

Lincoln's Springfield

LETTERS FROM CALIFORNIA AND OREGON 1845-1852

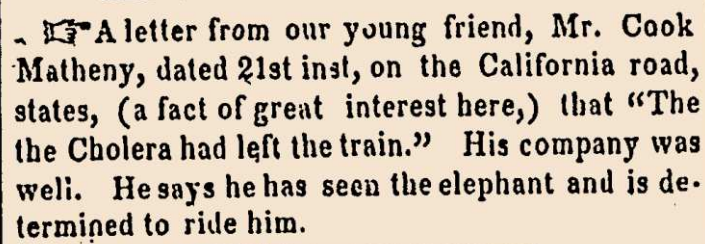


SPRING CREEK SERIES

Richard E. Hart

Front Cover: Map of Oregon and Upper California and Mexico, 1846, Samuel Augustus Mitchell, Philadelphia. Library of Congress.

Back Cover: Picture of original California Bear Flag that was created by Springfield, Illinois resident, William L. Todd, Mary Lincoln's cousin.



A letter from our young friend, Mr. Cook Matheny, dated 21st inst, on the California road, states, (a fact of great interest here,) that "The the Cholera had left the train." His company was well. He says he has seen the elephant and is determined to ride him.

Letter from Elijah Cook Matheny who was traveling on the "California road."

The letter is dated May 21, 1849.¹

I have long desired to see California; the production of her gold mines has been a marvel to me, and her stand for the Union, her generous offerings to the Sanitary (Commission), and her loyal representatives have endeared your people to me; and nothing would give me more pleasure than a visit to the Pacific shore, and to say in person to your citizens, 'God bless you for your devotion to the Union,' but the unknown is before us. I may say, however, that I have it now in purpose when the railroad is finished, to visit your wonderful state.

Abraham Lincoln, speaking to his friend Charles Maltby,
Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California, on March 25, 1865.

Lincoln's Springfield: Letters From California and Oregon (1845-1852)
Spring Creek Series.

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¹ *Illinois State Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, Wednesday, June 13, 1849, p. 3. (Hereafter referred to as the *Journal*.)



The Independent Gold Hunter on His Way to California,
hand-colored lithograph by Nathaniel Currie. D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts.

Man walking to right in image. Dressed in knee high boots and knee length jacket and carrying all his tools and kitchen implements. The California Gold Rush inspired many Easterners to journey westward. Gold was discovered in 1848 in California, an area that became a state of the Union in 1850. Eastern newspapers shifted from stories of frontiersmen and pioneers to dramatic tales of the easy wealth and riches attained by those traveling to the West. While many artists portrayed gold prospectors as heroic adventurers, Currier & Ives often produced Gold Rush images that portrayed gold seekers as unrealistic optimists. Here, a prospective gold hunter has traveled half way to California by foot. The sign in the background reads that he still has over 1,000 miles to go. He carries practical items for his journey including a shovel, a set of gold scales, a kettle, a gold processor that also acts as a hat, a gold washing basin and a frying pan, whose handle also serves as a fishing pole. Though the man strides forward, confident in his decision and determined to reach California to make his fortune, his appearance suggests that he is on a fool's mission.

Dedicated to my California friend who loves Lincoln
Robert S. “Bob” Willard

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Foreword

James C. Cornelius

When J. B. L. Soule coined the phrase “Go West, young man,” in a Terre Haute, Indiana, newspaper in 1851, he caught Horace Greeley’s eye at the *New York Tribune*. Greeley re-printed Soule’s article, giving the phrase great currency (and unrightfully getting credit for its coinage). Yet the young had already been going to the far west for nearly a decade by that point, including from Sangamon County.

Some of them wrote home. It is a form of recycling that these travelers’ personal letters to loved ones were turned over to the local newspaper so that all neighbors could read them; and 150 years later, those newspaper contents can be turned into books, so that even more of us can read the personal experiences of some of the bravest, hardest, sometimes greediest or foolhardiest folks of our past. We are all the richer for it. Dick Hart for his élan and doggedness in seeking out these leaves of the past for our edification deserves praise.

What do we gain from turning letters and news clips into books? Plenty, when their context is provided so well, and the subject matter -- a cross-section of local experience, ca. 1845-1855 -- is a vital backdrop to Abraham Lincoln’s development. It was and is news that William L. Todd, for example, headed west and helped launch California’s independence from Spanish rule. Todd left a very comfortable home in Springfield, where his father Dr. John Todd owned an entire city block, to take up the rigors of migration. He left his first cousin Mary Lincoln, as well as a dozen other relations, to chart a new course. Among other points in his 1846 letters here, he recommended that like-minded people instead ‘stay home’ -- Springfield was much more advanced and comfortable than the unbuttoned West.

Another example was Benjamin A. Watson, whose many heartfelt letters home to wife Emily and their very young children make excellent fare. He yearns as much to be back with her as with the gold prospectors. He along with a formally incorporated group of more than a dozen Springfield businessmen (i.e., those with gold fever) lit out and did well, though not all survived. Or take Elijah Cook Matheny, bearing three names central to Springfield history; his adventures lasted not long enough. Other individuals or groups were less fortunate -- the Donners, the disappeared. If we suppose that the first ones on the trails, to Oregon or to California, faced the gravest danger, we are mistaken. Just as many were killed or died of disease in the early 1850s, by the sample we see here. Nor was the initial news of the West’s riches the only draw. This writer did not know that 1852 was the year in which more California gold was mined than any other. All of these lives and tales we learn from brief or lengthy columns in the *Illinois State Journal* and *Illinois State Register*. The personal became the newsworthy, and vice-versa. The Lincolns knew most of the families.

Don’t forget: these migrants did all this pre-railroad. They never saw a paved or even macadamized or corduroy road. With cash and luck, some took a riverboat a small part of the way, but even some of those vessels went down with lives, or letters, or goods, as close as St. Louis, as far as the Platte River in Nebraska. That anyone at all survived should cause everyone today to marvel.

The strangeness of the new places, and the strange behavior they engendered, also come out in this book. One Sangamon County sprout named Baker had always wanted to join an Indian tribe. When of age, he went west and did so, keeping two wives and running a cash-cow ferry business. (Apparently this was agreeable to government authorities; had he been Mormon, well ...) Others fell to fighting while en route. “No water for 25 miles.” Others lost hope; or came home early; or never came home. “Fever season.” The Australian gold strike of 1853 drew thousands worldwide, including some of those erstwhile Illinoisans. More often, the travelers were charmed by the scenery, by Oregon’s soil and climate, by a black squirrel (“first one I ever saw”), by the sight of a

month-old newspaper, by buffalo chips for fuel, or a new tool for mining, “an Indian grave up in a tree,” Presbyterian missionaries at work with the tribes, an elk on a ridge, or the music they made themselves with fiddle and mouth harp by a fire, singing “Old Hundred” or “Dead March in Saul.” (Both of those tunes, little could they have guessed, were to figure prominently in their erstwhile neighbor Lincoln’s funerals in 1865.) And, as ever, they were stunned at times by the traffic, by too many oxen on too narrow a path, by the arrogance of a federal agent jumping the ferry line, by a snake that killed a horse, by the prevalence of bears. Back home, one lonely wife went down to the “line” just to watch the “cars,” as she wrote to her migratory husband. That is, the railroad had arrived. Why did she watch? Her journal does not exactly say.

Leaving a town, knowing they’d miss it, is part of the American pattern. Hart’s genealogical deep mining reveals that many of these young men (and a few families with them) were born in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, Ohio, and tarried for a time in central Illinois before lighting out for the plains, mountains, valleys, and riches of another land farther on. John Carroll Power touched on these developments 150 years ago; Doug Pokorski gave us another taste of this material two decades ago. Now we get a fuller sense of how Sangamon County stood as a dot on their dash westward.

All this is background to ... Mr. Lincoln? Yes, read this book and you will understand more fully why he could be offered the secretaryship, then the governorship, of Oregon Territory in 1849; and why Mary, and perhaps Abraham too, determined that the risk was too great, the loss of contact with the familiar world too debilitating. But these stories are background to all of central Illinois, for those extended families who made even bigger news out west than did Mary’s cousin. The reader can discover that for him- or herself. It is worth the trip.

James M. Cornelius
Springfield, Illinois
April 2019

California Dreamin'

Richard E. Hart

In the liberated 60s, many of the youth of that generation had dreams of going to California. The Mamas and the Papas expressed those dreams in a popular song—*California Dreamin'*. Earlier, in the mid 19th Century, many young men of Lincoln's Springfield also had California dreams. The west coast sirens lured them to leave their Springfield homes and families for a wild ride west across the prairies and mountains to California and Oregon. They embodied the persistent American desire for a new and better place and played a small part in a larger historical event--America's Manifest Destiny. They were all California Dreamin'.

Their stories have been overshadowed largely by the abundance of study of Abraham Lincoln and those Springfield residents who were significant in his life. There are a few exceptions, such as the oft-told story of the ill-fated Donner Party that in 1846 left from Springfield's Public Square for the Pacific Coast led by Sangamon County natives, James Reed and George Donner. But in most instances, the stories of the unknown dreamers have not been told, and they do deserve telling.

In the 1840s and 1850s, Springfield was small a town with a population in 1850 of 4,533. Sangamon County in 1850 had a population of 32,374. From 1845 through 1852, over 200 of these citizens ventured west to California and Oregon where they played major roles in the early history of both states. It is fortunate that some of these travellers were quite literate and kept journals and wrote letters back to their families in Illinois. Many of their letters were given to the Springfield newspapers—*Illinois State Journal* and *Illinois State Register*—and were published as part of the news.

In early 1849, gold was discovered in California. Sangamon County furnished its quota of emigrants rushing to California and Oregon. News of the discovery of gold in California induced a group of 21 citizens to form an association--The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company--for the purpose of travelling to California and supplying the gold miners. The company left Springfield on Tuesday, March 27, 1849. In 1849 at least 72 Sangamon County residents were bit by gold fever and headed west to become 49ers.

Lincoln knew many of these who went west and as an ardent newspaper reader most certainly read many of their stories and letters that were printed in the Springfield newspapers. Some of those writing had close connections to the Lincoln family. William L. Todd, Mary Lincoln's cousin, wrote of adventures including his creation of the California Bear Flag still used today. Springfield native, William Ide, also went to California in 1846 and there led the Bear Revolt. He became the first Governor of the California Republic. Benjamin R. Biddle was a Lincoln neighbor and Abraham's personal tailor. Biddle went to Oregon where he became a prominent public servant.

The west coast sirens also tempted Abraham Lincoln. In 1849, he was offered the governorship of Oregon. Mary said no and that was that. But on the afternoon of April 14, 1865, Mary and Abraham took a carriage ride around Washington and dreamed of the future without the burdens of the presidency. Lincoln said that they should fulfill a dream of going west to see California and Mary agreed. All of that was cut short by the events of that evening.

In years of searching the *Illinois State Journal* and *Illinois State Register*, I frequently came across articles and descriptions about town residents who left for the west coast. Many of the articles contain letters from those California and Oregon travelers. Other unpublished letters have been found in the manuscripts section of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, the California State Library History Room and the Society of California Pioneers. I have collected many of those articles and letters and I share them here. I acknowledge that there, no doubt, are letters that I have not found. I leave that to future California Dreamers.

Those who wrote the letters and journal entries contained in this book were literate. Their descriptions are informative and sometimes repetitive and mundane, but nevertheless written with clarity and facile use of the English language. These were not the country bumpkins that one may imagine from the general descriptions of pioneers found in many histories of the west. Indeed, in many instances, the writers of the letters and journals found in this book have the ability to communicate and write far better than many of today's "educated" graduates.

Individually these letters may not shake the world of mid nineteenth century American History, but collectively they do. And more importantly they add to our knowledge of the environment that Abraham Lincoln experienced in Springfield in the late 1840s and early 1850s. That environment included a great number of restless young Springfield men. They were a part of Springfield and thus Lincoln's environment. They were participants in the fulfillment of American Manifest Destiny and Lincoln was a very interested observer.

Richard E. Hart
Springfield, Illinois
September 11, 2019

Prelude

Some might say that knowledge of the beginning of Americans moving to the West Coast is lost in the shadows of time. Bits and pieces, however, do appear and give us a glimpse into those long ago beginnings. In the fall of 1838, Harriet and Hamilton Campbell of Carlinville, Illinois with relatives in South Sangamon County, Illinois, came under the spell of the Methodist missionary James Lee. Lee operated an Indian Mission in Oregon and he sought volunteers to join him in his endeavor to convert the Native Americans to be Methodists. I include their story and a few of their letters, as they are a prelude to what seriously began seven years later in 1845—the emigration of Americans to the West Coast.

Fall 1838

Missionary James Lee Seeks Missionaries for Oregon Territory Indian Mission

In the fall of 1838, Jason Lee, a Methodist missionary, returned from Oregon, and stopped at Springfield and Carlinville where he spoke. He spoke of the great Oregon Territory bordering on the Pacific Ocean and of his Mission in the Willamette Valley, south of the Columbia River. Lee was a large, fine looking man about thirty-five years of age, with an unusual amount of personal magnetism, a pleasing voice and fanatical zeal for his missionary work.

Soon after Lee was called to the ministry in 1832, he heard that the Native Americans of the Northwest wanted to know about the white man's God and the Great Book that told of the true religion. When Lee heard this, he knew that they needed him and he planned to go to them as soon as possible. In April 1834, he reached Independence on the Missouri frontier and started his journey to Oregon on horseback.

In the fall of 1834 after arriving in Oregon, Lee built a home and mission in the Willamette Valley. His mission prospered from the first, but more workers and money were needed. He felt that he was called to leave his wife and assistant-superintendent in temporary charge while he went east to interest the proper people in the undertaking. At his meetings in Illinois, he said that men with families were needed to colonize the Northwest, and to develop its great natural resources. He was sure that they could teach the Indians better if colonists could develop a civilization that would be an example for the Indians to follow. He appealed to the people to listen to the voice of God that was calling for volunteers and for money to help in this great work.

When Lee spoke in Carlinville, Illinois in the fall of 1838, Harriett and Hamilton Campbell heard him address the crowd in front of the tavern where he stayed. He told them of his plan to charter a boat to take all of the missionaries and colonists who would go with him when he returned to Oregon Territory. He said that while they needed teachers and doctors, they also needed carpenters, blacksmiths, farmers, and artisans of all kinds. The families at the Mission in that fertile valley of Oregon would be the pioneers of a permanent civilization. He painted glowing word pictures of the Western Territory. Henrietta's brother Benjamin R. Biddle and Benjamin's wife Maria also heard Lee speak in Springfield, Illinois.²

² *And This is Our Heritage*, Esther Moreland Leithold, Woodland, California, 1944, pp. 56-57. (Hereafter referred to as *And This Is Our Heritage*.)

Harriet and Hamilton Campbell Plan Move to Oregon Territory as Missionaries

Harriet and Hamilton Campbell decided to go with Jason Lee when his boat sailed from New York for Fort Vancouver and his Mission in the fall of 1839. The family tried to dissuade Harriet and Hamilton from going so far away from their home to an undeveloped country where they would have to live among Indians. They all admired Brother Lee and his life of self-sacrifice—his willingness to give all—even the lives of his wife and infant son (who had both died a few months before at the Mission)—for the salvation of Native Americans. But they also knew of the hardships common to the lives of all pioneers—and of the treachery of Indians who were sometimes considered friendly.

Harriet laughed at the fears of her family and friends, and said: “Why should we be more afraid than our ancestors who all crossed the ocean in smaller and frailer boats than we are going to have. And any way, God will watch over us as well at sea as on land. He will surely care for those who are dedicating their lives to His service.” Such faith was an answer to all objections, and the Hamilton Campbells started to make their plans to join the Jason Lee party when it was ready to sail. They had nearly a year to wait, and did not sail until late in October of 1839.³

1839

Harriet and Hamilton Campbell Leave For Voyage to Oregon as Missionaries

In the spring of 1839, Harriet and Hamilton Campbell were busy getting ready for their long trip to Oregon. They sold their home at Carlinville, and most of their furniture—saving only such things as could be carried to New York in their wagon for shipment.

The last few weeks they spent with her father and mother on their Lick Creek, Sangamon County farm. Harriet also spent some time in Springfield with Benjamin R. and Maria Biddle while they helped her make new clothes for the trip. It was late that summer when Harriet and Hamilton, with little Mary, started for New York in their covered wagon, which was loaded with household furniture, clothes, bedding, and a variety of other things to be used in their new home in Oregon. The family and friends told them a sad good-bye. No one expected to see the little Campbell family again, on this earth, but Harriet was smiling through her tears, as she waved them a last good-bye as the horses trotted down the road.⁴

1. Harriet Campbell's Letter From New York City

From New York City, on October 1, 1839, Harriet Campbell wrote:

We reached here about ten days before time for the *Lausanne* (our boat) to sail; but we have been entertained royally by the members of the Greene Street Methodist church. These good people are taking care of all of the Oregon Missionaries from the time they reach New York until our boat leaves on October third. Brother Lee had raised \$42,000.00 for the expenses of the expedition; and nothing has been overlooked to make the trip a success. As he wanted only married men, with their wives and families, to go with him on the voyage, he decided that he should not be an exception to the rule, and is to be married before we start, to a very fine woman—a school teacher—who will be a great help to him at the Mission. Two of the McKay (Indian) boys are staying at a school in Massachusetts to be educated; but the third one is going back to Oregon with us. Dr. Richmond (a minister and physician), with his wife and four

³ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 57-58.

⁴ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 59-60.

children, will be with our party. His little boy, whom they call Oregon, and our Mary, are to be baptized before we start. The next letter you get from us will be from our new home in Oregon, unless we can send letters from the Sandwich Islands. I believe we are to stop there on the way: but this is our last good-bye until we have sailed twenty thousand miles, over two great oceans, and reached our future home. I am already hoping that you too will want to join us there, when a safe road is built and you can come overland without danger. May God watch over you—as I am sure He will watch over all of us who have met here to follow His guiding hand to a new and unknown land. And I pray that we may all be true and faithful in following His Commandments; so that, if we meet no more on Earth, we may meet at last in Heaven, where parting is unknown.”⁵

This letter did not sound like Harriet, for she had always been light-hearted and gay before she came under the influence of the Oregon Missionaries, through Jason Lee.

2. Harriet Campbell’s Report to Benjamin R. Biddle on Life in Oregon Territory

I wish you could see this place where the mission is built! Oregon Territory seems like Paradise to us after our long ocean trip. We are surrounded by the most beautiful trees we have ever seen, with ferns and wild flowers and birds all about us. The woods are alive with all kinds of game and the rivers teem with fish. There are many fish with reddish-yellow meat, called salmon, which are very different from any fish we had at home, and they are most delicious. They tell us that, a little later, we will have an abundance of wild berries. I cannot begin to tell you of all of the wonders of this great country, in one letter; but I hope that the overland roads will be finished before many years, and that you too will decide to come out here to live.

Hamilton is very busy building houses and furniture for the members of our mission family; and he is also teaching the Indians to help him; —and to learn to build houses for themselves—but as yet they seem to like their own primitive wigwams or dug-outs better.

Mary is very happy and has a number of playmates among the missionary children; —and some of the mission Indians also have children about her age. The Indian children play some games that are very much like “prisoner’s base” and other games we used to play in Tennessee. We teach them our games and they teach our children theirs. Mary is learning their Jargon rapidly and can already make herself understood when she is with them.

Please write often and tell me all of the home news. All of your letters may not reach us, but I think we will get most of them; and we will write whenever we have a chance to send a letter Eastward. With much love to you all from

Your affectionate sister, Harriet.⁶

Harriet and Hamilton Campbell paved the way for what became a wave of Sangamon County residents traveling to the west coast beginning in 1845 and continuing until at least 1852. They left a treasure of letters and journals that provide us with a picture of their daily lives that cumulatively paint a vivid picture of what became known as American Manifest Destiny.

⁵ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 60-67.

⁶ *And This Is Our Heritage*, p. 67.

1845

Fifteen letters and personal descriptions are included here for the year 1845. This was the first year that I found a number of letters of Sangamon County, Illinois residents who traveled overland to the Pacific Coast. I found the names of eight Sangamon County residents who left the county and went west during this year.

William Brown Ide Prepares to Move West After Assassination of Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith

I always had a hankering for moving West. I was born in Vermont, but soon after becoming an adult I headed west, for the state of Kentucky. From there I moved to Ohio and then to Illinois. I married Susan Haskell and together we had 9 children.



William Brown Ide

I lived close to Springfield, Illinois, and while living there I helped nominate - Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, for president of the United States. I also worked on writing his presidential platform. However when he was assassinated in June of 1844, I knew it was time for me to leave Illinois. I sold my farm and many possessions, and was able to outfit three wagons for my family. We also had a small herd of cattle to sustain us on the route. We initially traveled to Independence, Missouri, where we joined a company of other settlers headed for Oregon Territory.⁷

William B. Ide

William B. Ide's family came from Devonshire, England in 1636 and settled in Rehoboth, Massachusetts. The family remained in Rehoboth for 5 generations until William's father, Lemuel, moved to Vermont where he was a carpenter and a member of the Vermont State Legislature. William was born on March 28, 1796, in Vermont. In the Revolutionary War, William's grandfather had been a Minute Man in the Battle of Lexington on April 19, 1775. William married Susan Goddard Haskell (1799–1850) in 1820, and they lived at first in Massachusetts, but soon moved westward—to Kentucky, then to Ohio and finally to Illinois. William had been a carpenter, but farmed in Springfield, Illinois, and supplemented his income by teaching school.

William was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was baptized a Mormon in July 1837, and was believed to have been the President of the Springfield Branch of the Church in July 1844. He assisted Joseph Smith's campaign for the Presidency of the United States in April 1844.

The *Nauvoo (Illinois) Neighbor* of May 22, 1844, notes that William B. Ide acted as a delegate from Sangamon County, Illinois, at the Mormon convention which nominated Joseph Smith

⁷ A *Biographical Sketch of the Life of William B. Ide: with a minute and interesting account of one of the largest emigrating companies. (3000 miles over land), from the east to the Pacific coast. And what is claimed as the most authentic and reliable account of the virtual conquest of California, in June, 1846, by the Bear Flag Party, Simeon Ide and Sarah Ide Healy*, Claremont, New Hampshire, Printed for the subscribers, 1880. (Hereafter referred to as *Healy*.) 1967, Glorieta, New Mexico Preface and Introduction by Benjamin Franklin Gilbert to The Rio Grande Press, Inc. (Hereafter referred to as *Ide Biography*)

<http://www.dsloan.com/Auctions/A12/45WebA12.htm>

www.bearflagmuseum.org/Simeon%20Ide%20Life%20of%20William%20B%20Ide%20Table%20of%20Contents.html#IdeTOC

Photograph of William B. Ide from the book *William B. Ide, the President of California* by George Kirov. Bancroft, *History of California*, San Francisco: The History Company, 1886, vol. 4, pp. 688-89 and vol. 5, pp. 188-89. Sharon A. Brown, *Historical Perceptions: The Controversy Surrounding William Brown Ide*, *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly* 16 and 17 (Winter 1993 and Spring 1994), part 1, pp. 6-7, 24-26, 31-32, and part 2, pp. 54-59.

for President of the United States and Sidney Rigdon as Vice President. Church records do not show when Ide embraced the Mormon faith or whether he ever separated.⁸

In 1845, William, age 49, left Springfield for California with a large wagon train, accompanied by his wife, Susan Goddard, five sons, James Monroe, Daniel Webster, William, Lemuel Henry Clay and Thomas Crafton and one daughter, Sarah. Later in California, William was the leader of the “Bear Flag Revolt” that led to a proclamation declaring California an independent country in July 1846, and he was the Governor of that independent country called the California Republic. Accordingly, William and his family were the first known Mormons to enter California and William—as commander of the short-lived California Republic—was, arguably, the first Latter-day Saints head of state.

The Bear Flag Revolt lasted from June 14, 1846, to July 9, 1846, when the United States took possession of California. Ide and other “Bear Flaggers” joined the United States armed forces in the Mexican American War which led to California separating from Mexico and becoming the 31st state of the United States on September 9, 1850. William was also a land surveyor for the U.S. Army.

He held numerous government positions in the County of Colusa: Judge, Deputy Clerk, Treasurer, Justice of the Peace, Defense Attorney and Prosecutor. He was a large landholder in Tehama County purchased from money he acquired from the gold fields. He died on December 19 and 20, 1852, and is buried in California.⁹

William L. Todd

William L. Todd was born on April 14, 1818, at Edwardsville, Illinois, the son of Dr. John and Elizabeth Smith Todd, both of distinguished American families. He was brought up in Springfield, and says that he “was in youth raised as a Druggist & Apothecary.” His father, Dr. John Todd, served as a surgeon in the War of 1812. William was a cousin of Mrs. (Mary) Abraham Lincoln; whose father Robert Todd was a brother of Doctor John Todd.

He went to California in 1845, when he was 27 years-old before the Mexican war or the discovery of gold and was there when the survivors of the Reed and Donner party arrived; so many of whom starved to death as they were snow-bound in the mountains.

William L. Todd was married on April 14, 1868, in California, to Mrs. Clarissa J. Pike, whose maiden name was Chase. She was born in 1823 in Dutchess County, New York. Mrs. Todd died childless in March 1874, in Sacramento. Mr. Todd resides at Los Angeles, California.¹⁰

⁸ *William Brown Ide, Bear Flagger*, Fred Blackburn Rogers, 1889, San Francisco, J. Howell, 1962. (Hereafter referred to as *Rogers*.) <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015018021918>
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/ssd?id=mdp.39015018021918;seq=21>

⁹ The William B. Ide Adobe State Historical Park in Red Bluff, Tehama, California honors Ide’s contribution to the state. There is no proof of where he is buried. The story is that he was sleeping in the jail (he was also the jailer), and a criminal stole his money and killed him, then spread rumors that he had smallpox. Ide was buried somewhere obscure out of town as was the custom of smallpox victims in those days. The death was reported in the newspaper as smallpox.

¹⁰ William L. Todd was listed in Bancroft’s *Pioneer Register And Index in the History of California*.

3. William B. Ide Writes Regarding the Oregon Territory *Journal*, March 20, 1845¹¹

Because of his style and later correspondence for the *Journal* newspaper, William B. Ide is the suspected writer of the following contribution that appeared in the *Sangamo Journal* of March 20, 1845.

EMIGRATION TO OREGON

From information from various places, in this and other States, it is but fair to conclude that the expedition to Oregon this year will exceed by more than double, that of any former year; and also that we may, if nothing occurs to check this immense tide of emigration, safely calculate that each consecutive year will more than continue the same ratio of increase, until the advantages which Oregon possesses, in point of climate and commerce, shall be balanced by the lower price of lands in the Mississippi valley.

That Oregon is destined to command a great portion of the commerce of the Pacific and the Oriental Isles, as well as to enjoy her full share of the trade of the Pacific coast of North and South America, no well-informed mind, it is presumed, can doubt. Nor is it to be supposed, that the commercial interests of the eastern States will be slow to acknowledge the vast importance, that the occupation of Oregon, by American citizens, will be to the commerce of the Eastern States. "Five millions of dollars per annum, will scarcely cover the proceeds of the whaling business owned, or carried on, by citizens of the Eastern States. It is reasonable to conclude that a greater portion of this trade will naturally amalgamate with the business of Oregon.

The reasons why we come to the above conclusion, are— 1st, that the North Pacific furnishes better whaling ground, and safer harbors for whaling vessels, than the North Eastern coasts. 2d. Oregon is, from the mildness of its climate, better adapted to growing the provisions necessary to the carrying on of this business, than any country bordering on the Atlantic coast.

That great and incalculable advantages to the United States will result from the settlement of Oregon by American citizens, can no longer be doubted; neither can we for a moment suppose that party politics, or party prepossessions, can so far derange that generous love of country, ever pre- dominant in the breast of every lover of American freedom, as to cause division, concerning the propriety of maintaining unimpaired American Liberty, over the whole territory of OREGON.

Encouraged by considerations like the foregoing, we are led to look calmly forward to the train of privations and hardships naturally consequent upon a journey of some 2,000 miles, thro' savage wilds and desolate, craggy, mountain cliffs, interspersed and broken by rivers, and sandy deserts, 'till the mind's eye rests quietly on the valley of the 'promised land! Nor do we feel that we, by prosecuting our design, desert our country, or are to be forsaken by our countrymen. Nor is it to be supposed, that we have hardened our hearts, and shielded our bosoms against the tender sympathies naturally growing out of our connection with civilized, and Christianized Society.

But with feelings and habits congenial to friendship and social order, we trust we may be pardoned if we express the fond hope that we may be able to extend the love of freedom; to contribute our mite, towards enlarging the dominion of rational liberty and social happiness, and ere long, under circumstances of comfort, to receive with joy and gladness, many of those friends we shall have left behind. April 1st, 1845, is the day agreed upon by those who have been, and are, making preparations to emigrate from Sangamon county, Illinois, to meet at the nearest camping ground west of Springfield. Seven families and five single men have agreed to

¹¹ *Journal*, March 20, 1845

start. It is expected that this company will consist of upwards of fifty persons, —among whom are Messrs. Nathan Hussey sen[ior], Job Burden, Nathan Hussey and H. Bird, of Fancy Creek, and W. B. Ide and others of Wolf Creek. [Fancy Creek and Wolf Creek flow through Williams Township before emptying into the Sangamon River about six miles northeast of Springfield.] Ten wagons are in preparation, to be drawn by two or three yokes of oxen each, carrying five months provisions. “There is room for more. Who comes next?”

Our intention is to join the Independence expedition, either at Council Bluffs, or at Independence, Mo. and pursue our way with them. “FOR OREGON”

4. Sarah Ide Healy Describes Preparations for Departure From Springfield For Oregon

In 1845, 49-year-old William B. Ide sold his farm and prepared to go to Oregon. His daughter, Sarah Ide Healy,¹² tells of the family’s departure:

All of our old neighbors came to help us pack our things into our three wagons, and to see us off. My father selected the timber for two of these wagons, and had them made to order during the winter. He also made the beds, bows and covers at our home—Mother and I sewing the canvas covering; which, being fastened to the bows and side-boards of the wagon, were painted a light slate-color, the same as the bed or body of the wagon. “Our wagons were very neat looking, and attracted a good deal of attention while passing through Illinois and Missouri. Many questions were asked as to our destination, etc.

We had a sale the morning we started, and sold off the greater part of our furniture. We packed our cooking utensils, tin cups, tin plates—with provisions to last us six months. Mother, my little brothers—Daniel, aged 10, and Lemuel, aged 8, and Thomas Grafton (a little boy that had been given to my mother), all rode in a wagon. I rode on horseback 3 days, to help drive the cattle; riding on a side-saddle. The drove of cattle numbered 165, including 28 working oxen. We camped the first night ten miles from our old home—cooked our supper by a camp-fire!

Mother and I slept in a wagon all the way to California. Some of the men slept in the tent, when not too tired to pitch it. Brother William came with us and drove an ox team from Fort Hall to Sutter’s Fort, and drove cattle the rest of the journey. Our number, all told, young and old, was thirteen, five of these were young men, who drove the teams ‘for their board and passage!’¹³

William B. Ide and Family and William L. Todd Leave Springfield, Illinois for Oregon Territory March 27, 1845

On March 27, 1845, William B. Ide, age 49, and William L. Todd, age 27, were the leaders of one of the first groups to leave Springfield, Illinois headed for the Oregon Territory. On April 3, 1845, the *Journal* reported:

The Oregon emigrants from this county, passed through our city Tuesday afternoon, and encamped for the first time some three miles from town. The expedition consisted of about forty-seven persons, old and young—16 wagons with ox teams, and quite a number of young cattle. With most of the emigrants we are personally acquainted, and regret that our county will lose in them good substantial farmers!

¹² *Ide Biography.*

¹³ *Ide Biography.*

5. Fred Blackburn Rogers Describes Ide-Todd Group Arrival at Independence, Missouri May 1845

The journey to Independence, Mo., was accomplished in four weeks, without any severe accident, but was attended with great care and anxiety to my dear parents. I remember my brother James (then in his 24th year) was away from us buying cows, and was gone so long, that it caused them great anxiety. He had been taken suddenly with bleeding from the nose or lungs, among strangers, and his health was so much impaired, that he could not for some time afterwards help take care of the stock, or of himself. We were thankful that his life was spared.

We camped one week within one mile of Independence, Mo., to lay in ammunition, guns and pistols—clothing for the men, and many little things needful on so long a journey. Father made an iron to brand his cows with his name (Ide) on the right-side horn. This was hard work for him, but very necessary. The western emigration via South Pass in 1845 was immense, compared with prior years. H. H. Bancroft estimates that 3,000 persons arrived in Oregon alone. Col. Stephen W Kearny, who saw much of the emigration, estimates the “Total number this season was about 850 men, 475 women, 1,000 children, about 7,000 head of cattle, 400 horses and mules, with 460 wagons!” The principal points of assembly for the journey were Independence and St. Joseph, both in Missouri. Rendezvous at Independence was favored by most of the companies, and apparently by the fewer persons originally destined for California. Oregon was quite securely American—California was still a Mexican province—hence the great majority of the emigrants were Oregon bound. The routes from St. Joseph and Independence, after passing respectively the Missouri River and the Kansas River, converged near the Blue River.¹⁴

William B. Ide and Family and William L. Todd Depart From Independence, Missouri on Oregon Trail May 10, 1845

They joined a wagon train in Independence, Missouri that was headed for Oregon. On May 10, 1845, a large train of wagons left Independence, Missouri, headed west on the Oregon Trail. Among those traveling in the train were William B. Ide and his family and William L. Todd. traveled to the ‘Big Camp’ where we spent a week or two.¹⁵



¹⁴ Rogers, pp. 10-12.

¹⁵ Rogers, p. 10.

The Oregon Trail is a 2,170-mile East–West, large-wheeled wagon route and emigrant trail that connected the Missouri River to valleys in Oregon. The eastern part of the Oregon Trail spanned part of the future state of Kansas, and nearly all of what are now the states of Nebraska and Wyoming. The western half of the trail spanned most of the future states of Idaho and Oregon.

**6. William B. Ide Letter From Kansas (or Kasaw) River
May 13, 1845**

The *Sangamo Journal* of June 5, 1845, contains the following letter from Ide, its “Oregon correspondent.” In every case, his references to the Nebraska (or Platte) River must be read to mean the Kansas (or Kaw) River—this for reasons that appear in a note.

Bank of The Nebraska

May 13, 1845

We have crossed the Nebraska and Kansas rivers. It is now the 13th of May, and we are encamped on the north bank of the Platte river, where we shall organize preparatory to our arduous journey to the West.

My teams, waggons, cattle, and all concerned, have stood the trip, so far, (all things considered) better than I expected. My cattle are thriving. I kill all my calves.

The present emigrating party consists of about five hundred waggons— one hundred and seven are in our company—thirty-five are a few miles ahead, and some seventy are a few days behind. But it is impossible to speak definitely as regards the number of teams. The number of souls is said to be between six and seven thousand. The number of cattle is immense— exceeding in all probability ten thousand head. Our teams, horses, mules, ponies, cattle and waggons, stretched out in procession some three miles in length on the broad prairies, present a grand spectacle. The Caw Indians flock around us like crows. Their business is to ‘swap’ ostensibly, but in reality it is begging and stealing. More or less cattle are stolen every night. These Indians are great cowards, poor and faithless. They meet you with an air of courtesy, extend the hand of friendship in graceful waving circles to all, and shake hands most heartily with any one of the company, who notices them most; and the next business is ‘swap’ ‘swap! In this traffic the supplying of their present want is the standard value they attach to their money. To all appearances these Indians are in a wretched, starving condition.

The soil and face of the country from Independence to the Nebraska river, is equal in point of beauty and fertility, to any I have seen. Timber is very scarce. Small groves, however, of an excellent quality, are found along the streams. The prairies are beautifully rolling—the soil rich and deep. The Nebraska river has shallow banks, and its bottom is quick-sand. The creeks which we have crossed, however, that empty into the Nebraska, have deep banks and muddy bottoms—on some the soil is more than fifteen feet in depth. These deep channels and muddy bottoms, have given us much trouble. Quite a number of cattle in crossing them got mired, and sometimes we have had to haul from fifteen to twenty out by their horns.

Lime-stone is abundant on the prairies. A stratum of rock lies on a level, showing itself above ground in almost every declivity which passes its level.

Our road so far, has been very good, although apparently not very direct in its course. I can say but very little of the prospects of the Oregon emigration. I can now only give you a faint idea of its magnitude, and the character of the people who compose it. From the best information I can obtain, the number of emigrants will be five-fold what it was last year; — but you must bear in mind that it was then greatly exaggerated. Of its character, I assure you so far as I can judge, I can speak in the most flattering terms. Agreeable acquaintances are every day formed. Gentlemen and ladies, too, of liberal minds and means are in the midst of our social circle. Finally, there is something ennobling in the very idea of an expedition so fraught with

consequences, so self-devoting in its effect. No narrow minded soul is fit for Oregon. If such embark, discord and confusion follow—they will shrink from the undertaking and escape to the States. But those whose minds are congenial to the enterprise, present their shoulders to its hardships, their breasts to its dangers, and their means and talents to the accomplishment of its purposes, will, I doubt not, be well rewarded.

I have written this in a great hurry. The country as we advance becomes more interesting, and in my next I hope to be able to give more information in regard to 'fitting out! I fear we have more cattle than we can protect. We are now obliged to have one hand to every twelve head.

The emigrants are all in good health and spirits.

Respectfully yours, W. B. Ide

7. Letter From One of the Oregon Emigrants May 14, 1845

The *Sangamo Journal* of July 3, 1845, contained more information regarding the Oregon emigration:

The *Chicago Democrat* publishes a letter of the 14th of May from one of the Oregon Emigrants. It is dated on 'Caw River! The letter is not later than our communication from Mr. Ide, but contains some further particulars.

Friday, 3rd, we left Independence, went ten miles and camped.

Saturday we went ten miles further and camped. Here we take the last farewell of our friends and civilized citizens. The companies for Oregon are numerous. We go 80 miles before we join the company, as some have gone further up for better feed. The cattle are so numerous that they eat every thing before them. We have now in sight 100 wagons and more coming every hour. There are a great many cattle to be drove. There will be something near three thousand persons to go. Don't you think there will be a jolly set? As a general thing, the company appears like brothers. There are persons from every State in the Union. In sight of our camp there are a number of Spaniards camped, who have two hundred mules which belong to the Santa Fe trade.

Sunday. M — happened over at their camp while they were employed in catching some ugly steers with the lasso—a rope with a slipping noose. Today one of our Oregon men employed two Spaniards to catch a yoke of steers. It was done in a hurry, and they seldom fail to catch their object. The Spaniards are almost as black as Indians.

Tuesday, we arrived at the River Caw [Kansas] near the Caw village. This stream is now the size of Fox River, sandy bottom and banks, the current is rapid, always riley and raises the freshets 30 feet. This is 100 miles from Independence. On the 14th we have a meeting to choose a pilot; there are two men up for the office.

One mile from our camp is a village; yesterday I was at the place, but the warriors were all gone to fight the Pawnees. Today the runners returned with some scalps and the town is all alive, singing and dancing. This morning, an old Indian Chief came to our fire painted and dressed in a curious style and began to sing and stamp the ground; his dress was buck skin. At our meeting the alarm was given that some Indians were driving off cattle. The meeting broke up suddenly—in less than one minute 50 men were on their horses, well armed and on the jump.

The report proved false. One prisoner was taken on a mule, who was brought to our tent, pale and trembling. He attempted to leave his mule in our hands and escape but when a pistol was presented to his breast he again mounted and rode while one led the mule. Our interpreter found that the man was innocent. I gave him something to eat, but he refused until our men

ate when he took a smoke and went his way. This tribe are noted rascals. Last night two of them attempted to pass our guard. When the rifles were leveled at them, they grounded their arms and shook hands and tried to apologize—they are the greatest beggars I ever saw—some go entirely naked. To night two of the chiefs came in camp and wished to see the Captain, showed their papers, wished to beg some calves. The calves were promised if they would not steal any.

I am now 700 miles from home. On the way we have met with no accident, and I do believe that if God ever favored or blessed a people it is this Emigrating Company of 1845. The Caw river at the ferry was 3 miles wide, now 30 or 40 rods, and the company was four weeks coming to the Caw—we were six days. The wagon ruts remain to tell us the great difficulty they had to encounter. Wherever we go we leave a good road as plain as the State road past your home!¹⁶

Grigsby-Ide Party and Swasey-Todd Party Formed at Fort Kearny, Now Nebraska

At Fort Kearny, Nebraska, the Ide Todd group broke up into three companies, one of which was piloted by Joe Meek and captained by John Grigsby and William B. Ide. Another was captained by W. F. Swasey and William L. Todd. From Fort Kearny, the companies traveled along the Platte River, then to South Pass and onto Fort Hall. The Swasey-Todd party was composed of William Bale, William Blackburn, William Gildoa, Francis Hoen, Thomas Knight, John Lewis, George McDougal, Hiram Rjeusaw, Thomas Smith, Harry Spiel, Jacob R. Snyder, William F. Swasey and William L. Todd.¹⁷

8. William B. Ide Letter From Prairie Wilderness May 21, 1845¹⁸

The *Conneaut (Ohio) Reporter* of July 25, 1845, reprinted a letter from William B. Ide to the *Sangamo Journal*, dated by Ide “Prairie Wilderness, May 21, 1845!” The place of writing appears to have been in the vicinity of the headwaters of Rock Creek, east of the Big Blue River.

Our company consists of one hundred and thirty-one wagons, which are divided into three divisions, to accomodate the different interests of the emigrants as regards loose stock. We lost near one-fifteenth of our stock before we could get organized, so as to protect it. Since we have had our interests mutual in regard to stock, we have lost none. We have the anti-stock go-ahead division (which we expect will leave us the first time it shall be their turn to go before, and the large stock division expect in that case to overtake them in the mountains, where they may be glad of our assistance,) the small stock division, and the large stock division. “Our cattle are improving. The grass road and water are fine. Our health is good, and our task easy, since we divided. We have 350 head of loose stock, twenty-seven wagons, and fifty-one women and children—all well provisioned and equipped. Many who have no loose stock have preferred our division and company. We have an organized government, both civil, military and judicial. Without such a government, no company can travel in these wild regions, and with one, every thing is easy.

We met last night, six wagons from Fort Larimer [Laramie] — 500 miles distant. Their Captain [Daniel Finch] has been with the Indians fifteen years. He gave me the following anecdote, illustrative of the power and numbers of the whites. He said that one of the principal Chiefs of the tribe where he was located, on seeing the emigration of the last year pass west, said to him—“Son—you have been with us a long time, and have not sought to go back. You will surely stay and die with us. You cannot go back now. All the white men have gone to the west. You cannot now go back!”

¹⁶ Rogers, pp. 7-8.

¹⁷ *Society of California Pioneers Quarterly*, 1931, p. 206.

¹⁸ *Journal*, May 21, 1845.

On being told that they were not a hundredth part of a number that could be missed from among the white men, he exclaimed—The white men thicker than the grass of the prairies! “There is no woman in our company that sleeps the less from fear of the Indians!”

9. William B. Ide Letter From Fort Laramie, now Wyoming June 25, 1845¹⁹

The key to Fort Laramie’s importance was its strategic location on the great central continental migration corridor via the Platte and North Platte Rivers to South Pass. By tradition this is most commonly known as the Oregon Trail.²⁰

The *Sangamo Journal’s* “Oregon Correspondent” (William B. Ide) appeared in the issue of September 4, 1845:

FORT LARAMIE, June 25, 1845

MR. EDITOR:—We are well. The road thus far, is far better than I have ever travelled before, the like distance, (since leaving Independence). We are 1060 miles from Springfield. Many of our cattle are getting lame, some from foot evil, and some from worn-out hoofs. The foot evil is cured by cutting out the inflected [infected?] part and then applying burning rosin or tar. For worn-out hoofs we apply hot tar, or rosin and then sear it with a hot shovel and then apply the second coat of tar.

