

The Letters of Peter Bryant, Jackson County Pioneer—*Concluded*

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III. THE LETTERS, 1862-1864

PETER BRYANT'S letters at the end of the period 1854-1861 present a picture of a Kansas homesteader who turned jayhawker during the troubled spring of 1861 on the Kansas-Missouri border.

Bryant's jayhawking experience was brief. He soon became disillusioned with guerrilla warfare as a means of furthering the Northern cause. Resolved to enlist in the regular army, as his Illinois friends were doing, he gave all of his equipment except a mule and a pony to "the government boys" and journeyed back to the old home in Princeton. Once there, he found that his father was ill and that his brother Mark needed assistance on the family farm, for at least one season. Peter gave the needed help, but all during the summer of 1862 he watched with keen excitement the progress of the war and the individual fortunes of those of his fellow townsmen who were already fighting for the Union. By the fall of 1862 Peter himself had enlisted.

The first letter in the group below was written just after his return to Princeton, to his brother Cullen, at West Point.

PRINCETON, BUREAU CO., ILLINOIS
Jan. 3rd 1862

DEAR BROTHER [CULLEN]

I suspect you think it is high time to hear from me again. From what I wrote you in my last, I presume you will not be surprised to learn that I am back to the old homestead again.

Folks and things have changed a good deal since I went away. Our little girls have grown to be women. Had I met Chat [his sister Charity] on the street, I should not have known her. All those who were "younkets" then are in about the same fix. The town has grown some. A new Courthouse, &c. Uncle John has torn up the old front part of his house and built new, has improved the looks wonderfully.

I got home last Saturday night. The folks had pretty much given up my coming. Was delayed some on the road. The bridge across the Chariton [river, in central Missouri] was burnt the night before, and we had to wait for the train from the east. This kept us nearly all day. Afterwards the hellhounds tried to blow us up, but luckily their powder (which was placed under a bridge or culvert) didn't explode until after we had crossed. They, after raids,

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burnt another bridge so that the H & St. Jo [Hannibal and St. Joseph] road is at present a good deal crippled. The scamps that tore up the North[ern] Mo. R. R. were caught and some of them shot.

Military matters here are below par. Winslow's⁶² regiment that was quartered at the Fair Grounds ran away from him, were going to St. Louis but were arrested at Alton and sent to Chicago. Three or four of them came home, and a day or two since some officers came and arrested them, but before they could get them on the cars all four of them had got away. Al Walters, Abe Lash,⁶³ and Les Piatt were three of them. Old John Walton was very indignant.

I can find hardly of the young fellows that I used to be acquainted with, most of them having gone to the wars. New Years was pretty dry, save perhaps at private dinners. They had a Festival at the Methodist Church, but not being of a religious turn I didn't go. At night, Charley Brown and two or three others got drunk and tore around as of old. Charley enlisted in Elliott's company, but at the fight at Big River bridge was taken prisoner and sworn [paroled on oath not to fight again]. Sol Hauck is in the army. Methinks there would not be so much surrendering if the rebels used them as they did my boys when they caught them: i. e. treat them to a hempen necktie.

The folks are all well. It has been sleeting this morning, and father went out doors and slipped down and bumped his head, I think not very seriously. I do not think he is so tough as when I went away.

P. BRYANT

PRINCETON, BUREAU CO., ILLINOIS

March 2nd 1862

DEAR BROTHER [CULLEN]

Your letter of Feb. 19th is at hand. You seem considerably elated at the success of our arms in Tennessee.⁶⁴ Well, I like it pretty well, too. The Bureau County boys got off first-rate, only seven or eight wounded. Alf Clark got a letter from Fred Wood. He says they were a good deal excited, but didn't

62. In August, 1861, Col. R. F. Winslow, of Princeton, formed a Bureau county regiment. After a period of training, the men "were not satisfied with . . . having him for a colonel," whereupon they marched off, against his orders, for St. Louis. They were arrested, detained for a time at Alton, and then pardoned and allowed to join the 57th regiment. Winslow's war career thus ended abruptly; he subsequently entered the practice of law.—Henry C. Bradsher, *History of Bureau County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1885), pp. 301, 348-350.

63. Abram Lash, of Princeton, private in Company H, 57th Illinois infantry, deserted November 1, 1861.—William W. Cluett, *History of the Fifty-Seventh Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (Princeton, Ill., 1886), p. 136. Two of the other men mentioned in this letter have been identified: Charley Brown was Charles E. Brown, private in Company E, 33d regiment; Elliott was Isaac H. Elliott, at this time captain of Company E, 33d regiment. (See letter of Christmas, 1854, and Footnote in the Autumn issue of the Quarterly.) The engagement mentioned at the end of the letter occurred after the 33d regiment had left St. Louis, crossed the Mississippi and entered debatable ground. Company E and two others were guarding the railroad at the bridge across the Big river, half way between Pilot Knob and St. Louis. On October 15 E Company was suddenly attacked by a large force of Confederates. After a hot skirmish, which resulted in several casualties, Elliott was compelled to surrender. The Confederate commander put him under oath not to take up arms again against the Confederacy during the remainder of the war. Elliott immediately set about trying to effect an exchange; he succeeded in doing so on February 5, 1862.—Isaac H. Elliott, *History of the Thirty-Third Illinois Veteran Volunteer Infantry* (Gibson City, Ill., 1902), pp. 22-25, 205.

64. The Northern victories at Fort Henry (February 7) and Fort Donelson (February 15), which practically secured Tennessee for the Union. To see the words of S. E. Morrison and H. S. Conner, "The prairie boys of the new Northwest had tried their mettle with the rangy foresters of the old Southwest; and the legend of Southern invincibility collapsed."—*The Growth of the American Republic* (New York, 1942), v. 1, p. 676.

think anything about running. Elliott's recruits left here for St. Louis last Tuesday. Charley Brown, Ed Wiswall, & Sam Adley & Ike Hughs went.⁶⁵ He wanted me to go down with them for company, but I cut my foot like the devil a few days before that and was obliged to stay at home. Julian, I suppose, is at New Madrid down in the southeast part of Missouri. If Elliott's had been a cavalry company, I should have enlisted with him. I don't like the idea of footing it at all, especially as high private.

I just received a letter from Frank. He is teaching school. Cbet was married on the 4th of February. The boys around there "charivari'd" him for a week. At last he concluded to "shell out." Bully for him. . . .

George Radcliffe's wife was buried yesterday. Captain Swift had a stroke of the palsy a few days since. It was thought that he would not recover, but I believe he is better now. Captain White also had a stroke, but is pretty much well now. E. Chapman's wife slipped and fell at the corner of the American⁶⁶ and broke her thigh.

We are having fine sleighing here. I believe we have had the most this winter that I ever knew. We take a ride with a girl once in a while as a matter of course. I presume "Stinke" or other "powers" don't allow you that privilege very often. They have had two dancing parties at Freeman's lately. They went off finely. I have not been to any of the cotillion parties at the American this winter. Dollars are too hard.

Frank Dee is going to move to Iowa this spring. He has bought a farm out there. Tom Robinson⁶⁷ has come home from Pike's Peak, is going back again in the spring. George and his wife (Eliza Wiggins) are keeping hotel in Denver. J. V. Thompson⁶⁸ has come home. He has been to Baltimore, doctoring for some "commurrin in his guts." Says he didn't see but two "Abolitionists" while he was gone. Everybody for the Union, but slavery must be perpetuated, and that is his doctrine. By G—d, such fellows ought to be sent to Ft. Warren⁶⁹ or hell. I suppose Jo was in his element at Baltimore. I believe there is where the first blood of this rebellion was spilled. I think the d—d hole ought to be wiped out and Jo with it. I wouldn't give a curse for this Union if the war ends without abolishing slavery. All well.

PETER BRYANT

PRINCETON, BUREAU COUNTY, ILLINOIS

April 13th 1862

DEAR BROTHER [CULLEN]

I received your letter of March 23rd in due time.

Since then, our boys have achieved another glorious victory⁷⁰ over the cursed minions of slavery.

65. Charles E. Brown (see letter of January 3, 1862), Edward Wiswall, Samuel Adley, and Isaac M. Hughs were all members of Company E in the 33d regiment. Wiswall and Peter's cousin Julian Bryant became officers in the United States colored infantry, at Vicksburg.—Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 138, 140.

66. The American House, a hotel opened in 1855 and still standing. John Howard Bryant had a financial interest in the establishment.—G. B. Harrington, *Past and Present of Bureau County* (Chicago, 1906), p. 106.

67. Thomas M. Robinson, youngest of the nine children of Capt. David Robinson, of Princeton. Apparently he did make it back again, since he was, in 1896, working as a miner in Colorado. The "George" mentioned in the next sentence is probably George Robinson, another son of Capt. David Robinson; George was a rancher in Colorado from 1862 till his death in 1891.—*The Biographical Record of Bureau, Marshall and Putnam Counties* (Chicago, 1896), p. 229.

68. Prominent Princeton citizen, first mentioned as a Douglas supporter in letter of November 10, 1854.

69. Federal prison in Boston Harbor, where political prisoners were sent.

70. The Battle of Shiloh, April 6, 1862.

The Bureau County boys were in the hardest of the fight. We have not heard who was killed, but I am afraid that a good many of them have gone to their long home. Three of our citizens, Steve Paddock, Dr. Shugart, and Fisher,⁷¹ have gone down to look after them and bring home the body of Maj. Page, who was killed. The body will be buried by the Masons, of which Society he was a member. His wife has the consumption, and the news almost killed her. It is thought that she will soon go, too. Capt. Ferris, Swain, and Manser (Ed Cobb's company) are wounded.⁷² The boys of the 57th behaved like veterans. Bully for them.

I think I shall stay here this summer. Father wants me to work some of his land and help take care of things. His health is poor. The farm didn't pay expenses last year. Mark had two men all summer, and they did a good deal of work, but produce is almost worthless, and a few years more of such management will run the whole thing into the ground. I think I shall put in about 25 acres of corn and put as much of it into beef as I can.

