

"All well and hard at work"
The Harris Family Letters
From Dakota Territory, 1882-1888

Edited by Paula M. Nelson



Mr. and Mrs Reuben Harris and son, Frank, 1860s.

— Courtesy of Mrs. Ruth Burmester, Reedsburg, Wisconsin

In the early 1880s, Dakota Territory was the promised land. Three things made the remote grasslands suddenly attractive: the westward extension of the railroad, which made the region suddenly accessible to settlers; the development of powerful new agricultural and industrial technologies, which eased the labor of prairie farming and enabled millers to produce excellent flour from the hard wheats that found the Dakota region and climate congenial; and rising land prices in settled areas, which drove farm families further west in search of affordable dreams. Settlers poured into Dakota Territory by the thousands. In 1870 the population of all Dakota stood at 12,887. By 1890, just as the Dakota Boom was turning to bust, the population of North Dakota alone was 191,000.¹

The Harris family of Delaware County, Iowa, was among the early Dakota Boomers. Elizabeth Seymour Harris and her son, Frank, chronicled the story of their adventure in letters they wrote to relatives in Wisconsin and Iowa.² The Harris family consisted of Reuben and Elizabeth Harris, their son Frank, his wife Augusta (usually called Gusta), and their two boys. In 1882 the family rented out their seventy-eight Iowa acres and emigrated to Dakota. The decision was in character for

the elder Harrises. Both Reuben and Elizabeth had been born in New York in the late 1820s. In the 1840s, when Wisconsin was the promised land, each had headed west separately. Elizabeth accompanied her elder brother, Silas Seymour, when he journeyed to the new state to take up land. Reuben migrated to Wisconsin in 1845. The couple met and married in 1851; Elizabeth gave birth to Frank, the Harrises only child, in 1853. The Harris family raised hops on their Sauk County farm until they departed for Iowa in 1868. They established a new farm near Coffin's Grove in Delaware County, in the northeastern part of the state. The family worked together on their Iowa land; son Frank remained on the home place and brought his new wife, Augusta Ward, to live with his parents upon their marriage in 1878. The younger Harrises had two sons while in Iowa; they would have a third son in Dakota. The Harrises decided to try their luck in Dakota in order to expand their land holdings and to benefit Frank and his growing family. When they began the venture, Reuben was fifty-eight years old, Elizabeth fifty-three. Frank had just turned thirty. In the spring of 1882, the men of the family traveled to Jamestown, Dakota Territory, by wagon. The women and children followed by train.

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

**Jamestown, Dakota
April 4, 1882**

Dear Sister,

We got here all right and well, found they had got a room and things in it, stove up, bed made, floor swept, and something to eat. (The men) got here all right not a thing hurt or broke the horses feel as well as ever, lots of snow on the ground, a foot on the level at Fargo, but the ground here is bare except snowbanks

. . . . This place is all alive with emigrants, it is a business place and no mistake. Last year it had two hundred inhabitants, and now two thousand, every hut and even all old stables are occupied. We have a good

new room clean and nice, lots of businesses down here and every one seems prosperous, farm wages from twenty-five to thirty dollars a month and all wages here at the same rate I expect

. . . . We pay fifty cents a day rent for our room, board is two dollars per day and there are eight large hotels and boarding places all crowded to their utmost, and such very large houses too. I will write again soon.

E.S. Harris.

¹ For further information on the great Dakota Boom, see Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 133-173. Hiram Drache, in *Challenge of the Prairies: Life and Times of Red River Pioneers* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1970), tells a detailed story of early settlement in the Red River Valley, which includes Dickey County, the locale of the Harris letters. A personal account of North Dakota farm life, written by a woman who lived on a bonanza wheat farm near Fargo during this time period is Mary Dodge Woodward, *The Checkered Years: A Bonanza Farm Diary, 1884-88* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989). While bonanza farming was not typical, Woodward's descriptions of weather and work are excellent.

² The Harrises had several options to choose from in acquiring land.

The most expensive option was purchase from the railroad. The government also sold land through the Pre-emption law. Settlers filed on land, improved it and resided on it for six months and then had the right to purchase it at \$1.25 per acre. The Homestead Act allowed settlers to win land for the cost of filing if they made improvements and maintained residence for five years. The government also offered land through the Timber Culture Act. A settler could get an extra 160 acres in exchange for planting ten acres of trees. Settlers did not have to live on tree claims land. The Harrises chose to claim land through pre-emption and the Timber Culture Act. In their letters they discuss homesteading at a future time when they had fulfilled their residency requirements for the pre-emption. (Land law information from Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, pp. 148-9.)

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Jamestown, D.T.
April 24, 1882

Dear Sister Julia,

We are still at Jamestown and will stay here a week or two yet. Frank and four or five other men went down into new country which is not yet surveyed and have made what they call squatters claims, that is, have built some shanties on the land they want and Rube has gone down there with one load of our things. He will stay long enough to draw some hay and get some more lumber and put up a more comfortable shanty. He gets hay for sixteen dollars a ton and draws it eighteen miles or more and draws lumber about the same, common lumber twenty-eight to thirty dollars per thousand. While he had his horses here he paid fifty cents a day for each horse to stand in the stable and eat straw for fifty cents a day, we have a room sixteen to by eighteen for fifty cents a day. There are twelve such rooms all in a row and full of emigrants coming in and going out. We are staying longer than most of them. It is about sixty-five miles to where we are going and the people have already named it Harrisburgh! Frank has got him a compass and is going to locate people. There is no land here but is in the hands of land grabbers and sharpers, you can't get a tree claim anywhere around here without paying for it from fifty to a thousand dollars to get a relinquishment of someone else's claim, but the unsurveyed land can be squatted on until it is surveyed and a squatter's right is ahead of all the others and that is about the only way the actual settler can get in ahead of the land grabber We will be eighteen miles southwest of Grand Rapids in the county of Dickey which is a new county taken from the south half of LaMoure County.³ The settlement will be mostly Americans, the Swedes and Germans go on to Bismarck and Glendive; and by the way, there are now at Glendive and Miles City thousands of men who can't get a place inside of a house to sleep and but little to eat, some of them can't get work, they say there is a dreadful state of things out there, every train going east by here is filled with disgusted people returning from west of here. They say the country west of here is nearly worthless and we don't like it here but people who have lived here a few years are very well pleased with this country You can't have any idea of the rush here, there are now six large hotels in this place and every night there are more people in town than can get sleeping places and besides the beds every room in the hotel has eats set where ever there is a place and every chair is let to a sleeper, sometimes forty or fifty men sleep in their chairs at the hotels and are glad to pay

for the privilege. Every night the depot floor is covered with men asleep, most of them with money to pay for a lodging if they could get it. Hotel-keeping pays big here, everthing is awfully dear here, two dollars a day for board and poor at that, beef sixteen to twenty cents a pound, potatoes a dollar and seventy-five cents, beans five dollars a bushel, oats seventy cents, corn a dollar, hay fifteen to twenty dollars a ton, butter that you can't eat it is so poor thirty to forty cents a pound, ten cents a quart for skimmed milk, cows fifty to sixty dollars apiece, horses not very much higher than they are there (Iowa) hens a dollar apiece. I have not seen a pig since I came here.

