely little pavilion, the boys call it, though it is really a closet I built for the Sullivans. It really is rather neat and it was about all done on wet days and in odd moments.

If you and Tom are planning a house, you will want to be careful not to make the slope of the roof less than about 40 degrees to the horizontal, as if you do, you will have to scrape off the snow after each snowstorm or else the weight will be too much for your roof. The Sullivans' hen house roof was smashed down last winter. I had a great time getting it up again with a jack and props this summer.

When you are going out you might as well bring the following, among other things. A couple of shovels (we can get or make handles here, but the Canadian shovel is a bad shape), 2 spades and the step (business?) for them; we can make handles for them too, but what they call a spade here isn't a spade at all, the shears we use for cutting tin, and the cartridge loading machine. Cartridges cost -/1-1/2 each here even when bought by the hundred, so that lots of people load their own.

If I was you I would start a list of the things you intend to bring with you, and add to it as you think of them. If you don't do something like that, you are sure to forget lots of things.

I went to the Hudson Bay Co. the other day and bought a waterproof sheet to spread on the ground under me on this trip. It is a pretty good one but rather dear,

\$2.50. I also priced their blankets. The large best quality double ones are \$9.00, and their tents. They want \$20.00 for a 10 ft. By 12 ft. tent made of 12 oz. stuff. They have a nice folding camp bed for \$4.50 which when I was looking at, I got my finger caught in the joint and it burst the tip of it in grand style. Luckily it only caught the very tip of my finger so it isn't very bad.

On the whole I think I like the country round here better than that near Vermilion. For one thing they don't seem to have got the early frosts, and the woods are prettier as spruces are mixed with the poplars. Unfortunately it seems to be damper too. However, I'll know this better after next week's trip is over. On the other hand, if I settled down north of Vermilion, the Sullivans will give me a hand to get started.

I hunted up a Methodist Church today to go to to-morrow.

Sept. 11th/10

I sent you an Evening Journal as I thought you might be interested in the account of J. Cornwalls and the press correspondents trip in the Peace River. There is really not much of special interest in it except the account of what bad rifle shots they were. You will also notice from the paper that Edmonton was "tickled to death" as our American cousins would say, by the visit of the Bristol business men.

I notice also from Friday's papers that the Government at Ottawa has refused to consent to the route of the western branch of the Canadian Northern Railway towards the Yellowhead Pass. I wonder what the C.N.R. will do now. The papers think they will go south, but our land guide thinks they will go north via the (pr....?) river pass.

I went to preaching this morning. There was a fine crowd there, very different to the Vermilion service. They are building a new church as the old one is too small. They have got the site of the first Protestant church ever built in Edmonton. Curiously enough, that was only built in 1871, that shows you how young this country is.

I think Edmonton will be a very important city in the future. They call it the

gateway of the west. It seems to me that it will rival Port Arthur or Fort William, or even Winnipeg in 5 or 6 years. It is intersected by the three big transcontinental railways; the Canadian Pacific, the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern, and one of the USA railroads is also planning a branch here to it.

11.9.10

I did not get either the gun or invoice for it from W.J.S. Wolfe yet. Tell him to wait till I see him next, etc.

I did not get a letter from any of you except Sally since last Tuesday week and as today is Sunday, that is almost a fortnight so I suppose it must have got delayed somewhere on the way out. If there was anything wrong with you I guess Sally would have heard it. By the way, that reminds me that Sally seems to think Fan isn't as well as she ought to be. I suppose it isn't lonesome for me she is.

I wonder will Pindy be satisfied to ride astride as all the ladies do here. If she won't, if I were her I would buy a really good side saddle at once and try and ride Uncle Harry's horses now and again if she can get them, so as to get used to riding and so as to make sure the saddle suits her and to get it soiled a little for the customs.

Don't let her get a bad saddle whatever you do, as out here one's life may hang on the goodness of one's saddle when out in the winter time. Besides, she will use it nearly every day so it will have to stand wear and tear.

I wonder how we will all get on our snowshoes. Of course it isn't necessary to be able to use them, but you can often take short cuts with them, whereas without them you can't leave the trails without sinking.

In the winter they tell me that you can't wear leather boots here as if you do, your feet get frostbitten. They all wear either big compressed felt boots or moccasins pronounced mock ass inns with the accent on mock. When in a stable or other damp spot they pull on galoshes or rubbers, as they call them, over the moccasins.

I guess you are tired of hearing that I won't write again for 9 or 10 days, but the guide told me that we won't be back for that length of time.