We sowed wheat last Friday. It has been very wet this spring, and this is the first chance that we have had. There is but very little sown about here yet. Uncle John is going to put in 65 acres, and has not sown any yet. Ours is just across the road, five acres broke up last fall. The stock mostly looks well. We have got 12 steers to feed next fall. We are feeding six cows now. They are pretty good beef. We fed Muggins. Mark sold him and a steer for \$49. The cows ought to average \$24.

I don't remember much of the gossip that is afloat. Captain Swift is dead, and Lucien Smith married. Dr. Swanzy got tight up in town the other day and said that Ed Bryant was soon going to marry a Miss McDuffie that lives at his house, that they were going to have a grand wedding, invite all the relatives and everybody else.⁷³ The report has gained some currency, but I don't know anything about the truth of it. Frank Dee started for Iowa about a week ago, and Cornelius Green sent a constable after him for \$18 wages that he claimed. He got a judgment of \$1.00. Frank had to pay costs, so he didn't make much. I suppose you knew Henry Martin was married last year. He has got a boy. They live in Muscatine. Park Newell is going into the grocery business in Trenton. Lige is buying cattle for Lovejoy. Jas. Rosenstrauss has got home. The folks are all well.

P. BRYANT

During this spring and summer interlude at his old home in Princeton, Ill., Peter received scraps of news from his friend and farming partner Frank Pomeroy in Holton, Kan. Frank's cryptic comments on marital and domestic matters occurred either just before or shortly after Peter married Henrietta Bacon⁷⁴ at Henne-

71. Stephen Gorham Paddock and Dr. Joseph Shugart were members of the county relief committee at this time; "Fisher" is possibly of the firm of A. and J. M. Fisher, grain merchants of Princeton.—Cluett, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 13, and Bradshy, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

72. Maj. Norman B. Page and Capt. A. H. Manser were of the 57th regiment; Capt. Frank B. Ferris and Capt. William T. Swain were of the 12th Illinois volunteer infantry. Both Ferris and Swain died from wounds received at Shiloh.—Cluett, *op. cit.*, p. 115, and *Biographical Record*, p. 617.

73. Lucien Smith was a friend of Peter's mentioned in the letter from Knox College, Christmas, 1854; Dr. Andrew Swanzy was a Princeton physician (Harrington, *op. cit.*, p. 302). Edward Raymond Bryant (1823-1881) was Peter's cousin, son of Austin and Adeline Bryant; he married Ellen Fields McDuffie, of Cameron, N. Y., May 7, 1862.—Bradshy, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

74. Henrietta Bacon (1839-1927) was a native of Boston, Mass., the daughter of Mercy Crouch Bacon.—Information from Mrs. F. L. Davis, of Holton.

pin, Ill. The couple were married by a justice of the peace on September 1, 1862. Two of Frank's letters, undated and without salutation, follow:

That Oct. [?] Indian speculation busted. I am glad of it. Amanda says if you are ashamed to own that you are married, you had better come to Kansas. When are you coming back? Mandy sends her love. What will the chance be for getting money on that note this fall. I have got to have some money this fall. I am going to build. I have most of the lumber ready.

Four fellows passed a counterfeit five Gold on West the other day. The same day they passed another on Seaman north of Holton. He found it out and followed them over here. He got Landon. He caught them. They [presumably the "gold" pieces] are heavy. Their steel shows.

FRANK

The Kansas 5th is at Rolla, Missouri [insertion at top of page]

[July]

I have sent you several papers since I wrote you. Among them were two copies of the Leav[enworth] Inquirer secesesh. Gen Blunt⁷⁵ has squelched it and put the proprietors in prison. Good. You wish to know what girl I go to see. I see so many that I can't name any in particular. Chet and his woman make [out?] very well. I think about six months more will prove it. The women are not very careful about desecrating your cabin. They do with it about as they please. Pete Dickson is out on the Blue. Tom Anderson has gone with the Kansas boys to Corinth. He got a clerkship in the Com[missary] Department. Dave and Lish still on the old track. I believe I have answered all the questions which you asked.

FRANK

We are going to celebrate the fourth [Fourth of July?] in Holetown [Holton] S. S. School. [insertion at top of page]

In August, 1862, Peter enlisted in Company K of the 93d regiment, Illinois volunteer infantry. His company was first organized in Bureau county, Illinois, August 19, as the "Princeton Guards." The regiment itself was organized September 8. It was sent to Chicago on September 17, where on October 13 Company K and the other regimental elements were mustered into the service of the United States "for three years or during the war."

Peter took his new bride Henrietta Bacon with him during his two-month encampment at Chicago. On November 9 the regiment left Chicago, via the Illinois Central railroad, for Cairo, where they embarked on a steamboat for Columbus, Ky. Shortly afterward they received orders to proceed to Memphis, Tenn. On November 12 the steamer ran aground on a sand bar. The troops disembarked, marched for two miles on the Arkansas side, and then re-embarked, only to suffer the same inconvenience a second time. They finally

⁷⁵ Brig. Gen. James G. Blunt, in command of the Department of Kansas in 1862.

reached Memphis on November 14 and were assigned to Col. R. P. Buckland's brigade, of General Lauman's division, in the right wing of the Army of West Tennessee. By this time Forts Henry and Donelson had already fallen into federal hands and the Battle of Shiloh had been fought and won by the Union forces as a massive holding action in spite of extremely heavy losses. Peter's 93d regiment was ready for action in Grant's Vicksburg campaign. In high spirits, Peter at last found time to write to his two brothers.

CAMP NEAR MEMPHIS, TENN.
Nov. 22nd 1862

DEAR BROTHER [presumably CULLEN]

I received a letter from you while we were in camp at Chicago, but neglected to answer it until I had so much business to attend to that I couldn't.

We left Chicago on the 9th, and after rail-riding and scraping sand bars for five days we arrived at this place safe and sound without being fired into or in any other way misused by the rebels, although while going down the river we tied up our old scow every night in order to prevent accidents and casualties, and from sundown until daylight the next morning neither military discipline nor rebel property were very much above par.

At present we are encamped about 2½ miles south of Memphis in a pleasant grove within range of the guns of Ft. Pickering on the one side and the sound of guerilla rifles on the other. Our pickets are fired into almost every night by them and occasionally captured, and about as often our side captures some of them. In either case they are paroled and sent back. One company of our regiment were out on a scout yesterday afternoon and took three prisoners. They were the first (except two that we took while coming down the river) that we have had the honor of catching.

Our company has not gone out scouting yet as a company, though we occasionally send out squads. Last night I had the honor of commanding one consisting of 20 picked men. We made it pay. Everything eatable in the shape of turkeys, chickens, pigs, cabbages, sweet potatoes, and honey had to suffer, for we believe in making this a self-sustaining war, and consequently "cramped" provisions enough to last a week. Lieutenant Gray⁷⁶ is out tonight to attend some bee hives that we "spotted." I tell you it is glorious fun. It reminds me of "one that's gone," but we don't have quite so free a swing nor carry it on so large a scale as in days gone by. Our Colonel says, "Go in, boys, but be careful and not get caught." We don't ask anything more. I don't believe our regiment will ever guard much rebel property. But I had almost forgotten to tell you where to find us.

We are in Lauman's division in the 5th Brigade commanded by Colonel Buckland. The other regiments under him are the 114th Illinois, the 72nd Ohio, and the 32nd and 93rd Indiana. The latter, it is said, will be exchanged for another so that the two may not be confounded. I have not seen

76. Clark Gray, second captain of K Company, was dismissed from service January 14, 1863, as a result of court martial proceedings (presumably the matter referred to by Peter in the letters of January 27, 1862, and March 1, 1863). The findings of the court were then set aside by President Lincoln, and Gray was again commissioned, April 3, 1863. He commanded the entire regiment at Allatoona, Ga., in 1864.—Harvey M. Trimble, *History of the Ninety-Third Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry* . . . (Chicago, 1898), p. 407.

General Lauman yet. Old [Brig. Gen. James W.] Denver commands, at reviews. They are collecting a large force at this place. At present there are about 40,000 troops in this vicinity, and it is supposed by our officers that there will be a big strike made somewhere before long, probably towards Vicksburg, but I'll tell you about it when the time comes.

I haven't heard from home since I left Chicago. My wife was in camp with me while there, and she felt pretty bad when I sent her home. I tell you she is a buxom little girl, if father does think it was a foolish job. All well and itching for fight and plunder.

P. BRYANT

CAMP NEAR MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Nov. 24th 1862

DEAR BROTHER [presumably MARCUS]

We are full of business as we can be now, or I should have written you before. We are stationed, or rather camped, about 2½ miles south of Memphis in a splendid place, plenty of wood and water and weather like May. I wouldn't mind staying here all winter, but that is out of the question.

This morning we received orders to march on Wednesday morning. We don't know where we are going, but think it probably to Holly Springs, about 45 miles S. E. from here. If so, we will have work to do soon.

Within the past two weeks there has been a large force concentrating at this point, and there are at present in this vicinity about 40,000 troops. We are in Gen. Lauman's division in the 5th Brigade commanded by Col. Buckland (acting Brig Gen.) of the 72nd Ohio. In the same brigade are the 114th Ill[inois], 32nd Wis[consin], 72nd O[Ohio], and 93rd Ind[iana]. . . .

The health of the regiment is tolerably good. 82, I think, are in the hospital. No very serious cases. More sick from Fisher's Company than any other. Three from ours, Norton is a little under the weather, but I think will be all right again in a day or two.⁷⁷ I took a bad cold while coming down the river. Our company was quartered on the hurricane deck, and it was a devilish cold place to sleep.

