

September, 1820
Vandalia, Illinois Territory

Dear Virginia

My dearest cousin ... this September afternoon, I sit on the summit of one of the beautiful hills near Vandalia, a delightful little town in the south-central part of Illinois Territory. As I gaze around me from this height of 200 feet, or perhaps more, I see the Mississippi River winding its way through a lovely valley, and tumbling over mighty rocks, forming a foaming river. Oh! how beautiful the eastern prairie is. And still ... I miss Boston more than ever.

This town covers nine acres of ground, and its principal trees are elm and oak. Vandalia is a thriving little place, and as we sit here, we can see the carpenters at work putting up the frames of business houses as well as residences, and the masons making foundations with brick. The largest hotel of the place is a large building. I smile when I think of the surprise Eastern people get as they see the beautiful residences, elegantly furnished by some of our citizens.

Beyond us lies the Great American Desert, but even the wilds of the Far West will soon be breached I think, as our country continues to expand. Talk is everywhere of people who say they wish to make a try for Oregon!!! Even father speaks with fanciful giddiness of continuing on to the Pacific coast. I myself am content to remain here.

A great many strangers are coming in every day, some seeking fortunes, and others the glory of God; among the former are six gentlemen, friends of ours, from Terre Haute, Indiana, our last camp. We had a very pleasant visit with them. One mile beyond the town is the cemetery where the famous frontiersman Daniel Boone lies buried. Our home is just at the foot of the bluff, and I think it is a pretty place.

I am no story writer, my friend, but please accept my poor description of my western home.

Sincerely,

Rose