It is exceeding dry; we have but little grass. The companies of emigrants follow each other in quick succession. The great number of cattle cause us some trouble. Bulls over the age of one year will not go to Oregon. I have lost three—the best of four. I could give some directions in relation to fitting out for Oregon or California, which may be of some service to some who are less experienced. I would defer my remarks until after I reach Oregon, but I may not have an opportunity to write again in season for preparations to be made next spring.

BEST WAGGONS—Strong two horse waggons capable of bearing three thousand pounds on common roads, wide track, block tongue, coupled twenty inches back of the forward axle, body 15 to 18 feet long, straight; bed 14 to 16 inches high in the clear—2 partitions across 18 inches each way from the middle (having a space for the ladies parlor) the two ends covered with half inch linn plank, the alternate plank hung on butt hinges, and all supported on a slight stringer passing from the hind gate to one of the partitions. Under these decks pack your provisions, either in bags or boxes—if in boxes, let the deck form the covers, resting on each side at the sides of the bed—at the top of the bed, let the sides project 6 inches, above which, put side boards 18 inches wide, one half inch thick, riveted to ten standards on each side 4 feet high, leaving the middle space open for a door on each side; on the top of each pair of standards rivet an elliptic to bow, rising 8 inches higher than the standards (making the inside of the bed 5 feet two inches high)—at the same time rivet a strip of half inch plank 3 inches wide firmly to the top of the standards on each side—leaving an open space of 15 or 18 inches wide between the side boards and said 3 inch strips, which may be stopped by a curtain, nailed to the outside of the strip above, and buttoned to the outside of the board below—on the center of the bows rivet a slender ridgepole, let the end boards of gates be firmly fixed and extend from the under side of the bottom plank of the bed to the top of the side boards, so tight as to exclude rain in a driving storm; let the top be covered with Osnaburg [coarse, cotton fabric] drawn on as tight as may be, and sized and painted with 3 coats of oil paint—the curtains and doors to be made of the same, and sized and painted one coat; the center support underneath the bed may be 4 or 5 inches wide, and extend 6 or 8 inches from the sides of the bed, to form a step, another

¹⁹ *Journal*, September 4, 1845.

²⁰ https://www.nps.gov/foia/learn/historyculture/upload/FOLA_history.pdf

iron step between it and the ground, will make it convenient for ladies to ascend and descend to and from the parlor. The inside upon the deck, may be fitted with shelves and racks to suit the fancy or convenience of the 'lady of the house! With slight strips of half inch plank fastened in front of the shelf there would be little danger of dishes falling, after one leaves Fort Leavenworth: such is the evenness of the road.

BEST ROUTE—From Springfield to Hannibal on the Mississippi River, to Paris, to Huntsville, to Fort Leavenworth—take the trail to the Kaw village on the North side of the Kansas river, thence the left hand trail to the Platte river— (there are three right hand trails falling off one after another, less travelled than the best route) thence up the South Fork to the first ford, thence up the North side of the same—the left hand trail up to the North Fork, thence up the South side to Scott's Bluff, eighteen miles above Steeple Tower, or the 'Chimney'—which is situated about three miles from the River, on the top of a conical bluff elevated some 150 or 200 feet above the river bank. The steeple or 'chimney' is a pillar of hardened clay, about 60 feet by 30 feet in diameter, rising out of the top of the cone some 200 or 250 feet retaining its full size to the top—which is covered with rock of very curious dimensions, and formed of clay— thence take the left hand twelve miles, to Cole Springs—thence twelve miles to Horse Creek—thence down the west side of said creek, and up the North Fork to Laramie. Here my way-bill must end for the present.

AMOUNT OF LOADING—Twenty or thirty hundred pounds to one team of eight oxen, or four oxen and eight cows—one half should be worked every other day.

OUT-FIT—One waggon for four to six persons—team as above. Stout young cows are preferable to oxen; Horses are of little service, except to collect cattle of morning. They need to be exchanged once in seven or eight hundred miles for others if much used. One hundred pounds hard biscuit; 150 pounds of flour: 20 pounds lard, 50 pounds corn-meal sifted, 75 pounds bacon: 5 pounds coffee, ten pounds sugar: one peck of beans: 50 pounds dried fruit: 5 pounds of salt: one half pound pepper: 7 pounds hard soap: 2 pounds salaratus: one half pound of spice: one half pound cinaman: 2 pounds ginger—a little castor oil: a little rhubarb: peppermint and camphor:—and some other things such as a dry body needs—but rarely thinks of beforehand—to each person full grown.

Fifteen pounds of tar and two pounds of rosin to each waggon; 65 feet of 1 inch rope, one set of spare shoes and a hundred horseshoe nails to each horse: four ox shoes to each work ox or cow, and nails: one years clothing: tarpolin hats: one water proof cloak: one rifle 32 balls to the pound: four pounds of powder: ten pounds of lead: one thousand percussion caps: one belt, butcher knife, scabbard, shot pouch and powder horn: one canteen or tin cup, and two whips to each man: five pounds of salt to each head of cattle. One axe, three augers: one drawing knife, and two chissels to each family, and one tent made of stout Osnaburg.

BEST FASHION FOR A TENT— Set up one pole in the centre, from the top of which, on the outside, extend three guys, or stay cords, which make fast to three strong stakes, then pin down the bottom once in 18 inches, let the entrance be low and made to close tight by a piece of the same buttoned over on the inside.

BEST METHOD OF TRAVELING—AND REMARKS ON TRAVELING—Twenty waggons with forty men are amply sufficient for the purpose of protection, or rendering assistance to each other. Large bodies move slow! It is easier forming connections, than it is dissolving them. More servants than are needed, breed confusion in a camp away from established governments,—where from humanity, one is compelled to retain a disagreeable servant. It is easier purchasing cattle than it is driving them to Oregon. Cattle and horses should be guarded day and night from Fort Leavenworth to the Platte river. Men who have large herds of cattle, and those who have but few, will seldom long agree to travel together.

Mutual interests and mutual necessities, form the strongest bonds of union, with some few honorable exceptions. No company of forty waggons have ever traveled to Oregon without dividing.

The less emigrants depend on each other the more quietly they proceed on their way. A selfish, narrowminded man, is not likely to enjoy a trip to Oregon. Emigrants are generally too impatient, and over-drive their teams and cattle. They often neglect the concerns of the present in consequence of the great anticipations of the future—they long to see what the next elevation hides from their view. Millions of acres on our route which usually produce a tolerable crop of hay, are now entirely destitute of grass. Emigrants should not depend on the last port, for their out-fit. I think the trail from Springfield to Vancouver, in Oregon is twenty-six hundred long miles, if the balance of the road is as crooked as the past.

TRADE—We purchase buffalo robes for from six to ten pounds of flour, or from three to six pints of sugar or coffee. We can get an ox, or horse shod, at Fort Laramie for one dollar per foot. We hire a smith's shop for \$6 per day. Three bars of lead will buy a buffalo robe; salt 50 cents a pint.

PROSPECT AHEAD—We expect hard times, in consequence of the scarcity of grass for the next three hundred miles. Oregon brightens the nearer we approach. A Frenchman who has resided there five years, and now travels in our company, often makes comparison between the most beautiful prairies we pass over—always giving the Prairies of Oregon the preference—saying, 'suppose this prairie you now see, was always clad in green, as you now see it,—such is Oregon!' But I must close.

Respectfully yours-
William B. Ide

Grigsby-Ide Party and Swasey-Todd Party Arrive at Fort Hall, Oregon Territory, now Idaho

Fort Hall was located at the end of the common 500-mile stretch from the east shared by the three far west emigrant trails. It was established as a trading post on the Snake River in the part of eastern Oregon Territory that is now part of southeastern Idaho. After being included in United States territory in 1846, Fort Hall developed through the 1850s as an important station for emigrants on the Oregon Trail. An estimated 270,000 emigrants reached Fort Hall on their way west.²¹

Diversion of Oregon Emigrants to California

Already forces were at work to divert emigrants to California. Lansford W. Hastings had crossed the plains to Oregon in 1842; thence he came to California in 1843, and returned to the States in 1844. At Cincinnati in 1845 he published his *Emigrants Guide to Oregon and California*, in which he described the superior advantages of California. In 1841 the Bartleson party had arrived, via Sonora Pass, at the rancho of Dr. John Marsh, near present Antioch, California. That overland movement resulted from encouraging letters written by Marsh. William E Swasey was at Fort Laramie in the early summer of 1845, when the emigration to Oregon began to arrive at the fort. He induced about a dozen persons to go with him to California. In June he left the fort, with pack animals, for Fort Hall via Fort Bridger. Apparently Ide's party was within a large organization of some 100 wagons, divided into three companies.

The march to Fort Hall was without untoward incident. Sarah Ide Healy narrates: "We traveled in one of the three companies having a camp-guard—a captain and sergeant on guard every night—until within a few days travel of Fort Hall. Then there was a general stampede to

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Trail (Hereafter referred to as *California Trail*.)

see who would get to the Fort first. We found a good camping ground there, and also Indians to trade horses with. One offered a very pretty pony for two calico dresses. Here was a company of mountaineer trappers, en route for California, who told us of a good route, and plenty of good grass. "While there father changed his plan—concluded to go to California: but first, before definitely settling the question, put it to a vote of his company, and they voted for California instead of Oregon!" So it became necessary for Ide to change from OREGON to CALIFORNIA the large, black lettering on the rear curtain of his hindmost wagon.²²

**Grigsby-Ide Party and Swasey-Todd Party at Fort Hall
Decide to Take California Route
August 9, 1845**

The Ide and Todd parties camped for several days at Fort Hall, now Idaho, trading horses with Native Americans and resting. There they met Caleb Greenwood, a mountain man who persuaded them to head for California, instead of Oregon. Ide and Todd, among others, chose the newer trail to California. They left Fort Hall on August 9, 1845, with a company of ten wagons.

10. Benjamin Franklin Bonney Describes Decision to Change Route to California

Propaganda favoring California intensified at Fort Hall. Benjamin Franklin Bonney was one of those originally bound for Oregon. He was seven years old at the time, but later narrated:

At Fort Hall we were met by an old man named Caleb Greenwood and his three sons; John was 22, Britain 18, and Sam 16. Caleb Greenwood, who originally hailed from Nova Scotia, was an old mountain man and was said to be over 80 years old. He had been a scout and trapper and had married a squaw, his sons being half breeds. He was employed by Captain [John A.] Sutter to come to Fort Hall to divert the Oregon-bound emigrants to California. Greenwood was a very picturesque old man. He was dressed in buckskin and had a long heavy beard and used very picturesque language. He called the Oregon emigrants together the first evening we were in Fort Hall and made a talk. "He said the road to Oregon was dangerous on account of the Indians. He said Captain Sutter would have ten Californians meet the emigrants who would go and that Sutter would supply them with plenty of potatoes, coffee and dried beef. He also said that he would help the emigrants over the mountains and that to every head of a family who would settle near Sutter's Fort, Captain Sutter would give six sections of his Spanish land grant [New Helvetia].... My father, Jarvis Bonney, was the first one of the Oregon party to pull out of the Oregon train and head south with Caleb Greenwood! According to Joel Palmer, captain of one of the Oregon bound companies, Greenwood succeeded in diverting thirty-five or thirty-six wagons toward California. These joined fifteen wagons previously so destined. The total California contingent now must have been at least one hundred and fifty persons; the Ide family alone numbered seven. Snyder arrived at Fort Hall August 6, 1845, and on August 9th left for, and reached the camp of the California Company about fourteen miles from the fort. Organization completed, the party started along the Snake River on the 11th, and on the 13th was camped on Cassia Creek (Raft River), having left the Oregon road at noon. Snyder says tersely, "We are now on the California road!" Goose Creek was reached on the 18th, and Mary's (Humboldt) River the 28th.²³

²² Rogers, pp. 15-18. *Healy*.

²³ Rogers, pp. 14-16

Ide and Todd Groups Take California Route

Journal, August 6, 1846²⁴

Just west of Fort Hall, the Oregon and California trails diverged in northwesterly and southwesterly directions.²⁵

doing well. The Messrs. Ide, with Mr. Todd, and some others from this section of country, took the route to California. It was said that they designed to examine that country, and, if it did not suit them, to settle on the Umquah, in Oregon Territory.

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11. Jacob Rink Snyder Diary

Jacob Rink Snyder, with pack animals, traveled in advance of the Todd wagon company. He entered in his diary:

Saturday 13 Sept. Traveled this day 25 miles through the same kind of country as that of yesterday and arrived at the sink of Mary's River. Found the water in the Lake as salty as sea water. We have had bad water for several days. The earth is covered with a crust of salt and the water that we use tonight is strongly impregnated with salt, saltpeter & sulphur. It made the horses sick.

Sunday 13th. This day we made the crossing between the sink of Mary's River & Truckeys [Truckee] River, a distance of 40 miles without grass or water, except boiling & salt water. The animals & men suffered very much owing to the day being oppressively hot. We arrived at Truckeys River at 11 o'clock at night. The waggons reached it in the morning at 7 o'clock. The change from a barren waste to a wooded country was one of the most pleasant I have enjoyed for years. Here the river runs through a rocky bed and the water is clear and pure. Remained here this day. [Also the 15th and 16th.]

Wednesday 16 Sept. This day we started for the Plains of California. A party of 10 left the company, traveled 12 miles & encamped... !'

This pack party, now untrammelled by wagons, is called by Bancroft the Swasey-Todd company, although William L. Todd, writing to his father on April 17, 1846, plainly indicates that he stayed with the wagons. This small splinter group may well be named for Snyder, its member diarist; it apparently had no captain.

On **September 17 and 18** Snyder describes the route up the Truckee River, which was crossed and recrossed many times, to the wide bottom near present Verdi, Nevada, where the river emerges from the Mountains. From that point Greenwood in 1844 had taken the Stevens party, with wagons, up the extremely difficult canyon of the river, thence to the vicinity of the lake now called Donner. Profiting from that adverse experience, Greenwood and his son John were to lead the 1845 immigration by a new route, undoubtedly reconnoitered by them on

²⁴ *Journal*, Thursday, August 6, 1846, p. 3.

²⁵ Just past present-day Soda Springs, Idaho both trails initially turned northwest following the Portneuf River (Idaho) valley to the British Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Hall (est. 1836) on the Snake River in present-day Idaho. From Fort Hall the Oregon and California trails went about 50 miles southwest along the Snake River valley to another "parting of the ways" trail junction at the junction of the Raft and Snake river. The California Trail from the junction followed the Raft River to the City of Rocks in Idaho near the present Nevada-Idaho-Utah borders. The Salt Lake and Fort Hall routes were about the same length—about 190 miles. From the City of Rocks the trail went into the present state of Utah following the South Fork of the Junction Creek.

their recent eastward trip from Sutter's. William H. Winter had used this new route, moving east in the spring of 1845.

Snyder's entries for September 19-21, 1845, are of extreme importance, for they provide a quite detailed contemporary description of a major re-location of the emigrant trail:

Friday 19th. Packed this morning at 1/2 past 8 o'clock. We follow the river after leaving the bottom; cross on the right, again on the left & again on the right, then take the mountain leaving the river on the left. It is about 6 miles from where we strike the river at the bottom to where we take the mountains. The general course is northwest until we descend a ridge into a valley [Dog Valley] where we find a spring branch and grass. The mountains are thickly covered with pine and redwood. It is a pleasing sight after traveling so long over sandy plains & barren hills. We keep a mountain on our left as we cross to the valley. Encamped on the spring branch. Traveled 18 miles.

Saturday 20th. Packed this morning at 1/2 past 8 o'clock. Our course lay up the valley we were in, over a ridge into another valley. Our course was between southwest & west. The best guide is a mountain on the left, bare of timber. It is 9 miles to Wind [Little Truckee] River from the spring branch where we camped, 9 miles from Wind River to Johns River [named for John Greenwood and now called Prosser Creek], & 6 miles from Johns River to the waters of Truckees River. By keeping the Bald Mountain on the left and pursuing the most eligible route, Truckees River cannot be missed. [The partially bald mountain about three miles east of the present Boca Dam qualifies as Snyder's guiding terrain feature.] We struck Truckees River & encamped about 1 mile from the point where we struck it. Near the point where we struck it are 2 large isolated rocks in the valley.

Sunday 21st. Packed this morning at 8 o'clock and followed the river on the right side until we struck a lake [later called Donner for the famed Donner party] at the foot of the declivity of the Back Bone of the California Mountains. This Lake is 3 miles long & from 1 to 1 1/2 miles wide. We passed a log cabin built by the Emigrants of last year. [Occupied by Moses Schallenberger of the Stevens party, during the winter just past.] Their waggons were left until spring before they were taken over. At this lake we commence ascending the rugged side of this mountain. It is composed of masses of granite. In many places large detached pieces are thrown in the way, rendering it almost impossible for horses to get a foothold, & in many others it is so smooth that it is as bad for the animals as the more rugged parts. We were obliged to lead our horses until we arrived at the summit. We traveled this day about 14 miles. Our course from our camp lay west until we ascended the mountain, then we descended a gradual slope, in some places very rough, until we struck an open plain where we encamped. We encamped on a creek, the waters of which run into the Plains of California. [The camp was probably near the present Kingvale, in the drainage area of the South Yuba River.] It was still rough going on September 22 and 23. The waters of Bear River were reached on the latter date. Snyder arrived at the Nicholas place near the junction of the Bear and Feather rivers on the 27th, and came to Sutter's Fort on the 29th. The New Helvetia Diary reported eleven men as having arrived from the mountains on the 29th, preceded by John Greenwood and a small party on the 27th, and "more of the party from the U. S" on the 28th. The Diary for September 30 reads in part: "Today we are quite buizy preparing the party of Men who are going to return to the Mountains with provisions and pack horses to assist the Waggons!"

The Diary for October 1 (1845) records: "Today the party left for the Mountains!"²⁶

So it is evident that some of these early arrivals cannot be classified as members of Snyder's party. Now we return to follow the fortunes of the wagon party or, as termed by Bancroft, the

²⁶ *Calendar of the Major Jacob Rink Snyder*, Collection of the Society of California Pioneers, June 1940. (Hereafter referred to as *Snyder*.)

Grigsby-Ide party. William Knight states that Grigsby succeeded one Brown at Laramie. Ide had exhibited qualities of leadership in his Illinois organization and did so later. Whether John Grigsby or William B. Ide, commanded from Fort Hall to Sutter's Fort, does not appear a matter of record. Likewise, the exact membership of this party may never be known. With a few exceptions, Bancroft's listing may be considered reasonably complete, but with unavoidable omissions of children. The new trail via Dog Valley has been discussed, indeed it may be properly named the Greenwood re-location, a cutoff in point of time if not in distance. Dr. George R. Stewart is convinced that it was used by the Grigsby-Ide party, and the present writer agrees that the circumstantial evidence is conclusive. The party had still to surmount the Donner Pass, which might more properly be called the Stevens Pass, because of its passage by the Stevens party of 1844. Snyder has given us a portent of extreme difficulty and possible disaster if an attempt should be made to negotiate the pass with wagons. Old Greenwood advised that the wagons be taken to pieces and hauled up with ropes. The immigrants were undeterred.

Lieut. James H. Carleton Writes Article for Newspaper

Although not printed in the *Journal* until February 12, 1846, this is the place to present the following interesting and descriptive article, "A Company of Oregon Emigrants on the great Prairie, by an Officer [Lieut. James H. Carleton] of Col. [Stephen W] Kearny's Dragoons!" This Dragoon contingent moved westward along the emigrant route to South Pass in the spring of 1845 and returned the same summer.

When we discovered the long train of waggons, it was so near the horizon, it was difficult to determine what it was by the naked eye, but when the spy glasses had been got out, and some one exclaimed, 'It's a company of Emigrants!' We felt the same interest and excitement which a passenger, who had been long at sea, would greet his ears from the look-out. The direction of the emigrants was northwest, and we gradually approached each other, and finally we struck the big trace just ahead of them. When they first observed us they felt a much deeper interest than ours was at seeing them—for our waggons not yet having come in sight, they supposed us a large band of Pawnees; but as soon as we had come near enough for them to witness the compactness and regularity of the column, they knew at once we were dragoons, and three or four of their principal men came galloping over to meet us. They expressed the utmost gratification when they were informed that it was the purpose of Col. Kearney [Kearny] to take his command so far upon the route as the Great South Pass, as at that point of their journey they would have escaped all danger of attack by the Indians.

The progress of a company of emigrants across what the geographies denominate as "The Great American Desert" is one of exceeding interest, and although the original of that progress presents to the mind only a large number of ox-waggons, with rustic drivers,—yet underneath it are matters that afford ground for far more serious consideration than one would at first thought imagine. It is not the mere performance of a long journey by these families, with their flocks and herds, and their little___ of worldly wealth, that calls for particular notice; though that alone, when looked upon in connection with the loneliness, the dangers and privations which attend it, is a matter worthy of peculiar attention: it is their destiny when that journey shall have been completed, and the independence that destiny may hereafter exert—not only on the country they have left behind, but on the world at large—that makes the simple passing along of these people—humble though they may be—a subject inviting the most profound reflections. They are journeying to the fulfillment of that destiny, and in that light, above all others, should they be regarded.

The company which we first saw, consisted as we were informed, of seventy men capable of bearing arms, besides a proportionate number of women and children. They had fifty large and well made waggons, each covered with white canvas, and drawn by three or four yoke of oxen. Wherever the country would admit of it the trace was formed by two parallel roads, five or six rods apart, and in such places the waggons moved in two opposite columns, there being

twenty-five in each column. The men were well armed — each one having a rifle, and many in addition to it, had a brace of pistols and a large knife, which they wore in their belts. Generally they were clad in coarse homespun cloth, with broad brimmed glazed hats. Some had buckskin hunting frocks, but the most of them wore loose blouses, made of Kentucky jane [jean]. These were secured around the waists by broad leather belts—and outside of all hung their powder horns and ball pouches. Every man seemed to be in fine health—full of energy and spirit, and so browned by exposure to the weather, so as to make him appear like any thing but an individual who would shrink from hardship or danger. The fact of their moving such a distance, and by such a route, is in itself of sufficient proof of their enterprise and courage, though they are abundantly able to show a still stronger one to whoever may have any curiosity of testing the point by molesting them while on their way, or even after they may arrive at their destination.

It was really a beautiful sight to see this company while on the march. The white topped waggons—the long line of cattle—the horsemen upon each flank, with their long rifles—the drivers with their big whips—all moving so regularly forward, that when viewed from a distance, it seemed as if it were united and propelled by the same power. A quarter of a mile in the rear came the loose stock, driven by some ten or fifteen mounted men, and consisting of horses, mules, oxen, cows, young cattle and calves. The continued rumble of so many waggons—the tramp of many hoofs, together with the lowing of the cows—the bleating of the calves—the occasional neighing of the horses and the braying of the mules, as they saw the animals of our long column to sweep past them: the tinkling of innumerable bells—the loud voices of the drivers—the sharp and frequent cracking of their long whips—and in addition, now and then arising above all might be heard the measure of some familiar hymn, or the burden of some old song: and boys and girls laughing as they frolicked along between the two columns—and mother singing to their little children in the waggons, or calling their attention to us and telling them ‘those are the soldiers going with us’—all these sights and all these sounds, though common and homely, have a peculiar attraction any where, but seen and heard here, and considered in connection with the purpose [s] which have drawn them away from the bounds of civilization, are doubly interesting. As we marched a great deal faster than the emigrants, we had only time to take a hurried glance at this company. This sketch may give the reader some idea of how they appear to the mere traveler. After marching a few miles further we encamped upon the bank of another well wooded stream that runs into the Little Blue!²⁷

From there the trail followed along a series of small streams like Thousand Springs Creek in the present state of Nevada till they got to near present day Wells, Nevada where they met the Humboldt River. By following the crooked, meandering Humboldt River valley west across the arid Great Basin, emigrants were able to get the water, grass, and wood needed by all travelers and their teams. The water turned increasingly alkaline as they progressed down the Humboldt, there were almost no trees so “firewood” usually consisted of broken brush and the grass was sparse and dried out—few liked the Humboldt River valley passage.

[The] Humboldt is not good for man nor beast...and there is not timber enough in three hundred miles of its desolate valley to make a snuff-box, or sufficient vegetation along its banks to shade a rabbit, while its waters contain the alkali to make soap for a nation.

Reuben Cole Shaw, 1849.²⁸

²⁷ Rogers, pp. 13-14. *Journal*, February 12, 1846.

²⁸ *Across The Plains In '49 A Vivid Picture of The Gold Rush of 1849*, Reuben Cole Shaw, Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley, 1948.

Ide and Todd Groups Cross Forty Mile Desert

At the end of the Humboldt River where it disappeared into the alkaline Humboldt Sink, the Ide and Todd groups had to cross the deadly Forty Mile Desert. On the other side of the desert, they found the Truckee River that led to the Carson Range and the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the last major obstacles before entering Alta or Northern California.²⁹

Ide and Todd Groups Ascend the Sierra Nevada Mountains

When the Ide and Todd groups began their ascent of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, many took apart the wagons and hauled them up ledge by ledge to the summit. At this point the large party began separating into several smaller parties, with each group determined to solve the problems of mountain travel in their own way.

12. William L. Todd's Story of Movement of Wagons From Fort Hall Through the Sierra Nevada Mountains

William Levi Todd later related his story of the movement of his wagons from Fort Hall through the Sierra Nevada Mountains:

We left Fort Hall on the 9th of August [1845], in company with ten waggons, and on St. Mary's [Humboldt] river we were joined by fifteen more. We went on smoothly until we reached the California mountains, which were 300 miles from our destination. There we met with 'tribulation' in the extreme. You can form no idea, nor can I give you any just description of the evils which beset us. "From the time we left the lake [now called Dormer] on the north side of the mountains [and east of the pass] until we arrived at the lake on the top, it was one continued jumping from one rocky cliff to another. We would have to roll over this big rock, then over that: then there was bridging a branch; then we had to lift our waggons by main force up to the top of a ledge of rocks, that was impossible for us to reduce, bridge or roll our waggons over, and in several places, we had to run our waggons broadside off a ledge, take off our cattle, and throw our waggons round with handspikes, and heave them up to the top, where our cattle had previously been taken. Three days were passed in this vexatious way, and at the end of that time, we found ourselves six miles from the lake on the north side of the mountain, and you never saw a set of fellows more happy than when we reached the summit. "When night came, we were very glad to take a blanket or buffalo robe, and lay down on the 'softest side of a rock' and were sorry to be disturbed from our sweet repose, when we were called in the morning to our labor. Here our flour gave out, and we could not get any for love or money. We had to live about ten days on poor beef until we met the 'packers' who had gone in advance to Capt. Sutter's, for provisions, where we got some flour for 20 cents per Ib. cash. "On the top of the mountain we found a beautiful lake [Lake Mary?], but quite small, and a few miles farther we came to a fine prairie [Summit Valley], about three miles long by three-fourths of a mile broad, full of springs and excellent water, and at the lower end a fine branch, which forms the head of Juba [Yuba] river, and the way we danced 'Juba' there, was a caution to all future emigrants. The difficulty of getting down the mountain was not as great as ascending it, though it was a work of labor, and looked at the first glance as impossible to be performed by horsemen, much more by teams and waggons. "Solomon Sublette, of St. Louis, who passed us at the Lake on the North side of the mountain, told us afterwards that he had no idea we could get through with our waggons. In some places we found it necessary to lock all four wheels coming down hill and then our waggons came very near turning over hind part before. At last on the 20th of October, our hardships were ended by our arrival at Fort Sutter, —where

²⁹ *California Trail.*

we concluded to spend the winter in the mountains, —that is, myself and waggon companions, five in number and Mr. and Mrs. Roulette.

William B. Ide Interviewed

Simeon Ide³⁰ says: About the year 1849 we had an interview with Mr. [William B.] Ide, in which he gave us an account of his 'trip overland' to California, in 1845. He did not go minutely into detail, but dwelt more particularly on the manner in which he ascended the Nevada Mountain; as that performance was the most laborious and difficult of the many difficulties they had to encounter. And not the least of these difficulties was the task of convincing the men with him that his plan of operations to accomplish the hard task then in prospect was practicable. Their guide had told them the only way was to 'take the wagons to pieces, and haul them up with ropes!' Our Yankee adventurer thought he would find a better way. He took a survey of the premises, on foot—climbing up the rugged 'cliffs of the rocks' till he reached the plane above, and finally concluded there was a 'better way'!

Mr. Ide found on the line of the ascent several abrupt pitches, between which were comparative level spaces for several rods distance, where the team might stand to draw up at least an empty wagon. Accordingly, he went to work, with as many of the men he could induce, by mild means, to assist him—removing rocks, trees, etc., and grading a patch 6 or 7 feet wide, up the several steep pitches and levels to the summit. The next thing to do, was to get a team of 5 or 6 yoke of cattle up onto the first inclined grade or semi-level. This was a tedious process. The first pitch was longer and more abrupt than any of the others. I think Mr. Ide told me they had to take one ox at a time, and by help of men, with ropes assist him up the first steep grade. "After having, by this process, their ox-team of 5 or 6 yoke in order, on the first 'level' (as we call it) they then, by the use of ropes and chains, attach a wagon to it, haul it up one 'hitch' then block the wheels, 'back' the team, take another hitch and another start forward—and they thus continue the operation till the wagon is on the first inclined grade! It was then, by a similar, but less tedious process, drawn up over the remaining steppes or 'pitches' to the level plain above—and the same operation was repeated with all their wagons.

And at the close of the second day of their arrival at the foot of Sierra Nevada, these then educated mountaineers found their entire retinue of wagons, 'goods and chattels' safely landed at the summit-level. Mr. Ide told me that these were the two hardest days' labor he experienced, for himself, men, women and children (and cattle, even), of the train during the entire journey. Nothing short of Yankee pluck could have conceived and accomplished such an undertaking!³¹

13. Sara Ide Healy's Account of Passage of Sierra Nevada Mountains

The following account was written by Sarah Ide Healy, William B. Ide's daughter, who was ___ years old when the group crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

We made our way to the place at which I am now writing. It is a beautiful valley, about ten miles long and two wide, situated between mountains, which are about 2,000 feet high, from the bed of Cache Creek, which runs through the valley!' Here are a few excerpts from Sarah Ide Healy's account of the passage of the Sierra Nevada:³²

It took us a long time to get about 2 miles over our rough, new-made road up the mountain, over the rough rocks, in some places, and so smooth in others, that the oxen would slip and fall on their knees; the blood from their feet and knees staining the rocks they passed over.

³⁰ See *Ide Biography* at footnote number 7.

³¹ *Roberts*, pp. 15-28.

³² *Ide Biography*.

Mother and I walked (we were so sorry for the poor, faithful oxen), all those two miles—all our clothing being packed on the horses' backs. It was a trying time—the men swearing at their teams, and beating them most cruelly, all along that rugged way.... We camped one night on a level place near a lake of very clear water; also very deep. During the night we were startled by a loud report that shook the ground under us like a heavy clap of thunder. We were terribly frightened. It proved to be an explosion of gun-powder—a keg or can of it in one of the wagons, which it set on fire; but afterwards circumstances led to the conclusion, that the man having charge of the wagon set it on fire, with the object in view of getting possession of a sum of money in a trunk, the owner of which having gone to California with the company that 'packed' from Fort Hall. [The owner was Thomas Knight, who returned from Sutter's to learn of his loss.] "In driving down into steep hollows, the men cut down small trees to tie to the hind end of each wagon, to keep it from turning over or slewing, and also to hold it back. In attempting to ride my pony down, the saddle came off over her head. She was so gentle as to stop for me to alight, and lead her the rest of the way down. "We camped one night in 'Steep Hollow! Our best milch-cow died the next morning. We did all we could to doctor her. We supposed she was poisoned by eating laurel leaves—grass being so scarce.

Traveling through the Sierra Nevadas, up hill and down; fording streams in the small valleys, with muddy bottoms, and small rivers, with large boulder rocks at the bottom; so large as to almost upset the wagon; driving over rocky roads—all this, though it might be considered healthy exercise, was somewhat fatiguing; and our Pilot wanted to stop a day or two to rest; but father did not think it best to, and drove on.

The next morning we continued our march without a Pilot; and, after traveling all day, we camped, as usual, for the night. Soon after getting quietly at rest, our Pilot came up, and, swearing as he came, said he was not responsible for our 'driving into a Canon that we could not get out of! My father seemed perfectly cool—said scarcely a word, for he knew that he was right. While Greenwood was scolding, I saw the stump of a small tree that was cut down the year before, which showed that we were camped on a road made last year—so all that needless alarm was soon ended.

Somewhere near the summit we came to a place where a company of ten or twelve wagons had camped the year before, and emptied their feather beds. They left their wagons and 'packed' their oxen into the valleys. We could see the tracks of these wagons very plainly—there having been no rain since the melting of the snow last spring. These were the first wagons that ever crossed the 'Plains' on their way to California, but were not brought into California till 1845. [Actually, the Bartleson party of 1841 started for California with wagons, but abandoned them before reaching the Humboldt. The Chiles party of 1843 was the first to reach California with wagons, which were left near Owens Lake.]

Our Emigrants, on coming, to this Plain, all made a rush for the long sought for California; ambitious to be first—not much waiting one for another; the best teams leaving the rest; every one looking out for himself, only. Some went to one part of the country, and some to another. I have since met but few of our first company, except those who passed our house on their way to Oregon.

The rest of the way we traveled very slow; our cattle—the small remnant of the flock we started from Illinois with being poor, and nearly worn out—having lost so many oxen as to be obliged to work cows in their place. While on the way, near the Humboldt, the water was very bad. Some of our best oxen became poor and unfit for work, and were left on the sandy desert, some 40 miles this way of it, to shift for themselves; and they probably died, or were 'cared for' by the Indians. An ox would lie down in his yoke, and could not be got up; so we would unyoke and leave him. Some of them were able to walk after the yoke was taken off: these we drove on as long as they were able to go, hoping they would hold out till we came to good water. Our cattle, all told, numbered only 65, when we moved onto our Rancho in April, 1846.

“On the 25th day of October, 1845, my father drove down into the American River valley, and in a few days more we camped near Sutter’s Fort, where Sacramento City is now!”

Coming up the face of the Sierra was the most difficult part of our trek. Old Greenwood had determined we would have to take every wagon apart, and lift them by pulleys, one at a time. He had traveled the route the previous year and this is what they had done. I surveyed the route, and determined we could still use the oxen, but only on the more level parts of the mountain. We moved oxen to each of the areas with less incline. We used pulleys for the steepest areas, but were able to move our wagons up more quickly with the assistance of the oxen.³³



The Swasey-Todd Party was made up of young men without families or much gear. Instead of laboriously taking the wagons apart, Ide and other men built road “bridges” to connect one level spot to the next. Even so, it took a long and strenuous effort to travel two miles to reach the summit of the Sierra Nevada. Nearby they found evidence of a pioneer party from the year before. The party had emptied their feather beds, unloaded the wagons, and “packed” the oxen. Their wagon tracks were still visible from the year before.

14. Benjamin Franklin Bonney Writes About Traversing the Sierra Nevada Mountains

Benjamin Franklin Bonney, who was about 7 years old at the time, later wrote:

At the foot of the Sierras we camped by a beautiful, ice-cold, crystal-clear mountain stream. We camped there for three days to rest the teams and let the women wash the clothing and get things fixed up. My sister Harriet was fourteen, and with my cousin Lydia Bonney, Truman Bonney, myself and other boys of the party, we put in three delightful days wading in the stream. It was October and the water was low. In many places there were sand and gravel bars. On one of these gravel bars I saw what I thought was wheat, when I picked it up I found it was heavy ... I took one of the pieces about the size of a small pea into camp with me. (One of our companions) Dr. Gildea asked me for it. That evening he came to my father, and showing him the dull yellow metal I had given him, said, “What your boy found today is pure gold. Keep the matter to yourself: we will come back here next spring and get rich.”³⁴

³³ *Pioneer Children on the Journey West*, Emmy Werner. (Hereafter referred to as *Pioneer Children*.) *Pioneers of California*, Donovan Lewis. (Hereafter referred to as *Pioneers of California*.) Rogers, pp. 25-27. *Ide Biography*.

³⁴ *Across the Plains by Prairie Schooner Personal Narrative of B. F. Bonney of His Trip to Sutter’s Fort, California, in 1846, and of His Pioneer Experiences In Oregon During the Days of Oregon’s Provisional Government*, Fred Lockley, Koke-Tiffany Co., Eugene, Ore. (Hereafter referred to as *Bonney*.) https://archive.org/stream/acrossplainsbypr00bonn/acrossplainsbypr00bonn_djvu.txt



Donner Lake From The Top of Stephens (Donner) Pass³⁵

The original trail of 1844-45 came along the north shore of Donner Lake and then up the extremely rocky, nearly impassable slope to the top of the granite “wall” at Stephens Pass. One emigrant, William Todd in 1845, described the climb very well when he noted that “it was one continued jumping from one rocky cliff to another. We would have to roll over this big rock, then over that...then we had to lift our wagons by main force up to the top of a ledge of rocks.” This original trail was replaced by late 1846 with the easier alternate trail over Roller Pass.³⁶

15. Sarah Ide Healy Describes Travel Down the West Slope of Sierra Nevada Mountains to Sutter’s Fort

William B. Ide’s daughter, Sarah Ide Healy, tells how the Ide group made their way down the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains to Sutter’s Fort.

In driving down into “Steep Hollow,” the men cut down small trees to tie to the hind of each wagon, to keep it from turning over ... and also to hold it back. In attempting to ride my pony down, the saddle came off her head. She was so gentle as to stop for me to alight, and I led her the rest of the way down. We camped that night in “Steep Hollow.” Our best milch cow died the next morning. We did all we could to doctor her. We supposed she was poisoned by eating laurel leaves--grass being so scarce.³⁷

Sarah Ide, nevertheless, remembered the trip fondly.

To me the journey was a pleasure trip, so many beautiful wild flowers, such wild scenery, mountains, rocks and streams--something new at every turn, or at least every day!³⁸

Todd and Ide Groups Arrive at Sutter’s Fort October 1845

The emigrants straggled into Sutter’s Fort over a two-week period. The Todd group arrived on Sunday October 19, 1845. The Ide group reached the Fort on October 25, 1845, just about the last party, with 65 cattle left of the huge herds with which they’d started the journey. Both animals and people were exhausted and in need of plentiful food and rest.

Sutter Fort New Helvetia Diary

The following entries complete those pertaining to the arrivals of immigrants (except Hasting’s party) at Sutter’s Fort by way of the Sierra Nevada in 1845. The fort was a most convenient

³⁵ Photo by Jim Moorman.

³⁶ *Journal*, Thursday, August 13, 1846, p. 2.

³⁷ *Pioneer Children. Pioneers of California. Ide Biography.*

³⁸ *Ide Biography.*

check point. Its Diary is therefore of incomparable importance, but it does not list all immigrants by name, and the number of wagons recorded falls short of the fifty or sixty which then came through the Sierra. Pertinent entries in the New Helvetia Diary from October 1845 follow:

Tuesday 7th [October] Today a party from the United States arrived having with them Mr. [Solomon] Sublette of St Louis they report 60 waggons in the Mountains from the U. S. bound for this country.

Friday 10th Two Emigrants from the hind company of 15 Waggons came in today for provision and immediately left again.

Saturday 11th Arrived Dr. [William B.] Gildea with his party from Waggons in the Mountains—Dr. Carter also came in today

Sunday 12th Mr. Bonny [Jarvis Bonny] and family came in from the Mountains.

Tuesday 14th Mr. Bonny went to Mountains with a horse.

Wednesday 15th G. M. Smith came in from the Mountains with some two or three more from the Waggons and report the Waggons most on the plains.

Thursday 16th The launch started below—Passingers J. R. Snyder, ... Mr. Martin,...

Friday 17th 5 Waggons from the Mountains arrived last night about 12 o'clock.

Sunday 19th Last night one more wagon arrived from the Mountains belonging to Mr. Hess. Today two more wagons arrived belonging to Mr. [William L.] Todd and Mr. Rollette [William R. Roulette] —4 or 5 Wagons more are expected immediately.

Monday 20th Arrived 5 waggons of the Emigrants—engaged a number of them to work at the Fort.

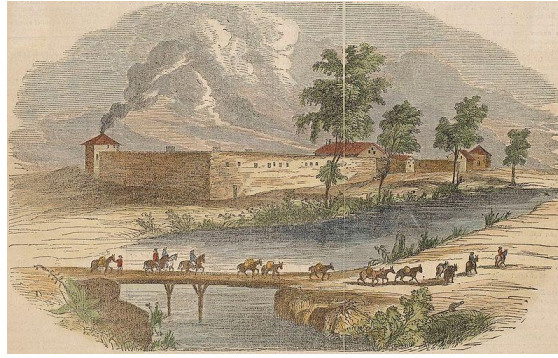
Tuesday 21st A number more of the Waggons from the Mountains arrived today.

Thursday 23d Today a meeting of the Emigrants was called to take into consideration the late news from the seat of Government concerning the introduction of Foreigners into this country—they adjourned over until Monday next. A German family arrived today from the U. S.

Friday October 24th 3 more waggons arrived from the Mountains today.

Saturday 25th 4 Waggons more came in today. Mr. [William B.] Ide's and Mr. [Eugene E] Skinner's.

Wednesday 29th Arrd P [Peter] Lassen & [Ezekiel] Merritt & [William C.] Moon with grindstones!



Sutter's Fort³⁹

Sutter's Fort

Sutter's Fort was the most important and interesting man-made feature of the immense rancho which "Captain" John A. Sutter had named "New Helvetia" following its grant to him in 1841 by Governor Juan B. Alvarado. This grant of eleven leagues extended from a line south of the American River north to the Three Buttes near modern Marysville. The fort was built of adobe bricks and measured about 320 by 150 feet, with walls about 18 feet high and 3 feet thick. There were bastions mounting cannon at the southeast and northwest corners. Bordering the inclosure there were inside many rooms, housing the guard, blacksmith shop, granary, tools, distillery, work shops, and employees. The flag of Mexico floated above, and an Indian sentinel paced his beat in front of the main entrance. The fort was on a slight rise and was surrounded by corrals and wheat fields. The location of the fort favored Sutter's ventures, such as farming, trading, trapping, and the use of Indian labor. It was perfectly situated as an arrival point for immigrants in northern California from the States or from Oregon. Sutter had shrewdly sent Greenwood to Fort Hall to divert travel directly to his establishment. He afforded employment to a few persons; others wintered at the nearby foothills or plains, or went to the Cache Creek-Napa-Sonoma area. We have noted the arrival at Sutter's of Peter Lassen on October 29th. We shall see how "Old Pete" within a day caused Ide to decide upon a different destination.⁴⁰

16. Benjamin Franklin Bonney Writes About Events at Sutter's Fort

In observing events at the Sutter's Fort, Benjamin Franklin Bonney wrote:

There was a large cookhouse at the fort, where we children liked to watch them doing the cooking. They cooked here for a large number of Indian laborers. In addition to the Indian workers, there were a lot of Indian boys who were trained to do the work. The Indian boys were fed in a peculiar way. They ground barley for them, made it into gruel, and emptied it in a long trough. When the big dinner bell rang, the Indian boys would go to the trough and with their fingers pick up the porridge and eat it.