This whole country is subject to floods, some nice towns on this RR are entirely under water. Fargo and Bismarck has been flooded for two weeks and more, and the whole country for twenty miles this side is a vast lake, and a week ago last Thursday we were called up out of our beds with the cry of GET UP and GET OUT, for the water is coming. On going to the door we found water all around us one vast lake and rapidly rising to the door sill. We hurried on what we could lay our hands on first and fled, we got into a house not far off on higher ground and stayed there two days This was Thursday morning; on Saturday morning they made a plank bridge from the railroad track to the back windows of the rooms and we came home. The water had settled so that was off the floor but we stood at the door and dipped up water to wash with Saturday. Sunday and Monday it raised a little again but finally went down. We no more thought of a flood than of any other impossible thing for it had been warm and bright for three days before it came This is so level here that if much snow falls during the winter it floods the whole country from Fargo to Bismarck. The people entirely deserted Valley City, a nice little town twenty miles east of here and from Fargo to Dalrymple twenty-five miles the country is all covered with water, over three hundred families at Fargo are homeless and are cared for by the city. This is the same every year we hear, but all the papers there are dumb on the subject of floods. Dickey County is not organized or surveyed but will be when there are enough inhabitants there which will not be a great while for since Frank and his party went there lots of young men have gone down and eight went with Rube Everybody here is for himself and cares not a thought for anything else, a man got drowned here right close to the town not long ago and no one cared no more than if it was a dog or a cat, and let him lay till someone missed a relative and fished him out several days after he had drowned.

E.S. Harris

³ Dickey County is located on the present day boundary with South Dakota; the James River flows through the eastern portion of the county. A group of Pennsylvanians founded Keystone in March, 1882. The Harris men arrived in the vicinity in that same month. The town lost the county seat fight to Ellendale, fifteen miles away, but continued to grow. In 1885 the population of Keystone was 125. The railroad

passed by Keystone in 1886 and the town moved to the site of Monango, a new railroad town a few miles away. See: *Monango, The Banner City* (Monango: Monango Centennial Committee, 1985), pp. 19-23, and *A History of Dickey County, North Dakota*, R.M. Black, ed. (Ellendale: Dickey County Historical Society, 1930), pp. 194-196.

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Keystone, Dickey County, Dakota
June 22, 1882

Dear Sister Julia,

. . . . We came down here three weeks ago last Saturday, was three days on the road and camped out one night in an empty shanty, the other we stayed at a house. Did not come but about 20 miles a day on account of our cow and very heavy loads. We got a cow at Jamestown, a two-year-old heifer and she gives us all the milk and butter we want We are having a very wet cold time of it. Don't know whether it is always so here or not as no one has ever lived in this part of the state but savages and wild beasts . . . it has rained over a week constantly, but not mud, the roads are dry and nice, at the crossing places at the creek and rivers seem as good as before the rain. Our garden, planted since I came down here, is finally up, part of it on sod and part of it we took sod off and plowed it over. Corn, beans, potatoes, turnips all looking fine. Frank has plowed about forty acres on his and his father's. Will go next week and break some for other parties. This is a very handsome and fertile country, the great drawback is the want of timber. The nearest railroad town is seventeen miles from here where we get our coal and other things. Have no post office yet, want you to direct to Keystone, Dickey County, Dakota by way of Aberdeen, Brown County, Dakota Keystone City consists of one house and two shanties. They are getting in a stock of goods at the house and expect a post office soon. A little over three months ago there was not a house in Dickey County, now there are two cities and a shanty on every quarter section around here

E.S.H.

To Silas Seymour from Elizabeth

Keystone, Dickey County D.T.
September 19, 1882

Dear Brother Silas,

. . . . We got here about the middle of May that is, Gusta and I did. Rube and Frank was here in April. We like it here, the land is rich, the water good, the settlers mostly Americans of the best sort. Frank and family will stay here through the winter. I shall go home a spell and Rube will, too, if he can leave his claim without danger of losing it. They have not entered their land yet, it has not been surveyed long enough yet to be on the market, will be in a month or so, and they have three months after it is on the market to enter it We have a little stream across the corner of our land, last spring it was full of nice pickerel. The prairies are entirely devoid of timber or brush of any kind. If there were only a few trees here it would be

KEYSTONE CITY,
THE COMING CAPITAL OF DICKEY COUNTY.

OPENING OF
Caldwell & Lloyd's
GENERAL STORE

June 1, 1882.

We will open at the above place, on June 1, the largest and choicest stock of store goods ever brought into Dickey county, consisting of

Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Crockery, Furniture,
Bedding, Flour, Feed, Provisions,

Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Clothing, Harness, Fancy Goods, Notions, Etc., as well as a full line of all articles usually kept in a first-class General Store, which we will offer at as good bargains as can be had anywhere in Dakota.

WE WILL ALSO DEAL IN

Farm Machinery,

And parties desiring Plows, Seeders, Reapers, Mowers, Harrows, Etc., will do well to consult us before purchasing elsewhere. **CALL AND SEE US.**

W. A. CALDWELL
JOHN S. LLOYD.

The arrangements for a Postoffice at Keystone are now about completed.

