

## **Bugnet children's letters to « Uncle Tom's Page », *The Edmonton Bulletin*, 1917-1923**

<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/search/?search=follow&qid=newspapers%7CBugnet%7C%28publication%3AEDB%29%7Cdate-asc&index=newspapers&locale=en&digstatus=&>

There are 34 hits for "Bugnet". The articles which concern Georges Bugnet and his Plantation are transcribed and are available in the "documents" link. There may be more items, such as some story submissions which I did not transcribe.

Uncle Tom's Page was a club *The Edmonton Bulletin* hosted. The Bugnet children wrote a great deal, I believe, far more than any other children. They reveal some fascinating details about the Bugnet home life and the participation in their parents' work.

The asterisks on some of the letters are "stars" the children were given by the editor of the page, Uncle Tom, for their participation and contributions in the club. They can be read on the Peel Library, I did not transcribe everything, but they can be found with the search word "Bugnet", although the search engine does not pick up everything, such as when Bugnet is at the end of a line and hyphenated i.e. Bug-net.

Many thanks to our Webmaster who has patiently put all of this in place, several times.

Juliette Champagne, president, Friends of the Bugnet Plantation Society

Sept 15, 1917,

### **Came from France**

Dear Uncle Tom – I have your letter and the badge and I am very glad. This is my first letter to your club. We are Frenchmen from France. I have a garden in which grow some apple trees, maples, lilacs, strawberries and raspberries. My father gave them to me. He has a nursery in which grow many ornamental trees and fruit trees such as apple trees, cherry trees, currants, foreign pines and spruces, Siberian locust, etc. He has a big flower garden in which grow many flowers. The nicest are the lilacs and peonies. I, too, have many flowers. Now we have apples and plums on the biggest scale. I am twelve years old and am in the sixth grade. My brother, who is nine years old, is in the fourth grade, and my sister who is 7 years old is in first grade. I will close my letter and wish the club all success.

Charles Bugnet, Rich Valley, Sept 4<sup>th</sup>

*Charlie also sends a nicely written letter in French.*

### **October 20, 1917**

#### ***Had Three Uncles Killed***

Dear Uncle Tom: This is my second letter to your club. I saw my last letter in print. We have picked up all the garden vegetables and the potatoes. We expect to have the threshing machine soon. I had four uncles fighting in France. Three of them were killed and the other got wounded, but he is alright now. He did not go back to the battlefield since. Now he is hauling munitions in an automobile.

Charles Bugnet, Rich Valley, Oct 13.

### **Catches Muskrats**

Dear Uncle Tom – I am sorry I have written to the club sooner. Now I have more time to write because our school is closed. I passed into grade eight. Since about a month we have had two pigeons. The female is laying now. I caught a muskrat in our creek a few days ago. He got caught about an hour after I had set the trap.

Charles Bugnet, Rich Valley, Dec. 4

**January 26, 1918:** Charles writes in to Uncle Tom; he is then 13 going on 14 (his birthday is on February 17)

### ***Coasting and Reading***

Dear Uncle Tom – I am writing to you for the fourth time. It is fine weather today. The coldest weather we had till now was 36 below zero. (*F<sup>o</sup>- about -37<sup>o</sup>C*) We have fine fun coasting, but for me, my greatest pleasure is to read, that is what I prefer. We have a library at our school. It contains about 300 volumes. When school was open, I read as many as I could. At home we have quite a lot of both English and French. Charles Bugnet, Rich Valley, Jan. 20

**July 13, 1921-** Joseph Bugnet (May 3, 1908) sends in a story: “The Anthropophagy” which appears in “Our Story Corner”. (Lost children fear being eaten by a farmer who takes them in, hide in fear, turns out the farmer is about to butcher some pigs) not transcribed.

### **July 27, 1921, Joseph Bugnet “Uncle Tom’s Mail Bag”**

Dear Uncle Tom – The frost during May froze all the apple flowers and most of the prune blossoms, but we have some crab apples, middle size. The currants are starting to ripen and the cultivated cherries are full of fruit.

