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IOWA FARM LETTERS, 1856-1865

*Edited by Mildred Throne**

The financial depression which began in the East in the fall of 1857 struck the Iowa frontier during 1858. Hardly had the farmers recovered from this setback when the first years of the Civil War brought renewed hardships. The following two groups of letters, written by tenant farmers in Jones and Delaware counties, illustrate what the Panic of 1857 and the Civil War meant to the small farmer of the West.

One group of letters, loaned to the Society by Miss Alice M. Jordan of Beeville, Texas, were written by Miss Jordan's great-grandfather, Ephraim Gard Fairchild when, as a young man with a small family, he moved to Jones County, Iowa, from New Jersey. The other group, written by John Kenyon and his wife, Sarah (and a few by Sarah's sister, Mary Ellis), to their relatives in Rhode Island, describes the life of a farmer in Delaware County, Iowa, his work, his illnesses and remedies, and his financial difficulties both in the panic years and during the Civil War. The letters cover almost the same years: the Fairchild letters, 1857-1858; the Kenyon letters, 1856-1865. Neither family had sufficient funds to buy land; both men were tenant farmers during the years covered by the letters.

Delaware and Jones counties are contiguous, lying in the second tier west of the Mississippi River in north-central Iowa. Both had been open for settlement for some twenty years, so that land prices were fairly high compared with the frontier lands farther west. In Jones County the average price of land was \$11.00 per acre in 1860; in Delaware County, not so thickly settled, farms had an average value of \$7.00 per acre in 1860.¹

The Fairchild and Kenyon families both had relatives already living in

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¹*Iowa Comparative Census, 1836-1880* (Des Moines, 1883), 267, 271. Jones County, with a total acreage of 364,160 acres, had 228,082 acres in 1,438 farms in 1860; Delaware County, with 365,440 total acreage, had 156,460 acres in 1,262 farms. *Ibid.*, 245; *Soil Survey of Iowa, Report No. 56: Delaware County; Report No. 57: Jones County* (Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station, Ames, Iowa, May, 1929).

these counties, relatives who would help them get a start. John Kenyon lived with his father-in-law, Richard Ellis, who owned 87 acres of land in Oneida Township, Delaware County. Ephraim G. Fairchild's uncle, Jeremiah Gard, who owned 120 acres in Wyoming Township, Jones County, had evidently provided for his nephew before he moved west, since Fairchild became a tenant farmer for Oliver I. Bill as soon as he reached Jones County.²

The letters are here reproduced exactly as written, except that periods have been used to indicate the ends of sentences. The letters have also been paragraphed where possible. Letter-writers in the mid-nineteenth century used little punctuation or paragraphing, thus often making reading and comprehension difficult. All the Fairchild letters were written by Ephraim and were sent to his parents in New Jersey. The Kenyon letters, written by both John and his wife, Sarah, were addressed either to John's mother or to his sister and her husband in Rhode Island.

LETTERS OF EPHRAIM G. FAIRCHILD, 1856-1858

Pleasant Ridge³ March 23 1857

Ever Kind and affectionate Father and Mother and all the rest of the friends. I take my pen in hand to write a few lines to you to let you know that we are all well at presant and hope these few lines may find you all the same.

I will try to tell you some thing aboute our journey oute west. we had a very slow trip. the carrs run verry slow all the way from Jersey City up to Dunkirk so we did not make connection with the train from their and had to stop there from 2 oclock in the afternoon untill 2½ oclock wednesday morning. then we Started for cleveland and arrived there aboute noon

² Information on these families was obtained from the federal population and agricultural censuses for 1860. The State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, has copies of the agricultural census books in manuscript, and microfilms of the population censuses. Ephraim Fairchild, in 1860, was 32 years old, his wife Eliza 32, and they had four children, two girls aged 10 and 8, and two boys aged 5 and 3. John Kenyon, in 1860, was 34, his wife Sarah, 31; they had three children, two girls aged 10 and 2, and one boy aged 6.

³ Pleasant Ridge is an area in the center of Wyoming Township. A "mushroom" town named Pleasant Ridge grew up there during the building of the railroad through the county, but it soon disappeared. *History of Jones County, Iowa . . .* (Chicago, 1879), 495.

and missed the train there again. we had to stay there till about 4 o'clock in the evening. then we started for Toledo and there we made connection with the train going to Chicago and there we had to stop about 4 or 5 hours longer. then we started about 9 in the evening for Dunleath.⁴ we arrived there about 9 or 10 on Friday morning and there we met Uncle Jerry. he started from home on Wednesday and arrived at Dubuque on Thursday and on Friday we crossed the Mississippi on the ice with the horses and wagon. then we started for Uncle Jerrie's.

we got as far as the 11 mile [sic. mile] house. then we put up and in the morning we started again and went about 1 mile and broke the arm of the axle tree. then we was in a fix. no house nearer than a mile but Eliza⁵ and the children got out of the wagon and went on to the 12 mile house afoot and Uncle and I unloaded the things into another wagon and fixed up the wagon so as to get to the 12 mile house and there was a blacksmith shop and the smith thought he could fix it. so he went at it as soon as he could and when he got it fixed it was about 2 or 3 o'clock. then we started again and traveled on until night. then we put up at Ozark with a man by the name of E. West. they were very nice people. the next morning which was Sunday morning it thundered and lightened and rained quite hard until about 9 o'clock. then it stopped and about 10 Uncle said he thought we had better start before the river at Canton⁶ got so high that it would be dangerous. so we started and got across the river safe and went on home. we got to Uncle's about 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon all safe and sound but mudier going I never saw in my life.

I shot a partridge chicken out of the back window this morning. I have seen a good many of them. there was as much as 25 or 30 in the flock when I shot that one. we saw hundreds of ducks Sunday when we were coming. . . .

Wyoming April the 9 1857

. . . yesterday morning when I got up . . . Uncle Jerry was going off after a load of hay and asked me to go along with him. so I thought I

⁴ Dunleith, Illinois, the original name for present-day East Dubuque.

⁵ Eliza Fairchild, wife of Ephraim.

⁶ Ozark was in Brandon Township, Jackson County. Canton, on both sides of the Maquoketa River, was in both Brandon Township, Jackson County, and Clay Township, Jones County.

would go as I was not doing any thing for the spring is so backward out hear that we have not done anny thing yet toward farming and there does not appear to be anny thing else to doe at presant. I was going to plowing last monday but the ground was so frosen that i did not go at it. that was town election day and Tuesday it snowd quite hard the most of the day. yesterday morning there was quite a tracing [of] snow but it was all gon before night. . . .

we started off after hay. we went down to bear crick and crossed it on the big pararie to a man by the name of Blabers but he had soled all of his hay so we turned round and went out to Wyoming. there we stopped at the post office. . . . then we went on up toward Matison [sic. Madison] over hill and dale through mud and mire about five mildes to a man by the name of Old Tom Bender as he called him self. there we found some hay for \$8 pur tun so we got a good load and as much as the oxen could eat and dinner for three of us for four dollars. we got loaded up and readdy to start about four oclock. then we had about 7 mildes to drive the nearest way we could come so we started and found a verry good road the most of the wa[y] home. we got home about eight oclock in the evening and all most bushed. . . .

on the 28 day of March the next saturday after we arrived here Mr. Oliver Bills the man that I was going to farm for had a raising to put up the house for me to live in and invited Uncle Jerry and the boys and me to come over and help. so we went over in the morning and before we got over my hed began to ache and continued to ache all the fournoon and I felt quite chilly. so I went home before the house was up. . . .

I like the looks of this part of the west verry well. i think that I can plow and harrow out hear without being nocked and jerked about with the stones as I allways have ben in Jersey. I think if Father and Mother and the rest of the family was out here I should have no desire ever to return to Jersey again. but they are not out here nor I dont expect they ever will all be out here but I think if they was out here they would make a living easier than they can in Jersey. . . .

our box has not come yet that we have heard of. our house is within 100 yds of the school house but there is no school there and I dont know as there will be this sumer. . . .

Wyoming Sunday April 26th 1857

. . . I believe I toled you about how we got along from Dubuque to Uncle Jerries but did not tell you how much it cost me. \$14,75 cts just for our Selves for Uncle did not charg anny thing for his time nor for his expences. I had to pay \$5, for the horses and wagon and pay for their feed besides and \$1, doller for mending the wagon which with our bord and lodging all together made \$14,75 I believe. well then I sent down for my box. Henry Bill Mr. Olliver Bill[s] sun went down after it and I worked for Mr Bill in henries place while he was gon. he was gon three days and Mr Bill charged me three dollars for the use of the team. the Bill for the box at Dubuque was \$30,5 cts. the box cost me all the way from Dover hear \$34,92 cts besides the time I worked for Mr Bill 4,30.

we unpacked the box last Monday the 20. we found every thing in good order except some rice that was all through the box and the peper that was in the banbox with the hats was all spilt and my fether bed was naled fast to the bed of the box and we tore it some gitting the bed of[f]. every thing else was in good order I believe.

I have bought a stove. it is the same fashion of Fathers. I got it in Wyoming. it cost me \$24, besides the pipe and the pipe cost me \$1,87 cts. I got 2 iron boilers 1 tin wash boiler 1 tin tea kittle 1 skillet 1 gridiron 1 tin teapot and a large griddle. I bought 91 lbs of wheat flour at 20/⁷ pur hundred one smoked shoulder at 1/ pur lb some pickeled pork at 10 cts pur lb some eggs at 10 cts a doz one bottle of pepper sauce for 25 cts one peck salt at 1/ pur bushel $\frac{1}{4}$ tea at 75 cts pur lb.

I pulled the box in pieces and then I went at it and plained it up and made a table of part of the bords and a cupboard of the rest. I made the cupboard the same length and the same width of the box and about 18 inches deep and made Eliza a foot bench and two milk beds out of the scraps. I made a trundle bed sted while we was at Uncle Jerries and put rolers under it.

We have got to keeping house once more. our house stands within about 4 rods of Mr Bill house and about 8 rods from the stable and in the

⁷ This symbol probably means "shilling," a term which Fairchild uses frequently. Until 1857 foreign coins circulated in the United States, and the term "bit" or "shilling" was used to refer to the Mexican *real*, which had a value of about 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents. See *Catalogue of Coins, Tokens, and Medals . . .* (Washington, 1914), 7; Allie M. Lett, "The Search for a Shiling, A True Story of Territorial Days in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* (3rd ser.), 1:40 (April, 1893).

same field whare I am farming. Mr Bill and his wife appear like verry nice people. we moved day before yesterday. Mrs Bill has ben in twice and Mr Bill has ben in 3 or 4 times. they fetched in some tea milk and today just before we sat down to dinner Mr Bill came in with a bowl full of green corn. so I guess we are a hed of you yet. we had some boiled beanes and some short cake and some stewd apples with the corn and it was so good that we all ate untill we liked to hurt ourselves.

I commenced plowing yesterday for wheat but the ground was frozen quite hard in some places. we have had a verry cold and backward Spring. there has been severel snow storms since we came out hear. a week ago last Friday night it snowd quite hard and on saturday morning the snow was good shoe deep and did not all go off until sunday. some of the men that had their ground plowd last fall has got their wheat sowd. . . .

A great bargon. Mr Griffin the man that ones [owns] that good Spring and 160 acres of land 5 or 6 acres broke and plenty of timber on it will sell the hull lot for \$1000 one thousand dollars. . . .

Wednesday the 29 . . . I have ben plowing 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ days this week and one last and have got about 7 acres plowd. you said Mother wanted to know how manny times I had ben to church. the first sunday I was sick. the next sunday I went to meeting and we had a verry good sermond and I have ben two sundays since but the minister did not come and last sunday there was no meeting. . . . you said two that Mother wanted to know how my money holds out. well it is getting low. I believe I have got \$31,86 cts. I have not got anny cow yet nor hog but I have bargoned for a hog. it will weigh 100 lbs or more. the price of it is \$4. I bargoned for it with Mr Gardenor or Jesse and I partly bargoned with Mr Bill for a cow but his wife found it out and she would not concent to let her go. I was to have her for \$30, and \$15, dollars down. . . .

Wyoming May 17th 1857

. . . you said you wanted to know how we liked this part of the Country. well for my part I think I like it a good deal better than I did Berkshire Valley. it is so much easier tilling the ground here than it is there and I believe Eliza likes it as well and the children appear to be verry well sattisfied. . . .

Well I will tell you how I are getting along with my work. I have sowd seventeen bushels of wheat and seven bushels of oats and are a going to

plant about ten acres with corn. I have got my corn ground furrowd one way and part the other way and that planted. I had Uncle Jerreys three youngest boys yesterday after noon to help me plant and we got a nice piece planted. I have got about one acre to plant with potatoes that is plowd. I have not planted much garden yet. I have got about a peck of potatoes planted and some onion seeds planted. I bought one bushel of potatoes the other day of Mr Hamilton and paid 75 cts for them and I bought two bushels of wheat of Mr Sudley Bill a few days ago for 75 cts per bushel and before I got it away wheat came up to \$1, pur bushel so I have had some good luck since we came out here. I dont know how much flour is worth now. I was over to town the other day and they said that wheat was coming up so I got one hundred of first rate flour for twenty shillings for fear it would be higher. I have got my hog home and he is a nice one. I feed him three pints of wheat a day.

