

Letters written from Canada on one sheet of paper by J. E. and Mary Quaife, November 15, 1832.

Letter of Mr. James Quaife

Dear Friends,

I am sorry I have so long neglected writing to you myself, but when we landed at Quebec, Mr. Scott was writing to his friends and he put in a few lines for me, and a request that his friends would favor you with a reading of the letter which would give you more information than I could, as I kept no account of what happened on our passage, but I would say now, that we had on the whole a good passage to what many had. Our Captain was very kind to us, and allowed us many indulgences we should not have had if we had sailed from London. We had a fire between decks, and a light if we wanted, and always sufficient water. We were seven weeks from the time we went on board, to the time we left, and till then we had not known the unpleasantness of traveling.

We went from the ship to the steamboat, and there we were crowded like sheep in a market, there being 14 or 1500 persons on board. We left Quebec on Tuesday and landed at Montreal on Thursday morning, and took lodgings but not very comfortable. We had to pay even for boiling water. We waited till Saturday and then took passage in a Durrum-boat for Kingston, which they told us we should reach in 5 or 6 days, and there I meant to have applied to the Emigrants Society to send me up further, but this mode of travelling is the worst I ever saw, for there were 50 or 60 of us in a small boat, not larger than a small barge, without shelter or accommodations for cooking, or for making tea, and the men a drinking set, not caring whether they got on their way or not; that in 8 days we had not got halfway, and no better prospects of getting the rest of our journey quicker. This delay in time caused us to spend our money for provisions beyond what we had calculated, and being exposed to all kinds of weathers and night air, Mary began to be very poorly, so we took our things from the boat at Milroche township, Cornwall, Upper Canada. Since then Mary has had bowel complaint very violent at times, but is now getting over it. When we first stopped we thought of moving on further if we could increase our money.

The first month I did but little work, as planting was just done, and there was not much doing till hoeing and haying (we had changed our last sovereign) then I could get plenty of work: the person who took us in is a Yorkshireman. He had been here two years, he pretended to befriend us but it was his own ends he was seeking. He charged us 3/- a week for our lodgings, which kept us from getting anything forward, and there was no place to be got elsewhere. We remained there 8 weeks, and finding we could go no further this year we looked about for a place to winter and hired a little log house about 1/2 miles from Milroche, and have settled for the present. Our house has but one room and stands close to the bushes. We have our firing for fetching and I give two days work a month for rent. For it the farmer finds me board, he is a Scotchman, and has been out about 12 years and is willing to help me as far as he can. He like me came out with nothing. Now he has got 200 acres of land, good barn and house stable, shed for cattle, etc., on it. His land is not all paid for so that he is obliged to pay with the produce of his cleared land, which prevents him from having work done which would be to his advantage had he the grain to pay for labor. I have not wanted work since I have been with him. The first month I was with him he got three new chairs, and a new axe which

cost 5 1/2 dollars and I owed him two days work only to be clear. Since then I have been working for another Scotchman and he seems well satisfied and willing to do me a kindness.

The one I live under has promised to get me a cow and I offset it in labour and a piece of land to plant in shares, if I can raise the seed, but we have the first winter to get through which is always the worst time for newcomers, as winters here are long and a person ought to have a stock of flour and meat beforehand. But if we have not earned it I think they will not let us want.

I shall get potatoes to carry us through by digging on shares. I have every tenth bushel for digging, and the farmer boards me. The crops of apples is thin this year - 2/- a bushel. Last year they might be had for the picking up. There is a miss in Indian corn on account of the lateness of the spring. Meat is scarce though it is not dear, beef and mutton 3d and salt pork 6d a pound wheat is 5/- a bushel, but that we can not always get, for we get but little cash for labour. The farmers have none, at least not to spare and we take such as we have, sometimes we stop weeks for pay.

Perhaps you will say that I have not found things as I expected, true, I have not nor have I stopped where I intended. Had I gone 200 or 300 miles further it would have been better, more plentiful and shorter winters, but I believe it was the unseen hand of Providence that placed us here for our good, for at the time we stopped here the sickness raged very much at Prescott and Little York, while in this neighborhood we have had but few cases. Had we gone on we must have been quarantined until our clothing and our goods had been washed and aired, and we must have been more uncomfortably situated and more exposed to the cholera than we have been here, and there must have been great want of shelter in a new country, where so many are flocking. I do not think of moving from here till I know where I am going, and very likely we may stop here altogether.

I wrote to Abraham Quaipe in the United States but have had no answer. Whether he received it or not I cannot tell.

We have cause to be thankful before God that he has shewn us favour in the midst of strangers. Our neighbours do not look above us, but wish us well, our landlord's wife treats Mary as a Sister and the children as her own. Another circumstance I would not forget, I should be ungrateful if I did. Soon after we stopped at Milroche a gentleman by the name of Murton - I think from Lenham was travelling up the country with his family, and had met with much unkind treatment. He spoke to Mary as she was washing beside the door. She told him we had lately come out, our name and where we came from how we were circumstanced. He shed tears and said my Father's family had worked for his family 50 or 60 years ago. He gave her a dollar and took me down to the waterside and gave me two large pieces of pork and a quantity of biscuits, and would have taken us with him but he had so much trouble to get shelter for his own family, and the men had left the boat (with his goods and family) and he is obliged to be at the expense of getting more (I hear he is settled near the Ohio). Had it not been for him we should have been very much drove to have provided for ourselves and family and we look on it as an interposition of Providence in Spiritual point of view.

We can but see the goodness of God as we are favoured with a pious Minister who preaches every Sunday in the Church and the Methodist preach once a fortnight about a mile and a half from here. They are like the early days of Methodism. Their preaching and prayer meetings are simple and unadorned - though sometimes very noisy. But the best is God is with them and the Saviour is powerfully present, both to wound and to heal, the youth are turning to the Lord, and the careless are wrought upon. I find myself quite at home among them and am glad my lot is cast among praying people. One man I have worked for, in the hurry of harvest, called us altogether before breakfast, read a portion of Scripture, and prayed with us and for us. He was the same in the field as at home - a Christian. Methodists are gaining ground here and next summer they will get a new Chapel. But now I must stop, my paper is nearly full, and I will tell you more when I write again. Direct for us . . . etc., I am happy to say we are all well, hope this will find you and all friends the same. My love and best wishes to all. I mention no names as I am writing to all.

J. E. Quaife 15.11.32

Letter from Mary Quaife (née Poynter)

Dear Father and Mother

As I thought you would think very unkind if I did not write something I wish to tell you that I am quite at home in my little cottage, as I have a good bed and a seat to sit in, which is as much as I expected to have in this land. After being without a home so long, have learnt to prize it and though I cannot . . . about you all, yet I have no wish to cross the water again. I often thought of my Father for I found it the hardest work that ever I did the last fortnight of our time was so miserable that I never think of it but wonder that we ever bore it. The children were much better than I was in the steamboat, the smell was shocking, so many being crowded together, that we could scarcely move hand or foot, and we did not leave without livestock and it was as bad in the boat and if I had not left it I think it would have cost me my life. Though have not many comforts of life I believe we shall see better days, and get a better living for our children than at home. The children are very hearty and taken notice of by all that see them, and often talk about coming to see you. I promise to write more in the next, hope you will not use us as bad as we have used you. This would come sooner but as we get no cash for labour we could not pay it out of the country, everything here is done by barter, as there is but little money.

My love to all friends and remain,

Your loving child

M. Quaife