

Letter from Jessie Hunter (nee Olding), Granite Creek, Aug. 29, 1898
To Jessie McQueen
Reprinted Courtesy the Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia¹
Transcribed by Diane Sterne², Coalmont, B.C.

Granite Creek, B.C.
August 29th 1898

My dear,

I have about an hour to devote to writing. I washed, scrubbed, and folded the clothes ready for ironing in the morning and must set bread to-night. Harriet began studying to-day, and Hugh has just got in from the office. He has had a very long day of it. A man came at 6 this evening wanting a lot of records he hunted up, and as Hugh intended going out to begin assessing to-morrow, he had to find them to-night.

I wish you and Elizabeth were keeping house in the little cabin just below our house, so that I could supply you with jam and a bit of corn cake occasionally, with a few odds and ends to help out your housekeeping, but it is little use wishing.

I suppose you know. Great Britain has annexed the Santa Cruz and the Duff Islands. This may be asked in the next exam so make a note on it. I am sorry you were not as successful as you ought to have been but better luck next time let us hope. I am anxious to know if you are 1st assistant or not. You ought to be, as you are the best teacher in Rossland, and this does not except the principal.

I will send your children a few little articles as soon as I know for a sure and certain fact that you are housekeeping all by yourselves. Why does not Eliza advertise for pupils? I think she ought to and would get a good class. She needs me to blarney her up to the Rossland people. I'd tell them how she can play and how she can teach and what a fine creature she is to be sure.

Hugh has started cleaning his little rifle - got a rag stuck in it and has now employment in trying to pick it out. It is a very useful article indeed and I can load it and unload it too.

Hawks are plentiful just now. Dan M^cKay shot one the other day - saw it on my clothes line, and when it flew, shot it "on the wing". He says he took it home to frighten Emily - Emily Cook. Cook's brother the parson is to arrive in Kamloops Sept 13th!!! I wonder if he will be over-joyed

¹McQueen, Lowden family fonds, Volume 3348, Folder 8, Letter 11. Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, Halifax, Nova Scotia

²Paragraph breaks have been added to this transcription for ease of reading.

with his sister-in-law. The heir to the estate has not arrived yet,³ so we are favoured with a visit from Mrs. Riley quite frequently. She is getting uneasy waiting so long. She has been three weeks away from home now, and was only at home four days from Ont. before she had to come out here. Tish's husband is from Halifax, N.S. His father is a wholesale merchant there.

August 31st Same year

I had Mrs Riley here last night so got no chance to write. I took in \$25.00 to-day and not a cent of it for myself. Hugh is out in Otter Valley assessing and has to go down to Princeton and back before the mail goes out or comes in.

Capt. Scott & Mrs. Scott went down to Princeton Tuesday morning. They say they intend spending the winter there, as do the Watermans - Time will tell. I think they will be quite sick of it before Spring.

Willie Munro is working for Stevenson and Mrs. Munro is on the ranch. Did I tell you that Lily Gillie died of consumption this spring? D.G. wanted his mother and other sister to come out here but they are not coming. His mother thinks she is too old to stand the journey - she is older than Mr. Gillie.

Mary Gilmore – Mrs. Dundas is down on Lulu Island now. Mr. Dundas bought a ranch down there. Perhaps I told you all this before. I did not get a letter from you while you were in Seattle. I heard that Maggie Cameron did not like Vancouver and has returned to New Glasgow. Hurry up and tell me if you are the next teacher to the Principal and what has become of Maud.

To-day Mrs Riley has been up to see Mrs. Holmes' baby - it has been sick several days. I hope it is nothing serious the child is only 3 ½ months old⁴, so maybe its teeth are troubling it.

Adeline and Emily were here this afternoon. They wanted an apple, their "have you any bread?" "I want some of your bread." "Have you any butter?" etc. I hope they won't be sick to-night or I shall be blamed. I did not give them any cake, and for that she may be thankful.

Did I tell you that Nat Barwick is paying attention to Ethel Woodward? Mrs. Marcus told me so, and Mrs. Harvey is very well pleased. Ethel has a very rough voice indeed, but they all have that. "Ethel is my daughter and Ethel is a pretty girl" is one of Mrs. Harvey's sayings.

