

*Letters from
Mattie V. (Thomas) Oblinger
to the Thomas Family
1873 and 1876*

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Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society
RG1346-S01-L108, RG1346-S01-L136

May 19, 1873

Page 1

Dear friends as I have an
 opportunity to send a letter to the office I will
 send you a few hastily composed lines
 Billie Mott come to our house Saturday
 morning he is going to St. Louis this after-
 noon so I will not have time to write
 much We have considerable of rain
 since I came here Saturday night it
 rained very hard It is too wet to plant
 corn some are ready but have to wait
 a day or so for the ground to dry off The
 plants and showery that I brought I put
 on Biles place I was looking at them
 last evening they look very promising
 the Dialitre especially We went to Mr.
 Cambels yesterday to church and Sabbath
 school They live seven miles south of here
 The minister failed to come so there
 was society meeting Mr. Cambels are
 right I am trying to catch you could
 hear them talk We look forward with thin

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May 19, 1873

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I will catch enough of some things
 to send for such as you so share
 you can see it and have an
 answer to little children with the law
 Uriah & Billie are talking W A B
 is lying on the ^{lounge} and Ella is teasing
 him for his book We moved in to our
 house last Wednesday (W. A. O. birth
 day) I suppose you would like to see
 us in our old house It is not quite
 so convenient as a nice frame but
 I would as soon live in it as the cabin
 I have lived in and then we are at
 home which makes it more comfort-
 able I ripped our Wagon shut in too
 have it around two sides and have
 several papers up so the boys think
 it looks real well the Uriahs made
 a bedstead and a Lounge so could
 have something to sleep on The only
 objection I have we have no floor
 yet will be better this fall I got one tea
 cup & saucer and the corner of the
 glass and the little here picture broken

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May 19, 1873

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for the mirror but the days clear
 since I have been here I think
 I am washing in day after day
 I am washing in day after day
 Pretty good luck I think my goods
 got here two days before I did Uriah
 had taken them out to Mr Houko
 Uriah was plowing and this fore
 noon talks of planting some this after
 noon he has twenty acres sown and
 have ten of it broke Doc & Billie &
 Uriah & stayed with us I know you
 would have laughed to see us fixing their
 bed we set boxes to the side of the lounge
 and enlarged Uriah's bed for all of
 them We enjoyed the fun and they
 enjoyed their bed as much as if they
 had been in a nice parlor bed room
 U. C. & Doc sang while I got supper
 They call Doc Sam and his sounds very
 odd to me wish you could see his
 whiskers shaved all off but what is on
 his chin an lip I told him I wanted
 come to send you but he could not
 see it

Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society, RG1346-S01-L108

Letter from Mattie V. Oblinger to Thomas Family, May 19th, 1873

(Page 1) May 19th, 1873. At Home in our own house, and a sod at that. And just eat dinner. Dear friends as I have an opportunity to send a letter to the office I will send you a few hastily [sic] composed lines

Billie Mote come to our house Saturday ~~evening~~ morning he is going to Grafton this afternoon so I will not have time to write much. We have considerable of rain since I came here Saturday night. It rained very hard. It is too wet to plant corn some are ready but have to wait a day or so for the ground to dry off. The plants and strawberry that I brought I put on Giles place. I was looking at them last evening they look very promising, the Dialetre (?) especialy [sic].

We went to Mr. Gambels yesterday to church and Sabbath school They live seven miles south of here The minister failed to come as there was society meeting Mr. Gambels are real Kentuckians. Wish you could hear them talk. We took dinner with them.

(Page 2) Uriah & Billie are talking U A O is lying on the ~~bed~~ Lounge and Ella is teasing him for his book. We moved in to our house last Wednesday (U. A. O. birthday) I suppose you would like to see us in our sod house. It is not quite so convenient as a nice frame but I would as soon live in it as the cabins I have lived in and then we are at home which makes it more comfortable. I ripped our Wagon sheet in two. have it around [sic] two sides and have several papers up so the boys think it looks real well. the Uriahs made a bed stead and a Lounge so could have something to sleep on. The only objection I have we have no floor yet will be better this fall. I got one tea cup & saucer and the corner of the glass on the little hero picture broken.

(Page 3) Pretty good luck I think. My goods got here two days before I did. Uriah had taken them out to Mr Houks (Hawks?). Uriah was plowing sod this fore noon talks of planting some this after noon. he has twenty acres surrounded. have ten of it broke. Doc & Billie & Uriah C stayed with us I know you would have laughed to see us fixing their bed. We set boxes to the side of the Lounge and enlarged Uriah's bed for all of them. We enjoyed the fun and they enjoyed their bed as much as if they had been in a nice parlor bedroom. U. C. & Doc sung while I got supper. They call Doc Sam out here Sounds very odd to me Wish you could see his whiskers Shaved all off but what is on his chin and lip. I told him I wanted some to send to you but he could not see it.

