

Letter from Albert Ronne to James Fergus, November 1892

November, 1892

Mr. James Fergus

Old Friend,

It has been my intention to write you for a long time [and] give you a short sketch of my eventful & dissipated career, since leaving your Ranch. On arriving at Chinook, the Round Up was about to start out. So thinking it would be a good chance to see the country, as well as to gain a few needful specimens of "the allmighty," my services were engaged to "Sleepy Tom," Foreman for the Broadwater Cattle Co., and done the Wild West Cowboy act from May 20th. . . .

The evening of the 3rd July, when being seized with an uncontrollably patriotic desire to celebrate, I sent in my resignation, which was promptly accepted, and ten o'clock that evening found me in Chinook. After the celebrations were over with, (and my head once more assumed its normal size) I started out north with a pack horse & saw some fine country, also found a suitable location which I afterwards returned to and am now living on.

We (Ronne Sr. & ditto Jr.) have each taken up 320 acres on what is called "Woody Island Creek." It is a running stream of pure spring water, which heads at the international boundary line and runs southeast into Milk River through the finest range in Montana. But Nature has been rather too parsimonious in the matter of timber, it being 25 miles from where we live. . . .

We certainly have a good location, being right in the heart of a Virgin Range with plenty of fine water & land which can all be irrigated. Since coming here on August 12, we put up about 40 tons of hay also a house & stable etc. Have done lots of hard work & expect to do a great deal more, having demonstrated to my entire satisfaction the *Darwinian* theory of the struggle for existence.

I shall sorely miss your library this winter, as I have already suffered from mental starvation having nothing to read. However, I have made the acquaintance of the Lady teacher in Chinook who is the most intellectual woman I have met in Montana, and she has promised to loan me some of her books. But if you will kindly send me a bundle of "Investigators, Ironclads," etc. they will be gladly accepted. . . .

We are having a cold spell [of] weather here just now, with the usual fall winds, & several small snowfalls. There is a large amount of cattle here, one outfit from New Mexico turned loose 15,000 head of steers, but as there is a large scope of country extending north & east with plenty of grass there is lots of room for more. But I must close for fear a too lengthy letter will give you "that tired feeling." . . .

Albert Ronne

Chinook, Mont.

Source: *James Fergus Family Papers, 1857–1971. Manuscript Collection 28* [box 2 Folder 5]. Montana Historical Society Research Center. Archives. Excerpted in *Not In Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana* (Helena, 1976): 102.