We live like kings just now. On the way down here we had rather hard fodder, pilot bread and raw ham and sometimes coffee. Now we are making up for it. What the quartermaster don't furnish we press from the planters around here, and I tell you pigs, chickens, sweet potatoes, and honey and everything in that line has to suffer. I have been out foraging two or three times, and it comes perfectly natural. Capt. [John W.] Hopkins' company [Company I] were out on picket duty yesterday, and this morning 22 nigs, 8 mules, 1 horse, and a waggonload of household furniture belonging to said Nigs ran to their lines for protection, and close on their heels came an overseer, and they captured the whole lot and brought them into camp, where they are at present a good deal tickled at their success. This morning Company H (Neponsset) went out and confiscated two mules, a waggon, Nig, dog, lot of hams, chickens two, barrels sugar, ditto molasses, and various other things. Col[onel] K is not behindhand. We've got three Nigs and expect to have mules before night. The Col[onel] says, "Go in, boys, but don't be taken nor waste anything." That is all we want if he will stick to it.

77. "Fisher's Co." was Company I, commanded by Capt. Ellis Fisher; "Norton" was Francis W. Norton, of Peter's company.—*Ibid.* Norton was mentioned again in the letter of March 1, 1863, and was, in all probability, the F. W. Norton who married Peter's sister Julia.

I can't tell you when I'll write again, but when you write, direct to P. B. 93rd Regt. Ill. Vol[untee]r via Cairo. Report has just come in that a man just died in the hospital. Name was Galbraith, Brown's (Wyandot) co[mpany].⁷⁸

PETER BRYANT

PRINCETON, BUREAU CO., ILL[INOIS]
Jan. 27th 1863

DEAR BROTHER [CULLEN]

I received your letter dated Jan. 15th this morning. I presume you will be somewhat surprised to know that I am here and honorably discharged⁷⁹ from the U. S. service. Such is the case. I was taken, while below Oxford, Miss., with the typhoid fever, and on the 21st of Dec. sent to the hospital, where I remained until the 1st of January nearer dead than alive, when they sent me home with the pleasant information that I was going to die of consumption. I tried to obtain a furlough so that I might go back again, but they would not grant it, saying I never would be fit for service again. Now I propose to prove that they are liars, and am acting accordingly. Ten days ago when I left Memphis, it was with great difficulty that I could walk across the room, and this afternoon I walked down to Uncle John's and back, and I can eat like the devil anything and everything that can be chewed.

As to consumption, I don't believe there is anything to it. I don't see but what my lungs are strong as ever they were, but the consumption of digestion viands since I came here has been devilishly on the increase.

Our regiment was not at Vicksburg, as you anticipated. They are not at present in Sherman's division, but while we were down in Miss[issippi] there was a change made, and the 93rd was put in Gen. [Isaac F.] Quimby's division, and at the time of the attack on Vicksburg were 15 miles east of Memphis guarding the Charleston and Miss[issippi] R. R. But the day that I left Memphis I saw Capt. Lloyd,⁸⁰ and he told me that they had marching orders, and their destination was probably Vicksburg. He told me also that on the day before, parts of the Companies "I" and "K" were out foraging and were fired upon by guerillas and Sergt. Maj. Harvey Trimble⁸¹ wounded and taken prisoner along with five others. I have since heard that Trimble received a flesh wound through the arm and has been paroled. Lt. Gray had just been placed under arrest for cutting the string of a gag that had been put on one of our boys for drunkenness and was choking the cuss until he got black in the face. Gray couldn't stand it. I admire his pluck. He is a bully officer.

The loss in our company when I left was 1 dead, 1 deserted, 2 missing (probably killed by guerillas), and 1 discharged.⁸² The boys are generally healthy, but have been marched almost to death.

I haven't written a word about home but will next time. There is lots of home gossip,—news to us, you know. All are well. Kate sends love.

P. BRYANT

78. Pvt. Herman Gilbreath, of Company C (commanded by Capt. William J. Brown), died in Memphis on November 26.—Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

79. Trimble lists Peter as first sergeant of Company K, discharged for disability January 15, 1863.—*Op. cit.*, p. 408.

80. David Lloyd, a hotel keeper, builder and abolitionist friend of Owen Lovejoy, was elected captain of Company K at its organization. He was killed in the Battle of Champion Hill, Miss., May 16, 1863.—*Ibid.*, pp. 397, 398. See letter of April 19, 1863, in which Peter tells about Lloyd's unpopularity, a matter which Trimble does not mention.

81. Harvey M. Trimble, author of the regimental history cited.

82. According to Trimble, the total casualties in Company K, by the end of the war, numbered 56.

PRINCETON, BUREAU CO. [ILLINOIS]

March 1st 1863

DEAR BROTHER [CULLEN]

I want to know why the devil you don't write to me. Not that I care anything about it, but do you know that you are keeping the Folks in a great sweat and splutter because you have not written home for three months. Mother thinks you have got into some d-d scrape that you don't want her to know anything about. She don't seem to realize that you are big enough to take care of yourself. Please write and relieve her anxiety.

I am not gaining very fast in health. I have had two attacks of the fever since I came home, brought on both times by trying to chop a little wood. I find that work and I can't agree yet, though I swear I hate to lounge around the house doing nothing. I don't know whether I will be able to work any next summer or not. I tell you soldiering has used me up badly, or rather the d-d stinking water that we had to drink.

The regiment is stationed at Memphis now and can muster only about 500 effective men, and when we left Chicago we had 953, so you see that I am not the only sick one. Last Saturday they brought home the body of Orderly Sergt. Reed of Fisher's company. He had been discharged and died on the way home. Jake Kinnan is 2nd Lieut. in that company now, Capt. Fisher having resigned. Jim Martin was elected to fill my place. Norton is promoted to 1st Corporal. Lt. Gray was put under arrest and courtmartialled for cutting loose a man that the Col[onel] had gagged. I have not heard the decision yet. Dave Rackley is dead. Got discharged and came home, died of consumption, the surgeon's name for "stinking water."⁸³

Quite a number of boys have deserted from our regiment, and I swear I can't blame them much, for there is not much to encourage a soldier now while guerillas lurk around on every side ready to shoot him down. It has turned out just as I predicted to you last summer—a guerilla warfare, and unless a different policy is pursued, this war will not end in twenty years. By God, we have got to kill, burn, and destroy every d-d thing in the South as fast as we come to it, for we can't conquer the devils until we make them taste cold lead, and there is no sense in keeping our large army down there to die off with disease. The way things are going, I don't know but what we shall want an army at home before long. The Copperheads had a meeting in the Courthouse the other day, and I understand that Jo. V. Thompson and Kendall⁸⁴ recommended opposition to the administration by force of arms unless the President recall his emancipation and Nigger regiment policy. You can see by that how much the damned hounds think of the Government. But there is a Union League⁸⁵ here that I won't say anything about.

Folks are well as usual.

PETER BRYANT

83. The soldiers mentioned in this paragraph are William T. Reed, discharged for disability March 10, 1863; Jacob S. Kinnan, commissioned first Lieutenant April 23, 1863, and James S. Martin, first sergeant of Company K.—*Ibid.*, pp. 230, 388, 389. Norton, Lieutenant Gray, and David Rackley are identified in previous letters.

84. J. V. Thompson: see letter of November 10, 1864, and following; Kendall: probably Milo Kendall, prominent Princeton lawyer.—Bradsby, *op. cit.*, pp. 344, 565.

85. The secret political organization formed to aid the Republican party and combat the antiwar propaganda of the Knights of the Golden Circle.

I meant to have given you a history of some [of] Amanda's⁸⁶ shines, but I will have to wait until next time. They say that she is going to be married soon to Matthews [insertion at top of first page]

PRINCETON, BUREAU Co., ILL.[INOIS]

April 19th 1863

DEAR BROTHER [CULLEN]

I received your letter of March 22nd in due time, and I have your reasons for not answering it sooner: first, too d--d lazy; next, nothing to write about.

Kate and I are living at Cyrus's now, and Mark and I are running the farm, or rather Mark, for I can't do much, not having got over the effects of going to war yet, and I am beginning to think it a little "mixed" if I ever do get entirely over it.

I had a letter from the regiment yesterday. They have been up the Yazoo pass⁸⁷ and come back again, and were, at the time of writing (April 1st) encamped on the Ark[ansas] side below Helena and expected to go to Vicksburg soon. There was one man shot by guerillas on the trip up the pass. He was of Lloyd's company, name Chester Tracy.⁸⁸

You say that you suppose from the looks of my photography that I must have been a sergeant. I had not got my stripes on when that was taken, but I supposed that I had told you that I was orderly serg[eant]. Jim Martin has the place now. Newell Bacon⁸⁹ is 3d serg[eant], Frank Norton 1st corp[oral]. I was told after I got into the hospital that at the time I was taken sick there was a plan being concocted to make me capt[ain] of the company. The boys don't like Lloyd, and every one of them signed a petition asking him to resign, which they handed to him, but the old fellow didn't take any notice of it. The last letter I got from the regiment says they are going to give him another, and they will give me a lift if I will come down there, but there is no use of whining, for I can't do half a day's work at home. I can't stand it down there.

You ask concerning Amanda. Well, the girl is dished at last. The deed was consummated on the 19th of March and to Newell Matthews. She promised to "love, honor, and obey," and thereby hangs a tale. Pap is mad at Mathews. Says he is a scoundrel and talks accordingly. Amanda used to board at our house, and Matthews comes a-wooing, and one night Cyrus told him that if he darkened his doors again he would kick his dirty a-s out thereof. Whereupon Amanda was wroth and went to Boss Everett's⁹⁰ to board and spark in peace, and Matthews went to Tiskilwa to teach and was taken sick, and she went down there and took care of him for two weeks and thereby lost her place at the Union School. It created quite a splutter. Amanda was a sad girl then.