Uncle Jerry is farming quite strong this sumer. he has sowd thirty eight bushels of wheat and two bushels of oats and is a going to plant twenty or twenty five acres with corn. he is going to run a breaking team this sumer. . . .

I think I shall want what money I have got to live on untill I can rase some thing. I was offered a lot of land the other day about 20 acres for \$10, pur acre on trust. it lays right acrost the rail road⁸ from the school house about half a mile from Uncle Jeries and I want Fathers advice about it. it belongs to Mr Sudley Bill a piece that the railroad cuts off from his farm. . . .

I have finished planting my corn and potatoes. I planted about 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ bushels of potatoes. . . . we had a misionary here to dinner today and Uncle Jerry two. he is around hunting up all the presbyteriens he can find and is going to organize a presbyterian church in Wyoming tomorrow.⁹ . . .

Pleasant Ridge June the 14 1857

. . . you said in your letter that Mother wants to know whether I think

⁸ This was probably the roadbed for the projected Iowa Central Air Line RR, which was never built under that name. After several changes in name, the road eventually became a part of the North Western system.

⁹ This was the Rev. George E. Delavan of Maquoketa, who, on May 17, 1857, helped organize a Presbyterian church in Wyoming Township. One of the men signing the articles of incorporation for the church was Fairchild's uncle, Jeremiah Gard. *History of Jones County*, 498-9.

I can make a better living here than I did in Jersey or not. Well Mother that is a hard question for me to answer yet for a sertenty for I cannot tell about it untill fall when I get my crops gatherd but one thing is certain I dont have to work as hard here as I did in Jersey to get in my crops. my wheat looks first rate. It is up about half leg hy and looks black and rank and is growing very fast. as for my corn I cannot tell much about it yet for it has been a verry poor spring for corn here so far. in the first place there was a failier in the seed and I had my corn all to plant over again. then the squirrels commenced digging it up in a few days after I got it planted and they kept at it quite strong and I tried to ketch them at it but they was to[o] cunning for me for some days but at last I found them out last tuesday. I went into the cornfield and shot six throught [sic] the day and wednesday I shot one and one on Thursday and two on Friday and yesterday I went down to the field but could not see anny so I think they are getting scarce. well I have just bin down to the edge of the corn and it has grown quite smart since I saw it yesterday. . . . I am going to commence plowing my corn tomorrow if all is well and it does not rain. my potatoes is just coming up. the oats looks nice but they dont interrest me as much as the rest of the crops for I dont have any of them. I have just as much ground with wheat as I put in with oats. oats is not as proffitable to rase here as wheat so I take my share of the oats in wheat. . . .

the rise [sic. price] of land here is more than 4 times as much as it is out in Jersey. unboken prairie is now worth \$10, pur acre. . . .

We had a presbyterian church organized in Wyoming 3 weeks ago today. there was 4 or 5 taken into the church by letter and there is several more that will join as soon as they get their letters. Uncle Jeremiah and Joseph Bryan was chosen as deacons. next sunday will be communion. . . .

Wyoming June 28th 1857

. . . Eliza is as well as can be expected. we have got a fine little boy. it was born on the 19 of this month. one weak ago last friday morning. it weighed ten and a quarter lbs. Eliza has been smarter than common except two light chills. she sets up some in the bed and gets up every day and has her bed made. the children is all well and enjoy themselves here first rate. the girls go to school every day. . . .

July 1 1857

. . . Eliza has mised her chill. she has not had any since sunday. the

baby does appear well now and grows nicely. we have Eunice Crowe to work for us. . . .

I have got my corn plowed through once and you had better believe there is plenty of weeds in it. I was thinking of going at it the other way this afternoon. the corn looks quite well out here now. some of it is about nee hie. there is a good deal of ground lying idle in this part of the country that was planted with corn and did not come up. Mr Prat planted about 70 acres and has not got any. . . .

Uncle says if he was in my place he would not buy that land now for he thinks when the railroad fever dies away land will be cheaper than it is now. . . .

I have not had a taste of fresh fish since we came out here. we talked some of going to the wapsay [Wapsipinicon River] a fishing but we did not get off and now I am so busey that I cannot go. I bought one salt codfish since we have ben out here and paid $8\frac{3}{4}$ cts pur lb for it and they ask 10 cts pur lb for them at the stores. . . .

Wheat looks first rate here this sumer. my wheat is now almost up to my hips and is not hedged out yet but I think it will soon be for I saw two heads out in sight this morning. I think I will have 150 or 200 bushels of wheat to my part if it keeps on doing as well as it is doing now but I may be mistaken in my calculations. . . .

I was to two raisens last weak. one to Mr. Johnsons and the other to Mr. Hammeltons. both were dwelling houses. . . .

Wyoming July 25 1857

. . . I have had to work verry hard this weak. I have ben plowing my corn for the last time and plowed and hoed out my potatoes for the last time. I was three days hoeing and pulling out the weeds out of my potatoes. I finished it last night. this morning I sowed my turnips in the corn and I thought I had done a nuff for one weak so I sat down to talk a few moments with old friends in Jersey by the way of pen and ink and paper.

Eliza does not get very strong yet but she is gaining strength now quite fast. she does not doe her work yet. Eunice staid here four weeks then she went to a nother place and we got Martha Cady one of our neighbours girles. she has ben here most a weak. the children is all well and hady [sic. hardy] as pigs and as saucy as ever. . . .

Mother wants to know what kind of a house we live in. well I will tell you something about it. it is a log house and quite rough at that but it

makes a shelter and does very well for a summer house. the room is not very larg but it does quite well for us for we have but little to put in it but we live in hopse of having some thing more some of these days.

our crops looks first rate at present. the wheat will be ripe about the first of weak after next or the third of aug. Mr Bill thinks it will yield about 30 bushels to the acre. if it does I shall have some to sell to get a cow with. . . . Oh how I wish Henry was out here now to help me gather my harvist for it is going to be a tite rub out here in harvist. . . .

it was quite backward here in the fore part of the season but it is not sowe now. we have not had much rain here for four or five weaks and the ground is getting verry dry but vegetation does not appear to suffer much yet. my corn grows very fast. some of it is higher than my hed now and does not show the tosel much yet. our garden looks first rate. we have had three good messes of beans and have had as many onions as we wanted but I am afraid we shall loose them for the gofers has got to work in them.

Pleasant Ridge Aug 9, 1857

. . . yesterday . . . I went into the harvist field and worked hard all day cradeling and binding. I put up 22 dozen shieves and was quite tierd at knight. I have got up 125 dozen shieves and have got more than 4 acres cut yet but the rest of it is not so heavy. last weak I went over towards the Scotch Grove Prairie about 4 miles from home to help Mr Carpenter one of Mr Bills brother in laws in his harvist and staid there 3 days. then this last week on tuesday he came to return the work and he worked 3 days and I worked 2 days while he was here and then worked yesterday. it is quite a ketchey time for harvist. it has rained more or less for the last two weeks. . . .

well Ed I wish you was out here now to help me in my harvist. I would put you through like Sixty and keep you on wheat bred and butter pork and potatoes and such lite diet. then after we got through harvist we wold take Some of the Prairie chickens and maby we would go to the wapseypinican and take some of them big fish that lives there.

I have got 9 or 10 acres of wheat and Oats to harvist yet and dont now as I Shall have any help for I have no money to pay for help and there is so much harvisting to do that hands are very scarce and wajes very high. it is from \$1,50 to \$2,00 pur day and found. . . .

Well my onions looks very well. some of them has got bottoms as larg as the bottom of a good sised tea cup but the gofers are at work in them

but he workes it to keep under ground all of the time and pulls them down into his holes but I think he will have to work Sharp if he gets his half of them for I think we get more of them than he does. . . .

we dont have any sunday school here this summer nearer than Wyoming but we have meeting here in the school house quite regular this summer. Sometimes it is free will baptists and sometimes presbyterien. Mr. Delevan the Presbyterian minister preaches for us in the school house and over to town every 2 weeks. to day was his turn and I staid at home and kept the children and let Eliza go for she had not ben to meeting before since we came from Birkshire. . . .

Aug 14, 1857

Friday morning well I thought I would set down this morning and write a little more as I have not had any chance to mail my letter yet. it has been good wether all this week except a little Shower on Monday untill this morning it has rained very stedly and looks as likely to rain on all day. I have been a putting in the best of likes all this week in my wheat. Monday I worked all alone and on Tuesday morning I had 3 hands come on to help me. well we went into it and worked on untill noon then one of them went off and then one of the others went of[f] about 3 oclock and the other went off about 5. so I was left all alone before night. the 3 made out 2 days work. then I worked alone again wednesday and Thursday four noon. then Uncle sent Dick to help me in the after noon. well I have got my wheat all done except about one acre. my oats is plenty ripe enough to cut so I shant have rest yet for I shall have to go right into my oats as soon as I get through with my wheat. well I Shall have to Stop riting for it has stoped raining and I must go over to Uncles and grind my cradle scythe. . . .

Eliza wants me to tell you about the churns that they use out here. the largest are about 5 gallons and from that down to two quarts. I saw one the other day about as larg as that jar that I gave P J. Mrs Bill fetched over a hull churning of butter milk one day in a pint cup and it was not full. their churns are mostly stone and you would laugh to see them churn. they set down and take their churn in their lap and churn away. . . .

Pleasant Ridge Aug 30 1857

. . . We have had a good deal of wet wether here to[o] as well as you have in Jersey and it has put harvist back very much but I think if it keeps good wether a few days longer the most of the grain will be secured.

some have got all through and others are mostly through. I have got two or three days work to do yet at the oats and a little over six hundred shieves of wheat to draw and stack yet and have got twenty seven hundred shieves now in stack. Mr Chs Gardener has got his a most [sic. almost] thrashed. the wheat crops did not take much damage by the wet weather. corn looks first rate out here now only it is rather late. it is so wet and cool that it does not ripen very fast. our potatoes looks first rate. Father spoke about his onions looking nice. well I have got some nearly as large as the top of a tea saucer I was going to say but I think I was going to stretch it to much. but without stretching it at all they are as large as the top of a tea cup. and we have got plenty of cucumbers. we have got a common fish tub all most full of pickles laid down now and the vines are fresh and bare good yet. I had to pay 50 cts for the tub. all barrel kind is very high out here. a new pork barrel costs about 14 shillings. our mellons looks first rate but they do not get ripe yet. we have got a nice lot of pole beans and they are as full as they can stick and begin to get big enough to eat. . . .

Sept. 6

Well I thought when I commenced this letter I should have it finished and on the way to old Berkshire long before this time but it is very busy times out here yet. I have got my grain all in stack at last and am glad of it I tell you. I was not quite a month at it but it did not lack much of it I tell you. I commenced the 4 of Aug and finished it on the 2 of Sept. Mr C Gardener has got his wheat thrashed and soled. he took 100 bushels down to canton yesterday and soled it for 60 cts per bushel and some of the merchants down there did not pay but 50 cts. I believe the price of wheat is 65 cts down to the river. oats are selling for 36 cts per bushel here at the rail road and potatoes 36 cts. I am going to help Uncle S Hammeltons boys thrash their grain tomorrow and then they are going to return the work when I thrash my grain. . . .

One thing more. yesterday I got up and went out to my hog pen and found my hog as dead as a hammer. he was sick for 2 or 3 days before he died and I tell you it was quite a loss for me as much as the loss of 8 or 10 dollars. . . .

Sept 10

Kind friends I thought I would write a few lines more this evening as I have a chance to send over to the post office. . . . I have been helping

Arthur and Edward Hammelton at their thrashing. it will take about two days more and we have ben at it two days. I expect to thrash mine next week.

well I expect H Tebos and his family will be about Starting when you receive this or before. but if he is not gon tell him to get some rope or straps and lash up his trunks good for it is a hard place on the cars for trunks. and tell him there will be a man come in the cars before they get to Chicago a check agent and he will take your checks for you and give you cards for them and will take you and your trunks from one depo to the other for 25 cts apiece that is for each ticket and the children goes free and you had better let him doe your business for you for you cannot doe any thing with them in Chicago. he will give you a ticket for your ride and when you get there go out to the runners and ask them which one of them will take you for them tickets and show them the tickets. but be shure and not let them take you a stray nor pull you in two. . . .

well my chance for sending this over to town to night is past so I will write a little more. we thrashed out 534 bushels of oats yesterday and got done before night but to day we have not done as well. we have ben thrashing wheat and broke down before night. . . .

Pleasant Ridge Sunday morning

Oct 11 1857

. . . Mother said she wanted to know how the railroad was gitting a long. well it is all laying still now the hole length of the road and they think it will not open again before spring. they had to stop for the want [of] money.