THE NORTH DAKOTA CAPITAL POINT, JAMESTOWN, D. T.

the most beautiful country I ever saw, but a few years will remedy that I suppose. We have a very small house, no upstairs, but don't want to put too much on our land until we get it secure, as this getting Uncle Sam's land is quite a grab game: regular snap-and-ketchum. If a man enters a choice piece of land and some other man wants it bad enough to pay one dollar and twenty-five cents an acre for it, all he has to do is to get someone else to contest it and he can slip in and pay for it and get it. It is being done here every day. This land law looks to be straight enough but it is full of loop holes. A man at Jamestown by the name of Wells has four hundred tree claims, a land agent wanted to sell us a tree claim relinquishment and could let us have our pick out of forty he said he entered at the land office at Fargo the week before. I asked him how he could get so many, he said it was all in knowing how and having friends in Washington. But said I: "It don't seem possible to read the law, that a man could get more than one tree claim." "O", he said, "That law is full of holes as a sieve." Rube and Frank will enter theirs for preemptions and will try to get a tree claim, too, at the same time, and after they prove up and get a title to the land will take homestead somewhere else as there will not be any vacant land here in six months

E.S. Harris

To Silas Seymour from Frank Harris

Keystone, Dakota
January 11, 1883

Dear Uncle and family,

. . . . We are in the best of health and snug and easy in a little 14 by 18 shanty part under ground, not very much to do and plenty of time to do it in, do not have any wood to cut. Only one cow to milk and four horses to see to. Father has got his grip on 320 acres of Dakota soil and I on 160, and hope to get another 160. Got my tree claim all right but some one got a tree claim on my squat and now I must get him off and I guess I can as a preemptor has 90 days to put his filings in and I got mine in under 10 days. It is very fine weather here, not enough snow to make a sleighing. It has been down to 36 below but only for a few hours. Got a letter from Mother a few days ago, she was well but in a great hurry to get back to Dakota Mother will send a few pigs and chickens to us before she starts, so if we get a good crop of No. 1 hard wheat next summer we will get along very well — that is, if I can get that claim-jumper off from my squat, as I have a lot of breaking on it. We want to get about 150 acres broke next summer if we can. It is settling very fast now and I think we will be obliged to go to some other place to get our homesteads. If we can get them by the rest of it, it would make a fair sized farm (960 acres) Horses are \$350 to \$500 per span, oxen \$150 to \$200 per yoke, cows \$50 to \$80. Coal is from \$8 to \$15 per ton, hay \$12 per ton. Oats is 60 cents per bushel, wheat 90 cents. Meats 15 cents to 20 cents per pound. Flour \$3.50 to \$4.50 per hundred, potatoes 60 cents per bushel. Breaking contract⁴ for next summer \$4.50 to \$5 per acre. A man with three horses can earn \$600 to \$700 from the first of April to the last of November. and a man can get \$25 per month as soon as the spring work opens up. The climate here is about the same as in the northern part of Iowa, only dryer in winter. We do not have any rain in the winter nor any mud. All of us have hopes of two or three railroads at Keystone next year. If we get one we will do well. The first of last April there were not more than 10 or 15 voters in the county and at the November election there were about 250 cast, and that was not all [the inhabitants] as a great many went home to spend the winter.⁵ The first night I spent in the county was on the ground without anything to eat or cover up with, 15 miles from a hotel. That was the first of April so you can see it was not a pleasure trip, and the folks at Jimtown got about drowned out at the same time, so take it all in all we

got pretty well introduced to a new country.

Your Nephew
Frank Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Keystone Dakota
April 28, 1883

Dear Sister and family,

I got home [from Iowa] first rate and found them all well and glad to see me The coach I was in had twenty-seven old and young on board who were coming right to Keystone and the most of the rest of that coach were coming to Ellendale and Dickey County. Somewhat over a hundred cars of emigrants goods have come to Ellendale for the past three weeks bound for this county and LaMoure and there is no let-up yet. Every quarter in Dickey County will be entered this spring. We will have plenty of neighbors and they are all a very good class of people with plenty of money to commence with. A colony from Auburn, N.Y. came the day before I got home of over a hundred and one, and one from Ills. [Illinois] of about the same. Both of them are scattered around in our section⁶ My pigs and chickens came nine days after they started. Pigs all right but three of the hens dead. Pigs, chickens and box cost only three dollars and thirty cents. You will be glad to hear the dog got here all right, he cost me one dollar and seventy-five cents and lots of trouble. My ticket cost thirteen dollars and six cents. I got forty cents worth of lunch, had one of my cakes left when I got here that I brought from there, did not lose nothing and got on first rate, but I shall never take a dog on a very long journey again — I had rather take two children fine weather, spring work most all done.

E.S.H.

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Keystone, Dickey County, D.T.
December 27, 1883

⁴ A contract to employ someone to break sod. Farmers without the necessary equipment or horses hired the work done.

⁵ During the early years of settlement, many settlers returned to their previous homes to spend the harsh winter months. They returned in the spring to resume farm work. Government residency rules allowed temporary departures.

⁶ It was not unusual for a number of relatives, friends and neighbors

from the same location to organize a move to a new country. They traveled together, claimed land in close proximity and created a ready made community of sorts. Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, p. 157, briefly mentions group settlement. Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 3rd edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975) p. 169, describes the development of colonies in greater detail.

Dear Sister,

. . . . We are getting along first rate, have plenty to live on and burn till we can get somewhere in the spring, having a rather mild winter, only one or two times down thirty below zero, more snow they say than last winter, no blizzards yet, weather about like in Iowa I guess, have not had anything in the house freeze yet and don't keep fires night either, have had plants in bloom until lately, windows quite frosty in the mornings but soon thaw off after fire is made in the morning

We have got a cat at last, found one at the stable one morning early this winter, don't know how she came there or where she came from. She has thinned off the mice so that we are not devoured by them as we were, she would kill ten or a dozen every night at first and lay them on the doorstep. We can't hear of anyone else who has lost a cat and can't imagine where she came from. Cats are worth two and three dollars apiece in Keystone and Ellendale and a quick sale at that as mice are very thick and destructive here, large field mice Our corn got frozen the same time it did there [Iowa], the cows ate ours, and we fattened our pigs on turnips. We have some nice hogs and hens, raised twenty-eight chickens, are keeping over twenty-one, have a warm house for them made of sod. Almost every one here has their houses and stables sodded up on the outside for winter and it makes them very warm and comfortable, they don't look very tasty but are very warm. One York State man over at Yorktown nine miles from here is so carried away with the idea of making houses out of sods that he has built a tower over eighty feet high of sods at the end of his sod house. We can see it on a mirage morning.⁷ It can be seen all over the country east of the hills on such mornings. A mirage is when we see the county tip up edgeways clear across the horizon, east, west, north and south, and we see plainly houses and fields which we could not possibly see on account of the hills otherwise. We have often seen Ellendale at such a time and north of here about thirty miles is a common farm windmill which occasionally shows up as plain as if it was only a mile away.