So many emigrants were crowded into the fort that winter that as a result there was a good deal of sickness ... A large number of the natives died as well as some of the emigrants, mainly children.⁴¹

³⁹ California State Library, California History Section, Picture Catalog, View of Captain Sutter's Fort, near Sacramento City, California. <https://calisphere.org/item/c1012f1f6d8e2ab1bf76ad104ae0ef01/>

⁴⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Helvetia https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21507

⁴¹ Bonney.

William B. Ide Settles North of Sutter's Fort

William B. Ide settled north of Fort Sutter where he worked for Peter Lassen on Rancho Bosquejo. Americans were allowed to settle under special arrangements with the Mexican government, and under the jurisdiction of General Vallejo.⁴²

17. Sarah Ide Healy Reports Ide's Settlement North of Sutter's Fort

The Sacramento with the approach of winter, shelter for his family became Ide's immediate concern. Little time could be spent in observing the bustle and the fascinating sights in and around Sutter's Fort. Peter Lassen induced Ide to go to the Lassen rancho on the upper Sacramento at Deer Creek. Ide, having a circular saw and mill irons, was to build a sawmill there, and he was to be furnished living quarters by Lassen. Ide and his family left Sutter's Fort on October 30th, arrived at Lassen's place and occupied a one room house there. Lassen arrived later with another family, in whose favor he dispossessed the Ides.

Sarah Ide Healy tells how that crisis was met.

This was about the middle of November 1845. We packed everything into our wagons; and, getting our cattle together, started up the river and forded it. After going about seven miles, we came to the camp of one family (a Mr. Tusting [William I. Tustin] who had bargained to take care of a Mr. [William G.] Chard's cattle, and live on his Rancho—had camped near Sacramento River, on H. R. Thome's [Robert H. Thomes'] Rancho, in order to have the company of Mr. Thome's man who had charge of his (Mr. T's) cattle. We camped near them, they being very anxious to have us remain with them all winter.

As the rainy season had already commenced, the weather was stormy. Father [William B. Ide] with two other men, built a log-cabin. All of us lived in it until April, 1846. During the winter, which was a very wet one, we were surrounded with high water-floods—our cattle swimming from one bank to another—Indians yelling night and day, while the river was at its height— we living on beef, butter and milk, with but little bread and no vegetables. Perhaps 100 lbs. of flour was all we had during the winter and spring, or until the wheat grew. A little wheat was a treat to us. These privations (not to mention many others), made us somewhat homesick. "We could get but little wheat to sow, which was bought of Capt. Sutter. We could not buy flour at any price: it was not in the country. There were eight in our family, including [and] a Mr. Tustin, his wife and child. Three young men—a Mr. Boker [Henry Booker], having charge of Mr. Thome's cattle and horses—a Mr. Belden, an eastern gentleman, and a Mr. [Henry] Pitts, who were weather-bound, and were of course some company for us, all lived in a log-cabin several months. They made themselves a canoe, and the two last named men put into it a supply of meat, their firearms, ammunition, etc., left us, and made their journey by water to some point down the river where they could embark on a larger craft

One of these men [Mr. Josiah Belden] owned the farm now known as the 'Ide Rancho.' Mr. Belden gave father one-half of it for living on and taking care of his (Mr. B's) cattle three years. After the discovery of gold, Mr. B. sold his half to my father, my husband, and my brother James; each paying him \$2,000—Mr. B's cattle being included. In April, 1846, we moved from the first cabin ever built in Tehama County into our partly finished cabin on Mr. B's farm. The year 1844 had seen the granting of most of the ranchos at the upper Sacramento. Ide would soon learn of those ranchos and of their grantees. East of the Sacramento at Deer Creek was Peter Lassen's Bosquejo; at or near Mill Creek was Rio de los Molinas, Albert G. Toomes; extending up river beyond Antelope Creek was Rio de Berrendos, Job F. Dye; farther north and on the west side of the Sacramento above Cottonwood Creek was San Buenaventura, Pierson B. Reading; south of Red Bank Creek was La Barranca Colorada, Josiah Belden; south

⁴² *Pioneer Children. Pioneers of California.*

of Belden and extending to Elder Creek was Las Flores, William G. Chard; south of Chard was Los Saucos, Robert H. Thomes; south of Thomes and opposite Lassen was the ranch of the squatter William C. "Old" Moon, with whom lived Ezekiel Merritt. The richer bottom lands were generally subject to overflow; most of the uplands were suitable for grazing. When Ide came to the upper Sacramento there were very few whites in the area; it was indeed the northern frontier of the Sacramento Valley. John Bidwell says that as late as December 1847, there was in the Sacramento Valley north of the Buttes a settler population of only 58 males and 24 females. The fall of 1845 had come to the upper Sacramento country. Frosts had touched with brown and yellow the sycamores, cottonwoods, and willows along the river—a pretty sight but not as beautiful as the flaming reds and vivid yellows of the maples of New Hampshire and Vermont, well remembered by most of the Ide family. Salmon ran the river and spawned in its tributaries. Immense sturgeon were taken later, some weighing over two hundred pounds. Deer were plentiful, and there were some bands of elk and antelope. Wild grape vines climbed the trees in the rich bottoms. The vines on one such tree were estimated to yield well over a half ton of grapes. At some time during that fall or the ensuing winter Ide made a reconnaissance of the Belden rancho, Barranca Colorada, which he was to occupy. About 3 miles north of the present town of Gerber, Tehama County, is the southeast corner and point of beginning of the 1858 survey of the rancho. About 1.2 miles north of that point and near the west bank of the Sacramento River the survey map shows Post 7. About 150 feet northwest of that post is shown an "Ide House," not further described in the field notes. That house is presumed to have been the one, then partially completed, which the Ides occupied in April 1846. There is now a small corral and loading chute in the vicinity. The rancho survey shows an interesting feature, named "Old French Ford," at Post B.C. 10, opposite the north tip of the present Blackberry Island. The name of the ford probably derived from early crossings there by trappers of French descent. The ford is shown up river from Ide's house in the Pierson B. Reading map of 1849. Jedediah Smith and John Work were among those who made early crossings of the Sacramento in this vicinity. Another Ide house is shown on the plat of the township adjoining Barranca Colorada on the north. It is plotted just south of Red Bank Creek, the north boundary of the rancho, and it seems to have been the so-called "Massachusetts House" named in the Ide Probate case. Its location was north of the east portion of present Riverside Avenue and near the Corning Canal. Barranca Colorada contains over 17,700 acres. Extending northwest from its southeast corner to the mouth of Red Bank Creek is a bench which rises about twenty feet above the large area to the east, which became known as "Ide's Bottom" and which today is practically devoid of habitations. The bench marks the beginning of extensive uplands, which continue some six miles westward within the rancho. Commencing at the present City of Red Bluff, first called Red Bluffy, are low hills. Elevations increase to Mount Shasta, about ninety miles to the north and visible from points on Ide's rancho. Lassen Peak, named for "Old Pete" bears forty miles northeast from the Ide Bottom. To the south for over 125 miles reaches the great plain of the Sacramento Valley. Within such a pleasant scene Ide was destined to spend most of his life in California. In early June 1846, Henry L. Ford rode to the Ide home to tell Ide that "Gen. Castro was on his way to drive all the Americans from the country."⁴³

Henry and Margaret J. Hussey Bird and Family Move to Oregon

Henry Bird was born on December 15, 1815, in Mason County, Kentucky. He came to Sangamon County, Illinois in 1836, and married there on September 30, 1841 to Margaret J. Hussey, who was born on April 5, 1821, in Sangamon County. Two children were born there. In 1845, Henry, age 30, and his family moved overland in wagons to Yamhill County, Oregon.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Ide Biography*.

⁴⁴ *Power*, pp. 120-121.

Robert Caden Keyes Goes to California With Drove of Cattle

Robert Caden Keyes was born in 1818 in Monroe County, Virginia. He came to Sangamon County, Illinois with his parents in 1830 at age 27. In 1845, he went to California with a drove of cattle belonging to other parties. From there he went to Oregon, and then returned to California, where he met his sister Mrs. Reed, on July 4, 1847, at the house of Capt. Yontz, where a party had assembled to celebrate the national anniversary.

Keyes was fourteen years superintendent of the Almaden Quicksilver mines in California. He was married about 1853, in California to Mrs. Roberts, of Australia, but of English birth and parentage. She was the widow of an Episcopal clergyman, who was married in Australia and died soon after coming to California. They had three children, and Robert died on September 15, 1865. His widow and children lived in San Jose, California.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Power*, p. 428.

1846

In 1846, eighty-one people left Springfield and Sangamon County for the west coast. They were a part of the estimated 1,500 people who migrated to California in that year. Two important events in American history occurred in 1846 and most of the Sangamon County emigrants participated in one of those events. They wrote ten letters describing their trip and these historic events.

The first event was the Bear Flag Revolt and the resulting creation of California as a part of the United States. William L. Todd and William Ide both participated in the Bear Flag Revolt in June of 1846. Todd wrote two letters describing that event and he also designed and made the first California flag. Todd's design is still the design of the California state flag. Ide led the Bear Flag Revolt and was the first President of the California Republic. Descriptions of the events surrounding the Bear Flag Revolt are included to give context to Todd and Ides' participation.

The second event was the Donner Party tragedy in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. The Party of forty left Springfield's Public Square on April 16, 1846. Their story is familiar to many and is a classic account of the tragedy experienced by Americans traveling west. I include descriptions of the event as it was Springfield related and puts the member letters and descriptions in context. James F. Reed's four letters give detailed descriptions of that party's fatal trip.

18. William L. Todd Letter From California to His Father

April 17, 1846

Journal, Thursday, August 13, 1846.⁴⁶

On April 17, 1846, William L. Todd wrote a letter to his father Dr. John Todd of Springfield, Illinois. The letter was published in the *Journal* on Thursday, August 13, 1846.

INTERESTING FROM CALIFORNIA:

Dr. Todd of this city, has politely furnished us with a letter from his son, William L. Todd, who went out with the emigration to California, in the spring of 1845, dated on the 17th of April, from which we make the following extracts. He states that the company in which he belonged, reached Fort Hall, without interruption. At Fort Hall, and on the road there, Mr. Todd and others heard so many reports of the superior advantages of California over Oregon, that some of his company, including himself, changed their destination to that country. Nor had he regretted this change, although he was not in love with California. William L. Todd says:

We left Fort Hall on the 9th of August, in company with ten waggons, and on St. Mary's extreme. You can form no idea, nor can I give you any just description of the evils which beset us. From the time we left the lake on the north side of the mountains until we arrived at the Lake on the top, it was one continued jumping from one rocky cliff to another. We would have to roll over this big rock, then over that; then there was bridging a branch; then we had to lift our waggons by main force up to the top of a ledge of rocks, that it was impossible for us to reduce, bridge or roll our waggons over, and in several places, we had to run our waggons broadside off a ledge, take off our cattle, and throw our waggons round with handspikes, and heave them up to the top, where our cattle had been previously taken. Three days were passed in this vexatious way and at the end of that time, we found ourselves six miles from the lake on the north side of the mountain, and you never saw a set of fellows more happy than when we reached the summit. When night came, we were very glad to take a blanket or buffalo robe,

⁴⁶ *Journal*, Thursday, August 13, 1846, p. 2.

and lay down on the softest side of a rock, and were sorry to be disturbed from our sweet repose, when we were called in the morning to our labor.

Here our flour gave out, and we could not get any for love or money. We had to live about ten days on poor beef until we met the packers, who had gone on in advance to Capt. Sutter's for provisions, where we got some flour for 20 cents per lb. cash. On the top of the mountain we found a beautiful lake, but quite small, and a few miles farther we came to a fine prairie, about three miles long by three-fourths of a mile broad, full of springs of excellent water, and at the lower end a fine branch, which forms the head of Juba river, and the way we danced Juba there, was a caution to all future emigrants. The difficulty of getting down the mountain was not as great as in ascending it, though it was a work of labor, and looked at the first glance as impossible to be performed by horsemen, much more by teams and waggons.

Solomon Sublette, of St. Louis, who passed us at the Lake on the north side of the mountain, told us afterwards that he had no idea we could get through with our waggons. In some places, we found it necessary to lock all four of the wheels coming down hill, and then our waggons came very near turning over hind part before, on to the cattle. At last, on the 20th of October, our hardships were ended by our arrival at Fort Suter, where we concluded to spend the winter in the mountains, that is, myself and waggon companions, five in number, and Mr. and Mrs. Roulette. We made our way to the place at which I am now writing.

It is a beautiful valley, about ten miles long and two wide, situated between mountains, which are about 2,000 feet high, from the bed of Cache Creek, which runs through the valley. In the mountains, there are deer and bear in abundance, and about 15 miles from here there are plenty of elk. The valley is about 60 miles from the bay of San Francisco, about 40 from the Pacific ocean. Bodega is the nearest port. As yet I have seen but very little of the country, and must confess that in regard to the part I have seen I am not as much pleased as I expected that I should be.

So far as I have seen the country generally is very mountainous, with here and there vallies suitable for cultivation. Those few vallies are generally taken up by the Mexicans; and should there be some not taken up, it would be impossible for foreigners to get hold of them -- the recent laws of Mexico forbidding any officers of this government to grant land to foreigners. In fact, the laws are framed to prevent foreigners from coming to the country unless they have passports. I have never been asked for my passports, but if I had, should have been inclined to do, as Dr. Ball did on a similar requisition, shew my rifle.

I expect in a few weeks to visit the southern portion of this country, perhaps as far down as the Lower Pueblo, 350 miles. I wish to visit San Louis, San Joseph, Monterey, Yerby Benna (St. Francisco), and in the fall design to go up the coast on the north side of the bay as far as the mountains, for the purpose of examining that portion of California.

I should be more pleased with this country if the seasons were more favorable. From the 1st of May to the 1st of October, it is one continued drouth; and from the 1st of October to the 1st of May, it rains, off and on, all the time. The only way by which crops can with tolerable certainty be secured, is by irrigation, or the overflow of the ground by some water course. There are many places where this can never be cultivated. The best locations are all taken up.

If there are any persons in Sangamon who speak of crossing the rocky mountains to this country, tell them my advice is, to stay at home. There you are well off. You can enjoy all the comforts of life, live under a good government, and have peace and plenty around you -- a country whose soil is not surpassed by any in the world, having good seasons and yielding timely crops. Here every thing is on the other extreme -- the government is tyrannical, the weather unseasonable, poor crops, and the necessities of life not to be had except at the most extorted prices, and frequently not then. In the winter season, it is impossible for a horse to go about -- the soil being so loose that the first rains make a perfect mortar of it, and your

horse frequently sinks down so much that you are compelled to jump off in the mud knee deep to help him out.

I do not, however, believe there was ever a more beautiful climate than we have in this country. During the whole winter we have delightful weather, except when it rains. We do not need fire except for cooking, -- nor have I seen during the whole winter ice thicker than a window glass, although we are in sight of snow the whole year round. Most all day long, we could be seen in winter with our coats off walking in the neighborhood of our cabin -- except when we were off hunting for a term of 4 or 6 days. The Mexicans talk every spring and fall here of driving the foreigners out of the country. They must do it this year, or they never can do it. There will be a revolution before long, and probably this country will be re-annexed to the United States. If here, I will take a hand in it.

William L. Todd

By the time this letter was published on August 13, 1846, William L. Todd had been as good as his word. On June 14, 1846, he and other American settlers raised the Bear Flag in the plaza at Sonoma, California denoting that Alta California was now an independent republic.

19. Mr. Skinner Letter From New Helvetia (Sacramento), Upper California

April 6, 1846

Journal, August 20, 1846⁴⁷

CALIFORNIA: The letter of Mr. Wm. L. Todd, published in our last paper, presents California as a point for emigration, in a most unfavorable light. So far as Mr. T's personal knowledge extended, he has no doubt given a true representation. Mr. Skinner, another emigrant, who left Putnam county last spring a year, writes thus under date of New Helvetia, Upper California, 6th April, 1846, which, as far as it goes, confirms the statements of the letter before referred to.

I have seen considerable of this country, and the coast part; it is a most delightful country, very productive, but a great scarcity of timber. In fact, there is but little or no timber in California, except in the mountains, where there is some excellent red wood and pine. Some of the red wood measures 22 1/2 feet in diameter, and three hundred feet high! This country is without a government, and as it is impossible for me to live without being governed, I shall pick up my traps and go to Oregon. California is a delightful country to live in, as regards climate, but I do not think the Sacramento will ever be much of a farming country, as all the land you plant needs watering to insure a crop.

The James Frazier Reed Family

James Frazier Reed (November 14, 1800 – July 24, 1874) was a businessman, soldier and, most notably, an organizing member of the ill-fated Donner Party emigration to California, in 1846. Reed's parents came to America from County Armagh in Northern Ireland and settled in Virginia. Reed remained there until he was twenty, when he left for the lead mines of Illinois. In 1831, Reed moved to Springfield, Illinois, where he went into the mercantile business and was successful enough to buy a farm near Springfield. He began to manufacture cabinet furniture at a point on the Sangamon River seven miles east of Springfield. Reed employed a large number of men, and a village grew up there that was called Jamestown in his honor. While living there, Reed ran several businesses and took part in the Black Hawk War of



James F. and Margaret Backenstoe

⁴⁷ *Journal*, August 20, 1846.

1832, serving with Abraham Lincoln. In 1835, he married Margret Backenstoe, a widow with two daughters, a baby and an elder daughter, Virginia Elizabeth Backenstoe, who went by the name Virginia Reed. The Reeds had 4 more children in Springfield: Martha Jane (called Patty); James F., Jr.; Thomas Keyes; and Gershom Francis, who died as an infant.

In about 1845, James F. Reed decided to head west to California. He organized a small group that included George Donner and his brother Jacob, along with their families and hired hands. Each head of household had three wagons in addition to two supply wagons. Reed had a particularly comfortable wagon made for his family to ride in, which has since become legendary.

George Donner's Advertisement: Who Wants to Go to California?

March 18, 1846.

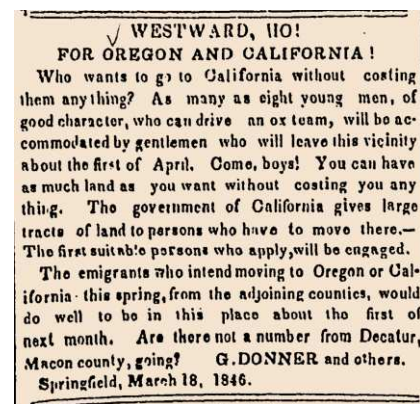
Journal, Thursday, April 2, 1846.⁴⁸

On April 2, 1846, George Donner placed a recruiting advertisement in the *Journal* newspaper seeking young men for driving ox teams in the coming departure of the Donner group.

WESTWARD, HO! FOR OREGON AND CALIFORNIA!

Who wants to go to California without costing them anything? As many as eight young men, of good character, who can drive an ox team, will be accommodated by gentlemen who will leave this vicinity about the first of April. Come, boys! You can have as much land as you want without costing you any thing. The government of California gives large tracts of land to persons who have to move there.— The first suitable persons who apply, will be engaged.

The emigrants who intend moving to Oregon or California this spring, from the adjoining counties, would do well to be in this place about the first of next month. Are there not a number from Decatur, Macon county, going?



G. DONNER and others,

Springfield, March 18, 1846.

Patrick Breen Joins Donner Party

Patrick Breen was born in Ireland circa 1805. In 1828 he emigrated to Canada and some time thereafter moved to Iowa territory, where he became the owner of a farm. In about 1831 he married Margaret. Breen was naturalized in 1844. Patrick and Margaret had 7 seven children – John, Edward, Patrick, Simon, Peter, James and Isabella. In the spring of 1846, the Breen family joined a party of emigrants bound for California. The party's ill-fated journey across the Sierra Nevada Mountains was partially documented in the diary Breen kept while stranded in a mountain camp at Donner (then called Truckee) Lake. After their rescue, the family arrived at Sutter's Fort, New Helvetia, in March of 1847. The Breens then lived for a short time on the Consumnes River and then in San Jose. In February of 1848 they settled in San Juan Bautista – becoming its first non-Spanish-speaking residents – where Breen would live as a rancher for the remainder of his life. Patrick Breen died in 1868. Though of little formal education, Patrick Breen was able to read and write – abilities which were considered a mark of distinction for an Irishman of his time in this country – and thus could document one of the more tragic events of the nineteenth century overland journeys.

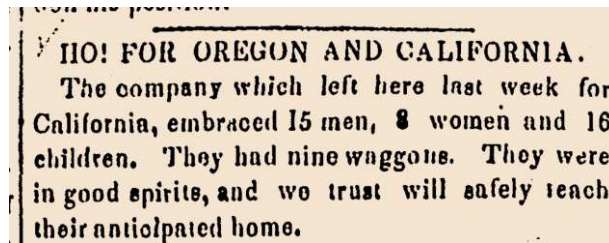
⁴⁸ *Journal*, Thursday, April 2, 1846, p. 3.

The Donner Party: Leaves Springfield for California

April 16, 1846

Journal, Thursday, April 23, 1846.

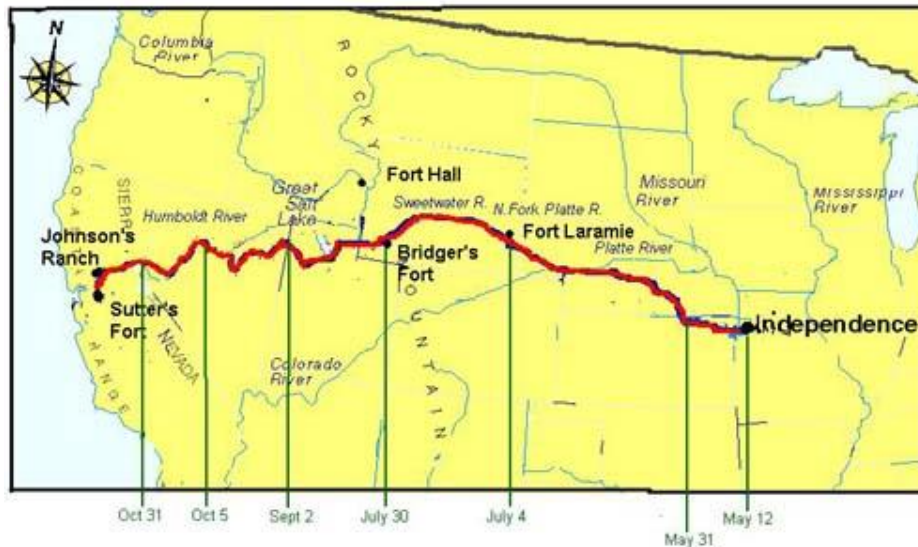
On April 16, 1846, the Reeds and Donners left Springfield and started their overland journey to California. The group consisted of 15 men, 8 women and 16 children, for a total of 39. They had 9 wagons.⁴⁹



Wagon Trains Over the Great Plains to the Sierra Nevada Mountains

On May 19, 1846, the Donner Party joined a large wagon train led by William H. Russell. Between May and July 1846, more than five hundred wagon trains were strung out along the Great Plains, headed west. Hastings had posted a widely read advertisement of a new route to Salt Lake, then through the desert, for those interested in getting to California “the easy way.” All went relatively well as far as Wyoming, when the group took an unplanned route, and ran into increasing difficulties.

TRAIL OF THE DONNER PARTY



The Donner Party: Newspaper Reports (1846-1847)

The following contemporary articles retell the story of the Donner Party. Tamsen Donner and James F. Reed wrote several as did William B. Ide and William L. Todd.

⁴⁹ *Journal*, Thursday, April 23, 1846, p. 2. *Illinois Times*, Springfield, January 25, 1996, pp. 10-11. Doug Pokorski, *Journal*, April 14, 1996, p. 5. John Power, *History of the Early Settlers of Sangamon County, Illinois*, Springfield, E. A. Wilson and Company, 1876, pp. 600-601. (Hereafter referred to as *Power*.) Illustration courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

**20. Tamsen Donner⁵⁰ Letter to Springfield Friend
From Junction of North and South Platte
June 16, 1846⁵¹**

Tamsen Donner was born in 1801 in Massachusetts. As a young woman, she traveled to teaching posts in Maine and North Carolina. After the death of her first husband and son, Tamsen married George Donner, an older widower. In the spring of 1846, when Tamsen was 44, she set off with George, their five daughters ages 13 to 3, and some 80 other men, women and children on the California-Oregon Trail, bound for San Francisco Bay. As everyone knows, the Donner Party was trapped in the Sierra Nevada by freak early snows and resorted to cannibalism to survive. When rescuers arrived, Tamsen sent off her daughters, while she made the fatal decision to stay behind with her dying husband. Tamsen's body -- and the journal she kept throughout the trip -- were never found.



Tamsen Donner

My Old Friend,

We are now on the Platte, two hundred miles from Fort Laramie. Our journey so far has been pleasant, the roads have been good, and food plentiful. The water for part of the way has been indifferent, but at no time have our cattle suffered for it. Wood is now very scarce, but "buffalo chips" are excellent, they kindle quickly and retain heat surprisingly. We had this morning buffalo steaks broiled upon them that had the same flavor they would have had upon hickory coals.

We feel no fear of Indians, our cattle graze quietly around our encampment unmolested.

Two or three men will go hunting twenty miles from camp; and last night two of our men lay out in the wilderness rather than ride their horses after a hard chase.

Indeed, if I do not experience something far worse than I have yet done, I shall say the trouble is all in getting started. Our wagons have not needed much repair, and I cannot yet tell in what respects they could be improved. Certain it is, they cannot be too strong. Our preparations for the journey might have been in some respects bettered.

Bread has been the principal article of food in our camp. We laid in 150 pounds of flour and 75 pounds of meat for each individual and I fear bread will be scarce. Meat is abundant. Rice and beans are good articles on the road, cornmeal, too, is acceptable. Linsey dresses are the most suitable for children. Indeed, if I had one, it would be acceptable. There is so cool a breeze at all times on the plains that the sun does not feel so hot as one would suppose.

We are now four hundred and fifty miles from Independence. Our route at first was rough, and through a timbered country, which appeared to be fertile. After striking the prairie, we found a first-rate road, and the only difficulty we have had, has been in crossing the creeks. In that, however, there has been no danger.

I never could have believed we could have travelled so far with so little difficulty. The prairie between the Blue and the Platte rivers is beautiful beyond description. Never had I seen so varied a country, so suitable for cultivation. Everything was new and pleasing; the Indians

⁵⁰ <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127902353>

⁵¹ *Journal*, July 23, 1846. *The Best Land Under Heaven*, Michael Wallis, Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, 2017, pp. 112-114.

frequently come to see us, and the chiefs of a tribe breakfasted at our tent this morning. All are so friendly that I cannot help feeling sympathy and friendship for them. But on one sheet what can I say?

Since we have been on the Platte, we have had the river on one side and the ever varying mounds on the other, and have travelled through the bottom lands from one to two miles wide, with little or no timber. The soil is sandy, and last year on account of the dry season, the emigrants found grass here scarce. Our cattle are in good order, and when proper care has been taken, none have been lost. Our milch cows have been of great service, indeed. They have been more advantage than our meat. We have plenty of butter and milk.

We are commanded by Captain Russell, an amiable man. George Donner is himself yet. He crows in the morning and shouts out, "Chain up, boys! Chain up!" with much authority as though he was "something in particular. John Denton is still with us. We find him useful in the camp. Hiram Miller and Noah James are in good health and doing well. We have the best people in our company, and some, too, that are not so good.

Buffaloes show themselves frequently.

We have found the wild tulip, the primrose, the lupine, the eardrop, the larkspur, and creeping hollyhock, and a beautiful flower resembling the blossom of a beech tree, but in bunches as large as a small sugar loaf, and of every variety of shade, to red and green.

I botanize and read some, but cook "heaps" more. There are four hundred and twenty wagons as far as we have heard, on the road between here and Oregon and California.

Give our love to all inquiring friends. God bless them.

Yours truly,
Mrs. George [Tamsen] Donner

21. James F. Reed Letter From South Fork of the Nebraska to James W. Keyes June 16, 1846

Journal, July 30, 1846⁵²

SPORTS OF THE WEST.

The following letter from a late citizen of this city, now on his way to Oregon, with his family, has been politely communicated to us for publication. It is dated—

South Fork of the Nebraska,
Ten Miles from the Crossings.

Tuesday, June 16, 1846.

To-day, at nooning, there passed, going to the States, seven men from Oregon, who went out last year. One of them was well acquainted with Messrs. Ide, and Caden Key[e]ls, —the latter of whom he says went to California. They met the advance Oregon caravan about 150 miles west of Fort Laramie, and counted in all for California and Oregon (excepting ours), four hundred and seventy-eight wagons. There is in ours forty wagons, which make 518 in all; and there is said to be twenty yet behind.

To-morrow we cross the river, and by our reckoning will be 200 miles from Fort Laramie, where we intend to stop and repair our wagon wheels; they are nearly all loose, and I am afraid we will have to stop sooner if there can be found wood suitable to heat the tire. There is no

⁵² *Journal*, July 30, 1846, p. 3.

wood here, and our women and children are now out gathering "Buffalo chips" to burn in order to do the cooking. These "chips" burn well.

So far as I am concerned, my family affairs go on smoothly, and I have nothing to do but hunt, which I have done with great success. My first appearance on the wilds of the Nebraska as a hunter, was on the 12th inst., when I returned to camp with a splendid two year old elk, the first and only one killed by the caravan as yet. I picked the elk I killed, out of eight of the largest I ever beheld, and I do really believe there was one in the gang as large as the horse I rode.

We have had two Buffalo killed. The men that killed them are considered the best buffalo hunters on the road—perfect "stars." Knowing that Glaucus could beat any horse on the Nebraska, I came to the conclusion that as far as buffalo killing was concerned, I could beat them. Accordingly yesterday I thought to try my luck. The old buffalo hunters and as many others as they would permit to be in their company, having left the camp for a hunt, Hiram Miller, myself and two others, after due preparation, took up the line of march. Before we left, every thing in camp was talking that Mr so and so, had gone hunting, and we would have some choice buffalo meat. No one thought or spoke of the two Sucker hunters, and none but the two asked to go with us.

Going one or two miles west of the old hunters on the bluffs, and after riding about four miles, we saw a large herd of buffalo bulls. I went for choice young meat, which is the hardest to get, being fleeter and better wind. — On we went towards them as coolly and calmly as the nature of the case would permit. And now, as perfectly green as I was I had to compete with old experienced hunters, and remove the stars from their brows, which was my greatest ambition, and in order too, that they might see that a Sucker had the best horse in the company, and the best and most daring horseman in the caravan. Closing upon a gang of ten or twelve bulls, the word was given, and I was soon in their midst, but among them there was none young enough for my taste to shoot, and upon seeing a drove on my right I dashed among them, with Craddock's pistol in hand—(a fine instrument for Buffalo hunters on the plains)—selected my victim and brought him tumbling to the ground, leaving my companions far behind. Advancing a little further, the plains appeared to be one living, moving mass of bulls, cows and calves. The latter took my eye, and I again put spur to Glaucus and soon found myself among them, and for the time being defied by the bulls, who protected the cows and calves. Now I thought the time had arrived to make one desperate effort, which I did by reining short up and dashing into them at right angles. With me it was an exciting time, being in the midst of a herd of upwards of a hundred head of buffalo alone, entirely out of sight of my companions. At last I succeeded in separating a calf from the drove, but soon there accompanied him three huge bulls, and in a few minutes I separated two of them. Now having a bull that would weigh about 1200 lbs., and a fine large calf at full speed, I endeavored to part the calf from the bull without giving him Paddy's hint, but could not accomplish it. When I would rein to the right where the calf was, the bull would immediately put himself between us. Finding I could not separate on decent terms, I gave him one of Craddock's, which sent him reeling. And now for the calf without pistol being loaded. Time now was important—and I had to run up and down hill at full speed loading one of my pistols. At last I loaded, and soon the chase ended. — Now I had two dead and a third mortally wounded and dying.

After I had disposed of my calf, I rode to a small mound a short distance off to see if Hiram and the others were in sight. I sat down, and while sitting I counted 597 buffalo within sight. After a while Miller and one of the others came up. We then got some water from a pond near by, which was thick with mud from the buffaloes tramping in it. Resting awhile the boys then wanted to kill a buffalo themselves. I pointed out to them a few old bulls about a mile distant. It was understood that I was not to join in the chase, and after accompanying the boys to the heights where I could witness the sport, they put out at full speed. They soon singled out a large bull, and I do not recollect of ever having laughed more than I did at the hunt the boys made. Their horses would chase well at a proper distance from the bull. As they

approached he would come to a stand and turn for battle. The horses would then come to a halt, at a distance between the boys and the buffalo of about 40 yards. They would thus fire away at him, but to no effect. Seeing that they were getting tired of the sport and the bull again going away, I rode up and got permission to stop him if I could. I put spurs to Glaucus and after him I went at full speed. As I approached the bull turned around to the charge. Falling back and dashing towards him with a continued yell at the top of my lungs I got near enough to let drive one of my pistols. The ball took effect, having entered behind the shoulders and lodged in his lungs. I turned in my saddle as soon as I could to see if he had pursued me, as is often the case after being wounded. He was standing nearly in the place where he received the shot, bleeding at the nostrils, and in a few seconds dropped dead. I alighted and looped my bridle over one of his horns. This Glaucus objected to a little, but a few gentle words with a pat of my hand she stood quiet and smelled him until the boys came up. Their horses could not be got near him. Having rested, we commenced returning to the place where I killed the last calf. A short distance off we saw another drove of calves. Again the chase was renewed, and soon I laid out another fine calf up on the plains. Securing as much of the meat of the calves as we could carry, we took up the line of march for the camp, leaving the balance for the wolves, which are very numerous. An hour or two's ride found us safely among our friends, the acknowledged hero of the day, and the most successful buffalo hunter on the route. Glaucus was closely examined by many to-day, and pronounced the finest nag in the caravan. Mrs. R. will accompany me in my next buffalo hunt, which is to come off in a few days.

The face of the country here is very hilly, although it has the name of "plains." The weather rather warm—thermometer ranging in the middle of the day at about 90, and at night.

The Oregon people tell me that they have made their claims at the head of Puget Sound, and say that the late exploration has made the northeast, or British side of the Columbia, far superior to the Willamette Valley, in quality and extent of territory.

Our teams are getting on fine so far. Most of the emigrants ahead have reduced their teams. The grass is much better this year throughout the whole route than the last.

Respectfully your brother,

James F. Reed.

Jas. W. Keyes, Esq.

22. Robert Caden Keyes Letter From Oregon City June 17, 1846

Journal, Thursday, July 29, 1847.⁵³

To the Oregon Emigrants. – I arrived at this place today, and it's a request to some friends, I make this statement to you concerning California, and the operations of men there. Captain Hastings left the 4th of May to meet the company from the United States, for the purpose of persuading them from their path, and enticing them to California. Now, this I can say to you that they hear Hastings tell of the wonders of California, there is a scarcity of timber and water; and those hills are set with oats and the vallies with clover, it is all short feed, as the sun burns the clover down by the 15th of July and the stock have to live on the seed in the winter. I have seen enough of Oregon to satisfy me that it is the best grazing country of the two, and for agriculture they won't compare.

Oregon City, June 17, 1846

Robert C. Keyes

⁵³ *Journal*, Thursday, July 29, 1847, p. 3.

William B. Ide Describes Rumblings of California Revolt Spring 1846

During the spring of [1846] men came to our door, telling how the Mexican government was going to force new emigrants out of California. The day I heard this, I took up my musket and joined a force of men who were going to intervene in this situation.

We visited the camp of John Fremont, a United States Captain in the area doing survey work with a group of about 50 men. Captain Fremont presented the plan of "Neutral Conquest." Captain Fremont did not want to be directly involved in any confrontation with the Mexican government, but he was willing to protect those who might be involved in such a plan. He suggested that if some of the leading Californios were taken prisoner, then General Don Castro, the Mexican governor, and his men might be drawn into battle trying to rescue them. This would result in general hostilities between the United States and Mexico. We determined to go to Sonoma, and there capture the Mexican government officials.⁵⁴

Bear Flag Revolt in Sonoma, California June 14, 1846

In 1846, on a report that the Mexican government was threatening to expel all settlers who were not Mexican citizens, about thirty settlers conducted what was to become known as the Bear Flag Revolt. On June 14, William B. Ide, William L. Todd and the others seized the pueblo of Sonoma and captured the Mexican Commandante of Northern California, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, who in fact supported American annexation. The Bear Flag Revolt changed the map of the United States more radically than any event after the Louisiana Purchase.



Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo
(1807-1890),
governor of Alta California
(before California was a U.S.
territory)

At dawn on June 14, 1846, thirty-three heavily-armed Americans gathered at the fortified adobe home of General Mariano Vallejo, on the north side of Sonoma's Plaza. These men -- some from the Grigsby-Ide party of settlers, some mountain men and explorers, but all displeased with Mexican rule -- pounded on the adobe door and loudly demanded the General come out and surrender the little fortress to them. Vallejo quickly donned his dress uniform, then opened the door and invited three representatives of the group in for breakfast and wine. The General's military bearing and immaculate uniform must have contrasted starkly with the clothing of his "visitors." Some of the Americans wore buckskins, others wore their work clothes, still others wore only what rags they had picked up or made during their travels. Robert Semple, a member of the group, later noted in his memoirs that the party "was as rough a looking set of men as one could imagine."

...a protest, not quite a revolution, the events of June 14, 1846 are burned into the collective memory of the town, when a tipsy group of 33 American settlers and mountain men arrested the Mexican general, declared an independent nation and raised a flag emblazoned with a bear and a star.

23. William B. Ide Letter Describing Bear Flag Revolt

Our group of 33 men arrived in Sonoma early morning of June 14, 1846. We went to the home of General Vallejo and demanded his surrender. Three men went into his home to work out the arrangements. General Vallejo took his time, dressing in his finest military uniform. You can imagine the contrast between his dress, and that of our group. Our clothing was well worn, and some of our group were mountain men who wore buckskins. General

⁵⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Republic
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_B._Ide_Adobe_State_Historic_Park

Vallejo also wanted change in the government of California, and said we did not need to take him prisoner. However it was felt best that he be returned, along with other leaders, to Captain Fremont.

At this time, our lack of official standing became an issue. No one had written orders from Captain Fremont (he did not want to leave any trace which would lead to him) and it was felt best that we disband and seek the protection of Captain Fremont. I had a sense our work was more than “Neutral Conquest” but one of independence, and so addressed the men: “Saddle no horse for me... I will lay my bones here, before I will take upon myself the ignominy of commencing an honorable work, and then flee like cowards, like thieves, when no enemy is in sight. In vain will you say you had honorable motives! Who will believe it? Flee this day, and the longest life cannot wear off your disgrace! Choose ye! Choose ye this day what will ye be! We are robbers, or, or we must be conquerors!”

After this speech the men rallied around me, making me their Commander in Chief. I [William B. Ide] immediately ordered that we should take the barracks. In a moment all was secured. 18 prisoners, nine brass cannon, 250 stands of arms and tons of copper shot, and other public property of the value of 10 or 12 thousand dollars was seized and held in trust for the public benefit.

Because General Vallejo realized that Mexican rule was inadequate to manage an area as large and rich as California, he had been hoping the United States would annex the region. He told the Americans that morning to consider him one of them. The group was wary; they respectfully informed him he was under arrest and sent him to Sutter’s Fort for safeguarding. Vallejo would eventually return to Sonoma after the U.S. took control of California. He would go on to serve as a delegate to the California Constitutional Convention, and later as a State Senator.

Having won such a surprising and effortless victory, the Americans, (now twenty-four strong), were at a temporary loss. Some suggested looting the adobe, which was also an arsenal, but William Ide made an impassioned plea for restraint, “Choose ye this day what you will be! We are robbers, or we must be conquerors!”

William B. Ide⁵⁵

Meanwhile somebody found a supply of brandy, welcomed by the weary and impatient outsiders. The wait continued, and finally Ide was sent in to investigate. The situation inside the house was later described in this classic statement by Ide—a fine example of his ability as a writer: “The General’s [Vallejo’s] generous spirits gave proof of his usual hospitality, as the richest wines and brandies sparkled in the glasses, and those who had thus unceremoniously met soon became merry companions; more especially the weary visitors There sat Dr. S [Semple], just modifying a long string of articles of capitulation. There sat Merritt—his head fallen; there sat Knight, no longer able to interpret; and there sat the new-made Captain [Grigsby], as mute as the seat he sat upon. The bottles had well nigh vanquished the captors!”⁵⁶

William B. Ide Writes Declaration of Independence For California Republic June 15, 1846

On June 15, 1846, William B. Ide released the Declaration of Independence for the Republic of California that he had written the night before.

⁵⁵ https://archive.org/stream/biographicalsket00idesrich/biographicalsket00idesrich_djvu.txt
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Republic
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_B._Ide_Adobe_State_Historic_Park
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Republic

⁵⁶ *Rogers*, p. 43.

But what is independence, without a declaration. I took it upon myself to write our declaration. I had some experience from my days in Illinois. So between one and three a.m. on the morning of June 15 I wrote:

“TO ALL PERSONS, INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA AND COUNTRY AROUND; REQUESTING THEM TO REMAIN AT PEACE; TO PURSUE THEIR RIGHTFUL OCCUPATIONS WITHOUT FEAR OF MOLESTATION.” I wrote that we meant no harm to those who did not take arms against us. I then put forward our case: First to protect our women and children. We had been invited to come to California with the hopes of a republican government, but upon arriving found a military despotism, which threatened us with removal by force, and demanded we leave our property, and thus be despoiled of our means of defense or flight. Next to overthrow a government which had robbed the missions, appropriated their properties, and which had shamefully oppressed and ruined the laboring inhabitants of California with tariffs. And finally to establish and perpetuate a liberal, just and honorable Government, religious and personal liberty; which shall insure the security of life and property; which shall detect and punish crime and injustice; which shall encourage industry, virtue and literature; and which shall foster agriculture, manufacture and mechanism, by guaranteeing freedom of commerce. I proclaimed that we relied on the justice of our cause, the favor of heaven, the good sense of the people of California, and our own bravery and love of Liberty for our hope of success. I further premised that a government to be prosperous “...must originate among its people: its officers should be its servants, and its glory its common reward.”

This proclamation we caused to be translated and sent among the people. We were quickly reinforced by 30-40 locals. Over time our numbers continued to swell with those who wanted freedom. I understand when the men of General Castro, our enemy, read this proclamation, they continued along the Humboldt River and across the 40-mile desert, finally reaching the Truckee River, which young Sarah Ide reports they crossed 32 times!

William B. Ide⁵⁷

24. William B. Ide Letter From Sonoma, California to Commodore Stockton June 15, 1846⁵⁸

Sonoma,

June 15th, 1846.