Tell Tom to get the .22 repaired and to bring it with him in the spring.

Sept. 22nd, 1910

Dear Mother:

I have only just got back here from the western trip. I had a pretty hard time too, but curiously enough I have got fat on it. You see we were never quite sure when we might get the next meal, so put in big feeds when we had the chance. I guess I may as well tell you the story as it happened. It was a chapter of accidents right through and very disappointing in its result, as I did not see any land I liked nearly as well as the land I told you of before, near the North Saskatchewan river.

Four of us and Mr. Sutton (whose card I enclose) the land guide, started out from Edmonton on Monday, Sept. 12th in a three seated democrat drawn by two horses.

We went through St. Albert and got to a little place called Ray the first night.

We put up at a little hotel there. Mr. Arnott and I had a tiny room and one bed between us. Fred and Norman had a similar room and the guide had a room to himself. There was no wash stand in any room and no light. In the morning we had to take turns with the other guests and wash as best we could in a basin in the hall.

Just after starting out next morning the bush came out of one of the back wheels so we packed it up a bit and drove it in again. By noon we were in the middle of the Alexander Indian Reserve. We stopped and lit a fire and boiled some tea, etc. while the horses grazed. One of the horses rolled and broke his harness.

I fixed that up with a bit of rope so that it held till night. That night we got to the house of a Mr. Rickson, a brother in law of the guide. Just before getting there we broke a front spring, and the bush came out of the back wheel again. That night Mr. Arnott and I again slept together, but as the bed clothes looked dirty, we heaped them on the floor and used my rugs. During the night we had a lively time with bugs. One beastly thing bit me over the right eye and it was all swelled and nearly shut all next day. I had a few more bites on the neck and shoulders, but the eye was the most conspicuous. Mr. Arnott did not swell at all, nor did any of the others.

22.9.10

In the morning we tied up the broken spring with wire and took off the back wheel and wound a piece of cloth round the bush and drove it in again, then wedged it with 4 wooden wedges. It never came out again as long as we stayed with the guide.

The guide mended the harness by bandaging it with zinc. It was 9:20 on Wednesday before we got started and I was a bit ill from the beastly bug bites. (If I ever go knocking around again I will carry some Keatings powder). You may be sure we took the rugs and our clothes out in the open and examined them well, after which we shook them unmercifully.

At about 10 o'clock one horse went very lame. Mr. Sutton tried several farms to get a horse to replace him and finally succeeded. That night we stopped at the home of a Mr. McLeod. Everything was nice and clean, but the swelling in my face shifted across to the other eye and was as bad as ever. In fact it stayed swelled all day Thursday. On Thursday night we camped in a wooded country near a lake. The guide had a small tent and I cut down a spruce tree and cracked off the light branches, and Mr. Arnott made a good bed of them while the other two boiled the kettle. We then put up the tent. We slept pretty well; the pine branches made a grand bed when covered with my waterproof sheet. On Friday my eyes were both alright, which was a great relief. You can scarcely imagine how much better I felt. I hope never to meet a bug again. Just after dinner on Friday one of the front wheels smashed up altogether and the axle came down suddenly on the ground. Luckily Norman, of the fellows, was a wheelwright so he and Mr. Sutton took off the wheel and went back with it to the last house we had passed.

Norman took off the band and drove all the spokes one by one again. They then reddened the tyre and put it on again, after which they cut sticks and laced them across the spokes with wire. It carried three, while two walked most of the rest of Friday. Just at dark we got to a place called Peavine. The house we came to belonged to a Mr. George K. Hay, an opposition guide to Mr. Sutton. Mr. Hay was in Edmonton but Mrs. Hay, a very nice English lady, allowed us to sleep on the floor so we did very well. She also spent an hour playing the piano for us.

She played all the old Scotch tunes. As Mr. Hay is Scotch, she knew them. She also played Hiawatha, The Merry Widow, Rainbow, Red Wing, etc. So we had a great time.

On Saturday Mr. Sutton wouldn't work, as he says that is the proper Sabbath. He isn't a Jew, but he has some funny religion of his own. He lives up to his belief such as it is, so I suppose it is hardly right to say much about it, but

it doesn't seem to me to be purely Christian either. For instance, he thinks a man ought to have two or three wives at once. Anyway, on Saturday morning I was so tired of his breakdowns and his preaching and finally the thought of wasting Saturday, that I said I would leave altogether and walk south to the Grand Trunk Line about 32 miles away. Mr. Arnott said he would do the same. The other two were town men and a bit scared of getting lost and so elected to stay with the guide.

