

In Brownington

More correspondence between a legis

by Darlene Young

This is the second part of a two-part article. It is a series of letters between Representative Ellis Robinson and his wife, Bessie.

Brownington, Vermont, November 6, 1908

My Dear Husband: ...Ruth is sick this morning...so I shall keep her to home today and dose her.... Uncle John died last night.... I think Sollie feels tired this morning. It was eight o'clock when he got his chores done last night and then by the time he got George and Jennie to bed it was late.... Hope to hear from you soon. With love, Bessie

Montpelier, November 10, 1908

Dear Wife: ...Last evening we had a session at the State House — heard the great John Senter speak on taxation. I spent some time in the Secretary of State's office looking after Grammar School data yesterday forenoon. Are they killing any deer up there? They are getting quite a few here but haven't had any venison served up yet. I hope the cattle are behaving decently and not bothering Sollie too bad — wish I could help him out. Well I hope I can telephone today — it seems a good while since I heard you speak.... Love to all, Ellis

Montpelier, November 11, 1908

Dear little Eva: I wonder how you are and what you are doing this morning.... I suppose you help Uncle a lot while Ruth is at school.. I wish I could see you this morning and give you a good hug.... How is Cherry and the rest of the calves? ...Well little girl papa will be home and see you in a few more days. Help mamma a good lot and I will send you another card soon. With love, Papa

Brownington, November 12, 1908

My dear Husband: It is just a week this morning since I carried you to [Barton] Landing



This photo of Bessie Delight Gray O'Hara was taken in December of 1897. She married Ellis Augustine Robinson on January 6, 1898.

and it seems like three, the time is long. Shall be glad if you ever get home to stay.... Today [Ruth] is to have [an] examination in Arithmetic. She is a nervous about it, but I told her to take her time and it would be alright.... Sollie gets tired some days, but now that the fence and stanchions are fixed it will help out greatly. I try to help him all I can. I think my work looks as if it needed someone to do it but as you know if I spend my strength one way I cannot another, so house cleaning will have to go until you get home. Yesterday I recorded a Lien Note for F.L. Gilfillan and discharged a Mortgage Deed for A.H. Cushman. I have not recorded those papers that came before you went away, but will try to get time before long. Hope you are well and hope to hear you speak again today over the phone. May God bless and keep you safe. With love, Bessie

Translator and his wife

Montpelier, November 14, 1908

Dear Bess: I am thinking of you this morning as indeed I am every day. I am sorry the water is so short — I hoped the rains might help it a little. Tell Sollie to get John's folks or somebody to help him cut wood or anything else he needs and water enough so you will not be short. Keep courage up a little longer. I am counting the days until I see you.... How much are the cream checks amounting to now? If you are likely to be short this week, will try to arrange to help you out.... Legislation is getting more strenuous — we are getting into the larger class of bills.... Well good-by and God bless and keep you all, Ellis

Montpelier, November 17, 1908

Dear Ruth: I was glad of your letter and glad that you did so well at school. I was especially glad that you got E. in deportment which means that you were a very good girl.... There is a gentleman here from Poultney who showed me a letter from his little girl who is nine years old. So you see there are probably many little girls who write to their papas. Well good-by dear and I hope to see you soon. Papa

Dear Wife: All well here this morning — hope all is well at home.... I expect that we shall adjourn Friday afternoon or Saturday morning. It is rumored that we will get some pay at that time.... I did not go out anywhere last night — we had a long session in committee room.... With love, Ellis

Montpelier, November 18, 1908

Dear Bess: Well we have thrashed out another day. We had a strenuous session yesterday over the Sunday [blue] law — we beat the fellow who wanted to open stores Sunday, about 3 to 1. Last evening I went to the Farmers Club — we had the cattle commissioner and discussed tuberculosis. The days are growing less
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“Wish I could

(Continued from page eighteen.)

till I can see you, am counting....
Hope to talk with you soon. Hug the
babies. With love, Ellis

Montpelier, December 3, 1908

Dear Bess: Wish I could step in
and see how you are this morning....
I had a comfortable journey.... Had a
strenuous afternoon. The men at the
State House seemed glad to see me....
We had a wide awake hearing on the
cattle question in the afternoon until
5:15 then went into committee till
6:15. Came home to supper and
went back as soon as possible to
hearing on Public Service Bill and
stayed till 12 o'clock. May God bless
and keep you all safe and happy.
With love, Ellis

Montpelier, December 9, 1908

Dear Bess: I am well this
morning and thinking of home and
the dear ones in it. I slept a little on
the train coming down from [Barton
Landing] to Wells River and so I got
to Montpelier in great form.... We
were down to the State House last
night until after eleven o'clock to a
hearing on weekly payments by
lumber companies — quite a hot
time.... Wish I could be there to help
night and morning. Give the babies
a hug for me and imagine you are
getting some yourself which indeed
you will soon.... Yours faithfully, Ellis

Brownington, December 16, 1908

Dear Ellis: I have done a big
washing today, and tomorrow I will
try to mop and have things a little
cleaner. I notified Sollie this
morning that when they hitched up
to get water that they could draw
two loads so I could wash and clean
up a little. My cold is worse tonight
but guess it will be all right by
morning when I get rested....
Thursday, December 17 I hope you
are well this morning. I would like
to just put my arms around your
neck and give you a hug and see if
you were well for myself.... I told
Sollie about getting up some feed.
Wouldn't mixed feed be better for the
hogs than bran? It costs only 5 cents
more a 100 pounds.... Are you coming
home Christmas? Will close with
love, Bessie

