

# Emigrants' Letters

The following letters were written by members of the Boardman / Topley family of Crewbeg, who had emigrated to Canada about the middle of the 19th century. The letters were discovered in the Boardman homestead at Crewbeg by Mr. Joe Poole, who kindly permitted their publication here. They show clearly how much these emigrants missed their native land and particularly illustrate the scale of emigration from the district at that time. The strength of their faith is also very striking.

Part of a letter from Isaac Topley to his father Abraham Topley, Clady Beg

Letter addressed to: Mr. Abraham Topley  
Clady Beg  
Care of Mr. Alexander Small  
Merchant  
Markethill,  
Co. Armagh,  
Ireland

Postmark: Markethill  
Feb 13? 1850

*The winter here is very pleasant. I can work with my coat of all the day. The winter is getting something like home. The snow is not more than 2 or 3 inches deep this winter. As yet every day is like a Christmas day here for eating and drinking. There is so many things on the table we do not know what to eat first. Provisions is very chaep this winter. Potatoes 1s (shilling) per bushel — every British shilling is 15d here. Pork is 3 dollars per hundert. Flower is 10s per hundert, oat meal is 12s per hundert. Indian meal is 8 shilling per cwt. oats 10 per bushel. Wheat 3s to 5s-6d per bushel. Beef is 4d per pound, mutton the same, turnips 1s per bushel, carrots 1s per bushel, tee 2s and 6d per pound., eggs 6d per dozen, butter 7d per pound, cheese 5d per pound; tobacco 6d per pound, whiskey 4/- per quart, aples 2d per bushel.*

*Dear father you will please let Mr. Leeper know I was up in St. Catherine's. I can go from Port Hope to Toronto for one york? shilling. I can leave Port Hope at . . . ? evening and took my tea with William Leeper on Saturday.*

*We are all well. Robert Dougan was well. I took my dinner with Mr. Hugh Dougan one day. He is well and doing well. Mr. Robert Leeper is moved to St. Catherine's. Our neighbours here is all well. Joseph Little is got married to Miss Mary Hamill. Martha Chambers is got married to a Mr. Waters of County Cavan.*

*Please let Nicols? Gray know his son Alexander Gray is well. He is my next neighbour. Agness Porter has posted a letter to her cousin Samuel Porter. Give my love to my old friend Mrs. Marshall and family in the warmest manner. Remember us to Uncle Boardman and family in the warmest manner. I never received your newspaper, it has went astray.*

*Give my love to John Gordon and family. Remember us to Mr. Robert Leeper and family and to Mr. and Mrs. Mitchel if he is still living. I am sorry for their trouble. I send my love to brothers John and William and hope the day is not far distant when we will meet.*

*Dear father right as soon as this comes to hand for I will have my year up as soon as your letter will come back to me. David Kilpatrick and family is well. They are looking for a letter from Mr. Leeper or some of the family. They give their love to you and to Mr. Leeper and all the family.*

*Dear father I must have dun and I thank God for the great measure of health He has bestowed on me. My head did not ake this 12 months: No more at present but remain your ever loving and affectionate son to death.*

ISAAC TOPLEY

Postmark: Tandragee  
30-11-1851?

Letter addressed to: Mr. James Boardman,  
Crewbeg,  
care of Mr. Richard Troter,  
TANDRAGEE,  
Co. Armagh,  
Ireland

Port Hope  
June 11th, 1851

Dear Father, Mother, Brothers and Sisters,

I now take this present opportunity of sending you these few lines hoping they will find you and all my friends in as good health as this leaves me at this date, thanks be unto God for all his mercies unto me in this strange land.

Dear relations, I enjoy as good health as ever I dun since I left you which is one of the greatest blessings I can enjoy. I never had to stretch myself by the fire as some do. Dear Father I received your kind and twice welcome letter which give me great satisfaction to hear of all your wellfare. I was glad to hear of your crops doing so well and that mother and you had so good health. I hope you can send me that news in your next letter again.

Dear father this has been a most remarkable cold winter. It is said to be 30 degrees colder this winter than it has been for a great while, but I did not find it much as I was not often out of doors.

