

"She says she can't get the right kind of woman to stay out here and help her so she just has a man or two. She has a garden, hot house, chickens and a graphophone, a type-writer, sewing machine, and a telephone. And all that means a great deal where people are used to getting along on bare necessities."



Letter G.C. to her mother  
July 8th, 1914

Waiting for evening Grace ate three plates of lettuce and wrote a few letters. She watched the cattle while the men slept. At seven p.m. they started off through the woods and the cattle gave them a lot of trouble as the mosquitos were terrible and plagued them incessantly. The mosquitos originated in the scenic little lakes they kept passing every day which were covered with beautiful yellow water lilies. Grace counted 27 lakes in two days.

Camping near Our Home Roadhouse, Raymond hired on two Swedish mushers who were also bound for Fairbanks. They helped herd the cattle. The mosquitos were so bad they did not get very far before they had to stop and build smudges. They kept these going night and day for the next few days. They were leaving the level country and getting up into the mountains. They began to see snowy peaks on the horizon; the surrounding hills were rolling and green with shrubbery.

Billy Epley went fishing in the Gulkana Lake, and caught a mess of grayling. He saw a brown bear, a caribou, and a mother moose with twins. The lake was narrow, eleven miles long, very pretty.

"We followed along the shore of it for hours. In the afternoon the warm sun was shining on the beach in a little cove quite protected by bushes so I went down and took a bath in the lake and washed my clothes. While I was washing I heard a most peculiar noise and as it approached I realized that there was an automobile coming up the road. I hiked up there and there was little Ford stopped at the camp. In the backseat was a most foreign looking gentleman with a turned up moustache. I thought "Heavens! Who is this prince of the blood?" I nodded but he stared straight through me -- and way beyond. Mr. Sharkey said he spoke to him three times without any response. We afterwards learned that he really was a Russian Count looking after mining interests and that the man with him was a mining expert."

Letter G.C. to  
her sister Pearl  
July 14, 1914



The automobile with the Russian Count had brought a telegram from Dutch requesting a rig sent back after him. That evening at Paxon's Roadhouse they stopped and telegraphed Dutch that they couldn't spare a team. He was some 70 miles behind.

Resting the cattle near the summit of little pass that evening Grace and Raymond lit a little fire to warm their toes. They sat at the foot of Gulkana Glacier watching the sunset paint the snow-dusted peaks. They had just remarked how remote and sort of lonesome the place was when, to their surprise, a man on a bicycle appeared. He had ridden the 160 miles from Fairbanks in just two days, and it turned out he knew some of their friends from Baker. He was up in Alaska dredging for oil. They chatted awhile, then it was time to start the cattle on. When they crossed the foot of the Gulkana Glacier on a big snow patch the steers grew frisky and cavorted like kittens. It began to rain and they bedded the cattle near a little lake, Summit Lake. Grace napped in the rain under a piece of canvas. When she awoke there was word of a telegram for them up at McCallum's Roadhouse. She rode up the three miles to retrieve it and learned that Dutch had reached Paxon's Roadhouse on foot and wanted a saddle horse sent back. Raymond sent back a gentle horse with Grace's saddle, so she rode on the wagon.

They paused often to build sheep bridges over glacial streams. The scenery was beautiful. Casey's Cache on the Little Delta River was a comfortable place to camp, plenty of feed for the cattle and sheep. They spent the day relaxing, waiting for Dutch. Grace went off a little way into the woods and wrote a letter to Jean and fell asleep. She was gone so long everyone thought she was lost. Her arrival back at camp coincided with Dutch's grand entrance. He was still sore and stiff and quite lame, but glad to have caught up with them. Grace was happy to have him back, he was such a talker and a character and a cunning little man. He wore a pair of baggy overalls that covered his assortment of shirts, a shapeless felt hat was wedged on his head, and a hand-made cigar was clamped in the middle of his grin.

They were moving along pretty fast with the help of the new men, though it was raining a lot. Grace had her saddle back and she could help with the cattle again. There were more cabins of trappers and miners the closer they got to Fairbanks, and more people on the road. They were also seeing more lynx and bear, and the cats cried at night, an eerie, lonely sound.

In a few days it was raining so much they had a hard time keeping their things dry, though they built a bonfire every night. Grace wrung out her hair into the roaring flames, hung her sodden coat and saddlebags on branches. Crossing the Tanana they had to use the ferry for all the animals, and the ferryman charged 25 cents a head for cattle and horses, and half that for sheep. Dutch bought a hind-quarter of moose for supper, and Grace washed the dishes with river-bottom sand.

In the greyish morning light she rode with Mrs. Sharkey in the wagon, out of the downpour. They were lurching down the muddy ruts of the Tenderfoot Creek district, a mining settlement. Little claims were spread all over up and down the creek; it was a rich mining area. Huge piles of slag were along the banks, and sopping, bent-backed miners worked beside the creek, digging channels to sluice boxes, shoveling dirt, swirling mud in pans. Their disinterested eyes flicked moodily up at the strangers straggling past them, the spongy-wooled sheep and dull steers. Rain ran in spouts off the pinched brims of their hats.