. . . . This effect is produced it is supposed by moisture in the air, the bright sunshine photographs so to speak the whole face of the surrounding country upon the air, making it seem as though we were in a basin and the earth around us tipped up so we can see objects a long way off quite plainly, house and pieces of breaking, and other things back at the foot of the hills twelve miles west look as if they were just beyond our breaking. It is like looking into a cloud and seeing houses and people driving along on a hill not far off just beyond the cloud when they are ten to twenty miles away with hills between us and them, sometimes

the objects seem wrong side up, a wagon full of people driving along wrong side up just at the edge of the clouds looks funny. I always thought it was unreal objects imagined that was seen in mirages, by what I had read, but it is not so, it is a real object a long way off in some way brought up into sight by some peculiar condition of the atmosphere and is seldom seen except just at sunrise or sunset

E.S.H.

**undated, winter
probably mid or late
January, 1884**

. . . . We may be obliged to go back to live if Land Commissioner Sparkes should do with us as he has with a good many other settlers just as much entitled to their claim as we are. He has taken them right away from them, cancelled them after they had complied with the law in every thing and paid for their claim and got a receipt for them and sometimes after they had their patents. We can stand that if he don't cancel our filings, at any rate till Congress or the next Administration straightens the matter out. We are not worrying too much for we know that we have got a good home to go to if the old crank takes our claims away. We don't expect it, but he may. Rube and Frank will homestead if he does, unless he makes a ruling that can't be done, which I suppose he will. The people of the territory are getting so enraged at his absurd and fearfully unjust rulings that a great many threats are made against him and probably some one he has wronged out of house and home will put a bullet through his old carcass and end it all

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

**Keystone D.T.
Feb. 10th, 1884**

Dear Sister and family,

I have not yet answered your letter as soon as I ought because I was so busy sewing that I kept putting it off but I will begin now I see by the papers that you are having very cold weather down in Iowa. Our folks

⁷ *Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia*, Seventh Edition (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989), defines a mirage as a "curious atmospheric phenomenon caused by the total reflection of light at a layer of rarefied air" (p. 278). Most commonly this results in an inverted image of a distant object. A phenomenon called "looming" results from

"the refraction of light passing from rarefied air to a lower and denser layer" (p. 278). Looming "lifts" distant objects beyond the horizon into view. North Dakotans experienced both phenomena. Mary Dodge Woodward in *The Checkered Years* frequently reported mirages of upright and inverted objects. See pages 26 and 58 for examples.

say it is colder here this winter than it was last and more snow storms. It is about as it was in Iowa last winter but not so much snow. Our plants have not froze in our rooms yet, so you see we are very comfortable in our little house made of only one thickness of boards. We have coal and provisions enough on hand to last till April or May and will not get out till we can get to Ellendale in the spring. They keep all kinds of groceries at Keystone and some coal but as they have to haul it from Ellendale they charge a good deal more for such things at Keystone than they do at Ellendale. We hear our neighbors are getting letters from their friends at the east and other places stating that they hear people out here are suffering with starvation and cold. That is all hash. There is no more want and distress here than there is any other place and not as many poor people who have to be helped by the county as there are in older places. There is but one pauper in the county and that is a sick woman. As for the cold everybody expects it is going to be very cold here and fixes up for it before winter and so don't have a very hard time with the cold. Frank has been to Keystone or to some of the neighbors three or four times a week so far this winter and hardly ever wears an overcoat. It is the same with Rube they don't seem to feel the cold as they did in Iowa and the weather has been very cold too [I]t was 40 degrees below zero Jan. 4th and has been as low as 28, and 32 several other times but we have a very warm house and every thing we have got has good warm quarters. We are under the hill so we get pretty well drifted in but not so bad but we get along very well. The snow on the prairies is about a foot deep now on the level, but in the ravines the drifts are quite deep . . . Rube is getting quite homesick I think but he does not say so. The children's noise bothers him lots. Gusta is going to be confined in May and that keeps me here till she is able to do her work herself, as it is not possible to get a girl to work here for private families on any terms. Hotels and boarding houses give such enormous wages here that girls will not work anywhere else. And it would not do to leave her as our neighbors are not very near.

Feb. 18 Since I commenced this letter it has snowed a great deal and drifted some. And we hear the railroads are blocked and the mails are all behind

E.S.H.

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

**Keystone, Dickey County, D.T.
July 14, 1884**

Dear Sister and family,

. . . . We are all well and our crops looking good, Rube satisfied with the looks of the wheat, if no wind or hail storm touches it, he and Frank will have over a thousand bushels he thinks Oats are looking well, also barley of which we have a small patch, corn is just commencing to tassel out and looks well. Turnips and potatoes splendid and we are eating new potatoes every day, have a good garden. A large violet and green beetle that is quite thick here for a few days every summer troubles the beans and last year destroyed several acres for us, but now as we planted only enough for our own use, it is not so bad. They are gone now, did not last more than two days We have not had a good soaking rain since April. A little drizzle and mist, no regular old-fashioned rains and showers as in Iowa, the wonder is that nothing has suffered. The ground is so dry and hard that one can't dig a post hole without picking, apparently as dry as the plaster on the wall, but still everything here keeps right on growing. They had to stop breaking several weeks ago, have not done but about 30 acres this summer but will again when it rains. Yesterday our men commenced haying and now I hear thunder, so perhaps we shall get some rain. Grass has been very good on the high prairie and cows have been in feed up to their eyes all summer. Dryer now but the meadow grass has felt the dry weather and is not so good as it has been every other year since we have been here.