And then, oh Gods, you should have heard Aunt Boss rave. She rang the changes long and loud about the evil doings of said Cyrus, then waded right into

86. Amanda Towers. See letters of July 22, 1860; April 19, 1863; September 20, 1863.

87. A channel connecting Moon Lake with Cold Water river, in the delta region, Mississippi. The plan of attack had been to reach the Yazoo river, destroy Confederate transports there and installations at Yazoo City, and establish a position on the high lands above Haines' Bluff. Fortifications at the pass proved impregnable, however, and the Union force had to turn back on April 5.—Trimble, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21.

88. Tracy was severely wounded.—*Ibid.*, p. 20.

89. Brother of Peter's wife, Henrietta Bacon Bryant.

90. James Smith Everett (1803-1889), of Princeton, brother of Peter's mother, Julia Everett Bryant, and husband of Harriet Cordelia Hyde Everett, the "Aunt Boss" mentioned below.

Paine, Ryan,⁹¹ and various others, and was going to raise all hell if the matter wasn't righted. You know she can talk a perfect diarrhea naturally, and she did her bulliest then. Aunt Louise⁹² helped as usual. But matters have cooled off now, and Amanda is teaching a large select school over Carse's old store.⁹³ Think she isn't quite so much of a vixen as in the days gone by; that is, before she saw the priest, and perhaps in time she'll make a staid and sober matron. At present, as all romances end, I suppose she is living happily without caring a fig for the rest of the world.

PETER

PRINCETON, BUREAU CO., ILL.[INDIS]
Sept. 20th 1863

DEAR BROTHER [CULLEN]

I have received your letter of Sept. 6th. Had begun to think that you was never going to write again.

Father got home only a day or two ago. He staid longer than he intended to at first. Went up into New Hampshire to visit the Fish's.⁹⁴ His health is a good deal better than when he went away.

Uncle Arthur came back the same day and with him Mrs. Ellen Mitchell of Dalton, Mass. I have not seen her yet. There is a Mr. Clark and wife of Ohio here on a visit just now. I believe they are cousins to Mother. Arthur Everett⁹⁵ is here at present, though I believe he intends to leave soon. Amelia and her husband Mr. Chapman are living in town. I believe they are expecting a young chap along soon. Amanda is teaching a select school, doing pretty well I think.

Mathews was defeated in the nomination for School Com[missioner] by C. C. Covell⁹⁶ of Buda. Z. S. Hills came very near getting it, but was defeated by a combination of Mathews & Covell. Dr. Allen has been nominated for County Treasurer. His opponent is Elder Walker,⁹⁷ an independent candidate to be supported by milk-and-water Republicans, Conservatives, and Copperheads. Don't know what they can do, but hope they may be damned to hottest hell. They have got the Union League to work against, and I think that will be our little opposition. Frank Walker was expelled from the League a few days ago. He got mad because they were not inclined to support his father, and in retaliation told the Copperheads all the secrets and doings of the League. They think it is a pretty big thing, but I rather think it will settle Frank Walker's hash as far as his character for truth and veracity is concerned.

Militia companies are being organized throughout the state to prevent invasion and domestic brawls if necessary. They have started one here. You

91. Possibly Tom Paine and Abram Joseph Ryan (1836-1886), the Catholic poet of the Confederacy. Both men might have been anathema to a Massachusetts Protestant.

92. Louisa Charity Bryant Odds (1807-1868), sister of Peter's father and wife of Justin C. Odds, of Princeton.

93. A general store kept by A. and M. Carse, of Princeton.—Harrington, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

94. A family of Gilsom, N. H. There is a letter of January 28, 1865, from Mr. Fish to Cyrus Bryant in N. Y. F. L.

95. Born 1840, son of James Smith Everett and Harriet Everett, of Princeton. See above, letter of April 19, 1863, and Footnote. Arthur Everett died some time prior to January 4, 1874, according to Peter's letter of that date.

96. Chester C. Covell, mentioned by a historian of 1877 as pastor of the Union Church, of Buda, Ill., and as having served several times as county commissioner of schools.—*The Voters . . . of Bureau County* (Chicago, 1877), p. 332.

97. Probably the Rev. Levi Walker (1802-1869).

have seen by the papers that the bushwhackers are playing hob in Kansas, and old Schofield⁹⁸ backs them, or rather don't do anything to prevent them. I hope to God he will be turned out of there and some decent man put in his place. There is no punishment severe enough for those damned hell hounds except death, and it will be inflicted, Schofield to the contrary notwithstanding. We paid up the old scores with interest, but Lawrence has again been burned,⁹⁹ our old men and children shot dead in the streets, our women ravished and murdered.

By God the end is not yet. The retribution will be terrible. If the authorities won't do anything, it will be done without them. Those bloodthirsty hell hounds must die. I know the love that Kansas bears to Missouri. It will never be forgotten. But I will stop, for I'm mad. If it was not for my wife, I'd be there today. I think I shall go out there next spring—to live. I have been sick with a fever for two weeks past. Had congestion of the brain. Am better now. The Doctor said it was the natural result of my sickness last winter and spring.

I suppose father told you about my boy.¹⁰⁰ He is growing finely. We call him William Cullen.

Emily's¹⁰¹ health is very poor. Has the consumption. Do not think she will live long.

PETER BRYANT

IV. THE LETTERS, 1865-1906

The preceding group of letters concludes the record of the second phase of Peter Bryant's life, his service to Illinois after jayhawking in Missouri, his service in the Vicksburg campaign, and his convalescence from illness contracted as a soldier. The last phase, from 1856 to his death in 1912, was one of productive effort as a farmer and civic leader in the community he had migrated to before the war, Holton, Jackson county, Kansas.

In spite of Peter's original intention to return to Holton, Kan., in the spring of 1864, expressed in his letter of September 20, 1863, he apparently remained with his wife and child at the Bryant home in Princeton, Ill., until 1865. In April of that year, about a week after Lee's surrender and the military conclusion of the Civil War, Peter set out with his young wife Kit and their baby son, William Cullen, on the slow overland wagon journey to Kansas. The first letter is from Kit, to the family in Princeton.

98. Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield, commander of a department of the Missouri military district from May 13, 1863, to January 31, 1864, and later secretary of war under President Johnson.

99. The raid and massacre by William Clarke Quantrill, August 21, 1863. The earlier burning of Lawrence was on May 21, 1856.

100. William Cullen Bryant (1863-1912). The other children of Peter and Henrietta Bryant were: Marcus E. (1863-1928); Julia A. (1870-1944); Emma (1873-1928); and John Howard (1877-1915). Julia was married in 1897 to Louis C. Duncan of the U. S. army; Emma was married in 1896 to James F. McColgin (see below, letter of September 13, 1906).—Information from Mrs. F. L. Davis, of Holton.

101. Probably his cousin Emily Everett.—See the Autumn, 1961, number of the *Quarterly*, pp. 322, 323.

Apr[il] 18, 1865

DEAR MOTHER AND SISTERS—

You are doubtless feeling quite anxious to hear how we are getting along, and how and where we passed last night. We drove up to a hard looking farm house about three miles south of Buda [Illinois] just as it commenced raining. They kept us very comfortably. We were willing to put up with anything for the sake of getting shelter from the rain. We went to Neponsit this morning and left our stove and barrel (our board wagon and all weighed 2500). We took dinner with David Robinson.¹⁰² Tonight we have stopped four miles from Lafayette with some very nice appearing sort of folks.

Willie keeps well and very good. He got pretty tired today, wanted to go home to Grandma's and Mine Harriett's. He flies round like a bee soon as he is let loose. Doesn't mind being with strangers. Makes himself perfectly at home. There were two teams left Tiskilwa a couple of hours before we did, Walters and Thompson for Kansas. The man that told us seemed very anxious we should get together. Said they were nice people. We think Cook kept very still about it. He must have known it. I am tired and will not write more now.

Affectionately yours, KIT.

Apr[il] 19. 9 o'clock P. M.

Rained hard this morning. The roads are quite bad. Commenced driving about 10 o'clock this morning. Got about 20 miles. Are quartered tonight in the barn of an old Scotchman 5 miles east of Wataga. Have good stabling for the horses and we sleep in the hay mow. It is as good a barn as the one at home. His house is too small to accommodate us. The little man gets pretty tired, but I guess he will stand it. He is gritty. [PETER]

Two months after their migration from Illinois to Kansas, Kit Bryant, facing the hard realities of a new life on the middle border, wrote a "gritty" letter to her sisters-in-law back in Princeton. Her brief account reveals Peter's discouragement over the prospects of the new homestead.

HOLTON, JACKSON CO., KAN[sas]
June 4th 1865

DEAR SISTERS

I thought I'd get a letter from Chattie last night, but was disappointed. Peter received one from Mark last week. [He] intended to have answered it today, but the horses got started for home and he is off after them. Pet has never been loose before.

Willie is trying to write to you, is the greatest bother you ever saw, grows worse every day. I went visiting the other day with him. He got Gramma's pipe and smoked all the afternoon. He caught the little kitten and crammed its mouth full of bread, milk, and corn, and many other tricks as bad.

We are having dry weather again. If we do not have rain soon, everything will dry up. Our corn and sugar cane is up nicely. If t'would only rain. Some days it seems so hot I can scarcely breathe. The wind blows a perfect gale from the southwest most of the time. Peter is growing sick of the country. I heard him say the other day if we had a dry season he would sell out the first chance. Last year, and in fact every year, they only raise half a crop for want of rain.

102. See letter of March 2, 1862, and Footnote.

There is not more than three good wells in the place, not one cistern. People mostly drink slough water, wash dishes in about a pint without rinsing. I could not eat anything at first. Now I shut my eyes and take it as it comes. I know if I had to bring water a mile or so, I [would] be as bad as they. I think its a little mixed if I'd do it though. Frank is digging a well after so long a time. We are not going to have fruit of any kind. The frost killed it all.

I shall want you to make me some jelly and put up some currants and send or bring this fall in those self-sealing cans. I will send money to pay expenses. My fruit kept very nice. I have opened two cans of apple sauce. T'was a good way to put them up, so Mother can try it if she has any more.