Dear father I have been thinking a great deal how you have put in the winter and how your health is. I am looking for a letter from some of you this long time and I expect to receive one from you before you receive this and dear father and mother it is a great joy to me to hear that the Lord has not forsaken you in your old age and seeing you have arrivee at that period of time which sums up our days and years and dear father though we should never meet in this world I hope we should all meet to part no more.

Dear father & mother I hope you will excuse me for not wrighting to you much sooner. I was expecting a letter from Brother John and my mistress was not in health so I had not the time to wright.

Dear father I have joined the United Presbyterian Church on the first sabath of March. I like the clergyman very well, his name is John Cairey (or Caisey?). There is a great many of County Armagh belong to him. He is a Scottish man.

Uncle is well. He is labouring every day. He gets 3s-6d per day. Cousin Isaac made me a present of a parasoul when I landed. Henry Topley and family is well. Iann?? Topley is living sixty miles off me. He has 14 dollars per month. I have not seen Samuel Topley yet. He has got married and has one child. Little William Topley is well.

I wish to know is Brother John singing in Markethill yet and dear Mother you want to know if I am content, if not you say the same bed is for me still. I would bee more content if you wear all in Canada but it not easy to forget the strong ties of nature, the land which gave me birth.

(Section obliterated)

There is a great many coming out but I don't know any I have seen. I am living in my old place but I am thinking of going to the states as I hear wages are higher there. I have been doing no house-work this long while, only taking care of a baby as my mistress could not suckle it. That has been my employment this last few weeks. I enjoy as good health as ever I did. I like the place pretty well but I think I would make more money in the states and when you rite direct (it) to David Kilpatrick for me and I will then get your letter.

Please let me know about all my neighbours how they are and how all my friends are. I send my love to father and mother, sisters and brothers and to all my little neices and nephews as if named. Give my love to all my old friends and acquaintances as before. I heard in Mrs. Mitchel a letter that you were all well as David Kilpatrick received a letter for his sister Mitchel. David Kilpatrick and family sends their love to you all. Please let Mr. Leeper know they are well.

Dear father and mother, brothers and sisters I must have dun. Bee not forgetful of the one thing kneedful — for what doth a man profit if he gain the whole wourld and loose his own soul. Look daily to the Lamb of

God who taketh away the sins of the world; and sanctification and redemption. Look to him as your shepard, your brother your saviour and your friend and let your whole lives be lives of faith and dependance on the Son of God. He is wise and affectionate, Powerful, full of love and grace and able to save and willing as he is able and he has it at his command all things that are needful to make us happy in time and eternity. Trust then in the Lord forever and you shall not be ashamed of your confidence. Read the divine word as often as you have the opportunity. In it is able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Approach the divine mercy seat morning and evening and worship him who is your creator and reedeemer. As my paper is near full I must bid you all farewell with the kindest regards.