Our present Head Quarters

Dear Sir

I beg leave to inform you by express, of a change in the Political affairs of Sanoma, and the Sacramento Valley; which has taken place within the last week. With the circumstances which led to this change, you are doubtless acquainted: viz. the hostility of the Spaniards to the American emigrants. About 40 days since a proclamation was issued by the Spaniards ordering all Foreigners to leave the country, and forbidding them to take any of their property with them, at the same time threatening them with extermination should they presume to remain in the Country. The immigration to the States was gone; the company for Oregon had left us. There was now no alternative but to die silently, and singly by the hands of our enemies

⁵⁷ https://archive.org/stream/biographicalsket00idesrich/biographicalsket00idesrich_djvu.txthttps://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Republic

⁵⁸ William B. Ide's June 15th, 1846 dated letter addressed to Commodore Stockton, but delivered to Commander John B. Montgomery of the U.S.S. Portsmouth by William Todd, as quoted in the California Historical Society Quarterly, Documentry, pp. 82, 83, Papers of the California Historical Society, Vol. I, Part 1, 1887 [From Mr. Charles Templeton Crocker's collection of Sloat Manuscripts, probably in Washington. A. Bartlett's handwriting].
http://www.bearflagmuseum.org/June%2015_1846%20William%20B%20Ide%20Letter%20to%20Stockton%20Montgomery.html

or fly to meet the foe. Information had reached the upper end of Sacramento Valley (where I resided) that 200 Spaniards were on their way up the Valley for the purpose of destroying our wheat, burning our houses and driving off our cattle. Aroused by appearances so shocking, a very few of us resolved to meet our enemy (being encouraged by the known presence of Capt. Fremont's command in the Valley) and dispose of our difficulties in the best possible manner. The 200 Spaniards proved to be a band of horses (about 200) guarded by a Spanish officer and 15 Men, being driven up the Valley as far as Capt. Sutters, thence across the River for the lower settlements for the declared and expressed purpose of being mounted by Soldiers and sent back to enforce said Proclamation. In self defence those few men (viz 12) seized the moment and pursued those horses, captured their guard and drove the horses to the neighborhood of Capt. Fremont's Camp. Still writhing under the dreadful necessity above alluded to we pursued our way both Night and Day adding to our number a few true hearts to the number of 34 men, until the dawn of the morning of the 14th inst when we charged upon the Fortress of General Guadalupe Vallejo, and captured 18 prisoners (among whom were 3 of the highest Officers in the Californian Govt. And all the Military Officers who reside in Sonoma (8 Field Pieces, 200 stand of arms, a great quantity of Cannon, Canister, and Grape Shot, and a little less than 100 lbs. of powder (quite too little to sustain us against an attack by the use of cannon). By the Articles of Capitulation it was contemplated we were to be provisioned by the generosity of our Captured Genl, while we can keep possession or while opposition renders possession necessary. By another arrangement of cannon and fieldpieces, we have strengthened our position and continue to hold it, under the authority of twenty four well armed men and (as we have good right to believe) the rule of the People. The Alcalde we discharged under a new appointment, the Soldiers were set at liberty, and the said Officers were escorted by ten armed men to an asylum under the generous protection of Capt. Fremont. This day we proclaim California a Republic, and our pledge of honor that private property shall be protected. With this, as we hear from various parts of the country, the Spaniards are not only satisfied but pleased. We are situated three or four miles North of the North end of the Bay, and are liable to be attacked by an enemy from beyond the bay but would repel any that should be made by the use of small arms. We have not Powder to work our Cannon, and therefore with our small force could not long resist the operation of cannon against us.

Destined as we are to certain destruction should we prove unsuccessful, we have the honor to be your Fellow Country Men, and whether we conquer or perish we are resolved to approve ourselves not unworthy the kindly regards of those who "Build to the honor and glory of the American Flag."

It is our object and earnest desire to embrace the first opportunity to unite our adopted and rescued country, to the country of our early home.

With every consideration of respect and by will of the People. I have the honor to be & c

Wm. B. Ide.
Commander in Chief

At the Fortress of Sonoma

To/Commodore Stockton
of the U. S. Navy.

William L. Todd Creates the Bear Flag June 15, 1846

After taking over Sonoma, the revolutionaries decided there should be a flag for the new independent Republic of California. William L. Todd, one of the Bears, was the artist who designed and painted the Bear Flag.

The original Bear Flag was designed and made by William L. Todd, who was the cousin of Mary Todd Lincoln. Todd painted the flag on domestic cotton cloth, roughly a yard and a half in length. It featured a red star based on the California Lone Star Flag that was flown during California's 1836... The flag also featured an image of a grizzly bear *statant* (standing). The modern flag shows the bear *passant* (walking). The original Bear Flag was destroyed in the fires following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

“EL OSO” OVER SONOMA

Captain Merritt's party would have preferred the American flag as the ensign of their new republic, but had been advised by Fremont of the indiscretion of such action, they being without governmental authority. Hence the Bear Flag. This historical ensign was a square of white sheeting furnished by Mrs. John Sears and a strip of red flannel sewed to its lower edge, and William Lincoln (sic) Todd did the rest. He found a can of red paint, a package of lampblack and was ready. Near the center of the cloth he laboriously drew the outlines of what he believed to be a bear, and filled it in with paint and lampblack. The bear — El Oso — was leisurely walking across the flag and had a very mild expression on its face, as if it were looking for a berry patch. In an upper corner of the cloth Todd painted a “lone” five-point star, and below the bear he placed the words ‘California Republic.’⁵⁹

Some reports had it that Mrs. Sears donated her white petticoat for the flag and the red flannel came from the back of a man's shirt. The California Republic lasted only a month and the original flag was destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. *San Jose Mercury News*.⁶⁰



San Francisco Bulletin, August 1, 1861.

The California Bear Flag- There are several claimants in California for the honor of having painted the “original Bear Flag.” A correspondent who was on this coast several years before Peter Storms painted his flag, writes us that William Todd, of Sonoma, is the person who first got up the Bear Flag. He says: “It was painted on a piece of coarse muslin, and the Bear and Star were drawn with a piece of red chalk, while the Stripe on the bottom was made from ‘dirty Matthews’ wife’s red flannel petticoat, and sewed halfway across.” Peter Storms flag was painted in Napa City in 1848, and I furnished materials. The color of the cloth was green. A party were going to Sonoma to attend an election, and the flag we got up to parade on the occasion.” – *Napa Reporter*.

25. William L. Todd Writes About Creating the California Bear Flag

William L. Todd wrote a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Express*, under date of January 11, 1878, giving the following version of the creation of the Bear Flag:

Your letter of the 9th inst. Came duly to hand, and in answer I have to say in regard to the making of the original Bear flag of California at Sonoma, in 1846, that when the Americans, who had taken up arms against the Spanish regime, had determined what kind of flag should

⁵⁹ www.archive.org/stream/historyofyolocou00greg/historyofyolocou00greg_djvu.txt

⁶⁰ *Days Gone By* appears on Sundays. Contact Nilda Rego at nildarego@comcast.net. California Republic artist recounts Bear Flag's 1846 origin, Nilda Rego.

be adopted, the following persons performed the work: Granville P. Swift, Peter Storm, Henry L. Ford and myself; we procured, in the house where we made our head-quarters, a piece of new unbleached cotton domestic, not quite a yard wide, with strips of red flannel about four inches wide, furnished by Mrs. John Sears, on the lower side of the canvas. On the upper left-hand corner was a star, and in the center was the image made to represent a grizzly bear passant so common in this country at the time. The bear and star were painted with paint made of linseed oil and Venetian red or Spanish brown. Underneath the bear were the words 'California Republic.' The other persons engaged with me got the materials together, while I acted as artist. The forms of the bear and star and the letters were first lined out with pen and ink by myself, and the two forms were filled in with the red paint, but the letters with ink."

The flag I painted, I saw in the rooms of the California Pioneers in San Francisco in 1870 and the Secretary will show it to any person who will call on him at any time.

If it is the one that I painted it will be known by a mistake in tinting out the words 'California Republic.' The letters were first lined out with a pen, and I left out the letter 'I' and lined out the letter 'C' in its place. But afterwards I lined out the letter 'I' over the 'C' so that the last syllable of 'Republic' looks as if the two last letters were blended.

Yours respectfully, Wm. L. Todd.⁶¹

**California Bear Flag Raised in Sonoma Town Plaza
Creation of California Republic
June 17, 1846**

By noon of June 17, 1846, the rebels had raised the new California Bear Flag, proclaiming the Mexican province to be the California Republic. William B. Ide was chosen to serve as commander.

We raised a flag in the town plaza proclaiming our independence. The flag was made by William Todd, who accompanied us from Illinois. He is the nephew of the wife of the lawyer Abe Lincoln. The flag had a lone star, similar to Texas which won its freedom from Mexico, and became a part of the United States. The grizzly bear was chosen as an emblem of strength and unyielding resistance. So we were known as the "osos" or "Bear Flaggers." When General Vallejo saw our flag, he said it looked more like a pig than a bear. Upon the flag we wrote California Republic, declaring our independence from Mexican rule.⁶²

Our group numbered only 24 men as a group of men took the prisoners and themselves to the protection of Captain Fremont at Fort Sutter. And so we prepared for our own "Alamo." We quickly set the barracks to order. I divided the men into two companies. The 1st rifle company went to cleaning the arms and repairing and loading them. The 1st artillery company set the canon to defend the fort, loading them doubly with grape and canister. We also set to obtain supplies for the manning of the fort.⁶³

William B. Ide

**William B. Ide Describes California Republic Turn Over to the United States
July 9, 1846**

The California Republic lasted until July 9, 1846, just 25 days, when the United States flag was raised at Sonoma.

⁶¹ As transcribed at: www.sfgenealogy.com/calwatanook/pioneers/capio.htm. Posted by William Trinkle.

⁶² https://archive.org/stream/biographicalsket00idesrich/biographicalsket00idesrich_djvu.txt

⁶³ <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6535/>

Our government effectively was the presiding body over Northern California for almost a month. Our greatest criticism came from Captain Fremont who said I was trying to take California for the Mormons. Nothing could be further from the truth.

When Captain Fremont came to Sonoma, we turned the government over to him, and he was assigned by Commodore Stockton to pursue General Castro's forces south. I received no commission of him, but perceived my duty and continued on as a private. I marched with Fremont's forces to Monterey, where I was discharged, broke and looking more like a beggar than President of a Republic. I was able to get passage on a boat, and return to my family. There I farmed, but later became involved in the government of Colusa County, serving as judge.



William Ide⁶⁴

William B. Ide Returns to Home Near Red Bluff, California

After the Mexican–American War, William B. Ide returned to his home near Red Bluff, California, where he resumed his partnership with Josiah Belden at his Rancho Barranca Colorado. He bought out Belden in 1849, and was successful in mining. Ide went on to a distinguished career as a public servant in Colusa County (the precursor to portions of today's Colusa, Glenn and Shasta Counties). There he served as Probate and County Judge, Presiding Judge of the Court of Sessions, County Recorder, County Auditor, County Clerk, County Treasurer, Deputy County Surveyor and Deputy Sheriff.

Ide died of smallpox in December 1852, at the age of 56. He is buried in a small cemetery on the east side of Highway 45, 5 miles south of Hamilton City, California at the former site of Monroeville where a monument is visible from the road.

26. James F. Reed Letter From Fort Bridger, now Wyoming July 31, 1846

Journal, November 5, 1846⁶⁵

From a California Emigrant

We have laying before us a letter from James F. Reed, late of Springfield, Ill., dated at "Fort Bridger, one hundred miles from the Eutaw or Great Salt Lake, July 31, 1846"

We have arrived here safe [says Mr. Reed] with the loss of two yoke of my best oxen. They were poisoned by drinking water in a little creek called Dry Sandy, situated between the Green Spring in the Pass of the Mountain, and Little Sandy. The water was standing in puddles. — Jacob Donner also lost two yoke, and George Donner a yoke and a half, all supposed from the same cause. I have replenished my stock by purchasing from Messrs. Vasques & Bridger, two very excellent and accommodating gentlemen, who are the proprietors of this trading post. — The new road, or Hastings' Cut-off, [this is manifestly Capt. Fremont's newly discovered route to California,] leaves the Fort Hall road here, and is said to be a saving of 350 or 400 miles in going to California and a better route. There is, however, or thought to be, one stretch of 40 miles without water; but Hastings and his party are out ahead examining for water, or for a route to avoid this stretch. I think that they cannot avoid it, for it crosses an arm of the Eutaw

⁶⁴ https://archive.org/stream/biographicalsket00idesrich/biographicalsket00idesrich_djvu.txt

⁶⁵ *Journal*, Thursday, November 5, 1846, p. 1.

Lake, now dry. Mr. Bridger, and other gentlemen here, who have trapped that country, say that the Lake has receded from the ____ of country in question. There is plenty of grass which we can cut and put into the wagons, for our cattle while crossing it.



Fort Bridger, Wyoming

We are now only 100 miles from the Great Salt Lake by the new route,—in all 250 miles from California; while by way of Fort Hall it is 650 or 700 miles—making a great saving in favor of jaded oxen and dust. On the new route we will not have dust, as there are just 60 waggons ahead of us. The rest of the Californians went the long route—feeling afraid of Hasting's Cut-off. Mr. Bridger informs me that the route we design to take, is a fine level road, with a plenty of water and grass, with the exception before stated. It is estimated that 700 miles will take us to Capt. Suter's Fort, which we hope to make in seven weeks from this day.

The Donner-Reed Party Takes The Hastings Cutoff August 1846

While camped in Wyoming, the Reeds, Donners, and several other families decided to take a new route, Hastings Cutoff, and elected George Donner captain, creating the Donner Party. The Donner Party separated from the other emigrants. While crossing the desert west of the Great Salt Lake, Reed was forced to abandon two of his wagons after losing nearly all his oxen.

Map Showing the Hastings Cutoff



The Donner-Reed Party Returns to California Trail September 26, 1846

The exhausted Donner Party re-joined the California Trail on September 26, 1846, near Elko, Nevada, having taken three weeks longer on the Hastings Cutoff than the traditional route, the California Trail.

27. James Frazier Reed Descriptions

October 6, 1846

October 6, 1846

On October 6, while traveling along the Humboldt River, Reed became embroiled in a quarrel between two teamsters and in the ensuing fight stabbed John Snyder to death. One emigrant proposed hanging Reed, but after Reed's wife pleaded for leniency, the other emigrants decided to banish him. Reed initially refused to accept their decision but finally agreed to go ahead to Sutter's Fort in the Sacramento Valley, for supplies. After a difficult journey, during which he nearly starved, Reed reached the fort on October 28. After two days' rest, he attempted to take provisions back to the wagon train, but deep snow blocked the way.

The early onset of winter not only blocked Reed's route, it had also trapped the Donner Party in the Sierra Nevada. The Donner Party members contrived shelter, hoping to resume their journey, but were forced to spend the winter in the mountains. They were already low on supplies and had to slaughter their oxen for food. As the winter wore on, many of the emigrants starved to death, and some resorted to cannibalism.

The ill-fated Donner party was the last wagon train to attempt the crossing in late October, 1846. In her book, *Life among the Paiutes*, Sarah Winnemucca (Chief Truckee's granddaughter) noted that members of this group were the least organized and not very resourceful.

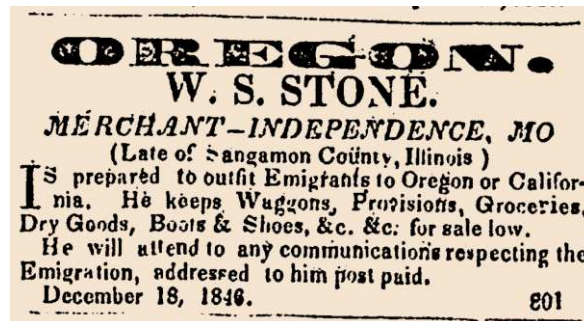
"We could have saved them," she recalled, "only my people were afraid of them. We never knew who they were or where they came from."

Slow progress ultimately led to their becoming snowbound in the Sierra Nevada, without adequate food supplies to last through the winter. There, half of the emigrants died of cold and starvation. Some of those who survived resorted to cannibalism in order to stay alive. Reed's family was one of only two in the party to survive intact, and it claimed to be the only family that did not resort to eating human flesh. Reed played a key role in raising search parties and obtaining food supplies for those stranded, including his wife and children. Reed went on to settle at San Jose Mission, California, where he made a fortune buying and selling real estate.⁶⁶

Outfitting Emigrants to Oregon or California at Independence, Missouri

December 18, 1846

W. S. Stone late of Sangamon County, Illinois



Journal, Thursday, January 21, 1847.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Illinois Times*, Springfield, January 25, 1996, pp. 10-11. Doug Pokorski, *Journal*, April 14, 1996, p. 5. *Power*, pp. 600-601.

⁶⁷ *Journal*, Thursday, January 21, 1847, p. 3.

Harriet Campbell in Oregon Territory

In 1845, Harriet Campbell, Hamilton Campbell's wife and Benjamin R. Biddle's sister, was living in Oregon Territory where she and her husband served as missionaries at the Jason Lee Indian Mission.

The Lee Mission met with reverses, and was abandoned soon after the death of Jason Lee, in 1845. When the Catholic Missionaries founded a Mission on the north side of the Columbia River, they took many converts from the Lee Mission and created much discontent among those who remained. The Catholic Missionaries were mostly French, and understood the Indians better than Jason Lee and his missionaries.

In 1845 Hamilton Campbell bought most of the Lee Mission livestock and moved them to his place in the Chehalem Valley where he expected to go into the stock raising business. Harriet then wrote long letters to her family in Illinois, telling of the wonders of the Willamette Valley in Oregon. She encouraged the Benjamin R. Biddles to think about moving to where there were opportunities open to settlers in that Territory.

1847

I find only one Sangamon County resident leaving for the west coast during 1847. Those who left earlier wrote four letters and personal descriptions during the year. I may have omitted letters or descriptions from the Donner Party as they are so well documented in other studies.

James Frazier Reed Participates in Battle of Santa Clara January 2, 1847

James F. Reed tried to organize a relief expedition, but turmoil from the Mexican War disrupted his efforts. On January 2, 1847, Reed took up arms and participated in the Battle of Santa Clara. While in the area, Reed took steps to secure land for himself in Santa Clara, where he would eventually bring his family.

Donner Party Rescue Team February 1847

In early February 1847, the citizens and naval officers of San Francisco funded a rescue party. Its leader was Selim E. Woodworth, a naval officer, with James Reed as his second-in-command. Reed rounded up men and supplies in the Sonoma and Napa valleys north of San Francisco Bay, then headed up into the mountains. Reed met his wife Margret, his stepdaughter Virginia, and son James, Jr. coming out of the mountains. After an emotional reunion Reed and his men continued on to the camp, where his remaining children, Martha (8) and Thomas (3), were still stranded. Reed led a party of emigrants out from the camps, but a severe blizzard trapped them at the top of Donner Pass for two days, during which the party ran out of food. When the storm ceased, most of the refugees were too weak to continue. Reed departed with his children but was forced to leave the others behind. A few days later, however, another rescue party arrived and brought them out.

Newspapers From California Report Donner Party Tragedy *Journal*, July 29, 1847

California papers to the 6th March have been received at Boston. The political news is not important. But these papers contain most distressing accounts from a company of emigrants—among whom were the emigrants from Illinois. They tried a new route across the mountains, and fearing a failure of provisions, Mr. Reed and some others, proceeded in advance of the company, leaving them on the north of the mountains in camp, (150 miles from the nearest California settlements,) to Sutter's Fort, obtained provisions, reached Bear river, could not cross it for the flood. Cached his provisions, returned to the fort for more provisions and an additional force, started for the mountains, but no information had been received of the success of the undertaking. A party of fifteen left the camp on the middle of November, and of these nine died of starvation on the route; and the remainder, six females, arrived at the settlements in great distress. /*/ There was a rumor that a party of twenty-four subsequently left the camp, and all were lost in a tremendous snow storm upon the mountains. It was said that the party in the camp had provisions enough to last them to the middle of February, by which time it was hoped they would be relieved. The names of the dead, who belonged to the first party which left the camp are—Patrick Dolan, William Stanton, Wm. Fosdick, L. Murphy, Graves, two young men whose names are not given, and two Indians. There were some sixty left in camp, most of them women and children. The next news from California will be looked for with painful interest.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ *Journal*, July 29, 1847

Donner Party: Survivors

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. John Battiste Trudeau | 25. William Graves |
| 2. Edward Breen | 26. Solomon E. Hook ⁷⁵ |
| 3. Isabella Breen | 27. William Hook ⁷⁶ |
| 4. James Breen | 28. Noah James |
| 5. John Breen | 29. Lewis Kiesburg |
| 6. Margeret Breen | 30. Mrs. [Elizabeth] Kiesburg |
| 7. Patrick Breen | 31. Mary Murphy |
| 8. Patrick Breen Jr. | 32. Simon Murphy |
| 9. Peter Breen | 33. Harriet Pike |
| 10. Simon Breen | 34. Naomi Pike |
| 11. Eliza Donner ⁶⁹ | 35. James F. Reed |
| 12. Francis E. Donner ⁷⁰ | 36. Mrs. [Margaret] Reed ? |
| 13. Geo. Donner Jr. ⁷¹ | 37. Virginia E. B. Reed |
| 14. Georgianna Donner ⁷² | 38. Martha Jane (Patty) Reed |
| 15. Leana C. Donner ⁷³ | 39. Thomas Keyes Reed |
| 16. Loithy Donner | 40. Eliza Williams |
| 17. Mary M. Donner ⁷⁴ | 41. Mrs. W. [Doris] Woolfinger |
| 18. William Eddy | 42. James Sm |
| 19. Sarah Fosdick | 43. Augustus Spitzer |
| 20. Sarah Foster | 44. C. [harles] T. (William) Stanton |
| 21. William Foster | 45. Balis Williams |
| 22. Elizabeth Graves | |
| 23. Ellen Graves | |
| 24. Mary Graves | |

⁶⁹ Eliza Donner, born in Sangamon County, Illinois, lived through the disaster on the mountains in 1846 and was married in California to Perry McCoon. He was killed by a runaway horse. His widow was married on December 8, 1853 to Benjamin W. Wilder.

Eliza P., born on March 8, 1843 near Springfield Illinois, was educated at St. Dominie Catholic School at Benicia California. She was married in California on October 10, 1861 to Sherman O. Houghton who was born on April 10, 1828 in New York City. She was his second wife.

⁷⁰ Frances E. Donner, born on July 4, 1840 in Sangamon County, Illinois, was educated at St. Dominie Catholic School at Benicia. She was married on November 24, 1858 in California to William R. Wilder. They lived near Point of Timber, Contra Costa County, California. He served in the 1st. regiment N. Y. Vol. Inf. through the Mexican War. He was Mayor of San Jose, California. In 1855 and 1856, he represented California in the 42d and 43d Congress. Hon. S. O. Houghton and family resided in San Jose, California. He was a practicing lawyer.

⁷¹ George Donner, born in August 1837 near Springfield, Illinois, was married in California on June 12, 1862 to Margaret J. Watson. They had six children. George Donner died in February 1875 and his family lived at Sebastapol, Sonoma County, California.

⁷² Georgiana Donner, born on December 3, 1841 near Springfield Illinois, was educated at Benecia Catholic school and married on November 4, 1863 to Washington A. Babcock in California. They lived at Mountain View, Santa Clara County, California.

⁷³ Leanna C. Donner, born on December 5, 1834 near Springfield, Illinois, was married in Sacramento City, California, on September 26, 1852 to John App. They had four children.

⁷⁴ Mary M. Donner, born on March 18, 1839 near Springfield, Illinois, married there to Sherman O. Houghton. She died on June 21, 1860, leaving one child.

⁷⁵ Solomon E. Hook, born in January 1832 in Sangamon County, Illinois, was married in California on November 7, 1866 to Alice Roberts. They had three children and lived in Winters, Yolo County, California.

⁷⁶ William Hook, born in 1834 in Sangamon County, Illinois, arose in the night, ate too much food, and died from the effects in 1847.

Donner Party: Deaths

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Antonio (New Mexican) | 11. Samuel Donner |
| 2. Charles Berger | 12. Ellen Eddy |
| 3. John Denton | 13. Margaret Eddy |
| 4. Patrick Dolan | 14. J. Fosdick |
| 5. George Donner Sen. | 15. Milton Elliot |
| 6. Mrs. Donner | 16. Geo. Foster, |
| 7. Jacob Donner | 17. Mrs Murphy |
| 8. Betsy Donner | |
| 9. Isaac Donner | |
| 10. Lewis Donner | |

Late From Oregon and California

Journal, Friday, August 6, 1847.⁷⁷

The *St. Louis Republican* of yesterday, announces the arrival of Messrs. Shaw and Bolder, direct from Oregon. They left on the 7th of May, and were 83 days on the trip. Nineteen persons came with them. They passed the Pawnees with little trouble, gave them some tobacco, clothes, &c. — They met the Oregon and California emigrants, who were getting along well—being 25 days ahead of the usual time occupied by emigrants.

Reed and Donner Party Reaches Sutter's Fort, California

James Reed's family and others of the Reed and Donner Party reached Sutter's Fort after much suffering. Mrs. George Donner was dead. Donner had been robbed of his money; which was subsequently recovered.

James F. Reed Family in Napa Valley

Reunited, the James F. Reed family recuperated in the Napa Valley for many weeks, where Reed served briefly as sheriff of Sonoma. Reed took his family to revive the neglected orchards of Mission San José. He leased the orchards and in the summer gathered and dried apples, figs, pears, and quince. These he shipped to Hawaii, trading for cocoa, coffee, rice and sugar.

28. William L. Todd Letter from Sonoma, California

May 8, 1847

Journal, Thursday, September 16, 1847⁷⁸

William L. Todd Spends Year Digging Gold in Sierra Nevada.

Letter from California.

The following letter from Mr. William L. Todd is published in this paper by request of several acquaintances of the writer, and with the permission of his father, Dr. [John] Todd, of this city.

Sonoma, California, May 8, 1847

Dear father: (by Mr. Prairie) I once more have the pleasure of writing to you and letting you into the ways and doings of the "lost one" in both of your family. This is my fourth letter home,

⁷⁷ *Journal*, Friday, August 6, 1847, p. 3.

⁷⁸ *Journal*, Thursday, September 16, 1847, p. 1.

(one in July 1846, one April and one in January 47) since my arrival in this country. The reason of my not writing oftener, is the want of an opportunity—there are opportunities frequently occurring by which I could write, where I'm living in San Francisco; but living in the country, as I do, they passed before I hear of them.

I've been told by Gov. Boggs, and several others, that they have seen a letter written by me and published in some of the newspapers published in the states (the *Illinois Journal* item). I am truly sorry that such is the case. The letter I wrote you last spring, was written in haste, before I had seen enough of the country to form a correct opinion about it. I have been at that time, but a few months in the country, and in ... one part of it — and the rainy season had prevented me from seeing that sufficiently to form an opinion of the whole. Since then I've traveled through most of the country from the bay of Santo Domingo (1200 miles south of this), to the head of the Sacramento Valley, and I'm much better pleased with the country now than I was then; but still there're many objections to the country; and were all well situated in the states, knowing what I now do, I would never leave them to come here.

The country from the bay of Santo Domingo near the mission of San Louis Ray, is very poor for farming purposes. It is very mountainous, with a few valleys; and they've a small, though the land in those valleys is very rich. And in minerals it is very rich. Gold, silver, copper, and lead ore are found in abundance, in the order is very rich, though the wants of cool and would renders it very difficult to get at the pure metals. The valley of the Pueblo de Los Angeles is about 70 or 80 miles long, extending from the mission of San Juan (below) to the seacoast, above the town of the Pueblo, and about 30 miles wide — producing most of the tropical plants. Grapes, oranges, figs, peaches, pears, etc. are here in abundance; but little attention is paid to drain, though it is thought by many, that it will yield very good crops. From Matt to the river Salinas, the country is pretty much as it is below San Louis Ray; but I believe it is much richer land.

The country on the San Joaquin, (pronounce W a HK EEE in) and from that up to the California mountains is much richer for farming than the lower country. Valleys and planes are much larger and the mountains smaller. The valley of the San Joaquin, is from 3 to 400 miles in length, and about 50 miles in breadth. The River San Joaquin runs through the valley and empties into the bay of San Francisco. The land generally, it's quite rich, and it is believed will produce grains, as well as fruits, in abundance; it is yet it is unsettled. The Indians of the California mountains, line contiguous to that river, have for the last few years, been very hostile, rendering it dangerous for small parties of whites to settle there. The richest and most settled, as well as largest valley in the country, is the Sacramento. It extends from the California mountains on the north, to the bay of San Francisco and the River San Joaquin, on the south; it is from 300 to 500 miles long, and from 50 to 100 miles wide. Through it run the Rivers Sacramento, American, Fork, Feather and Bear River. The Valley is quite rich and produces wheat and corn, (small Indian), but not so good crops as in the western portion of the United States cynical and it is believed that fruits of all kinds raised here, Will grow in great abundance and perfection here. But I do not think any of the land in this country is as is as rich as the lands in Illinois or Missouri; and the want of rain in the summer will always be of serious injury to the corn and wheat crops.

The current climate of the country is most excellent—never too hot or too cold. In the summertime, on the seacoast, you always have fine breezes from the north, which keeps it from being too hot; and the winter from the south, warm. 40 or 50 miles back from the coast, it is warmer in the summer, and the further you go back the warmer it becomes, until you get to the California mountains, which are covered with snow year-round. Valleys of the San Joaquin and Sacramento are hot in the summer.

Since I've been in the country, I have never seen ice of the thickness of a dollar, nor a night but what I could lay out in the open air, with but two blankets, unless it was late.

Rainy season in the northern part of this country is very disagreeable, — commencing in the latter part of November, and ending in April — during that time is very difficult for person to get about. The rivers are in the south there is not so much rain, and a person can get about much better than in the north.

I spent all of this winter in the southern portion of California, and prefer it to the northern part. The climate is much better, and there's not so much rain. It is older settled, and the orchards and vineyards are much larger and in better order. I would much rather have a piece of land in the Pueblo Valley, then any other part of the country.

The immigration from the states last year, has been quite large; and I am sorry to say, many of them were very unfortunate. Some 20 or 30 wagons which came by Hastings cut off never reached the country; and many women men and women. In the California mountains -- James F. Reed lost most of his cattle crossing the desert, (75 miles) without water our grass; and he left two wagons at the Salt Lake. The other he got to the California mountains, and left it there. His wife and children had to walk from thence to Sutters — They came out with Eliza Williams, and four or five others, got in safe. But Bayless Williams, Mr. Elliott, George and Jacob Donner, and some of their families, died in the mountains, and others, that either you know or I know. Mrs. Reed and her family had to walk 60 or 80 miles without anything to eat, in the snow about 15 feet deep. I saw her the other day; — she is now well.

When I wrote to you in January last, I expected to leave this country this spring; but I was so long detained in the army, under Fremont, but I am compelled to alter my attention, and even if I had got oftentimes, seeing the opportunities I now do of making something to repay me coming to the country, I doubt whether I should leave. The country has just passed to a war of 10 months, and it is beginning to recover from the evil effects of that war, although military despotism still governs. Gen. Czerny is the governor of the country and governs it with martial law.

In January 1847, the foreign residents here became disgusted with its too radical and unprincipled acts of the manpower in this country, and raise a revolution against them the authorities at commenced by declaring that all Americans should be should leave the country, or "their homes should be what should beats up on the plains of California common; Stating that Commissioner slowed had taken possession of Monterey and San Francisco (who that joined us a few days before we left Sonoma) being a leader, waived the stars and stripes in our camp. From that time until the retaking of Pueblo, in the month of January last, I have been in the service of the United States, I may say, until 6 March last, when I was discharged. You're many others, like myself, served during the whole war, and were discharged at the same time. In November last, Commodore Stockton came to San Diego, and they're told us that we must enlist as common soldiers remain as prisoners on board the Congress until he could send us home. After the retaking of Pueblo we worked for our promised immediate discharge, and are paid by Commissioner Stockton; but we obtained either from him. Send two or three weeks after our team term of service had expired, Col. Frederick Fremont consented to discharge us, and did so on 6 March, — ... has been \$20 each to purchase horses, saddles, and revisions, To take us home, — a distance of 800 miles!

29. Virginia E. B. Reed Letter From California to Her Cousin, Mary C. Keyes May 16, 1847

Journal, December 16, 1847⁷⁹

The following letter is from a little girl, aged about twelve years, step-daughter of Mr. James F. Reed, and was one of the unfortunate company of emigrants, of whose sufferings last winter, we gave an account in our last week's paper. The artless manner in which this child details the sufferings of the party, and especially of her own family—the joyful meeting of her father after his absence of five months—can scarcely be read without a tear, —while her notice of the country, which she had reached with untold tribulation, will cause a smile. “It is a great country to marry. Eliza is to be married; and this is no joke!”⁸⁰



Virginia E. B. Reed

CALIFORNIA, May 16, 1847.

My Dear Cousin: I take this opportunity to write, to let you know that we are all well at present, and hope this letter may find you well. — I am going, my dear cousin, to write to you about our troubles in getting to California. We had good luck till we came to Big Sandy. There we lost our best yoke of oxen, named Riley and George, and when we came to Bridger's Fort we lost two other oxen. We then sold some of our provisions and bought a yoke of cows and a yoke of oxen. The people at Bridger's Fort persuaded us to take “Hasting's Cut-off,” over the salt plain. They said it saved three hundred miles. We went that road, and we had to go through a long drive, as they said, of forty miles, without water or grass. Hastings said it was forty miles; but I think it was eighty miles. We traveled a day and night, and at noon next day father went on ahead to see if he could find water. He had not gone long before some of the cattle gave out, and we had to leave the wagons and take the cattle to water. Herren and Bayliss stayed with us, and the other boys, Milt, Elliott and James Smith, went on with the cattle to water. Father was coming back to us with water, and met the men. They were then about ten miles from water, and father said they would get to water that night, and told the boys the next day to bring the cattle back for the wagons and to bring some water. Father got to us about day-light the next morning. Walter took the horse and went on to water. We waited there till night, thinking that the boys would come, and we then thought we would start and walk to Mr. Donner's wagons that night, a distance of ten miles. We took what little water we had, and some bread, and started.

Father carried Thomas, and the rest of us walked. We got to Donner's, and they were all asleep. So we laid down on the ground; we spread one shawl down; we laid on it, and spread another over us, and then put the dogs on top—Tyler, Barney, Trailer, Tracker and little Cash. It was the coldest night you ever saw for the season. The wind blew very hard, and if it had not been for the dogs, we would have froze. As soon as it was day, we went to Mr. Donner's. He said we could not walk to the water, and if we staid we could ride in the wagons to the water. So father left us and went on to the water, to see why the boys did not bring back the cattle. When he got to the water he found but one ox and one cow, and that none of the rest had got there. Mr. Donner came up that night to the water, with his cattle and brought his wagons and all of us. We staid there a week and hunted for our cattle, but could not find them. The Indians had taken them. So some of the company took oxen and went out and brought in one wagon and cached the other and a great many other things, all but what we could put in one wagon.

⁷⁹ Virginia Reed Murphy (1833–1921). In *Unfortunate Emigrants*, edited by Johnson Kristin, 262–86. University Press of Colorado, 1996. doi:10.2307/j.ctt46nr9n.17. *Overland in 1846: Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail*, Volume 1 edited by Dale Lowell Morgan, University of Nebraska Press.

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⁸⁰ *Journal*, December 16, 1847.

We had to divide our provisions with the company to get them to carry it. We got three yoke of cattle from the company, including our ox and cow; and we went on that way awhile, when we got out of provisions, and father had to go on to California for provisions.

We could not get on in the way we were fixed, and in two or three days after father left us we had to cache our wagon, and take Mr. Grave's wagon and cache some more of our things. Well, we went on that way sometime, and then we had to get into Mr. Eddy's wagon. We went on that way awhile, and then we had to cache some of our clothes, except a change or two, and put them in Mr. Breen's wagon. Thomas and James rode the two horses, and the rest of us had to walk. We went on that way awhile and came to another long drive of forty miles, between Mary's river and Truckey's river, and then we went with Mr. Donner. We had to walk all the time we were traveling. Up the Truckey river we met a man, Mr. T. C. Stanton, (and two Indians,) that we had sent on for provisions to Capt. Suter's Fort before father started. He had met father not far from Suter's Fort. He looked very bad. He had not ate but three times in seven days, and the last three days without any thing. His horse was not able to carry him. Mr. Stanton gave him a horse, and he went on. We now cached some more of our things, all but what we could pack on one mule, and started again. Martha and James rode on behind the two Indians. It was then raining in the valleys and snowing on the mountains. We went on in that way three or four days, until we came to the big mountain, or the California mountain. The snow was then about three feet deep. There were some wagons there. The owners said that they had attempted to cross but could not. Well, we thought we would try it; so we started, and they in company with us, with their wagons. The snow was then up to the mules' sides. The farther we went up, the deeper the snow got—so that the wagons could not go on. They then packed their oxen, and went on with us, carrying a child a-piece, and driving the oxen in the snow up to their waists. —The mule that Martha and the Indian was on was the best one; —so they went and broke the road, and that Indian was the pilot. We went on that way two or three miles, and the mules kept falling down in the snow, heads foremost, and the Indian said he could not find the road. We stopped and let the Indian and Mr. Stanton go on and hunt the road. They went on and found it to the top of the mountain, and came back and said they thought we could get over if it did not snow any more. But the people were all so tired by carrying their children, that they could not go over that night. So we made a fire and got something to eat, and mother spread down a buffalo robe, and we all laid down upon it, and spread something over us, and mother set up by the fire, and it snowed one foot deep on the top of the bed that night. When we got up in the morning, the snow was so deep we could not go over the mountain, and we had to go back to the cabins that were built by the emigrants three years ago, and build more cabins, and stay there all winter, as late as the 20th February, and without father.

We had not the first thing to eat. Mother made an arrangement for some cattle—giving two for one in California. The cattle were so poor that they could hardly get up when they laid down. We stopped there the 4th of November and staid till the 20th of February, and what we had to eat I can't hardly tell you, and we had Mr. Stanton and the Indians to feed. But they soon left to go over the mountains on foot, and had to come back. They then made snow shoes and started again, and a storm came, and they had again to return. It would sometime snow ten days before it would stop. They waited till it stopped snowing and then started again. I was going with them, but took sick and could not go. There were fifteen persons left in this company, and but seven got through—five women and two men. A storm came on, and they lost the road, and got out of provisions, and those that got through, had to eat them who died. Not long after they left we had eaten all our provisions and we had to put Martha at one cabin, James at another, Thomas at another, and mother and Eliza and Milt, and I, dried up what little meat we could get, and started to see if we could cross over the mountain—and we had to leave the children. O Mary! you will think that hard—to leave them with strangers, and did not know whether we ever would see them again. We could hardly get away from them. We told them we would bring them back bread, and then they were willing to stay. —We went and were out five days in the mountains. Eliza gave out and had to go back. We went on that day, and

the next day we had to lay by and make snow shoes. We went on another day, and could not find the road and had to go back. I could get along very well while I thought we were going ahead, but as soon as we had to turn back I could hardly walk. We reached the cabins, and that night there was the worst snow storm that we had the whole winter, and if we had not come back, we could not have lived through it. We had now nothing to eat but hides. O! Mary, I would cry and wish I had what you all wasted. Eliza had to go to Mr. Graves; we staid at Mr. Brien's. They had meat all the time. We had to kill little Cash, and eat him. We ate his entrails, and feet, and hide, and every thing about him. My dear cousin, you often say you can't do this and you can't do that; but never say you can't do any thing—you don't know what you can do until you try. Many a time had we the last thing on cooking, and did not know where the next meal would come from; but there was always something provided for us.

There were fifteen in the cabin that we were in, and one half of us had to lay in bed all the time. —There were ten died while were at the cabins. We were hardly able to walk. We lived on little Cash a week; and after Mrs. Brien would cook her meat and boil the bones two or three times, we would take them and boil them three or four days at a time. Mother went down to the other cabin and got half a hide, bringing it in snow up to her waist. It kept on snowing and would cover the cabins, do all we could to prevent it, so that we could not get out for two or three days at a time. We would have to cut pieces of the logs on the inside to make a fire with. The snow was five feet deep on the top of the cabin. I could hardly eat the hides. Father as we afterwards learnt, started out for us with provisions, but could not reach us, for the dreadful storms and deep snow, and after he had come into the mountains eighty miles, had to cache his provisions and go back on the other side to get a company of men to assist him. Hearing this they made up a company at Sutter's Fort, and sent out to our relief. We had not eaten any thing for three days; we were out on the top of the cabin, and saw a party coming. Oh, my dear cousin, you don't know how glad we were! One of the men we knew. We had traveled with him on the road. — They staid with us three days to recruit us a little; so that we could go back with them. There were twenty-one of us who left with them, but after going a piece, Martha and Thomas gave out, and the men had to take them back. Mother and Eliza and I came on. One of the party said he was a Mason, and pledged his honor that if he did not meet father he would go back and save his children. O! Mary, that was the hardest thing yet—to leave the children in those cabins—not knowing but they would starve to death. Martha said, well Mother, if you never see me again, do the best you can. —The men said they could hardly stand it: it made them cry. But the men said it was best for us to go on and the children to be taken back. The men did so, and left for them at the cabin a little meat and flour. Mother agreed to leave them upon the pledge of Mr. Glover that he would return for them if we did not meet father, — which we did in five days. We went on over a high mountain as steep as stair steps in snow which was up to our waists. Little James walked all the way. He said every step he took he was getting nearer father and nearer something to eat. The Martens took the provisions the men had cached, and we had very little to eat. When we had traveled five days we met father with thirteen men on their way to the cabins. O, Mary! you don't know how glad we were to see him. We had not seen him for five months. We thought we should never see him again. He heard we were coming and he made some sweet-cakes the night before at his camp to give us and the other children with us. He said he would see Martha and Thomas the next day. He went there in two days. They found some of the company eating those who had died; but Martha and Thomas had not had to do it. The men left the cabins with seventeen persons. Hiram Miller carried Thomas and father carried Martha, and they were caught in a storm that lasted two days and nights, and they had to stop that time. When they went on they found the Martens had taken their provisions, and they were four days without any thing. They went on again, and one of Donner's boys was with them, and the snow was up to their waists, and it kept on snowing so that they could hardly see the way. In all that time Thomas asked for something to eat but once. Father brought Martha and Thomas in to where we were. None of the men he had with him were able to go back to the cabins, their feet was froze so bad. So another company went out and brought all the persons in from there. They are all in now from the mountains but four, who are at a place called the Starved Camp, and a company is

gone to their relief. There were but two families, of the whole number in the mountains, that got out safe. Our family was one of them. Mary, I have not told you one half of our troubles; but I have told you enough to let you know that you don't know what trouble is yet, and I hope never will such as we have seen. Thank GOD, we have all got in with our lives, and we are the only family that did not have to eat human flesh. We have lost everything, but I don't care for that. We have got through with our lives. But don't let this letter dishearten any from coming here. Don't take any Cut Offs, and bring nothing but provisions and just enough clothing to last till you get here.

My dear Cousin: We are all very well pleased with the country, particularly with the climate. — Let it be ever so hot a day, the night is always cool. It is a beautiful country. It is mostly in valleys and mountains. It ought to be a beautiful country to pay us for our troubles in getting to it. It is the greatest country for cattle and horses you ever saw. It would just suit Charley; for he could learn to be a bocarro [*vaquero*], —that is, one who lassos cattle and horses. The Spaniards and Indians are great. They have a Spanish saddle, and wooden stirrups, and great long spurs, with the pricking part five inches in diameter. They could not manage the California horses without the spurs. They won't go on at all without they wear the spurs. They have little bells fastened to them to make a jingle. They blindfold the wild horses, get on to them, and then take off the blindfold, and let them run, and if the riders can't sit on them, they tie themselves on and let them run as fast as they can. One Indian will ride into a band of bullocks and throw the lasso on a wild one, and it being fastened to the horn of his saddle, he can hold it as long as he wants to do so. Another Indian throws his lasso on the feet of the bullock, and together, they throw him right over. The people here ride from eighty to one hundred miles a day on horseback. This country just suits father and I for riding. Some of the Spaniards have from 6 to 7,000 head of horses, and from 15 to 16,000 head of cattle. Tell the girls that this is the greatest place for marrying they ever saw, and that they must come to California if they want to marry. Tell ___ that ___ is engaged to be married. You all think this is a joke, but I tell you 'tis the real truth. Tell Doctor ___ that they doctor the funniest in this country that he ever saw. They grease the sick all over with mantaja [*manteca*, *Ed.*] and kill a bienna [*gallina*, *Ed.*] and cut it in four pieces, and put a great piece of fat *carrina* [*carne?*, *Ed.*] on the wrist, and kill a sheep and wrap the sick up in the skin. Father is now down at St. Francisco. He is going to write when he comes back. Give my love to all. — So no more at present, my dear cousin.