Sept. 1st

This is written on the old instalment plan. To-day Hugh got home - he was out in Otter Valley assessing since Tuesday and he left at five for Princeton to-night. Harriet and I walked up the hill to see Mrs. Holmes and her family. The sick folk are on the mend. Mrs. Riley interrupted me last night and she has just gone to-night. I am waiting for the kettle to boil as I have to set bread, and we want a scrub ourselves for we must be very dusty.

³Emily Cook delivered a baby girl (Francis Mary) on October 11, 1898. She was pregnant at the time of this letter. Emily's husband, Foxcrowle Cook, was hoping for a boy. It wasn't until 1912 that they had a son, Edward Henry.

⁴The baby referred to was Thomas Walton Holmes born May 20, 1898.

We came down the new piece of road and it is a very gradual slope down to the very point of the bench. It ends almost where we turn down to go to our field then the road crosses the flat to the street coming out to the street just below the Cariboo House⁵.

Hugh's trip down to Princeton is occasioned by Scott and Waterman not keeping their promises. They were to send some money due and it has to go to the Minister of Finance this mail as yesterday was the last of the month. They are a very careless lot. Waterman is about the most selfish chump I ever saw. Did I tell you I met Mrs. Herbert Cancellor this summer? She is very very plain looking, but sensible and rather nice. Cancellor brought her in when he came with the ballot boxes. They intended coming here with the check of the English but Mrs. Marcus and her crowd forestalled them – Mrs. Marcus said to Mrs. Coutlee “now we'll get up early in the morning and get there first” - this was at Thynnes.

There ought to be three freight teams in this week, bringing stuff for Capt. Scott⁶ - an engine and some furniture. They expect a young lady from Australia aged 17 to visit them. Capt. Scott says he is going to bring their piano in⁷. We'll see all in good time.

There is a man missing. He went down to our field where he had his horse and took a rope to catch the horse. He left the rope on the fence. The saddle and horse are in the field and he has not been seen for two days. I cannot imagine what can have happened to him. He had been drinking when he was at the hotel the day before. Whether he was drunk when he was last seen I do not know.

I must go and set bread, then get to bed for I am tired and to-morrow is sweeping day. I get lazier as the years go by I believe.

Sept. 2nd

As I was getting ready to sweep my sitting room who should come in but Mr. Neville the new Methodist minister from Nicola. He had been told by somebody I came here to stay and I wish people would mind their own business and let my house alone. He is an Englishman and likes his own comfort. As far as I can see Hugh will not be home to-night so we can manage comfortably. He left to see some of the folk round town to let me finish sweeping, and I was just ready to wash the kitchen floor and this when Mrs. Riley came to spend the day. She knew I was going to be busy too, but she has just gone over to Cook's and Neville went across the creek to see the men of the Boston & British Columbia Co. Tomorrow he purposes going to Princeton to hold service there Sunday morning and to return to have service at seven Sunday evening.

I have been rushing round all day and now feel tired and quite sleepy enough to go to bed, while it is not eight o'clock yet, I'll have to stop writing as soon as Mr. Neville gets back. Here he is so good night. Mrs. Thynne left just after supper to-night so I've got to wind up in a hurry. It is

⁵Cariboo House was the only hotel in Granite Creek that survived the fire of 1907.

⁶A reference to this trip can be found in the Memoirs of Walton Hugh Holmes.

⁷When Hugh and Jessie Hunter moved to Granite Creek, Jessie's organ was transported there by six Chinese men. It was the only organ in Granite Creek at that time. The organ was a gift from Hugh to Jessie upon their marriage in 1891. The piano being transported into Granite by Capt. Scott was the first piano in Granite Creek.

so cold I fear we shall have frost, but I picked the largest of the tomatoes to-night to be sure of them. Mrs. Riley came over with Mrs. Thynne and visitors prevent me from writing. Now I have all my mail to attend to - several letters on business must be written, also a note home. I hope you are carefully taking care of yourselves and not starving yourselves if you have rented a shack or rooms for your own selves

Love to you both,
Your loving Jessie

Jessie Olding to Jessie McQueen, 29 August 1898, Granite Creek. The McQueen Family Papers, Atlantic Canada Virtual Archives, no. 3348_08_11. University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB, Canada. Original: McQueen, Lowden family fonds, Volume 3348, Folder 8, Letter 11. Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, Halifax, Nova Scotia.