I went over the hill week before last with a company of our neighbors. There were five men and another man and his wife along, with four teams. We were gone three days, slept on the ground nights. Rube and I had the little blacks and kept up with the crowd. We went about forty miles into the Coteaus Country⁸ making about fifty miles from home. After we reached the foothills about twelve miles west of here we did not see any signs of habitation and met no one but another party of tourists that we met the first day out. We went northwest towards Bismarck and found that after we passed the first low range we came into a high plateau prairie gently rolling and very fertile with an abundance of good grass and watered with thousands of small lakes surrounded with meadow grass as high as a man's shoulders, a sort of rice grass that the horses ate greedily. Rube said it was something like sweet corn stalk, and the men thought it would go four and five tons to the acre, of hay The prairie was similar to this part of the valley except more rolling and better upland grass, the finest meadow grass I ever saw, and a good deal of it. It will some day be the grandest stock region in Dakota. When we were five or six miles up from the foot of the Coteaus we looked back and could see twenty miles over the valley, could see Keystone eighteen miles away. It was dim, the houses looked like a few sticks sticking up in the distance, houses and

⁸ The word coteau is French and refers to hilly upland areas. The Coteau des Prairies was named by French explorers and stretches from southwestern Minnesota to southeastern North Dakota. A

geographic feature known as the Missouri Escarpment traverses western Dickey County, creating a sharp rise of 300 to 400 feet in the topography. See Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, p. 6.

shanties looked like little dots over the prairie, and pieces of new breaking land here and there showed very plain

July 16 Since I commenced this letter we have had a good soaking rain and it is not over yet, has rained all the afternoon and is raining now. Our folks have got eight or ten loads of hay down and out in it. I will send on some flower seeds of wild flowers I have gathered here. The little black seeds are what they call the Buffalo Bean. A bean you can see it is, but a small one. It grows in a round pod about as big as thimble, a dozen or so to a pod, have a very pretty leaf and purple spike of flower, quite pretty. People eat the pod when young and tender, it is like asparagus. The other is a white foxglove, very pretty It grows on the bluffs back of the house. Both would need to be planted now, I expect.

E.S. Harris

**To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth
Keystone, D.T.
Oct. 7, 1884**

Dear Sister and family,

. . . . We are all well and hard at work. Rube is taking care of the potatoes, turnips, corn and garden stuff, and Frank is plowing. He has been drawing off wheat once a week, price is very low from fifty-three cents to sixty-three is about as it has gone. We had about a hundred and fifty bushels of potatoes and four hundred bushels of rutabagas. Don't know how much corn as they have fed it out as fast as it was picked. Have fattened the hogs on boiled pumpkins and turnips, some corn and some wheat screenings, and will have a plenty of pork and one hog to sell and seven pigs and three old hogs to keep over. Will feed them on turnips and potatoes they seem to do first rate on them.

We are having very fine weather as warm as May. Have had a very nice fall just wet enough for plowing but not enough to make the roads the least bit muddy this fall

. . . .[E]verything is so low here now that we have had a hard squeeze to pay for what machinery we have got. But they have done it, but had to hire a hundred dollars at 3% a month to help out. We bought a binder, breaking plow, and sod pulverizer and they all had to be paid for this fall. We have wheat enough to sow left and have our coal nearly all got and have our winter supplies all provided except flour, and the men and some of the neighbors are going to mill about thirty miles at Old Fort Ransom. Will be gone three days. We [will] all have good new warm winter clothing when I get them all made and the men have german socks and snowjacks, the socks are felt and very warm. They cost two dollars and a quarter a pair, and they wear other socks inside and snowjacks or rubbers over. They come up to the knee and are worn over the pants. The children, Gusta and myself have new shoes and are all very well fixed for winter, so you need not worry about

us. The trouble is we have so much that is good to eat and such good appetites that we eat more than we ought. Had a good garden, lots of cabbage, hubbard squash, sweet turnip, beets, carrots, parsnips, beans, citrons, etc., etc., and our potatoes are very large and nice we never had such good potatoes before. So you see there is no danger of our starving. Our little cow will give milk all winter and she gives us all the milk and butter we want

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

**Keystone, Dakota
December 8, 1884**

Dear Sister and family,

. . . . Our fall work is all done and the men are digging a well near the house. They are down about ten feet and have found indications of water, getting into quicksand and will not have to go more than 15 feet probably We have no snow to speak of, freezes every night a little, warm and pleasant days.

Wheat is down to forty cents a bushel, potatoes 25, hogs 6 cents a pound dressed, oats 25, corn forty, butter 25, eggs 25, coal from six to eleven dollars per ton. Flax was the best paying crop here this season that we raised, over a dollar a bushel and went from ten to twenty-five bushels per acre, it is put on new breaking only, as soon as the ground is broke and is said to subdue the sod sooner than any other crop, but it always has so many foul seeds in it that Rube has never raised any yet, he thinks he will try to next year.

We have salted down three hogs. I made sausage and will make mince pies. It seems good to have lard and plenty of soap grease again

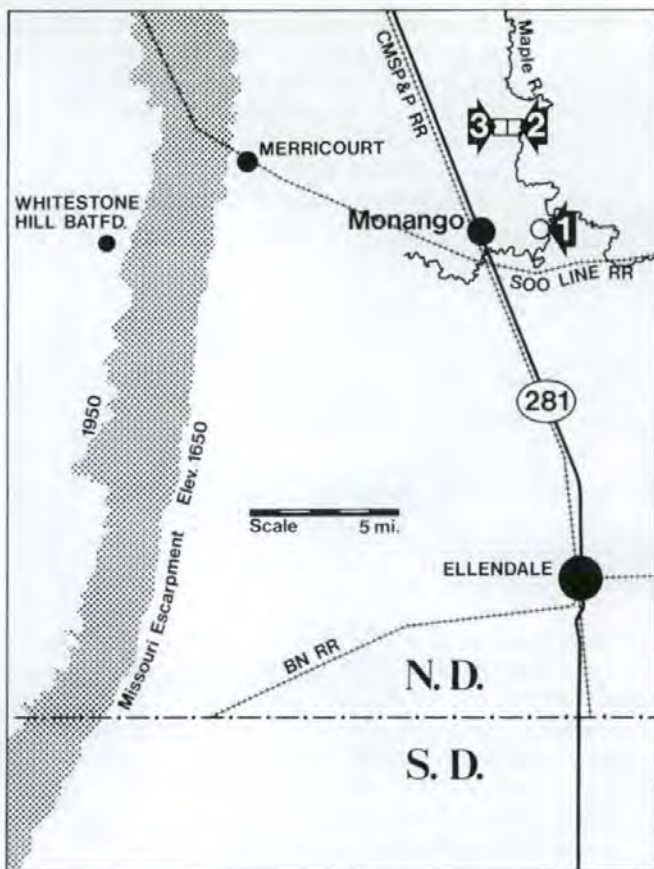
E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

**Keystone, Dakota
Dec. 27, 1884**

Dear Sister and family,

. . . . We are having a very pleasant winter so far, no storm, yet, not much snow so far, is either sleighing or waggoning just as one chooses. The thermometer has been down below forty degrees [below zero] on several mornings but has not been tedious, and one morning the spirit thermometer at Keystone went down to 42 degrees [below zero] but did not realize it was so cold. We don't feel the changes in our house it is so warm. Has not froze the plants yet. We have been out to a



In the summer of 1882, near Keystone (1), Dickey County, Dakota Territory, Reuben and Elizabeth Harris initially settled on 160 acres (2) bordering their son Frank's quarter section (3). Keystone was abandoned in October 1886, when the railroad bypassed it in favor of Monango. In a July 14, 1884 letter to her sister in Iowa, Elizabeth describes a trip west in which she "... could see twenty miles over the valley ..." That vista she describes was viewed from the Missouri Escarpment, which rises 300 feet in 2½ to 3 miles.

