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Letter: William Thompson (Smith Creek [Port Hope], District of Newcastle) to his uncle in England, 23 January 1819

Notes regarding the transcription:

In this transcription, most misspellings and grammatical anomalies which occur in the original text have been maintained. For example: Docter is Doctor, verry is very, pilenty is plenty, Dol is dollar. The following symbol was changed to ease reading of the text: ‘&’ changed to ‘and’. Occasionally, commas and periods have been added to assist in clarifying the sentence structure. Square brackets [ ] indicate indecipherable text. The following are examples of symbols which represent measurements of currency: ‘s’ is shilling, ‘p’ is pence, ‘f’ is pound.

TRANSCRIPTION

Toronto on Smith Creek January 23 1819

I through the help and mercy of God sit down to write a few lines to you as I have had a verry bad fever which lasted for six weeks. I begun on the 25 of September and on the Monday after we got the Docter he bled me twize and laid on a blister betwixt my shoulders but I was too far gon for stopping it. My father begun in the same way but we got the Docter that night and he stopped it from going any farther. We are well off for Docters for here [there] are three in this place. The Docter that attended us is thought to be a verry skillfull man. On the Thursday after I begun I was so weak that when my Father led me out of Doors I felt so ill that I never expected going out anymore alive. One [On] the Sunday after, I had a warm bath but but when my Father lifted me out of the bath I had a fainting fit in which all my friends expected I should have died and I expected no other. The fever was at hight that day. The week after the Docter laid a blister on my left arm to take away the pane from my head as I was verry outrageous all the time. On the Sunday after, my Mother put on my clothes as I could not put them on myself. They then led me out once more and I have been mending so since. The Docter says that if it had not been for my Father and Mothers good nursing they would not have had [neither] of there sons alive. I was 12 weeks and never capable of working but thanks be to God we are now all well and I hope this will find you and all our Friends the same. So now I will give you an account of the country and how I like [ ] about the trade of commerce which is going on here. When I first came I felt very much unsettled as the people and place was strange to me for on a Sunday here is nothing to see, as here is no church, but here is a Chapel that is attended once

a fortnight by a dicenting minister so it is verry different from what it was at home as that none of my old companions to company me as I had at home, but now I begin to be alittle more satisfied as I am getting more us,t [used] to the country and there ways. We have got the brewing started which makes alittle more company and stir around us. We sell ale at 2 s per gallon and 90 per quart & beer at 60 per gals [gallon]. We have got sixty bushels of good malt made and have piilenty of Barley to make more on. Here is good hops grown here in this country. Now I am verry sure that any person that will come here and be steady, they may do better here then at home for every man that is at age may get one Hundred acre of good land for nothing for it is verry good when they are drawing wood. And if any person should not like to going to the woods to chop down the trees if they have a little money they may get it choped and heaped and ready for burning and fenced in for 10 dollars and a  $\frac{1}{2}$  per acre. And if they have not one penny there is plenty of work so that they may soon earn as much as will buy provisions so that they may get out to there lands. For we have had a labouring man at our house that came from Leeds he wrought [bought] his passage from Liverpool to Qubech [Quebec] for his [meat]. The captain gave him 5s when he landed which was all he had. He wrought a little and then walk,d [walked] up to this place which is more than 500 miles. He work,d [worked] a little here then went to his land and built himself a house up to the square. He then came back again to work here and earned as much as bought himself tools that cost him £3 and provisions that will save him untill [ ]. He is going to his land again and he intends to sow all sort of corn in the spring. This country is fine and pleasant and has fine springs of water so that by cutting down small trees and making paper of them they can take the water into there own houses. We have a fine spring underneath our house. You may tell my Uncle Mark that I think

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a Taylour [tailor] is a a verry good business here for they work by the piece they have. 5 dollars for making a coat at home and 2 when they go out, Ditto a waistcoat 6s at home and 4 from home and for a pair of pantalons 2 dollars at home and one dollar from home. Here is no Breeches worn in the country, and he can have his hundred acres of land and live where he will and work is pilentifull indeed. I think there is no trade that can come amiss if they will work and not take to drinking. I think of going and improving my land so much as I can for land is getting leaner every day. You may tell R Steels that I shall be glad to see him in Canada for I am sure he may do better here than at home. R Nedd seemed verry desirous of hearing from America. Tell him that if he was here he might do a great deal better than at home for if he did not wish to draw a hundred acres of land for it is from 10 to 20 miles Back from his place he might buy land joining on the front york road from 2 dollars to 4 dollars per acre. Some of the money to be paid at 4 years end some at 8 years end. It is all covered with wood. Now I shall tell you how grain of different kinds are