Virginia E. B. Reed.

Miss Mary C. Keys,
Springfield, Illinois.

**30. James F. Reed Letter From Napa Valley, California to Gershom Keys
July 2, 1847**

Journal, December 23, 1847⁸¹

NAPA VALLEY, Cal., 2d July, 1847.

Dear Sir:

We have landed in California, at last, after great tribulation. The history of our journey, as well as some notices of this country, accompany this letter. I will add other notices of incidents and miscellaneous things, which I omitted in that communication.

Wheat sells here for one dollar per bushel. The call for wheat is limited. Large 3 year's old beef sells for \$1 per quarter, and when retailed, at two cents per lb. Pork, the finest I ever saw, sells for 6 cts. per lb. In no country can hogs be raised with less trouble—supporting themselves

⁸¹ *Journal*, December 23, 1847.

without expense to the owner. Beef and pork can be put-up here to great advantage;—the finest salt in this world is found on the beach of this bay. Lumber for barrels, however, is rather scarce. You can go into a flock of a thousand sheep, and select and kill the best for \$2 each. Butter is 50 cts. per lb.: cheese, 25 cents; chickens, 50 cents each; eggs, 50 cents per dozen. Hens lay and hatch the year round without any care. Turkeys are plenty on some farms. Flour is worth from \$6 to \$8 per 100 lbs.—owing to the scarcity of mills, and the want of machinery for cleansing the wheat. Horses sell from \$6 to \$30; wild mares, \$6 to \$10.

Vegetables can be grown here in perfection, but the seed must be put into the ground in the winter, and then they will mature before the dry weather comes on. The finest pumpkins I ever saw were here, and you can enjoy them the year round. — Watermelons can also be kept for a long period. I have eat them in December. Fine cabbage and lettuce are in perfection the first of May. Potatoes are raised in many places. Corn was in roasting ears on the Sacramento on the 6th of June. Beans were then large enough for eating. Onions grow very large and fine. Indeed, all the culinary vegetables can be raised in great abundance and excellence, by planting at the proper season.

Figs and olives are not a certain crop, being delicate fruits. Oranges and lemons have not been tried here; but they do well 3 or 400 miles below. I can make a living for my little family easier here than in the States; and while I am doing this, I am certain that they are enjoying good health. I do not look to the approach of the warm season with any dread. I have not to labor in summer to procure feed for stock in winter, while I am shaking with the ague or burning with fever. When the rainy season comes on, all I have to do, is now and then to see to my stock, — that is, to ride round and bring them together. I can get help without difficulty to plow, sow, reap, and get my wheat cleaned and housed; and if I want to sell any, the same help is at hand to take it to market. If I do not wish to take the oversight of my stock myself, I can employ a native to do it.

Our Sugar, Coffee and Molasses, come from the Sandwich Islands. Cotton and other goods come from home. These last articles are high; but competition will soon regulate business. Iron is worth 10 to 16 cents per lb. Ploughs bear a high price.

The wheat now is within a few days of cutting. It is more forward on the Sacramento. At Capt. Sutter's ranch two weeks past, he had 400 Digger Indians harvesting his wheat. His crop this year is estimated at 80,000 bushels.

Sonoma Valley west of this place about 12 miles, is a fine little valley, about 20 miles long and from 1 to 3 miles wide. At the mouth of this valley on the bay, is the town of Sonoma, which is fast improving by American emigrants, who came in here last fall. It is a pleasant place, but more subject to fogs from the sea than the Napa. The mountains on the west of Sonoma are low, and the fogs and cold winds have a fuller sweep from the ocean. It is not so with the Napa. On the west side, and between it and the Sonoma, there is a high range of mountains, which prevents sudden changes. The globe cannot present a healthier spot than this valley. Presuming that you have heard of these valleys, and as many of our friends are located in them, I have thought that a slight notice of them would be entertaining to you.

Napa Valley is the place where I am now residing with my family, at the house of Capt. George Yontz, formerly of Missouri. Capt. Y. has been here for 15 or 16 years. He is known all over California for his honesty and hospitality. I have often seen a bullock a day consumed at his house, and sometimes two. There are more fat bullocks consumed at his house than at the Planter's House in St. Louis; and they are fatter than any ever seen there. The greatest objection to beef here is, that it is too fat. Napa Valley is about 30 miles long, and from one to three miles wide, and contains some of the finest land I ever saw; it is well watered, Napa Creek running through it. There is now in progress of building upon this creek, three flouring and one saw-mill. I admire this valley. No healthier place can be found—no fever, no ague, no

sickness. The days are pretty hot, with cool nights. It is a fine location for fruit— apples, peaches, and grapes.

I do not want by anything; I have said to be understood as encouraging persons to come here. — Far from it. If I like the country, others may and do dislike it. Many are dissatisfied and will leave it; but the country will lose little by their absence — except an outbreak of the Mexicans should take place, and in that case heads count. There is a great deal of difficulty in coming to this country, and particularly the last 300 miles of the road. — The worst is in crossing the mountains. For about 80 miles, you never saw a worse road, though 19-20ths of the wagons came through safe. The disasters of the company to which I belonged, should not deter any person from coming who wishes to try his fortune. Our misfortunes were the result of bad management. Had I remained with the company, I would have had the whole of them over the mountains before the snow would have caught them; and those who have got through have admitted this to be true.

I will refer to some of my unfortunate companions. Bayliss Williams began to fail before the company was out of provisions. Milton Elliott was well and hearty when he went to the cabins of the Donners. He helped Mrs. Donner to render as comfortable as possible their miserable abode. He was gone some ten or twelve days, and when he returned, was thin and weak, and in a few days died. He lived longer than Bayliss. James Smith was about the first who died of the boys. He gave up, pined away and died; he did not starve. John Denton left with the first company; he gave out on the way. I found him dead, covered him with a counterpane, and buried him in the snow, in the wildest of the wild portions of the earth. Here, too, C. T. Stanton, of Chicago, resigned his spirit to its Eternal Father, after he had labored and toiled, and finally sacrificed his life, to save his companions in distress. Some ten or eleven other unfortunate beings I was compelled to leave at the head of the Juba, on account of the neglect of Passed Midshipman Woodworth, to perform the part expected of him.

May God bless you and all my old friends about Springfield.

Your brother,
James F. Reed.

Mr. Gershom Keyes, Springfield, Illinois.

Celebration of First July 4th on West Coast July 4, 1847

On July 4, 1847, at the house of Capt. Yontz, a party assembled to celebrate July 4th. Robert C. Keyes brought 81 Americans with him, and found 127 others on the ground. They united in what is believed to have been the first celebration of the fourth of July on the Pacific coast. Capt. Yontz furnished all the provisions and the ladies present made a flag by sacrificing their underclothing.

31. James F. Reed Journal Winter of 1847-1848

Journal, Thursday, December 9, 1847.⁸²

Narrative of the Sufferings of a Company of Emigrants in the Mountains of California, in the winter of '46 and '47, J. F. Reed, late of Sangamon County, Illinois. [The following narrative was prepared for the press by Mr. J. H. Meisryman, from notes taken by Mr. J. F. Reed. We copy from the *State Register*;—omitting the list of those who survived and those who perished,—having published the same several weeks since.]

⁸² *Journal*, Thursday, December 9, 1847, p. 1.

Through the kindness of Mr. James W. Keys, Esq., we are enabled to lay before our readers an abstract of the journal of Mr. James F. Reed, who migrated from this place, some two years' to California. He says that his misfortunes commenced on leaving Fort Bridger, which place he left on the 31st of August, 1846, in company with eighty-one others. Nothing of note occurred until the 6th of September, when they had reached within a miles of Weaver Canon, where they found a from a Mr. Hastings, who was twenty miles in advance of them, with sixty wagons, saying that if they would send for him he would put them upon a new route, which would avoid the Canon and lessen the distance to the great Salt Lake several miles. Here the company halted, and appointed three persons, who should overtake Mr. Hastings and engage him to guide them through the new route, which was promptly done. Mr. Hastings gave them directions concerning this road, and they immediately recommenced their journey. After travelling eighteen days they accomplished the distance of thirty miles, with great labor and exertion, being obliged to cut the whole road through a forest of pine and aspen. They halted upon the south end of the great Salt Lake, where they remained several days. Mr. Reed describes the water of this lake, to use his own expression, as "strong enough to brine beef." Leaving this place on the 30th September, they proceeded on their way, crossing a large desert, devoid of water, on account of which they lost several of their finest cattle.— When within nine hundred miles of the California settlements they discovered that their stock of provisions was insufficient to last them until they had traveled that distance; therefore, they appointed two persons, Messrs. C. F. Stanton, of Chicago, and William McClutchem, of Clay county, Mo., who should proceed with all possible haste to Fort Sacramento, owned by Capt. Sutter, procure supplies, and return as soon as possible. They accordingly started on their errand, and although having near a thousand miles to go, they calculated that they would return in a short time. The company then proceeded, and after traveling three hundred miles, giving ample time, as they supposed, for the return of Messrs. Stanton and McClutchem, and fearing that some accident had befallen them, they determined to send another messenger. Mr. Reed was at once chosen as the most proper person for this service, and providing himself with seven days provision, he commenced his lonesome march. Before him lay a journey of six hundred miles, which he must accomplish on foot, for although he had a horse, it was so weak that it could not carry his saddle-bags and blanket. He left the company at Mary's river. On the second day's march he overtook the Donners, who were in advance, account of the superior condition of their cattle. Here he was joined by Walter Herron. He found the Donners subsisting on the carcasses of some of their cattle, which had been killed by the Indians in a night attack two days previous. In company with Herron he pursued his way; the scanty supply of provisions soon gave out; along the banks of Mary's and Tucker's rivers they found a little game; after leaving the latter they saw none at all. For seven days they journeyed through that wilderness, during which time they ate but two meals, and they were made of wild onions. Fortunately, at the end of the time they reached Bear river valley, where they found a small party of emigrants, who had halted to recruit their cattle, and were awaiting the arrival of supplies from Mr. Johnson's, the first house in the California settlements, and distant from Bear river sixty miles, and to their infinite delight they also met Mr. Stanton on his return to the company. He did not recognize Mr. Reed, who suffered much from his toilsome journey. During the seven days of starvation, he had traveled successively 38, 35, 25, 30, 26, 20 and 17 miles each day. Captain Sutter had provided Mr. Stanton with flour, dried meat, seven horses and two of his choicest Indians. Mr. Reed, not deeming the supplies sufficient for the support of the company to Bear river, determined to push on to Fort Sacramento, obtain additional aid, and meet the company at Bear River Valley, while Mr. Stanton should proceed with his supplies to their aid. On the 23d October, Mr. Reed started for Fort Sacramento, leaving Herron with the party of emigrants, he being unable to travel. After traveling one hundred miles, he reached the Fort, and was received at the gate by the generous hearted Sutter, who furnished him with large quantities of flour and meat, twenty six horses, and a number of Indians. Here he found Mr. McClutchem, who had been left by Mr. Stanton. Mr. McC. joined Mr. R. on his return. Two days after leaving the Fort, it commenced raining; and the third day, the tops of the great California Mountains were covered with snow. For four days they traveled in the rain, and at the end of that time reached the head of Bear River, where

they found snow eighteen inches deep.— The next day's march brought them to snow thirty inches in depth. Here the Indians deserted them; and on this account, they were obliged to leave nine horses in camp. Starting with seventeen horses, they proceeded to cross the mountains. As they advanced the snow became deeper; they reached the depth of four feet, when the horses sank completely exhausted, and it was found impossible proceed with them. Messrs. Reed and McClutchem determined to use every effort to reach their friends. Choosing the best horses, they urged them forward—but alas!—they were obliged to leave the poor animals completely buried in snow. They then attempted to pursue their journey foot, but for the want of snow shoes, were obliged to abandon all hope of passing that huge barrier of snow, which separated them from their families; and gathering their horses together, they returned to the valley, and went from there to Mr. Johnson's, who received them in the most hospitable manner. Here they asked for information in relation to the mountains, not obtaining any but the most discouraging, they proceeded to Fort Sacramento, throwing themselves upon the generosity of the ever kind Sutter. Here he was told that it would for him to attempt to reach his friends until — of February, when the storms of winter should cease. But Mr. Reed was not satisfied with this, he determined to go to the Lower Californias, and seek for aid from that quarter. Arriving at the Pueblo de los Angeles, he met Lieut. R. F. Pinkney, U. S. Navy, then in command of that place. Under the patronage of this gentleman, he became acquainted with several Americans. He stated his many misfortunes, and implored relief, but this was impossible to obtain; at that time the Californians had rebelled in strong force, and peace must be established before anything could be done for the sufferers in the mountains. Under these circumstances, Mr. Reed had but one alternative—to obtain the aid of his countrymen in that part of California he must aid them in avoiding the danger which threatened them. He, therefore, entered the service of the United States as first lieutenant of a company of Mounted Riflemen; his company ““liberated thirty men—”sailors, whalers and ...;” these were joined by twenty citizen volunteers, one company of Marines, and one piece of artillery, hauled by two yoke of oxen. With this force, they marched against the enemy, who they met (300 strong) upon Santa Clara plains, and defeated them entirely. A peace followed this decisive battle, and the army returned to San Francisco, where they were disbanded. Now the citizens turned their attention towards their suffering countrymen, who, while these events were transpiring, had reached the mountains, where they found that the snow had formed an insurmountable barrier to their further progress; they therefore, halted and built such cabins as they could. Their provisions being exhausted, they had recourse to their cattle, rendered miserable by rough usage and famine; when the meat failed, the hides were resorted to, and when they too had been devoured, then human flesh was seized by the unfortunates to preserve their lives. A meeting was called at San Francisco, contributions were made, and the sum of \$1,000 was raised in the city. On board the ships Portsmouth and Warren \$300 was contributed by the sailors. ... committee of purchases was then appointed, which repaired on board a launch, owned by Messrs. Smith and Ward, and purchased everything necessary for the relief of the sufferers. Messrs. Smith and Ward then kindly offered the use of their fine launch to convey the supplies to the mouth of Feather River; “for the plan of operations was, to send all the supplies to that place, in charge of a party of men under Passed Midshipman Woodworth, while Mr. Reed should enlist a sufficient number of men, purchase horses, and proceed by land to the same point, there pack his horses with the supplies, and then go forward to the mountains. Just as they were preparing to start, a small launch, belonging to Sutter, came in from Sacramento bringing the intelligence that two men and five women had arrived at Mr. Johnson's from the mountains, the survivors of a party of fifteen persons, who had started from the cabins — the east of the chain. This party had left their companions for the purpose of lessening the consumption of the provisions, and that they might send aid to them.— The sufferings of this party were truly awful. A synopsis of the journal of Wm. H. Eddy, of Belleville, will give the reader a better a idea of the hardships endured by them. He commences with: Dec. 16, 1846.—Started from the cabins, in all, fifteen persons, (the names of the party were as follows: Mr. Graves, Patrick Dolen, Jay Fosdick, C. F. Stanton, Antonio, a Mexican, Lemuel Mur-Lewis and Salvador, Indians, Wm. H. Eddy, Foster, Mrs. McClutchem,

Mrs. Fosdick, Miss Mary Graves, Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Pike,) on snow shoes, for the California settlements;— traveled four miles, and arrived at the head of Truckey's lake.

17th.—Crossed the great chain.

18th.—Descended Juba creek about six miles; the supplies furnished by Mr. Glover. His party immediately commenced distributing their provision among the sufferers, all of whom they found in the most deplorable condition. Among the cabins lay the fleshless bones and half eaten bodies of the victims of famine. There lay the limbs, the skulls, and the hair of the poor beings, Who had died from want, and whose flesh had preserved the lives of their surviving comrades, who, 'shivering beneath their filthy rags, and surroundings by the remains of their unholy feast, looked more like demons than human beings. They had fallen from their high estate, though compelled by the fell hand of dire necessity. Like messengers of Heaven, did Mr. Reed and party appear in the eyes of the unfortunates. They moved about dispensing their supplies, frequently arriving in time to push from the lips of sufferers the unnatural food, which they were subsisting upon. At one cabin they found children devouring the heart and liver of their father; they were even then tearing the raw flesh with their teeth, not having the patience to cook it, and their chins and bosoms were deluged with the blood.— Another family had sent to borrow a leg from the body. This strange loan was made, but with strict injunctions not to send for more, for it could not be. To Mr. Reed this was a horrid sight. Among the bones and skulls that filled the camp kettles, he saw the remains of many of an old and well-tried,— commenced freezing.

20th.—Left J(li)a; traveled four miles.

21st.—Went down the mountain in a southerly direction; provision exhausted; Stanton snow blind; he did not reach camp at night.

22d.—Remained in camp waiting for Stanton.

23d.—Cleared off; ascended a mountain for observation; still in hopes that Stanton would arrive. 24th.—Left top of mountain; proceeded down a valley three miles; storm recommenced with greater fury ; extinguished fires.

25th.—Antonio and Mr. Graves died; remained in camp.

26th.—Could not proceed; almost frozen; no fire.

27th.—Still in camp ; no fire; Patrick Dolin died.

28th.—Storm abated; succeeded in making fire; Lemuel Murphy died.

29th.—No food for five days; a portion of the company eat human flesh.

30th.—Stripped all the flesh from three of the bodies; traveled four miles.—

31st.—Traveled six miles.

January 1, 1847.—Passed a rugged canon. ____ Continued down the valley.

3d.—Mr. Fosdick became very weak; had to wait for him.

4th. —Nothing to eat.

5th.—Mr. Fosdick gave out entirely; commenced eating the strings of our snow shoes.

6th—Traveled two miles; halted on account of the illness of Mr. Fosdick; Indians left us.

7th— started on trail of Indian boys; saw deer sign;— killed one.

8th—Dried deer meat by fire; went to bottom of the mountain.

9th—Ascended large mountain; entirely out of the snow.

10th—Descended the mountain.

11th—Saw the dead bodies of the two Indian boys.

13th—Proceeded down the valley; occasional snow drifts.

14th—arrived at an Indian village; procured some acorns.

And on the 17th, Mr. Eddy arrived at Johnson's, leaving the rest of the party at an Indian village.

When the news of this terrible disaster reached the citizens of San Francisco, their minds were filled with consternation. From the various rumors they heard, they could hardly hope that the remainder of the emigrants were alive. But this ... added new zeal to their endeavors, and on ... 7th of February, every thing being ready, Mr. Woodworth and party departed in the launch for the mouth of Feather River, while Mr. Reed proceeded to Sonoma, where he added \$350 to his funds, and enlisted twelve men, who were to receive three dollars per day from the date

of enlistment to the date of discharge. He also procured forty horses to transport the supplies from Feather river to the cabins. Here he received intelligence, that immediately upon the arrival of Mr. Edd the settlements, Messrs. Sinclair, Suiter and _ Kinstry had, upon their own responsibility, fitted out an expedition for the relief of the sufferers.— This was gratifying intelligence, indeed, inspired Mr. Reed with new hope. After a long journey, over rugged mountains and swollen streams, Mr. Reed and party reached Feather River, and to their great disappointment, found that the launch had not arrived. As no time could be lost in waiting, Mr. Reed and Mr. McClutchem pushed on to Mr. Johnson's, distant twenty-five miles, leaving the party to follow ... of the launch. Arriving at Mr. Johnson's small hand-mill, owned by him, was put in motion, and a good quantity of flour was made. Beefes were slaughtered and the meat dried, so that when the party arrived nothing was to be done but to pack their horses. On the arrival of his men and horses, Mr. Reed was informed that Mr. Woodworth had stopped at Sutter's landing, upon the Sacramento, was fitting out an expedition to proceed to the mountains. Leaving word with Mr. Johnson that when Mr. W. should arrive he should hasten on with all speed, he started once more towards his friends. After traveling two days they reached the snow, and at a place called Mule springs they cached their saddles and bridles, and a portion of the provisions, and every man relieving the horses of part of their load, by placing it upon their own backs, they proceeded and traveled fifteen miles without snow shoes. Just before reaching camp the following day, they met Messrs. Glover and Rhodes of the party fitted out by Sinclair, Sutter and Mc Kinstry, who informed them that they had reached the cabins and found the people in the worst condition possible; that they had started for the settlements with twenty-one persons, old and young, owing to the robbery of their cache by ... little animal, called Marten, their provisions had become exhausted, and that they had left the party in a starving condition several miles behind. Receiving this information, Mr. Reed immediately dispatched Messrs. Ritchie and Gordon to the Mule springs to bring up the provisions cached there, and with instructions that if they should meet Mr. Woodworth to send him on with all speed, for upon him Mr. Reed greatly depended for future supplies, knowing that the quantity he had himself was insufficient for the support of the sufferers from the cabins to the settlements. Had Mr. Woodworth hastened on after receiving these advices, much suffering would have been prevented, but he relied up... own judgment, and that judgment by a man young in years and of little experience, will be appreciated by the world at its proper value, and this narrative will plainly show the error of Mr. Woodworth's course. Mr. Reed then hastened to meet the sufferers, after, however, leaving; He had not proceeded far when ... of the party, who were, dragging their emaciated forms along in the snow. The first persons he met were principally children, who were stronger, and being lighter, could travel through the snow with greater facility than the rest of the party. Provisions were immediately distributed among them, and hurried them towards the camp. But, what were the feelings of Mr. Reed when he beheld his wife and two of his children tottering towards him; their forms wasted away, and their countenances pale and haggard from the ravages of famine and cold. With what feelings did he rush towards those so dear to him whom, long ago, despair had induced him to believe had perished, and what was their joy on beholding the protecting hand that had been so long lost to them. Mrs. Reed had started from the cabins with her four children.— Hardly had she proceeded two miles when her two youngest sank beneath the fatigue and were unable to proceed. She could not leave them to die, and to return to face the miseries of the cabins again, was horrible; but sooner than leave them she determined ... meet any dangers, when her little daughter said, "I will go back with Thomas. If we never see each other again, do the best you can, God will take care of us." But she could not consent to part with them, until Mr. Glover told her that Mr. Reed being a brother Mason, he felt in duty bound to exert himself to save her children; that he would return with them to the cabins, and that he would pledge his honor as a Mason to return and carry them out of the mountains as soon as he should conduct the party safely to the settlements. Relying upon his faith, she consented that they should ... Mr. Reed seeing his wife and children somewhat invigorated by the food they had received, pushed with his party for the cabins, in the most dread-state of anxiety in regard to the situation of his children. Reaching the ridge dividing Bear and Juba rivers they made a cache, and proceeding ten miles further, they encamped. Two day's after this, they saw the top

of a cabin just peering above the silvery surface of the snow. As they approached it, Mr. Reed beheld his youngest daughter, sitting upon the corner of the roof, her feet resting upon the snow. Nothing could exceed the joy of each, and Mr. Reed was in raptures, when on going into the cabin he found his son alive. The family at this cabin still had a little provision left from a friend. In gazing upon this revolting picture of sufferings of the most hideous form, he thought of the narrow escape of himself and family from the cruel fate which had overtaken his companions, which cut them down in death, amidst the sight of a beautiful country, where, if they could once arrive, they could live in peace and plenty, and the very country for which they left their native home and traveled many thousand miles ... Gathering together those that were able to travel, and leaving two young men and seven day's provisions with those who were unable, Mr. Reed and his men cached all their effects, and set out on their return. Every day they anxiously looked for the arrival of Mr. Woodworth's party, but each day, they were doomed to disappointment; slowly they proceeded on their toilsome way, and after travelling three day's the provisions became very scarce, he then sent three of his best men to the cache upon the ridge dividing Bear and Jubi, with instructions for one to return with the contents, while the other two should proceed to the next ranch, and if in the meantime they did not meet Mr. J. Woodworth, to turn with its contents also. The three men proceeded to their errand, without one morsel of provision. The party followed slowly upon their trail, accomplishing 13 miles in that day's travel. The next day, just as they reached camp, a storm, which had lurked behind threatening clouds of darkest hue for several days, now burst upon the poor emigrants with all the fury of a tornado. The winds blew a bitter, piercing blast; the pitiless snow beat fiercely against their thinly clad and weak forms; their blood grew chill within their veins, and death, with glaring eyes, stared them in the face. All that night did the storm rage, nor did it abate in the least the whole of the next day; another sight was passed in the relentless storm, and it was only by the most superhuman efforts of Mr. Reed and his men, that the lives of the party were preserved. The fire had sunk into a pit in the snow, twenty feet deep, and it required the most unceasing toil to save it from the destructive power of the snow. Another morning dawned upon the vast white blank of nature, but brought no fair weather; another night spread its sable curtain over this world of snow, and still the pitiless storm howled among the towering silver coated pines, ... morning dawned, fair and bright, the wind subsided, and the frozen mist sank upon the white bosom of the mountains; but now they had the misfortune to lose one of their number—little Isaac Donner, who died of starvation, for their provision had given out when the storm first came on. When it was proposed to start once more, a portion of the party objected, and under no consideration could they be prevailed upon to leave the camp; the rest feeling bound, ...as life remained, to make every exertion to reach the settlement, proceeded on their way. Owing to the softness of the snow, their journey was very toilsome, and the air became colder until they reached camp, but they had no idea of the effect of the cold upon them until a fire was started, when reaction taking place in their limbs, their agony was intense. So severe was the pain they suffered that they forgot for a time the cravings of hunger. The next day they travelled ten miles, and the great toes of many having burst, they could have been racked the whole distance by their blood. They had now been four days without provision, but at this camp, to their great joy, the three men, who had been dispatched to the caches, came in with a little provision, the cause of their delay was, finding the first cache had been robbed by Marten, they proceeded to the next, and the great storm coming upon them, they were obliged to wait until it abated. Invigorated by these supplies, they proceeded, and two days after they reached the camp of Mr. Woodworth, in Bear River Valley. As soon as Mr. Reed and party reached Mr. Woodworth's camp, they urged him to proceed immediately to the relief of those who had been left on the east side of the mountains, and the party that had remained at the head of Juba valley; the former having very little provision, the latter none whatever. But Mr. Woodworth and party, when gazing upon the pale and emaciated forms of the emigrants, and saw pictured upon their countenances the evidences of most intense suffering, and looked forward to the dangers that must be surmounted before they could reach and relieve the poor emigrants, they quailed before the prospect, and refused to proceed without a pilot. A pilot was, however, needless,—because the tracks made by the snow shoes of the party which had just arrived, were amply sufficient to

guide them to Juba valley, from which Juba river was a sure guide to Truckey's lake, near the cabins. Of all this Mr. Woodworth was informed, but he utterly refused to proceed without a pilot. At the end of two days, a large majority of Mr. Reed's party volunteered to go with him. They went, and on their arrival at the head of Juba valley, they found the party that Mr. Reed had left. Three persons were dead, and the survivors were subsisting on their dead bodies. After making the necessary arrangements for this party to proceed to Bear river, the relief company proceeded to the cabins, where they found that six more had died since Mr. Reed's visit. Gathering the survivors, they carried all the effects of the company, and returned to Bear Valley. And now after three month's starvation, among the snow-capped mountains, the survivors of this unfortunate company are tilling the soil, beneath the perpetual summers of the vallies of California.

Grandison B. Crow Goes to Oregon

Grandison B. Crow, born in Chester County, Kentucky, was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois. He went to Oregon in 1847. In September 1848, he went to California, gold having been discovered there in June 1848. After spending eighteen years there, he returned to Sangamon County in 1866, and lived at the family homestead in Ball Township.⁸³

⁸³ *Power*, p. 235.

1848

There was only one letter and one Sangamon County resident who went west in 1848. This was the year gold was discovered in California and material describing that event is included here. The impact of this discovery would have a tremendous impact on Sangamon County residents in the following year. Many would go west as 49'rs.

32. Penn Letter About the Benefits of Illinois Compared to the Far West

Journal, Thursday, January 6, 1848⁸⁴

Illinois vs Oregon.

To the Editors of the *Journal*: I have seen in your paper several interesting communications from persons resident in Oregon and California. Comparatively a stranger in your State, I have noticed the great avidity with which those accounts are sought for by your readers. Independent of the fact, that some of their acquaintances are not residing in those remote regions; those countries are to them fanciful portions of the earth, in soil, in landscape and in health. It is said that quote distance lends enchantment to the view;" And I am apprehensive that those who have gone to those distant places have found on a near and more familiar view Oregon, that that country, like all others, possesses advantages and disadvantages, and therefore is not an exception into a rule which applies to the greatest portion of this mundane sphere.

I have already made a longer introduction to this communication, then, perhaps, is necessary. While your readers have been interested in your letters from Oregon; — I, residing near the shores of the Atlantic, had been no less interested in reading accounts of the great West — the wonderful adaptation of its soil for producing crops — it's great natural avenues for commerce — and the immense advantages it offers to the farming class of our citizens — More particularly those who have little means, but who has strong hearts and arms and are desirous, by the extra exertions of a few years, to make themselves comfortable with old age comes upon them. And all these particulars, I have not been disappointed in passing over your beautiful state. True, it is not Eden — true, it is not a country of which it may be said —

"No chilling wind, or poisonous breath; Sickness and sorrow, pain and death, are felt and feared no more."

But, like other countries, it is subjected to some of those ills which marked the difference between the sorrows of earth and the beauties of heaven: but as far as I have been able to learn, except in some locations on Rivers, in the neighborhood of ponds, slobbs, or sluggish streams, — the mortality is less than in the rural districts of the eastern states. Consumptions, of which I have heard of some cases here, generally results from severe and neglected colds and exposures; they are not, as in some parts of my own state, a hereditary disease of families, which sometimes take off several members in a few months time. I have seen there, in a family of four sisters, three of them, within as many months, struck down by this fatal disease. There is sickness here: it is such as is incident to the settlement of all new countries: the turning up of the new Prairie — the opening of sluices to carry off stagnant waters, exposures — cause sickness, painful, vaccinations, and sometimes fatal. But where have we not sickness and death? Immortality is less here, I repeat, then in the agricultural portions of many of the old states.

But Illinois has positive advantages. I have examined with admiration and delight the obvious advantages of your prairie country for settlement. — What would our eastern farmers say were I to tell them that all which is required to put the wild prairie in order to receive the seed for crops, is merely to turn over the natural award by a plow drawn by two yoke of oxen? That

⁸⁴ *Journal*, Thursday, January 6, 1848, p. 3.

done, and the land fenced, and there is no further trouble. There is no timber to clear off — no stumps to annoy for years — but a deep soil, in most cases from eighteen inches to two feet deep, a deposit which invites us to draw upon it, to any extent, for the nourishment and growth of crops, — and it scarcely ever fails to honor the draft. With such a soil — with a favorable climate — with a reasonable share of health—with a fair market—the farmer has all the elements to secure himself competence—to bring up his family respectably—to assist in establishing about him the institutions of education and religion, — thus securing to himself and those for whom he feels the deepest interest, the blessings of the present life, and happiness hereafter.

I might go on, Messrs. Editors, (for this is a fruitful theme,) and give my views of the different portions of the State for new agricultural settlements. Illinois is the gem, the garden spot, of the mighty valley of the West. You and I may not live to see it, but within a few years its advantages will be appreciated and enjoyed by millions of inhabitants. Who then will limit its internal improvements? How many rail roads will be required to accommodate its population, and to carry to market the immensity of her products?

Illinois in preference to Oregon or California for me. Others may enjoy themselves in the wild scenes of the Farthest West; — the Far West satisfies me. Here I shall not be beyond the reach of my Eastern friends, — I can visit them If I choose. I can go back and renew my love for those places where I wandered in youth and innocence. I can visit the graves of my parents, and shed anew tears to their memory. Oregon is not for me.

These reflections, Messrs. Editors, passed thro' my mind, while, a stranger here, last October, I traveled over, in different directions, your beautiful county, and the counties of Christian, Logan and McLean. How was I entranced almost with the scenery, the soil, the climate, at that beautiful season. How heavy were the burthens of corn which rested on the fields;—how numerous the cattle which lived rejoicing in their freedom upon the prairies; and even the swine grunted forth evidence of the fatness of the land!

In some of these sojournings I passed over the entire of land by John Grigg, Esq. of Philadelphia. In 1836, this gentleman vested counties. Generally they were fortunate entries. In Christian county large tracts have been converted into flourishing and beautiful farms. Saving the absence of fruit and ornamental trees, the growth of which is the work of time, — on a casual look you would say, that the appearance of these farms indicated that fifteen years of labor had been expended upon them. You could hardly realize the truth, that the first attempt at improvement only dated back two and at most three years. And there was yet room for scores of additional farms, all of which would possess great natural advantages.

While, therefore, you indulge the fancy of your readers, in giving the interesting communications which you receive from Oregon, (for I like to read them myself, as I read in other days the adventures of Mr. Robinson Crusoe.) I hope you will not forget that you live in the centre of the Great Mississippi valley, and that in a less number of years that have elapsed since the declaration of American Independence—while the population of Oregon may reach that of the population of Illinois—this valley will contain fifty millions of inhabitants, and will enjoy all the advantages of a dense population of concentrated wealth.

Penn

Gold Discovered at Sutter's Mill January 24, 1848

The California Gold Rush began on January 24, 1848, when gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill on the American River. James W. Marshall, a foreman working for Sacramento pioneer John Sutter, found pieces of shiny metal in the tailrace of a lumber mill. Marshall quietly brought what he found to Sutter, and the two of them privately tested the findings. The tests

showed Marshall's particles to be gold. Sutter wanted to keep the news quiet because he feared what would happen to his plans for an agricultural empire if there were a mass search for gold.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Just days after the discovery at Sutter's Mill, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, ending the Mexican-American War and leaving California in the hands of the United States. At the time, the population of the territory consisted of 6,500 Californios (people of Spanish or Mexican decent); 700 foreigners (primarily Americans); and 150,000 Native Americans (barely half the number that had been there when Spanish settlers arrived in 1769).

By mid-March 1848, at least one newspaper was reporting that large quantities of gold were being turned up at Sutter's Mill. Though the initial reaction in San Francisco was disbelief, newspaper publisher and merchant Samuel Brannan set off a frenzy when he paraded through town displaying a vial of gold obtained from Sutter's Creek. The most famous quote of the California Gold Rush was by Brannan shouting "Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River!"

By mid-June, some three-quarters of the male population of San Francisco had left town for the gold mines.

By July, word of the gold discovery had reached Hawaii.

By August 1848, the news had reached Oregon, and soon people began arriving from the ranches and towns of Southern California, Sonora, and provinces of northern Mexico. Rapidly, word was reaching even such faraway places as Chili and Peru. As news spread of the fortunes being made in California, the first migrants to arrive were those from lands accessible by boat, such as Oregon, the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii), Mexico, Chile, Peru and even China. Prospectors, from the East sailed around Cape Horn. Some hiked across the Isthmus of Panama, and by 1849, about 40,000 came to San Francisco by sea alone. By August 1848, the hills above the river were strewn with wood huts and tents and the number of miners in the area reached 4,000. By the end of 1849, the non-native population of the California territory was some 100,000 (compared with the pre-1848 figure of less than 1,000).



Sutter's Mill and the beginnings of the California Gold Rush.⁸⁵

John Sutter had ambitious dreams of creating an empire--the New Helvetia in the Sacramento Valley. But his great fiefdom was destroyed because all of his holdings and Sutter's Fort were lost to the ever-increasing masses seizing everything in pursuit of instant wealth.

⁸⁵ This photo, online courtesy of the Oskosh Library,

Gathered information estimated that about 4000 people were working the mines, about half of whom were Indians, and that some \$30,000 to \$50,000 worth of gold was being mined every day. At the close of 1848, high water ended the first mining season, but there were approximately 5,000 miners still working, and new strikes were being made every day.

On August 19, 1848, the *New York Herald* was the first major newspaper on the East Coast to report that there was a gold rush in California. Gold fever kicked off there in earnest, however, after December 5, 1848, when President James K. Polk announced the positive results of a report in his inaugural address. As Polk wrote, "The accounts of abundance of gold are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service."

At first, the prospectors retrieved the gold from streams and riverbeds using simple techniques, such as panning, and later developed more sophisticated methods of gold recovery that were adopted around the world. Gold worth billions of today's dollars was recovered, leading to great wealth for a few. Many, however, returned home with little more than they started with.

San Francisco had been a tiny settlement before the rush began. When residents learned of the discovery, it at first became a ghost town of abandoned ships and businesses whose owners joined the Gold Rush, but it then boomed as merchants and new people arrived. The population of San Francisco exploded from perhaps 1,000 in 1848 to 25,000 full-time residents by 1850. As with many boomtowns, the sudden influx of people strained the infrastructure of San Francisco and other towns near the goldfields. People lived in tents, wood shanties, or deck cabins removed from abandoned ships.

As news of the discovery spread, some 300,000 people came to California from the United States and abroad during the period 1848 to 1855. This was the California Gold Rush, arguably one of the most significant events to shape American history during the first half of the 19th century. A total of \$2 billion worth of gold was extracted from the area during the Gold Rush, which peaked in 1852.

In what has been referred to as the "first world-class gold rush," there was no easy way to get to California; forty-niners faced hardship and often death on the way to the gold fields. At first, most Argonauts, as they were also known, traveled by sea. From the East Coast, a sailing voyage around the tip of South America would take five to eight months, and cover some 18,000 nautical miles.

These early gold-seekers traveled to California overland across the mountains or an alternative route was to sail to the Atlantic side of the Isthmus of Panama, to take canoes and mules for a week through the jungle, and then on the Pacific side, to wait for a ship sailing for San Francisco. There was also a route across Mexico starting at Vera Cruz. Eventually, most gold-seekers took the overland route across the continental United States, particularly along the California Trail. Each of these routes had its own deadly hazards, from shipwreck to typhoid fever to cholera. They came from what is now the Mid West and western Pennsylvania. While most of the newly-arrived were Americans, the Gold Rush also attracted tens of thousands from Latin America, Europe, Australia and Asia.

The upheaval was enormous. Native American cultures that had lasted for thousands of years in California were lost and destroyed. But the Mormon economy in Utah flourished with the large gold riches funneled into their banks. The old Mexican province suddenly became a new state.

San Francisco grew from a tiny hamlet of tents to a boomtown, and roads, churches, schools and other towns were built. A system of laws and a government were created, leading to the

admission of California as a state in 1850. New methods of transportation developed as steamships came into regular service and railroads were built. The business of agriculture, California's next major growth field, was started on a wide scale throughout the state. However, the Gold Rush also had negative effects: Native Americans were attacked and pushed off traditional lands, and gold mining caused environmental harm.

Travel by Sea



To meet the demands of the new arrivals, ships bearing goods from around the world—porcelain and silk from China, ale from Scotland—poured into San Francisco as well. Upon reaching San Francisco, ship captains found that their crews deserted and went to the gold fields. The wharves and docks of San Francisco became a forest of masts, as hundreds of ships were abandoned. Enterprising San Franciscans then took over these abandoned ships and turned them into warehouses, stores, taverns, hotels, and one into a jail. Many of these ships were later destroyed and used for landfill to create more buildable land in the boomtown.

Instruction to Emigrants

Immigration to California.⁸⁶

Do not wish to hasten any good citizens out of Illinois — would much rather do all in our power to keep them here, and get thousands from abroad to join them and thrive, essays that may, in our rich soil instead of toiling among the Sands of California — but, we know that, all over the Union, many are panting to go after the glittering treasurer, so that it is but common humanity to look up for them all the information which may serve to make their passage together safe and comfortable. Such information has been communicated to the *Louisville Courier*, by Edwin Bryant, well known as the author of a book called: — “What I saw in California.”

⁸⁶ First published in 1848, *What I Saw in California* is recognized as the foremost trail guide for the Forty-niners. Almost overnight, Edwin Bryant became their authority on how to survive the grueling passage from Independence, Missouri, to San Francisco, and how to prosper in the Promised Land. He also served as a literary model for the diarists among them. His popular book was based on journals describing fully his “tour” west in 1846. For the Kentucky newspaperman, it had been an undertaking with an uncertain outcome, since the overland trail was still faint and the fabled, remote California was then in political turmoil. In fact, Bryant’s party had headed straight into the Mexican War. For today’s reader, *What I Saw in California* is more than a trail guide. It is a valuable primary source of information about the westering experience. In sharp detail, the book portrays births, weddings, and deaths on the trail and the strategies of men and women desperately trying to survive in the adventure of their lives. It includes an early account of the Donner tragedy and of the kaleidoscopic life in California immediately following the American conquest. www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/university-of-nebraska-press/9780803260702/

First the best and shortest route is, via Independence or St. Joseph, Mo. So, to Fort Laramie, Southpass, Fort Hall the sink of Mary's river, etc. the old route. The emigrant by taking this route will certainly reaches destination in good season and without disaster.

Second the lightest wagon, have strength to carry 2500 pounds, is the vehicle most desirable. This wagon can be hauled by three or four yokes of oxen or six mules. Oxen travel about 15 miles per day. Pack mules can only be employed by ... men. Party with pack mules can make the journey and less time by one month then in wagons — carrying with them, however nothing more than provisions, clothing and ammunition.

Third the provisions necessary, per man are as follows: — hundred and 50 pounds of flour; one hundred 50 pounds bacon: 25 pounds coffee: 30 pounds sugar. Add to these items, a small quantity of rice, 50 or 75 pounds of crackers, dried peaches etc., and a keg of lard, with salt, pepper, etc.

Fourth every man should be provided with a good rifle, and is convenient with a pair of pistols, 5 pounds of powder and 10 of lead. Revolving belt pistol may be found useful. With the wagon there should be carried such carpenters tools as a handsaw, auger, gambler, chisel, shaving knife, etc. and ax, hammer and hatchet. This last weapon every man should have it in his belt with the hunters...

Fifth from Independence to the first settlement in California, which is near the gold region, is about 2050 miles to ____ to San Francisco is about 2290 miles.

Six the accounts of the gold mines and other minds in California are undoubtedly true. They're derived from the most authentic and reliable sources

Seventh what could a young man or a man with a family, with or without a profession, do, should be immigrate to California?

Answer— when he arrives there he must turn his attention to whatever seems to promise the largest recompence for his labor.

Families as well as parties going out, should carry with them good tents, to be used after their arrival as houses. The climate, however even in winter is so mild that, with good tenants, As what they purchased their after they arrived home, they will be compelled to pay a high price for.

Eight immigrants should be at Independence, or the point of starting by 20 April, and start as soon thereafter as the grass will permit. This is sometimes by the first of May, and sometimes 10 days later.

The immigrants, should not take the route via the south end of the great Salt Lake, but continue on by Fort Hall, when they will again enter set his route on Mary's River, about 100 miles from his headwaters. On this route they will always, except in two instances, find water and grass within short distances.

Mr. Harris Pilots Company of Oregon Emigrants

Journal, Thursday, March 2, 1848.⁸⁷

Oregon Emigrants. — Appearances indicate that a large immigration will be made to Oregon during the present year. Already about 40 families are in Saint Joseph [Missouri] and the

⁸⁷ *Journal*, Thursday, March 2, 1848, p. 1.

neighborhood, awaiting the spring time, when they will set out for that country or California. We anticipate that many hundreds will congregate at this place before the first of May, and cross the river here. We advise those who intend moving to either of these countries at any time, to do so as early as practicable. The great inducement for emigrating is to get a good tract of land, and prudence suggests that the more he made soon, otherwise the most desirable portions of the country will be settled. There can be no doubt, we apprehend, that Oregon will be cared for the present Congress. The only reason given for not organizing to territory the last session of Congress, was the want of time, and that reason will not do for this session, for they take their time, it's been a long session.