— Map by Brian R. Austin

couple of parties this winter, children and all.

The hard times pinched a good many here who run in debt wild for horses and machinery. But everybody has enough to eat and wear and burn if they don't pay their debts. I don't know of a family here that you might call poor enough to suffer for food or clothes

....

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Keystone, Dakota

May 28, 1885

Dear Sister and family,

We are all well and hard at work and I suppose you are too getting in crops. Pert and myself have been sick

this spring but are well now As soon as I could get around I tried your old remedy and it cured us all. All the rest of the family were ailing, I had some lime got and I whitewashed every part of the inside of the house, even the coal bin and it cured us all right away. Our sickness was caused by so many living and sleeping in one little room through the winter and the lime killed the malaria. Our room did not once freeze through the winter. Rube and Frank have got in over a hundred acres of grain, wheat, oats, and barley and ten acres of corn, about an acre of potatoes and are just finishing forty acres of flax. They put in another man's land and will break some next week for seed corn and beans and turnips. We had a very nice spring for work. Not quite as much rain as would like but everything is growing right along. We had a very pleasant winter not much snow and few storms all winter We conclude that Joe could not get any cuttings for us as we have not heard anything about it and none have come to the depot but if you are well I wish you could send up a few maple seeds if there are any in the door yard and charge us what ever the trouble and expense is to you.

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Keystone, D.T.

June 12, 1885

Dear Sister and family,

. . . . Rube sent five dollars to a seed store in Minneapolis and got some box elder seed and is planting them today. Frank will plant his tree claim in the fall, time enough then and they say we can gather elm and ash and box elder seed on the Sheyenne River about forty miles from here in September We are all well as can be now, our crops looking very fine indeed; people are talking they expect twenty-five bushels of wheat to the acre, and it looks as though we would get a good price. I never saw grain grow so fast and we have rain every few days and warm growing weather.

It seems strange people think we are in danger from the Indians here. We have not seen an Indian since we have lived in this country. No more danger from them here than there. True there are Indian reservations in Dakota, but no Indian is allowed off their reservations without a permit. Each reservation is guarded by forts and soldiers and mounted police. The Indians are all unarmed, none of them allowed any firearms at all. They are working a good deal of the land on their reservation and people who have seen them tell us they have horses, harnesses, wagon and cattle, cows, and farm implements furnished them by the government. Have cookstoves in their houses and other civilized things around them. The government feeds and clothes them and pays them for every bushel of grain they raise and every pig, calf, colt and then gives it to them

to encourage [them] to become self-supporting. The Indians' and half-breeds' war in the northwest is between four and five hundred miles of here and we are no more affected by it here than you there. They are allowed to keep up their tribal relations and have their pow-wows and other devilment among themselves, but cannot go off their reservations to do any mischief.⁹

Our men have got in over a hundred acres of wheat, oats, and barley and ten acres of corn, an acre of potatoes, and between 40-50 acres of flax on another man's land and going to put in a few acres of the breaking Our teams are too light for breaking this summer, we did think of hiring money on the south 40 to get teams with, but the Manchester money-lenders wanted a mortgage on more land than that, and Rube would not do it. Can get horses aplenty but enormous prices on them and 12% interest. Rube says he wishes Joe could send him some money soon, if it is not more than ten dollars to get feed for his hogs and coal with. Send check in letter to Keystone.

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Keystone, Dakota

June 25, 1885

Dear Sister,

We got the maple tree seeds, four bags of them, a few days ago, and Rube planted them yesterday. They are very nice and large. Our box elder seeds that was planted a short time ago are all coming up nice. We are all well as can be and our crops are very nice. Have had a plenty of rain but no wind or hail storm yet here. The weather has been splendid so far not very cold or very hot just comfortable Not very good corn weather but good for wheat but corn looks very well. Will be knee high by the fourth of July I guess, and all other crops are doing well

. . . . This is getting to look like an old country with so many crops on the ground and so much breaking done. We have a good well of water near the house now. Not very deep but cold good water. No railroad building here this summer so far and a good many are disappointed.

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Keystone, D.T.

July 1, 1885

Dear Sister,

We got your letter and the ten dollars all right. That will do us now for quite a spell, don't have to get any hog feed now for they live on what they can pick, and the two old horses are doing first rate on grass without ground feed as they are not working much now. Have broke about ten acres so far since crops are in. The ten dollars will get coal and flour to last quite a long time. We can get groceries and clothing on time, but coal and flour has to be paid down for. When we have potatoes and green stuff we don't eat much flour and won't burn much coal in warm weather. Hope we won't be as hard up again after we raise this crop. They are looking splendid, will have green peas from our garden tomorrow, have had radish and lettuce for over a month. We have a quarter of an acre of sugar beets, cut worms and gophers have hurt one piece of corn some. Our cow gives a good mess of milk, make what butter we want, and have plenty of pork The men go haying next week. The railroad land here is being sold so that takes off some of our hay land. Every one cuts what hay there is on railroad land without leave or license, but we have considerable hay on our own and have charge of a quarter belonging to a man in Michigan and shall cut what there is on his. The railroad land through here is getting sold off very fast on account of the stock on the railroad being so low. It is obliged to take its own stock in payment for its land at the face of it, and is worth but 37 cents on the dollar now, so a good many people are buying it up and paying it to the railroad for its land, getting the land very cheap that way as one dollar in that way pays for nearly three dollars of land

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Keystone Dickey, Dakota Territory

Aug. 9, 1885

Dear Sister,

. . . . We are all well and the men are harvesting. Do not expect to hire any help. Have been two and a half days at it now, and have got about twenty-five acres done. Frank cuts, binds, and carries it with the binder and Rube sets it up. It looks odd to see two men alone attempt harvesting a hundred-acre field. They expect to

⁹ The trouble that Elizabeth is referring to is the second rebellion of the Métis, a mixed-blood group of people of the Red River Plains, against the strictures of Canadian rule. The Métis leader, Louis Riel,

was hanged in November, 1885. Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow* (New York: Viking Press, 1966) is a lyrically written account of Canadian Plains history. See pages 57-66 for the Métis story.

cut and put up ten acres a day, without rushing. They drive four horses on the binder. Did not get in as much flax as they expected, old Pet our oldest horse could not stand much work and they quit at fifty acres of flax. Have some over a hundred acres of grain and fifty of flax to harvest. Flax comes last, cut it with binder only, don't bind it. Our grain is first rate, flax not so good, corn and potatoes good, garden splendid. Had more hot hot weather than we have had a summer before since have been here. Several horses at Ellendale died from heat. Cooler now and nice showers for a day or two. No hard wind or hail here yet. Got up a nice lot of hay, thirty tons and have a lot to cut after harvest.