Well I expect you have heard from Henrys folks by this time for Uncle wrote a letter the day they arived here and mailed it the next day. they got here one week ago last thursday after noon. . . . Henry went to work for Uncle gitting hay and Caleb went to work for Mr Gardener and Will and Eef went to work for Mr Rumery diging potatoes. . . . Henry has bought him a stove. it is a second handed stove. he got it of one of the irish men that lives here on the railroad. he gave \$20 dollars for it. they say it is a first rate stove. they have not got their goods up from the river yet but I believe Henry is going to send for them this week. . . . Henry has had more calls for work aredy than he and his boys can do. this fall he has the offer of corn to husk and potatoes to dig and to help thrash and he has had the offer of from 40 to 60 cords of wood to cut this fall. . . .

Well now I will tell you a little about how I am gitting along with my work. I have not got my grain thrashed out yet but I expect I shall have it thrashed the last of this week or the fore part of next. I have worked 4½ days at thrashing for the neighbours and they are going to help me in return when I thrash. I have plowed 4½ days for Mr Bill and I have got my road tax worked out. my road tax was two days work. my potatoes is fit to dig but I have not dug any of them yet except one bushel to eat. they have not roted much yet but they begin to turn black some. I shall have a nice crop of potatoes if they doe not rot. my corn is not ripe enough to husk yet but it is out of the way of frost. we have not had any frost yet to doe any hurt here on the ridge but in the low ground there has been frost enough to kill the corn. my corn is good. Mr Bill husked out two bushels for his hogs and it took 23 hills for a bushel. my beāns is not a going to amount to much. they run too much to vines and did not begin to set untill it was to late for them to get ripe. my onions is a quite size but the most of them has grown to much to tops but we shall [have] plenty for our one [sic. own] use and perhaps a bushel or two to sell. I have got a nice lot of pumpkins this fall and some as large as I ever saw. I have got a lot of butiful turnips some of them nearley as large as a tea saucer. our mellons are all gon now. the best of them was gon when Henrys folks got out here. . . .

we have regular preaching here now. the Reverand Mr Delevan has moved up to Wyoming and preaches every Sunday in town and every two weeks here in the red school house and every two weeks over north west in Mr Pauls neighbourhood. so we have regular preaching both in town and in the neighbouring school districts and have no excuse for not attending public worship when health and wether permits. . . .

Pleasant Ridge, Nov 16th 1857

. . . there is thousands of prairie chickens oute here and lots of rabbits. Henry and some of the boys went out the other day a hunting and they caught 15 rabbits and 2 chickens. . . .

Sunday 22

. . . Mr Delevan preached to day. last Sunday we had a United Breth-eran to preach for us. he preached a very smart sermon. . . .

It has been quite cold wether out here for the last two weeks. we have had 3 or 4 little snows and today it commenced snowing about 10 oclock and has snowed very studdy ever since. it is now 7 or 8 oclock and it

snows yet. it acts very much as if it was a going to be quite a snow but I hope it will not for there is a good deal of corn to husk yet. I have not got half done husking yet. I have husked about 380 bushels of ears and have got near 500 to husk yet. Uncle has not got near done husking yet. he has got two thirds of 10 or 11 acres to husk but I should not be surprised if our corn had to lay out in the field through the winter but if it does it will make good picking for the Prairie chickens. . . .

I went out the other day to see if I could find me a cow. I partly bargoned for one but I have not been after her yet. the price was 25 dollars and I was to pay for her in wheat and corn at 50 cts for wheat and 20 cts for corn. I think I shall go after her tomorrow if it is not wether to work at the corn. . . .

Dec 6th 1857

. . . now I will tell you a little about my farming in the Garden of the world. I sowed about 10 acres of wheat and had 212 bushels and about $3\frac{3}{4}$ acres of oats and had 149 bushels. I planted about $4\frac{1}{2}$ bushels of potatoes and dug about $117\frac{1}{2}$ bushels. I planted about 10 acres with corn and have husked 660 bushels and have got about 150 or 160 bushels picked and throwed in a pile with the husks on. I shall have 800 or a little more bushels of corn this year but it is not hardley worth cartting off at present. it is selling for from 15 to 30 cts per bushel and wheat is very low to now. all kinds of produce is down very low and money is very scarce. but we must try to git along without much money. I have not had but 25 cts in money yet for all the work that I have done in Iowa. I have paid for my thrashing in wheat. it took 30 bushels and I have got a cow and paid 30 bushels of wheat on her at 50 cts pur bushel and have to pay 50 bushels of shelled corn yet at 20 cts pur bushel making \$25 dollars for the cow. the cow appears like a verry good cow. she gives about four quarts of milk a day. we churned yesterday afternoon and got two lbs of butter and now we have got butter to eate of our own manufacturing and it appears a little more like living. we have plenty of beaf this fall. I have taken beaf for butchering. one man gave me 24 lbs for helping him butcher one beaf. . . .

Tuesday evening 8th

All well this evening except Eliza and she is almost sick with her teeth and ears. It is very disagreeable wether here now. we had 2 or 3 weeks in Nov that felt very much like winter. it snowed and blowed and frose at a

round rate. it froze my ink all to death in the cubbord but about the first of this month it moderated and the snow all went off and it was muddy I tell you and since then have had all kinds of wether. sometimes it raines and sometimes it snows and blows but the most of the time it raines and is very muddy. . . .

Dec the 20 1857

. . . Well I have got my corn all husked out and cribbed up. my hull crop was 813 bushels. my share is 406 $\frac{1}{2}$ bushels of ears. I have got my farming work all finnished up now but I am some in debt for hired help yet. . . . we see the Prairie fires burning around some this winter. there is two or three fires to knight but they are at a quite a distance. there is lots of chickens around here now but I dont get time yet to go out after them but I think I shall have to take time before long and go out and see if I can catch some of them. we begin to get chicking hungry and as we have no tame ones I must try to get some of the wild ones.

One thing I must tell you about. I have shot one thing out here that I never shot before. that was a fat hog. they doe not chase their hogs here to ketch them when they want to kill them. they take their gun and go to their pen and shoot them down. I have shot six beaves and one hog this fall. I have helped dress eleven beaves and two hogs this fall and winter.

I must tell you about our flower. we have just as good flower as the best superfine genesee New York inspected that you can get in the town of dover and . . . we have as good bread here at our house as ever Mr Youngs of Dover baked in his big oven. . . .

Jan 4th 1858

. . . we have enough to eate and drink and enough to ware and have had enough to doe so far. I have helped to dig one well and have helped to bucher [sic] several hogs since I wrote last. last Friday the first day of the new year I went over to Em Crones and him and his brother in law and my self went out after some Prairie chickens and we hunted through the cornfield and over pararies until dinner time with out any success. then we went to Williams and took dinner. then after dinner we started out again and we soon came a crost a larg flock and I shot at them and made the fether fly some for they carried off the meat further than we could see. then we went on further and found some more and their fethers carried them off fast enough without shooting at for we could not git within two guns shot of them. So we made up our minds that it was of no use. . . .

I have not got but one [hog] to winter and that is not very large but it goes quite Smart and I have got plenty of corn to feed it out for I have not soled any of my corn yet only what I let Mr Van have for my cow and he has not got that away yet. Yesterday he had a constable sale at his house. he was pressed for \$100,00 dollars and could not raise the money so the constable levied on one log wagon worth \$65 or 70 dollars one good old cow one colt 2 year old past worth 90 or 100 dollars and one bull which he had refused 80 dollars for and the lot did not bring onley 103 dollars. Henry Tebo got the colt and cow for the sum of \$63,50. he made a great bargon if he has good luck with them.

Feb the 21 1858

. . . it has been very hard times out here this winter although there is a great abundance of provision and that is cheap and good but money is very scarce and hard to be got. groceries is quite high but not as much so as they have been but they are cash articles. therefore we have to git along with as little as possible. . . . the rail road is laying still yet but there is some talk of its going on this spring and I hope it will for I think it would make the times seem better. there would be a call for flower corn and potatoes and a great many other things. there is a railroad now in progress about twenty miles from here.¹⁰ it is running from Dubuque to Anamosa the County Seat of this County. they think to get it completed by the first or middle of May. . . .

Mar 7 1858

. . . I am preparing to build a Shanty. I am a going to trade my corn for lumber. I get my lumber for \$15, pur thousand and get \$25 pur hundred bushels for my corn delivered at the saw mill. I am a going to build my shanty on Uncles land. yesterday I was getting some logs to the mill. I got the logs of Uncle Jerrey. . . . I am going to have it sawed into sheating to lay the shingles on. . . . if you dont get another letter from me quite as soon as you have been getting them you must not think hard for this letter will take the last stamp that I have got and I have no money at presant. money is very scarce here this winter but I will write as soon as I can. . . .

¹⁰ This was the projected road from Dubuque to Keokuk, to run through Anamosa, Marion, and Iowa City. Because of its twisting route, it was known as the "Ram's Horn." Although the whole project was a failure, the road did reach Anamosa on March 9, 1860. *Ibid.*, 343.

April 11 1858

. . . . I am a going to lease a strip from the railroad up to the timber line. I have got my seller part dug and my lumber part carted. I got some logs of Uncle and had them sawed . . . and as for what I am a going to doe this summer is more than I can tell my self as yet. but I think to work on the railroad if it starts and if it does not I shall work for any one that wants work done. I have not taken any farm to work this Summer. the times is so dull here that mechanics are working their farmes themselves this season although there was land enough to let this season to those that have a house and team of their own. but I shall try to doe the best I can. I found some stamps in the letter last evening. it did not say who they was from but they come very acceptable for I have not had any money since I wrote before onley a five cent piece that I found the other day. . . .

May 17th 1858

. . . our cow has come in and done well. we are raising her calf. I intend to make an oxe of it. the calf is three weeks old this morning and we have churned four times from her and got as much as eleven lbs from the four churnings. I think the cow will keep us in butter this Summer and raise her calf and have some milk for the pig and some for the babies. my hog had the misfortune of breaking her shoulder about two weeks ago and I was afraid that I should loose her but she has got partley over it and is doeing better now than she ever has done before since I have had her.

I am making very slow progress with my house. every boddy is so busy with their teams that it is impossible for me to get a team to do anything but I think after planting I shall be able to get my lumber and nailes and shingles and put up my house.

it is very hard times oute here yet. it is impossible for any one to get a dollar in money for any thing. grain is not worth carting off to the river. Wheat is only worth from 30 to 40 cts pur bushel around here. I believe it is worth 45 and 50 cts at the river. corn is selling for 15 and 20 cts. potatoes is worth from 10 to 15 cts. butter is 10 cts and 11 pur lb. eggs is 6 cts pur dozin. wheat flour is worth at the mills \$1,75 pur hundred. oats is worth about 20 or 25 cts. . . .

June 6 1858

. . . it is the hardist times here that I ever saw before in my life. it is impossible for me to get a cent of money any more. I have not had 25 cts of money since the first of January last and there is nothing that the farm-

ers have that will fetch money nor even groceries. Mr Bill took some butter over to town one day last week and they would not give him but 8 cts pur lb and they would not let him have Shugar for it at that. he had to take a pair of over alls for the butter and borrow some money to get his groceries with. chease is worth but 4 cts pur lb. eggs is worth 5 cts pur dozen. potatoes and corn is worth about 20 cts. wheat from 35 to 40 cts pur bushel.

But we hope that we shall have better times here in less than a year. there is a prospect of the rail roads going on now before long and we have an election this month to vote for and against banks here in this State and I think there will be no danger but what we shall get the banks.¹¹ the banking law is all ready made and I understand they have got the bank notes all ready plated and ready for signing and if they get it they will Soon have their money in circulation. And I think it is time that we had some banks here if we can have good substantial ones for money is so scarce here that some are making money for them selves without a law. there was some fellows taken up yesterday in the town of Monmoth about 5 mildes east of us for passing counterfeit money and one of them they found the dyes with that he made the money in and Six hundred dollars of bogus gold already coined and ready for circulation.

Thursday morning the 10th we have heard something more of the particulars concerning those counterfeiters. they did not find the dyes with them but proved that they had them. there was not quite six hundred dollars of the money but about five hundred and twenty and he had not got it quite redy for circulation for he had not got it galvanized. he had it hid in the woods under a log. it was all in one dollar pieces. there was two of them that they got and they have taken them to jail to await their trial.

