

Merrimack, Wis., Jan. 24, 1858

Dear Mother:

... I have wishes sometimes that I had gone east instead of coming up here to spend the winter, although I know it is more for my interest to stop here. I am really getting to be quite a Westerner. When the 6th day of Feby. comes, it will be four years since I started from home to be gone a year to the West. Pretty close calculating, don't you think so?

I am getting pretty tolerable long winded as you may know for I was out hunting deer the other day and shot at one but did not kill him. However, I gave him chase and ran him ten miles all alone but finally gave up without getting him. However, I intend to go again the first snow that comes.

I have been fishing considerable of late. Have had some good luck. I caught one Pickeril on Friday last that weighed 6 lbs. We had him stuffed & baked today. He was fine eating. I wish I could bring you one occasionally. We have had all the Pickerils we could eat since I began to go fishing.

I have not done any work except to cut the wood for the stove since I came here. It costs nothing for wood except for the team to draw it with, which is not much. Uncle Sam's farm is near-by, at least small patches of it here & there. There is generally wood & timber on it.

I believe I wrote in my letter to George the reason of my leaving Hamilton [Illinois]. My move from Galena [Illinois] to Keokuk [Iowa] was a bad one on the whole I think, that is, if I could kept on making as fast as I did make for the time I was there, I should have been much better off to stoped there. My investments in real estate at Keokuk proved only a ten per ct. interest operation on account of the contested title, and I could not take my money out of it at that under a year. However, two months of that year has passed and the remaining ten months will be gone before I am aware of it. However, I wish I had it now; I should use it in the spring, I presume, to buy me a farm. But perhaps it is all for the best, for I do not call it extraordinary good farming land in this section. But then I might not buy about here.

Maynard & Harriet are very well. The baby is quite well & smart, weighs 20 lbs, has two teeth, sits up to the table and eats bread at meal times.... We have had no winter here in the West as yet, and I do not believe we are going to get any this year. It seems more like April the January....

They have a Lyceum here called the Merrimack Lyceum in which all the great men of the town take part. I was appointed the last evening to defend the negative of the next question, which is as follows, Resolved, that the sale of intoxicating lickors as a beverage ought to be punished by imprisonment. I am on the wrong side for me according to my principles, although I shall try and make a bold defense for the whisky seller....

I am with much love your obedient son,

J. O. Partridge