August 11th This letter has not got posted yet will walk down to Keystone myself with it. The men are so very busy they can't leave

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

**Keystone, Dakota
Oct. 11th, 1885**

Dear Sister,

I have been so full of work that I have put off writing from day to day till I am ashamed and will now write after all the rest are asleep. We are well and worked hard this summer . . . Rube and Frank done their harvesting alone, have not cut all their flax yet as some is too poor to bother with, have thrashed some wheat, some oats and barley enough to feed for the present. Our wheat will go 20 bushels to the acre all crops good but potatoes, they are a light yield, good in quality. We had a frost that killed the vines early and have had a very dry weather since July, but gardens are splendid and nothing suffered from it but potatoes and late flax.

On account of the dry weather and high winds terrible fires have raged all through northern Dakota,

but we have had none here, and if we had we would not suffer from them as we have ample fire breaks east, west, north, and south of us. Don't worry about us on that score for we are perfectly safe, even if fire should sweep clear around us. A party of railroad men was through here a few days ago and located a railroad. It goes through a corner of our land, will be built along here next spring they said, runs from Grand Forks to Pierre. Had a small rain last night which put out the fires and will lay the dust and help the plowing. Frank has got a riding plow and puts on four horses and plows three acres a day. It is called the Flying Dutchman.

I will let you know two or three weeks before hand when we come home but it will be some time yet for there is lots of work to do before we go. Frank must plow while Rube draws off wheat and does other things, and now we cannot afford it

. . . . Wheat is from 74 cents a bushel and the roads are in very good condition this fall to draw heavy loads. People draw from 40 to 50 bushels of wheat with one span of horses. They some of them put 50 bushels of wheat on a wagon and fasten two of them together and put a good span of horses to the front wagon and draw it easily twelve and fifteen miles. Rube draws from 40 to 50 bushels to Ellendale with the little blacks

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

**Keystone, Dakota
January 29, 1886**

Dear Sister,

We got your letter and the money all right and was glad to get it. Rube and Frank went down yesterday and paid their taxes. Went with the buggy as there is not enough snow here for good sleighing, are having a



Threshing under horse power in the Monango area, circa 1880-1885. Note the use of horses for powering the separator.

very fine winter, some colder this month than last, no snow storms yet Rube and I have Frank's claim shanty drawed up near the house and live in that this winter, fixed it up very warm, have our bed, a small stove, sewing machine, trunks, etc., in it, have it carpeted and it is as cozy as it can be. It is about ten feet from the house door to ours. Gusta comes does most of the housework and I do the sewing. We all eat in the house, our room is called the shanty

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth
Keystone May 9, 1886

Dear Sister,

. . . . We are all well and have been very busy this spring, the men have put in a hundred and twenty acres of grain and have about thirty more to get in. Frank is the assessor in two towns and will start out tomorrow for the first. He has to be done in May or June. We have two cows now, our old one and a two-year-old heifer, we get two full pails of milk at a milking. And I make from eight to ten pounds of butter to sell a week. Butter is twenty cents now. Merchants don't buy only butter enough to supply the home demand. Feed is getting quite good. We have a good many new neighbors now on railroad land. One has just built a stable and shanty just across the creek from us, and a pasture fence. This is the first fence our children have ever seen! It is very healthy here this spring. The tree seeds on our tree claim are coming along finely. Rube has planted his twice now, once last spring rather late and they did not come up, he planted them over again last fall and now both plantings are coming

E.S. Harris

To Walter Seymour from Frank Harris

Keystone, Dakota
Oct. 3rd, 1886

Cousin Walter,

. . . . We have had a very dry and hot summer in this part of Dakota. Wheat in this part has turned out from 1/2 to 23 bushels per acre and it will not grade above No. 2 hard and No. 1 northern . . . our wheat turned out from 3 to 15 bushels per acre. Had 528 bushels from 80 acres. Oats are a complete failure. We had 15 acres and did not cut more than 3 acres of them. Barley

was very poor. We had 40 acres and got 105 bushels from it. Potatoes are fair. Hay was scarce here but west of us 12 miles in the hills it was very heavy. About all of our neighbors went over there and put up hay. Flax was very poor as well as all other crops.

We broke 40 acres during June and the dust would fly from the furrow and nearly blind a person. And now when I come in from plowing my face is as black as a darkey's. And the ground is so dry a sharp plow blade will not last over two days. But all the same farmers keep at work and they will get their plowing about all done this fall. And by the way I will give you a description of how we plow here. We never use less than three horses on a plow and prefer four and five and six. Single plows cut 16 to 18 inches wide and the gang 24 to 28 inches and then we try and make from 16 to 24 miles per day. So with a 16 inch plow we average 3 to 3½ acres per day and a gang from 4½ to 6 acres per day. There has been over 2500 acres broken this season in this township.

Well, we have a railroad at last. The C & M and St. Paul extended their line north from Ellendale 30 miles and have the iron about all down. It'll run 1½ miles west of my land and their new town will be 5 miles from us. They did not go to Keystone but went west 1½ miles and started their own town so Keystone is preparing to move it to the new town of Monango.¹⁰

Father and Mother will start for Iowa the last of this month and intend to spend the winter there and perhaps they will stay there if they do not sell the farm. Wheat is very low about 38 cents, oats 40 cents, potatoes 65 cents. We will not sell any wheat this fall as we think it will be worth more in the spring. And then we will want about half of what we raised for seed next spring

. . . . Land has doubled in value in the last 5 months. A half section out of the section my tree claims is in sold for \$5000 this fall and not any improvements on it of any value and other land is selling at from \$1200 to \$2000 per quarter section

From your cousin
E.S. [Frank] Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Monango, Dakota
June 26, 1887

Dear Sister,

. . . . We are having very dry weather, so much so that it is hurting the grain badly. But not as much as the gophers are. One man seven miles from here had three thousand acres of wheat entirely eaten up by gophers. They are working badly in ours, have about

¹⁰ Due to the demise of Keystone, Monango was the Harris' post

office after this point.

finished thirty acres. We are poisoning, shooting, and trapping them every day. . . .