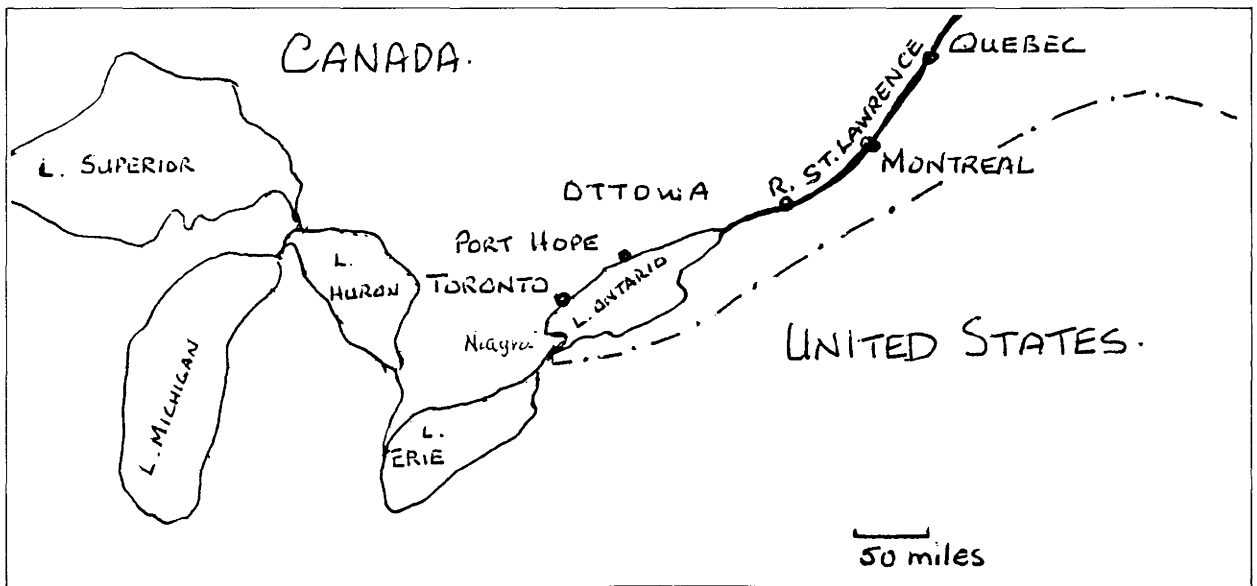
I remain your daughter to death,

ELIZABETH BOARDMAN

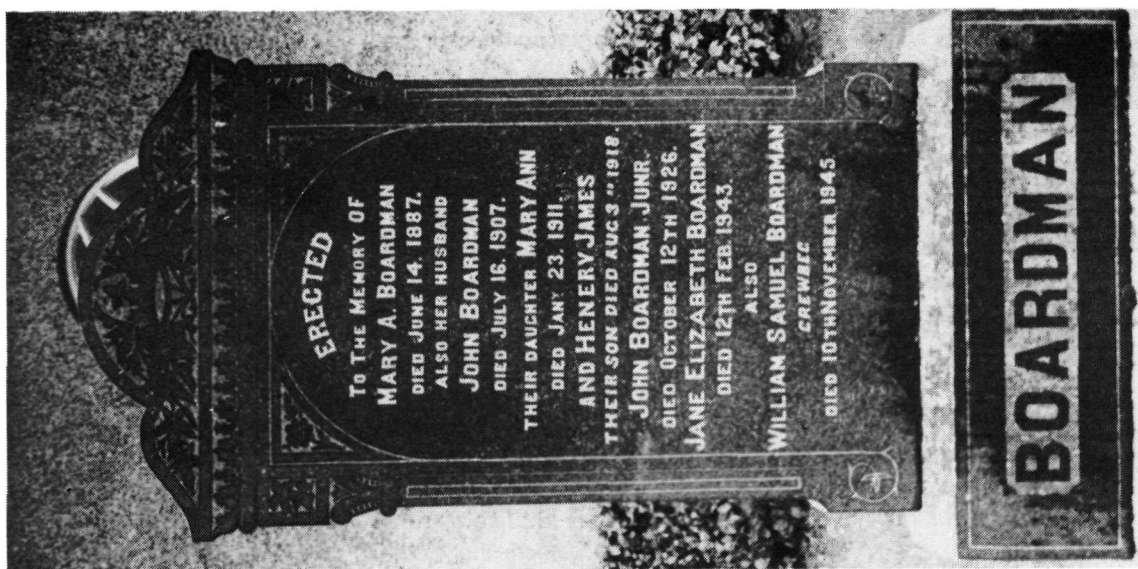
Written on the back in different handwriting but unsigned.

Dear friends,

I am going to scribble over a few lines to let you know that you might have wrote me a letter. You mentioned my name in your last letter, in the next you will not mention it at all if you do not I must live without you. I am going to post this one this day, I live in Port Hope. Isaac and me board in the one house. We are well. John is down in this place now. I would like to see you all here but if we never meet in this world I hope we will meet in the next. I send my love to you all. Let Mr. William Corner know that I am going to write him a letter. He may be looking for it. I hope they are all well. Elizabeth sends her love to them. John Boardman, Go when you receive this letter go on Saturday to Clady and Ballalain to Mr. Leeper and Mr. William Corner's and then you can go down to Markethill on Sabbath morning and let them know we are all well.



Map of the St. Lawrence, showing Port Hope.



The Boardman Memorial, Cremore.



William Boardman who died in 1945.

Letter postmarked Montreal MY 7? 1952 and Tandragee MY 23 1852.

Addressed to Mr. James Boardman,  
c/o Mr. Richard Troter,  
Tandragee,  
County Armagh  
Ireland.