Peter got home late last evening. I do not think he will write to Mark this time. A man caught his horses 4 miles east of Holton going for Illinois fast as they could.

I wish you would send me that [sacque?] pattern after the girls send to you. I expect Elijah¹⁰⁰ is married by this time. Did you go to the wedding?

Our things have come at last. Peter is going after them this week. He will have that box sent to a man in Leavenworth, and then we will get it without any trouble.

We have real pretty wild flowers here. I'll send you some Sweet William seeds this fall. They are so different from anything you have there. I'd like some Verbenas if I thought I could keep them from freezing in the winter. They have no house plants here.

From you[r] aff[ectionate] sister KIT BRYANT

HOLTON, JACKSON CO., KANSAS

August 29th 1865

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I received your letter containing the Medicine several days ago. They came all right, though a few of the pills in each package were ground up, I suppose by the fingers of curious Postmasters. Our P[ost] M[aster] sent the letter up to me by one of the neighbors and told him that I had got a package of Garden Seeds.

It gets sweltering hot here some days and is pretty sickly through the country. The little fellows generally suffer the worst, and several have died in the neighborhood (our neighborhood is larger than yours: five or six miles around). We have not had any rain for a week, a trick that has not happened before in all summer. I have not finished cutting my Hungarian. We had a hurricane a short time ago, and it blew it all down flat, and it did not get up again. I had to mow it with a scythe. A good deal of the small grain about here was injured by the wet weather. Corn is first-rate, and weeds grow finely. It has been most too wet for potatoes, but if we can have a few days more of dry, I think they will come out all right. Our sugar cane is first-rate. I have got half an acre, and I rather think we will have molasses enough to do us.

Kit is driving a brisk trade with butter and eggs. She got seven old hens for \$2 and manages to sell about 4 doz[en] eggs a week, and they are worth two bits a dozen. Butter is worth 30 cents a pound. If I had about a dozen cows like the old gal I sold you and a good cellar, I could make a fortune. The three that I have got give lots of milk, but all of them together don't make much more butter than that one used to last summer. I have got four first-rate calves.

100. Peter's cousin Elijah ("Lige") Wiswall Bryant, son of John Howard and Harriet Wiswall Bryant. See letters of December 8, 1854, and October 29, 1865. Lige's wife was Laura S. Bryant (1846-1910).

I want to buy some more this fall if I can. They ask \$8 a head for them, and it is hard to buy at that. Some of the neighbors are going to Missouri to buy this fall. They say they can be bought for \$5 there, and it costs about a dollar to get them here.

We have been having some railroad meetings here, but somehow they don't seem to do much. The idea is to get the Atchison and Pikes Peak RR to run through Holton, but as near as I can find out, they mean to run about ten miles north of here and leave us out in the cold.¹⁰⁴ We are getting a good deal of the Denver City trade through here now. They freight with big wagons holding from 60 to 80 hundred [weight] and drawn by six yoke of cattle and from 25 to 50 wagons in a train. They start 3 or 4 a week out of Atchison, and in a busy time one a day. You can see by that where our cattle go to and what need we have of a railroad here. But there is another thing about it. When they get the railroad through, we are not going to get \$150 a yoke for raw steers.

Prairie chickens are plenty, and I get after them sometimes with the gun. I can take them flying now almost every shot. We are all well.

PETER BRYANT

HOLTON, JACKSON CO., KANS[AS]

Oct. 29th 1865

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I wrote you about a month ago that I was going to want some money about this time, and I am after it now. If you have such a thing as fifty dollars that you don't want, it would accommodate me very much if you would let me have it. I could use a hundred to pretty good advantage, but then if you are not pretty flush you need not send me so much.

I have been having the ague some lately, and my work is getting behind-hand, and I want to hire a man a month, and that will take \$26. Then I am going to build a small barn and an outside cellar, and it will take the other \$24 to buy the shingles.

Frank and John Dixon¹⁰⁵ and I have been burning a lime kiln. We made one big enough to hold 300 bushel, filled it up and burnt it five days and five nights, and when it cooled off there was not any lime there, and as we are all green in the business we don't know what the matter is. We are going to try it again one of these days and see if we can't have better luck. We calculated to sell a hundred dollars worth and came as near it that Frank posted notices down in Holton "Lime for Sale," and there has been a perfect rush to the kiln ever since. But somehow they did not seem inclined to buy. If it had only been lime, we could have sold it all out in four days.

Frank is going to Leavenworth tomorrow with a load of truck, principally butter. Kit is going to send down 20 pounds, for which she expects to get 60 cents a pound.

The young man [Peter's two-year-old boy William Cullen] has had the ague. He went at it with a vengeance. Had nine shakes in ten days, and it

104. Maps of 1867 show an unnamed railroad running through Netawaka, nine miles north of Holton, from Atchison generally N. N. W. to Blue Rapids, in Marshall county. A map of 1877 designates this road as the Central Branch of the Union Pacific. See below, letter of August 28, 1872. By that time the completion of the Kansas Central had made it unnecessary for Peter to go to Netawaka to catch a train.

105. John Dickson, or Dixon, was a friend of Peter's who came west in 1857 and established himself as a farmer near Banner, Kan.—Information from Mrs. F. L. Davis, of Holton.

made him look considerable peaked. We broke it up on him about a week ago, and he is beginning to fat up again. He can take half of a pumpkin pie at one meal without any trouble.

We have got 34 gallons of molasses. I think that will stand us until molasses comes again, and we have got potatoes enough to do us, and corn enough to feed the horses and pigs and make all the Johnny cake we want, and pumpkins and turnips and onions in abundance, and if we only had 2 or 3 barrels of apples and a barrel of cider we would be fixed just as well as you Suckers [Illinoisans] are. Apples are very scarce here. The grocers don't bring hardly any to Holton, and they charge 25 cents a dozen for little hard knotty things such as we used to take to old Gilchrist.

How is your crop this year? How does Lige make it with his new wife? Is he dealing in cattle this year? What are two-year-old steers worth there? Here they sell for \$100 a yoke or pair. All steers go by the pair here. They are all bought up by the freighters, and they had just as soon buy four-year-olds that never saw a yoke as those already broke.

YOURS truly
PETER BRYANT

P. S. Nov. 2nd,

I have just received your letter containing the P[ost] O[ffice] money orders. That will do me for the present. I will write again when I get time. P. B.

HOLTON, JACKSON CO., KAN[sas]
Nov. 28th 1865

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I suppose you think it is time to be hearing from me again about that money. I am so busy nowadays that I don't get any time to write, and then besides I have been in a devil of a stew what to do with the money. I want that land, and I want some cattle, and next summer I want a mower, and that won't buy all of them. I guess that I had better nail the land, and there may be enough left to buy a cow or two, and I will let the mower rip if something don't turn up before next haying time so that I can get one. Cullen has got an idea that he wants some land and is going to send me \$200 in a month to buy him some, and I have been thinking whether he and I had not better buy that together, but I don't know as it would suit him. I wrote to him that I thought I could get 80 acres for \$200, and the place I want is only 130 acres, and I don't suppose 200 would buy half of it.

The man that owns that land lives somewhere near Galesburg [Illinois], and I want you to go down and buy the land for me. Get it just as low as you can and don't pay more than 600. I suppose the way land sells about here that it is worth about \$500, but it is worth a hundred more to me than anybody else. There is a man here offering to sell a piece same size with 40 acre broke and ten acres fenced and about as much timber for \$600, but he has got a runaway wife somewhere and can't give a good title. Frank Pomeroy bought a quarter section with 15 acres of good timber on it for \$550. There is an 80-acre lot here with some timber, plenty of stock water, a first-rate spring, and good farming land which I have heard the man offers to take 200 [dollars] for. If it is true, there is a mighty good chance for some poor man to make a farm. I don't know exactly where that man lives, but will find out as near as I can before I mail this.

Kit wants you to send her box of truck same as you did the books by express to P[eter] B[ryant], Holton, care [of] Wm. Gordon and Bro[thers], Leavenworth, and she wants Chat to send along the collar [insertion in Peter's wife's hand: "By the way, it isn't for me. I owe it for the making of my slippers"]

I finished husking corn last week. Have got a crib full 12 feet long, 8 feet wide, and 7 feet high inside. I think it will be enough to do me. I am doing some plowing now. We have had the finest weather this fall for doing work that I ever saw.

Willie is not very well. He has the ague. Had a chill today. Somehow we can't use it up on him [in spite of his early childhood fevers, William Cullen lived to the age of 49, dying in 1912 in the same year as his father Peter].

Somebody has been kind enough to send me the "Republican." Who do you suppose it was? Much obliged. I have written this in a great hurry, which will account for blunders.

PETER BRYANT

[P. S.]

That man's name is Richard Armstrong. He lives two miles southwest of Wataga. The railroad runs right through his farm and dooryard. The description of the land is S. E. quarter of Section 24, township 7, range 14. I have forgotten what meridian or which side. You can tell by looking at my deed. I left it in the secretary. Stick hard for \$500. It is as near the real value as I can get at. That is all West will give. Please attend to it soon as possible and let me know.

HOLTON, JACKSON CO., KANSAS

Jan. 14th 1866

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I received your letter containing the draft, for which I am much obliged. I bought two cows on the strength of it last week and agreed to pay for them tomorrow, and I began to be a little dubious lest the money should not come in time and the man should back out, for I got them pretty low. Cows are worth here from 30 to 35 dollars, but I got those for 25 and 28 [dollars], and they look good and have good reputations for butter-makers, or rather for giving the stuff they make butter of. I want to get about 3 more. That will make me ten, and if we can't make butter enough out of them to make a living, we will have to try something else. Old Billy Struckman, one of our neighbors, sold over \$400 worth of butter from 7 cows last summer, and I think we can do as well as they can.