Nowadays I am reading a library book, entitled “The Stories of Old Greece and Rome”. I should like to have as much strength as Hercules.

Yesterday, our cat caught a little bird and brought it to my sister who took from her and took care of it. When it was cured, we gave it its liberty. Today another came in the school and got between two windows. Our teacher got him out and showed him to the children. He was a sparrow. Joseph Bugnet

### **September 7, 1921**

About a week ago, my mother sent my small brother and sister to the granary. My sister is five years old and my brother is three. My mother noticed that they were away a long while, so she went to see what was the matter. She found them in a corner of the barn, very close together, and very scared.

My mother asked what they were doing and my small sister said: "We have just seen three big animals, the father and the mother and the baby which had a long tongue hanging out. They were queer animals, because they sat on their haunches.

My father went to see and found the three tracks in the meadow. They had seen three bears. - Joseph Bugnet (13) Rich Valley

### **December 7, 1921**

#### ***Wants more stars***

Dear Uncle Tom,

How can I get my second and third stars? We have a new teacher, Mrs. Simentine. We had a picture show on Oct. 28, which showed all the Rocky Mountains and the lakes around them. We are going to have a Christmas tree and I'm going to be the nigger servant.

We haven't had any threshing done, but expect the threshers soon. I am to have my Grade 8 exams by Christmas. I hope we soon will have ice so we can go skating. Can you skate, Uncle Tom?

My big brother Charlie is not at home now. He is working at a place three miles from home. We are to have a debate on Tuesday: "Resolved that the boys do more work than the girls." I am on the boys' side. Yesterday we had a spelling match and our side won. Joseph Bugnet, Rich Valley

*(There is a reply from Uncle Tom explaining how to get more stars. He would like to see a photo of Joseph with the blackface. Mentions exams, skating, debate and threshing.)*

### **August 17, 1921 – "Uncle Tom's Mail Bag"**

A Bad Hail Storm

Dear Uncle Tom, Is there a little place for me in the club? I am Joe's sister, and am 11 years old, on January 3. We have just had a great hail storm. The hail stones were as big as pigeon's eggs, and it was so dark in the school we couldn't do anything. When we got home my mother said they had been no hail there and we live but a mile from the school. It was lucky, for our garden, which is very nice, would have been all spoiled.

We have twenty-six pigeons and I have ten little chicks of my own. My sister, nine years, has nice chicks. My big brother wishes some member would send him the words of "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine." – Marie Bugnet, Rich Valley, July 20

*There is certainly a place for you Marie, and you are welcome. That certainly was quite a hailstorm, but I am glad your garden escaped – Uncle Tom.*

Marie- born, January 3, 1910

**February 11, 1922 *Fairy Tales in French***

Dear Uncle Tom,

I am reading fairy tales in French. The one I like best is *L'Oiseau Bleu*, or in English, *The Blue Bird*, by Madame D'Aulney. Do you know it, Uncle Tom? I am knitting mittens for my brothers and sisters. I made three pair, and have two more to do.

Our pigeons are laying, but unfortunately, our stable is cold and the eggs freeze. Last week we had much work to do, as there were three sick at home. My big brother, my small brother and the baby, all had bad colds and fever but are better now.

I passed my exams, and shall be in Grade 5 this year. I was twelve years old on Jan. 3. – Marie Bugnet, Rich Valley, Jan 26.

*It is a long time since I read that pretty tale, Marie, and I'm afraid I've nearly forgotten it. Why not translate it for The Corner. I think you are a very industrious little niece, and congratulate you on your success at school and your birthday. I am glad your brothers are better, and hope you escaped. – Uncle Tom*

**February 11, 1922 *Caught an Eagle***

Dear Uncle Tom,

My brother Charlie and I went fishing last week and caught for Jackfish. One was 32 inches long, and the others between twenty-eight and thirty inches.

Our neighbours caught an eagle in a coyote trap some time ago. It measured seven feet from tip to tip of the wings, and was about two and half feet high. They had set the trap for coyotes and one day found the eagle instead.