Well now I will try to tell you something about the weather here. we had about two weeks of plesant and fine weather in the latter part of March. then it began to be wet and cold and it appears to get worse and worse. it is not quite as cold now as it was in April but it is quite cool for the time of year. I have not saw but one or two persons yet this sumer

¹¹ Banks had been prohibited in Iowa under the 1846 Constitution, but with the passage of the new Constitution in 1857, which provided for banks, the 1858 legislature passed a Free Banking Bill and a State Banking Bill which were submitted to a vote of the people on June 28, 1858. Both bills passed by an overwhelming majority. Howard H. Preston, *History of Banking in Iowa* (Iowa City, 1922), 75, 82, 84.

with thin close on. it will be quite plesant for a day or two at a time then it will cloud up and blow and rain and thunder. we have had more thunder since the first of March than we had last season all together and such heavy rains. why it rains sometimes untill it seames as though it would float the counetry away. it has taken almost every bridge in the country and some of the mill dams. it has taken off L D Brainard's dam at the mill whare Kiney lives and it took of[f] the dam at mill rock where I have had all of my grinding done since I have been oute here and two other damms on the mineral creek was damaged a good deal. one of them was the mill where Henry and me got our lumber and I expect Henry is over there now to work helping repare the dam. the watter cut around in front of the mill and took out all of the logway and some of his logs and about two thousand feet of oak lumber. the roads is washed and damaged a good deal and the corn crops have suffered very much by being washed out and covered up. but the wheat crops looks fine yet and I hope we shall have a bountifull harvist and a good time to gather it. . . .

I have not got my house up yet nor all of my lumber together yet. it has been such bad going all the Season that I could not get to go after it and I have got disapointed about getting nailes for corn. So I shall have to adjourn building untill I can turn myself some other way and I dont know when that will be. . . .

July 11th 1858

. . . I expect to go into harvist tomorrow. I am a going to help Mr E E Gardner two days then I am going to help Mr W E Cady some. I dont now what wages will be this Season but I dont think it will be as much as it was last Season. I hired Som last Season and had to pay \$1,50 pur day and bord and some charge \$2, pur day.

our wheat and oats crops is not a going to be near as good as they was last Season but the farmers think they will get about a half crop but corn and potatoes looks first rate at presant. I have about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres planted with corn and potatoes and beanes and some other vegitables and the corn and potatoes and beanes looks first rate and I think the potatoes will come on now. they was planted late and it has been so wet this Season that I could not get them hoed out untill yesterday. I got Some help and dressed them out and they look quite nice but my Sod corn I guess will come out rather slim. the ground was broke very early and it has been so wet that the hasle nut brush and grass and brake has come up so thick that

it has choked the corn but I think the stalks will run up and make some fodder and if corn comes out as good as it bids fare for now there will be plenty of chances to husk on shares. I have had some offers to husk on Shares now.

there is Strong talk of the rail roads going on now. they think it will commence in about two or three weeks.

There was a man along here just now a hunting harvist hands and said he would give 10 and 12 Shilling per day for hands and pay the money and I tell you it was quite a inducement but he lives twelve or fourteen miles from here and Eliza and the baby is so miserable that it is imposible for me to leave home to go so far away. . . .

Aug 8th 1858

. . . The farmers has not got through with their harvist yet. it keeps such wet wether the most of the time that it is a slow job to get the grain gathered and after it is gathered it is not worth but little and Some is not worth gathering at all. I dont think that the wheat and oats crop to take it on an average through Jones County will be more than one fourth of a crop.¹² Uncle Jerry sowed fifty bushels of oats and I think it a chance if he gets more than 200 bushels. I have helped him two days. one day I mowed oats and yesterday I helped to draw and Stack. Dan G and Birt took one team and Caleb and myself took another and we drawd and Stacked Thirteen loads a piece and put them all in one Stack and there is as much as twenty loads more to draw and it will take the most of it to top out the Stack that we worked on yesterday. I expect to help draw again tomorrow if it is weather fit to work at it. we want to get Uncles harvist gathered as Soon as we can and then go to gathering hay. there is lots of hay this Season or grass to make hay off. I was over on the big Prairie the other side of the crick last Friday to help a man Stack Some wheat and it looks like a big meadow as far as you can see. the grass up full nee high and as thick as it can Stand on the ground. . . .

Oct 3/58

. . . we have very fine weather here now. it is as nice weather as I ever saw at this time of year. it is very dry and warm. there has not been any frost yet here on the ridge but I believe there has been Some light frosts on

¹²Both the wheat and oats crops were a total failure in Jones County in 1858, due to rust. *Report, Iowa State Agricultural Society . . . 1858* (Des Moines, 1859), 289.

the low grounds. corn has ripened off very nice here this fall. my buck-wheat is ripe and I have got it part out. . . .

Monday morning the 23 . . . it is quite cool this morning for the time of year and I fear there will be a frost before this cool Spell passes over. it has been quite cool for several nights and it appears to keep getting colder every night and if there Should be a frost and cut off the fall crops I dont know what the inhabitants of Jones County and Some other of the adjoining Countys will doe for provision for themselves and family and say nothing about their cattle and hogs for the wheat and oats crops is almost an entire failier and what wheat there is makes people sick to eat it.¹³ there is hundreds yes thousands of acres of wheat and oats to that has not been cut and the news papers gives an account of Several horses that had been turned into the uncut oats which have died by eating the rusted oats. there is no vegetable that has come to maturity yet this Season in this part of the country but what has been blighted. beanes peas cew-cumbers mellons beats onions and all kinds of garden sauce cabbage is not doeing any thing and I dont think that potatoes will be much of a crop and there is Some parts of the country that the corn is entirely cut off by the late hail storms. I was out through a portion of clay township one week ago last Saturday acrost Scotch grove Prairie and into the grove and I tell you it was a desolate looking place. there was hardly a stack of grain to be Seen for Several mildes. the corn was all entirely cut off by hail.

there is some people here that have no grain that are trying to find work where they can get wheat for their work and they can not get it.

they are offering \$1, pur bushel now for old wheat at the mills on the road down towards Dubuque at Canton and Ozark and they are asking \$5, pur barrell for flour at the mills. . . .

LETTERS OF JOHN AND SARAH KENYON, 1856-1865

Aug 29 [1856]

Plum Creek¹⁴

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . Our goods have all arrived. the last that were sent came on the

¹³ This was because of the rust in wheat and oats. See Note 12.

¹⁴ Plum Creek, an affluent of the Maquoketa River, flowed through Delaware County, from southeast to northwest. Evidently the Ellis farm, on which the Kenyons lived, was near the creek.

same time as our others. The stove hearth was broken into and the slide pretty well smashed. we can have the hearth mended I think but the slide is past pancakes. everything else came safe and sound. . . .

Our folks went after plums yesterday and I went a week ago. we travel in ox teams here over the prairies. It was the first time I had been in the woods since we came here. it was really refreshing to get in the shade and hear the birds sing. When I buy my farm I shall be near my timber. . . .

Mr Parsons sold his farm a week ago for 27 hundred part prairie and part timber joining and is going farther west about two hundred miles. his wife feels very bad about it. I dont blame her. I have always looked at their place and thought it the prettiest place about here. there house stands near to the grove of timber. but any of the Westers are ready to sell any-time to make money. Mr Parsons paid six hundred for his two years ago so he thinks he will sell and go and make another good farm and sell again. I warrant all he has done to this one was to break and fence 20 or 30 acres. there was an old log hut on it that they have lived in since he came here without a window and so cold in Winter they have to go to bed to keep from freesing. that is what one of his boys told here. isnt it a shame a man worth between three and four thousand to live so but its the way of the world here.

We get along and do without things here that would be impossible in the East. I should dread for our neighbors to come and see us if they were not going to stay and settle. if so well and good for they would soon see the way of Western life. . . .

Wednesday forenoon I must try to steal a few minutes to write so as to get my letter finished to send to the office the first time any one goes that way. it is not here as it was to Ashaway. you have to write and wait an opportunity to get it to the office. five miles over those prairies is quite a peice. Tomorrow there will be ten or a dozen men here to thresh wheat so I shall get but precious little time to write then.

Our freight bill was enormous on our goods but I dont see what we could have spared very well. we get along with what we brought. all that I have bought is half dozen cups & saucers. we have to snub it but that is what I knew we should have to do but as long as we have enough to eat I shall feel pretty well satisfied. We dont have any dainties but we shall live just as long and perhaps be the healthier.

Molasses is eighty five cts per gallon sugar you can get 6, 8 and 9

pounds for a dollar. I did want to do up some plums but I cannot this year. great large ones most as big as peaches.

green tea such as we get there for forty cts is one dollar. We shall have to go on credit for a year then if John has his health I hope we can do pretty well. He has got his cow most paid for. I feel very thankful for that. and [he] has bought two more heifers. I dont know how he will manage to pay for them but if he cant why he must sell them. it is not like buying clothing or any such thing for they will sell and keep gaining too. I really want to keep them through the winter if possible as he has got his hay cut and they would sell then for a great deal more than what he gave. He bought them to a sale on three months credit last month for eighteen dollars of the same man he bought his cow of. . . .

a mink killed [Clara's] old white hen and part of the chickens so I had to take six of the chickens into the house. . . . Mrs. Robberts gave she and Bub¹⁵ a Shangai rooster and pullet. their names are Tom & Bet. I expect every night will be their last for the roost is not good for any thing and the owls minks wolves and hawks are ready to help themselves the first opportunity. If they will keep off untill John can build a roost I will thank them very kindly. . . .

I begin to dread the Winter. they tell such cold stories about here. they said last Winter was awful but generally the Winters are very mild so much so that the ground dont freese untill about January but last Winter their floors would ice when they mopped and the tables when they washed dishes. Mr Barnard froze his great toe one night. it happened to get out of bed when he was asleep. . . . people as a general thing clothe the west with to much romance I take it. its not all gold that shines. . . .

[Note from John Kenyon on same letter]

. . . we have dug a well since we have been here and I finished stoneing it up yesterday. I have been a thrasing this week. we had 1,00. 15 [sic. 115] bushels wheat. they use thrasing machines here. it requires 8 horses and ten men to tend them and will thrash from 3 to 5 hundred bus [bush-els] a day. they put me in mind of a cotton hopper but make a heap more noise and its a right smart machine. that is a hoosier expression out here. you can use it for a by word. . . .

¹⁵ The Kenyons had two children in 1856: a daughter, Clara, aged 6, and a son, Ellis B., aged 2.

Sept. 25, 1856

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . Such a snake as John killed in the garden I never saw nor you either I guess. it was as large round as my arm and very long. Ann saw it first. it was crossing the path right ahead of her and the way she *hollered* was some. John and I was digging potatoes close by and Mary¹⁶ she come post haste with a stick with Clara and Bub at her heels from the house and John ran from where he was opposite and rapped him with his hoe. Mother and the girls went after hazlenuts last week. she saw a great yellow rattlesnake as large as this one but she did not dare to strike it. the bushes was so thick. Wolves carry off the neighbors pigs here every few nights. I should not dare to go far after dark here but Mary and John dont mind it or any of the rest of the folks around here.

we have got no hen roost yet and I expect every night I shall lose my hens. Eggs are from 15 to 20 cts per dozen wheat last week was down to fifty cts per bushel. rather of a hard look for the farmers but all that have sold around here get 75 cts. I wish you could get some for fifty cts which would bring your flour at 3.00 a barrel. . . . Molasses here is 90 cts a gallon. we cant afford to use it. I have not seen a peice of gingerbread this long while and dont expect to for a year to come. . . .

I have been anxious for John to get a peice of land but he dont seem to feel in a hurry. its rising every day but he thinks because he has no money he cant buy. I think that those that have no money can make money by buying and improving. He says he likes here the best of any where he has ever been in the West. It appears very healthy here. . . .

There has been a report that there was a colony coming from the East to settle within a mile of us in sight. there will be four Presbyterian ministers. there will be seven or eight ministers . . . then as there is four now. . . .

We dont have any new clothes. I will tell you when we do. John has had a pair of boots and shoes and bubby has got to have some shoes. Clara and I will have to have some before Winter is over, and that I hope will carry us through.

John has been sued since we have been here. I was outrageously mad to see him so imposed upon and he paid the costs like a dunce when he was not obliged to as they did not go according to law but he is so mighty

¹⁶ Mary Ellis, Sarah Kenyon's sister.

good. . . . It was about his not working on the road.¹⁷ It rained one day so he did not go and the next time he was not warned of it untill ten o'clock in the forenoon and the thrashers were all here and he could not leave. The law allows them ten days notice and not less than three at any rate and that by the man that sees to the road and he did not come near John. . . .

Plum Creek Oct 1st 1856

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . I sometimes wish we had a tract of land here so as to sell it in a year or two but whether John will or not I dont know. I think he can do well raising stock if he dont buy any land around here but land is raising and the country filling up in here so that he wont be able to pasture and cut hay for any great length of time. . . .

. . . I wish John could get his dagueratype taken but he cannot short of Dubuque unless he should happen to run in with one of those travelling saloons up to Delhi when they come along. . . .

We went down and offered Mr Robberts fifteen dollars per acre for his farm cash down to fetch on his Mother and sisters.¹⁸ he likes [it] here better than any place that he has seen out West. he has been in Wisconsin & Minnesota. is going to put up a lumber mill at Stillwater Minasota. Mr Robberts asked him twenty so they did not trade.