I am glad to hear that you have got along so well with your ice. I thought last summer that I would put up a little this winter, but I had so much work to do that I did not get any place made for it and therefore did not get any ice. Last week it rained nearly all the week and cleared the creeks all out. Before that, the ice was about 14 inches thick.

That box got along last Monday. The apples did not freeze. They were a rare treat to us, and we asked Frank and his wife over to help eat them and to convince him that the Jonathan is the tree for us to plant.

About that cloth that was in it, from the pattern rolled up in it I suppose it was intended for Willie, but I told Kit that she better make herself a cloak and get something else for Willie, for he would knock that out in a week. He is a hard boy on clothes, and I have been thinking of getting a pair of pants

made of leather for him. Kit wants to know what his aunties and Grandma think about it. The young man was highly tickled with Mother Goose and can read about half of it already, but he reads by the pictures. He smelled the apples in the box before it was opened and had a big time about the big "led" apples that Aunt Ju sent him, and the scalawag stuffed so much that it made him sick.

So Lige had to run away from home, did he? I don't blame him a bit. He ought to have been fool enough to know that he could not stand it there and built him a house beforehand. Does he deal in cattle any, now, or what does he do for grub?

There was a fight in Holton on Christmas between a Copperhead and a returning soldier, and the soldier was stabbed in the lungs. The next day a mob hung the Copperhead. After that, some of his friends got out warrants and had some of the mob arrested and tried before a justice of the peace. Six of them were bound over to appear at next term of court to answer to the charge of murder. The bonds are six hundred dollars each. They say that they are perfectly willing to stand a trial, for they know that a jury cannot be got together that will convict them. Among them are some of the most prominent citizens of Jackson County. It was thought for a few days that the stabbed soldier would die, but he is getting well now. Folks seem to think that the end is not yet, and that there will be several Copperhead farms for sale before another winter. This [is] a great country. Last summer there were two niggers hung for stealing horses, and the cops were jubilant over the high moral tone of society. Now they talk differently.

PETER BRYANT

HOLTON, JACKSON CO., KANSAS

April 1st 1866

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I received your letter of March 27th today inquiring after the Money Order. They were received all right, and I ought to have written you before but kept putting it off.

I am very busy just now. The Spring has been backward and cold, so that all of my work comes right in a pile. I am setting out an orchard now. I have not sowed my oats yet and don't see how I can before next week. My man cut his foot the other day, and that don't help the cause any. He cut off the 2nd toe and a gash about an inch and a half long in the foot. There was a good deal of trouble in getting plows to scour in this country. I have finally got one made by Andrus of Grand Detour, Ill[inois] that I think will fill the bill.

Mr. Ross of Dover lectured in Holton on Temperance last week. Kit and I heard him one evening.

What is Cyrus¹⁰⁶ going to do in Lawrence?

Yours truly

PETER BRYANT

106. The reference is not to the brothers' father Cyrus Bryant, but to an unidentified Cousin Cyrus, who wrote to Marcus on April 26, 1866, that he had arrived in Nebraska City, Nebraska territory, after a tedious four-day steamboat trip up the Missouri river from Lawrence, Kan. Although he found Nebraska City "full of Rebs," Cousin Cyrus was encouraged by the prospects of the area. He reported land selling near the city at 50 cents per acre and \$456 a section 25 miles out of town. Although he liked this section of Nebraska territory "better than Kansas," he had decided to go on to Omaha. Having sold three sewing machines for William Lea of St. Louis, Cyrus disappears from Peter's correspondence.

HOLTON, JACKSON CO., KANSAS
Oct. 15th 1866

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

We received your letter of Oct. 3rd this evening. I am sorry to say that we shall be obliged to postpone our visit to Princeton [Illinois] until some future time.

When I wrote before, I was in hopes that I could crowd my work along so that we could make the trip, but just about that time my hired man got a notion in his head that he must have a farm of his own, so he posted off and left me to go it alone. I have not been able to light on a man since that I could hire. I would like to have one a couple of months. I have got 20 acres of corn to husk and lots of other work that ought to be done. We have just got our molasses made. Had 70 gallons. It is selling at 45 cts. per gallon at the mill and 50 with the barrel. Frank Pomeroy has a mill and evaporator. Will make about 500 gallons of his own this fall. The grasshoppers have taken my wheat. I sowed four acres, and it came up first-rate, but it is all gone now except about two rods square, and that is going.

I don't think of any more to write, and I am getting sleepy. I had to get up last night and kill a skunk. He got into the hen house and killed two chickens. I am going to Holton tomorrow, and Willie says he is going along to get a pair of red-topped boots.

PETER BRYANT

BANNER, JACKSON CO., K[ANSAS]
Feb. 14th 1869

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I received your letter of Jan. 29th several days ago just after I had mailed one relating partly to the same business.¹⁰⁷

As to the new disposition that you propose, I do not know as I exactly understand it. Is Mother to hold the original \$8000 and \$750 besides? If that is the case, I have no objections. So far as I am concerned, even if she should receive a larger share, for I think and insist that she should have all that she needs for comfort and pleasure as long as she lives if I do not get another cent. But if the idea is to let up on you and come down on the rest of us, whose shares are so much smaller, why I don't think it hardly fair.

The way I look at it is this. You have a farm already opened, fences all built, good house well furnished, barn and outbuildings, all ready to go right along and make a comfortable living, and if there is any one day that you feel as though you didn't want to put in and work, why the whole machinery does not stop. You don't have to go right into the hard work and stick to it. Now, with me it has been "root hog or die" ever since I have been here, and well you know just what I have got. It won't do to let up on the work yet, although prospects are brighter this year than ever before. You need not think I am so lazy that I don't want to work at all. I like to work some, but I don't like to be forced to work or go hungry.

As to dividing that \$500 with the girls, if they have to dig as hard for a living as I do, I am willing to divide, but in that case I think you ought to do something for them, too. I am sure you can stand it as well as I can. I am willing to leave the matter for Mother to decide. If she thinks they need the

¹⁰⁷. The business apparently concerned the final disposition of some property left by Peter's father Cyrus, who died in 1865.

money and will use it judiciously, I will cheerfully give it up without another word.

I believe I have answered all your questions plainly as I can, and if you have any more send them along and I will see what I can do for them. Please let me know soon in regard to the apple tree business, for I want to know what I have got to do and prepare accordingly.

We have had a very hard winter on stock, not very cold but wet, muddy, icy, and very disagreeable. Last week we had some fine days, and Jacobs commenced plowing. We have not sowed any wheat yet, but will work this week if it stays fair weather. We got most of the ground plowed last fall. I have bought two yoke of cattle to do my breaking. Am going to fence in all my land this spring. Bro. Jackson across the creek is going to fence all of his quarter, too. Gets his rails from Armstrong without leave. He thinks a speculator has no business with timber.

The R[ailroad] Co[mpany] offer the Pottawatomie lands for sale except the 11 miles square in N[ortheast] corner, and it is thought that will soon come into market. Holton is agitating R[ail] R[oad] question some. They are doing the joint work for two Roads now, one from Omaha to Topeka, the other from St. Jo[seph] to Manhattan. I have not been to any of their meetings, but I heard that one Road agreed to make Holton a point if the County would give their approval [?] in bonds and take that amount of stock in the road [?]. Holton is in for it hard, the rest of the county not so much.

They have a new son down at the Jacobs. They call him Moses. Our wife and babies are all well.

Yours truly
P. BRYANT

HOLTON JACKSON CO., K[ANSAS]
Aug. 28th 1872

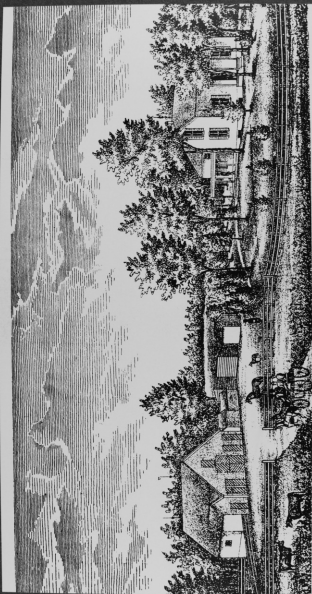
DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I have been having a holiday for the last few days. Not that they have been any great deal of pleasure to me for they have not, but what I mean is that I have been exempt from the regular routine of labor, the plain English of which is I have been sick. Down with a dysentery or something of that sort.

We are full of business here building a new house or rather fixing up the old one, enlarging somewhat and renovating generally, building a new cellar &c. I am getting behind somewhat in my other work. Have not cut any hay yet nor have I plowed much for wheat. We are having a very abundant season. There was a heavy crop of oats and will be more corn here this fall than ever before. Oats are worth 12½ to 15 cts. and some people think corn will be no higher. It is a matter, however, that does not trouble me very much for I never sell any, though I may buy a few hundred bushels. Even then I would hate to give a man less than 15 cents. I intend to feed a few cattle during the coming winter and have but 40 acres of my own.

I suppose if you read the Holton News that you are aware that Holton has got a Rail road ¹⁰⁸ and we Jackson County folks generally feel mighty big over the little fellow. It is only a 3 foot gauge with little baby engines and cars, but I guess it is big enough to give us all a ride one at a time and do all

108. The Kansas Central railway, which connected Leavenworth and Miltonvale (185.59 miles), reached Holton on August 11, 1872.—Harold Crimmins, *A History of the Kansas Central Railway, 1871-1935* Emporia State Research Studies, June, 1934.



PETER BRYANT'S FARM BUILDINGS IN 1881

This sketch was published in J. S. Bird's *Historical Plat Book of Jackson County*. The property was on Sec. 24, T. 7 S., R. 14 E., three miles south and three west of Holton.

the business that we have to do at present. I suppose they will build it up into our neighborhood shortly. Then we won't have to go to Netawaka to get away from home if we should ever get ready to go. I thought when we were in Ill. before that we would get ready to make you another visitation by this year, but the way the thing is running I am afraid we will be unable to do it. It seems as though the longer we lived here the more we have to attend to and less chance to get away from home.