Grace spent the day in the Tanana Hotel in Richardson, baking biscuits. The 'hotel' was made of logs with plank floors, bunks, and a billiard table. It was quite filthy. They had a crank victrola and records, and Grace

played them all afternoon, music sounded so good to her. She baked ten dozen biscuits in the range oven, to take on the trail. It seemed strange to hear rain falling on a roof for a change. That afternoon the cattle broke into a grainfield and caused some trouble. Raymond had a hard time pacifying the cattle and the farmer. He also heard a report that the roads ahead were going to be bad -- muddy and washed out and the rivers high.

They sold four sheep to people in that town. They started on the next day, and the road was very rough. Grace rode in the jolting wagon, sleeping most of the way. They came to a very pretty little roadhouse called Birch Lake. Grace, still drowsy, got down from the wagon and was greeted by a tall, cheerful Danish man she could barely understand. He invited them in, as it was pouring rain, and Grace was glad for the shelter, although inside the place was striking, compared to the grounds. The proprietor was a scrawny, starving man, crazed with too much whiskey, and only half-lucid. He was too sick to get out of bed. His Danish neighbor, a cheerful man named Toney, was caring for him.

"He had been on this jag since the 4th of July, we learned, and was there alone with his cat and dog -- both looked half-starved and the man hadn't eaten anything for ten days. A distant neighbor, Toney, also a decided character, had stopped and tried to take care of him, that is giving him a drink every so often. He knew enough to tell us to come in and as it was pouring we did. I slept that night on a couch in the office room. It was uncanny to hear the drunk man mumbling in the next room but they assured me he was too sick to get out of bed. In the middle of the night I awoke to find him prowling around the room half-clad and muttering to himself. He had on a faded, splotchy kind of red and purple shirt and his face matched it in all particulars. He soon vanished again."

Letter G.C. to J.B.  
July 24, 1914

Grace lay rigid in the hot, stuffy office on the narrow couch as the wild-eyed man stumbled around her in the dim light, mumbling to his dog. Shocked awake by his presence she lay paralyzed and stiff, not even drawing a breath. In his fermenting haze he never noticed her. When he shuffled back out Grace did not move for a long time, waiting for the drumming in her chest to subside. She only let herself drowse the rest of the night, and got up feeling groggy in the morning, to start breakfast. The men had been out with the cattle all night, and they crowded into the kitchen, starving. Grace kitched in on another batch of biscuits while she had the opportunity of a kitchen and oven. At noon she and Mrs. Sharkey made a big dinner and set the table in the front room. Two men, a judge, Mr. Erwin, and a Mr. Watts arrived on foot, their car had broken down. The drunk man stumbled out insisting he was dying, and asked that Judge Erwin make out his will. The two new-comers hid his whiskey keg, and they took it along with them when they left. Dutch looked after their 'host' until they were ready to leave; the Dane had departed for his camp to look after his stock.

Grace slept in the fresh air of the wagon bed as they drove along in the afternoon. The roads were soggy and bottomless and many of the bridges were washed out.

It was July 23rd before Grace finally got some long-awaited mail from home. She had not heard a word since she left Hood River on the 3rd of June. A Mr. Ford rode out from Fairbanks in a buggy and met them at their camp with the mail. The only disappointment was the lack of a letter from Jean, who must have written, but whose letter must have been lost.

"Poor Raymond has hardly left the cattle, and has been going without half enough sleep, but he seems to be thriving under it. He was almost as disappointed as I was that I didn't get a letter from you."

Letter G.C. to J.B.  
July 24, 1914

It was a beautiful day, the sky clear, and Grace saddled up and rode with the cattle. It felt wonderful, trotting along the pretty birch-lined road.

RAYMOND  
ON CY  
NEAR  
LA GRANDE



"Passed Toney's camp and he escorted us some distance. He entertained Raymond and I with his views on various subjects. We heard that the Salchakat River was very high and we would have difficulty crossing but Toney assured us "You coom alright mit de cattle across -- aber -- de sheep..." He also spoke of that liar (meaning lawyer, Mr. Erwin) from Fairbanks."

-- Diary G.C.

Grace stayed up until midnight reading letters, with a baby rabbit in her pocket which Raymond had caught.

Through a cold hard rain they drove the cattle to the camp on the Salchakat. The Indians across the river poled their little boats up and down the rapids with amazing speed. They had a large village there with racks of salmon drying and over a hundred constantly howling and barking dogs. The level of the river was steadily falling, and they waited in camp a few days for it to drop, watching the activities of the Indians.

This has been part two of "A Short Trip To Alaska in 1914 -- The Journey and Life of Grace Carter". It was written and compiled by Jessica Lackoff and Marti Reece. Next month we will print the third and final segment of this true story of life in the early nineteen hundreds.

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