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MC194: Folder 16 Mudd, James to Brother [Mudd, Stephen], 1879 December 28

This transcription from the original letter contains language contemporaneous of the time and is being presented as part of a historical record.

Knob Noster, Missouri Dec. 28th 1879

Dear Brother,

I send you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Hoping you are well we are all well except bad colds. I had a letter from Geroge about a week ago, saying he had a letter from you that you wanted to come to America. That you had hurt your back in the Coal Bank [illegible] how they are all getting on. I have a boy as big as me now. George, 18 years old. He is working with me [illegible words] That is a bad job for you. He also says you want to work on a farm and want to hear what the chances are around here. Well in the first place, Missouri is situated about 1250 miles west or rather, [illegible] west of New York City, where I live it is in latitude 38 ½ degrees north and I believe where you live about 57 degrees farther north or in other words, I live about 1100 miles farther north than England and remember it is hot here in summer up to 95 and sometimes 100 degrees in the shade and yet it is as cold in winter or nearly so. The State of Missouri is rather larger than England. The Mississippi river runs on the east boundry and the Missouri river runs through the state from east to North West or rather from north west to a little south east. It is a good state. That is the land is good through the middle and northern part of it the south part is rough and rocky. In wealth and population it ranks the fifth of the United States. New York Pennsylvania Ohio and Illinois are ahead of it. The mines are coal and lead. I am working at the coal mines now about two miles from where I live. The mining has been low and poor for several years it is some better now not in price but more work. The miners all over the states has been raised but not here. A man can make about [illegible] shillings a day by hard work living is reasonable cheap here flour about 13 shillings per 100 lbs beef from three pence to four pence and bacon generally lower sugar about six pence per lb. All kinds of wearing [?] are dearer but you will eat more beef and bacon in a week here than in three months in England. About working on a farm you cannot get steady work by the day and the wages would not be more than two to three shillings per day when you did get work it is not a very good place for a man with a family to get work on a farm. Yet again a man can get a farm and team found sometimes and [illegible words?] get me half of the crop. but you could not do that as you are not used to the ways of the country. I do not see anything here except the coal to make any money for you and that is uncertain. But again any good man that will work will always get something to do. But the work is all different to what you have been used to. Now remember I tell you facts and I would not say come if things were better than they are. Times are better than they have been for years and work reasonable plenty yet wages are not any higher but every thing you buy is higher. The only better it is there is more work to be got at the same price. I would like you to come very well, but I always say I will never tell any one to come because if you did not like the country you would blame me for it. I do not know what wages are in England now, but I expect there is more money in diging [sic]

coal here than there but it is a very is a very hard coal to dig and you would not like it at the first anyway. George says you are married does not say if you have any family or not. Tell me where all the family is that is in England Bob and Alex was at Burton. Bell I do not know where she is nor where Jack is. Tell me how they are all getting on. I have a boy [illegible] big as me **now**. George, 18 years old, he is working with me in the mines have other five they are all smaller Judith the next living 13 years old and the rest down to baby a little over two years old. He was not a month old when my wife died, but I raised him so far. I took care of him myself when he was little over ever since he was born in fact. Had nobody but Judith to help me. I am married again now let me hear what you think of the prospects are you hurt permanently so you will not be able to work hard or work in the mines. George says you want some help if you come. Well George will likely be able to help you. I think Will will not not [sic]. As for me if I have any money at the time I will let you have it. Tell me how you are situated what you want and all [illegible] Will's wife Jane has died lately and he is badly of [sic]. For a woman now he might take you and your wife in with him maybe. I do not know you could work on the farm with him and she could cook until you could both do better. I will write to him about it and if it will be agreeable to him I will let you know or tell him to do so. I have only a small farm eighty acres while they have large ones they could easily give you work but the country is extreme hot and you could not stand it very well and I do not think you would like it very well but here is no other chance to buy land cheap around here anymore. Here is plenty of land cheap enough but then a man that has no money can not buy it. Now if you want to come you can come and stay with me until you can start housekeeping for yourself. I can get you something to do somewhere at some price and can help you a good deal indirectly. Far by what you could do to come as a stranger among strangers. I believe that California is the best place to work on a farm but they will not stay there permanently so I do not advise you any way if you were to go to California you would come within a mile of me and you could get off the train and stay a week and then go on again if you want to come to Missouri, come on I will put you into a way to make a living any way. Only I won't be blamed for your not liking it here are English, Irish, Scotch + Welch men here it has been pretty cold weather here lately. I have a nice place here has a fine orchard and all kind of fruit and has a vineyard and makes wine. So this is all this time. From your affectionate brother, James Mudd

Address

James Mudd
Knob Noster
Johnson Co.
Missouri

P.S. Wife and family wish to be kindly remembered to you and your wife and all brothers and sisters. Write and let me know what you think about it.