

December 25, 1915.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Another year with its legal holidays - days of festivities and days of family celebrations, has passed and now upon the holy day of the birth of our Savior, we are united in spirit in a family reunion by the means of our letters.

I feel grateful that our circle is still unbroken and hope that it may remain so for a long time to come. I am thankful to be able to make a good report of the Hartmann family. We have had a fair share of prosperity, good health, and happiness, and are full of courage and hope for the coming year.

Now for a review of the year: Last Christmas was made lively by the presence of Tess, Effie and David - David spent only two days with us - Effie her school vacation and Tess about a month, or until recalled to Bellevue by the illness of Aunt Mary.

There was one drawback to our happiness at that season and that was because Ralph was absent from the family circle on account of illness. He was in a hospital for contagious diseases for eight weeks, on account of scarlet fever. He made a good recovery with no after effects - a cause for thankfulness.

In April Fred purchased a fruit farm across the lake in Michigan. The family went there for the first time during the spring vacation the latter part of April, and some of us were there until nearly the middle of November. I spent about six months in all at the farm, in four installments. That the life agreed with my health was proved by a gain of sixteen pounds of flesh.

Our farm consists of twenty acres of land. We have about 550 feet of lake frontage and a half mile stretch to the rear end of the place. We have about eighteen hundred fruit trees - apples, peaches, pears, cherries, plums and quinces, besides small fruit and a garden. The peach predominates - we packed 1,500 bushels of peaches for the market in one-fifth bushel baskets.

Our live stock consists of two horses, a cow, pig, chickens, two hives of bees and a dog, not to mention two canaries. We have a small house of seven rooms and a fair sized screen porch. It is built on a slight elevation, the lawn sloping down to the edge of the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan.

Fred turned the management of the place over to the children, Bertha being the general manager; they to pay all expenses but insurance, taxes and house furnishings, out of the proceeds and to pocket the balance. Said balance was not very heavy this year, on account of there being a superabundance of fruit throughout the country and partly due, probably, to our inexperience in handling the situation.

I am enclosing a picture of the house - you will notice some tall trees. There are ten big maple trees around the house, five in a row to the west and five more to the south. The other picture is of the bluff - a public driveway runs between our lawn and the bluff.

The heavy work of the farm was done by a man whom we engaged by the year; the remaining part was done by the family. We have become expert in packing all kinds of fruit, pruning berry bushes and transplanting and weeding strawberries.

Fred spent a month or less at the farm - the time being spread over week ends and occasionally an extra day or two. As a monument of his part of the summer's work there, is a natural stairs down the bluff to the beach, (bluff about 75 ft. high), and many ornamental shade trees and shrubs planted.

Charlotte had seven weeks absence from the library, which she spent helping on the farm - not a rest, but a change of occupation.

We love the farm and its surroundings, the lovely view of the lake and the gorgeous sunsets over it, the fine air and the free, untrammelled life.

I am greatly desirous of having you come and see it all for yourselves and hereby extend an urgent invitation for you to come and visit next summer.

We had the pleasure of a short visit with Charles Forbes last June. He passed through Chicago on his way east and spent a couple of hours with us both coming and going.

Two of the important events of the year was Helen's graduation from Vassar in June and Constance's graduation from high school. In September Constance entered the Northwestern University at Evanston. Emily is a senior in high and Ralph a freshman.

We see Laurie Brown occasionally. She is taking a course in English at the Chicago University, preparatory to teaching that branch in a girl's private school in Detroit.

Recently we had some Dryden Bakers here for dinner - Mr. and Mrs. Baucus and daughter, Jessie. Mrs. Baucus was Kittie Baker, daughter of Albert Baker, son of Uncle David J. Baker. Mr. Baucus is publishing a history of the Masons, or is at the head of the business, general manager, I believe. They have been in Chicago five years, but I met them for the first time a year ago and the second time at the dinner above referred to. They are very pleasant people.

In conclusion I will wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Your loving sister,

Maggie