Politically there is not much excitement. Almost all the Republicans are Grant men and the Democrats are all for Greeley. What I think about it is just this. Horace may be a very good sort of man himself, but he is in cussed bad company, and if he is elected by rebels and Tammanyites and Democrats it is going to be a very hard matter to turn his back on his supporters after he is President, and I don't think we are ready to turn the government over to those fellows yet.

I don't know what you think of that matter, but I notice the Chicago Tribune is for Greeley and Uncle John swings his hat for the old Chapaquacker,¹⁰⁹ and I know you have considerable respect for either of them, and for this reason (hoping you will not feel insulted) I did not know but you might lean that way too. If you do I would just call your attention to what kind of an outfit you are training with. I know there is Trumbull & Palmer and Sumner and a few others, and there is also Jeff Davis and every other d--d scawag that carried a musket on the rebel side during the war. And as for dead stinking rottenness I will put Frank Blair & Gov Warmouth against the meanest men in the Grant party. But I didn't intend to make you a stump speech.

P BRYANT

HOLTON JACKSON CO., KS
Oct. 27th 1872

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

We received your letter of the 6th inst. in due time. Was glad to hear that you are a Grant man. Not that I think that the old Nepot is altogether perfect, but in Western phraseology I think he is a heap the best man of the two. I think I have bothered my brains less about politics this year than I ever did in my life before. In fact I don't believe I have raised a single yell for Grant or any other man this fall. Don't want you to think by that I am dead, for candidates here are just as live as ever they were and excitement just as high, but I have had other irons in the fire. With building my house and the farm work I have just about all that I can attend to, and taking into consideration the immediate proximity of winter I don't know whether I shall be able to attend to all of that or not.

We are getting the building pretty well along now. Will have it plastered this week. Then if I had my potatoes dug and corn husked I would be ready to go into winter quarters. My potatoes are good. Think I will have 200 bushels. Corn is also good. Will have 1800 or 2000 bus[hels] of that. Have a good deal of it cut and in the shock. Fall wheat looks fine, and if we do not

¹⁰⁹ Greeley kept a farm at Chappaqua, N. Y., and enlisted the interest of Tribune readers in his swamp reclamation and his crop experiments; in 1871 he published a book entitled *What I Know About Farming*. Persons that Peter associates with Greeley, in this same paragraph, are: Lyman Trumbull, Illinois senator in 1855, 1861, 1867; Joseph Palmer, California Brander of Palmer, Cook and Company; Charles Sumner, Massachusetts senator; Francis P. Blair, Jr., whose political activities in St. Louis were supported by the Tribune; and Henry Clay Warmoth (1842-1931), governor of Louisiana, 1868-1872.

have an uncommonly hard winter or some other plaguy mishap turn up there will be a big crop of wheat next year. I think there was about as large a breadth sown this fall as last though perhaps not in so small patches. Many farmers have from 40 to 80 acres, and it was generally got in in pretty good season.

Our Rail Road has made a stop at Holton. Whether it is final or not I am unable to say. In the contract with the County they were to have \$60,000 in bonds when they built it to Holton, which has already been paid, [and] \$50,000 more when they built a branch to Netawaka and \$50,000 more when they finished the main line to the west line of the County. It is said that they have given up the Netawaka branch and they have not yet gone to work on the main line, but they have until the 22nd of Feb 1873 before they forfeit the bonds. It is evident that the company is hard up, and whether they will be able to raise the money to build it all or not is a matter at which outsiders can only guess.

I think the little road is doing pretty good business considering the length of it, for they are bringing in a large amount of freight and carrying away a good deal of produce.

The health of our family is very good now. Marcus [his second son] had a sick spell during the latter part of summer, an attack of bilious fever, but he is around again now, and Dude [his daughter Julia] is fat as a pig. She is learning to spell a little now.

YOUR TR
P. BRYANT

HOLTON JACKSON CO., KANSAS
Jany 3d 1873

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I don't know but you will begin to think pretty soon as Cullen does that I never write to you unless I want money. At any rate that is the case just now. I need a hundred dollars most cussedly, and if you can let me have it, it will accommodate me very much. I have tried hard to make both ends meet, but some how with my building and the low price of everything I had to sell, I could not make it. I have had to borrow \$100. at the bank, and it is due in 30 days, and if you can help me please let me know immediately, and if not ditto, for I want to know what to do.

Money is very close here, and some of the best men we have got are not able to pay their tax. We have just had a big snow storm. It is 14 inches deep on a level, and we had the coldest weather just before that that I ever knew in this County. The mercury stood at 20 below Zero. The ground was nearly bare at that time, making it very bad on fall wheat. Cattle are doing very well, but not many feeding in this County this winter, making corn a drug in market. It sells for 15 cts. when it will sell at all. I think there would be a speculation in it if a man had a few dollars to invest.

Our folks are well excepting colds, and I believe all the young ones are afflicted that way.

The episodic is going the rounds here. Some of my horses are coughing a little, though it don't seem to be anything very bad. I have heard of but one death from it in the County, and I do not think, judging from newspaper accounts, that we have it as bad here as they did with you and further east.

Our little Rail Road has come to an end at Holton. They were to have

built a branch to Netawaka for \$50,000. in Co. Bonds, which they have already forfeited, and the other 50,000 will become forfeit by the 22nd of Feb. if they fail to build the west line of the County by that time, and they are making no effort to save it. That will make it easier on the tax payers, and they all talk as though they wanted things easy as possible.

Yours

P. BRYANT

HOLTON JACKSON CO., KS

July 22nd 1873

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I received your letter enclosing draft for the payment of your note, and I herewith forward you the note cancelled and receipted.

A few days after I got your letter I received one from Uncle John enclosing your note for \$700., over in five years without interest, which he says he was directed by Uncle William to send to me. So it seems that I have got the upper hand yet, although I suppose you got things fixed to suit you and probably got a pretty good lift too. I am glad that he appreciates what his poor relations are trying to do for themselves instead of fooling it away on Ben Rattery or some other poor devil to go and lay his bones on the burning sands of Africa. I think it is a good deal better to give Hixon and the balance of us a little lift, don't you?

I have been very busy for a week past stocking my grass. My wheat is good. Oats not very good. Weather very dry. If we don't get rain soon the corn is gone up. Wife & children are not very well. Have summer complaint.

Yours &c

P. BRYANT

HOLTON JACKSON CO., KS

Jan. 4th 1874

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I received your letter on New Year Day. Was very glad to hear from you again.

I commenced a letter an evening or two before, but I got sleepy over it and went off to bed without finishing it. Else perhaps you might have had a letter for New Year too. Was glad to hear of the general good health of our friends. My family is well at present and have been all winter except the baby [Emma, b. 1873], who was attacked with the croup a night or two before Christmas and was afterwards threatened with fever, but we broke it up and she is now quite well again. We did not have any company Christmas day nor any turkey. Kit thought she had enough to do without getting dinner, so I got some oysters and we had a stew and the boys enjoyed it well and wondered if Uncle Mark's little girls¹¹⁰ were having a good time and got lots of nice things in their stockings.

That evening I got a copy of the "Republican" containing the resolutions adopted by the members of the bar at Oshkosh, Wis. relating to the death of Arthur Everett,¹¹¹ which was the first that I had heard of his decease. It happened that about that time they stopped sending me the Republican and I missed four [or] five numbers and then sent for it again, and if they published

110. Grace Mary Bryant (1868-1950) and Alice Bryant Crater (1870-1916).

111. See letter of September 20, 1863, and Footnote.

anything in regard to it I did not see it. I think from the published account that they must have thought very highly of him where he was located.

I saw the notice of Willie Everett's¹¹² death. It must be a terrible stroke to his young wife.

I am glad to hear that you are doing well in your business.¹¹³ Wish I could say as much for myself, but somehow I can not see that I am getting rich very fast, and neither does the hard work seem to let up a particle. In fact if there is any difference it is on the increase.

I am not feeding any cattle this winter. Have nothing on hand but a few two-year olds. My corn crop was light, not making over 25 bushels per acre. I fattened some hogs and sold some, some time ago. They brought 3 ct. [and] are worth 3½ now, while in Chicago & St. Louis they are quoted at 4½ to 5½. Somebody must make money. There were a good many hogs fattened here, and the most of them went out at 3 cts.

Corn has taken quite a rise lately— is now worth 40 cts. Fall wheat 90 to 1.00. I have about 100 bushels of wheat to sell when it gets high enough to suit me.

My prospect for the new crop is very good at present. Have about 20 acres. It got a good start in the fall. A good deal of the wheat about here was sown late owing to the dry weather in the fall and is considerably damaged. The winter thus far has been mild, although we have had some rather sharp weather since New Year. I do not keep any hired help this winter. Am getting some wool cut, but there is no demand now, and I will have to hold it over until next fall.

Business is dull. In fact, I don't know what a fellow could go at to turn an honest penny unless it is playing poker, and even at that those who make a business of it have got so sharp that an outsider don't stand any chance.

P. BRYANT

HOLTON K[ANSAS] July 27th 1874

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I have received your letter containing my note and a draft for \$250. It is fulfilling a transaction that I did not expect at this time as I did not suppose you had recovered from the effects of your disaster so that you would have the money to spare.

I had need of \$300 about the middle of June and was expecting to use that money, but as soon as I heard of your tornado I made other arrangements and had thought no more about it. However, it is all right if it does not cramp you, and I enclose your note—cancelled. It is devilish queer that a fellow can't try to do something for himself without fire, rain or wind or some other cussed thing turns up and wastes all he can make.

I have had one or two little [swipes?] myself, though I never lost quite \$4000 at a lick. Still I suppose it is all in a lifetime and not much use to growl.

