

Eben North Letter to Rufus, March 2nd 1817

Honored Parents and Brothers

I last week received a letter of my father's Feby. 10th and one from Lester dated Jan. & yesterday received another from Lester 30th December. We are all well at present in this place & it is a general time of health. We had a very open winter till about the middle of Jany. From that time till about the 20th of Feby. We had snow attended with severe cold weather, the coldest that ever was known in the country of so long continuance. Since that time we have had moderate weather attended with some rains. The greatest depth of snow was about 18 inches, now about 9. Provisions monthly gone to Canada: wheat \$2.00, peas \$2.20, oats .75 cents per bushel. Pork and other meat none. Not one family in ten in the town of Alexander has meat enough to last them through the summer, myself amongst the rest.

I thank you for the offer of some money in the Spring if I should want, but I think I shall make out without any if I can have my school money collected. The worst difficulty will be towards getting a cow. They are now selling from 25 to 30 dollars & I expect by the time I shall get my money to purchase one with, they will be so high I shall conclude not to get one the present summer. My wagon I have not yet sold, but think there is a probability in the spring. My scythes I have sold but one. Tis said they will be as good as the cash here at \$1.40 in haying time. My school is out. The first time that I engaged for, have engaged again to teach it as much longer as I wish, which I shall close as soon as the winter breaks up. I see you are something alarmed at my having a deed of so much land. I did not do it inadvisedly. The reasons of taking it was that I had rather have it myself than to have Noah, as he could not deed it to me till it was all surveyed, which cannot be done till spring. I calculate to deed it back again as soon as it is warm enough to survey. However there is no danger of getting tangled should I be disposed to keep it. Noahs' signing a note with a man that I wrote to you about. He has got clear of the clock note. There is nothing [to be] done about Noah. I understand he refused to pay it till compelled by the law.

It is said that the Indians sufferings by hunger is intolerable. There is now 40 or 50 in this town depending upon the charity of the people. There has been two or three at my house this winter. They behaved themselves like gentlemen & are willing to pay for what they receive in baskets or brooms as a specimen of their eloquence & situation. I shall send you a copy of a speech of one of the Indian chiefs to the White people It was published last week in the Batavia papers.

This letter ends here and is resumed again on March 11. The text of the speech follows:

“BROTHERS: You are powerful men; the Great Spirit makes you strong & gives you abundance. You have spread yourselves like a mighty stream over the land & the Red Men flee before you. Our forests are now yours and have grown into a fruitful field under your cultivation. Our little cornfields are swallowed up & lost amidst your extensive farms. Our bear & deer, which we used to hunt, have given place to your innumerable flocks & herds. Our little wigwams have grown into grand houses & full barns. You have much to eat.

BROTHERS: The Great Spirit sent his frost last summer & killed our corn. Your corn was killed too, but you have plenty of wheat & thin pieces of paper to buy more. If

you will give us some of your paper, we can buy for ourselves. It is not for us to tell you what you ought to do, but we are informed by your good men that you have a religion that bids you feed the hungry. Brothers, we are hungry. Our squaws and children are faint. The Great Spirit will surely help you if you give bread to his children. He made the Red men & has kept them alive to this day. Will you suffer us to perish with hunger when you have more than you can eat? Does the Great Spirit tell you in his book (for we hear you have such a book) that the White man may not help the Red men? Do you say we are idle and might not labor for our bread?

BROTHERS: We are not like White men. We have not been taught like them. They do not want our work. We are feeble & unskilled. Do you say Indians get drunk? And do not White men sometimes get drunk? Shall we be left to starve to death because some of our people love whiskey, for which we are sorry?

BROTHERS: You are wise men; you can make plans and contrive beforehand. It is not so with us. We are dark and see but a little way. The Great Spirit has made us a small people and we are dependant on you. Is there not a door open for you to come to us & say 'Brothers, we have come into your wigwams to put meat into your kettles, to fill the bellies of your little ones, to wipe the tears from the cheeks of your squaws. We have come to convince you that our religion teaches us to love all men.'

BROTHERS: We must all die, and your good men talk that there is a great day coming when we must be all called to give in our amounts before the judge of all men. Is this believed among you? Will you be sorry on that day that you fed a poor Indian? Our hearts are full, we could say much more, but it is enough. If the Great Spirit opens your hearts to us, we shall rejoice. We will kindle our fires and smoke our pipes in peace and our squaws & children will sit by us and smile while we talk to them about the good White men who helped us in the time of need."