Arnott and I started out at 8:20 on Saturday and walked west first, as we wanted to see the land we had come out to see. I had my rugs, overcoat, coat, drawers, vest, souwester, soap, towel, razor, etc., tooth brush and spare pair of socks rolled up in my waterproof sheet, so I cut a stick and carried them on my shoulder. Arnott had a similar bundle in a soldier's backpack, and a 30.40 Winchester rifle.

About 10:30 an old chap overtook us with a wagon. We asked him if he was going by Green Court and when he said he was, we asked him to take our bundles. So we got on better then. We had dinner at 11 o'clock at Meyerthorpe post office.

We got to Green Court at 3:30. We found Mr. Bayly, the post master and Dominion land subagent, and asked him if we could put up there. He allowed us to sleep on some hay on the floor of a small blacksmiths shop he had. On Sunday we walked away west and looked at lots of land, but it is all either already taken, or no good, or good soil but covered with trees or bushes. We finally saw a hill in the distance and made for it hoping to see some open country from the top, but it was no good. So we started back again and walked till an hour after dark in order to make Bayly's place again. We slept on the hay again and next morning we added two small tins of corned beef, a tin of sweetened condensed milk, some coffee, a pound of raisins, a pound of sultanas and a pound of dried pears to our load; also an empty golden syrup tin to boil water in. Then we started south.

On Monday night we got to a hill between two big bogs, one of which we had crossed. It was as lonely a country as ever I saw, even in Kerry. We lit a fire and spread my sheet and rolled up in rugs and slept with our feet to the fire, and the loaded Winchester beside us, as there are lots of bears (brown, black and cinnamon so they say) in that country. We got up two or three times to keep up the fire, but we were not disturbed except by the distant howling of about two prairie wolves.

We weren't seriously afraid of anything as of course bears or wolves won't go near you if left alone, but I could not help thinking of the nice fix I would be in if a big timber wolf grabbed me by the throat. On Tuesday morning we started off again as soon as we had light enough and walked hard till half past eight when it was very hot, so we stopped and made coffee with bog water, and we ate

the meat and all the sultanas. We also ate the nicest looking of the cooking pears and I stewed the rest of the tin and we ate them that way. We started again at half past twelve and walked till half past two when Mr. Arnott shot two partridges with the Winchester. They were expensive birds, costing about 4 or 5 shots each.

Just then we came to a little river of very cold water in which we had a swim. After that while I skinned and cleaned the birds, Arnott lit a fire. Unfortunately it was windy and the fire started to spread. I had to go and help him to put it out. I tried boiling water in the golden syrup tin, but that didn't do. In the end I had to use one of the rugs to get it out. It scorched the rug a bit but did not seriously injure it. Anyway it was better than starting a prairie fire which might have burned us up.

We decided to wait till we got to a better place before cooking the partridges, so we walked on. Later on we came to a big spruce wood right in the middle of which we found a wagon trail going east and west. We did not know which way to follow the trail, but as we soon found a section peg which told us that we had come a mile east as well as 17 miles south from Green Court, we decided to chance it and go west. After walking about half a mile we saw a foot trail leading south, so I said we might as well light a fire and cook our birds and meantime someone might come along. So we did. We cut the birds in slices and toasted them on long forks cut from green wood. We had no salt, but we ate them and the raisins for want of anything better.

Just as we were done and the fire almost out, a man driving a cow came along. We asked him the way and if he could tell us of any house we could stop at. He said he kept stoppers, so we followed him. We got another meal from him and his wife and they made us up a good bed on the floor. It was a good job too, as next morning was wet. However, as Jenkins, the nearest station, was only eight miles away we started out. We got there at 11 o'clock. There is only one house there, a store kept by Swanson and Anderson, two Swedes. We asked if we might put up there till the next train and they said yes. So we slept there and came in on a construction train this morning. At least it started at 11, but did not get to Edmonton till 6:10 p.m. Altogether this trip cost me about \$70 and we are not anything the better off, except for the experience of life in the wilds.

I expect you will all think that I am a mighty poor walker to take 2-1/2 days to do about 30 miles, but I assure you we walked hard. It is no joke to carry a 30 lb. pack across bogs where you sink every step up to your ankles or through woods where you have to stop and climb over fallen trees. By walking pretty hard and no stops, we were able to make just two miles an hour, and two hours at a

stretch was as much as we could well stand. Besides, we knew that there was no train between Tuesday morning and Thursday morning, and as we dare not risk the bog at night, we could not catch Tuesday's train, so we did not see the good of killing ourselves.

