

Let's Explore Letters



Curriculum Connections: Grades 1 – 8, Language; Grades 1 – 6, Social Studies: Heritage and Identity; Grade 7 – History, Canada 1800 – 1850: Conflict and Challenges

An **Archives** is a building or centre that has special documents. Archives play an important role in preserving a community's heritage. At PAMA, there are a variety of documents in the archives, such as: photographs, posters, newspapers, journals and government records. Today, we are going to look at a letter in the PAMA Archives and create our own.

Hannah Young letter, 1832, Region of Peel Archives Textual Records Collection

We will be looking at one of the earliest letters in the PAMA Archives. It was sent by Hannah Young from the Township of Toronto (now Mississauga) to relatives still living in England. This letter shows us what life was like in early Peel and helps illustrate the hopes and fears of early European immigrants to the area.

The original letter, written in cursive without punctuation, is attached. A transcribed excerpt of the letter is included below.

Hannah Young's Letter to Ann Hodgson, 1832 (punctuation added)

Dear Ann

January 8 1832

I take this opportunity of writing these few lines to you and I hope they will find you all in good health as it leaves us all at present, thank God for it. Dear friend it is now above 8 months since we parted very possible never to meet again in this world. You will remember when I left you in Stratford's gallery I went on in haste to let my Aunt know that you and your Cousin James and Aunt ___ was there and I knew that neither my Uncle nor William was on board. I thought she might come on shore and see you all for the last time but when I found her she had just parted with your Aunt Sarah and her heart was full of trouble. Seeing this I left her expecting to find you again and to bid you a final farewell but when I went to the door it was locked and you were all gone. But there being a road through the celler I got to the street but where you was gone I never could learn. I went into every room but could not find neither friend nor relation nor any that I knew. This being done I made the best of my way back through the celler to go on board again. When I got below, the plank was drawn, the ship was moved, all was ordered below. My Uncle came on board at the bridge, as soon as the sailors would allow us we came upon deck and took the last survey.

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On the 20 it was a fine day. We entered the firth and we had Scotland on the left hand and the Orkney island on the right. Scotland we could clearly discern. The buildings, the men ploughing, the cattle grazing in the large herds by the sea side. My Aunt was upon deck most part of the day. At night we left the North sea and entered the West Ocean and back. Adieu to the British Island.

21 of May, this morning the wind was contrary which was a great disappointment as we intended to see Quebeck in the course of the day. At 2 o'clock PM the ship came to anchor opposite the goose island a narrow piece of land laying the middle of the river. A boat was lowered down. My Uncle and two or three more rowed off to it. The Canadiens were busy sowing their wheat. In the evening they returned. They brought with them a quantity of milk, some neat straw hats, and a goose. William killed it and it was roasted on Sunday.

On the 23 we reached Quebeck, on the 24 we left [the] "King William" and went on board of a steam packet and reached Montreal on the 27. From there we took the open boat to Prescott, from Prescott to York in a steam packet. In coming from Quebeck to York we were 3 weeks and it was the most miserable time we ever had since we left England.

When we landed at York, the capital of Upper Canada, my Uncle thought we had better take a rest, as we were weary with travelling. My Uncle went on shore and took us a house for to go to. My Uncle and William thought they would see the country for the people in general gave preference to Canada more than the United States, for there the taxes is more, the land more an acre, more barter and not so much money in circulation as there is in Canada – so they took to travelling to see if they could find a situation for us. They went different roads 40 or 50 miles. The land, they thought, was of a bad quality being in general of a sandy nature.

As they were coming down Dundas Street the last time, they made up their minds to see after no more land in Canada, but we would cross the Lake at York and go to Ohio, but, by chance, they saw a large house not quite finished. It was 17 miles from York and it was close by the high road. They asked the workmen that was in it who it did belong to. They informed them it belonged to a tavern keeper which lived on the road side between there and York. He had built it for a tavern and he wanted a tenant for it. Hearing this they called to see this Gentleman. A bargain was soon made. they took it on a lease for 3 years if we did like the bargain, if not we had our liberty to leave when one year was up.