(Page 4) He has worked on day at his house I have got acquainted with some here. They are not hard to get acquainted. The boys went to Sutton Saturday afternoon I went along to see the town and country on our way we seen three Antelopes. U. C. shot at them for fun. Charlie if you was here you would never get done looking for you can see ever so far coming from Sutton. We could see the Co seat which was elven mile from us.

We got a letter from you U.C. has tell Katie D. that he glories in her spunk and for peace and joy to go with her but she must not do so when she comes to Neb. There is some here looks as though they would like if some girls would come around. I am real sorry to hear of Aunt Elizas ailments. Hope she may get well. I saw J Arnoton the parson (?). He told me that two of the ~~Swg~~ Swigart boys

(Page 4 right side) and their wives started to Oregon the

(Page 4 top upside down) same morning I started. so Rose Thomas has gone farther west than I have. The other ~~was~~ woman was a Larose.

(Page 3 & 2 together top upside down) I am washing today. This after noon is little cloudy with the sun shineing [sic] occasionally. Ella is as hearty as she can be and has an appetite like a little horse. I never cooked for such appetites as I have since I been here. some times I think I will cook enough of some things for two meals but the boys clean them every time.

(Page 1 top upside down) We are all well I must close for this time I am as ever your sister & daughter. Our love to all. M V O

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NEBRASKA
 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

August 8, 1876

Page 2

other day our neighbor (Geo. Schwartz) killed a hog and we got 89 lbs. to have
 for this spars & small diggers I fried it and cracked it down to keep until they
 come I often think of your Pickel pork barrel and think of the nice sweet
 meat we use to fry and put on the table but we would not eat it because it
 was not hand made or fresh. I have often wished this summer I could go to
 that barrel and pick out the fattest piece but it we could eat it here not because
 we are starving but because we are so healthy and have such good appetites
 we can eat any thing. The people here are about throng with their grain there
 has been an immense lot of grain raised here this season and it has been
 a favorable season to take care of grain most all the grain is good some of the
 oats are not very good by being struck with rust. Charles Oats are plenty
 think they will yield 40 bushels per acre and are a splendid quality. Charles has
 the way ^{crop of the neighborhood} to take it all through ~~the land~~. If he did have to tend it with
 this year old colts he took time and planted his corn so he could tend it
 both ways and it looks quite different to most of the corn around here.
 Can you know how they put in corn and tended when you was here they that get
 and the weeds are getting to be a perfect nuisance. Frank has 18 ^{acres} he thinks
 will yield 60 bushels per acre and 4 acres that looks well but will not yield so
 much as it was planted late our corn looks well we will have our share of.
 As this again and some pumpkins our Watermelons are not so plenty as last
 year was planted too late. Potatoes are not near so good a yield as last year as they
 are so bad we will have more than we can make use of so we have quite
 a lot planted some vines are entirely striped some are not hurt much yet
 we will feast on Fried chicken & sweet potatoes after while as both chicken
 and sweet potatoes are doing well I had a huge saep of cabbage yesterday
 for dinner will have plenty from now on I have the best cabbage in
 the neighborhood you but I worked for it we have had to do with out cabbage
 every winter since we have been here and I was determined to have it
 this season if it could be raised any tomatoes will soon be ripe have a
 nice lot of them. The barley yielded 27 ^{1/2} bushels to the acre. Um ah was
 to cut our wheat a Thursday this away sound quite strange to you
 to cut wheat the middle of August. It is a very late wheat and was
 sown a late have but 5 acres but it is good. The boys are going
 to cut it with their harvesters. Charles Bush you could spend most
 summer here and see how they take of their grain and see the

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Letter from Mattie V. Oblinger to Thomas Family, August 8, 1876

(Page 1) This afternoon I will try to write you a few lines. I do not remember when I wrote last but I believe it was in June I don't think you have had a letter from Neb since the 4th We have been very busy and most of the time with out stamps and money. We have managed to keep ourselves in groceries such as we were compelled to have by selling butter and a few vegetables we have has an abundance of Peas Beans Radishes and other garden truck. It has kept us scraping and gathering pretty close to keep a going but we have managed so far not to go in debt one cent this summer. Uriah is going to town tomorrow afternoon and I want to send a little butter and Potatoes and corn and pickles to get some groceries. credit is pretty hard for anyone to get in Sutton and we have learned he is a poor customer to deal with and the least we have to do with him that much better off we are. Every inch of dry goods we have got this summer was 6 ½ yds of calico for the girls dresses but we will have to get some pretty soon or we will have to grease and go naked.