I was a bit disappointed at not finding your proxy form waiting for me when I got here. If it turns up in the morning I shall file on S.E. 34-56-6 for myself and N.E. 34-56-6 for you, if I will be allowed (it may be reserved) or S.W. 35-56-6.

These are the lands I went to see near the river north of Vermilion. I can't do any better as the western country is far worse. I only hope these are still open and that no one else has taken them.

It is very late so I will wait till to-morrow to answer yours and Kitty's.

23.9.10

This morning as your proxy form had not yet arrived, I thought it better to go to the Dominion Land office and file on a homestead for myself. You see there are a whole lot of people looking round for land and I was afraid that all the spots I liked might be taken. Mr. Arnott has filed on S.W. 35-56-6 and his father-in-law has taken S.E. 3-57-6. Neither of them has seen the land, but they asked me about it and if they don't like it, they can abandon it again.

On the enclosed card I have marked my quarter with a small o, Mr. Arnott's with a +, Mr. Drew's with a . and the one I hope to get for you with a z so you can see the relative positions.

I hope I and all of you will like it. At any rate, I did my very best. I had a very nice letter from Harry and Eve Muntin(?) last night. They think like Uncle Harry, that it would pay better to take improved land. We will know better later and if so, Tom can try an improved farm.

I shall go down to Vermilion to-morrow night again. If your form doesn't arrive by then, I shall

have to come up here again. I am glad Kitty enjoyed her Killarney trip so well.

It was a pity she had not better weather.

It is a great pity Tom had such bad weather for his harvest. Still he is not alone in that, as here in Edmonton it was a bit wet too. I guess there will be a lot of bother in thrashing it, not to mention the waste. It is too bad to have to work hard all the time at home and have so little for it. I wonder if we will be able to do much better here. At any rate, there should be very little fun of us going to the wall here as Tom or I could easily get work outside for 5 or 6 months of the year so that we could keep above water anyway. I am glad Dr. G. Munro liked the idea for Fan.

I guess you will be pleased by my having the Arnotts for neighbours. They are, of course, not perfect but they are not half bad.

One objection to the west country south of Green Court is that there is a large nigger settlement there. Also, there is a certain amount of Typhoid from there. I think on the whole that the place I picked is the best for us at present.

24.9.10

Dear Mother:

I got your proxy form this morning. As I was passing the office coming out of the breakfast room, the clerk called me and handed me your letter. I had run right out of money so wasn't able to file for you till I could get some up from Vermilion. I got the bank to send down my signature last night by the train, and got them to reply by telegraph this morning, so that I had plenty of money by half past eleven. The moment I got it I went down to the Land office as fast as ever I could walk and luckily the quarter I wanted for you was still open so I filed on it for you.

I suppose you know the conditions. You will have to go to see the Land Agent here in Edmonton by about the 20th or 21st of March next and to be in actual occupation of your land on March 24th, 1911. If you fail to do this, your entry will be cancelled.

If Kitty will be 18 on Feb. 26 next, you cannot enter for a different homestead after that date so they told me.

I asked them if it wouldn't be possible to get a slight extension of time for you as the weather will be a bit cold for travelling then, but I couldn't get any more time for you.

Do you think you will be able to come out by then, the boat and train will be comfortable enough as they are steam heated even in the Colonist Class in this country. The unpleasant part will be the drive from Vermilion. I have worked pretty hard today hunting up stuff that I can't get at Vermilion. I bought a 10x12 tent, a pair of Hudson Bay 4 point blankets, flannelette sheets, etc.

I forgot to put in the card in the last letter, so here it is. I am awfully glad you and I are side by side without even a road allowance between, and Kitty will have her first lake too.

I forgot to tell you that I went to the land office today to get a permit to cut logs for building purposes. They asked me when I intended to cut them, and as I could not tell them, I had to do without a permit till I can find out where I can get good logs. I am afraid this will mean a hunt for a J.P. or some official as I must seek an affidavit before I can get the permit. I was a fool not to hunt up some good timber before, but I did not know all the rules. You see, it's easy to get J.P.s here, but it will probably be difficult to find them in the country.

My address will be: W.F. Wolfe
 Elk Point
 via Vermilion, Alta.

I had to interview the head postmaster and several clerks here in Edmonton to make sure of that today. You had better to be sure to (list) it on all letters from this out.

Don't put any Post Restante or anything on the letter, just

Elk Point
 via Vermilion, Alberta.