Mary has worn out those new shoes that you and she bought out there and has got her a pair of calf skin ones. I wish I had some buck thorn berries to make some syrup "for to take" now and then. I wish you would ask Capt Bills wife if she has not got some and if she has I would like two or three seeds in a letter and I will plant them in a box and grow them. The children make a terrible fuss over senna.¹⁹ Soon as John gets a minute [to] spare I want him to get me some butternut bark and I will try that. I dont know of anything else to prepare for physic. . . .

Delhi Dec 1st 1856

[John Kenyon]

. . . I am well as usual for me and have enjoyed good health here on the prairie. I think more so than it is around the timber and towns. it is

¹⁷ Most pioneers paid their road tax by working on the roads.

¹⁸ Evidently she means that the money from the land would enable "Mr. Roberts" to bring his mother and sister to Iowa.

¹⁹ A purgative made from the dried leaves of the senna plant.

quite sickly at Delhi at present. there was three funerals there to day and one to morrow and there is several more cases that is doubtful. they die with the typhoid fever. I have been to Delhi to [a] funeral to day. went as bearer. they could not get enough in town and had to come out to Plumb Creeck for me and John Bernard. . . .

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . I should have written before but had no paper so I just gave John the last gold dollar I had and told him to get me some postage stamps and paper. he got the paper but instead of stamps a lot of tobacco. . . . you must save all of your old clothes for me. they are just as good as new here and I will dress up my young ones "right smart." They are all eating hill corn and milk and grunting about how cold they be and how lyey there corn is. . . . We are very anxious to get some seed of the Chinese sugar cane another year. then you see we will make our own lasses and sugar then. I must stop and go to bed for it is most nine oclock. I generally go to bed before eight and get up about nine. thats the way others do around here in very cold weather. . . .

We are all quite smart now. I made me a new hood out of Anges old dress skirt and have to wear it nights for a night cap. with the remainder I made Clara a quilt. Daytimes I wear Bubs sunbonnet. . . . You spoke about knitting stockings. I really wish we did have some for I guess I shall friz here. Mary swept off a heeping dust pan of frost off one window this afternoon.

. . . Monday night a weasel come in our hen roost and killed two pullets. They killed all of Mr Jones. thirteen for Mr Bob and quite a number for Barnards folks. I fear we are going to have a harder winter than we did last. The people around here say they had no such storm here last Winter. That money you sent was very acceptable for Clara and I are about barfoot. just as soon as the roads get clared if they ever do John will go to Dyersville. We have not had any molasses for two months. . . . Our light consists of a saucer filled with coons oil with a rag in it. still we are as chipper as birds and I have never seen the day what I wished myself East to live. . . .

[John Kenyon]

. . . Monday night it commenced snowing and blowing and it lasted for forty hours. such a storm I never saw since I can remember. the snow is about twenty inches deep in the woods where it is not drifted and on the

prairie it is from one inch to 16 feet deep. you could not see two rods some part of the day. tuesday John Barnard went to hickery grove to drive his cattle and he got lost in the prairie and did not get back untill the next morning. his folks was worried about him so his father in the course of the evening started to look for him and he got lost before he got ten rods from the house and the first thing he knew he brought up all standing at his own house and concluded not to try it again untill morning. . . .

Iowa, July 5, 1857

[Sarah Kenyon]

I am all alone excepting Clara and the day is as long as the moral law. I have to write with one eye in the garden and if the cattle was up the other would be in the wheat feild. . . . John has gone to see if he can get a dog. its nothing but a puppy but perhaps it will bark and do a little good. . . .

its hot as blases here in the middle of the day so I had begun to get dinner. I must tell you what it was. well pusly [sic. pussley: purslane or portulaca] I was picking. I butter and sweeten [it] a little and play its string beans. try some. the first I cooked I stewed in that little tin cup you sent to John. it pleased our folks . . . but I was half starved and it was all that I could get that had got large enough and I was fairly surfeited with greasy pork and white bread. we have no potatoes now. let me see I was picking pusly looked up and the wheat was full of cattle so I started off on the full canter. when I came in hailing distance I clapped my hands and screamed . . . and all went out like fun but Fathers white steer. Steere by name. he would go one way and tother way and every way even to the right way but would not go far enough to do any good. after all I chased him up stream and let down all the pair of bars there was in the feild rapped him on the rump and bid him begone. I had to keep my eye on them till John came to dinner to put the fence up. . . . Jones cow tore down the garden fence but John was here to fix that and one of the calves was in by the time he was back to the house again.

But the cattle dont begin [to compare] with our hens. they are eating up every thing in the garden and we have to chase them the whole time trying to save a pea & bean. they will pick and eat bean leaves as fast as they would pick up corn. dont lay an egg. we made a soup with one [of] them the other day and I will make another. . . .

Lewis Box was here yesterday to change some eggs to set. I hadnt any

so he wanted to know if I could lend him a rooster. yes says I here is one. Bill was that minute coming for the beans. says I catch him he cant run very fast. I had tied his legs up so he could not get around so fast and I could give him a whack now and then so he soon ca[t]ched him. I gave him the shears and he undid his legs and started for home. every time I look out I expect to see him coming back with him. the boy wanted to know when we should want him. I told him we would let him know. that wont be till beans are out of the way and thats some time. its five oclock and I must go and feed my chickens. I have been up much as one dozen times since I began this. Now Clara will have to watch for me. . . .

Hay is going to be very light this year. we shant get more than enough for the cattle. the railroad contractor has great droves of fattening cattle which eat up all the grass besides its very light. I am dreadful sorry I was in hopes John could get enough to buy him a team. . . .

Oneida Aug 8th 1857

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . My health is rather worse than usual now. I have had a dreadful misery in my side a week or two back but its some better now. I put on a plaster and am taking Blackmans balsam. . . .

It seems like Fall it really scares me. every body is prophesying that the corn will be cut down with frost. I hope not for I have promised my family that they shall have a nubbin of corn one of those days to make up for their poor fare now. My pig looks first rate considering the fare she has sour milk and pusly. I want a Johnny cake myself too. anything but living where you dont have no meal. Our folks are trying to get up some hay. there has been so much rain that they dont get along a bit. . . . We have commenced making pickles this morning. . . .

I see by the Westerly Echo that Missouri is spoken of out East. its all Missouri here no going to Minnesota scarce once in a while one to Kansas but all seem to think the most of Missouri. I think its peoples duty to go there and try to make a free state of it as much so yes I think more so than to go off and pay money to foreign missions. . . .

Monday afternoon . . . Aunt Delby . . . took home my nipperkin [half pint] pail. is going to make me some vinegar with a vinegar plant she has. it springs out a new one from the old one. then they take it off put it in a gallon of water with a tea cup of mollasses and in eight days you have vinegar. . . .

Thursday eve 7 Oclock

Plumb Creek Oct 1st 1857

[John Kenyon]

. . . I am rather tired to night. I have been helping Mr Segar this afternoon draw corn. he helped me thrash. that is the way we have to manage out here. change work with one another. to morrow I have got to help Mr Box next day Mr Cruse then I shall be square with them all round. our wheat crop was rather light this year. only about 15 bushels to the acre. the season was rather wet. it run to straw mostly. we have had frost on the 28th and 30th but corn is out of the way mostly with the exception of some that had to be planted one 2 or three times. I had about 3 acres of sod corn that was not quite out of the way but I cut it up yesterday and this fore noon. my sugar cane just begins to top out. it looks like broom corn. it grows so high that you have to look twice to see the top of it. the folks think a good deal of it out here. good many has little patches of it out here this year experamenting on it. Mary has seen some of the sugar and molases. she thinks it is very nice. Mr Cummings out towards Delhi has made him a mill to crush it with. it is made like a cider mill only the roollers are smooth. they crush it and get the juice out then boil down for molases then boil it little harder for sugar. . . .²⁰

The mice and cattle plagued us very bad. they are posessed to get in to the corn fields. you have to keep one eye on your work and the other on the cattle. last week Mr Stephens cattle got into his corn and one of them has died. one of his cows and two others they dont think will live. our cattle was over there the same night. Mr Jones went over after them. I met him down to Cruses and help[ed] him drive them home. I did not get to bed untill half past eleven. . . .

Friday noon . . . I went to digging potatoes. the gophers are eating them the worst way. I shant get more than half crop say 75 or 80 bushels. I shall have plenty of corn and potatoes if nothing hapens and some to sell. I have onions turnips cabbage pumpkins croocknecks beets carrots and a fat pig in the pen that will weight pretty close to 2,00 lbs now and I have plenty of stuff to give him so you see that I shall have something to

²⁰ Sorghum, or Chinese sugar cane, was being planted throughout the state in these years, as a substitute for the expensive southern sugar and molasses. Sorghum molasses was made in quantity, but farmers were never successful in making sugar from the cane.

eat this winter if I am lucky. I am going to get me two or three pigs this fall so I can raise my own pigs and have some to sell providing I am lucky.

Sunday afternoon. I am going to Delhi to morrow to carry some wheat to mill and sell some chickens to buy bub some shoes. we have over one hundred [chickens] all together and all we can get for them is 15 ct a piece. they sell chickens by the pair out west. so much a pair. . . . pork is going to be high out here this fall. folks think it will be ten dollars a per hundred fresh by the hog. corn is 30 cts now and it will be down to 25 in less than 4 weeks. molases 80 cts beef 5 and 6 Dolls per hundred lbs. flour is 2.25 to 2.50 per hundred eggs 20 cts butter 25 cheese 16 cts. . . .

Dec 5 1857

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . How I wish it was possible for us to help you but I dont see as we can now.²¹ hard times reaches Iowa. that is as far as money is concerned. money is out of the question here. if people are obliged to raise money they have to sacrifice the whole nearly. If we should sell every thing that is saleable that we own we could not raise fifty dollars and then how we should ever get started on life through the winter I could not tell. If I live to see another Summer and have my health at all we shall try to help you a little at a time. . . .

I have never written to you how we lived for I knew it would worry Mother but we have snubbed it in true Western style. last Winter I came very near giving up but we received that money from home . . . and I do think it saved my life but only for one year. perhaps was it gain, who can tell. We had a cold Winter and a cold house without plastering or Clapboards with but very little meat no butter no sweetning. white bread and potatoes and stewed pumpkins was our living. I was so that my appetite was all gone at least for such things. our milk was gone but John bought Brownny and he used to bring me in a cup full of the strippings when he milked and I began to recruit right away. the warm days came and I staid in my garden all the time I could and I was the strongest this summer I ever was since Clara was born. . . .

This fall I went and gathered hasle nuts so last night John Clara and me sat up untill ten oclock getting them out. what do you think of [sic. for]. well to sell to buy me some lasses [molasses]. I havnt tasted any since last

²¹ They had recently received news of the death of John Kenyon's mother.

Spring and some dried apples. we have no souring or sweetning of any kind use no tea or coffee no spices no grease of any kind except butter but I shall have a doughnut when the pig is killed and all the pork ham sausage &c I wish. once John went to Dyersville this week to get him a pair of boots but they wont trust such hard times. he bought the children two doughnuts and you never saw how well pleased they were. I have made butter enough so far to buy what little we do have. I have the sage for my sausage paid twenty cts for quarter of a pound. if I was going to be at liberty next Summer I would raise sage and red pepers for sale as well as for my own use. . . .

Jan 23d 1858

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . I am sitting by my own fireside to day and very pleasant it seems to me. havnt got settled as yet but hope to by Spring. havnt a chair or teacup in the world but I dont mind that if I can only be by myself. . . .

the times grow harder and lighter here every day. produce sells for mere nothing. wheat 30 corn & oats 15 butter 15 eggs 10 but groceries and dry goods high as ever. . . .

[John Kenyon]

Sunday eve, Jan 31 1858 . . . I never saw such time since I can remember as we are having out west. I have not had a dime of my own for the last six months and do not expect to have one for the next six to come. . . . We are having beautiful weather as any one could wish for. no snow to speak of. . . . some difference from last Winter. . . .

we have had two great wolf hunts²² out here about 70 to 1,00 turned out. the first hunt on horse back with guns and other weapons. on the second there [were] only about 40. they got 6 in the ring and drove them in to rouges grove and left them. they start from diferent places and come in a circle out center about mile and half from us where they have a flag raised so they can see it for miles. they have drove them in from off the prairie so they are quite thick about here. Mr Roberts one of our neighbors got up night before last in his shirt he said an[d] chased them away from the house. pon my soul he says the beggars followed me right bang up to the house. . . .

²² For these circular wolf hunts, see William J. Petersen, "Wolves in Iowa," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 38:65-9 (January, 1940).