Mr. Harris is still in the neighborhood of St. Joseph, and will pilot a company to Oregon or California. St. Joseph is still his head quarters, and he will start from this place ...

Mr. Wiggins Safe in Oregon Territory
Journal, Wednesday, August 16, 1848.⁸⁸

Advices have been received from Oregon, which state that Mr. Wiggins and his party, who were supposed to be lost in the California mountains, arrived in safety in Oregon territory last fall.

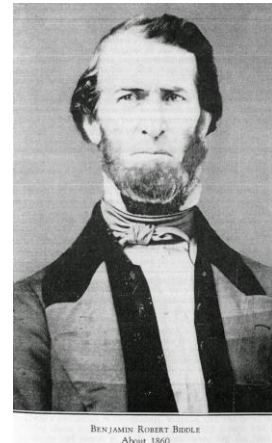
Grandison B. Crow Goes to California From Oregon

In September 1848, Grandison B. Crow went from Oregon to California, gold having been discovered there in June 1848. After spending eighteen years there, he returned to Sangamon County in 1866, and lived at the family homestead in Ball Township.⁸⁹

Benjamin R. Biddle Active Citizen of Springfield: Plans to Go to Oregon Territory

In 1848, Benjamin R. Biddle (1808-1882) was a 40 year-old resident of Springfield, Illinois. By trade he was a tailor, but he no longer practiced that trade. He was active in community affairs, serving as President of the Mechanics' Union, trustee of the Springfield City School and being a member of the temperance movement. In politics, he was a Whig.

For some time, Benjamin R. Biddle had talked of going west to the Oregon Territory where his sister, Harriet, and her husband, Hamilton Campbell, lived. The death of his father pushed this dream to the forefront.⁹⁰ He decided to go in the spring of 1849. He wanted to see for himself if the country was as beautiful and well adapted for home making as it was represented to be. He planned to take a load of merchandise with him, with which to pay the expenses of the trip. Then, if he could make the proper arrangements, he would return in the spring of 1851 for his family.



Benjamin R. Biddle

⁸⁸ *Journal*, Wednesday, August 16, 1848, p. 1.

⁸⁹ *Power*, p. 235.

⁹⁰ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 84-85.

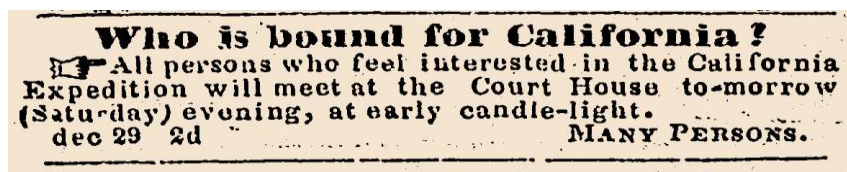
Slavery Prompts Benjamin Robert Biddle to Go West

There was even talk of war between the Slave States and the Federal Government. It did not seem possible that the grandchildren of the men who had fought to free America and establish the Union, could war among themselves and destroy that union; but men were hot-headed, and there were times when it seemed that such a thing might happen. Perhaps if war did come, just as Henry and Robert were reaching manhood, they would be called to carry arms against their own people, of the South.⁹¹

It would be much better for them all to go West and leave this turmoil behind than to have their fine boys carried off to fight against their own flesh and blood. And so B. R. and Maria thought longingly of the home that could be founded in the West—far from the bitterness and political confusion that threatened to engulf them. Dr. Cardwell and Mary thought the same way about the matter. Father and Mother Biddle had grown too old to attempt the hazardous journey; and B. R. would not consider leaving them while they needed him and depended on him.⁹²

California Emigrants Meet at Sangamon County Court House December 30, 1848

Journal, Friday, December 29, 1848.⁹³



William F. Cutter Goes to California

William F. Cutter was born on October 8, 1828, in Sangamon County, Illinois. In the Mexican War, he served one year from June 1846, in the 4th Illinois Inf., under Col. E. D. Baker. In 1848, Cutter went to California where he spent several years in mining and died there of consumption.⁹⁴

James Francis Reed and the California Gold Rush

In the spring of 1848, James F. Reed joined the Gold Rush, finding rich diggings in the Placerville area. Returning to San Jose in the fall of that year, he began an active community life. The family settled on a 500-acre ranch between First Street and Coyote Creek, in what is now downtown San Jose.

Reed became a real estate developer as well as a speculator in various mining enterprises. Subdivision of the Reed land in 1849 resulted in the naming of Reed, Carrie, Margaret, Keyes, Lewis, Martha, Patterson, and Virginia Streets in honor of Reed family members. The present day Reed School was named after Frazier O. Reed, a grandson of James Reed. During the California statehood process, Reed was a leading proponent of a plan to make San Jose the capital of California, and he went so far as to donate four city blocks to the cause.

⁹¹ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 85-86.

⁹² *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 86-87.

⁹³ *Journal*, Friday, December 29, 1848, p. 4.

⁹⁴ *Power*, p. 240-241.

1849

During the year 1849, 76 residents of Sangamon County were struck with gold fever and went west to California. Three of the 76 are recorded as taking their families and those in the families are unnumbered. Fifteen of them wrote 54 letters during 1849. This is the most prolific letter writing year of the years under consideration. The names of the letter and journal writers are listed here with the number of their letters and journal reports.

Benjamin Watson 13 letters to his wife.
Benjamin Robert Biddle 12 letters/journal reports
Charles Maltby 2 letters
Elijah Cook Matheny 5 letters
Charles Ludlam 2 letters
Franklin Hickox 2 letters
Eli Cook 6 letters to his wife
John B. Watson 5 journal reports
Alfred R. Elder
William L. Todd
Christopher Logan
Isaac Constant
William Enyert
Philip Weber
Robert F. Coflin

The '49ers Come to California

Waves of immigrants from around the world, later called the "forty-niners," invaded the Gold Country of California. As John Sutter had feared, he was ruined. His workers left in search of gold, and squatters invaded his land and stole his crops and cattle. Although Sutter tried desperately to find ways to profit from the discovery, both he and John Marshall never enjoyed the wealth, power, and prestige they felt they deserved.

Throughout 1849, people living in the United States (mostly men) borrowed money, mortgaged their property, spent their life savings and left their families and hometowns to go west to California in pursuit of gold. Wives left behind took on new responsibilities such as running farms or businesses and caring for their children.

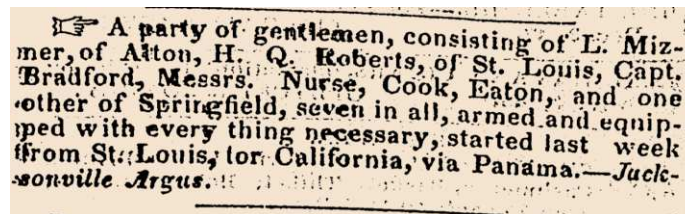
During the winter and early spring of 1849, a great deal of property changed hands in and about Springfield. Men sold or mortgaged their holdings to raise money to finance their trips to the California gold fields. They planned and worked hard in order to be ready to start as soon as the grass began to grow in the spring as they had to have feed for their stock along the way.

By the fall of 1849 gold fever had spread worldwide. Companies were being formed in Great Britain, Germany, and France. Miners were recruited from China. The Gold Rush lessened some of the burdens of world-wide economic problems: the potato famine in Ireland; revolution in France, Germany, and Italy; Taiping Rebellion and opium wars in China.

By the end of 1849 there were 40,000 people in the mines and the non-native population of California was estimated at 100,000, (as compared with 20,000 at the end of 1848 and around 800 in March 1848). To accommodate the needs of the '49ers, gold mining towns sprung up all over the region, complete with shops, saloons, brothels and other businesses. The overcrowded chaos of the mining camps and towns grew ever more lawless, including rampant banditry, gambling, prostitution and violence. San Francisco developed a bustling economy and became the central city of northern California.

In late 1849, California applied to enter the Union with a constitution preventing slavery, provoking a crisis in Congress between proponents of slavery and abolitionists. According to the Compromise of 1850, proposed by Kentucky's Senator Henry Clay, California was allowed to enter as a free state, while the territories of Utah and New Mexico were left open to decide the question for themselves.

John S. Bradford, Nurse, Eli Cook, Eaton Leave For California Via Panama



Register, Friday, January 19, 1849.⁹⁵

Eli Cook Goes to California-1849

In 1849 at age 40, Eli Cook left for the Pacific Coast without his family and died in Nevada City, California on March 25, 1853. Eli was born on November 4, 1809 in Butler County, Ohio and married there on April 7, 1829 to Sarah Jones who was born on February 2, 1809 in Preble County, Ohio. They moved to Indiana and from there to Effingham County, Illinois and thence to Springfield in 1837. They had nine children. Eli Cook was a hatter by trade and followed that business in Springfield. He was Mayor of Springfield three terms in 1846, 47 and 48.⁹⁶ He travelled west from St. Joseph, Missouri in 1849 to Sacramento, California before settling in Nevada City and operating a dry goods business.

John S. Bradford Goes to California

January 1, 1849

On January 1, 1849, John S. Bradford, age 34, started for California from Springfield. He went there by the Isthmus of Panama, and was eighty-seven days on the Pacific Ocean, reaching San Francisco on May 20, 1849.

He [John S. Bradford] was born June 9, 1815, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His father was a native of Delaware and died in Philadelphia in 1816. John learned the trade of a book-binder in Philadelphia. In 1835, he decided to see something of the country and started on a pedestrian tour of the City of Mexico. He made his way to Pittsburg and went from there by boat to Cincinnati and from there to Dayton, Ohio, and finally arrived at Richmond, Indiana. There he abandoned his purpose of visiting the land of the Aztecs as he had an opportunity to work at his trade, and while in that city was induced to join a corps of United States engineers who were constructing a wagon road known as the "National Road," from Cumberland, Maryland to Vandalia, then the capital of Illinois, at which point the engineers disbanded, the capital being in transit then to Springfield.

In December, 1840, Bradford came to Springfield, and in the spring of 1841 he bought the interest of Mr. Burchell in the book bindery of Burchell & Johnson and became one of the

⁹⁵ *Register*, Friday, Jan 19, 1849, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *Power*, pp. 227-228.

firm of Johnson & Bradford. Soon after coming to Springfield he became a member of the Springfield Cadets, of which he was appointed Lieutenant, and through his connection with the military organizations of Illinois he finally was enabled to set foot on Mexican soil. During the Mormon troubles the cadets were ordered to Nauvoo by Gov. Ford in 1845 and did good service there. In 1846 Bradford enlisted in Company A, Fourth Illinois Infantry, commanded by Col. E. D. Baker, and was commissioned Quartermaster of his regiment by Gov. Ford, and as such he accompanied it to Mexico. After his arrival in that country he was made Commissary of the United States Army. He was present at the bombardment and capture of Vera Cruz, was at the battle of Cerro Gordo, and in other battles, returning with his regiment to Springfield in 1847.⁹⁷

John S. Bradford was married on July 15, 1841, in Brandenburg, Kentucky, to Adaline M. Semple, who was born in October 1817, in Cumberland County, Kentucky. Her brother, James Semple, was at that time Charge de Affaires to New Grenada, afterwards United States Senator from Illinois, and still later one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Illinois.

The result of that war securing to us California and the discovery of gold,

When the military commander of that department of the Pacific ordered a government to be formed for a new State of California, he was elected to represent a district extending north to Oregon, east to the Sacramento River, and south to the Bay of San Francisco. The Legislature organized the State and divided it into counties without ever having passed through a territorial probation. Bradford was re-elected as a member of the Legislature in 1850, his district composed of the five counties of Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and Marin, being a portion of the district he represented in the first Legislature.

In 1851 Bradford returned to Springfield, his family having remained there, and his business relations with Mr. Johnson having continued. He became an active figure in public life: he has served the county of Sangamon, in 1857, as Superintendent of Public Instruction and was one of the Commissioners to divide the county into townships and name them. He served the city of Springfield as Treasurer, Alderman and Mayor.

When Illinois was called on for 6,000 of the 75,000 men to meet the rebels, Bradford was appointed by Gov. Yates as commissary, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, his commission bearing date April 16, 1861, being the first commission issued by Gov. Yates in connection with the war to suppress the rebellion. He prepared quarters for the first soldiers rendezvoused by the State, and called it Camp Yates.

Bradford severed his connection with the firm of Johnson & Bradford in 1869, and opened a book store in Springfield, which he sold out in 1873, and moved to Aberdeen, Mississippi. He returned to Springfield in November 1875. Mr. and Mrs. Bradford had seven children in Springfield.⁹⁸

In 1876, Bradford became Crier for the Court and subsequently was appointed United States Commissioner. He is one of the staunchest members of the Democratic party in this section of the country and is a prominent member of the Masonic order and a Knight Templar.

Bradford was one of the leading members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, in which he is Senior or Parish Warden.

⁹⁷ *Portrait & Biographical Album of Sangamon County, Illinois*, Chicago, Chapman Brothers, 1891, p. 130. (Hereafter referred to as *1891 History*.)

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24551868/john-s_-bradford *Power*, p. 130.

⁹⁸ *Power*, p. 130-131.

Journal Newspaper Articles in January 1849

A gentleman from Panama, states, that there must be at that point, at this time, 6,000 persons, waiting for passage to San Francisco.

The New York Commercial states, that the gold fever in that city is rapidly declining, and that not half the vessels advertised will sail for California.

Several of our young men have left for California. They are among our best.

At a California meeting on Saturday night, held at the court house, some 26 names were handed in by persons who design to leave for California in the Spring. The meeting stands adjourned to be held at the same place on Saturday evening next.

Journal, Tuesday, January 2, 1849.⁹⁹

Fare to El Dorado.

The New York Journal of Commerce has the following in answer to the frequent inquiries made with regard to the expense of a trip to California by the most expeditious route via Chagres, in steam vessels:

From New York to Chagres, in saloon,	- \$150
" " " cabin,	- 120
" Panama to San Francisco, in saloon,	- 250
" " " cabin,	- 200

For places at a less distance, to the south of San Francisco, on the Californian coast, a proportionate reduction is made.

The California Bill.

The following is a copy of the bill introduced by Judge Douglas in the U. S. Senate, for the admission of California into the Union as a state:

A Bill for the admission of California into the Union as a State.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all that portion of the territory of the United States, which was acquired by the "treaty of peace, friendship, limits, and settlement with the republic of Mexico, concluded February 2, 1848," shall be one state; and the same is hereby declared to be one of the United States of America, on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatsoever, by the name and title of the state of California: *Provided,* That con-

The commercial editor of the N. Y. Tribune says, that in Wall street it is estimated that after the first of March, the Atlantic states will receive gold to the amount of \$3,000,000 a month, from California. This amount can be easily absorbed in the ordinary business of the country.

Register, Wednesday, January 3, 1849.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ *Journal*, Tuesday, January 2, 1849, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Register*, Wednesday, January 3, 1849, p. 2.

Telegraphic Despatches.	
FOR THE DAILY STATE REGISTER.	
A long despatch was received, but not in time for to-day's paper.	
The Overland Route to California.	
The St. Louis Reveille gives the following items in relation to the expenses attending the overland journey to California:	
To go in companies of ten persons, associating with other companies, so as to make a caravan sufficiently strong, the expenses will be somewhat as follows:	
One wagon, harness, and eight good mules, would cost the party about,	\$900 00
For ninety days, nine hundred rations of flour, at one and a quarter barrels to the ration; (two ounces more than full army ration,) twelve hundred pounds,	30 00
Ninety rations of pork, (three quarters of a pound to the ration,) for each person, making six hundred and seventy-five pounds in all, about,	47 00
Coffee, sugar, pepper, salt, &c., for each person, about \$3 making	30 00
Cooking utensils, tin plates, coffee pots, camp kettles, &c., for a party of ten persons, large estimate,	30 00
	\$1,037 00
Making \$103.70 as the cost of transportation and provisions to each person. To this, add expense of tents, and contingencies, and the total will be about \$110 00 to each member of the party. Fire arms, ammunition, and clothing will cost as much to go by Panama as across the plains.	

Register, Saturday, January 6, 1849.¹⁰¹

Jason Coke Henkle to Leave For California

Dissolution of Partnership.
THE partnership heretofore existing between J. C. HENKLE and T. S. LITTLE, under the name and style of Little & Henkle, is this day dissolved by mutual consent; therefore, all persons indebted to said firm **MUST** call and settle **IMMEDIATELY**. Mr. Henkle leaves in a few days for California, and the business must be settled. Don't wait to be called on.
 January '8, 1849.

Journal, Wednesday, January 10, 1849.¹⁰²

Jason Coke Henkle was born on October 10, 1820 in what is now Pendleton County, West Virginia. He came to Springfield on July 8, 1838. He died on November 3, 1877 at age 57 and was buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois.¹⁰³

Benjamin R. Biddle Changes Plans to Go to Oregon Territory Plans to Go to California Where Gold Had Been Discovered

As stories of the fabulous riches of gold found along the California streams reached the States, the Oregon Territory was almost forgotten by the mad rush of gold seekers streaming westward to California. News of the discovery of gold in California induced a group of 21

¹⁰¹ *Register*, Saturday, January 6, 1849, p. 3.

¹⁰² *Journal*, Wednesday, January 10, 1849, p. 3.

¹⁰³ *Power*, p. 369.

Sangamon County citizens to form an association, The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company. Benjamin R. Biddle acted as their secretary.

Benjamin R. Biddle had initially planned on going to the Oregon Territory where his sister and brother-in-law were living. When he heard of the gold found in California, he decided to go there instead. In the few months before spring, he put his affairs in order, so that his family could live in comfort while he was away.

John B. Weber and Benjamin R. Biddle Decide to Go to California Together

Benjamin R. Biddle and John B. Weber decided to go to California together as part of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company. Weber had finished his work of copying the *Illinois State Records* and was anxious to invest his savings in something that would bring quick and abundant returns. Biddle and Weber knew nothing about mining for gold, but they knew that all who went to California for gold would have to buy supplies. The first stores near the mines would reap a greater return than the miners themselves.



John B. Weber

John B. Weber, born on April 7, 1810, in Shepherdstown, Virginia, was married there on September 23, 1832, to Sarah Ann Woltz. She was born in Shepherdstown on March 20, 1812. They had two children in Virginia, and moved to Springfield, Illinois, arriving on April 16, 1836. They had eight children in Sangamon County.

John learned cabinet making in Maryland and followed the business two years in New York City, six years at Shepherdstown, Virginia, and five years (1836-1841) in Sangamon County, Illinois, where he was disabled by the loss of a hand by a buzz saw. He was appointed by the Illinois legislature of 1842 and '43 to copy the land records of the state in numerical order, which kept him employed until 1849. He then went to California, and returned in the fall of 1851.

He then purchased a farm in Pawnee Township, one of the best farms in the county. He has been sheriff and collector - 1854-6; was Quartermaster and Commissary during the Mormon War, under Governor Ford, in the fall of 1846. He was clerk in the commissary department in raising the first six Illinois regiments for the suppression of the rebellion.¹⁰⁴

His first wife died on August 5, 1866, and on November 28, 1867, he married Mrs. Nancy J. Drennan; nee Dodds.¹⁰⁵ They lived adjoining Pawnee, Sangamon County, Illinois.

Biddle, Weber and Company: Joined by Second Presbyterian Church Members

When friends heard of Biddle and Webber's intentions, they wanted to join them. Before they started, three other members of the Second Presbyterian Church had arranged to become members of the firm of Biddle, Weber and Company (The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company) to engage in the mercantile business in California. They were:

Augustus Eastman, a young man in his twenties, came with his parents to Illinois from Maine in 1836. He had youth, enthusiasm, and enough money to buy his outfit and pay for his portion of the goods to be transported.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Power, p. 762. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24488401#view-photo=167897668>

¹⁰⁵ Power, pp. 760-761. *1881 History of Sangamon County, Illinois*, Inter-State Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, p. 985. (Hereafter referred to as *1881 History*.)

¹⁰⁶ David Eastman, born on October 20, 1794, was married on January 1, 1817 in Maine to Salinda Wood, a native of Winthrop in the same State. They had four children and came to Auburn, Sangamon County, Illinois, in 1836 or 7.

Lewis Johnson, whose wife died a short time before, longed for a change of scene and action. He had money to invest and was well liked by the other members of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company.

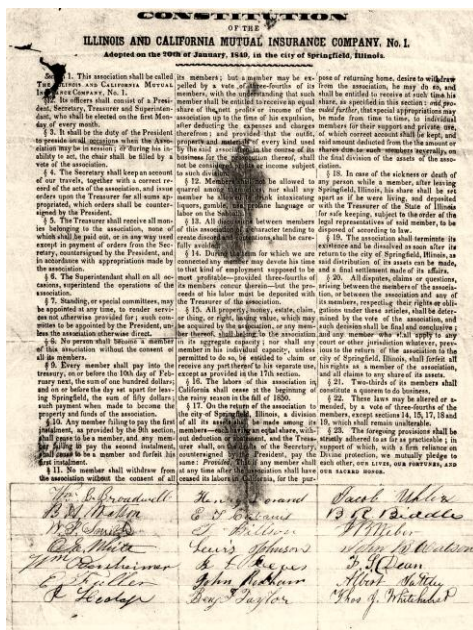
John B. Watson was the oldest man taken into The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company. He was born in South Carolina in 1800, and was 49 years old. Watson taught school the first year he resided in Springfield. He was afterwards county surveyor and engineer of the Great Western Railroad. This experience and his general business ability made him a valuable member of the expedition. He returned in 1852, and he and his two daughters died of Asiatic cholera in August 1852.

Formation of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company

On January 20, 1849, in Springfield a group of 21 citizens formed The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company for the purpose of traveling to California on the overland trail and supplying the gold miners. Benjamin R. Biddle acted as the secretary. They would open a trading post in the hills west of Redding, California. The company was composed of the following persons:¹⁰⁷

B.[enjamin] R. Biddle	T.[homas] Billson	William B. Broadwell	E.[than] T. Cabaniss	F. S. Dean
Henry Dorand	E. Fuller	Richard Hodge	Lewis Johnson	William Odenheimer
B. D. Reeves	John Rodham	Albert Satley	W. P. Smith	Benjamin F. Taylor
Jacob Uhler	Benjamin A. Watson	John B. Watson	J. B. Weber	C. E. White
Thomas J. Whitehurst				

Constitution of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company No. 1 January 20, 1849

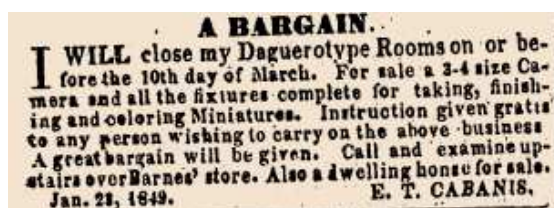


Of their children Augusta, born in Maine went from Sangamon County to California and died there. George L. Eastman, born on May 5, 1833 in Maine, brought up in Sangamon County, went to California in 18_2 and returned to Springfield in 1870 where he lived.

¹⁰⁷ 1912 History of Sangamon County, p. 998.

Ethan T. Cabanis Selling Camera Equipment and House January 22, 1849

E. (Ethan) T. Cabanis, a daguerian, was one of the signers of the Constitution of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company. On January 22, 1849, he placed an advertisement in the *Journal* stating that he would close his Daguerotype Rooms by March 10, 1849.



Journal, Thursday, January 25, 1849.¹⁰⁸

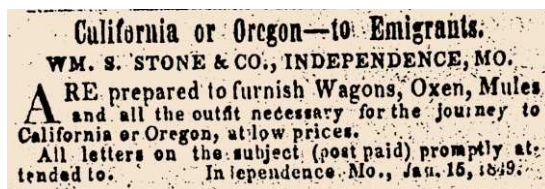
A BARGIN

I will close my Daguerotype Rooms on or before the 10th day of March. For sale a 3-4 size Camera and all the fixtures complete for taking, finishing and coloring Miniatures. Instruction given gratis to any person wishing to carry on the above business. A great bargain will be given. Call and examine upstairs over Barnes' store. Also a dwelling house for sale.

Jan. 22, 1849

E. T. Cabanis

William S. Stone in Independence, Missouri Sells Wagons, Oxen Mules and Outfitting For Journey West



Journal, Monday, February 5, 1849.¹⁰⁹

Albert Sattley Leaves For California Gold Mines

Albert Sattley a well known business men of Taylorville who is now living a retired life has the honor of being a native of Illinois his birth having occurred in Sangamon County at South Rochester on the 10th of April 1821 His parents Archibald and Harriet Hawley Sattley were both natives of Vermont. In 1819 they came to Illinois and were married in the Eastern part of the State, their union being celebrated on the 13th of February 1819 near Carmi in White County. His death occurred in Sangamon County March 16 1842. Upon the home farm the subject of this sketch was reared to manhood and about a year and a half after his father's death he went to Springfield where he engaged in clerking until April 1849. Attracted by the discovery of gold in California he then joined a party of twenty which left the capital city for the mines. Fitting out a mule team with supplies he crossed the plains reaching his destination after six months of travel. He entered the mines at Redding Cal and also sought for the precious metal on the Yuba River being associated with his brother in law Thomas Cheney. In 1850 he returned by way of the Isthmus route to New Orleans and then came up the Mississippi. The boat on which he made the trip had a cholera passenger on board. At length Mr Sattley arrived safely at home and soon afterward resumed clerking in the store where he had previously been employed there remaining until 1854 when his brother in law Thomas Cheney having died he came to Taylorville to settle up the estate and soon purchased Mr Cheney's interest in the store of Shumway & Cheney the firm name then being changed to Shumway & Sattley. For two years business was carried on under that style when Mr Sattley sold out. He then purchased one hundred and sixty acres of land at \$20 per acre situated a quarter of a mile from the square in Taylorville. With the exception of forty acres all this has since been platted and added to the city. For two years Mr Sattley carried on farming. In 1866

¹⁰⁸ *Journal*, Thursday, January 25, 1849, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Journal*, Monday, February 5, 1849, p. 3.

he returned to Taylorville where he and his brothers Marshall and Archibald established the Sattley Brothers plow shop. Large works were built near the Ohio & Mississippi depot about 1873 and the firm did a good business for some years. They also had an agricultural implement warehouse and in their factory they manufactured plows cultivators harrows etc. The parents and their family are members of the Presbyterian Church. In politics Mr Sattley has always been a supporter of Republican principles and served as United States Government Assessor for Christian County during the war.¹¹⁰

Lewis A. Saunders and Samuel Fisher Go to California

Lewis A. Saunders was born on December 27, 1826, in Springfield and worked there in Col. John Williams' store. When gold was discovered in California, he formed a partnership with Samuel Fisher, who for several years had lived with Saunders. Saunders and Fisher left Springfield early in 1849, as part of a company. When they reached California, they engaged in mining and selling provisions to the miners on South Feather River. Saunders wrote to his parents regularly once a month. In a letter written to them early in April 1850, he reported himself well and in a prosperous condition. That was the last communication his friends ever received from him.

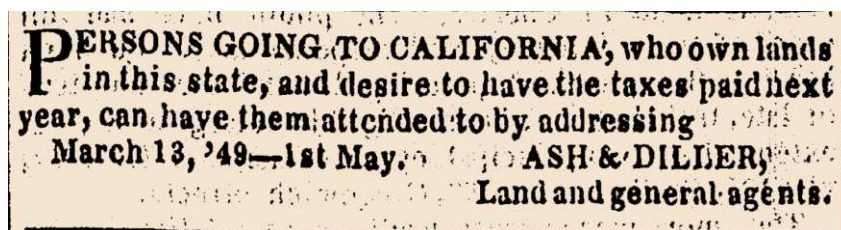
On April 8, 1850, Samuel Fisher, Saunder's partner, went to Sacramento on partnership business. Saunders was last seen by a Rev. Mr. Mayfield and a blacksmith from St. Joseph, Missouri. Neither of those men could say whether it was before or after Fisher left for Sacramento. His parents received about \$200 in gold dust from his effect, much less than he took with him. Fisher returned a few months later, and in 1874 was a wealthy farmer and manufacturer at Brooklyn, Schuyler County, Illinois.¹¹¹

Phillip Clark Takes Overland Route to California

Journal, Thursday, March 21, 1850¹¹²

Mr. Phillip Clark,--who went the overland route to California last spring [1849],--arrived at his home, near this city on yesterday. He returned by the Isthmus route. Mr. C., we are glad to learn, brought home some 1500 dollars, as a result of his labors, for transporting provisions on mules from Sacramento city to the mines, last fall. He brought several letters from some of our citizens, in California. The Springfield insurance company had broken up, and the members were engaged in different employments. We understand that Mr. Clark designs to remove his family to Oregon this spring.

Springfield Land Agent Offers Services of Attending to Payment of Taxes



Register, Friday, April 27, 1849.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Power, pp. 639-640. *Portrait and biographical record of Christian County, Illinois : containing biographical sketches of prominent and representative citizens, together with biographies of all the Governors of the state, and of the Presidents of the United States.* Chicago, Ill. : Lake City Pub. Co., 1893.

<http://genealogytrails.com/ill/christian/sattleyAlbert.html>

¹¹¹ Power, p. 638.

¹¹² *Journal*, Thursday, March 21, 1850, p. 3.

¹¹³ *Register*, Friday, April 27, 1849, p. 3.

William Enyert Party Leaves Springfield for California Gold Mines March 25, 1849

William Enyert, born on June 25, 1825, in Hardin County, Kentucky, was married in Sangamon County, Illinois, on January 13, 1852, to Sarah Elder. They had four children in Sangamon County. William left Springfield on March 25, 1849, for the gold fields of California in company with Robert [S.] Lightfoot and James Callerman. They arrived in California on September 19, together with another company from this city – Grant Addison, Spergin, Wm. Shields, John Smith and Giles Taylor. Only three of the eight others who went with him returned. William was gone two years and three months, and made enough to buy himself a good home.¹¹⁴ Robert S. Lightfoot, born on March 13, 1825 in Kentucky, came to Sangamon County with his parents, went to California soon after the discovery of gold and died there.

James Baker: Sangamon County Resident Becomes Indian Chief and Ferry Keeper

James Baker was a Cotton Hill Township, Sangamon County resident who went to California.

William and Phebe Baker's son, James, was born in January 1819 in St Clair County and was raised on the Horse Creek farm (Sangamon County, Illinois). William Enyert who went to school with him remembers having heard him say frequently in their boyhood days that he would join some Indian tribe at 18 years of age.

About 1837, he went west and came back in 1844 to see his mother who lived in Rochester. He said he had joined the Snake tribe of Indians and after a stay of about six months he returned to that tribe.

But little was known of him until 1849 when a party of eight persons left Springfield for the gold regions of California. William Enyert says they found him at the crossing of Green River keeping a ferry. He recognized Enyert readily and treated him kindly. Enyert learned from him that he was a chief in the Snake tribe, had two wives, one with him and one at Fort Bridger, and two children by each. His daily receipts were from \$500 to \$600 at the ferry. He is yet living among the Indians and is occasionally heard from by his friends. Enyert says that when he saw him he was full six feet tall, wore his hair long and straight, stood erect as any Indian, wore buckskin clothes and in his general appearance looked very much like an Indian. Enyert had been a school mate of his in this county. E. C. Matheny saw him under similar circumstances.¹¹⁵

Benjamin R. Biddle Buys a Diary and Telescope

Benjamin R. Biddle bought a diary in which to keep a daily record of his journey and a telescope for scanning the country (for Indians, etc.) as they rode along the trail.

The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company No. 1 Prepares to Leave For California

As the time for leaving drew near, there were about forty men, and a few women and children, ready to join the party for California. Among them was a young man, named Sam, who was anxious to drive an ox team and work his way to the gold fields, so they took him with them to handle one of the teams and help care for the stock.

¹¹⁴ Power, p. 92 and 293.

¹¹⁵ Power, p. 92.

Their equipment was the best that could be obtained—with six oxen for each wagon and four extra oxen for emergencies. Each wagon carried four barrels of grain from which they could feed the stock, sparingly, until the grass was high enough to satisfy their hunger. The barrels were to be used later for carrying water when they crossed the Great Desert. They carried smoked, dried and salted meat, dried fruits and vegetables, pickles, flour, sugar, tea, coffee, and other food to last six or eight months. Maria [Biddle] and the other men's wives baked chickens, bread, pies and cakes for the men to eat on the first days of their journey. Maria also made two large fruit cakes, which would furnish a little luxury for them when they were far from home and the good things they were in the habit of having on their tables. She had also knitted socks and gloves and a nice warm scarf for B.[enjamin] R. [Biddle] In fact, she had done everything she could think of that might add to his comfort and safety; but, as the time drew near for them to leave, she worried more and more about the dangers of such an undertaking. She remembered the stories her parents and grand-parents had told her about pioneer hardships; and she was sure that she should have made a greater effort to have kept him at home; but she knew that nothing she could have done would have stopped him. So she kept her fears to herself and went about her work with a tranquility that surprised every one—including herself.

The day before he left, B. R. [Benjamin R. Biddle] sat down to talk with the children and said: "Now children, Pa is going away, for a long time, and is expecting you to take care of Ma while he is gone. Aunt Angeline will be near you; and Uncle Will Cardwell, and Aunt Mary will come once in awhile; but you will be here all of the time, and you will be the ones to look after her every day. You are almost twelve, Henry, and Robert is ten—so it won't be long before you'll be grown up. I'll expect you to do the work I planned for you—and help Ma in every way you can. I want you to write to me often, to San Francisco; and tell me everything that happens at home. And Emma, a little girl six years old can help her mother too. You can wipe the dishes, and help keep the house clean—and watch Puggie, so's she won't get into mischief. Now I want you all to remember everything I've told you—and be good children while I'm gone—and mind Ma. I'll try to bring you all something nice when I come home. And remember, if you are very good, and do everything I've told you, you'll be very busy and the time won't seem long."

They delegated Benjamin R. Biddle and John Weber to go to St. Louis to buy a stock of merchandise for a mining community. They were to have it sent by boat, around the Horn to San Francisco. They each filled a wagon with stock that they could take overland. They knew, by Harriet Campbell's letters, that flour, dried fruit, and other merchandise were shipped from Chili, Mexico and the Sandwich Islands, and could be bought at the wharfs in San Francisco.

Farm products had been very cheap for several years and the farmers along Lick Creek were much discouraged. Many of them were planning to join the party going to California so the subject of migrating to the West was discussed with even more interest than the ever-present problem of slavery.¹¹⁶

Elijah Iles Thanked For Donation of Hay

A meeting of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company No. 1 adopted a resolution thanking Major Elijah Iles for a liberal donation of hay.

¹¹⁶ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 89-90.

At a meeting of the "Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company, No. 1," the following resolution was unanimously passed:
 Resolved, That the thanks of this Company be, and they are hereby respectfully tendered to Major E. ILES for a liberal donation of hay.
 B. A. WATSON, President.
 B. R. BIDDLE, Secretary.

Journal, Tuesday, March 6, 1849.¹¹⁷

The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company

Journal, Tuesday, March 27, 1849.¹¹⁸

The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company left Springfield at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 27, 1849.

The Illinois and California Mining Mutual Insurance Company.
 Leave this city, for their destination, at two o'clock to-day. They seem to be well prepared for their arduous undertaking.
 Our townsmen will see in this list many of our old city residents and valuable citizens. Others are from the county. Among them are farmers, mechanics and professional men. Our best wishes go with them. May they realize their hopes and return in safety to their families and friends.
 There are two other companies formed here, which will leave soon.

NAMES OF THE MEMBERS.
 B. A. Watson, T. Billson,
 C. E. White, Lewis Johnson,
 Albert Sattley, John Rodham,
 Benj. F. Taylor, Richard Hodge,
 E. Fuller, Jacob Uhler,
 Wm. B. Broadwell, B. R. Biddle,
 W. P. Smith, J. B. Weber,
 B. D. Reeves, John B. Watson,
 Wm. Odenheimer, F. S. Dean,
 Henry Dorand, Thomas J. Whitehurst,
 E. T. Cabaniss,

B. R. Biddle
 T. Billson
 William B. Broadwell
 E. T. Cabaniss
 F. S. Dean
 Henry Dorand
 E. Fuller
 Richard Hodge
 Lewis Johnson
 William Odenheimer
 B. D. Reeves
 John Rodham
 Albert Sattley
 W. P. Smith
 Benjamin F. Taylor
 Jacob Uhler
 B. A. Watson
 John B. Watson
 J. B. Weber
 C. E. White
 Thomas J. Whitehurst

Richard Hodge Goes to California

Richard Hodge, born May 19 1819 in Smithfield Jefferson County, Virginia, was married in April 1838 to Catharine Divelbiss in Westmoreland County Pennsylvania. They moved to Springfield in the fall of 1839 and had five living children.¹¹⁹ He went to California with the Illinois and California Mining Mutual Insurance Company in 1849.

Thomas Billson Goes to California

Thomas Billson was married in Springfield, Illinois, to Hester, born on July 21, 1826, in Nashville, Tennessee. They had three children in Springfield. Thomas Billson went from Springfield to California in 1849, with The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company and died there in 1850.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *Journal*, Tuesday, March 6, 1849, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ *Journal*, Tuesday, March 27, 1849, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Power*, pp. 381-382.

¹²⁰ *Power*, p. 754.

Benjamin A. Watson Goes to California

Benjamin A. Watson left Springfield on March 27, 1849 with The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company and headed to California to work the mines during the Gold Rush. He left behind his wife Emily Watson who was expecting their second child and a 2-year-old son. His wife gave birth sometime in the late fall of 1849. Watson's letters recount his overland journey to California. He traveled with The Illinois and California Mining Mutual Insurance Company from Springfield to St. Joseph, Missouri through Nebraska Territory, following the Platte River. He crossed the Green River by ferry, continued past Independence Rock, South Pass, and took the Nevada Route to California.

Watson arrived in California sometime in August or September of 1849. He worked the mines in the Lassen and Reddings Diggings area, as well as the American River and spent much time in Sacramento city. Benjamin had only minor success at digging for gold due to the worked-over country and the good claims having already been staked. He set up a retail business but does not reveal its nature in his letters. His business was very profitable and survived the great flood of January 8, 1850. At the peak of his business he and his partner were both netting \$700.00 per month, or about \$20,000 per month in 2010 dollars. He made a small fortune and returned home sometime late in 1850. Later he built a resort and hotel at Perry Springs, Illinois and was a successful businessman for many years in Pike County, Illinois.

Sanford Watson, Alfred R. Elder and Families and George B. Goudy and Mr. Keeny Leave for Oregon¹²¹

March 21, 1849

For OREGON. —Yesterday evening, several citizens of our county, —Messrs. Sanford Watson and Alfred R. Elder, with their families, and Mr. George [B.] Goudy, and Mr. Keeny, left the neighborhood of this city, for Oregon. Mr. Watson is one of the oldest residents of this county, and Mr. Elder has been here for a number of years. They are among our best citizens. The others are young men of worth, residents our city. Messrs. Watson and Elder go to Oregon for the purpose of making homes for their families, and anticipate, by well timed industry, to secure the advantages which arise from early settlement. Mr. Watson has a brother in Oregon, who left here two years since, and at our last dates from him, he was pleased with the country and was doing well. We dislike to part with such citizens; but it is well for Oregon that such men are among the early settlers of the country. — They were well fitted for their journey—families in good health; and we anticipate that they will reach their new homes in safety, — though probably after much toil. They promised to write us on their arrival. We hope they will be particular to state in them all the information they can obtain from our numerous friends formerly residents of Illinois, now in Oregon.

Thanks to Citizens of Springfield

On the evening of March 28, 1849, The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Companies No. 1 and 2 held a meeting at their encampment on the North Mauvaisterre, Jacksonville, Morgan, Illinois. They adopted a resolution thanking the citizens of Springfield for their help and good wishes expressed to those going west in the Company. B.[enjamin] A. Watson was President and B.[enjamin] R. Biddle was Secretary.

¹²¹ *Journal*, March 22, 1849, p. 3. George B Goudy came to Oregon in 1849. In 1852 he worked on the Oregonian. In 1853 he went to Olympia and soon after became one of the publishers of the Pioneer and Democrat. In 1855 56 during the Yakima war he commanded Company C of which H.W. Scott then of the Oregonian was a member. Mr Goudy died September 19, 1857 at Olympia in his 29th year. The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society, (1911-12-01), pages 375-384 [Reprint] Volume: 12 (1911)

At a meeting of the Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Companies No. 1 and 2, held at their encampment on the North Mauvisterre, on the evening of the 28th March, 1849, the following resolutions were adopted, viz:

Resolved, That the citizens of Springfield by their many acts of kindness towards us whilst preparing to start on our expedition to California, and for their good wishes so fully expressed from time to time, and especially when they 'gave' us their parting hand as we left our homes, have merited from us some public expression of our gratitude and thanks.

Resolved, That we tender to them our heartfelt thanks for all their kindness towards us, and hereby pledge ourselves to them, that we will be careful not to do any thing whilst absent to render us unworthy of their kindness and confidence, or cause them to feel ashamed at any time of us as their fellow-citizens.

Resolved, That the editors of the Illinois Journal and the State Register be requested to publish these resolutions.

B. A. WATSON, Pres't.
B. R. BIDDLE, Sec'y.

Journal, Saturday, April 7, 1849.¹²²

At a meeting of the Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Companies No. 1 and 2, held at their encampment on the North Mauvisterre, on the evening of the 28th March, 1849, the following resolutions were adopted, viz:

Resolved, That the citizens of Springfield by their many acts of kindness towards us whilst preparing to start on our expedition to California, and for their good wishes so fully expressed from time to time, and especially when they gave us their parting hand as we left our homes, have merited from us some public expression of our gratitude and thanks.

Resolved, That we tender to them our heartfelt thanks for all their kindness towards us, and hereby pledge ourselves to them, that we will be careful not to do any thing whilst absent to render us unworthy of their kindness and confidence, or cause them to feel ashamed at any time of us as their fellow-citizens.

Resolved, That the editors of the Illinois Journal and the State Register be requested to publish these resolutions.

B. A. Watson, Pres't.

B. R. Biddle, Sec'y.

Christopher and David Logan Go West to California-1849

In 1849, brothers Christopher at age 20 and David Logan at age 25 left Springfield and went west across the plains to California. They were sons of America T. Bush Logan and Judge Stephen T. Logan, once a law partner of Abraham Lincoln.¹²³ He nominated Abraham Lincoln for President in the 1860 Chicago Convention. Christopher died in 1850 in California unmarried at age 21. Did they go with the Biddle group?



David Logan

David Logan Changes Destination to Oregon-1849

In the spring of 1849, David Logan came to Oregon and located at Lafayette where he practiced law. While living there, he was defeated by the Judge M. P. Deady for the Legislature. Shortly afterwards he moved to Portland, where he soon was ranked with the foremost in his profession, which he maintained until his retirement from practice in 1871. "David Logan was perhaps the greatest jury lawyer of his time." Nearly his whole knowledge of the fundamental rules and principles of law were learned while in his father's office at Springfield. David Logan, in appearance, strongly resembled his father, and possessed many of his characteristics, but lacked his father's indomitable industry and that thrift that led to an easy competence.¹²⁴

He was defeated as a candidate for the Legislature in 1851. In 1854, he was elected on the

¹²² *Journal*, Saturday, April 7, 1849, p. 3.

¹²³ *History of The Bench And Bar in Oregon*, pp. 269-270.

¹²⁴ Inscription: David Logan Apr. 15, 1824 Mar. 26, 1874

LD, IOOF Register of Burials, DAR p. 84. Marion County Oregon Marriage Records 1849-1871, Vol. I, p. 37.

