

Letter on birch bark, handwritten text on both sides
1898

Museum of History and Industry 4798

On Board Str "Joe Masters"
Koyukuk River, Alaska
August 29, 1898

My Dear Wife

I write you this letter just to show you what they do in this country for writing paper. This is a piece of birch bark, of which there is a large quantity grown here. We are now 400 miles up the Koyukuk River, and still going 250 more if we can before winter sets in. We are all well and contented as can be expected under the circumstances. There will probably be a great rush up here this winter and next spring. If the mines turn out all right it will probably be another Dawson City. Excitement. We are making good time up the river considering that we have to cut our wood and the current which is very strong. We passed today the steamer "Katie Hemrich" from Seattle. Bound up the Koyukuk River. We are within 35 miles of the Arctic Circle and we will winter north of that yet. The weather has been more or less rainy, but we get a fine clear day throwed in once in a while. We have passed quite a number of natives down the river where they are fishing. The first 350 miles of this river is much easier for steamers to go up than the Yukon. I am going to send this out by the first chance I get and I will send a piece of this for Roy and Clyde. Tell them Papa got this bark off a tree and writes these letters on it to them. I would give a great deal to see you all again and know that you were all right, but I will have patience and wait. I will not trust my long letter in this as it may never reach you. I expect to meet someone going down the river and they may lose it or forget it. Well, as this is all this will hold, I will close with my love and best wishes for you. I am your loving husband "Joe"