I lost my badge some time ago. Could you please send me another, Uncle Tom?

Joseph Bugnet, Rich Valley.

*I have given you your stars (3) Joseph, as your stories have been printed. Jackfish should be pretty good now? Were they hard to catch? Your neighbours must have been surprised at their catch. What did they do with the eagle? Aunt Polly says to tell you she is writing – Uncle Tom.*

**February 11, 1922**

Uncle Tom writes that Joseph and Marie's father entered his novel, *Le Lys de Sang* in a competition and it won much praise, although he didn't qualify. Children should congratulate J and M.

**March 11, 1922 *A New Cousin***

Dear Uncle Tom,

You asked me to translate L'Oiseau Bleu for the Corner. It is too long to translate in full, but we have an extract that Joe started for me, as he thought I could not do it well enough. I have a new cousin, born January 27. His name is Pierre, or in English, Peter. My uncle and auntie live six miles from our place. I finished reading the tales, and found them very interesting. Marie Bugnet, Rich Valley, Feb. 20.

*I am sorry I asked too large a task of you, Marie. I had forgotten the story was so long. Do you go to play with your new cousin sometimes? Thanks for the story, which you see has won your star. Uncle Tom*

### ***A Generous Offer***

Dear Uncle Tom- I have started to translate the Blue Bird for the Corner, and will send a page each time I write. When I have finished, Uncle Tom, would you like me to send a translation of a story my father wrote a while ago, "The Birch, the Larch and the Red-Headed Woodpecker?" He will help me translate it.

I saw that one of the members was reading Swiss Family Robinson. We have it and I find it interesting.

My brother and I are hauling logs to build a chicken coop. Last week, we dug up an old well. It is about ten feet deep, and there is about four feet of water. We cannot use it for the house, as it is iron-water, and when we boil it the rust comes to the top.

Joseph Bugnet, Rich Valley, February 20.

**May 27, 1922**

### ***Letters from Rich Valley***

Dear Uncle Tom – I was sick quite a while with grippe. I have some apple trees already in leaves. The biggest are two feet high. We are going to seed our vegetable garden next week. My two hens are setting so I shall have some little chicks in about fifteen days from now. We have twenty-eight hens and yesterday I gathered two dozen eggs. That's quite good, isn't it, Uncle Tom?

Marie Bugnet

**Dear Uncle Tom,**

We have all been ill with grippe, except my father and two brothers. Many of the neighbours have been sick too. I guess I am the first member to tell you that in my father's garden there is a rosebud on one of his rarest rosebushes. In a while we shall have other flowers too.

My father has just bought a set of harness for the horses and I am glad. Many of our neighbours have their wheat in already. I think school will start soon. I was fourteen on May 3. –

Joseph Bugnet, Rich Valley, May 7.

*The Tale of the Larch, the Birch and the Red-Headed Woodpecker Georges Bugnet's story, is published serially in the children's page of the Edmonton Bulletin, from May 28 to 19<sup>th</sup> of June. It is not completely*

*available on the Peel collection because some of the issues collected of the Bulletin are of the Morning Edition. The excerpts are not signed.*

**August 21, 1922**

***Citizenship Stories***

To keep a District Clean

I would clean up all the weeds in the fields. I would kill all the gophers, mice, rats and other animals of that kind.

School children always should keep the school grounds clean and let no rags nor papers lie around.

We should always take care of the birds and never destroy them as they eat the insects. If there were no birds, gardens and fields soon would be destroyed.

Many people kill snakes and think they are poisonous. They are not, but are almost as useful as birds, as they too are good destroyers.

Joseph Bugnet \*\*\*

**Letters from Rich Valley August 21, 1922**

Dear Uncle Tom,

I have been picking strawberries, but there are not many this year, as it is dry and the partridges eat them. Our cultivated currant bushes are loaded with fruit which is ripe. It is too bad you are so far away, or I would have sent you some to taste, Uncle Tom.

