9-24-1854

Letter to John Butler and James Butler from Peter Butler

Peter Butler

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Polk County, Oregon Territory, September 24th, 1857

Dear Child,

I hasten this morning to inform you that the best time has come to hand over the money and let it be considered to my debt.

I am now ready to leave for the west, having made arrangements for a portrait of Mr. B., which I expect to be able to obtain about Christmas. I have my horse for one hundred and seventy-five dollars to be paid at Christmas. I expect to sell my little farm that I bought of Dr. B. for one hundred dollars, which will pay all that I owe, but I shall have no means to help myself with and I must live now for some time to come. I have agreed to take back land in Illinois for the money that I paid for the claim. Thomas Hutchinson has concluded that he must sell his part of the land, and I have thought that his part would not sell by itself, and he has no other way to make the money for me and wanted me to take the land and construct a do or die and suppose Hutchinson will sell all the undivided land which they own in Illinois, if they can find a purchaser.
I would be glad to see my son settle down near by, you know. If you can get an offer for this land, I am to have by law, let me know what you can get for it and by what time we will conclude what we will do, for some things this is a very good country, but I should be better satisfied in living for this reason I have a living in Illinois and have to make a living here, and an other thing your mother is not as well satisfied as she ought to be. I will inform you of a most dreadful murder or rather massacre committed on some Perricoos a few weeks ago in the woods where (other than nearest us) was angenic to the country together with some other emigrants they encamp and one night the next morning a dispute took place between an Indian and a hiker about a horse each claiming the horse, the pack mule and his revolver to be the Indian's, who drew his pistol and shot the hiker dead. The massacre then commenced. The Indians killed ten white men and took the women and children and shortly after hung the children alive in the presence of their mothers. I believe the women in the most brutal manner tortured them to death in a manner so horrible to make a murder volunteer and made one of them go to the acting governor and demand the men.
Polk County Oregon Territory September 24th 1854

Dear Children

I seat myself this morning to inform you that the drafts have come to hand, and we have got the money, and I considered it my duty to inform you of the fact by the return mail as I expected you would feel some uneasiness after receiving my last letters. I have paid for the claim by borrowing two hundred dollars of Isaac Smith which I expect to be able to return about Christmas. I sold my horse for one hundred and seventyfive dollars to be paid at Christmas. I expect to sell my little mule that I bought of T. Haley for one hundred dollars which will pay all that I owe, but I shall have no means to help myself with so I must live poor for some time to come. I have agreed to take Isaac’s land in Illinois for the money that I paid for his claim. Thomas Hutchinson has concluded that he wont sell his part of the land, and Isaac thought that his part would not sell by its self and he had no other way to make the money for me and wanted me to take the land and concluded to do so, and if we should any of us conclude to go back to Illinois, we will have the land to go to. I suppose Hutchinson and Isaac will sell the undivided land which they own in Illinois if they can find a purcherer

I would be glad to sell my tax title land down by Squire Rises, if you can get an offer for the land I am to have of Isaac let me know what you can get for it and by that time we will conclude what we will do, for some things this is a very good country, by I should be better sattisfied in Illinois for this reason I have a living Illinois, and have to make a living here, and an other thing your mother is not as well sattisfied as she expected to be. I will inform you of a most dreadful murder or rather masicrce committed on Snake river near fort Boisey some few weeks ago a Mr. Ward (whose brother lives near us) was comeing to this country together with some other emagrants they encamped one night and the next morning a dispute took place between an Indian and a packer about a horse each claiming the horse. The packer pulled out his revolver to scear the Indian, who drew his pistol and shot the packer dead. the masicree then commenced and the Indians killed ten white men, and took the women and children and shortly afterward burnt the
children a live in the presents of their mothers, and after treating the women in the most brutal manner, tortured them to death in a manner too horrible to relate a number volunteered and Isaac [amounght] the rest to start tomorrow after them Indians, but the acting governor counter manded the order and the men will not go [?] this fall and by next spring the Indians will get into the mountains and so the matter will likely end. I believe I told you James in my letter to you that Eliza Ground and Bob both had the chill and fever, they are both about well now or was when I heard from them last. I have had two chills, but I have got about well, so this leaves us all in usual health. I write this letter to you both together with your wives an all your dear little children

John I think that some person bought my three cornered harrow. I believe it was one of the Criders and it was not put into the note I wish you would try to find out how it is, and if you can get anything you may have it for the trouble you take in getting it. I want you to have pay for all your trouble and you must retain enough in your hands to compensate you well. I have not time to write as much as I wish to write this morning, for we want to go to meeting some six miles off and must quit writing and start or we will be too late Your mother says that you may tell Hannah Whitman that her cough is no better than when she left Illinois, though her health is about the same, indeed if the health of Oregon is better than Illinois it is only case of the cholery or some malignant disease. I close by subscribing myself Your loving father

Peter Butler