

North, Letter from Enos to His Parents, 1829

Alexander [New York] May 24th 1829

Honored parents

I received your letter some time since accompanied with two Hartford papers and did suppose that Lester had written a letter in return. Since I found he had not, I have not been able to write myself a principal part of the time, which accounts for the reason of your not having a letter sooner. With respect to health in this country; it is very sickly in this and other towns as far as I am acquainted, our bilious intermittent fever has paid us another visit this spring with a doubled fury in order to give all those a sound drubbing that it was not able to flax out last fall. It however attacks some who had it last fall, although it does not commonly stay with them long. It is attended in some cases with a very violent dry, hacking cough seated on the lungs. It is much more severe than it was last fall. Part of Jones family have it. Olive has been sick – getting better. John Peck & wife, are living in Lester's west house. A man by the name of Foster on the opposite side of the highway, and wife and one child sick. Another family by the name of Coe living on the same side of road further towards where Lester now lives. Two children sick. There has been no deaths yet; I however think it very doubtful whether Peck's wife ever recovers. She has the appearance of the fever setting her into the consumption. With respect to myself, I have not done much business since last fall except foddering my cattle and getting my wood. The fore part of the winter, I was laid up better than a week with an old ulcerated tooth that could not be drawn. I then had a severe spell of the piles, then took another tug with my old ulcerated tooth again. Afterwards attacked with a violent dry, hard cough with difficulty of breathing. It would sometimes be better, but would return again if I went to work and continued so till about the middle of April, when I was attacked with the fever. I waited upon it with a good deal of patience about a week, and it made such work with my cough, I concluded it would kill me and sent for a physician. He came and bled me, and went to giving me vegetables and said it absolutely necessary to have the cough immediately attended to & let the fever go a spell, but advised to break the fits as soon as it would do. His medicine had a good effect on my cough and I then went to taking the quinine, which completely subdued my fever & ague altogether for a spell, and had principally got clear of any cough and blessed with a good appetite, but was so weak I could hardly go, but continued to gain strength till about the 20th of May. By this time, I was taken with a relapse by being imprudent in trying to do some chores that were suffering, and had to take more quinine and once more have stopped my fits and again began to have a good appetite. I did suppose that I had undergone something by sickness before, but I have never suffered so much as I have with my present disease. I do not go out of the house much, or have not since my relapse, and have formed the conclusion to keep still for the future, and if I cannot get my work done, let it go to destruction without fretting or scolding.

With respect to my business on the farm, it is bad as can be. I was hindered a good part of the fall in the house when my family had the ague, and was not able to get in much wheat. I

got in about 3 acres very late. Where I had corn it looks bad enough now, and probably shall not have wheat enough to eat. I have been very much troubled to get my help since I have been sick, but have finally got a young man who is scarcely able to work in consequence of his just recovering from the ague, to plant me some corn and potatoes, but cannot keep him long, and shall get them in, in three or four days if the weather is good. I was calculating to get in 10 or 12 acres of wheat on the flats including some chopping done last year, which I was not able to clear in consequence of the ague last fall, but have given it all up, as I am not able to hire him, and I think altogether probable my fever will stay by me like a brother by turns till cold weather comes on. Lester's family all well.

The season here is very backward. I believe corn is all planted here except mine. The leaves on trees are about their natural bigness. Peach trees are out of the bloom. Fruit is not destroyed by the frost, and a prospect of having considerable.

I received two numbers last week of your Anti-Masonic paper. I should write more, but do not feel able and must conclude.

Yours, etc.

E. North

The letter is addressed to Mr. Rufus North, Colebrook, Conn. In the upper left-hand corner are the words "Alexander N. Y., May 27"; in the upper right-hand corner is the number 18½ [cents]; in the lower left-hand corner are the words "Colebrook meeting house Post Office" The letter is its own envelope. It consists of a single sheet 16 x 12¾ folded in half on the long side, then folded 1/3 at the top, up 2¾ inches from the bottom, then in thirds, with one lobe folded once again in half to be sealed with two nickel-sized globs of wax.

The reference to "Meeting House Post Office refers to what today is 561 Colebrook Road, across from the Colebrook Town Hall. In 1829 the postmaster was Reuben Rockwell, and as a consequence, the Post Office was in his house, which at that time was the next building to the Congregational Church, which was replaced by the present church in 1843.

Note: The definition of the word "ague" is 1. "A malarial fever characterized by regularly returning paroxysms, marked by successive cold, hot, and sweating fits. 2. A fit of fever or shivering or shaking chills, accompanied by malaise, pains in the bones and joints, etc.