We had some rain a few days ago and since then the garden is growing well. We have a nice white peony that smells very fine.

The other day, I surprised Mamma. I brought from the garden a big radish as big as a cup. We have raised our own seed for the last four years.

Now we have sixty small chickens. I have a sour hen to which it does not pay to give eggs. I set her on a dozen and she ate them all. Don't you think it would be as well to eat her too, Uncle Tom?

Marie Bugnet, Rich Valley, Aug. 2

**Dear Uncle Tom, August 21, 1922**

At school we have organized a committee called "The Bulldog Committee." We have a program every Friday afternoon. There is a program president, a program representative, a class representative, an editor and a president, that is I.

The program president is to get a program ready. The program representative is to help the program president to get the program of debates, songs, spelling matches, speeches, etc. and so is the class representative.

The editor is to get a joke paper ready. Being president, I call a meeting every Tuesday. We have half an hour for that. I have to put up a notice the morning before.

The children are very much interested in this.

My father and my brother Charles have gone to help my uncle for three weeks. They come home every Saturday night and go back on Monday morning. My father received the papers.

Joseph Bugnet \*\*\* Rich Valley

*Uncle Tom replies to Marie : I expect you had to help Mother make jelly with the currents, eh Marie? Yes, I wish I had a car and could surprise you with a visit now and then and taste the*

*and then to Joseph, "By the way my clematis is in bloom, though still very small, not two feet high. Thank you, it is very pretty indeed and will be very fine next year.*

### **October 17, 1922**

#### ***Of course, there's room, Marthe***

Dear Uncle Tom,

Is there room for me in The Corner, for I wish to be a member of your club? I am ten years old and in Grade 3. I am small for my age, for my brother John, who is eight is bigger than I and Marie is a whole head over me.

Last week I was making a dress for my sister's doll. My little sister is Madeline. She has nice curly hair. My brother John wants to write too, but he writes so badly that I'm afraid you couldn't read his letter, so I think he had better wait until next year.

May I have a badge, Uncle Tom?

Marthe Bugnet, Rich Valley, Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **Rich Valley, March 18, 1923**

*Again, you have the congratulations of the club, Joe. We are very proud of your success. I am glad you missed the Corner, and hope you like the new departures. Thank you for the remainder of the Bluebird, which a number of correspondents asked for. We missed your letters and are glad to have back again.*

*Uncle Tom.*

#### **More News from Rich Valley**

*There is a reference here to Georges Bugnet's sister, who in 1923, is 28 years old -Thérèse, for whom the Thérèse Bugnet Rose is named.*

Dear Uncle Tom,

All our family had the gripe except Papa, but we are alright now. At Christmas, my grandmother gave me a nice doll. She was bought for my auntie when she was six years old, twenty-two years ago. She is twenty inches high, with nice dresses, nice shoes and stockings and a tapestry frame. (I do not know if that is the correct word.)

We lost one of our best cows, she caught her legs in some logs and (...) winter, either through accident or sickness; [*There is a typo here in the Bulletin about the hens, see Uncle Tom's comment below*] from sixty, we have only fifteen left. We shall not get many eggs this summer. It is too bad, isn't it? Uncle Tom, because eggs are very good and I like them very much.

My uncle and aunt who are staying in Edmonton, lost their baby the day after Christmas. He was eleven months old and died from pneumonia. Our poor little cousin, had been sick since his birth. We have another little cousin who has the same name as my brother Maurice, two and a half years old.

Marthe Bugnet

*I'm sure on little girl was delighted with her beautiful Christmas doll, eh, Marie? I expect you are busy all the time making new and lovely dresses for her. We all are sorry about the cow and the chickens. That was a big loss, on a farm. Your auntie and uncle had an unhappy Christmas time, Marthe. Is the cousin, Maurice, their son? Thank you for all the kind messages to Aunt Polly and Uncle Tom.*

Dear Uncle Tom,

I must write an thank you for the badge, also my pretty star card. I think the cards are lovely, and must soon [...] fell so badly that she broke three ribs. She was sick a long time, so we had to kill her. I hope Aunt Polly is all right and you too, Uncle Tom

Marie Bugnet

(Probably refers to the cow injuring herself and falling on some logs.)

