Aug 30th/96

Barkerville
Cariboo
British Columbia

Dear father

I recieved your letter & the two photos which you promised us, and I am very well pleased. Our Jim is down at Quesnelle just now, so he has not seen them yet; but I expect him back very soon. I am sure he'll like them. I can hardly tell whether to call them good likenesses or not, there is such a great change in some of you. The only ones that I dont see any change in, are mother and Joe. You look younger if anything. Our Will & Ada & Martha Ann look a trifle older; but no worse for it. Our Albert is altered most, I hardly knew him. If he had been separate, or alone I would'nt have known him. I think the same of the youngsters; but then, that is not to be wondered at, for children certainly do alter a lot. Jaffy and Frank are both grown to fine lads. Lizzie just reminds

me of our Annie's picture in the other family group. It seems rather hard that our Annie could not have been with you. If you could let me have one of her latest photos, I should be awful glad. I tried hard, and almost fancied I could see something of her features in Dorothy's picture; but it is not very clear. There is one member of the group, that I dont remember having seen before; that is, the young lady standing alongside of our Albert. I would be very glad to make her acquaintance, and it seems to me that our Albert ought to be able to give me an introduction, he is the nearest to her. Just mention this to him.

You ought to have had Sam in the group, but I suppose he could not very well get leave of absence from his post. I dont know if I have altered much; but I think if you were to see our Jim, you would see a great alteration. He is quite stout and browzed. He looks well. We are both in good health. I am glad to hear that of you

I am sure you would have a good time on your tour of Chippenham, Bath & Bristol. and I am very glad to see you going in for enjoyment. You ought to take more of these pleasuring trips; they will do you good. I have made up my mind to take a trip home in 1900, so I'll see you then (God willing) if not before. I tried hard to get to Chicago Exhibition; but the fates were against me. You bet, I'll see the next Paris Exposition and have a spin through some part of Europe too; money or no money. Our Jim says he'll come too.

I am now going to intrude the Bear Lake question on you again. Once more I am hopeful of us going on with the ranche and making something out of it. Ever since we abandoned it last fall, I have kept urging it on to our Jim and Tommie. I offered to keep them going if they would tackle it. I can do that and put a little of something away beside. I am going to put enough in the bank, so that I can refund you at any time, for what you lent us.

I have already made one instalment of 70 dollars, and I have bought a cabin with furnishings for 60 dollars — a good bargain. Then I have spent close on 50 dollars for clothes, etc. It feels nice to be having lots of money, I never was so flush before; but I hope to do far better yet. Anyhow, I think I am doing well to say I have only been in the country ~~only~~ a little over 2 years. I can tell you this country is a lot different to the old country, a man has got to learn everything anew, like a collier going right from the pit to the looms; but I am rambling from the Bear Lake question. — Our Martha Ann says I am an old rambler —. Tom Fletcher sent me a letter last week, saying that he and our Jim had agreed to take my offer and go to Bear Lake if I would make inquiries from the Gold Commissioner if the land in question was still unrecorded by anyone but us. I saw Mr Bowron (Commissioner) to-day, and he said it still stood in our name. The man who told me, he was going to take the land, did not record it yet. He has been living out there

for years, trapping, hunting, and fishing; but never did any work by way of cultivation, yet he tells everybody, that it is a poor place for growing anything. He is jealous of anyone going out there, for fear they would encroach on his preserves; as you might say.
I have heard scores of men say that it will be some of the best property in the country before long; but no one has had the courage to try it yet. It is so far from any ~~other~~ people and there is no road to it, except a trail.
I think that if we went to work in earnest the government would soon make a road. They opened up the trail to Bear Lake last summer and built bridges, and this summer they had a lot of men to work on it again. and opened it up to Goat river, a long way beyond Bear Lake. It seems as if the government is trying to open up that country. If we go on with it, we shall be the pioneers in that section. Mr Bowron told me, he thought the trail would be fit for a winter road even now. If our Jim could take my place, I would gladly go with Tommie. If they go, there will be perhaps two months of the severest part of winter

counter, when they would stay around here, then he can get some idea of the work to be done in this place, and if he is agreeable and the Directors would allow it, I would exchange places with him. I would like to go, for there would be more adventure than in this job. I have had no chance yet, either for hunting or fishing or anything else. Out there is a fine country for the sportsman and trapper; but that isn't the only thing I have in view. It is a rich agricultural country, too, I am sure. I am judging from what I saw, and dont credit Kenneth McLeods statements. A man could cut tons and tons of wild hay and pea-vine, It grows as tall as myself. Timothy hay is worth $100 a ton in Barkerville. It does not cost very much to make hay in this country, it does not take a small army of men to be raking away at it day after day. They just cut it and scatter it a little, the sun dries it quick. What makes it so dear, is because there is so little of it. The country is all covered thickly with trees, except for small patches. You might call the land at our end of Bear Lake, prairie land, it is an open piece of country for miles and would be

easy to prepare for cultivation. We would not make anything big for the first year or two; but a man is always certain of living by ranching why, we could make a good living, by catching the fish in Bear Lake & river and selling them in Barkerville. Of course we would have to get pack-horses; but then, they dont cost anything to keep only when you've got to buy hay.
There is certainly a big chance of making money out of it, if only there was a road from it to Barkerville there would be a fortune in it. It would pay I think, even to make hay out there and bring in here on pack-horses. They do pack hay in here even now from miles around.
Just now, quarty is all the go, prospectors are scouring the country for quarty ledges, many have been found and are now being tested by cyanide process (a patent owned by a Glasgow firm) if successful that would boom the country, then our ranche would be worth something.
I suppose you will have read in the papers, how British capitalists are turning to B. C. for investment in mines. This country is going ahead. The Cariboo mine at Forks of Quesnelle which commenced last summer, closed

cleaned up, then, $42,000; this summer they have cleaned up $100,000 at the first wash up and they will have another yet. That is nothing to what they expect from now on; they have only cleaned off the surface dirt so far and have 60 ft deep of rich paying gravel in sight.

The British Pacific Railway Co are actively pushing their scheme, they have it before the Dominion parliament, and are bound to get it yet; when they do, Bear Lake ranche will be worth something. The line as proposed goes right through the land that we recorded.

You will think I am painting it too much; but that is how it appears to me. I think it is better to go in and take chances. If we wait till it is a sure thing, you may depend on it, someone would know before us and cut us out. Nothing ventured nothing won.

Jim Shepherd is doing well with his ranche for the 1st season, having cleared 4 acres - lots of work in that - grown some fine potatoes and cut six tons of hay, built a house and chicken house, dug a well, made roads, and put up fences since about February. Pretty good.

No more at present, Good-bye.

Your affectionate [illegible]

they will keep it up a few days yet, with a regular fusilade of firecrackers. They make a better show of hospitality than we do at our Christmas and New Year. All their houses are thrown open their tables spread with tea, cakes, candies, fruit, liquors, and cigars, and everybody is welcome to partake. Some white men go and get beastly drunk at the chinaman expense, and these same men will be abusing them and clamoring for their exclusion from the country soon after.

They have their Chinese flag flying — a very handsome one — and a lot of fancy paper lamps lit up.

I wish our Jim could manage this job; but I dont think he would suit at all. Tommie Fletcher would do better. Either of them are willing to take it, if the board would allow it.

I had a letter from our Jim this morning Feb. 5th, having sent yours down last week, which he recieved.

This is all the news at present I think, with kind regards to all

I remain. Your affec: son

John