The dry weather has stopped most people from doing much breaking. It is much dryer here than last year, but feed good, more hay being cut. It it don't rain pretty soon we will not have any grain

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Monango, Dakota

Feb. 15, 1888

Dear Sister,

. . . . Both railroads that bring mail here have run tolerably regular this winter, notwithstanding the storms, there has been only one week we did not get mail from the east and south There was no one frozen to death in this county in the Great Storm¹¹ and but few in North Dakota compared to the fearful loss of life in South Dakota. The papers here are trying to conceal the facts as much as possible, but it seems certain that over a thousand people perished in the west. I have not heard of any stock freezing hereabouts. Wolves are becoming too familiar in barnyards and chickencoops, rabbits have eaten many of the twigs of apple trees. No matter how the roads are blockaded, we are absolutely supplied with food and fuel, so it is with everyone else here that I know. I do not know of a single destitute person here.

Our neighbors and ourselves are having quite a sociable time this winter. There has been a party somewhere in the neighborhood once a week since Christmas Rube and I went last week, there was six married men and their wives there, thirteen unmarried men, and one girl, and eleven children. And that is the way they all are The roads are splendid sleighing. We don't intend to stay here another winter. It is too risky.

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Monango, Dakota

July 27, 1888

Dear Sister,

I got your letter more than a week ago and ought to

have answered it before. We are all well and our crops are looking very fine indeed. Will not commence harvesting for ten days yet and if nothing happens to the grain before then will have very good crops indeed. The gophers are subdued so that they have not gotten much of the wheat this year. Hope you did not think we carry the strychnine in our pockets to feed to them. We kept a hole in the ground and when it was fed to gophers a bottle of it was mixed with a pail of wheat and was then carried and put in their holes where nothing else could get it. The strychnine is all fed now and the pail it was mixed in and the paddle it was stirred with has been burned up long ago and we will not need anymore, so don't worry any more about it.

August 7, I commenced this letter about a couple of weeks ago and will finish it now. The men are trying to make hay but it rains every day and it is slow work. They will not cut any grain before next week. Will hire a man to help part of the time if they can find one. Help is very scarce and high We have had very nice weather lately cold and rainy most of the time but the corn grows fast and there is worlds of hay every where.

. . . . Rube and I will come home in the fall and perhaps Frank's folks too. Don't know yet. Some one will have to be here next spring to mark on our tree claims as they are not well planted trees yet on account of the two last dry seasons. We have a very good garden with plenty of weeds in it but the vegetables also grow

If you and Joe don't want to stay on the place another year we will either stay on it ourselves or get some one else You can all of you think the matter over and when we come home in the fall we will know better what to do than we do now. Our trees may look better by that time

E.S. Harris

To Julia Kelley from Elizabeth

Monango

Dec. 16th, 1888

Dear Sister Julia,

We got your letter telling of Nick's death yesterday. We will start for Iowa just as soon as Rube is able

¹¹ January 1888 is notorious for the terrific snowstorms that took the lives of hundreds of northern plains people caught outdoors. Mary Dodge Woodward chronicled the result in her diary: "Two hundred people are reported dead and they have not all been found. The

railroads were blockaded, the snow standing fifteen feet deep in the cuts The *Fargo Argus* reports two thousand head of cattle, sheep and horses lost or frozen to death." Woodward, *The Checkered Years*, pp. 210-211.



Elizabeth Seymour Harris and Reuben Harris, several years after their Dakota experience.

— Courtesy of Mrs. Ruth Burmester, Reedsburg, Wisconsin

The death of Nick Seymour, Elizabeth's mentally retarded brother, was the catalyst for the Harrises' return to Iowa. Elizabeth had cared for Nick since her mother's death in 1854 and had worried about him a great deal while he lived with other relatives during her sojourn in Dakota. Because she was his guardian, his death generated legal obligations; Elizabeth had to sell his land and arrange for the probate of his estate. That fact, along with Frank's homesickness and his discouragement over three hot, dry years in Dakota, propelled the family home to their Iowa farm. The elder Harrises lived out their lives on the Delaware County place; Elizabeth died there in 1908; Reuben survived until 1916, his ninety-third year. Frank raised stock and engaged in dairying. He and Gusta added two daughters to their family of boys. Frank served his community for two decades as a township clerk and as a member of the school board. He died in Delaware County in 1918.

For the Harrises the years in Dakota were productive and largely happy but in the long run they decided that seventy-eight acres in Iowa meant a more secure future than 640 acres in Dakota. In this they were not unusual. The story of the frontier was one of departures as well as arrivals; many times eager immigrants found the promised land to be less than they dreamed it would be.

The Harrises were luckier than many who became discouraged and left the frontier behind. They had a prosperous farm in Iowa to call home. When they departed, they joined a small exodus from the territory. Elwyn Robinson argues that it was not so much the drought that drove settlers out of Dakota in the late Eighties, but the collapse of "speculative excitement." The end of the boom, according to him, was the result of psychology, rather than economics or the environment. Whatever the cause, the boom ended and the Harrises returned to the familiar landscape of their Iowa home where they lived out their remaining days, the Dakota years only a memory of short-lived adventure and much hard work.¹² ND

Editor's Note

The Harris family letters are in the possession of Ruth Seymour Burmester of Reedsburg, Wisconsin, the grandniece of Elizabeth Seymour Harris. Mrs. Burmester provided a wealth of information about the family for this article. I would like to thank Mrs. Burmester for the use of the letters and for her help. This particular collection includes twenty-nine family letters, most of them written to Elizabeth's sister, Julia Kelley, who, with her family, rented the Harris farm in Iowa while they were in Dakota. There are also letters to Elizabeth's brother, Silas Seymour, in Sauk County, Wisconsin, and one to Walter Seymour, Elizabeth's nephew and Frank Harrises' cousin, in Madison, Wisconsin. I have standardized the occasionally irregular spelling and have edited out repetitious passages or material concerned only with family matters.

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¹² Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, p. 154.