HBB p. 270 (portrait) Lang, p. 718. Oreg. March 128, 1874 2:1 OS 30 March 1874 3:1 PCA Index

Whig ticket to the Territorial Legislature from Multnomah county. In 1859 he ran for Congress, and after an unusually heated campaign was beaten. In 1860, he was again placed in nomination by the Republican party for Congress, and was again beaten. He served as Mayor of Portland from 1864 to 1868.

In 1862, David married Mary Porter Waldo. They had no children. David died near McMinnville, Yamhill County, Oregon on March 27, 1874¹²⁵ age 49 y's 11 m's 22 d's. He is buried in Salem Pioneer Cemetery, Salem, Marion County, Oregon.¹²⁶

Isaac Constant Goes to Oregon Territory Spring 1849

Journal, Springfield, February 26, 1850.¹²⁷

Isaac Constant, born on April 5, 1809, in Clarke County, Kentucky, was married in Sangamon County, Illinois on February 14, 1835 to Lucinda Merriman. Lucinda was the daughter of Reuben Merriman, who was born on February 12, 1813, also in Kentucky. Shortly after his marriage he purchased a farm in Sangamon County, Illinois (near Springfield) and moved there. On this farm, his eight children were born, two dying in infancy in Illinois. In the spring of 1849, Isaac Constant left Sangamon County for the Oregon Territory.

In 1812 his (Isaac's) parents started for Illinois, but stopped for several years in Ohio, finally settling in Sangamon County, Illinois, in 1820. Here Isaac grew to manhood on a farm and was married in 1833 to Lucinda Merriman.

Isaac Constant was a friend of Abraham Lincoln and enlisted as a soldier in Lincoln's company during the Black Hawk War.

Isaac went to Oregon in 1849, and took a claim under the homestead law.

"Father was prosperous while residing in Illinois; but on account of poor health he was advised to leave his farm for a time and take a trip 'Over the Plains.'" So he and a young friend started on the trip west, taking the Oregon Trail. This was sometime in the year 1849 and without much difficulty they arrived at their destination in what was then known as the Oregon Territory, now defined as southern Oregon.

On arriving safely in Oregon City the two young men spent some months looking over the country, coming as far south as the Rogue River Valley, where he was especially struck with farming possibilities of the Bear Creek basin. Both men then returned to Illinois to get their families.

He [Isaac Constant] returned to Illinois in 1850, disposed of his property, and with his family and some of his neighbors, emigrated to Oregon in 1852. They were among the first families who settled there. After they arrived, Isaac Constant had to go two hundred miles with pack animals, for provisions. The valley was teeming with Indians, but he lived to see them all pass away, and surrounded by a large circle of friends, he resided near Jacksonville, Jackson County, Oregon.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ *History of the Willamette Valley*, Herbert O. Lang, Himes & Lang, 1885, p. 718. (Hereafter referred to as *Lang*.)

¹²⁶ *Corning's Dictionary of Oregon History. History of the Bench And Bar In Oregon*, pp. 269-270. PCA Index states Hon. David Logan, Portland former home, died March 27, 1874. The picture of David Logan is from p. 269. *Lang*, p. 718. *Oregonian*, March 28, 1874, p. 2, cl. 1. *Oregon Statesman*, March 30, 1874, p. 3, cl. 1.

¹²⁷ *Journal*, February 26, 1850, p. 2.

¹²⁸ *Power*, p. 221.

James Harvey Slater Goes to California March 28, 1849

James Harvey Slater was born on December 28, 1826, nine miles south of Springfield, Illinois. He left home on March 28, 1849, driving an ox team over the plains and arrived in California in September of that year.¹²⁹



Benjamin R. Biddle Begins Journal

Benjamin R. Biddle kept a private daily journal that was later published by the *Journal*, a Springfield newspaper. The account of Biddle's journey begins on the prairies with two letters, covering the period May 7th to May 19th. The main narrative describes the entire period from June 11th to September 19th. A short, supplementary series of articles, entitled "Winter Quarters", is in sharp contrast to the trail journey: here Biddle confronts the "bleak winter", closing on a subdued note at Christmas Eve, 1849.

To enliven the repetitive nature of the daily journal entries, the author finds opportunity to comment on social issues, such as relations with other migrants (generally good), contacts with Indians (mostly peaceful), a US army commander (drunkard) and sundry residents along the route. Unexpected details, such as a baptism by immersion, and a migrant Daguerrotype Artist add interest to the narrative.

Leaving on March 27th, 1849, The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company participants first travelled to Naples, Illinois, arriving April 4th; here they crossed the Illinois River. The next stage, completed on April 27th, took them to St. Joseph, Missouri, where they crossed the Missouri River. Progress across the Great Plains with their ox-drawn wagons was slow, but steady. Fort Laramie was reached on June 11th, and South Pass crossed on June 28th. On later stages the going became rougher: although many other emigrants chose to abandon their wagons after reaching Fort Hall and proceed with mule trains, Biddle's group persevered with their loaded wagons, finally reaching Sacramento, California safely on September 13th. Their journey took twenty-four weeks.

33. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Wife From Near Naples, Illinois April 1, 1849¹³⁰

Camp on the Bluffs 4 miles from Naples
April 1, 1849

My Dear Beloved Wife:

I take this opportunity of informing you of our movements up to this time and giving myself the pleasure as it were of holding short converse with you, though alas! Widely separated by flood and plain. My dear wife I hope ere this reaches you, you will have become reconciled to our temporary separation separated in flesh, but one in heart. Oh how I would like to embrace

¹²⁹ Power, p. 664.

¹³⁰ California State Library, California History Room, Sacramento, California, *Benjamin A. Watson Gold Rush Letters (1849-1851)*, Box 3153. (Hereafter referred to as *Benjamin A. Watson Letters*.)

<https://oac.cdlib.org/search?style=oac4;Institution=California%20State%20Library::California%20History%20Room;id=T=001442707>

Creator/Contributor: Watson, Emily. Powell, James B. Abstract: Letters from the Overland Trail, St. Louis to Sweetwater, Wyoming written by Benjamin A. Watson; letters from California written by Benjamin A. Watson; letters from wife Emily Watson; photocopy of Benjamin A. Watson signed constitution of his overland company adopted on January 20, 1849.

you this bright calm Sunday Evening, how is our dear boy, does he ask for his pa, does he seem to miss me, oh there are times when my heart smites me for having abandoned the face of that sweet cherub though it be for a time. Be to him, Dearest, all that he would find in me learn him to love right for rights sake, but I must commence telling you of our travels.

Now by referring to my notes I shall be enabled to give you a pretty complete account of all we have done up to this time.

Tuesday March 27, 1849 Left Springfield at 2 o'clock p.m., my heart filled with the most intense grief (how it??? My heart to part with you and father) head ached very bad, my cold caused me to suffer much; rode out with this letter to Camp Taylor, pitch tents, got supper, had a call from some Indians of the neighborhood, had music from the band, and retired, but all hands seemed to wish to do anything else but sleep. Camp life is a ??? to most of the boys, made today 4 miles

28th got off at 7 ½ o'clock // rode fine and mules working well, nooned today at a saw mill, pretty tired feet getting very sore, weather continues very fine, found today two bad mudholes which give us some

page 2

foretaste of what we had to expect, got through safe however and arrived at ??? Camp at 4 o'clock, making today 20 miles 11 o'clock at night pm guard. Heigh ho I wish it wasn't me on account of those I left behind me.

29th this morning at 7 o'clock the bugle sounded the advance and merrily we rolled on till 11 o'clock A. M. when we reached Jacksonville. Astonished the ??? with the promptness and celerity of our movements, nooned today on "college hill", west of the city, opposite to the Deaf dumb asylum, we raise much interest here with the ploys of the deaf mutes male and female they all seem to be very happy the girls as usual were all talking at once, this institution is a noble charity, honorable to ??? and worthy of all commendation, their building is a fine large brick most delightfully situated. Arrived at camp Watson (so called from my having located it when the rest of the Co. could not agree upon a proper place) til 3 ½ o'clock, pitched tents and went out to shoot squirrels. Wound up with a concert, very pleasant going, feet getting very sore, made 17 miles.

30th started at the usual time, this day has been a very laborious one upon men and mules. It would be impossible for me to describe the difficulties of the day, we had to pull our wagons through some sloughs caused by back water from the Illinois (river) today proved 14 better than 5 mules we took our mules out of the wagon and pulled it out of the mud, the country today has been very hilly, and land poor in places, arrived at Camp "Naples", at 5 o'clock, making 17 miles. Prospects for crossing river very bad, and no hay for our mules.

31st this morning we rolled our wagons on the ferry boat, Wind high, causing considerable anxiety about the result, boat returned about 4 o'clock // all landed safe, lay round camp all day, a reasonable rest for all hands, shot at a mark across the river//a tree three times in succession ¼ mile, expect to cross our mules tomorrow morning at sunrise, cool tonight Naples is a poor place.

April 1, 1849 this morning we crossed our mules over the river which is miles wide at this time. It took us till noon to get all safe ashore, we are now encamped on shore with the sater spread out before us like a miniature ocean, with the sun shining cheerfully down on us. I found today the first flower variety of the milkweed a very ?? flower, tomorrow we resume our march refreshed in mind and body. I shall leave the Company at the Mississippi River, for Saint Louis. And now again farewell dear wife. Cheer up. Do not be cast down our separation will not last long. Almost a whole week has passed already. Strive to get along smoothly with

every body, endeavor to keep our place in as good order as you can, you can get Jim to nail up a board when one gets knocked off the fence, goodbye dearest. Kiss our dear little chap for me, and learn him to kiss my picture every day and to love his pa and I think with him you will find enough to occupy your thoughts especially if our anticipations should prove as I hope they may. Be a kind daughter to my father. Give my love to all. I remain ever your affectionate and confiding husband.

Benj. A. Watson

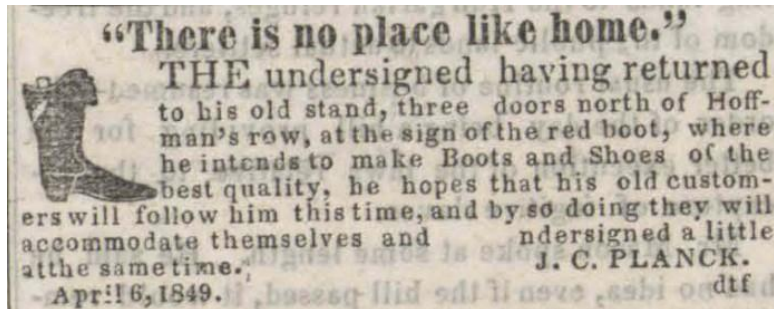
I think Billson is getting stouter every day. My feet have got about well.

Charles McCrea Goes to California-1849

April 1849

Charles McCrea was born in 1818 in Pennsylvania. He and his wife moved to Beardstown, Illinois, and resided. They had two children there. McCrea went to California in April 1849 at age 31. He was about starting for home when last heard from in 1855 and it is believed by his friends that he was murdered for his money. In 1853, his wife filed for divorce.

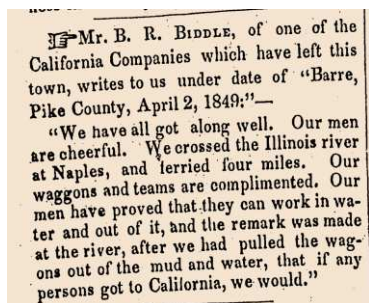
J. C. Planck Happy to Be Back Home



Journal, January 29, 1850.¹³¹

34. Benjamin R. Biddle Writes Newspaper From Pike County, Illinois

On April 2, 1849, Benjamin Biddle and The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company crossed the Illinois River at Naples, Illinois, about 90 miles west of Springfield. Biddle wrote home about their progress. Barre, Pike County is likely Barry, Pike County, Illinois, which would have been about 90 miles from Springfield. They would have had to cross the Illinois River to get to Barry.



Journal, Saturday, April 7, 1849.¹³²

Mr. B. R. Biddle, of one of the California Companies which have left this town, writes to us under date of "Barre, Pike County, April 2, 1849:"—

"We have all got along well. Our men are cheerful. We crossed the Illinois river at Naples, and ferried four miles. Our waggons and teams are complimented. Our men have proved that they can work in water and out of it, and the remark was made at the river, after we had pulled the wagons out of the mud and water, that if any persons got to California, we would."

¹³¹ *Journal*, January 29, 1850, p. 4.

¹³² *Journal*, Saturday, April 7, 1849, p. 2.

The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company Arrives in St. Louis

When the members of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company arrived at St. Louis, they all went into the city together, where they met their partners, bought additional supplies, and started by boat up the Missouri River to St. Joseph.¹³³

Benjamin R. Biddle Chosen Captain of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company Party

Benjamin R. Biddle with his partners and their guide formed the nucleus of The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company party, and Biddle was chosen Captain. Among them were many well-educated men and tradesmen—a doctor and dentist, a minister, a blacksmith, a wagon maker, and others who, having lived in a pioneer country, could turn their hands to any necessary or useful work. Occasionally small parties would ask permission to stop overnight at their camp, or to travel with them for a day or two for the protection afforded by a large party. Biddle would not countenance any drinking. A drunken man was a dangerous man on the trail.

35. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Wife From St. Louis

April 8, 1849¹³⁴

Mrs. E. K. Watson
Care of W. W. Watson Springfield, Illinois
Postmark April 10 Saint Louis, Missouri

Saint Louis April 8, 1849

My Dearest Love:

I again take my pen in hand to address you, to enjoy the ??? pleasure of communicating to you my thoughts and feelings, sad because it brings so forcibly to my mind the great sacrifice which I have made in parting from the light of my existence, from my dear family, from my dear wife and boy, a pleasure because I know I will make your heart glad to received a word from me, because it makes me feel as though I were for an instant in your sweet presence. Alas! It is only for an instant for when I raise my eyes from the sheet I see none but strange faces. I do not see that dear face to greet me with its smile, oh that I were home again. No, I think it would be for the best that I should go from you for a while. I think as I did when I left home that if my life is spared I shall return home to compensated for my deprivations and then we shall not regret our separation. I am ??? I shall now resume my transcripts from my journal. I hope in this ??? you may derive some amusement or entertainment. My last letter left us on the Illinois River where we ?????, shaving and washing up and eating a very good dinner.

Monday April 2nd Set off in good season. Mules much refreshed by their rest and good feed. Traveled four miles over a hilly country covered with black (walnut) and Hazel. I reached Griggsville, a very flourishing village, surrounded on the west by a very beautiful county indeed, fourteen mile further reached the little town of "Barry", another smart place. We have passed through the cities of Philadelphia and St. Louis, places that you have heard of. We reached our camp at five o'clock in a beautiful valley surrounded by hills from which gushed some of the most beautiful springs which I have seen since I left my native Tennessee, having made today twenty eight miles.

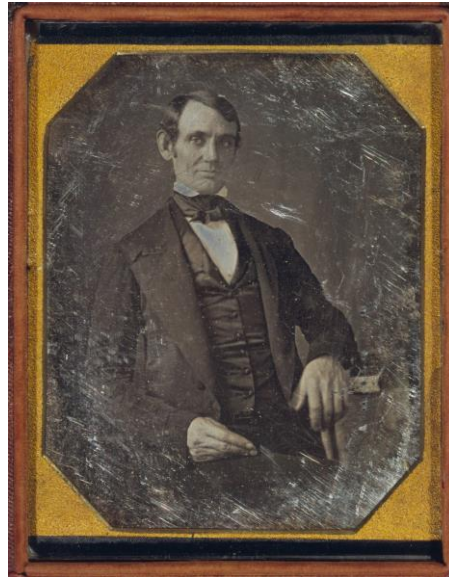
¹³³ *And This Is Our Heritage*, p. 91.

¹³⁴ *Benjamin A. Watson Letters*.

Sunday 3rd left camp this morning in the rain, our India rubber keeping us dry. Marched today through a fine country under the bluffs, passed through Kinderhook, made a push to pass so ox teams ahead of which we did and arrived a camp on the ??? slough a shute (sic) of the Mississippi River. The rain pouring down incessantly all day, prospects for the night very discouraging, wood scarce and wet. Had some music which raised the spirits of the boys, lay down at nine o'clock and passed the best night since I left your sweet arms, made today sixteen miles.

Wednesday 4th Crossed the river in a steam ferry boat and landed at Sapio?, 1 ½ miles above Hannibal, having ferried ten miles, reached Hannibal at 10 o'clock, a boat had just arrived for St. Louis, which I went aboard of and left in fifteen minutes. Company all well, arrived at St. Louis at 10 o'clock at night. The wind blew so cold I could not enjoy the scenery very much, shall stay on board the boat tonight.

Thursday 5th Took lodgings at the Missouri Hotel. Such a crowd there was no chance to get a room, met ??? in the telegraph office, met N[ichola] Shepherd [Springfield photographer who took the first photograph of Abraham Lincoln.]¹³⁵ in the street and concluded to take up lodging with him at the Main Street house, met G. B. Fisher, Bill Pease, & G. Y. Whitehurst, got the blues again they reminded me of home and its joys, went up and spent the morning with Mr. Brooker, he cheered me up considerably.



Abraham Lincoln
by Nicholas H. Shepherd, 1846

Friday 6th knocked about town and made some purchases. Saint Louis is a great place, astonished at the great number of ugly women one meets on the street. I expect all women will look ugly to me until I see my dear wife again, sorry for them if all men look upon them as I do.

Saturday 7th shipped everything aboard the good steamer "Agoma" which leaves this evening for the Missouri River... I forgot to mention that I slept with J. B. Fisher at "Scotia" on Friday night. I told him to call and see you and ???

¹³⁵ Shepherd, Nicholas H. Born in May 1822, in New York State. 1843-1844 Census lists Shepherd as a "druggist" at 549 Grand Street, New York. "It is known that with their knowledge of chemicals many druggists went into the then new and exciting business of making daguerreotypes..." As early as 1845, Shepherd was taking pictures in various cities of Illinois. October 30, 1845 Journal advertisement: late of New York City; has taken rooms for a few days over the grocery store of J. Delany's on Adams Street. "Listed as a daguerreian in Springfield, Ill., 1845-1848. Prior to recent discoveries, he was credited with taking the earliest daguerreotype of Abraham Lincoln, in 1846." January 10, 1846 Journal advertisement: Daguerreotype Miniature Gallery Over the Drug Store of J. Brookie. "...he will remain at the above room until the 1st of February..." May 7, 1846 Journal report on visit of N. H. Shepherd, daguerreotype artist, to Decatur, Bloomington and places in northern part of State; May 28, 1846 Register advertisement: Springfield Daguerreotype Gallery, over the drug store of J. Bookie; "Lincoln's earliest known photographic likeness, made probably in 1846, when at the age of thirty-seven he was elected to the U. S. House of Representatives. Original daguerreotype, believed to have been made by N. H. Shepherd, in Springfield, Illinois. Library of Congress." January 1, 1847 Register advertisement: Springfield Daguerreotype Miniature Rooms, Northwest Corner Public Square, over the Drug Store of H. R. Pomeroy. 1848 Gibson Harris, a young law office clerk with the Lincoln and Herndon firm, had once roomed with Nicholas Shepherd at Springfield. Harris wrote that late in 1848 he had received from Albion, Illinois, a letter telling that his photographer friend and room-mate was about to start for California. Harris never heard from Shepherd again. He believed that perhaps Shepherd had lost his life on the Overland Trail. 1850 Journal, June 20, 1850: report from Sacramento City, California, stated that former Springfield residents in the area were well, some were looking for gold, and "Shepherd the daguerreotypist, was merchandising there..." Nicholas married Ann Williams on September 2, 1857, at Sacramento, California. 1860 Census for Sacramento City listed Shepherd as a "farmer."

Sunday 8th the boat will not leave till tomorrow evening so I spent the day as best I could. Went to church at 10 o'clock. Went down to the ?? with [Nicholas H.] Shepherd⁹³ after dinner and saw great crowds of Dutch there??? Satisfied that it a national characteristic of the Dutch??? their Sundays in ??? This is becoming a mighty city dearest, when I come back I am determined you shall spend a month in the city to see some of the ??? And now my dearest wife I must bid you goodnight. I am on board of a crowded boat but am fortunate in having a state room in connection with [Nicholas H.] Shepherd. Dearest I tell you candidly I believe our temporary separation will be of great advantage to us. I know I never could have known the depth and extent of my love for you if I had not separated from you and when I again hold you to my bosom I know nothing but He who controls all things shall tear me from you. Write me a long letter to St. Joseph and tell me how our sweet cherub does. Tell me if you still think our pleasant anticipations will prove true in fact tell me everything that will interest me, (and everything you do tell me will do so). Kiss our babe, and be of good cheer. Tell mother I wish she would write to me. Tell me how you like your situation, try to be happy. Pray for my safe return. Farewell dear sweet loved wife.

B. A. Watson

36. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Wife From Saint Joseph, Missouri

April 16, 1849¹³⁶

Saint Joseph, Missouri
April 16, 1849

My Dear Wife:

From this far off place it is again my pleasure to address you my life, my soul. Oh dearest how I wish it were in my power to clasp you to that heart that beats only for you. Dear wife if you could only realize the love I bear for you, you would I think be almost reconciled to our separation, which has taught me that love the depth of which I knew not before and if it should be the will of Divine Providence to guide my steps safely to your side, rest assured a whole lifetime of love shall compensate us for our separation. I fear dearest you will not be able to answer this in time for me to receive it at this place, but with ??? I may do so.

This week has not been one that has added much of interest to my journal, though I have been passing through a very interesting portion of our country. My last letter left me in the City of St. Louis on board the "Aloma" bound for that point. Well we got off from the city about 11 o'clock at night on Monday with 250 passengers on board the greater portion of whom are as big fools as myself, are going to try their fortunes beyond the plains. Our upper decks were crowded with wagons and men our lower decks with mules and our cabin with asses (I fear) it was a very tempestuous night the wind blowing a gale which at times almost threatened to capsize us and the rain pouring in torrents which threatened to baptize us, there that is almost a rhyme. Morning found us in sight of the time-honored village of St. Charles and I confess I was disappointed in not having a better place the situation is fine but everything looks tired.

Today the wind still continues to blow great guns which kept the folks in a stew all the time though I confess it does not frighten me at all the country along the river does not look very inviting to a person who lives in our fine land. The river is not as much cut up as I expected to find it though the water being high makes it appear to better advantage than it otherwise would. I suppose the timber seemed to be rather better than it does on the Missouri and Illinois rivers. There is usually a high bluff on one side or other of the river all the time. The towering rocks at times assuming the shape of some twisted castle at others of some???. Dearest I wish you were with me to enjoy the varied scenery which presents itself at every turn

¹³⁶ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

of the river, but??the wind blows so cold I must go in to the cabin by the stove awhile from which I was soon aroused by the screaming whistle of the engine announcing our approach to some town which proved to be “Booneville”, named after the great pioneer of the West, though I don’t think quite so much of the place as I do of old Daniel. We puffed away making but slow way against the mighty current of this river aided by the headwind which we have had to encounter. Tonight we had preaching from a Mr. Calhoun a very talented man whilst the sermon was going on in one end of the boat there were a lot of gamblers swindling some young men in the other quite a contrast you will say and so I thought. We lay by tonight on account of the abundance of the snags and the darkness of the night got under way as soon as the moon rose and reached “Glasgow” a very flourishing looking town about 8 o’clock A.M. Our passengers generally seem to be very decent lot of people we have some ladies on board among whom is a Mrs. Whitesides from Galena who is going with her husband to California. She is a young good-looking woman but she has no children and never did have so an old acquaintance (George Saunders) told me and I think she is unhappy on that account at least she looked so to me. But says you what right did you have to be looking at women? Well never mind deary I promise you I shall never do anything else till I see your own sweet face, but I am digressing and my page is becoming full, we passed several considerable towns, among which I would note as of much importance Lexington, Brunswick, Jefferson City, ?? and last though not least Kansas the last town on the west side of the Missouri River and this brings me to the Indian Territory, the first object of attraction was “Fort Leavenworth”?? consisting of some very fine building upon a most magnificent?? Which must someday become a place of importance. The cold wind moves me to the fire (we having had some snow the day before) from which I was aroused by the cry of “Indians.” I sprang to the deck and beheld for the first time the lords of the soil in their native wilds, but as near as I could judge they were very dirty filthy looking lords, which I afterward found to be true as several of them come to the fort. While we were ??? a short distance when I confess my love the sight of these people brought very finally to my mind the fact that I was leaving all that is dear to me far behind, but no more repining. I arrived here last night at 10 p.m. in good health. Company not yet arrived, town crowded with emigrants. Supposed to be from 2000 to 5000 in the vicinity, there are some backing out, it is now?? I should not wonder if some more of ??? should. Crawfish tomorrow I was disappointed in not finding letters here but suppose it has not been time for them to get here yet. Can’t tell when we shall get off, the season is backward and now my soul is ??? once more farewell your own true husband.

Benj. A. Watson

37. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from St. Louis, Missouri

April 24, 1849¹³⁷

Envelope addressed to:
Mrs Sara Cook Springfield Ill
For Mr Posey?

St. Louis

April 24th 1849

Dear wife

I drop you a few lines informing you that myself and company are all well by Mr [Rigery] I send you the likeness you requested me to send you will get Mr. Wickersham to go to the Odd Fellows Lodge and get my regalia at the Lodge I have one collar and one apron in my old shop I have one apron you had better get Mr. Wickersham to sell them for what th[y] will bring to some odd Fellow as the[y] will be of no use to you I expect to leave here in two days, and go up the Missouri River to Saint Joseph from that place I will write to you again. Do the best you can tell Franklin to be a good boy and assist you and when I return I will bring him a good Mexican Poney.

¹³⁷ *The Society of California Pioneers*, 300 Fourth Street, San Francisco, California 94107, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. (Hereafter referred to as *The Society of California Pioneers*.) Letter # 1.

My love to you all
E. Cook

38. William Charles Ludlum Letter to Family from Near Independence, Missouri

May 12, 1849

Journal, Wednesday, May 30, 1849.¹³⁸

Latest From The California Emigrants

The following letter from our townsman, Mr. C. Ludlum, to his family, has been politely communicated to us for publication. It embraces our latest news from the emigrants.

In Camp, two miles from Independence,
May 12, 1849

It is now eleven day's since we arrived in the neighborhood of Independence. I should have written before but was waiting until we had set some day for leaving for the prairies, and thinking, probably, I might hear from home also. We shall leave here for the West, by way of Santa Fe, on Monday next, the 14th inst. Nearly the whole emigration take the northern route, but very few take the route which we take—probably the number of our company will not exceed on hundred wagons and one hundred and fifty men,—consisting of the Jacksonville Co., Dr. Roger's Co. of Pettersburgh, Capt. Crandall's Co. of Peoria, a small Co. from Kentucky, besides a small Co. or two with which we are unacquainted.

We expected that Capt. Robert's and Mr. Cook's companies, of Springfield, would have joined us; but for some cause or other they do not, and I believe that they have taken the northern route. Dr. Robert's of our company, returned from St. Joseph a day or two ago. He saw Capt. Roberts and Mr. Cook, and many of the Springfield folks, including Mrs. M. Saunders, who was about a day's travel on the road. They were all well. Weber and Watson's companies had left two days before the Dr. reached St. Joseph.

Nearly the whole emigration have left Independence. Until within the last few days it had the appearance of an immense ant's nest. The town was completely filled with people, and ever one seemed to be hurrying to and fro, attending to their own business;—mechanics and merchants all busy, and reaping a rich harvest, although their prices are about the same as at Springfield;—all moving along most harmoniously, except the gamblers, (and they form no small part of the crowd,) who have frequently a fuss amongst themselves, exchange a shot or two, cripple one another probably for life, occasionally kill a man, all amongst themselves, and of which very little notice is taken by the community.

All the towns along the river from Jefferson city to Fort Leavenworth have presented about the same appearance as Independence. In our journey out here we passed through the country about the time the companies were getting ready or starting for the gold regions. Every body appeared to be excited, and the farther we came west the excitement seemed to be increased. From some of the small towns half of the male population have left for the west. The estimate of the emigration which will go by the South Pass is something like 10,000, including many families, and nearly all these have left within the last two weeks.

There has been, and is yet, a good deal of cholera in the towns along the river. There has been as many as seven deaths in Independence in a day. The emigrants have been much affected with this disease. In some large encampments there have been ten or twelve deaths. We had

¹³⁸ *Journal*, Wednesday, May 30, 1849, p. 1.

had one case in our camp, Mr. Kirby, of Jacksonville. He contracted the disease in St. Louis, and was taken down the day after his arrival in camp. He has nearly recovered and will leave with us for the west. The rest of the company are well. My own health is excellent.

We have with us Capt. Kirker, whose family live in Mexico. He is acquainted with the whole of that country, speaks the Spanish and Indian languages, and goes with us as one of our company, and I think will be of immense benefit to us in our journey.

P. S. Since writing the above a train has arrived from Santa Fe, bringing intelligence of large quantities of gold having been found about 150 miles from that place. We intend to explore that neighborhood well, and should the account just heard prove true we shall spend the balance of the summer there. If not successful, we shall move down to the south side of the river Gila, making such examinations for the precious metal as circumstances will permit; and if still unsuccessful, we will wend our way to the Sacramento river.

C. Ludlum

The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company Group Arrives at St. Joseph, Missouri April 27, 1849

On April 27th, The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company arrived by boat in St. Joseph, Missouri, where they planned to disembark and meet their other Illinois friends who would be waiting to join their train for the two thousand mile trek across the wilderness to the "Promised Land." While waiting at St. Joseph, they bought more supplies and repacked their wagons.

ARRIVALS AT ST. JOSEPH FROM ILLINOIS.
The last St. Joseph's Gazette notices the arrival of several companies of California emigrants from this state.
The following persons, composing the Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company, No. 1, arrived from Springfield on the 27th. of April, all in good health and condition :
Wm. B. Broadwell, B. A. Watson, W. P. Smith, Jacob Uhler, Wm. Odenheimer, E. Fuller, Henry Dorar, E. T. Cabaniss, T. Billson, Lewis Johnson, B. D. Reeves, John Rodham, Rich'd Hodge, Benj. Taylor, B. R. Biddle, J. B. Weber, J. B. Watson, F. S. Dean, Albert Saterly, Tho's Whitehurst.
The Springfield company No. 2, had arrived and left.

The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company No. 1

William B. Broadwell	B. A. Watson
W. P. Smith	Jacob Uhler
William Odenheimer	E. Fuller
Henry Dorar	E. T. Cabaniss
T. Billson	Lewis Johnson
B. D. Reeves	John Rodham
Richard Hodge	Benjamin Taylor
B. R. Biddle	J. B. Weber
J. B. Watson	F. S. Dean
Albert Saterly	Thomas Whitehurst

Register, Monday, May 14, 1849.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Register, Monday, May 14, 1849, p. 2.

Additional Second Presbyterian Church Members Join The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company

Those who joined The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company at St. Joseph were friends from Illinois and were known to be substantial citizens. In fact they were nearly all members of the Second Presbyterian Church of Springfield, who were carrying their Christianity with them into the wild west. They were temperate men too, who used liquor for medicinal purposes only. They had little patience with the human derelicts they sometimes met along the way.

Number of the California Emigrants.
The St. Joseph Gazette of the 4th inst., gives the following statistics and calculations in relation to the number of emigrants on their way overland to California:
CALIFORNIA EMIGRANTS.—Every boat that arrives at the wharf is crowded with emigrants for the gold regions. Within the last few days several hundred wagons have come through by land, from Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Up to 12 o'clock yesterday, there had been 8,318 persons who had made this a point of departure for the plains; and from what we can learn, we should not be surprised if five thousand more landed here in twenty days. We also learn, that a large number have crossed the upper part of the state, intending to cross the river at the Bluffs—say four thousand persons. We do not think it an extravagant assertion to say that at least eighteen thousand persons will leave the frontier between this place and the Bluffs; and many persons estimate the number far above this. We have no means of knowing what number will leave Independence, but should suppose that six or eight thousand will depart from that point. This will make some 25,000 persons on the plains in a few weeks. A number of these are destined to perish upon the way, and we fear a large number who have undertaken the trip, have not thought properly upon it. Some who have been accustomed to hardships, may get along without difficulty, while others who have never undergone any privations, must suffer considerably on the plains.

Register, Monday, May 14, 1849.¹⁴⁰

The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company Leaves St. Joseph, Missouri

When they were ready to start moving from St. Joseph, The Illinois and California Insurance Company party consisted of 35 or 40 men, five or six women and a few children. They traveled with twenty wagons and a number of men on horseback and with packhorses and mules to carry their equipment. They were all equipped with the best outfits that money and careful planning could secure.

39. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from St. Louis, Missouri

April 28, 1849¹⁴¹

Envelope addressed to:
Mrs Sara Cook
Springfield Illinois

Saint Louis

April 28th 1849

Dear wife

I send my best respects to you and my children hoping you will do the best you can during my absence. It is now nine o'clock night: I shall leave for St. Joseph on the steam boat Sacramento about eleven o'clock to night. Our party are all well and generally in good spirits. If you wish to write on the receipt of this it will reach me before I leave St. Joseph Missouri after that if you write direct to San Francisco California.

My Best respects
To you all
E. Cook

¹⁴⁰ *Register*, Monday, May 14, 1849, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 2.

**Eli Cook, Henry E. Roberts and Henry M. Spotswood
Leave St. Louis For California via Independence, Missouri
April 29, 1849**

Register, Saturday, April 28, 1849.¹⁴²

Messrs. Eli Cook, H. E. Roberts, Henry M. Spotswood, and others from this city, are to leave St. Louis to-morrow for California via Independence. It is a most respectable and well appointed party.

Elijah Cook Matheny and Charles Rollins Post Leave for California

Elijah C. Matheny and Charles Rollins Post (1826-1919), Caroline Post's husband, left Sangamon County in 1849 to prospect for gold in California. Post came back with enough capital to go into business; he dealt in grain and later in farm equipment.

Aged 93yrs, 6ms. Died in Los Angeles, CA. Old time friend and neighbor of Abraham Lincoln. He was the last surviving member of the famous guard of honor which accompanied the body of the President to Springfield from Washington in 1865.

Charles R. Post was born in Cornwall, Vermont, on January 15, 1826, the son of Truman and Betsy (Atwater) Post. The family emigrated to Marietta, Ohio, in 1833. In 1842, Truman came to Waverly, Morgan County, Illinois where he purchased a farm and remained until his death, which occurred in 1847. Charles went to California, crossing the plains. He remained in the mines a couple of years, then returned to Waverly, where he stopped a short time. He went to Jacksonville and embarked in merchandising one year. He then moved to Springfield where he engaged in the grain trade, and continued in the same until 1857; then engaged in selling farm implements.

He married Miss Caroline Lathrop, daughter of Erastus Lathrop, of Ashforth, Connecticut. By this marriage there were three sons: Charles William, Aurilian A, and Carroll L. Mr. Post has held several local offices of trust in the gift of the people, is a deacon of the Congregational Church. In politics a Republican.

His son, Charles William Post, was the famous inventor of Postums coffee substitute, founder of Post Cereals, and other endeavors. C W Post was the father of Marjorie Merriweather Post.¹⁴³

40. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Wife

April 29, 1849¹⁴⁴

1 (?) Mile North of Saint Joseph
April 29, 1849

My Beloved Wife: You cannot conceive the pleasure I have enjoyed in perusing your letters to me, only to think I have had the good fortune to receive three letters from you within the last three days dated the 11th, 15th and 19th April. Dear I thank you for those sweet letters, so full of love and confidence and containing that which I so much desired to know. I am sorry to see so many expressions of sadness, once despondency, in your letteers. My darling you

¹⁴² *Register*, Saturday, April 28, 1849, p. 2.

¹⁴³ *1881 History*. Contributed by The Meriwether Society #46827721.

¹⁴⁴ *Benjamin A. Watson Letters*.

should not indulge in such sad feelings as you have done, you must bear up for the sake of our dear little ones. I see much talk about what is most uppermost in my mind, first you tell me that our little dearest will soon be known by everyone, oh how glad I am it is what I most desired to know. I am confident now that you will be yourself that you will be the noble, ?? and sensitive woman that I married for a wife. I know you will consider the great necessity there is for you to be calm and cheerful and that you will control your feelings of grief at our separation for the good of our dear little unborn innocent. Oh I know that the knowledge that you are carrying within you that little germ that will become the image of him who is absent will be the source of undefeatable joy to you, the reflection will be delightful to you, know that those motions which you feel were produced by him whom you love and who loves you so dearly. The more I think of it the more am I rejoiced that it is so. How I was delighted when I read about my noble boy. Tell him "Pa" will bring him many ?? from "Fawny" and a little horse for him to ride too. I hope the dear treasure is entirely well before you receive this letter. I am very sorry that Mr. Fisher should have said what he did. I am sure I said nothing that would warrant him to say anything that would make you think I contemplated returning from this place. I am very sorry that he should have raised hopes in your bosom that could not be realized. I am very much surprised that he should have done so, but my hope you will have made up your mind to our separation long before you receive this. I know my dear you would not have me to abandon my intention of going without more reasons for doing so than when I left home. I know you would not commit dishonor to your husband, you know that. I could not honorably leave our company. By joining the company I may have induced several other persons to do so too, it would not answer for me to back out from them now. I would become a byword and a reproach in the mouths of every one, you would not have him whom you love to be exposed to the sneers and ridicule of his fellow citizens. I know you would not, and therefore you will not reproach your husband for not returning to your arms. My love you need not give yourself any uneasiness about my safety on this trip. Our teams are of the best description that will start ?? our men are more able to stand the fatigues of the journey from having become inured to traveling than almost any others. But I must continue my journal. Last Sunday I spent most of the evening in writing to my dear wife, walked down to the river at night. Some boats came up from St. Louis.

Tuesday—I loafed about town all day, very tired of such business, town full of dust and people, time hangs very heavy on my hands not having anything to occupy my attention with, business is a great thing to keep the mind occupied, heard for certain that the company were within thirty miles of town, expected in morning, in the forenoon I sauntered round town till dinner time. After dinner White and I started for the country to meet the boys. We walked until night overtook us. Once while we had waded to where our road run out, we stayed at a young man's house who appeared to be just commencing life. They had one little baby that reminded me very much of my own dear boy. We had to sleep in the same room with the man and his wife, being the only one the edifice contained. It was a room about 12 feet square containing two beds, 3 chairs, 1 rough table 1 cupboard and a few cooking utensils. They appeared to be very happy, the wife is quite a witty sensible woman, during our conversation I remarked that if our expedition should not prove successful I should pass through to San Francisco and be home by the first of December. She remarked that there would be such kissing and hugging and fussing that it would make a person blush to be in a hundred yards of us.

Thursday—After paying 25 cents for supper, breakfast and lodging we started on our road, after walking some 4 miles we saw a man working in a field and asked him our road and if he had seen our teams, told us to take a cutoff and we might overtake them before the ?? certain point in the road about ten miles from there, started back once reached the point about 11 o'clock found they had encamped where they had crossed creek, put off and come up with them at last, in about six miles more traveling making a very hard ?? work the next day.

Tuesday—we came into St. Joe on a ?? received a letter from my dear wife, moved out 1 mile north and encamped, had some music after supper, which enlivened us up very much, went down and serenaded the citizens from the heights of St. Joseph, a very ?? peak that juts out

over the town as it were, immediately on the bank of the Missouri River, surmounted by a crop that marks the resting place of some old French voyageur who ??? had selected that place for its great beauty and grandeur, it commands one of the most magnificent prospects that this county can produce, our music sounded rich from that point and raised all the dogs and some of the natives, but before they could reach us we had???

That closed the week, now my dear I must talk of what I expect to do tomorrow, we will move out of the United States of American into the Indian territory on the west side of the Missouri River, where we shall encamp for four or five days before we take up our line of march for the shores of the Pacific, now don't cry dear for I can see the tears starting in those dear eyes at the mention of it. Dear, when I looked at your picture this morning I thought it did not look so sad as usual. I hope the dear ... will cheer up for the sake of him who so dearly loves her. Tell Walter that I am very glad that he has got his office and that I secured his letter and will try to answer it before I leave the country.

Tell ??? to write to me, Tell Father that I received his letter by the hands of Mr. Anderson, but he forgot to call and get the letters from ??? I was at their house every day whilst I was in St. Louis, but did not buy anything from them. I suppose they were mad because I did not and would not give me the letters, my paper is getting very scarce. Deary I am delighted with your letters, they breathe such a ??? love for me that they feel like balm upon a wounded heart.

Farewell my dear sweet wife.

Yours till death.

B. A. Watson

Indian Territory

While Biddle and The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company party treated the Indians with great kindness, they always gave the impression that they were not afraid, and were always ready and able to defend themselves if necessary. Indians seldom made an attack unless they were reasonably sure of success.

Occasionally, they met Indians who asked for food, guns and ammunition. They always gave them small quantities of food, but never gave or traded arms or ammunition. Their guide could speak the language of several of the Indian tribes and could talk to others by a common sign language. B. R. and John Weber had also known Indians when they were young. They understood them well enough to meet them in friendship. Most of the Indians would look into their wagons, examine their stock, ask for bacon or flour—and then go their way. B. R. always gave them something. In return, they gave him much valuable information about the country through which they were passing—and the trail ahead.

Once five or six Indians on horseback joined them and rode along with them all day. The trail wound through mountainous country, with huge rocks (behind which Indians could easily have been hiding) dotting the landscape on both sides of the road. Every one in the party was nervous and alert, but before sundown, the Indians turned off to the right, rode down a dry ravine and left them.

That night they feared an attack, and the usual guard was doubled. Those who slept kept loaded guns within reach—and the wagon containing ammunition was placed where it would be most accessible in case of trouble. However the Indians did not molest them. Perhaps their guests of the day had been friendly Indians, as they had claimed—or they may have decided that the company was too well armed and organized to fall an easy prey to an attack.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 91-92.

George B. Goudy Leaves for Oregon May 1849

George B. Goudy came to Illinois with his parents in 1832. He attended Illinois College in the years 1844-5 and 1846-7 being then resident of Springfield Illinois where he was employed as a printer. Goudy left Springfield in May 1849 becoming one of the Argonauts of 49 going to Oregon City, Oregon in September of that year. There he became publisher of the *Spectator* a weekly newspaper. He soon went to Lafayette, Oregon where he held the offices of circuit auditor and sheriff. In the summer of 1854, Goudy married Elizabeth Morgan of Lafayette. One child was born to them. In April 1855 Mr Goudy removed to Olympia Washington where he was unanimously elected public printer by the Legislature. He then conducted *The Pioneer and Democrat* a weekly paper and did the territorial printing. He died in Olympia on September 29, 1857. Mr Goudy was a man of great industry and attained much personal popularity. He was one of the early pioneers of the Pacific Coast as his parents and grandparents had been of the east and assisted in giving it a start in the course which has since developed that region.

41. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Wife From Indian Territory May 6, 1849¹⁴⁶

Indian Territory 8 [?] miles N. W. from St. Joe

May 6, 1849

I now take up my pen to write you the last letter that I shall have reliable certainty of your receiving from me for some time to come, as tomorrow we take up our line of march for the "Eldorado", and dearest what I shall now write you will receive as the wishes of your husband and so far as wishes are expressed in these lines I feel the most reliable confidence you will strive to carry out so far as in you lies the power so to do. In the first place my darling wife I want you and I expect you will bear our separation calmly and patiently and with that dignified fortitude which I know you are capable of enduring. The knowledge that you will thus conduct yourself will lighten the hours of the weary much and make my mind rest better satisfied for then deserting you and my sweet boy now dearest I do not want you to fret and grieve yourself unnecessarily about me. I want that you should do everything to preserve your health for when I come home I shall be very sorry to find that you have injured your health by suffering your mind to dwell upon imaginary dangers which you may suppose surround me. Give yourself no uneasiness whatever about me, for, for your sake I shall take good care of myself that I may enjoy your dear society when I shall return to your arms to leave them never more.