5th May, 1852

Hope.

My dear Brother and Sister,

*I have taken this favourable opportunity of writing a few lines to let you know that I am enjoying good health at present, thanks be to God for all his mercies to us poor sinfull creatures as we are, hoping these few lines will find you all enjoying the same.*

*I seen Elizabeth this morning. She is well. I seen her yesterday. I seen her the sabbath day at sermon, so you may think we are not far distant from each other. She is living on in Mr. Nathen Choat's(?) where Isaac lived three years and three months. Isaac is living in Port Hope this winter. Mr. Choat wants him back but he is in an easier place so I believe he intends to stop in it this summer. The(y) like Elizabeth in Mr. Choat's — first rate. The(y) would not part with her for any wages. She is as well thought of as any girl in Hope. She could get places as many . . . . . ?? about her. She is respected by every person living here. They have hired another girl to help her for fear she goes away. She has good wages. She has four dolars per month and the mistress has given her a great dale of presents. She received your letter in 4 weeks after the date and was glad to hear from you all. She was intending to write but she was waiting for Miss Mc'ormick going home and she told me she thought she would after your letter came.*

*I went to Mr. Jonston's myself to see Mr. Jonston has got a letter from Ireland and I think she will not go now. Elizabeth was still waiting so I thought I would scribble over a few lines myself. I thought you would be thinking long so I said to Elizabeth this morning I would write myself to keep you from thinking long.*

*You think money is easy got here, — it is not. You can get trade for your wages. You may expect a letter in a few weeks from Elizabeth. She wants to know if Eliner is coming out this fall or not. As soon as this comes to your hand write to me and let me know, everything about your situation and how you are enjoying your health. I had not one day's sickness since I came out to this country.*

*I think a great dale of Lang(?) in this country. When I was at home in my own country living in my own family it was my desire to go to America but if my comrade had abeen spared with me and me settled down I would not think as I do. But she was called out of a troublesome world and I had longer days and more to come through.*

*I want your advice on many things. I was thinking about looking for a woman as the people is advising me to marry. I believe I could get one. I fell in with a very decent? woman last November. She has sixty acres of good land and has the deed in her own name but she has four children. She is from Cumber below Belfast. The people has advised me not to take her on the account of her having a family so I think I will not heed it now or never with the same. She is about 44 years of age but whatever the Lord has layed out for me his will be done. The almighty has placed us in this world and we no not how short a time it may be and he has given us opportunities of improving our time and if we do not we perish.*

*He has given us six days of the week for our own employment; he has given us the sabath to attend holy ordinances; he has given us the Bible; if we begin at the beginning of Genesis and reads to the end of Revelations we will still find out a great dale of encouragement; he has given us the house of prayer; he has given us the throne of grace; he has promised us the holy spirit if we ask it. I want to know if you all attend your place of worship. If you were all here you would think more about the sabath. I want to know if John attends Markethill or not. If he does let all my old neighbours know that I am well. Let Mr. Leepers know that David Kilpatrick and family is well and I send my love to them all in the warmest manner. I send my love to William Corner and family. I will write a letter to William again the fall. Let William know that Mrs. Homles? is well. If you see any one of them before you write send me the directions to Hannah? McKee? to Philadelphia. I seen young Hugh Porter. I was in his house. Him and family is well. He would like to hear a Covenanter preach. I would*

*(like) to hear about about my brother Jacob. I would like to see him in this country. Elizabeth's mistress is an English-woman. She gives her leave to go to the meeting almost every sabath. She will not let her stay at home. Let John English know his uncle William Holmes and family is well and doing well. They told me the(y) would like to see him and family. They told me the(y) would give them awayll — the(y) would get a place. They would do well to come out when the children is wee.*

*I send my love to John Boardman and family. I send my love to all my old neighbours. Elizabeth sends her love to all to her father and family in the warmest manner. Henry is married forty? miles from me and William is with him.*

*I did not see John since the fall. He is up where Samuel is. I got a letter five weeks aga, I expect one every day. I have done nothing this winter not one week's work. What I earned in summer, I have got through it. I have good clothes. A good black suit.*

*No more at present but remain your brother to death.*

**ABRAHAM TOPLEY**



**The Boardman house, Crewbeg, to-day.**