There is 2 hundred acres of land belonging to it, 20 in meadow and 20 that was chopped. This was to log and burn to sow with wheat at the fall. We did only get 6 or 8 acres sown – the rest they will sow with oats or barley at the spring. The rent of this place is 45 pounds a year. We were very glad when we got a place to go to. We were at York 3 weeks and then went to our situation. We thought it had a very strange appearance, for look what way we would there was nothing but large fir and oak trees for to look at.

The first Sunday I was there I felt unhappy – it was the first Sunday after midsummer. I did remember where I was the year before as on that day, and who I saw. I thought I should never see any of you again, and I should never have friend nor acquaintance

any more. In this I was happily mistaken for on Monday we had an English lady come to see us who came from Hornsey near Hull, 2 years since. They have one son and two daughters. We were all so glad that we got acquainted the first week as if we had been neighbours for 10 years, and they have been our companions ever since and they live half a mile from us. Every week we keep gaining fresh acquaintance with the English for they are settling very rank around us.

I would have wrote sooner but we could hear no account from your Uncle George Kidd having wrote different times from the last letters. Received an answer and was glad to hear that they were all well but they seem to be very much displeased that we have stopt in Canada. John Mead does live a mile and a half from them and he sent my Uncle word that he would not go back to England if he would pay all their passage and give him a great deal more. My Uncle set off with an intention to go to Ohio in November but the year was too far spent for the journey. It is 350 miles from where we live and there is conveyance by water most part of the way in the summer season but he was too late in going, for when he had travelled 100 miles the frost set in so severe that the people told him the lakes and canals would be frozen up before he could return, and to travel by land it is very expensive. So he thought he had better return home again and go no further and as far as he has seen in the states he himself approves of Canada but my Aunt and Uncle intends to go if it please God to spare them until another summer.

Very few emigrants like this country at first for it has a very wild appearance but we like it very well now and we are doing very well in our situation and is very glad that we left England and came to America for now we have some recompense for all our troubles and trials that we had to go through at the time when we had no home. But thank God we have got house and land again, and we have no bishop no priest nor poor to provide for. What a family does earn here they have it for themselves. My uncle would buy this place but our landlord is not inclined to sell it, but he has taken the mortgage of a farm of 114 acres. It is half a mile from where we live, it does join the high road. 30 acres cleared and a good dwelling house on it and it may be bought for 2 hundred pounds. My Uncle intends to purchase it as he does like this part of the country very well for it is very healthy.

We have no such storms with high winds as we had in England. The weather is more mild and serene in general, a clear atmosphere. It is hotter in summer than it is in England, but I was a month in the hayfield and I did bear the heat very well. The winter did begin very early, it was the 1 of December it was very hard frost for that month but at the beginning of January it became more mild and the snow is nearly all gone.

I wish you health and love to you both to your Father and Mother and your three brothers to all your Uncles and Aunts and Cousins and all inquiring friends. I hope you will send me an answer to this as soon as possible and let me know all particulars. No more at present. From your affectionate friend, Hannah Young

Read and Reflect

What happened during Hannah's journey?

Hannah's journey was _____

Where did Hannah travel from? Where was she going? _____

Why did Hannah leave her home? _____

Hannah's letter was written in 1832. What challenges did Hannah have that are unique to the nineteenth century? Which of these challenges still exist for you? _____

Can you relate to any of Hannah's story? Why or why not? _____

Why should we read letters from the past? What can we learn from them? _____

In the 1800s there were no cellphones or computers. Letters were the best way to communicate and send a message to someone. How do you share news with your friends? How do you think people will learn about the past in the future? _____



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Draw a picture of Hannah's journey. Use any art materials you have.

Options:

- 1 – 5: Draw one part of the journey. For example, draw Hannah's new home.
- 6 – 8: Create a visual representation of Hannah's journey using abstract art (art that uses form, colour, lines and shape to represent reality). For example, draw Hannah's emotions during this time of change in her life.



Create your own letter.

Now that you have investigated Hannah's letter, it's time to create your own.