selling and how cattle are selling and then the reader may juge [judge] for himself on the farming business. In the first place you can have one hundred acres of good land given you and if you make much improvement you are entitled to one hundred acres more. I will tell you one thing whereby you may juge [judge] the quality of the land. A country man has drawn his land and he [ ] as much as he planted and bushals of potatoes which yeilded him 160 Bushels. Tell John Jackson this land will grow onions 14 inches round. I think from this that this is not Bad land. Wheat is 1 Dollar per bushal Indian corn ditto. By the same oats 2 s to  $\frac{1}{2}$  Dollar Barley one Dol potatoes  $\frac{1}{2}$  Dol onion 2 Dol apples 1 Dol per bushal. I have bought a young cow for 20 Dol beef 4 d per lb, 5lb pork  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lb. Here are some fine sheep as ever I saw in England and not subject to any disorder and fine large oxen and very beautifull horses and more fit for the road than English Horses are. Groceries are verry dear except tea and salt. Tea is 6 s 3d per lb, salt 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  Dol hundred weight but others being dear does not effect us much for we make our own soap and candles and when people gets on there own land they can make there own sugar and [ ] and vinegar. Clothing of all kinds are verry dear more then double they are at Montreal. If cousin Harper comes as we shall expect him along with other tools and [mints]. In his letter he must bring 2 narrow turn saws for turning [felts]. And if he brings a Dozen of hand saws they sell here at 12s each, bring 2 or 3 sets of cast steel chisels and 2 or 3 Draw knives, and a few [thousand] and Ditto of 2 and 3 sets nails and a few grosses of screws 1/2 Doz of 1/2 round rasps, ditto flat files, some handsaw files and prickers and few plain irons of different sorts and a good oil stone or two, some whip saw files and 2 or 3 sets of mortising chisels, and a adze for making spouts. And mind everything of the tool kind be well sourced from salt water and put them in the driest part of the ship and a few [ ] of [some] paper. If cousin Harper comes tell him not to be a cabin passenger, but to come in half decks and find him self and not to pinch for flour and only bring a few biscuits, sugar and tea, Chees and eggs and bacon before beef. A little Butter and alittle dry mint to make tea is very wholesome at sea. White pease for soups and a few onions and a Brown loaf or 2 you will [find] them verry nice at sea. they will keep for a month. Rice to make pudding and not to pinch for potatoes and if any women be coming a little sago and currants and ginger and a bottle of port wine. these would all be verry good for sick person. And tell cousin he may bring all pots and pans [ ] bedding and his end oven & likwis

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one for us as there is none in the country, you need not bring any glass, glass of all kinds is cheap & bring 2 lbs of carraway seeds as they are 6 s an oz [ounce].

Dear uncle my Father finds himself in a verry great strait to know what to say to you about coming to America when at this same time he

believes you would do better here then you can do at Eastington. For here you have 2 chances, that is you can work at your trade and at the same time you can have your 100 acres of land under improvement. Land is improving in value every day and if you chop upon it and get a few acres clear it will find you and family with bread so that you will want nothing but little clothing and you would get through life with more tranquility and peace of mind than you can do in England. It is the best thing a man can do to take the land and improve it as fast as one can, but to persuade you to come this [ ] not do I tell you the truth and what I think about it and so leave you to juge [judge] of the matter. It is truth we should like to have some friends and relations [ ] about us but it is not for the sake of this that we would persuade them to come. We would rather choose to be alone. My Aunt Sarah may think it would be hard for the children to cross the ocean but that trouble may be done away, for children seemed to get better over then up grown people. Give our kind love to William Birks and Mrs and tell him it is my opinion that he had better be improving a 100 acres of his own land here which in a few years will be verry valuable, as delving and toiling at Eastington for nothing or it may happen for worse than nothing. I shall explain to you the conditions you take the land on. In the first place you draw the land, and you are under a tie to put up a log house 16 feet by 20 and clear 5 acres, and then they give you the deed which costs (lbs symbol)5.5s and then you can sell it to any person you choose. You are not tied to the time of taking the Deed, you may take it as soon as you are able. Give our kind love to R Noad and tell him we shall be glad to see him in Canada and I should hope that from this letter and others written by us since we arrived in America he will conclude this is a better country for a labour then England. If paper would allow, I would assign a few reasons why it is better, but I must draw to a conclution. Dear uncle remember my Father to [ ] and tell him he will be glad to receive a letter from him or any friends. Remember my Father to W Norwood and tell him that the letter wrote to him by [game] young was not without truth for in Montreal I have no doubt but there is a many in the winter season who are almost ready to suffer and the reason is it [ ] of verry great improvement and plenty of work in [summer]. They stop awhile the winter sets in which they tell us is so verry sever that no work can be done and what they have earned in the [summer] season all goes in the winter and there is no parish to go to so that a many are almost suffering in that season of the year but that is not the case up the country. Here is pilenty of good land to give away, years you will say but it is all a wood. You will say, what can I do with it? I will tell you what to do. You must start to chop and every tree you fell you will clear as much near as I can tell 5 yards square. You could not clear land so fast in old country. There is many labouring men but we go a class higher. Every small [ ] in Eastington that is they was here and fixt on there owen land they would

better then they can do at Eastington, but I shall leave the reader to judge from the contents of this letter judge for himself. I must draw to a conclusion, but uncle here is one thing more and that is if cousin Harper comes desire him to give my Mother kind respects to Mrs. John Belle and give her as much money as will buy 2 or 3 pair of shoes, and likewise a gray cloke and tell him to bring with him a whole piece of [Baruagan Fustin] and a little twill,d [twilled] cotton.

Give our kind love to my uncle and aunt Belt and tell him to send me my German flute and tell him to send [Rusen] sermons and my two slates. We join in love to grand father and g mother and our kind love to you all as relations with out any exceptions. We shall be glad uncle if you will write and say if any friends be coming out. Give our love to John Richardson and tell him we have not seen his business to be a good one nighter [neither] in the lower province nor the upper one. For here is no calls for neither clocks nor watches worthy of notice. And tell my uncle Bletcher that all his sons and daughters gives their kind love to them both and all relations and they are well in good health and I hope you all are at present.

Mr. Will'm Thompson upper Canida lake ontario  
Township of Hope District of Newcastle