

MOHAI 1996.24.3: Letter from Isaac and Isabelle Bechtel, Bellevue pioneers, to relatives in Ontario, Canada [transcribed]

Bellevue June 24/89

Dear Mother, Sister, Brother, and family

As you wish to know more particulars about the big fire I will this evening try and explain it to you as best I can as I got to the City about 5 hours after the fire first started but everything was then in flames already though I seen quite a number of walls fall after I got their Herbert was along so were five of the camp men we stayed around untill after midnight their wasent but one Brick business house left unburnt and that was on fire 5 or 6 times but a lot of Citizens formed a Bucket Brigade and in that way saved it and the Building was the Post office and Land office. July 1st I got sleepy the evening I wrote what is here I could write no more so I quit I will now try and finish it - well it the fire burnt about 40 Blocks or about 160 arcre of ground all built up solid with frame and Brick buildings you stated that you thought the fire would make things dull though it is just the reverse Every thing is bussle and activity as Brick masons, Carpenters, painters, and common Laborers can get all the work they can do and more men are wanted and cannot be had their is five or six buildings that is brick stores one storey high already in the burnt District and about as many more ½ as high their is about 300 tents up in which all kinds of business is done I heard the other day Johnny and Wille are trying to sell their lot in the North of Seattle Johnny is just now Tending a lodgeing house Willie Told me that he got the job for him he might of kept it for himself but he was said he expected to start a chop house this week again, the fire has not done any harm on the whole though some of the property holders are heavy loosers but only in a few instancences will any be unable to build and that property goes into other owners hands and will be rebuilt at once their is only a few instances where the poorer people have lost their all and in such cases if they make application they will be furnished a good cook stove and dishes and beds enough for the family and clothing and a few provisions too start on there is no need of suffering in any one case if only application is made through the proper authorities their has been a fund subscribed for the sufferers to the amount of about \$8500 cash and upwards of 30 Ton of provisions for the neady and all that want work can get it at \$2.00 per day and can get meals for 15cts at the releif tent so you see there is no needy need to go hungry if they want work but no Lazy need apply as they will very soon get found out and then their name is [illegible] and if any needy can show good cause and the distance not too far they were

furnished with a railroad pass or steamboat ticket to get to their friends so you see that people can live if they are burnt their has been a few chard human remains found but how many I cannot say probably 3 or four well I must stop as I must get ready for Town and am in a hurry we are all pretty well at present - Bella would write but has no time just now but will write when she can she has not been troubled with headaches so much the last month

Love from all to all

We are as ever

I. K. & I. L Bechtel

[There is a note added in the upper and right side margins of last page of letter that appears to be written by a different person] Johnny and Willie left their trunks here so they did not get burnt Johnny got all his shirts burnt except the one he had on and two pair of shoes were burnt. he has all the stocking good he had when he left home except one pair he never had on woolen stockings last winter

[Additional writing at the bottom of the last page are unintelligible and appear to be doodles not intended as part of the letter.]