We have 220 bushels of threaded barley 200 of it in the house ready to sell when the market opens for it. We hear it is worth 35cts. In Carlton and one man near Grafton has engaged 900 bushels at 50cts per bushes but the grain merchant do not want it yet for fear of it heating on their hands We had our barley threshed about two weeks ago thinking we could sell it right away so we could get us some things and get a well we need a well so bad it has been almost impossible to get along this summer with out one having two head of horses and 4 head of cattle to water I find it pretty hard to get along and take care of milk with little water but I have made butter to sell all the summer off out heifers and have had to use butter to shorten and grease every think I think they do well for common cows. I do not know what we would have done if we had not got them for we have not had a mess of meat in the house since last winter until the

(Page 2) Other day our neighbor (Geor Smith) killed a hog and we got 391 lbs to have for threshers & well diggers I fried it and packed it down to keep until they come. I often think of your pickle pork barrel and think of the nice seet meat we use to fry and put on the table but we would not eat it because it was not lean ham or shoulder. I have often wished this summer I could go to that barrel and pick out the fattest piece in it we could eat it here not because we are Starving but because we are so healthy and have such good appetites we can eat any thing.

The people here are about through with this grain. there has been an immense lot of grain raised here this season and it has been favorable season to take care of grain we out all the grain is good some of the oats are not very good by being struck with rust Uriahs oats are splendid think they will yield 40 bushels per acre and are a splendid quality Uriah has the brag to take it all through the barrel If he did have to tend it with three year old colts. He took time and planted his corn So he could tend it both ways and it looks quite different to most of the corn around here. Sam you know how they put in corn and tended when you was here they do that yet and the weeds are getting to be a perfect nuisance Uriah has 12 ½ acres of corn he thinks will yield 60 bushels per acre and 4 acres that looks well but will not yield so much as it was panted late our cane looks well we have our share of squashes again and some pumpkins our Watermelons are not so plenty as last year was planted too late. Potatoes are not near so good a yield as last year as the bugs are so bad we will have more than we make use of as we have quite a lot planted. Some vines are entirely striped ours are not hut much yet We will feast on Fried chicken & sweet potatoes after a while as both chickens and sweet potatoes are doing well I had a huge mess of cabbage yesterday for diner will have plenty from now on I have the best cabbage in the neighborhood you bet I worked for it we have had to do with out cabbage every winter since we have been here and I was determined to have it this season if it could be raised my tomatoes will soon be ripe have a nice lot of them. The barley yielded 27 ½ bushels to the acre Uriah wants to cut our wheat a Thursday. This may sound quite strange to you to cut wheat the middle of August It is a very late wheat and was sowed late have but 5 acres but it is good. Robinson boys are going to cut it with their harvest. Charlie I wish you could spend next summer here and see how they take of their grain and see the

(Page 3) machinery run The headers are going to go ahead of every thing here in very few years for lots of men say they will not pull any more bands after this year When they are cut grain with a header when they are done cutting they are done stacking. I tell you it looks nice to see a header running Combs headed our barley I rode across with them in the headed box and could have a good view all the machinery goes before the horses. Uriah done his on stacking and stacked considerable for Combs he says it is the easiest way to harvest he ever seen The Headers put the grain in the stack for the same

three the Harvester puts in the shock 1.50 ct per acre they can cut any kind of grain and they have a machine here called the Self binder. One man can cut and bind his on grain I have not seen that at work yet but they boys have it is no uncommon occurrence here for one man to have 100 acres of harvesting and some 160 acres Uriah is up at Giles today helping him put up his flax.

Well I will stop writing about harvesting and crops or my letter will all be taken up for that.

Oh yes Giles will start with the thresher now soon. Sade will stay here most of the time or she thinks so and at Sams part the time. I have had lots of pie plant to use had enough to make eight pies for threshers have had eight Raspberries one bush of them you sent us is growing the blackberries all died. Well the next thin in general Net, you asked me some time ago what the Giles had in their house. Well They like ourselves and all the rest here they have not got much furniture they have a cook stove and as few cooking utensils as can do with, a small sink two short benches dishes enough to set a small table 1 bed stead (Seal Morgans bed stead) a Lounge home made, Giles sheet iron trunk, a blue Chest that Sade brought looking glass like ours only a little longer two pictures two Chairs, the ones Giles brought from home and a home-made table Sade has 25 yards of carpet that her Pa bought for when she started out here, but she don't want to put it down until they finish the house. Sade has a tolerable good bed. Sade did not bring as much from home.