Brownington, December 18, 1908

My Dear Husband: Your letter I received yesterday.... I think our colds are better this morning.... I have finished recording the Harry Merrill mortgage this morning and I think if I could see [attorney W.W.] Reirden I would blow him up for making such tracks for people to read — it is as bad as Carpenter's writing, so you have a little idea what a fine time I have been having.... Everything is all right indoors and out.... Hope to hear from you today. With love, Bessie

Montpelier, January 5, 1909

Dear Bess: I had a pleasant trip yesterday.... There were a lot of reprobates on the car coming down. I had a great visit with the men. I saw Joe and Tom and a lot of other men last night at the State House. "Glad to see you" was an everyday occurrence.... The air is full of taxation and other topics. I guess the Legislature is the same old stubborn lot. I hope John will get the wood over quickly.... With love to

and be there to

all, Ellis

Montpelier, January 6, 1909

Dear Bess: I must tell you about our committee meeting. I saw Joe yesterday morning before session and asked him to call a meeting of the committee. At the end of the morning session he arose and announced that the committee would meet at once. So we hustled into the Judge's room and I presented my bill to the chairman to read. Then of course it was up to me to explain and defend my scheme. Well the Lord gave me liberty and I expounded the matter well enough so the committee voted unanimously to report the bill favorably. So the bill has gone into the hands of the Revision Committee. Yesterday we had a happy time — we allowed the big men to scrap over a bill a good long time, then we butchered the whole thing in cold blood and longed for more.... Well good-by with H's and K's and love to all, Ellis

Brownington, January 6, 1909

Dear Hubby: I have just got Eva dressed.... She does not seem awful sick but has a sore throat and quite a cold in her head. If she is any worse I will have Dr. Wright come and see her. She seems real hoarse. I was up quite a little with her in the night. I have greased her well and will do all we can for her.... Don't worry about us, for if anything should come that we need you will telephone you.... With love, Bessie

Montpelier, January 12, 1909

Dear Wifey: I got here all right in due time.... Yesterday afternoon after the session which was not specially important, the Committee on Education met at 4 p.m. and considered the plan for distribution of school moneys. We chewed on the subject till 6 o'clock then came to supper then went to the State House. Our committee was invited to meet the committee on Appropriations to consider the Normal School. Governor Prouty and [former] Governor [Fletcher] Proctor addressed the committees then after the excellencies had withdrawn, Chairman Bacon called on the member from Brownington who fired a few remarks at the helpless audience. I had the satisfaction of hearing Bacon say that my views were about right.... H's and K's and love to all, Ellis

Brownington, January 12, 1909

[Papa]: I hope you are well. I am pretty well. I scraped up enough meal to feed the calves.... Uncle is going to [Barton] Landing after meal. Well good-bye to papa. From Ruth Helen Robinson

Dear Papa: I have got my hair combed, so I am writing to you. When are you coming home? What are you going to bring me? With love, Eva E. Robinson

Brownington, January 13, 1909

Dear Ellis: When you phoned this morning I forgot to ask you about the electric light business. Mr. Young phoned me yesterday to know if you was going to have electric lights or not. He said that they would not come up to his place unless you would have them. I told him I thought you expected to have them.... but I told him I would find

help night and morning"

out and let him know.... Wish they would wind up the law business so that you could come home for good this week.... Love to you, Bessie

Montpelier, January 14, 1909

Dear Bess: ...It seems very uncertain as to adjournment. Of course by mutual agreement the work might be shortened up so as to finish very soon but I don't see how we can get done before some time next week.... There was a red hot discussion on the Utility Bill in the coat room.... We had a warm discussion in the House yesterday morning over the much talked of Tax Bill. It was a Senate Bill and the Constitution provides that all revenue measures shall originate in the House. The House voted to throw out the measure on the grounds of unconstitutionality and return it to the Senate with thanks.... With love, Ellis

Brownington, January 18, 1909

Dear Husband: Eva had a naughty spell this morning just as you telephoned, so I did not hear all you said.... Are you going to get through over there this week? I am getting tired of work and want you to get home so I can let *you do it* for a while.... Good night, Bessie

Montpelier, January 18, 1909

Dear Bess: I write you a few lines this morning to let you know how I am coming. Are you all snowed in up there? I thought of you yesterday when it was snowing all day long. Well cheer up comrades, I will come. No man can tell the day or hour when adjournment will come but a

few days more will tell the story....
With love to all, Ellis

Montpelier, January 19, 1909

Dear Bess: Are you frozen solid this cold morning? If your wood gets short, try and get some more of John. Pack the stove full, keep comfortable if possible.... We are ripping through the bills as fast as we can get at them. I think we will finish Sat. or the middle of the next week.... Good-by for this time, Ellis

Brownington, January 19, 1909

Dear Ellis: I read in the paper that you thought that if the session did not come to an end soon that you would have to buy a new suit of clothes. What, has your pants worn through the seat yet? I am sure I wish the session would come to an end.... Eva is better. Ruth is well.... I am well and *tough*. I don't see but what you will have to come home and help me some next week as I have got to take the census of the Town.... Will say good-by with K's and H's and love to you, Bessie

Montpelier, January 22, 1909

Dear Wifey: I got your letter and the babies' letters and pictures yesterday. I was more than glad of them. Now I don't know whether we finish tomorrow or not. If I stay over Sunday I shall earn money enough to pay for some help on the chores.... Tell Ruth and Eva if I don't come tomorrow I will answer their letters.... With love from Ellis

[Some spelling and punctuation have been changed for clarity.]