

Letter From L. North, Son of Rufus of Colebrook

Addressed to Mr. Rufus North, Colebrook Meetinghouse Post Office, Litchfield County, Connecticut. The postage was 18½¢. [The Colebrook Center Post Office at the time was run by Reuben Rockwell out of his house, which was between the Colebrook Store and the Congregational Church. The church stood where number 563 Colebrook Road stands today.]

Alexander *[New York, about 30 miles east of Buffalo, 8 miles southwest of Batavia and 20 some-odd miles south of the Erie Canal.] Feb. 13th 1825.*

Honored parents

We received a letter from you the last of January informing us that you have not had any letter from us since the first. We wrote a letter and sent it by Mr. Scovil the latter part of Dec. He agreed to leave it at Mr. Hungerford's. He was moving back with his family from New Connecticut. Says the town that Mr. Bettica lives in is very unhealthy. It is very healthy here at present except old granny has the pneumatic so that she is confined to her house. *[Malaria was very prevalent throughout eastern North America in the early years. Upstate New York in this year of the opening of the Erie Canal was spotty, hence the reference to "healthy" or "unhealthy" locations.]*

The money that is due to me if you have any use for it I wish you to keep it, as I have no use for it here at present. Mr. Jones and Albert have taken out new Articles and now feel very rich. *[Articles means land deeds.]* I do not think they would now sell for anything nigh what their land is worth. People that have taken up land an hundred acres or more get new Articles by paying 30 to 50 dollars. The ten dollar bill that I had from John is not good for anything. The present bank of Detroit is good, but the bank which that belongs to is a broken one. He agreed to take the bill and pay one [of] my due himself, it is four dollars and sixteen cents that is due to me, as we made it when we reckoned it up. I shall send it by this letter, and I shall expect that he will pay you \$4.16 for it.

We have had a very open winter; *[Open winter means that they have had little or no snow.]* we have not had any sledding until the 1st day of February when it snowed and blowed about three days, then come a thaw and carried it all off. It has been very warm for some days back; it is considerable cooler today though not cold enough to freeze any, yet it is very bad traveling and has been ever since I have been here. It [is] said to be the most open winter ever known here. We have had some very cold weather.

Bar iron: English and Swedes sells at six dollars per hundred. If Joel should come here in the spring, I should think it would be well enough to fetch some iron work such as chains, hoes, staples and rings, *[these two are components of an ox yoke.]* perhaps a few axes and some other notions. The price of chains in Batavia is 18¾ cents. Course, humbly things the blacksmiths charge more – some say 25 cents; staples and rings \$1.50 to \$2.00. They want to be considerable longer than you have them in Connecticut. Hoes, .75 cents; axes (English steel) \$1.50; cast steel \$2.00 warranted 30 days. I do not think it would be best to fetch many clocks, as the country is full of them. They sell for \$10 and \$12 dollars. Iron work I think would be much better property than clocks. Plowshares sell for 15 cents a pound New York currency. Mr. Demun says he will take 100 dollars in iron, or something besides money [for] a farm of 80 acres. About 30 acres under improvement with a good orchard. Not any barn, house not very good.

He will not be able to take any more iron work, for if he does not have the money, he cannot get back his article. His article is in another man's hands. Wheat sells for .75 cents per bushel, rye .50, corn .37. I bought about 300 pounds of pork for \$4.50 per hundred. Said to be \$5.50 now. Codfish six cents a pound. Olive has put up two barrels of pork which she calculates to sell if Joel should come in the spring, it will be well enough for him to send by the next letter and buy a barrel of it, as I should rather buy this than go to Batavia for it. She thinks you ought to get a screw for the sawmill and send by Joel if he comes. She says it was according to agreement they should have a screw. *[This is probably the driving device that allows the log to travel through the saw blade.]* Their farm and sawmill was prized [priced] at \$700.00, and their other property in the same proportion.

Eben has got out all his timber and plank for his house – calculates to have his house 33 feet long and 18 wide. He did not sow any wheat this fall. He had 5 acres chopped over last spring which is not cleared or burnt over. My piece is not burnt over yet – calculate to clear it in the spring if I can, and sow it to wheat. There is an acre or more which was cleared on Joel's land which ought to be planted next spring, and about an acre 'round his house which is not seeded down. Rufus is about the same as ever – grows more full of mischief every day. There is a Baptist minister preaches at the Block schoolhouse once a month, and at the schoolhouse two miles west, once a month. The Methodists preach occasionally in the neighborhood of Mr. Cady's, about two miles east. Mr. Brown, the Presbyterian minister, preached his farewell sermon the Sunday after we got here. There is a Universalist preaches at the creek a part of the time, it's the only preaching they have at the creek, and sometimes at the Block schoolhouse. They are more numerous than any other denomination, though we have as many kinds of religious denominations as was ever named under heaven. There are three meeting houses in Batavia, one Methodist, one Presbyterian and one Episcopal – they have a bell in the church. The Presbyterians have a subscription paper out for a bell that will weigh two thousand five hundred [pounds]. Lucas Smith, formerly from Litchfield, preaches at the Church meeting house.

The place where goods are landed on the canal for Batavia is Newport, as the road now is 19 or 20 miles north of Batavia. Lockport is 30 miles beyond Batavia. Brockport 21 northeast. There is a road laid out from Batavia to Newport that will be 14 miles. This is all I think of at present, and shall conclude with

Yours, Etc.

L. North

Feb. 16 – it is beginning to be some sickly among children taken with violent puking and the retch.

The length of staples want to be as much as 7 inches from the bow. I should think some leather would be a good article to fetch here. Sole leather 28 cents a pound, upper leather 62½ cash.