**April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1923** *Joseph writes, he had sent in his translation of the Bluebird and it was reprinted, but he didn't know this. He also won a Forestry prize. Joseph was also the president of the Alladin Club of Uncle Tom's Corner.*

Dear Uncle Tom

It is a long time since I have written. We had not received the Bulletin for about two and a half months and thought it had stopped, but last week we received it and I was glad to find Uncle Tom again. I found the time long when we did not see the Corner anymore. I did not know that L'Oiseau Bleu (Bluebird) had been printed. I do not remember just where I stopped but am sending what I think had not sent before.

Last November, the Canadian Forestry association arranged a competition on forestry for all schools. Three prizes of twenty-five, fifteen and ten dollars were offered. The principal object was to stimulate



study and inquiry into the forest resources of Canada and their protection against the plague of fire; the planting of trees on urban streets, the establishment and improving of farm wood lots, and the cultivation of trees on the bare prairies. I took part in the competition and last month had the pleasure of learning that I had won the third prize for Alberta and I received ten dollars the week after. Don't you think I was lucky, Uncle Tom?

I have received two letters from Marcus Stanley and answered them. The first was all in French, but I suppose he found it too hard for the next was half French, half English.

I am very busy these days. I am learning Latin and Greek. The latter being the harder sometimes I have some very hard nuts to crack.

I hope you and Aunt Polly have not been sick like we have.

Jos Bugnet \*\*\*\*

### **Won a Nature Star, *The Edmonton Bulletin*, December 29, 1923**

Dear Uncle Tom – I think it is time for me to win my first star, and I think the story of my little rabbit will be good for that.

My little brother Maurice is learning to read French. He learns very quickly. Mary or I teach him. At night he reads to papa what he has learned.

We got Mr. W. Cough [whooping] out of the house at last. The baby still has a big cold, but she is better.

I broke my badge, Uncle Tom, and would be very glad if you would send me a new one. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all the members of the club. Marthe Bugnet, Lake Majeau, Dec. 14

*You have won your star, you see, Marthe, and I hope soon to see more star stories and finally an Honours story from you. Congratulations on the birthday. I hope you had a pleasant time and that more are in store for you. It must be interesting to teach Maurice French. If you were near you could help me brush up on my French too. Would you like that? Thanks for the good wishes, Uncle Tom.*

### **Our Nature League, *The Edmonton Bulletin*, December 29, 1923, Page 9, Item Ar00913**

#### **The Rabbit**

I have a little rabbit as white as snow with long white fur like of a sheep. The top of the furs is as fine as silk. His eyes are red when he sees me come to feed him, he stands on his hind legs and waits until I call: "Bunnie, Bunnie." Then he comes and eats from my hand.

My little sister tells me that Bunnie likes me very much, but I think what he likes best is what I have in my pan. He climbs on me to let me pet him. He is not scared at all.

Marthe Bugnet

**December 29, 1923, Marie is knitting**

**Dear Uncle Tom,**

I haven't got much time to write. My brother Charlie is working at a camp on the Pembina River. I am sending in my handicraft story. It tells the way to make a handbag. I made one and it looks very nice and I think I can get my second handicraft star. I hope I can get a third one soon. These days, I am knitting woolen shoes for Madelaine and a pair of mitts for myself.

I shall be fourteen years old on January 3. Thérèse was eight years old yesterday.

I have a cat that is black and white. She is very smart. We have three of them. Wishing the members, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Marie Bugnet, Lake Majeau

*I've given you your star today, Marie, as I'm printing your star story. I shall be watching for the others. I'm sure it was a very pretty handbag. You seem to be a very industrious girl. On behalf of the club I wish you many happy returns of the birthday, also Thérèse. Thankyou for the good wishes- Uncle Tom.*

[The instructions for Marie's handbag are also on this page, but I have not included it.]