

James Mead to his father

In this letter, James R. Mead writes to his father concerning his buffalo hunting and trading. He has just returned from a trading trip. He does not know what to do with all of the robes, so he plans to send them to his father. He includes some advice about the best way to care for and sell these robes. He is hoping to come home to Davenport, Iowa, for a visit in the spring, but only if the fur prices were on the rise. In a few days he is heading north to get more furs. These typed copies of the James R. Mead's letters were donated to the Kansas State Historical Society by Mr. Mead's family in 1940 when the originals were still owned by the family. The originals are now held by Wichita State University.

Creator: Mead, James R. (James Richard), b. 1836

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James Mead to his father

BUFFALO ROBES

Salina, Ks.
Jan. 11, 1861

My dear Father:

I have just returned from a trading trip and have a lot of robes. I don't know what to do with them unless I get you to sell them for me. You had better take your team and take a pleasure trip thru some of the counties of Illinois and sell them. I could sell them here in Kansas if I had time. They cost us from 30¢ to \$1 first cost, not counting time and trouble. Some of them are very good and some stiff and poor. If you can get \$3 for the poorest of them and from \$5 up for the best, we shall be very well satisfied. They are not equal to the wild Indian tan, but will get soft by use if they do not get wet. Be careful to keep them dry and not in frost or dew. Look out that they are not stolen -- most anybody will hook a buffalo robe. In Kansas every wagon has a cover on it, so that they are alright for such a trip but it is not so with you.

If I had been prepared more fully I could have got several hundred robes this winter from the Indians. As it is, we have got nearly 100. I shall send you 3 bales of 15 each and expect to pay you for your trouble in selling them. They will sell if you only stir around among folks on the road. There is one splendid painted robe in the lot which you might keep if you like and some calf robes, soft as a blanket. Take 2 of them and get you a coat made. I have had one made today, all brushed, a splendid soft one, soft as broadcloth and almost as light. The robes cost me \$1; cutting 25¢; making, 50¢; total \$1.75 for a coat well worth \$10. I shall send them to the river as soon as possible in order to have them sold this winter. They may not be at your place before a month from this time but maybe sooner.

I think of coming home on a visit in the Spring but can't tell at present on account of the low prices of furs of all kinds. I fear Spring will not find them in much better condition. At all events we shall make some money if times do not close entirely up. I have got hold of some metal (mineral) which I think is valuable, perhaps tin or silver. I am going to take a hunt for the mine as soon as I have time. I send you a specimen which I wish you to show to men who will know what it is. At any rate, show it around among scientific men till you find out what it is. It is beautiful at any rate.

I am going in a few days way up the Smoky, perhaps a hundred miles above here to get furs and you may not hear from me for some time to come. The weather here is warm and pleasant. Have had no snow of any consequence and an overcoat is only needed to keep out cold wind. Any returns you might have, send to me to Salina, so that they will get here by April 1st.

Hastily,

James.