March 11, 1817

I again assume my pen to finish my letter, which I could not do before in consequence of the note you wrote about which I shall be able to inform you about. Weather moderate, snow principally gone in cleared land. Not much sapping done yet. Closed my school last week. All well. I shall send you enclosed as agreement made with Raymond, which you can examine for yourselves, which I consider a handsome discount (about 47 dollars). If you can make out the money, the chains to be a log chain and plough chain at a quarter of a dollar per pound. The weight he has described himself. The yoke irons he wishes to have the inside of the bow of the staple to be steeled, also the inside of the ring. Iron staples & rings are selling here for a quarter of a dollar per pound, but he is to allow you for their being steeled. *[I think that what they propose to do is temper the inside of the ring and the yoke irons so that they will wear longer.]* What you think in justice you ought to have. The fire shovel & tongs he wants should be stout & well made & is to give you your price. The ploughshare at a quarter of a dollar per pound, and the largest size about middling. The slice handle you may cut in two if more convenient in transporting. The yoke irons and staple wants to be long enough to have the yoke six inches through. Money is the principal object with Raymond & this is the best bargain I have been able to make. The slice above mentioned of iron, is the same that it is now getting in Batavia, a quarter of a dollar per pound. Seems to be an established price for all kinds of such work. Drag teeth the same price as chains.

Wrought nails the same price (retail price) retailing price of hoes one dollar & warranted. Warranted ones retail price two dollars & fifty cents. These are the prices of the fore mentioned things as the merchants are selling for in Batavia and the blacksmiths in general. Money is so scarce in this country that I dare not recommend it to you to fetch a load of iron under an idea of selling it. At present it is considered as good property here and I think would sell well and trust it out and by so doing, get some bad debts.

I shall send you another offer made by Noah if you cannot make out money enough to pay Raymond according to his offer, you may accept of this Raymond & Noah both want to pay, but Noah thinks he cannot afford to do any more than to fling in the interest on the note and take 100 dollars in iron. It was with great reluctance that he would agree to take a single hoe. The objection he made against them was that they were so small an article they should be too good to trust out in small debts. He has, however, agreed to take one dozen at 5/6 a piece Connecticut currency, which is the most I could get, the rest to be chains & ploughshares & drag teeth at a quarter of a dollar per pound. Weight of the drag teeth about 36 pounds - about 4 pounds each tooth. The chains to be made into sets of a plough & log chain & as many ploughshares as may be convenient. Raymond still holds the note against Noah & if Noah takes the property, he is to give you or me a discharge of all claims against us as respects Raymond & pay him when the note is out two years from next April. Raymond offers to do the same as Noah will, but prefers the offer he has written, as money is his principal object. I think it altogether possible that he will fling in more on this test proposition if he finds out that Noah is like to take the property. I shall make him an offer of it as I have made the observation that I shall let the one have the property that I can do the best with, though I do not think he will fling much more than Noah will if he does not have more than 100 dollars in money, as he is greatly in want of cash. You will please to write an answer to this, which offer you will accept of, as they will be very anxious to know if you pay 100 dollars in iron. They will want it in June, but if you accept of Raymond's offer, it is not so essential. Raymond says he should be glad of it in June, but if you cannot make out the money conveniently, he will wait longer, but some time in the summer.

Yours

Eben North

PS I have talked with Noah about the interest on the note when it is to commence, but he has not agreed to pay any of it himself. Has got considerably tangled with Jakeway.

[Note in margin:] For the agreement with Raymond, see the inside of this letter. I find I cannot enclose it without its being discovered by the post master.

Calculation on Raymond's offer:

Discount on the face of the note	30 dollars
Interest from the time the note was given to the first of next April	14 dollars
Interest from the first of April till say the last of June, 3 months	3.40cents
The time that you will probably pay up the note	\$47.50 discount

I intended to have enclosed my agreement with Raymond, as I have written in my letter, but to save double postage, I shall copy it on the backside of this letter.

[On the back of the envelope is the following:]

Pembroke, March 11th 1816. By agreement with Eben North of the town of Alexander, I, Charles Raymond, do agree that in case that I can have 150 dollars in money & Twenty dollars worth of blacksmith work delivered to me in the month of June or later, if more convenient, then I, Charles Raymond will deliver up the note of two hundred dollars that I now hold against Noah North for the sum before mentioned, the work to be one set of chains made of good iron weighing about 40 pounds & in two pieces & a set of yoke irons weighing about eight pounds & the length of the staple six inches from the bosom & a fire shovel and tongs and a ploughshare. The work to be done well and made of good iron & if the articles of blacksmith work that has been mentioned amounts to more than twenty dollars, then there is to be a reduction of money what the surplus is of the articles of work.

A true copy. Attest Eben North

Charles Raymond

This entire letter consisted of a 4-page letter. The pages measured 8"x14" approximately, with sides folded in and originally sealed with wax in two places, the wax size being about the size of a nickel. It was addressed to

*Mr. Rufus North
Colebrook
Connecticut
Litchfield County
Colebrook Connecticut Post Office*

The word "Connecticut" was written vertically on each end of the envelope.