(Page 4) I thought she would for the old man is in good circumstances but as tight as the bark on a beach tree in Feb. he knows how to keep his money he give Sade 25 dollars when she left home he bought Sade a meal sive and coffee mil while he was here and bought Sade Wheeler a set of knives & forks and Sades sister sent Sams little girl three yds of calico was all the presents he brought so you may know they are all tight or they would have sent more than that. All thoug I think Giles has a good woman she will help him save for she is no spend thrift they only get just what they have to have and she is verry saveing in any thing she goes at I think as much of her as any sister in law I have she is willing to do any way and any thing to save expenses and she is very careful of every thing she has. You may know she is not very proud when she has rode Giles saddle to church all summer and Giles rides on a horse blanket Now you need not think because they have nothing more that they are about to come on the county for we are all Homesteaders here and are all on equality all live about alike. If you think you could not enjoy yourselves here with us and our little dab of home made furniture and our one room houses you know what you can do but let me tell you You would find as much sociability and I believe a little more than you will find in the east Sam Ward is back on his place again Says Neb is one of the Jolliest places he ever seen. Mrs Ward has not seen hardly a well day since she left here. They have another boy or girl I do not know Uriah has that note yet he is going to see him the first day he gets time.

Well I think Geoges takes the rag off the bush Mother what do you think by this time about Geoges not haveing a big famly I think they are in as fare away for a big family as we are if Grzzie was old when married I think they are leaving us clear behind and if Giles does not hurry up will not give him any show at all Chalie I was in hopes we would get your choice names but I guess George are going to beat us. Well Stella is our baby and will be for a long time she likes her ninny as well as ever but I have threatened to take it from her next month if it is cool and she keeps well and I expect I will have a dreadful time of it for she is so bad after it. Ella is trying to feed her pup we have another to raise but I expect will be like all the rest when we get it raised we will loose it She calls it Jo Turk she says Jo is its given name I named it Turk.

Oh Yes wish you could see my flowers We have the prettiest Petunias here I evr seen grow they are as big again as they grow in Ind I have saved my honeysuckel until it is in full bloom I tell you I am proud of it it is all the one I know I have a prickley pear and Mrs Griffith brought me one of the prettiest Cactis I ever seen from the Republican Valley It resembles the pincushion cactis only much prettier. Have you got Your Oleander yet if you have I want you to send me a slip you can send it in a paper cut off two or three slips stick wax on the ends and they will only be on the road a few days and I believe they will grow if you send Giles things this fall I want you to stick in a few tulbs of Tulips and Lilies if it is only one or two of each kind just so we can get a start I would like so well to have a Peonia have not seen any here.

Nett we read your letter containing your pictures I dont think your picture is near as good the one you sent me married life certainly can not agree with you You look nearly as old and peaked and lantern jawed as I do What in the land ailed you any how you look as though you was in deep distress was your dress pinching you or is that a kind of style you have got to putting on It dont fit you if it is I dont believe you are

fattening up on Peaches this fall Stright look very much as I thought he would But I don't believe he is any better looking than my own man. I feel just like taking hold of that goatee and pulling him across the house Well I guess there will be no danger of beauty killing either of our men nor will we quarrel over their good look for as pretty is pretty does but I shall look for Strights pictures soon besure and send me a piece of your wedding dress this fall for my log cabbin. I am working at it and all the pieces of the worsted dresses you can get. I think Aggie Norris has done well better have some one to appologize for her If my memory serves me right she was married the after part of Sept or in Oct I call it quick work I suppose Sallie Mc will be next Is there any talk of Sallie Horn marrying or does She have any beaux does she look like she use to I wish you could tell me just the half of what I want to know when you write.

(Page 1 top upside down) Nett if you find so much pleasure in writing to your new kinsfolks why dont Stright write to his new kinsfoks I think him and Sade are both alike they are slow at forming acquaintences I don't think you will get a letter from Sade soon for she is a poor hand to write She is with her pictures like Giles is with his she thinks she does not make a good Picture Well neither of them is killed with beauty and how can they expect pretty pictures the picture Giles had of Sade I thought was better looking than she is for Sade is not very hand some for like the rest of us she has a big nose but it

(Page 1 left side) is a pitty [sic] that two should get together and neither of them make a good picture

(Page 2 left side) Nett did you do like Giles & Will get a democrat so you have to keep still.

(Page 3 top upside down) Sam Dave Robison is married he married one of the Brown girls that lives over South. I expect there are some big mistakes in this letter for the young ones have nearly teased the life out of me. Oh yes we spent the fouth in Fairmont We had a splendid time. Well there is a poor sight for Uriah to write any in this letter I did not suppose he would have time to write so I have not left any room for him. We are all well Dont want you to think the way

(Page 3 left side, closest to edge first) I wrote this letter about being out of money that want you to send us money that was not my object at all. I thought I would tell you how we had been getting along this summer.

(Page 3 right side) Mother you said in your letter for us to keep a stif [sic] upper lip that would get some fruit this fall. Well that is no trouble for us any more for we have had to keep a stiff upper lip so much since we have been here that they have about grown stiff. Wish you could see the girls Ella has been riding Stella in the grain scoop but she has up set her and Stella is mad as a wet hen you better think they are wild but they go again Write soon.

M V & U W Oblinger

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