

Chinook Alberta
March 21, 1917.

Dear Aunt Clara and Uncle Joe: -

Evelina wrote me some time ago that you contemplated the idea of making an automobile trip out in this direction this coming summer. Of course we would feel very badly if you come out part way and didn't come all the way, so please try to plan your itinerary to include Chinook. August, September, and October are as a rule the best months for travelling in a car in this country though it is hard to prophesy. As a rule July is quite wet most of the time and we call July the mosquito month as they are worst at that season though some years we don't have any.

There is one thing I guess I ought to speak of when inviting you to visit us especially if you should happen to have any of your distinguished friends from the east with you. Evelina thought you might be shocked by the style in which we live which she considers only a few degrees better than some of her slum friends. In fact during her Chicago experiences the police demolished one shack built on any empty lot of old pieces of tin

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etc that was scarcely any worse than our old sod house in which we spent the first winter. We live a trifle better now but the style in which we live would be most nearly described by the term "camp style".

We appreciate the value of a higher standard of living, and realize that living as we do is likely to permanently lower a person's standards. I have known quite well to do persons in this country to keep their families in what were almost one roomed shacks getting along without many of the luxuries and conveniences of living but I have no ambition to do that way myself. However to keep up a good standard of living one has to have a fair income and in our case ~~the~~ only way to get that income is to get all our land under cultivation. Raw land doesn't pay taxes even while cultivated land yields a good profit. At present we have only about one third of our land under cultivation. As we expect to sell one half section and cancel the same value of obligations on which we have been paying interest (8%) with the money it will bring our proportion of cultivated land up to half our holdings. For next season we will have practically all the land under cultivation when our standard of living will begin to be raised. Further investments in land or otherwise will

not be such a drain on us^{s.} as they have been.

Cultivated land in this country will always pay its way through a series of years including failures, low prices and all. What kept us so long getting started was the fact that till we proved up and mortgaged our homesteads we hadn't capital enough to even start developing our land on a scale to meet living expenses, taxes, interest and development expenses. For four years we didn't gain any ground, but these last three years of the seven we have been here, we have ^{been} gaining ground very rapidly and in spite of the fact that we have had two partial failures in these three years. This last year the hail damaged our crop nearly 70% and still we had a small surplus after meeting the year's expenditures and keeping our seed and feed. Also we retired a few hundred dollars worth of debts. Due to the hail damage some of our wheat cost as much as forty cents a bushel to thresh last fall.

I spent a few days this winter visiting a man at Edith, for whom we worked when we first came to Alberta. He came nine and one half years ago and had five thousand dollars. He is now worth sixty thousand dollars, owns and farms about twelve hundred acres, has one hundred and fifty head of cattle, sixty five head of horses including a prize winning stallion, has a big gasoline pump and threshing machine, automobile etc, He intends building a new

modern house in the spring, which will cost about six thousand. water hot & cold, electric lights, sanitary plumbing steam heat etc. He will pay cash for it as he has done for practically everything.

This man is a very good farmer and puts several times the work on his land that most people do but it seems to pay him. In 1908, 1913, 1915, & 1916 his summerfallow wheat yielded as good as fifty bushels to the acre, and in 1912 yielded forty ~~8~~ bushels.

In 1915 he had seventy acres of wheat that yielded seventy two bushels to the acre and the same year the rest of his summerfallow yielded sixty bushels of wheat and his stubble forty four. He has had barley yield as high as one hundred bushels to the acre and forty acres of oats in 1913 yielded one hundred and forty two bushels to the acre. In the nine years he has had only one failure 1911 (a good year in our district) when his summerfallow grain was frozen so he didn't cut it and his stubble yielded eighteen bushels of low grade wheat. Some of his neighbors who do not farm so well have had two failures from drought and one light crop 1913.

Well I seem to be writing a very long letter. I wish I could interest you enough in this county so that you would make us a visit. The chances for investment here are fine - not necessarily to invest in farming but for instance to buy for cash and sell on terms at better prices to neighbors who wish to farm the land. There will be a big boom in farm lands here soon. It's starting already. Sincerely Will Belden