Start by choosing who you want to write your letter to - perhaps your future self. As you're writing your letter, imagine that someone might find your letter 150 years from now. What should you include to explain what life is currently like? Discuss why life is currently different.

Share your creations with **@visitpama** on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram!

Dear Ann

January the 8 1832

Lot

I take this opportunity of writing these few lines to you and i hope they will find you all in good health as it leaves us all at present thank God for it dont mind it is now above 8 months since we parted very possible never to meet again in this world you will remember when i left you in Stradford's gallery i went on in haste to let my Aunt know that you and your Cousin James and Aunt Anne was there and i knew that neither my Uncle nor William was on board i thought she might she might come on shore and see you all for the last time but when i found her she had just parted with your Aunt Sarah and her heart was full of trouble ^{she} left her expecting to find you again and to bid you a final farewell but when i went to the door it was locked and you were all gone but there being a road through the cellar i got to the street but were you was gone i never could have i went into every room but could not find neither friend nor relation nor any that i knew this being done i made the best of my way back through the cellar to go on board again when i got below the plank was down the ship was moved all was ordered below my Uncle came on board at the bridge as soon as the sailors would allow us we came upon deck and took the last survey i was not more than an hour before i was very sick my Aunt was not sick until the next morning she was the better sculler but for the first three weeks we were all very sick and i had such a violent cough i thought i should have died for my Uncle and William was never well until the 14 and it was when the wind blew up on the North a perfect gale but after that they had good health all the way over every Sunday we had a prayer meeting on deck morning and afternoon and every evening on the deck day below for there was many times myself that was not able to go on deck to the prayer meetings on the 20 it was a fine day we entered the fiords and we had Scotland on the left hand and the Orkney island on the right side of the fiord my Aunt was upon deck most part of the day at night we left cattle grazing in large herds on the sea side my Aunt was upon deck most part of the day at night we left the North sea and entered the White sea soon and bade adieu to the Swedish island 21 of may this morning the wind was contrary which was a great disappointment as we intended to see Quebec in the course of the day at 2 o'clock P.M. the ship came to anchor opposite the goose island a narrow piece of land laying the middle of the river a boat was lowered down to receive Mr. Walker my Uncle and two or three more covered of to it the Canadians were busy sowing their wheat in the evening they returned they brought with them a quantity of milk some neat straw hats and a goose William killed it and it was roasted on Sunday on the 23 we reached Quebec on the 24 we left my Uncle and went on board of a steam packet and reached Montreal on the 27 from there we took the open boat to Prescott from Prescott to York in a steam packet in coming from Quebec to York we were 3 weeks and it was the most miserable time we ever had since we left England when we landed at York the Capital of Upper Canada my Uncle thought we had better take a rest as we were weary with travelling my Uncle went on shore and took us a house for to go to my Uncle and William thought they would see the country for the people in general gave preference to Canada more than the United States for the times is more the land more an acre more barter and not so much money in circulation as there is in Canada so they took to travelling to see if they could find a situation for us they went different roads 40 or 50 miles the land they thought was of a bad quality being in general of a sandy nature my Uncle was much disappointed with the country and the people for the Canadians thought he had got a little money and first one and then another came to tell him that they had land to sell he went with several of these Gentlemen but still he could find nothing to please him as they were coming down Dundas Street the last time they made up their mind to see after no more land in Canada but we would cross the lake at York and go to Ohio but by chance they saw a large house not quite finished it was 17 miles from York and it was close by the high road they asked the workmen that was in it who it did belong to they informed them it belonged to a Taverner paper which lived on the road side between there and York he had built it for a Tavern and he wanted a tenant for it having this they called to see this Gentleman a bargain was soon made they took it on a lease for 3 years we did like the bargain if not we had our liberty to leave when one year was up here is 2 hundred acres of land belonging to it 20 in meadow and 20 that was chopped this was to log and burn to sow with wheat at the fall we did only get 6 or 8 acres sown the rest they will sow with oats or barley at the spring the rent of this place is 4,5 pounds a year we were very glad when we got a place to go to we were at York 3 weeks and then went to our situation

Mr. Walker's Copy

Region of Peel Archives, RPA textual collection



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