

Letters from Ruth Chrisman and later from Estelle Chrisman Laughlin

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Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society

Transcript

of a letter from Ruth Chrisman to Martha Turner, a long-time Nebraska State Historical Society librarian.

Broken Bow
Nov-17-1935

Dear Miss Turner —

No doubt you think I have forgotten my promise to write you and send a few of our early experiences in Nebraska. My parents came here in the Spring of 1883 from Nemaha Co. Neb. — with their family of seven children — 3 sons and 4 Daughters came through with five wagons. My Father had several hundred head of cattle which he shipped as far as Kearney as this was our nearest rail road point. From there we all Journeyed on together to Broken Bow. My Father had been here — and filed on land north of B. B. about 14 miles. There were not many settlers there as that time plenty of gov. land — so my older Brothers and Sisters all took up land adjoining which took in several thousand acres of such wonderful range — and hay.

I can remember how we used to gather wild fruit in the canyons. Such delicious plums and raspberries — and the grass would be over our heads. Summer months were beautiful such wonderful rains — never heard of droughts those days. But the winters were quite severe and my Father, like many others, suffered a great loss in his stock. Would drift with the storms, get in a pocket in the Canyon the Barrett Family, near West Union, southwest Custer County, Nebraska and freeze to death. We had many hand slips but with it all we had our little pleasures. When our neighbors were such a long distance when we visited each other we spent several days. How I can remember then the Barrett Family, near West Union, southwest Custer County, Nebraska how happy we were when we would look out and see someone coming over the hill. The Barrett Family, near West Union, southwest Custer County, Nebraska Knew they were coming for the Nite: only had three rooms in our sod house — but always had room for all that came.

My parents were from Va. — had that southern hospitality. We would take down a bed or two — put the table out side and be ready for a dance. My Brother played the violin so we had our orchestra at home — often danced till daylight. My parents have passed in to the great beyond. Also — my two older Brothers have gone. Brother Eugene in Scottsbluff, Neb. My three Sisters are still living — the oldest of the family Mrs. R. B. Sargens will be 80 in Feb — is a wonderful old lady, so well and strong — still loves to gather the wild fruit grows every summer — walks and carries it home. She loves to do it — says it reminds her of the early days in Custer Co. My next Sister Mrs. W. A. Miner — lives at Tecumseh Neb. Mrs. Tooley and myself make our homes — together in B.B. Her husband C. S. Tooley was elected to the senate in 1930 from the 23 district, served one term when his health failed. He passed away in — 1931. I have spent the greater part of my life in western Neb — spent several winters in California and other states. Still, I find myself wandering back — to my old friends and dear Old Nebraska.

Altho — I can well remember the blizzard of 88 — was caught away from home at School. We had no fuel to burn but corn stalks — so we had to "move out" — went with the storms to the nearest neighbor: who was a widow lady — she was out of fuel — had to burn some old chairs to keep us warm - Know how happy my Mother must have been when we all got home again. There were so many teachers and children who perished in the Storm — but we are so thankful we don't have those dreadful blizzards any more, and our winters are not so long.

Miss Turner - you just use what you want of this — am afraid none of it will sound very interesting. But Promised you would write something — I enjoyed my little chat with you and hope to meet you again when in Lincoln —

Your Friend Ruth Chrisman

Transcript

of a letter from Estelle Chrisman Laughlin (related to the Chrisman sisters)
to Myrtle Berry, Nebraska State Historical Society librarian.

C O P Germing (sic), Nebraska Y
March 11 1959
State Historical Society Lincoln, Nebraska

Sometime ago I volunteered to send you some more information about the four sisters in the "Chrisman Sisters" picture, which has been widely copied in historical works. You have a postcard made of this picture taken by Mr. Butcher. Goheen Valley in which the homestead was located was named for several families of the name of Goheen who settled there, taking homesteads, according to Ruth Chrisman, the youngest sister in the picture.

She also gives the following information: To the extreme left of the picture as I would look at it: The sister there is Hattie, (Harriet Susan) Chrisman, born March 1, 1870 at Waverly, Missouri. She emigrated with her family to Nemaha County about 1883. They later emigrated to Custer County in 1887, and took homesteads north and east of Broken Bow. The dress worn by Hattie Chrisman was a brown and white percale. The horse standing by her was "Bet." Hattie married Charles Samuel Tooley, in 1897 and they lived in Broken Bow for many years. He was a Nebraska State Senator.

The smallest sister in the picture, standing in the center, holding a hat, was Lizzie (Elizabeth DeCalmo) Chrisman, born February 15, 1856 at Waverly, Missouri. She also emigrated north with her family. The house shown in the picture was on her homestead in Goheen Valley. The dress worn by Lizzie was brown and white Gingham. She married Randall B. Sargent, and they lived north of Broken Bow on a farm, until retirement age when they lived in Broken Bow. Their children are all follows: Glen Sargent of Missouri; Charles Sargent of Broken Bow; Irene (Mrs. Alan Dewey) of Halsey, Nebraska and Kenneth Sargent of Wisconsin.

The tallest sister in the group is standing back of "Lizzie" and this is Lutie Belle Chrisman born February 24, 1866, at Waverly, Missouri. She also emigrated with her folks to Nebraska in 1883. The dress worn by Lutie is also brown and white checked gingham. She married George B. Sweeney and they had four children: Lutie now deceased; Rita (Mrs. Walter Thornton) of Broken Bow; and Ruth (Mrs. Moie Lowenthal) of Chadron; Malcolm, also deceased. She married a second time, William Minor of Tecumseh, Nebraska.

The youngest sister in Ruth Chrisman, who in at the extreme right of the pictures standing beside her pony, called "Jessie." She is wearing a brown and white percale dress of the same pattern as her sister, Hattie's. She was only 11 when they came to Custer County, and is still living at, Broken Bow, Nebraska. She has been a nurse and it was only a few years ago she ceased working at her profession. She recalls events of the early settlement in Nebraska very clearly. She always disliked this picture very much, because of her hair hanging down over her forehead. In her words she said "I looked like a horse thief."

We all cherish the picture very much and are proud to have it used in your collection.

Sincerely yours,

ESTELLE CHRISMAN LAUGHLIN