The weather is very dry here. Wheat and oats are all harvested and stacked, a fair crop. Corn is gone up. We will have none. That breaks into my cattle feeding operations. It will hardly pay me to hold my steers over,

112. William Law Everett (July 12, 1849-October 16, 1873), son of Dr. Oliver Everett and Beanie Law Everett, of Dixon, Ill. The young wife referred to in the next sentence was Annie Chamberlain, of Princeton, who married Willie, March 31, 1873.—Edward F. Everett, *Descendants of Richard Everett of Dedham, Mass.* (Boston, 1902), p. 204.

113. The firm of "Glassburn and Bryant, Dealers in Grain, Stock, Flour, Salt, etc.," of Tampico, Ill.—Letterhead used by J. M. Glassburn in letter to Marcus, July 20, 1875, N. Y. P. L.

and if I can get as much money for them as they cost me I will be satisfied. There is a good crop of fruit, though I don't think apples will be as large as they would with more rain.

There blew a hot wind all day last Saturday from the sand hills in the southwest that dried up the green stuff terribly, and judging from the way it singed things here there can not be much left down in the paradise of this state 200 miles southwest of here. The mercury went to 110 in the shade.

You asked me some time ago in regard to the "Republican." Last August I sent them \$2. for one year's subscription, and I see by their label on the outside that there has since been another year added and it runs now until August 1875. Kit has not received any magazines from your wife, though somebody has sent Julia a child's paper, "The Mousy Folks Gem" with a picture. Willie was already taking the paper so that now we have two copies. If that was the paper referred to, Julia sends thanks.

I do not suppose that it will be of any use to mention the fact that we would be glad to see any of our friends and relations that might take a notion to stroll this way this fall or any other time, nor the fact that we would like to take a stroll eastward but find ourselves utterly unable to do so at present.

My family are all well and tearing around.

P. BRYANT

HOLTON JACKSON Co., Ks
Oct. 4th 1875

DEAR BROTHER [MARCUS]

I received a letter from you some time since while at Nantucket, Mass., which I neglected to answer at the time, and as it has been so long since, I will send this to Princeton, thinking you have probably got around home by this time and earnestly hoping with improved health and strength.¹¹⁴ We are as well as usual except Marcus and Willie. They were down with a kind of bilious fever a week or so ago and have not fully recovered yet.

I am very busy just now, though I don't know as any more so than I have been all summer. In fact I have put in more hard nigger work this summer than I have been wont to do for the past three or four years. What the result will be I am hardly able to say. Possibly I may make both ends meet but nothing more. Still I have had first-rate health, less sick headaches than before, and my knee has got stout so that I get pretty well fagged before it makes me limp.

I am putting up prairie hay now. Grass is remarkably good this year, I think as good or better than I ever saw it before. I think I can get up a hundred tons to sell. Dealers bale it and pay \$3 per ton delivered at the depot. There is no money in it for me at that price, but we are hoping for something better after a while. My corn is pretty fair. I think it will make from 30 to 50 bushels to the acre, probably average 40. The smallest yield is from the seed I got of Lige. It is a smaller kind than we usually plant here, and earlier. It so happened that there was a dry spell of about two weeks just when it should have had rain. While the other corn, being a larger variety, was more backward and the rain came in time to make a heavy crop. I shall keep that

¹¹⁴ Marcus did not recover from the illness mentioned here. He died February 27, 1876. N. Y. P. L. has four letters relating to his trip east and attempted convalescence: two from his business partner, J. M. Glasburn, to Marcus, July 20, 1875, and August 21, 1875; and two from Marcus to his wife, Kezia, July 26, 1875, and August 1, 1875.

seed of Lige's, for I believe it will hit oftener than it will miss, and some time it may make me a crop when the other would not make anything.

Cattle are plenty and good. Steers can be bought for 3½ to 3¾ cts per lb. There will be quite a good many fed here. They are paying 25 cts. for corn, and it will probably be down to 20 cts., perhaps less. Hogs are very scarce, worth from 6 to 8 cts. I heard one man offer 9 cts for a choice lot the other day. Those who are lucky enough to have a few will do well. The grasshoppers eating up the corn last year made sad havoc with the hog crop, as they did not winter so well on prairie hay as cattle did. I managed to [bring?] through 17. Will have about 15 to dispose of. I have not got any cattle to feed, but think I shall buy a few [word illegible] and feed from Feb. [word illegible] and let them go on the grass.

My wife came pretty near going to Alton on a visit a short time ago, just as near that she did not go. The R R companies out this way got into a war with each other, and for a few days the Rock Island Co. sold tickets to Chicago and back for \$10.00. Kit scrambled around to get ready, and just as she was about to start they raised the fare to the old figures and she went back on it. Gosh she was mad. I tried to hurry her up a little, told her that kind of fare could not last always, but no, she wasn't going in her old rags and take naked young ones like I did. And the result was she is here yet, but I must close this and look to my wife, for she is forever looking to see what I write and she don't like to hear about it.

YOURS

P. BRYANT

Following the correspondence with Marcus, concluded above, there is in the present collection only one letter. This was written by Peter in the year 1906, to Marcus' daughter Grace M. Bryant, who continued to live in the Princeton home until her death in 1950.

It is obvious that between 1875 and 1906 Peter and his family prospered upon the land and that he achieved some eminence as a citizen of Jackson county. The letter below reveals that he had become a police judge and was prominent enough to be chosen as speaker for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of Holton. The fact that on this occasion Peter read a poem of his own composition reminds us again of his flair for writing,¹¹⁵ which had showed itself when he was a schoolboy in Princeton writing verses of longing for "The Far Off West."

115. According to John E. Chandler, publisher of the *Holton Recorder*, Peter is still remembered in Holton "as having some of the poetic proclivities of his famous uncle."—Letter to the editors of this collection, September 13, 1957.

OFFICERS

W. D. KUHN, Mayor
 E. E. RAFTER, Pres. of Council
 S. H. NEWELL, SR., City Clerk
 PETER BRYANT, Police Judge
 J. A. ROKES, City Attorney

COUNCILMEN

	FIRST WARD
M. L. VARNER	F. S. SCOTT
	SECOND WARD
C. F. HURRELL	W. E. BROWN
	THIRD WARD
R. F. GLENN	E. E. RAFTER

CITY OF HOLTON¹¹⁶

HOLTON, KANSAS, Sept. 13, 1906

MY DEAR GRACE

I received your letter, the big envelope, several days ago, and from the bulk of the enclosure I felt sure that I had at last found what I was looking for.¹¹⁷ Imagine then, my disappointment on finding only a lot of old school compositions¹¹⁸ that I supposed had gone to the flames years ago. Then I waited patiently for your next, but in the meantime fagged my brains and shook my rattlebox for words to fill the vacuum that Cullen had forgotten. Then yesterday morning your letter came, and when I read that you "had done your level best and failed" I felt as if the matter were all right anyhow, and the public would never know the difference, but when I came to where you wrote of a poem that you thought written by your father, just thought I would look at it, for I did not remember of my brother Marcus ever writing a jingle in his life, and when I unfolded the old time-stained sheet, will you believe I found the very thing I was looking for.

Grace, you builded better than you knew, and I can not thank you too much for what you have done. However, your letter did not come until within half an hour of the time I was to make my talk, so I could not use it, but read the piece as I had it fixed up, but it was nowhere near as good as the original.

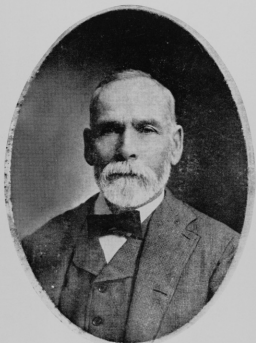
There was a large crowd out, it was estimated at 5000 people, and to do the best I could, I do not suppose my voice reached half way round, but 'tis all said and done now, and the audience cheered, and clapped their hands vociferously, so I guess they liked it. I do not know whether they will publish my part in the proceedings or not, but if it is done I will send you a copy.

Men [?] Willin was here last spring. He said your mother was in Dixon caring for your grandmother, who was very feeble. Since then we have heard nothing. Is she still there?

116. At the left of the list of officers and councilmen, the letterhead bears an engraving of the Holton town hall.

117. The literary composition referred to here may have been "The Old Oak's Story," a narrative poem of over 350 lines concerned with the history and legendary lore of Holton and Jackson county. It was read by Peter at the third reunion of the Bryant family, July 13, 1879, in Princeton, and was printed by the Signal Job Printing Co., of Holton, in the same year. Besides "The Old Oak's Story," there are two other published works by Peter that are known to the present editors: a speech, "The Second Transplanting," delivered at the Bryant family reunion in 1895, and "Reunion Song," written for the reunion of 1898. Both are in *The Bryant Record* (Princeton, Ill., 1898).

118. Certain school compositions written by Peter at Miss Smith's school are preserved in N. Y. P. L. They include: "The Far Off West" (verse and prose), dated December 2, 1880; "The Effects of the Emancipation of Slavery in the British West Indies," undated; an untitled composition on emancipation in the West Indies, undated; "Fleasures of Hunting," dated January 2, 1851; "Ghosts and Witches," undated; "High Times," undated; "The Prairies," undated; "Lager Beer," undated; an untitled composition about playing with gunpowder, undated.



PETER BRYANT

(1837-1912)

A nephew of William Cullen Bryant, Peter Bryant arrived from Illinois to take a claim in Jackson county in 1859. Except for time out for the war, Jackson county and Holton were "home" until his death.

Your friends here are all well. Marcus and John are hard at work on their farms and have abundant crops. Emma's husband is traveling in Iowa in the interest of the International School of Correspondence of Chicago, seems to be doing well.¹¹⁹ Remember me to your mother and all inquiring friends. And if you feel as if you would like to hear from me once in a while just write to me, though I hardly suppose I will be able to put you out so big a job next time. Thanking you again I am

Yours affectionately
PETER BRYANT

119. See Footnote on Peter's children, letter of September 20, 1863.