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Tillicoultry September 14th, 1854

Dear Brother,

We received your letter dated August 9th and we were happy to hear by it that you were all well. I have no doubt but you will all have been thinking me very careless in not writing you before this time. It is long since I was thinking about it but never came to a resolution to begin but I hope you will excuse my laziness and look over it for this time.....we received your letter on the 27th of the month and Peter Cousin arrived on the 30 First. His sister in law called upon us after we had received the letter to let us know that they were home and she told us that Peter was away to Saline and that he had your likeness with him and that he would call and leave it. We waited with patience for 2 or 3 days and after got quite anxious to see it. Elizabeth, children and I were going along to Muckhart to see her father and I am going to Pitgobar to see if I could get it. I saw Peter and the wife and he told me he had come away and left it in Saline but that he would get it up and send it to us as soon as possible.....We were disappointed at not getting it. However he and the wife came along a few days after with it and I must say we were all very proud to see it. I would not have known by it that ever I had seen you. It is such a long time since I saw you. John Cousin would not have known you either. You are more like my Father and my Self than I ever thought you was. Every person that has seen it says that it bears a great resemblance to me. Your hair is darker than mine and being exposed to the air I have a little more colour but the form of the face is very like, especially about the forehead and the lower part of the face....How proud my Father would have been to have seen it for he often spoke about you and regretted very much that he heard so very seldom from you. He would have said if Jamie is alive he is very careless in not writing us. I am not very sure what to think about America. Peter Cousin and the wife did not give us very flourishing accounts about it. We were not very sure whether to believe them or not. They say the most of the streets of Albany are very dirty, that a person some ____? will go over the shoe mouths in mud? and dirt and swine running upon them in all directions. I said I thought they would be ready to lose there swine's. He said he supposed that they would find their way home at night.... They say they are not anything like the comforts in America that is to be found at home. The weather being so very warm in summer makes it so very disagreeable. He said he had often to rise out of bed with heat and lie down upon the floor....He says the tailor trade is not so good as he thought it was although wages be pretty

good, houses costs? coals? and living is so very dear that it takes the most of it to dothey both say that they were losing their health.... and he seems to be dissatisfied too because he had to work to a master and here he was a master himself. I think that surely he is not very settled as he always been shifting. Since he was married he set up for himself in 3 or 4 different places and was not content with any of them and not content yet. I suppose he thought they would get money for the lifting in America...I would be apt to take a different view of it if ever I came to America to see you. I will be very ill off if ever I return to Scotland again.....They told us you showed them a great deal of kindness to them. They wish me to send their respects to you all. You wish me to let you know my wages and the price of provisions. have been very high this last twelve months on account of the war and the scarcity of the crop. This has been a very fine season the crops are splendid if they be swiftly gathered in.

This just about mid harvest.... I am still liking this place very well. I may almost say I am my own master. My masters interfere very little with me. My wages here is 16 shillings a week with vegetables and coals driven. (coal delivered to the house) We have 5 pounds a year for house rent to pay of that. I will mention the price of provisions for the last 12 months but I hope they will be cheaper this incoming one. It has been long dry the weather but it is a very heavy rain just now. The oat meal is about 23 shillings per boll, 4 lb loaf 7 pence, butter per lb 1 shilling, cheese good (good cheese) ditto 6d, Sugar 4 pence to 5 pence, tea 1 shilling per quarter lb., Beef 7 pence per lb., pork 6d , do (ditto ie per lb), eggs 7 pence to 8 pence per dozen..... coals per ton 7 shillings. We have a little to pay for poors rates (just like taxes, those employed contribute towards paying *poors rates* for those living off the parish) and streets sweeping and gas lighting We will want about 30 shillings for a good Black coat made and ready, trousers ditto 16 shillings, vest 10 ditto, hat 8 to 10 shillings, boots 14 to 16 shillings, wearing shoes 9 to 10 Ditto / stockings pair 1d - 6d to shilling.....

printed dresses for women 4 to 6 shillings, worsted do (ditto) (meaning worsted dresses for women - these would be their heavy working clothes as opposed to printed dresses in a finer material) 10 to 14 sh.....

I have given you as near a sketch of the prices as I can so you will have an idea what the difference is betwixt you and us..... I will expect a letter from you soon and let us know whether the tailor has been right or wrong. He is still stopping with his father in law. I don't know where he will pitch his quarters next.....

When I heard your likeness was coming I told Robert Currer (James's sister Agnes's son) that his uncle was coming to see us and would he come and see you. He took it in earnest and he was quite happy at the thought of it and said he would surely come and see you but when I told him it was your likeness he said it was good enough but he would rather have seen your self. I must say we are very proud to have it beside us. I have one of your old Serpent? Blairs? Keeping too....I have not seen John since my father's funeral. Agnes was round here in the Spring and looking well. Our friends are all well as far as I know....There has been a few cases of Cholera here for some time back....The manufacturing trade is getting a little dull here.....I have scribbled away until I am nearly tired. I will now have to draw it to a close. I am writing with the light of the gas. Elizabeth is well and joins me with her best respects to Mrs. Reid and the family not forgetting your self. Jeanie is getting a big girl and Johnnie is now running about....

Hoping this will find you all well.

I will say no more at present

But remains

Your affectionate Brother and Sister

William, Elizabeth Reid

Please direct the letter to me

Commercial Buildings No 21 Tillicoultry

Excuse my bad writing for it is late.

Date September 14th 1854

#16. Letters From Scotland to James Reid 1833 - 1868

From William Reid, brother, September 14, 1854

Transcribed by Glynis Aritake and Lorna Paterson, September 2014