Saturday June the 20th 1859

[John Kenyon]

. . . I have planted about twenty acres of corn and 7 or 8 acres of small grain. I finished planting corn yesterday rather late to plant on the sod.

there is quite an excitement here now about horse thieves. there is [a] regular band of them all through this state and Minesota. they are stealing horses all round us and the inhabitants are geting very desperate. they lynched a man about four miles from us last week. they had suspicion of him. some one had lost two horses. they went and told him he must produce the horses in so long a time and he did so and that was enough to satisfy them. he was one of them. eight men seized [him] carried [him] about two milles to a little grove and strung him up by his neck and held him there to make him confes where and who the rest of the gange [was]. then they would let him down to breath. they served him so several times but could not get any thing out [of] him. they was so mad that they hung him up and left [him] to die but two of the men felt a little conscience smiten and went back and cut him down. he had about gone up. they think he will die any how. The sherif have arrested part of them. . . .

Paul I did not tell you about my going to Pikes Peak. well I did not go but I have seen men that has been and they give hard account of [the] country. they say there [are] thousands on their way back and some have actuly starved to death. it is the greatest humbug that ever was known in the west. hundreds have gone from around here sold out every thing and come back with nothing. there will be a good deal of suffering amongst the emigrants. It cant be avoided. they are sending provisions on to them but afraid it will be to late for some. . . .

Aug 1st 1859

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . Well our wheat is pretty good this year so we shant have to buy flour I hope. oats good barley good taters one and two in a hill sorghum good garden *sass* good all but the beans. . . .

when I have a new dress I will send you a piece. I have not decided which to get a red one or a *yaller* one. I think as I cant afford but one I shall get the two colors combined. havent bought a yard of calico or any other dress material since we came to Iowa. I have made over patched and repatched untill every thing is used up. . . .

I must go and help John pull some pusly for the hogs. I guess between

us they will not starve. I forgot to tell you what bad luck I had with my poultry. I have not a single young duck and but two chickens. have set eggs enough to have had a hundred. my rooster the hogs killed and Johns red one has gone up or down. I guess he ate some corn that was strychnined for gophers.

[John Kenyon]

Friday, July the last I do not know what date but that does not make any difference in Iowa. I know one thing that is it is the height of harvesting and haying and I am flat as a pancake. been tied up in the house a week ago to day with a sore foot. they call it a carbuncle. . . . last night I put on a soap and sugar plaster and that seems to bring it to a focus. . . . all the way I can get round is with a crutch I made myself. . . .

I have my wheat all down but the question is when shall I get it up. I will trust in providence for that. I have about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre of oats to cut then comes my haying but I will not worry you with my croaking. . . .

Sunday Oct 15th 1859

[John Kenyon]

. . . the cars leave Nottingham for Manchester to morrow 8 or 9 miles west then a week from to morrow they go farther west.²³ . . .

we are going to buy a mate to fred and we have got a yoke of oxen named bob and tom. now for the frost. we had one every month but one that was July. we had one 4th of June killed every thing then we had one the last of august caped the climax killed every thing dead as door nail. I had about 20 acres of corn mostly sod corn. I shant have twenty bushels. wheat crop good 60 bushels. oats I sowed one bushel and had 20. barley $1\frac{1}{2}$ and had 7. potatoes 90 bushels and the best I ever saw. . . . Sorghum little over $\frac{1}{4}$ acre 30 gallons splendid better than the sale molasses. we have cabbage beets carrets turnips &c and some for our own use. 4 hogs fattening and 7 shoats to keep through winter if we dont eat them all up. if I could have 2 or 3 hundred dollars 2 months ago to bought oats with I could have made a spee [?] in the operation. they could [have] been bought then for ten cts a bushel. next spring they will bring 75 cts quick.

²³ The Dubuque & Pacific RR began construction in 1855, building as far as Dyersville. By December, 1857, the road reached Earlville in Jones County (at that time called Nottingham), and Manchester in the fall of 1858. This is now a part of the Illinois Central system. John F. Merry (ed), *History of Delaware County, Iowa, and Its People* (2 vols., Chicago, 1914), 1:171.

now for the market prices. wheat 52 cts and flour \$1,60 to \$2,00 per hundred. corn none in market. heard of one or two loads of poor soft stuff sold for 25 ct. oats 22 cts. beans white \$1,30 cts onions 50 cts Sorghum 50 ct per gallon potatoes 20 ct per bu beets 35 tomatoes \$1,00 per bush crab apples \$1,00 butter 12½ cts cheese 9 and 10 cts eggs 8 cts per doz pickels 4 Dolls per bbl. I must stop for the present for prairie fire is comeing down on us full split and the wind is blowing a perfect gale.

Monday eve Oct 23d . . . and now for the prarie fire we had week ago yesterday. I went to window and looked out and it was about 1½ miles off[f]. I could [see] nothing but smoke and it looked awful dark. I grabed the hoe and scythe and started for our south road about 20 rods from the house. when I got there the fire had just reached the road. it come in the shape of a V and the flames roled higher [than] the waves on the ocean. it looked awfull to me. I was so frightened that I shook like a dog. . . . it had crossed the road. I run for life and put it out and followed it up the road ten rods or so untill it was past our land. I hurried back but it had crossed the road in another place and was within ten feet of the fence. Father Ellis and Mother and Ann was fighting of it like mad (as the english say) with foot mats rag rugs old peices of carpet coats and petticoats &c. we fought it to the corn field then it had to side burn about 20 rods then it had a clean sweep for the hay. stables and house chicken coops hogs sties all made of hay and poles but the house. Father and me stayed and fought it and the women folks cut it for the stacks and raked up all the old stalks they could. Mary she come just as the fire was comeing round the fields. she grabed bed close off[f] the bed carpeting any thing she could lay her hands on. . . . had all wet ready for action. on came the fire and how they kept it off[f] the stock the Lord only knows. I was [so] frightened that I dare not look that way. if it had not [been] for the female department everything would burn. they fought like heroes. Beaches and Joneses folks had almost as narrow escape as we but not quite so long. they had it about an hour and we 4 or 5 hours. they said they fought so hard they would come out of the fire and smoke and throw them selfs on the ground. they thought they was going up. I did not fight hard as that but I fought hard enoughf to burn off[f] my whiskers and hair so I had to have them cut. I looked rather red around the jaws . . .

Mr Campbell one of our nearest neighbors south of us killed a bear last week in his corn field. he rode up to him [on] horse back [and] fired one

barrel. his horse throwed him off[f]. the bear closed in with him. he beat him with his gun untill he broke the breech off[f]. then he used the barrel untill he killed him. the bear hurt him some on the arm and leg so he had to have a Doct. the bear weighed 200 lbs and he sold him to Esq Gillman at Notingham for the sum of twenty Dolls. I would not mind being scratched a little for that amount. there was a bear seen on hickery grove a few weeks ago. . . . The Almorak folks have seen signs of one up their. he carried off[f] Mr Harsons beehive. . . .

Sunday Nov [n. d.] 1859

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . John works like a nigger and its all to no purpose. there is something to drag us down the whole time. . . . the frosts have set us down from where we began. John has to work out to get corn to feed his hogs for they must be fatted to pay our fencing and breaking bills and I do his work. I have dug nearly all the potatoes between 30 and 40 bushels worked in the sugar cane patch one week pulled white beans carrots &c gathered all the seeds and husked a load of frosted corn cobs every day. There was no corn to it for the hogs 11 of them that just kept them from squealing while they was eating and that was all the good it did them and I am so glad that I can work that I wont change the West for the East yet. Its nothing to work if one has the strength to do it and I have been tough as a pitch knot untill I had this hard cold that laid me up for three weeks so I just kept the family from starving. there was two days Mary had to cook and then Clara did the rest. I had the sick headache once toothache once and the cholera morbus one day. that was all the time that I have lain by from my work that I can remember since sis was born. . . .

[John Kenyon]

. . . I have to work like a niger this fall and seems rather hard to farm it and then work out to buy corn to fat your pork on. I get four bushells of corn for a days work and the hogs will eat about one and a half a day but I have got a little the start of them now about twenty bushels. . . .

Bears are quite plenty here now. I hear of one being killed every few days. they have burnt over the prarie and timber so much in Minesota that they have left and the Indians have followed them to[o]. there is about 60 or 70 out two miles from Delhi come down a hunting the bears. they are only five or six miles from us.

the Nottingham folks dedicated their new school house last tuesday. they had a grand time. the Governors Greys a military company from Dubuque was out also the Buffalo Band. the ladies had a fair the proceeds to go towards buying a bell and in the evening they had a ball and supper also extra oyster supper. they also had a grab bag full of little trinkets 10 cts a grab. . . .

Seventh Day Eve January 28th 1860

[John Kenyon]

. . . Sally says she cant have time to write to night she has so many dishes to wash. she has four plates one bowl one tumbler and two tea cups and saucers. we have five in all now but we have had only one tea cup and saucer for months and months and months but we have enough to eat and drink thank the lord so wee dont mind about the other fixings. wee have about half a barell of Sorghum yet and wheat enough to do us as the hoosiers say. potatoes and vegetables of various kinds. . . .

I have been drawing wood this winter. I bought a lot of dead and downed wood just as it stood and lay on the woods for six dollars. I have sold nine dollars worth and have enough left to last me two years. I made a ten strike that time but it is the first time since I have been in the west. I have lost a two year old steer and a yearling heifer this winter and come pretty near looseing another. it got caut in the manger. I happened to go out early that morning so I saved him. I lost one the morning before in the same place. we have a very good school this winter. Clara and Ellis goes every day. we have a female teacher Miss Lease. . . .

I have been to Nottingham to day. brought home lots of things. I suppose you would like to know what I bought. . . . 3 yds of overhall cloth 20 cts worth stocking yarn 25 cts worth sugar a pen holder and pencil for C[lara] and a pencil for Ellis. I stopped and cut Mary some wood and she give me some sausage and doughnuts to eat and candy for the babies.

they have a splendid school over a hundred scholars. it has been quite sickly in and around Notingham this winter. putred sore throad and ty-poid fever. some six or seven deaths. . . .

they talk of starting a union store out here. they have their meeting the fourth of next month. the farmers want to get the highest market price for their grain and pork and so on and get their groceries at the wholesale prices at St. Louis and Chickago. Father Ellis sold his minks skins last

week 13 of them for \$19,50 cts. He has been to his traps to day and brought home 2 more. that is office seekers salary 3 dollars per day. . . .

now for Markets prices. wheat 81 to 85 cts per bu. oats 28 to 30 Corn 25 to 30 cts beans 80 cts to \$1,00 potatoes 30 beets 30 turnips 25 carrots 25 flour 2.50 per hundred pork $3\frac{1}{4}$ to $4\frac{3}{4}$ cts by the hog. beef $3\frac{1}{2}$ pr hundred hides green 4 cts dried 9 cts. tallow ruff 8 cts tried 12 cts candles 15 cts lb lard 9 or 10 cts eggs $12\frac{1}{2}$ butter $12\frac{1}{2}$ coffee 8 lbs to dollar sugar 11 to 14 lbs for \$1,00 dried apples 12 cts per lb peaches do [ditto] mackerel 10 cts lb codfish 9 cts whitefish 15 cts caught in Lake Erie. wood \$2,50 cord lumber common fencing and sheeting fine 15 to 17 dolls per M. flooring and siding 28 to 32 laths 25 per hundred shingles \$2,50 bunch. . . .

We have subscribed for the New York Tribune. Mary pays 50 cts and Father and me 25 cts each. it is a company concern.

Sunday Jan 30 1860

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . John need not make game about my washing dishes for he got in a bowl and I dont own any such article. I have six plates too. we are the poorest folks you ever saw but I would not own it to any body but you. . . . if we should sell every thing we could not pay our debts. Renselleer is very kind to us. I dont know where we should have been if it had not been for him. he let John have his oxen last spring. John was going to fat them and kill them to pay for them last fall but the frost took the fat things away so R told John he would wait another year. he sent us 26 papers they were of all kinds. some pictorials Frank Leslies New York weeklys &c. they are directed to Clara. she felt pretty *Big*. Mary paid our breaking bill. she holds us up by the seat of the breeches so we have not come down yet. she has let John have money a good many times. we should have straightened ourselves out if we had have had a good corn crop but we are waiting for our good luck to come all at one time now, and when it does rain porridge our basin will be right side up I hope. Now with all our perplexities we cant be what the world calls very good. I am glad we have some one to pray for us for prayer is something rare in the West. I heard one last 4th of July and two besides that the year before but . . . dont despair about us. the angels have their hooks in us and we shall be drawed in yet I trust. Why John does more in keeping from drinking gambling &c than Paul would to preach the gospel pray and all

the rest of the good things 50 years. John dont chew tobacco now either. He laid off the first of January and we drink tea and coffee now in its stead. quite a good exchange for me for we have to go without milk. . . .

my hens lay. I sold 2 dz. yesterday. now if I could have your price for them I should be well off for rations. John brought me home a big rooster last week but it took as much to keep him as one of the hogs so I sent off one of my ducks and changed for a little white one and took off the big ones head. John paid twelve and a half cents for him. he weighed six pounds.

Earlville March 12, 1860

[Mary Ellis to Paul and Ange Barber,²⁴ John Kenyon's sister and brother-in-law.]

. . . John has been quite well but the poor fellow met with a sad accident yesterday. he was in the woods splitting rails with another man — he went to take an iron wedge out of the log and the man with him accidentally struck his hand. broke the middle finger so that it lay upon the back of his hand. the others were badly mashed. . . .

. . . I went [to a party] last Friday night. there were over 150 present. had a very pleasant time. It was a *leap year* party. I took a *married man* for my partner and his wife took for her partner *the very one* I should have taken under other circumstances. . . . out west young and old married & single all go together — dancing, whist & chess playing charades &c is generally the program of the evening. It is all *fashionable* so no *wrong* done. . . .

[n.d., but evidently written between
letters of March 12 and 18, 1860]

[Mary Ellis]

. . . I want to talk with you about John and Sarah this evening. They have tried so hard to get along since they came west and it seems as though *bad luck* was there portion. I sometimes wonder they keep up the courage they do. you have no idea how poor they are for their crops have failed them every year yet but John has just looked it all in the face and kept steady to work and Sarah has done more work the three years we have been here than she ever done before. John is respected by all his neighbors

²⁴ John Kenyon's sister, Ange, was married to Paul Barber. All the Kenyon letters are addressed to the Barbers or to John's mother, before her death in 1857.

and loved too, and that is something. how he will bear up under this last misfortune I dont know. it comes just as his Spring's work comes on. . . .

Now Ange you hold a note or the family does against him and that note worries him more than every thing else. he often says if anything should happen to her [Ange] what would become of him with interest to pay &c not that he had any fear of Paul. I never heard him mention his name in the case.

If you would send him that note I will guarantee he will pay your part as soon as he can and not let the boys know anything about it. I let him have twenty dollars last Fall & will give him the note besides a two year old steer to match the one he lost if you will send that note and Father will give him ten acres of land that is already fenced and partly broke. I would do more but I have to help Father some. he is now five hundred dollars in debt so you can judge how much he is able to do. These hard times have made it very hard for Iowa farmers.

This is a strange letter for me to write but I felt it my duty to ask and tell you just how it was. John knows nothing of this. it is all my own asking. If you will send the note do send it as soon as possible. it would be such a joyful surprise for both Sarah and John. . . .

Earlville March 18th 1860

[Mary Ellis]

You cannot think how pleased I was to receive a letter from you so soon. I feel very grateful to you for what you have done for John. It was a great as well as a very *glad* surprise to them. You will never lose anything by it, for if the time ever comes when they can you will be rewarded.

I know them both well enough for that — they knew nothing of my writing untill the letter came.

John's hand gains but slowly. The neighbors are very kind and have promised to come and put in his wheat for him. . . .

John set down and cried like a child when he got your letter. Mother said when he came home after he hurt his hand when he came in the children run up to him and he burst out crying and said my poor children what will become of them. I'm so poor. he did not seem to think of it till he saw them. . . .

Oneida Monday March 18, 1860

[Sarah Kenyon]

Saturday we received a letter from you and was very much surprised at

the contents. I did not know which it was best to do laugh or cry but as John took to the latter I made up my mind to do neither as I could not laugh with very good grace on account of a big bunch in my throat and stomach and if I should cry there would be no one to keep order.

Now you want to hear from Johns *paw*. it is bad yet — cant use it at all but as he dont faint when I dress it now of course it is better. the one that had the end cut off when he was a youngster is worse than the one which was broken short off. his hand is much swollen yet. how long before he will use it I cant tell. My health has been very poor ever since he was disabled which makes it very bad. but I am better now. soon as I get my strength if I ever do I shall make things whiz. I have had the tormenteded [sic] cold or horses distemper that I ever had. first I was taken with an awful headache and cough. it seemed as if my stomach was raw. then I hoarsed up so I could not speak aloud. . . . the time I employed in blowing my nose & sneezing. Then I had a second seige of earache. Clara and sis was sick with colds at the same time. sis would cry half the night with earache and Clara groan the rest while John would have roared if I had not quelled him with morphene. Ellis was quite decent. he had his earache in the daytime. Mother has had the lung fever but is better now. I think if she had doctered in season she might have thrown it off but I was taken before she was and was not able to do any thing for her. as for me I am used to doctering myself. John was taken with the cold after me. I just put the physic and hoarhound tea to him nice and kept him on water porridge the next day and he came out bright as a new dollar.

Last Friday we were blessed with two little calves a *steer* and heifer. Saturday John and Ellis went to mill so I had to keep pretty busy so much I forgot to eat any dinner. our cows did not do well but I doctered them all day. one I think is doing well but Brownie is bad yet. Father has a heifer that is the same. she is as poor as a snake. I cant bear to think Brownie will get so poor but I expect she will and perhaps die. we feed her with boiled wheat oats roots flaxseed &c to save her if possible. the greatest of it all the cows changed calves. Brownie was the master cow she had her calf first. when the other one come she took to that and made her own go with the other cow. the other cow seemed perfectly satisfied.

About that note. well we thought we could have paid it before now but it seemed as if we were fated or cursed or something very like it. every [thing] has gone *tother end too*. early frosts in the fall and late frosts in

the Spring chints bugs wet weather sore feet sore hands dead cattle &c but I told John as long as our health was good and our lives spared we would try not to fret too much but I have seen days when the house could not hold me. I would go out and work and something not very much akin to gratitude swelled my *bussum* for of all things in the world it is hard to see everything laid to waste by the frost that was growing and likely to make an abundant harvest — just like catching a bird. get your hand on it but it would get away in spite of you. but I am going to try one more year that is if John can work and we have our health. all the hope I have is that the bitter is all in one place and by and bye we shall have a little sweet but if we all live I hope we may see better days so we can repay you for your many deeds of kindness. . . .

About sending money, I dont want you too. you need it yourself. We can grub through I will warrant. I should think we could return it in the fall but we have had such luck I dont dare think of any thing now. our crops have been so uncertain. any Eastern money is good here but Western money wont go at the East. Checks are the safest. No discount. sometimes people get a premium. how it is now I dont know. John had a check cashed for Uncle Otis when he was going home and got half a cent premium which Uncle Ootis give him for his trouble making 50 cts. . . .

Oneida Oct 10th 1860

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . We are all pretty well and enjoying life the best we have since we came out West — she is shaking off her shackles and with it I hope we shall. . . . John has threshed his grain had 125 bus of wheat 10 of rye 93 of oats and we have lots of corn, and 4 old hogs to fat and 13 shoats to eat. pork is selling first rate and they think it will all the fall. 4 cts live weight and generally it hasnt fetched that dressed. Beef is quite low. we are fattening the oxen and one cow. some wheat & oats to sell which I hope will make our debts look small if we have good luck.

I am awful tired to night. been digging potatoes with John this afternoon. when the taters & carrots are all out of the ground & the sugar cane made up I quit for the season. I have worked well this Summer. this is the first help that John has hired. had a reaper to cut six acres of wheat — all the rest he has got through with my help and the childrens. what do you think of that. He has put in 25 acres of sod corn and 10 of old ground . . . and such lots of pumpkins & squashes. and before I forget it we dont

see any signs of fall yet. when the frost does come I guess it will be snow. We have some [of] the best lasses you ever saw I will bet a goose.

Have we ever wrote you that we were going to move. John has took another farm of 40 acres. its about half of it broke. we shall have a house with two rooms kitchen and bed room. I wish their was a garret and pantry. I should be very grand then but I dont sport many dishes so their is some gain in that. We shall have to go without clothes one more year — then I hope we can have some but we have got along so much better than we ever have before I feel real thankful. . . . Mary declares she never will marry a farmer — their lives are so hard. . . .

[John Kenyon]

. . . my fingers are so stiff yet that I cant make much hand at writeing. . . . the neighbors helped me get in 6 acres of wheat and I hired a reaper to cut 6 acres and I have did all the rest myself with Sally and the children untill now I have hired me a man for a month at ten Dollars a month. the prospects look bright now. We have good crops and good prices for this country. I am going to farm about 60 acres next year. . . .

business is picking up in the far west. the cars pass four times a day at Nottingham now and seems kinder old fashion. . . .

now for the market prices. pork 4 cts live weight beef 4½ dressed wheat 60 to 70 cts oats 23 Corn none in market butter 10 cts eggs 6 a doz chickens 10 to 12 cts a peice beef hides green 5 ct. . . .

[Sarah Kenyon]

Oct 29 we have frost but the weather is warm yet. we have 60 gallons of mollasses. I am cutting carrot tops of[f] now. when I get them done I shall be glad. there will be over 100 bushels. . . .

Oneida Feb 23 1861

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . I have the headache about as much as ever this Winter but it seldom *floors* me nowadays. I have been making soap to day out of concentrated lye and it did not help my head any by a long chalk. . . .

Such a winter as we have had so far would make any body weep. cold as Greenland. snow . . . in the timber and banks to Johns neck on the prairie. the snow blowed so Saturday you could not see 3 rod and it has blowed just so much every snow storm. this winter is dreadful for our poor cattle with nothing but a shed and that made of hay and straw. John says he shall sell out before winter but I guess he will forget it next July. Some

were sowing wheat this time last year and now there is such a body of snow I fear & tremble for if wheat is not in early here it is a perfect failure. You spoke of our getting rich. we get enough to eat now that we could not always boast of. the clothes we have not come to yet. when we do I will let you know.

You spoke of politics. dont talk to me of that for I get enough of that here. . . . its all war here. they are drilling companies for *sarvices* right smart. Oh dear the *tarnal lection* [election] made awful work here. brought produce flat and what you did sell and get the money for perhaps the money would be worthless before you were home. I presume you heard of the banks suspending and smashing. they begin to talk of another smash but I hope not. we have had hard diggins long enough. John has hired a man to work for him this Summer. hope I shall not have to do quite as much out doors. will work about 50 acres this year and break some I hope. we are on our hired place. it is quite a comfortable place for out West. Johns cattle have not been out of the yard since last Nov. their drink is in the yard quite an item for the west. . . .

Tuesday morning or noon it is now. . . . Perhaps we shall come East to live after a while. my health improves every year and when we get a little start I think farming would pay a great deal better East than here. the more you raise the worse you are off for it takes so much to pay for getting it. John will write you the prices then you just consider what a small [one word illegible] for a great deal of care and labor. Sometimes I wish he would stop farming but he likes it and so do I. Produce is so cheap it would cost nothing to live but there is nothing to do here but work on the railroad and I dont fancy that. If we only had a farm East we would show you the way it was done. if we had the money for what we raised last year at Eastern prices we should be independent. . . . It seems like a great deal to an Eastern person but its merely nothing in value here. O dear my soap and emptyings plague me beyond measure. the soap wont mix and the yeast sours. all the way I have to make bread is out of water salt & flour. Did you ever make any salt risings bread. if not I wish you would try one loaf. . . .

I have two rooms here no pantry or chamber. its a stone house the dampest frostiest hole I ever saw. . . . My hens have laid 12 eggs to day and I expect to get a cent a peice for them. I feel pretty well I tell you. it wont be a week if this weather holds before they will be down to 7 or 8

cts per doz. last fall they would not sell at any price. 5 cts through the Summer was all you could get. . . .

March the 3rd 1861

[John Kenyon]

. . . the snow is fast disappearing and the ground is quite bare. we have had a thaw for about a week rain a little and fog all the rest of the time but it has clared of[f] quite pleasant and warm. the snow has been from two to three feet deep since the first of January and cold most severest weather I ever saw. the snow would blow enough to suffocate one to be out in it. all I have did this winter is my chores and I could not half do them some of the time it blowed and snowed so. I have 17 head and expect 4 more soon. 12 shoats 8 barrows and 4 sows. I lost the best one I had. I carried it to Randels (he keeps blooded stock) and his hogs fought it so it frose to death one cold night.

I shall farm from fifty to sixty acres this season. have a hired man half the time Father Ellis the other. we sowed wheat last year about this time. I dont think we shall this year untill after the first of April. I intend to put in about 35 acres of small grain this year so as to have some to sell another year if nothing happens and it is the Lords will. I have about one hundred bushels of wheat and 300 of Corn 40 or 50 of potatoes and lots of vegetables and about 30 gallons of Sorghum and one whiskey barrel of Pickles. we have enough to eat and that is good as our neighbors but things are low here. that is farmers produce. . . .

you must excuse my poor writeing for since I hurt my hand I cant shut my two middle fingers. they are in the way I find in a great many instances. if I grab a pig by the ear all I can hold by with my right hand is my thumb and fore finger. . . .

Old Abe will take the reins in his hands I suppose if they do not kill him. I hope he will bring some of those hot headed southerners to Limerick. this is getting to be a great country. I should think the way they are acting at the south but I hope it will come out all right after a little as the hoosiers say. . . .

now for the market prices. wheat 55 to 60 per bu oats 16 cash 18 store pay barley 45 rye about the same as wheat. white beans 75 cts potatoes 15 cts carrots 15 corn 18 to 20 per bu $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 by the hog beef $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ hay \$2,00 per ton. grocerys and dry goods up to the top notch. good cows 16 to 20 Doll yearling 5 to 6 two year olds 9 to 10 3 year olds 14

to 16, four year old steers well broke 45 to 60 according to quality old oxen 65 to 80 scarce at that. corn is so cheap and plenty farmers have fattened every thing that will sell. . . .

Oneida Oct 11, 1861

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . Our hired man left just as corn planting commenced so I shouldered my hoe and have worked out ever since and I guess my services are just as acceptable as his or will be in time to come to the country. He writes very humbly to us. says if God spares his life he will make it up to John for leaving him for he dont think he did right. for my part I am glad he went. we shant have him to pay. all he went for he thought his one dollar a month more than we paid him was worth risking his head for and he thought he was going for 3 months²⁵ only but when they arrived to their camp they wanted 3 year volunteers. he refused to take his oath but they hissed him so he ponied up.

We had a very dry summer but a wet spring & fall. our wheat was about half a crop but we did not hire but 5 acres reap[ed] and a boy 1 day and a half. John cradled the children raked and I bound 20 acres the hottest weather I ever seen. thermometer 110 in the shade. men quit in other feilds some worked in the night but we stood it through but it took the flesh all off me what little I had. I wore a dress with my sunbonnet wrong [wrung] out in water every few minutes and my dress wet also. this was all the clothing Clara and I wore. aint I coming into niggerdom fast. we are getting into the fall work pretty well. to day we were going down to Mark Earls stripping sugar cane for him to pay for his mill and horse to work ours.

I never thought to tell you about our health. John is pretty well I am ditto to day. Yesterday I was tired out so staid in the house and washed till pitch dark. Clara and I have pulled beans for 3½ days and dug taters half a day. . . .

A great many are in a perfect stew thinking they [the Confederates] will go through here burning and plundering but I dont fear any thing but the red skins. they are pretty saucy out West. . . .

I am sorry Paul has the Neuralgia for I know how to pitty him. My remedy is to take red pepper tea and bind on wherever the pain is. if

²⁵ The 1st Iowa Infantry regiment, recruited in May, 1861, was a three-month regiment. After that, all enlistments were for three years.

that dont break it put the mustard poultices strong to neck arms and feet. if that dont do put a blister²⁶ on the arm. if not very hard I have put one behind my ear and made that answer the purpose. . . .

There is no Secession about me or rank abolitionism. still now is the time to rid the country of the curse of Slavery I do hope & pray.

Sunday eve Nov 24th 1861

[John Kenyon]

. . . we have about finished our falls work. we have only 60 or 70 bushels of corn to husk and shant I be glad. we shall have about 300 bushels. Sally and the children help farm it. they are equal to two men. Sally and C[lara] will husk about as fast as I can. they will take two ears and Ellis and me two and we make every thing snap. I dont know what I should did with out them. help was so scarce and high \$1,50, \$2,00 per day and board. every thing we raise is very low and things we have to buy is dear. cotton cloth 15 cts per yd and every thing else to match it. wheat is worth 50 cts per bushel corn 10 cts oats 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ rye 35 barley 25 buck-wheat 40 flour \$1,50 per hundred potatoes 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 20 cts bus turnips 10 carrots 10 butter 10 cts lb eggs 8 chickens 10 cts a peice beef \$2,00 per hundred live weight hogs the same. sugar cane molasses 65 cts a gallon. . . . we are going to have a roasted turkey and plum puding thanksgiving day. . . . our school commences the first Monday in Dec. I hired Frances Dunham. he is an old teacher. pay \$25 Dollars per month. . . .

Oneida Oct 9/62

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . yesterday I had the sick headache. worked too hard the day & night before. stripped sugar cane all day untill I could not stand up straight. then went out in the evening and cut it up as we were going to have a frost and a hill of it is pretty heavy to lift and it rather upset my foundation pins.

John talks of coming East this winter. says he is going to take his pork and start if he can. he [is] sure of work when he gets there. I hate to be left with the cattle we have such awful snow storms. I am afraid they would all die. but if he can go and make enough to pay his way I think he had better for he has been a long time away. . . . He says he dont want

²⁶ A blistering plaster.

to leave on account of the Secesh and Indians. precious deal of good he would do. merely get his own head cracked or neck stretched. . . .

the way they do grind us Westerners is awful. cant sell any thing, have to give it away to get the cars to carry it. eggs wont sell at all. I made out to sell a chicken to buy this paper with to a lumber dealer. dont expect I could have done that but he is selling out and I guess he was *mighty* hungry. butter I did not make any to sell this summer. let the calves run on the prairie with the cows. I was not going to bother with milking feeding calves skimming milk churning &c when butter wont fetch a cent part of the time and but 6 or 8 the other. If I did not have to work out all the time I would not mind it but its more than I can do to get victuals for five in a family without fussing with milk. If John comes East I shall wish I had made some to send to you but as it is we shall have to buy through thrashing. Our wheat was a very poor yeild on account of the bugs. John did not pay out but 3 dollars for help on 18 acres of wheat and it was just as much trouble to harvest as though it was good. When we get the lasses made taters dug and roots pulled I hope I can come in and patch up and wash of. . . . I am heartily tired of laboring so for nothing and I am going to make a rumpus soon if things cant be squeezed out. . . .

Johns hand dont exempt him from draft still no recruiting officers will have him. we had perillous times here for a while when they were talking of drafting. men that had been down and tried to enlist last Spring and had their papers from the army surgeon as exempt did not get clear in the draft. At the same time four and five hundred Indians were camped about 10 or 12 miles from here armed to the teeth without a single squaw or pappoose with them. people thought that if there was any drafting done they [the Indians] would pitch in and burn and kill headed by our own citizens but the draft passed over and they departed. . . .

Thursday eve Nov 6 or something like it. . . . John is ploughing as yet. Ellis and me dug the taters and we all dug carrots. we have 75 bushel & 30 or 40 of taters. the rutabagas & round turnips me and the children have pulled. now if the corn was husked & cribbed I should feel as if I could sew a little. . . .

I went visiting to Earlville last Friday. was sick so I could not do much to home so went to see one of my neighbors that moved down there this Fall. came home on foot & alone after dark so you must know I was pretty feeble. It was the first time I ever set foot in town and seeing and hearing

the cars made me feel real homesick. I guess I would have sat down and cried if I had not been nearly in town when the train went along in the morning but I got quite used to it before night seeing them pass (its two miles to town).

John has sold 2 hogs at 2 cts per pound salt is 5 dollars and still rising cottong cloth $\frac{3}{4}$ very thin 20 cts sheeting 30 calico 20 but going to be 25 the next that is opened tobbaeco 1.50 tea 1.50 coffee $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb for a dollar thread 10 cts a spool cottong 25 cts. that makes me think where is the skirts coming from this winter. a calico quilt will cost a dollar and a half sure. needles is almost impossible to get. you can get crowbars and little short fine ones. I sent to Sarah for some but those she sent were too large. I want you to send me two or three. I will send you one the size I want. I sewed with it ever since a year ago this time untill I wore the eye through as you can see. . . .

John will go looking [for] land when the ground freezes so he cannot plow and then after he gets straightened up perhaps he will come East by Christmas. that is if he can get work out there enough to pay his fare back. . . . I wish you would write me how much cotton yarn is a pound. sometimes I think I will send and get me a warp and weave me some cotton cloth myself. I can get rolls of woll [wool] here for 40 cts. I would like to make up some cotton and woll cloth for sheets &c if I could make it pay.

Earlville Jan 11th 1863

[John Kenyon]

. . . it is very sickly in this section of the country this winter. typhoyd fevers measles hooping coughf diptheria. Clara Ellis and Sis have the hooping Coughf. Some had it about six weeks. . . . Father he is trapping. caught 12 minks and about 50 muskrats. sold 9 of his mink for \$2,25 a piece. the rats are worth 25 cts a piece. produce is doing better than last fall and winter but that does not effect me any for I have none to sell. I only had 90 bushels of wheat 30 of oats and between 3 and 4 hundred of corn. I have not killed my pork yet. have 6 hogs to kill average 250. sold 2 in the fall weighed 798 at 2 cts per lb live weight and had one dollar for driving them to Nottingham. . . . I am going to butcher wednesday then I shall be lousey with money. I bought 11 shoats saturday give \$1,00 a piece. I have 16 more all together. . . .

[Sarah Kenyon]

. . . I suppose you are anxious for the Potomace and I for the Missis-

sippi. we heard here once that Vicksburg was taken. one fellow went to speculating in oats and lost 25 dollars in one afternoon. pork took a rise and there was quite a commotion for one day but the next days report contradicted it and things went on again as usual. If they only would open it [the Mississippi River] and not draft nor kill anybody they might keep their armies till doomsday and pay those big officers all they like. I would pay the losses and not murmur either if I could get but half enough to eat. we expected a draft in this state this month but we heard that Kirkwood [Samuel J. Kirkwood, Governor of Iowa] has given it up. thinks it would be worse than nothing. I think he is a man of sense for once. glad there is one in the programme. that fellow that left us for the war has skedadled. I always knew what patriotism there was in him lay not exactly in the seat of his breeches. . . .

Its nothing to joke about the way the wounded and dead are coming home here every day. a fellow was brought in to his folks dead a few weeks ago. the first they knew of it. I guess the young men will be scarce in the West the way they are slaughtered. John has been over to Beaches and they give him a pan of onions and he is eating them raw. its all the apples westerners have. I made dried squash pies soured with vinegar and call them dried apple pie. . . .

When they get the Mississippie open I shall write every week. I shall be so pleased but now every thing is so dull that I am all used up. Eggs are six cents now so I feel quite elated but store goods are awful. a spool of thread costs ten cents, calico, 18 cts. per yd salt more than pork a pound by half a cent. I never thought I should live where it would bother me to earn salt for my porridge. Pork 2 salt 2½. . . .

Jan 17th 64

[John Kenyon]

. . . I do not feel much like writing to night. I am so full I can scarcely stir without pain. we have been over to Father Ellises to day to eat our Christmas dinner. it was so cold that we could not get to it before and the way I played the knife and fork would did you good if you had not been to hungry your self that is if you had been there to seen me. we had turkey boiled ham stufing potatoes onions pickle tomatoes green apple pie mince pie and lots of *Doughnuts*. . . . we are going to have new years some time this week. . . .

. . . times are pretty good here now. evry thing brings a good price.

pork that weighs 200 — $6\frac{1}{2}$ cts 150 lbs \$5.75 under 100 lbs 4.75. beef 4 and 5 cts lb. wheat No. 1, 85 to 90 cts per bush oats 50 to 55 butter 16 to 20 eggs 23 for fresh and 17 to 20 for packed. my pork was light. the frost cut my corn and it would not fat pork. I have fed my corn out. now I will have to buy and pay fifty cents per bus. I have sold 18 hogs or pigs in size brought \$109. they weighed from 75 lbs to two hundred. I have sold a yoke of steers for 60 Dolls and 2 cows for 16 Dolls a piece. . . .

Earlville March 2nd 1865

[John Kenyon]

. . . we have a very pleasant winter here just snow enough to get around good. I have been in the timber what time I could get a cutting and hauling wood and post and rail timber. Ellis has been with me two trips. he drives the oxen and I the horses and we make it count two load a day. we have two or three snow storms for the last two or three weeks then turned to rain. we had two as big freshets as we very often have here carrying away bridges and mill dams &c. It cut the race out twice on our mill dam. we have a mill about a mile from us [that] we call ours. built this summer and winter and just ready to start when this first freshet came. I suppose they are grinding by this time. it makes it quite handy for us or it will if the water dont take the dam away every day. we formerly went to Manchester Dyersville Hartwick or Bensons mills. it is some ten or twelve miles quite an item in distance.

there is quite an emigration West this winter and spring. they have ben a moving all winter most evry day. you will see them with their covered wagons horses oxen cows and young stock going West & north west some to the Missouri river some to Kansas and Nebraska territory and a great many of them stop in this state out in the western part where the coal & evry thing else is found that is valuable. I suppose you have read of it on your paper as the English say. I will send you some Iowa papers if [I] can get them that has got the coal and petroleum blow in them. they talk some of starting a petroleum Company in Earlville. it is all you can hear now a days. . . . there is a good many that is going to Idaho this spring from around here. they will go with oxen mostly from here. some go with mules and horses. I have not had the fever much yet but think I should if Uncle Sam makes another call for half a million or less. we are out of the last draft and thousands ahead for the next if they make one.

the market prices is rather on a decline. wheat \$1.00 per bus. Oats

45 cts barley \$1.25 corn 45 to 50 in the ear 76 lbs to bushel. rye none in market. pork 12½ cts dressed beef 5½ ct on the foot butter 25 cts eggs 15 cts Doz beans \$1.50 cts bus sorghum \$1.25 to \$1.40 per gall. working oxen \$100 to \$150 pair cows 25 to 40 dolls each Horses from 2 to 400 Dollars a pair hay tame 15 Dolls per ton prairie hay 6 or 7 Dolls per ton.