You must not believe unfavorable reports about us, for if anything unfortunate should happen to us we will possess as great facilities as any one else of informing you of it. Therefore until you hear from me or someone else believe nothing that is of an unfavorable nature. As to our success and capacity of reaching California that "hopeful place", I have not the least apprehension, our teams are of the best description, and moreover we have brought another wagon and two more mules for the purpose of making our load lighter. We shall travel with a large company so that we will be ??? from ??? Indians as anybody else. Now dearest you must be satisfied and contented for the sake of our dear little ones for your own sake and for my sake, you believe that it is all for the best that I should go. I believe that I shall make a fortune by going. I know that I have learned to appreciate your priceless love more probably than I ever should if I had not been separated from you, it is not so with you too dearest? I think it must be so, if so is it not for the best that I should go and when I shall feel that dear heart beating against mine again I know that no mortal power shall tear me from it. But I must return to my journal.

¹⁴⁶ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

Monday, April 30 - This morning at an early hour camp was astir with preparations for a start for the Indian Territory of Nebraska. We moved down to town at seven o'clock, the wind blowing a gale and the dust filling the air to an extent that I never saw equaled. We took our freights into our wagons, traveled up to Duncan's Ferry 5 miles above St. Joe.

Tuesday, May 1 - The company lay all day at the ferry waiting our turn to cross. I went into town with some others to make some purchases for the company. Bought a wagon and two mules for the purpose of fitting out another team. Returned at four o'clock and found the company crossing the river all had took hold and assisted in rowing the boat which I found hard work. Crossed over and went for the first time out of the United States.

Wednesday, May 2 - Last night the weather portended rain. Dean being sick I stood guard in his place. Lay down at 1 a.m.. At 3 1/2 o'clock Billson awakened me by shouting ??? that we were being overflowed. I started up and found it pouring down rain and the water running all over the bottom of the tent. We got up and "cooned" it on a log for the balance of the night. At seven o'clock we moved out to our present encampment about 8 miles from the river upon one of the most beautiful creeks I ever beheld. The water is very cold and pleasant and we have plenty of grass for our mules. The weather today has been warm and cloudy.

3rd - Remained in camp occupying ourselves with fixing up.

4th - Still in camp unloading and loading up the wagons, making boxes, ??? barrels. In ??? of company I found a bee tree this evening which some of the boys went out and cut. We got a good supply of honey which went fine.

Saturday 5th - Today I went into town and bought some articles for the company. Found the road very bad in the bottom, timber in the bottom is of the very best description. Consisting in part of two or three varieties of Hickory, four varieties of Ash, Hackberry, Cottonwood, Locust, Walnut, Iron wood and Coffee Nut and Box Elder. The ground is covered with the best of grass and rushes for stock. This is a fine country and as soon as the government shall become the owner of it, it will become alive as if by magic with a busy people.

Sunday 6th - Today I took a walk out to the road about a mile from camp, and saw a great many teams passing by. Amongst the rest was ??? Bill Duncan of Bloomington and Dr. Laster. There are a great many going with insufficient teams for the trip. Today we had something of a "stampede" among our mules, they having been standing idle for several days full of plenty of grass and corn. They are full of Satan and about anything will make them start. There was soon 8 or 10 pulling up their pickets, scampered off over to ??? We succeeded however in recovering all of them. I think it will be of some advantage to us as it will cause us to be more on our guard for such occurrences and prevent them in future. I think we shall get off tomorrow by 10 o'clock and go about 9 miles to Wolf River and wait there until we organize into a "train". I shall continue my dear to write to you every Sunday and send my letters by such opportunities as may present themselves. I expect to be able to send you one with some trains which we shall probably meet in the course of three or four weeks, and another from "Fort Larrimie" which shall reach about five weeks hence. Another by some of the Mormon we expect to meet between here and the "Salt Lake". But do not be disappointed if these should fail as there is no reliance should be placed in their coming to hence. I want you to continue to write me your dear letters. I shall be able to receive them once a month as that is as often as the mail is carried between New Orleans and Panama. My dear I must again call to your mind how much I desire that you should continue to live with my father. I am so solicitous upon this subject solely on account of our dear boy, no not entirely so, rather I think if you are near you father often, he will keep your mind in a constant state of uneasiness from his penchant that he has for prophesying evil. And you know my dear it will not do for you in your present condition to be too much excited about anything. Oh how should like to see you in about two months. You will look so ??? But it cannot be and I must content myself with imagining how charming you will look. I forgot to mention that I have received your dear letter

in which you told me that it was a fact, but my dearest my paper is drawing to a close, yet it seems to me that I could spend the night in writing to my love. But I must close. Give my love to all the family. Tell Hetty that Bilson is in fine health and spirits. He has gained 13 pounds in weight since he left home. But I must close by assuring you of the undying affection which fills my heart for the angel of my life. Oh how I love you my der sweet wife. My angel, my hope for ??? in this world.

Your affectionate husband,
B. A. Watson

[p.s.] Bilson says he will not write from this place but will do so on the first opportunity. Kiss my boy again and again my dear sweet wife. Tell John Ives that I expected to have received a letter from him before this.

**42. Alfred R. Elder and Sanford Watson Letter From St. Joseph, Missouri
May 7, 1849**

Journal, Springfield, May 28, 1849.¹⁴⁷

We have seen a letter from A.[lfred] R. Elder and Sanford Watson, dated at St. Joseph, 7th May, stating that their company had been very successful thus far, and were in good health. Bush, Logan, Isaac Constant, Z.[acharia] Elkin and James Constant were well. The company was on the eve of starting for the plains.

We are pained to state that Mr. William Leggott, late of this city, belonging to Mr. [Eli] Cook's company, died near St. Joseph, of cholera.

**43. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from St. Joseph, Missouri
May 9, 1849¹⁴⁸**

Envelope addressed to:
Mrs. Sara Cook
Springfield Illinois

Saint Joseph Missouri

May 9th, 1849

Dear Wife and Children

I am in tolerable good health hoping these lines may find you all enjoying the same blessing. I received your letter yesterday and was glad to hear that you were all well. Do the best you can I hope to be able to return in less than two years from the time I started. Our company are all tolerable well. Daniel Leary sold out yesterday to Mr. Gormley and started home. Mr. [James Francis] Reed is lying very sick with the fever in this place. They have sold their team. Levi and Jacob Lewis are going with ox teams and Mr. Gormley as I stated is going with us. I have seen a great many of those from Springfield. They are generally well. You had better get Mr. Wickersham to get my regalia at the Odd Fellows Lodge. My vetaet apron & collar is at the Lodge and my sich apron is at my old shop. You can get them of Adams You may as well let him sell them to some Odd Fellow and use the money keep the youngest children at school as much as possible and some of the older ones if you can spare them. Today we start on our journey across the plains. I shall not... [end of letter—missing page(s)]

E Cook

¹⁴⁷ *Journal*, May 28, 1849, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 3.

**44. William L. Todd Letter from San Francisco, California
May 13, 1849**

We are gratified in hearing from our young friend William L. Todd, son of Dr. [John] Todd, of this city, who left this place in 1845, with the immigration for California. He writes under date of San Francisco, 13th May, that he has been in good health-- that last year [1848] he had been digging the "yellow stuff" in the Sierra Nevada,-- that he was now engaged in mercantile business, with fair prospects. The news part of this letter has been anticipated by previous publications.¹⁴⁹

**45. Benjamin R. Biddle Journal From The Plains
May 13, 1849**

FROM THE PLAINS

109 Miles West of St. Joseph,

May 13, 1849.

We are now on the great prairie--nothing to relieve the monotony of the view but a few small groves, indicating watering places. The prairies of Illinois are mere garden spots in magnitude compared to this great plain. This would be a beautiful county if timber was plenty. We have seen but few Indians. They have stolen some cattle, but they were all recovered. We keep a strong guard at night. No accident has yet happened to us, and we get along with as little difficulty as any other 20 men on the road.

We expect in a few days to intersect the Independence road, when there will be a great rush. It is represented that there are great numbers ahead of us; but we suppose that the great body is behind. When we lay by,—as we have to-day— many companies pass us—a hundred have gone by to-day. They all seem to be in a hurry, and it is thought they drive too fast. The grass is not very good generally; but the mules do well. Some of our men complain that our loads are too heavy, and probably we shall throw away our ovens and lids and surplus iron. As we advance we find a great many articles thrown away by emigrants.

We expected to find it lonesome on the plains, but it is not so; we have plenty of society, and that of the best men. We are either passing or in sight of teams the whole day, and we generally find out where each other are from, &c. Our encampment is near others, and time passes swiftly. I will resume my journal: [We make brief extracts from it.]

Monday, May 7, 1849.—Received a delegation from a company from Dayton, Ohio, which desired to join us, and organize as one company— which was agreed to, and they were to come up with us on the march. We left camp at 10 A. M. at the sound of the bugle, and this day passed 128 ox teams—encamped on the prairie, having traveled 12 miles.

Tuesday, 8th.—Passed an Indian Mission; some improvements,—horse mill, blacksmith shop, and farm, carried on by government, and a school, in which there were between 30 and 40 Indian children. It was evident the natives were making but slow progress in civilization, growing out of their repugnance to labor. Traveled 16 miles and encamped.

Wednesday, 9th.—Some rain; traveled 8 miles and encamped on a branch; had to pack our wood nearly a mile; 85 oxen and six mule teams passed us.

Thursday, 10th.—Some dark clouds hanging about the horizon. Started at 7 A. M.; groves of timber near, indicating water; camped at 5 P. M., on a fine creek; made 28 miles. The Ohio

¹⁴⁹ *Journal*, June 8, 1849, p. 2.

company having joined us, J. B. Watson was elected general superintendent, and an advisory committee appointed to assist him. We passed a very fine dog, which had given out.

Friday, 11th.—Signs of rain; started at 7 A. M.; showers of rain; crossed Nimehaw,¹⁵⁰ a beautiful stream, with rocky bottom and timber on its margin. This is a great place for emigrants. Here we saw a fresh grave—of a man from St. Louis, who had been long in ill health. Every tree about had bits of paper fastened to them, written upon, informing emigrants and friends that the writers were well and had passed this point;— traveled 23 miles and encamped.



This excerpt from the Lewis and Clark map of 1814 shows the rivers of southwest Iowa, southeast Nebraska, and northwest Missouri. The “Little” and “Great” “Ne-ma-haw” Rivers are seen at the west-central edge of the map.

Saturday, 12th. Some clouds, cold; started at 7 A. M.; passed a dead ox partly skinned; came to an encampment where many things had been left, and a wagon burnt up. We crossed three tributaries today. Our Ohio friends broke a wagon tongue by the running away of the cattle; no farther damage done. Timber on the creek elm, and had bad fires. Traveled 21 miles.

Sunday, 13th. The morning bright and beautiful. 28 wagons encamped with us last night.— The day has passed very pleasantly. 130 wagons have passed us today. We find that a majority of the teams travel on the Sabbath, what the result will be on their teams, the end will prove. There is a family of children in camp tonight; the little creatures are playful and happy.

There were a train of 34 wagons passed today in which were Mr. Leviston and lady and two children (formerly Miss Woodson of Springfield.) Their wagon was beautifully arranged, and as neat as a parlor. The lady looks well and appears as if at home.

B. R. B.

P. S. Tuesday 15th. All well, and moving on well, we are eight miles above where the Independence road strikes ours, and 140 miles from St. Joseph.

¹⁵⁰ The Nemaha River basin includes the areas of the state of Nebraska below the Platte River basin that drain directly into the Missouri River. The major streams of the drainage include Weeping Water Creek, Muddy Creek, Little Nemaha River, and Big Nemaha River. The basin has a total area of approximately 2,800 square miles, and includes much of southeastern Nebraska. The name ‘Nemaha’ originates in the Ioway-Otoe-Missouria phrase *ní-máha*, which means ‘water-soil’ and refers to the muddy water at corn-planting time.
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemaha_River_basin

HEAD WATERS, LITTLE BLUE,

May 30, 1849.

Another week has passed since I wrote you. Nothing strange has occurred to our company since then. We all enjoy excellent health. The road is most excellent, and the country most beautiful. The streams have rapid currents, and the waters are as clear as crystal, with pebbly bottoms. Springs of great beauty are breaking out constantly; the air is pure, and there seems nothing wanting to make this country most desirable for the agriculturalist but timber. When the autumnal fires are kept out, timber will spring up and grow with rapidity. This may soon be;— for game is becoming scarce, and the natives will have to leave the country.

We have seen a few buffalo and antelopes, but none of them have been shot. We are now in the Indian country. They are very shy of us,—few of them having come into the camps. We keep a strong guard at night.

We are constantly passing notices from those who have preceded us,—written upon paper, elk horns and boards;—so that we are apprised of all that is going on ahead of us. The number of deaths known to me I have given in my journal.

The season is so backward that Flora has not put on her beautiful vestments here. I have seen but few flowers that I have not seen before. I send you a specimen of the wild pea, in the midst of a field of which is our encampment. The air is filled with its perfume. We have encamped to spend the Sabbath. Some of our company are now out hunting, while others, like myself, are engaged writing to friends far away. I have dated this on Sunday, though in fact written on Saturday. We have an opportunity of sending letters by private express—which brings letters to us at 25 cents, and deposits ours in the nearest post office at one dollar.

Time passes away swiftly on these plains. We have an abundance of society—interesting, well educated persons,—but we are absent from many we love.

I have given you the general features of the week, and now resume my journal:

Monday, May 14.—Rained hard, with a high wind. Resumed our journey—came to the Big Blue, a rapid stream—passed a wagon which had broken down, and partly burnt. Here was a fresh grave, of a young man who had died of inflammation of the bowels. Traveled 23 miles to day, and passed 113 wagons.

Tuesday, 15th—Cloudy and cold; started at 7 A. M.; passed three new graves—one of the persons died of fever, one of a bowel complaint, and the other was killed by being run over by a wagon. Made 22 miles to-day.

Wednesday, 16th.—Cloudy and cool; started early; came to Walnut Creek, took in wood,—crossed over the creek, and crossed Sandy, a pretty stream; saw some antelope, but failed to secure any. B. [enjamin] A. Watson shot at one, but at too great distance to take effect. Made 23 miles—rained hard at sun-down.

Thursday, 17th.—Cloudy morning; started early; some excitement in consequence of two drivers mistreating a mule, but it ended in smoke; struck the Little Blue again, and ‘nooned’—encamped at night upon its bank; caught some fine fish; passed 95 teams today; saw some abandoned Indian lodges; made 25 miles.

Friday, 18th.—Sun rose clear, caught fish and a turtle; traveled up the river all day; passed 59 wagons; road sandy and gravelly; made 23 miles.

Saturday, 19th.—There was a thunder storm last night; it frightened our mules; morning very windy; passed the Louisville Company, which had just buried one of their number, shot by accident. We made our camp at 11 A. M. Mules want rest, grass good and fine water.

Yours, B. R. B.

46. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Wife From Nebraska Territory
May 13, 1849¹⁵¹

One Hundred 12 miles West of St. Joe
 Territory of Nebraska May 13, 1849

My Dear Wife: By the date of this you will see that I am steadily and rapidly leaving all that I love far behind and am streaching my course far on to that point of which you have ??? "The Far West" and my dearest wife you cannot conceive of the varied feelings which constantly fill my bosom. Sometimes it is that of a man who feels that he is doing something wrong at another I feel a ??? of doing my duty to you and our children by endeavoring to place you independent circumstances which I hope this trip will effectually accomplish. Dearest I was compelled to leave St. Joe without receiving another letter from you, which I most confidently expected to have done. I wanted to hear from you again that our fond hopes would be realized, but I shall believe that it is so and shall expect about next Christmas to hear of another fine boy being come to town. Dearest I hope that before this your mind has settled down calmly to bear our separation as I would have you, in fact from what father wrote me I confidently believe that it has done so, my angel I do not know when you will receive this but it is a pleasure for me to write to you. This morning I looked at your picture and it did look so natural I almost fancied that the lips were about to open and speak to me. But I kissed them and stopped the sound. We have been waiting by today and are camped by the first trees that we ??? by since Monday ??? we have had to make our home in the wide prairie every night.

Monday 7th

- This morning all hands went to work early loaded up our wagons ready for a start upon our long journey which we commence at 10:00 a.m. One of the boys killed a black squirrel the first one that I ever saw. Saw a red crawfish in the brook. Today our road has been over a beautiful country, soil excellent but rather broken though our road has been rather level having traveled upon a ??? ridge most of the way, saw some Indians and an Indian grave up in a tree which is the way some of the tribes bury their dead. Camped at five o'clock having traveled 15 miles.

8th - got off at 6 ½ o'clock this morning, weather fine but rather warm. Wolf River at 10, reached the "Mission" at 12. The mission is an agency established by the government for the purpose of paying the Indian's their annuities. The Presbyterians have some missionaries here for the purpose of Christianizing and civilizing the Indians, but one of the ladies of the mission told me that she thought there would not be much good come of it, as the men were too fond of painting their faces and too lazy to work. The government has a very fine farm under cultivation here for their benefit a couple of miles farther on. Saw some 10 or 12 Indians who seemed to have put on their holiday paint they were all well mounted, and in their native costumes and fancy pants they looked fine. There were two twin brothers among them they were very fine looking men. The country today has been more level and it is really a very fine body of land, but deficient in timber. Roads are incomparably fine. Camped in the open prairie at 3. Weather fine. Making 16 miles.

9th - we remained in camp til 1 ½ o' clock waiting for the balance of our company. Some ??? Indians ??? when we have combined for mutual protection. Country still very beautiful. Started 1 ½ o'clock and traveled till five making about 8 miles. Half-mile from wood and water.

10th - This morning our train moved majestically off at the sound of the bugle. 17 wagons and 68 men make very considerable ??? Stopped at 12 to noon rested 1 ½ hours and then traveled

¹⁵¹ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

on till 6, making 9 ½ hours traveling time, or 25 miles. Weather threatening rain but none of consequence falling.

11th - weather looking hazy and still threatening rain, occasionally strips of timber in sight along the water course. Found today the first running stream of water in 60 miles traveling ??? Having been all the time upon a beautiful ??? ridge. Camped at five o'clock having as usual stopped to noon, ??? Made today 23 miles.

12th today we have to pass a large train of ox wagons who would not turn out of the way for us. We have passed since last Monday about 200 ox teams. We expect to get ahead of all of them in about three weeks. Weather pleasant, but road dusty. Nooned at the usual hour and reached camp at 6 under the shade of a tree, the first we have seen for some days upon the road. Country today has been more hilly. Made today 22 miles. Today we have been laying over since we have been here there have been some 10 or 80 ox teams passed our camp and 30 more have stopped here. We will have a hard time tomorrow passing them. We have to turn out of the beaten track and it makes it hard upon the mules to draw the wagons.

My dear another week of our probation has gone. Time rolls on with great rapidity. Already I begin to count the weeks that have passed and think that every one that rolls by on the wings of time brings me nearer the moment when I shall behold my beautiful and lovely wife. Oh how I long for the time to come when I shall start home. When it comes won't I come with a rush. I should think I would. My dear I am very sorry that you should have wrought up your mind to the belief that I was going to back out and come home. I do not hardly think though that you had much reliance that I would turn back. You know me too well for that.

The best thing for you to do now is to devote yourself entirely to your dear babies, thinking only of my returning to reap the rich harvest of love which you are treasuring up for me deary. I do not think I shall ever have the heart to go even down in town when I get home without kissing those stout lips of thine. I wish I could do so now for I think it would cure mine which are very sore from riding in the wind. Otherwise my health is very good as also is Billson's and in fact every other member of the company. You must not neglect to write to me very often. I shall probably be able to reach San Francisco by the middle of September at the farthest end I shall then expect to get letters enough from you to keep me reading a week at least I shall occupy a week in reading them over. Don't forget to request the postmaster at San Francisco to hold on to the letters until they are called for. Direct so on the back of your letters, otherwise they may be sent to the dead letter office. I shall continue my history in my letters though you may never receive this one but if you should fail to receive any of them I shall be able to supply their place by reference to my journal. It is now 8 o'clock at night and all the camp are assembled round the campfire singing "Old Hundred".¹⁵² Billson and Cabanis are accompanying them on their instruments. It sounds very fine away out here where such sounds were never heard before. It has entirely stopped the croaking of the frogs in the adjacent stream. They have now changed the tune to the "Dead March in Saul", which reminds me that we passed the grave of a young man yesterday from St. Louis, a Mr. Sims who died of dropsy and was buried by the wayside. A monument to call the attention of all to the fact that we are but grass before the sickle, but I am not wont to become the parson, so I will change my key and talk of something more agreeable to wit to tell you again how much I love you my dear. I know I do my heart feels like I have left half of it behind and so I have too the biggest part by a long shot. Kiss my boy for me every day and teach him to love his father. I shall expect

¹⁵² "Old 100th" or "Old Hundredth" (also commonly called "Old Hundred") is a hymn tune in Long Metre from Pseaumes Octante Trois de David (1551) (the second edition of the Genevan Psalter) and is one of the best known melodies in all Christian musical traditions. The tune is usually attributed to the French composer Louis Bourgeois (c. 1510 – c.1560). Although the tune was first associated with Psalm 134 in the Genevan Psalter, the melody receives its current name from an association with the 100th Psalm, in a translation by William Kethe entitled "All People that on Earth do Dwell". The melody is commonly sung with diverse other lyrics as well.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_100th#Lyrics

that he will be able to spell by the time I come home. Won't I be proud of him. Though my paper is out so I must kiss you sweet goodnight my sweet wife

your affectionate husband,

B. A. Watson

**47. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Wife From Near Headwaters of the
Little Blue, 240 Miles From St. Joseph, Missouri
May 19, 1849¹⁵³**

Camp near the Headwaters of the Little Blue 240 miles from St. Joseph, Mo

May 19, 1849

My Dear Wife:

You cannot conceive how agreeably I was surprised to receive a letter from you away out in the midst of a great plain, on Tuesday last about noon a man came up to our train carrying an express to the Platte River and on reading over his list I had the indescribable joy to see my name and on opening the letter I found it was from my dear sweet wife dated the 30th • It came like manna from above to me for I did not expect to hear from you until I had reached California. I had to pay a dollar postage but it went free for I got the worth of my money. It told me that you and my boy was well and it made me certain of something which I very much wanted to be sure of though I thought it must be so. Yet my dear I am sorry that you cannot quiet your mind down. It is no use dwelling in your thoughts further about my coming back until I see the Elephant or rather as you say until I pick up what I want, and when I do that I assure you my dear you shall see me just as quick as wind and steam in the air balloon can bring me to your dear bosom. I sent you a letter a few moments after I received yours, by a man who was going into Kansas, he had been out to bring a gentleman who had been left by his company sick, it is now Saturday night and the camp tonight is enlivened by the music of our band. It has the very best effect upon the mind of the men. I have just had to suspend my writing to take part in the performance. Our band is composed of a cornet, trombone, fiddle, tambourine, symbols, for which we use two pie pans, triangle for which we substitute an old stirrup [sic] and really we make some very good music as good I dare say as any of the inhabitants of this country ever heard. Speaking of inhabitants, we had not seen an Indian since we left the vicinity of the Missouri though we have been travelling through their corridor all the time. We expect to see some next week, though they are represented as all being friendly, but they will steal anything they can lay their hands on. We do not intend to give them any chances to steal anything from us as we keep guard all the time every man taking his regular turn once every fourth night. We bring our mules every night into a "corral", which is a place ??? formed by driving our wagons close one behind another in a circle and then we pitch our tents in the spaces between the wagons. We then stretch large ropes across from one wagon to another to which we tie our mules making them perfectly secure against all attempts of the Indians. But my dear I must continue my journal as I am filling my sheet. I shall send this by the man who brought me yours of the 30th instant. He has been up as far as the "Platt" and is now staying at an encampment about 1 mile beyond us and will go on tomorrow. Last Sunday I spent my time in writing to my beloved and in the evening I took a nap and dreamed of her.

Monday May 14^a-This morning we all felt very much refreshed by our ??? of the day before and moved on over a beautiful country but still deficient in timber there not being anything like enough for even fire wood much by less tall timber. 12 miles further we passed the "Big Blue", a most beautiful stream full of fine fish. We lost 3 hours today in crossing the Blue and one of its affluents. Nooned at the usual hour and encamped at 6 o'clock having traveled some 20 miles.

¹⁵³ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

Tuesday 15th -This morning we passed by the grave of a young man of Louisville by the name of McMillen who lost his life by the mules running away with the wagon and the wagon passing over his body. This country still presents the same vast expanse of prairie uninterrupted by not a single tree. Our road is not quite so straight as before, but yet being good water and grass in ??? tonight. Struck the Independence Road today, about 10 o'clock, don't appear to be much traveled yet. Camped today at 6 o'clock making 23 miles.

16th -Our road today has been over a very broken country but the land is very rich in places but generally not so good as heretofore. We took a high cut today and saved 10 miles. Crossed the "Sandy", a tributary of the Little Blue about six miles from Walnut Creek, another of its affluents, making ??? halt we camped at 6, distance traveled today 23 miles.

17th -This morning we got off early traveled over a rough road till 12, when we struck the Little Blue, a very fine stream not quite so large as the Sangamon, full of fish which we caught a mess while our mules were grazing at noon. 13 miles from the "Sandy". The weather for several days has been cloudy and cool, found fine grass in the bottom of the "Blue" up above stream our road had been today. Camped at 6, distance 25 miles.

18th -Our road still runs up the Little Blue through a very rich bottom only leaving it twice for 60 miles if there were more timber the valley of this stream would be as fine as a man could well find. We have not found any game yet except an occasional antelope which is so wild as to render it almost impossible to get a shot at them. We expect to come up with the buffalo next week.

19th -Buffalo grass is now becoming very common. Our road still continues to ascend the Little Blue. Last night there was a war among the elements thunder, lightning and rain taking part in the performance. This morning the grasses were quite heavy from the rains of last night, making it hard on the mules. Today one of Eastmon's wagons capsized no damage done. We encamped at 11 1/2 o'clock today upon fine grass where shall remain until Monday as we could not reach a camping place west of Sixteen miles from this on Tuesday night. We expect to camp on the big Platte River. Our camp is surrounded by a perfect ??? of a variety of sweet pea which is now in full bloom filling the air with its fragrance. They are more beautiful than any of their kind I ever saw, probably because they remind me of "Home". I have also observed a variety of pink bearing a yellow flower, also a flower very nearly resembling the China Aster? In appearance and fragrance. The Prickly Pear is becoming very common in every location we have had one or two ??? of wild onions, and are to have a dish of turtle soup tomorrow as Billson had the good fortune to catch a very fine turtle night before last. We shall season our soup with wild garlic of which there is a good supply at hand. We learned from a young man who came up since we encamped that Capt. Roberts was a few miles behind us and he will doubtless come up tomorrow as we shall lay by. There are a great many persons going out by this route that is from the various fronts of the Missouri River. I think they will amount to 20,000. We are ahead of the many and I think shall be able to keep so. There was a man killed by one of his comrades a mile below us last night either accidentally or on purpose. I believe the latter, making in all six deaths that have taken place on this road that we know of. I tell you this that you may not be frightened by the stories you may hear and that we heard before we started from St. Joe and which we have found to be false. Our whole camp are entirely well and have been so, but I find I am coming to the bottom of my paper and as it is getting too late to write another, everyone in camp except myself, the guards and others similarly occupied, are snoozing in accompaniment to Mr. Wind, which is blowing tremendously making the canopy of our tents flap and flop as though it would split. I think we shall have some more rain before long, but a word to my sweet one you must not blot your letters up so with you tears save them, to share for joy over my safe return recompensed for the sacrifice which I am making for the good of my family. My dear I wish I could write some word that would express the extent of my love for you but I cannot and must leave you to set your own ??? upon it. Your affectionate husband.

B. A. Watson

**John S. Bradford Reaches San Francisco, California Via Isthmus of Panama
May 20, 1849**

Reaches San Francisco on May 20, 1849

On January 1, 1849, John S. Bradford joined the vast army of people that was pushing its way on to California in search of gold. He went by the way of the Isthmus of Panama, and after a voyage of eighty-seven days on the Pacific Ocean arrived in San Francisco, on May 20, 1849. He made Benicia his headquarters and became a man of prominence there. His family resided in Springfield, and he retained his business relations with Mr. Johnson also.¹⁵⁴

**48. Letter From Charles Maltby at Fort Kearney, Platte River, Nebraska
May 24, 1849**

Journal, Wednesday, June 27, 1849.¹⁵⁵

From the Plains

Fort Kearney,¹⁵⁶ Platte River, May 24, '49.

We have the pleasure to say that we are in good health and spirits and are progressing finely towards our place of destination. We have had good weather and good roads. No accident has befallen us. Mrs. M's health has rapidly improved. Our team is doing well. Oxen six years old are better than mules for this trip.

Yesterday we met a company of traders from the Rocky Mountains. They say we will have good roads, and grass as far as they have been (400 miles) towards the Rocky Mountains. We hear nothing to discourage us, and hope to reach California in September.

About 200 teams have passed us, and we suppose there're some 3,000 behind. The Springfield ox-teams are about a days travel behind; and the Springfield mule teams are about the same distance ahead, and we expect to overtake them, we are constantly passing mule teams, which left St. Joseph before we did.

We are now 230 miles from St. Joseph; 40 miles more will carry us to the buffalo region, where, it is said, they are plenty. 340 miles from this will bring us to Fort Laramie, which we hope to reach by the 18th of June; and Fort Hall is 550 miles from that point, which we expect to reach by the 1st of August.

Messrs. Morgan, Harris and Turley are with us,-- all well. The weather is cool. We are now passing for Kearney, and I must close.

Yours, etc.
Charles Maltby

Mr. S. B. Moody, Springfield Ill.

¹⁵⁴ *1891 History*, p. 588.

¹⁵⁵ *Journal*, Wednesday, Jun 27, 1849, p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ Fort Kearny was an outpost of the United States Army founded in 1848. The outpost was located along the Oregon Trail near Kearney, Nebraska. The town of Kearney took its name from the fort. The fort became the eastern anchor of the Great Platte River Road and thus an important military and civilian way station for 20 years. Wagon trains moving west, were able to resupply after completing about a sixth (16%) of the journey. The fort offered a safe resting area for the eastern immigrants in this new and hostile land. Livestock could be traded for fresh stock and letters sent back to the States. The fort continued to expand over the years, until there were over 30 buildings before its closure in 1871. It took on additional roles as a Pony Express station, an Overland Stage station and a telegraph station.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Kearny

Abraham Lincoln Declines Offer of Secretaryship and Governor of the Oregon Territory

In 1849, the Oregon Territory was being rapidly settled, and the pioneers were expecting to have a Territorial Governor appointed. The friends of Abraham Lincoln were anxious for him to have the appointment, as he seemed to be especially qualified to govern a new territory. Some of his enemies were also anxious to see him sent away from the States where he was becoming a person of importance, and those who disliked his ideas and rough manners feared his influence. But Lincoln, himself, had never asked for the position; and when it was offered to him he declined, and recommended a friend for the office. It was said that his wife refused to go to Oregon as she believed in his political future in the States.

Abraham Lincoln was offered the secretaryship of the Oregon territory, which he promptly declined.

In 1849, he was offered the more lucrative and prestigious governorship of Oregon (paying \$3000 per year), which tempted him. John Todd Stuart and Lincoln were in Bloomington attending Court when a special messenger arrived informing him of the Oregon governorship offer. When Lincoln asked Stuart if he should accept, his former law partner said he “thought it was a good thing; that he could go out there and in all likelihood come back from there as a Senator when the State was admitted.” Lincoln “finally made up his mind that he would accept the place if Mary would consent to go. But Mary would not consent to go out there.” Joshua Speed later told Stuart “that Lincoln wrote to him that if he [Speed] would go along, he would give him any appointment out there which he might be able to control. Lincoln evidently thought that if Speed and Speed’s wife were to go along, would be an inducement for Mary to change her mind and consent to go.

Lincoln doesn’t give a reason for rejecting the job. But some speculate that Lincoln’s wife, Mary Todd, didn’t want to move as far west as the Oregon Territory. At the time, that territory was made up of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and part of Wyoming.

Other Lincoln historians suspect Oregon would have placed Lincoln too far away from his political connections. In fact, Lincoln never even visited the Oregon Territory.

The population of Oregon in 1849 was well under 50,000 people. And at the time, Vancouver was bigger than Portland, mainly due to Ft. Vancouver and the Hudson’s Bay Company.¹⁵⁷

Mary Lincoln “did not fail to remind him that her advice, when he was wavering, had restrained him from ‘throwing himself away’ on a distant territory.”

¹⁵⁷ National Archives, 1849-1907, box 32, Record Group 48, College Park, Maryland. Newspapers reported that Lincoln turned down the Oregon governorship because of “objections of his family to remove to that distant country.” Jesse Conrad to Caleb B. Smith, Terre Haute, Indiana, 11 October 1849, Smith Papers, Library of Congress. Mary Edwards Brown, granddaughter of Ninian W. Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, Vol. 1, Chapter 8.

49. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Fort Laramie, Wyoming
June 7, 1849¹⁵⁸

Fort Laramie¹⁵⁹

June 7th 1849

Dear wife

I take the present opportunity of dropping you a few lines to inform you that I am well. In fact I am in better health than I have been for years. My comrades are all in good health and in fine spirits. We have traveled nearly half our journey. We shall be in California if we have no bad luck before the middle of August. Our mules are in good order to day Sunday we are getting them in shape. We are encamped with the Springfield Rangers. Mr. Saunders has been to our tent to see us. Mr. [William] Shield, Mr. [Ebenezer] Colburn and many others are in the company [torn page] of their every lady is well... (torn page) work and travel about 18 hours out of 24. Which is tiresome I assure you. We get up at 3 o'clock in the morning and eat breakfast at about sunrise. Our route is on the same path principle one thing can be done as well as another. Some get the blues on the road. Some are of no use. Some turn back and others should. If a man has not spirit, he should never start to California. For in the legend ... of our revolutionary heroes it tries men's souls and many falter on the way. With me it is different. I have a spirit to endure hardships and a constitution also. I have felt better for the last two weeks than I have felt for years. The first part of our journey after we left Saint Joseph was rather gloomy. The road side was a complete grave yard and frequently as many as three buried in one grave of cholera several of us had symptoms of it but except for our old friend [William] Leggott we all escaped ____ (torn page) and there is scarcely (torn page) one. We are now about seven hundred miles from Saint Joseph or eleven hundred miles from Springfield. I hope these few lines may reach you and find you all well.

My love to you and my children
 Your husband
 E. Cook

50. Elijah Cook Matheny Letter From the California Road

Journal, Wednesday, June 13, 1849.¹⁶⁰

A letter from our young friend, Mr. [Elijah] Cook Matheny, dated 21st instant, on the California road, states, (a fact of great interest here,) that "The Cholera had left the train." His company was well. He says he has seen the elephant and is determined to ride him.

Elijah Cook Matheny, the son of Charles R. Matheny, was born in Springfield, on June 13, 1826, and lived there practically all of his life. At the breaking out of the 1849 gold fever in California, he traveled across the plains by wagon to the Pacific Coast and stayed there until 1854, when he came back to Illinois. He sailed from San Francisco for Panama and thence to New York. He stayed in Panama for some eight months near where the Canal is now located.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 4.

¹⁵⁹ Originally established as a private fur trading fort in 1834, Fort Laramie evolved into the largest and best known military post on the Northern Plains before its abandonment in 1890. This "grand old post" witnessed the entire sweeping saga of America's western expansion and Indian resistance to encroachment on their territories. Located at confluence of the Laramie and North Platte Rivers in southeast Wyoming, this famed outpost - first as a fur trade post and then as a military garrison played a strategic role in transforming the United States. Here, for 56 years successive waves of trappers, traders, Native Americans, missionaries, emigrants, soldiers, miners, ranchers and homesteaders interacted and left their mark on a place that would become famous in the history of the American west - Fort Laramie. <https://www.nps.gov/foia/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

¹⁶⁰ *Journal*, Wednesday, June 13, 1849, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Sangamon County, Illinois*, Volume 2, Part 2, edited by Newton Bateman, Paul Selby, p. 1424.

51. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to Wife
From Camp on Platte River 6 miles West of Deer Creek
June 17, 1849¹⁶²

Camp on Platter River 6 miles West of Deer Creek
 June 17th, 1849

Dear Beloved Wife:

Sunday again brings us a day of rest and me an opportunity of fulfilling a most pleasant duty of informing you of our progress, and to tell you again and again how much I love you. Oh dear sweet wife I wish it were possible for me to give you some idea of the change that has come over my feelings since I left you. I thought that I loved you before I left home, but I don't think compared with my present feelings the ????? to be caused by so holy a name as love. If I loved you then I adore you now. Dear wife if I am spared and should again be permitted to embrace you the most faithful of hearts you will be repaid for our temporary separation by the tender love which I shall lavish on you and our dear children it may be from the long delay that must occur before you can possibly receive this that you will have become again a mother, oh sweet and bitter reflection. Sweet because the little angel will add another bond to cement our hearts together, sweet because you will have it to love and cherish during the absence of its father. Sweet because the sight of the dear cherub will increase your love for the author of its being and when I return I shall be very greedy and shall expect you to pour out to me a rich store of love, a bitter reflection because I cannot be with you to cheer and strengthen you by being with you during your hard trials but may the good Lord carry you safely through the ordeal.

I left my last letters my dear for you at Fort Larimer but I sometimes fear you will never receive them for I have not much confidence in the honesty of the peoples of the Fort. They are generally a rough set of men who have spent most of their lives among the children of the wilds and who have lost if they ever possessed those fine sensibilities which would make them respected. The epistle of an absent husband to his wife though they may not destroy them as they have received the money to transmit to the states it might be a serious business for them if they ??? perform their duty. Now for descriptions of the fort it is built of some dried brick or as the Mexicans call it "Adobe" in the form of a square containing something like an acre of ground. There is a court in the center the walls are very thick capable of resisting any efforts of the Indians against it the wall is provided with loop holes for rifle men, all around the square in the inside is occupied as store houses, work shops, stables, apartments for the men, all of whom are blessed with copper colored spouses and all that [page 2] I saw were as ugly as the mud from which surrounded them, though there is no accounting for tastes as the girl said when she kissed the cow. The East side of the Fort is the main entrance on that side the houses are two stories high the roofs are almost flat sloping slightly inward and composed of earth thrown on logs of cedar laid close together the wall of the fort extending above the roofs of the houses forms a most admirable breastwork for defense. There were a large number of fine wagons drawn up before the fort which they had bought for the enormous sum of five dollars a piece which had been abandoned by emigrants on account of their being too heavy. They had thousands of pounds of bacon which they have bought for 1/4 cent to 1/2 cent per pound and everything else in provisions. We came up with Capt. Roberts here who had left two ??? before he and Henry Spotswood had had a fight and separated here two of the men going with Henry and four of them going with Roberts among them ??? You can tell John Ives this ??? Roberts traveled with us this week but left us yesterday evening he I suppose not wishing to layover on Sunday. Today the camp was thrown into a state of great excitement by three buffalos being discovered making their way directly for the camp, not withstanding it was

¹⁶² Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

Sunday. I could not withstand the temptation was seized by gunmen and got fair shot at one of them about 100 yards off though I did not get to meet I am certain I killed the animal. ??? and ??? Killed one yesterday evening about 4 miles from camp upon which we are now feasting. The meat on our table today consists of Buffalo meat and deer, antelope, fish, Hare, and bacon, a first rate assortment we have plenty of fresh meat all the time, but I must resume my journal. You understand unless something untoward occurs that we always remain in camp on Sundays and of which I make no note.

Monday, June 11 started at 6 AM rolled some 8 miles the road diverged from the river to which it did not return for the distance of 6 miles. The teams halted for noon on the high table and adding by having taken a cut off or a bye path which ... along the river but impossible for teams. I came out far ahead of the wagons. I lost my dinner but some of the most beautiful flowers I have yet seen. We reached the Laramie Fork of the Platte at four o'clock which we found a very fine rapid River. It was most too deep to ford we locked our wagon sides up and came through safely and encamped on this side about 1/2 mile east of Fort Laramie. Upon very fine grass at 6 o'clock distance 23 miles.

12th started at 6 1/2 o'clock arrived the fort where we sold some of our powder and lead we having become satisfied that we have more than we should have any use for and wishing to lighten our wagons drove 7 miles over some very steep hills though not near so hard as I had expected to find and stopped to noon on ??? grass and without water 5 miles farther we came to the "Warm Spring" a very large and most beautiful spring pouring out from beneath a tall cliff and most barren and ??? looking spot the water is tepid being 71 degrees by the thermometer the atmosphere at the same time was 61 degrees we encamped four miles beyond the spring upon the open plain having taken wood and water from the spring distance traveled 16 miles.

13th This morning we got off at 5 1/2 o'clock travel over a very hilly country. The road is the finest I ever saw no turnpike road being superior to it. We are now traveling through the Black Hills and the country is more like a desert than anything I ever saw though the people at the fort told us there was more grass this season than there had been for twelve years before. "Laramie's Peak" the loftiest peak of the Black Hills has been in sight at intervals since Friday last now appears not more than 10 miles from us. But it is in fact 50. The atmosphere being so pure you can see objects at incredible distance. The top of the mountain is covered with snow and to me snow at this time of the year looks very strange. There seems to be a good quantity of pine timber growing on the sides of the mountains we have crossed during the day several fine streams of pure water with timber and fine grass without which this place would be impracticable for traveling. We halted at noon as usual and stopped for the night between two high hills at five o'clock. Distance 25 miles.

14th today we have traveled over the same fine roads and desert country. The only plant which seems to flourish here being the wild sage which grows to an ??? size serving for fuel and filling the air with a strong smell of turpentine and camphor. We passed through what is supposed to be an old crater of a volcano whose fires are long since extinct and whose thunders have long since been quieted. The soil and sides of the hills around it very rare looking as if they had been exposed to extreme heat many of the hills are evidently of volcanic origin. We crossed several streams today the largest of which is the LaBonte. The water is as cold as ice. Wood has been plenty since leaving the fort. Weather during the middle of the day becoming very warm, but cool at night, no mosquitoes. Distance 20 miles.

15th The country today seems to be improving and grass some better. 6 miles from camp we found the Laprell? River a fine stream about 30 feet wide and 2 feet deep. Struck the Platte River at 10 o'clock. Eastmon & Campbell of company are absent from camp tonight, having strayed off hunting. We rested as usual at noon for our animals to graze. Distance traveled 22 miles.

16th this morning we started at six o'clock following up the Platte, here a mountain stream, the water is cold and runs like a mill race. Crossed the ??? River this morning. 5 miles farther we crossed Deer Creek. This point furnishes ordinarily a fine resting place for the emigrant though we found it so crowded that we moved 6 miles further on and encamped on the Platte. Found fair grass and wood plenty. Eastman and Campbell came into camp this morning having slept out without their coats though no evil effects are apprehended from the exposure to the night out. We encamped today at three o'clock and Doren and Laterly went out hunting and killed a fine buffalo. Got the meat into camp at 10 o'clock at night fine time in camp plenty of beef. Distance today 16 miles. The weather all this week has been very dry and warm and the road very dusty. Our road for the last week has been very hard on the feet of oxen without shoes and there are many of them very lame from hard driving and gravelly roads many of the ox trains have kept up with us so far but while we make the day's drive in eight hours they drive eleven or twelve making it very hard on their cattle. We shall arrive at the upper Platte ferry tomorrow distance about 16 miles. During the week dearest I expect we will have accomplished half of our long journey though I must say it has not been near so tedious nor laborious as I expected to find it though I wish I was on my way back to my own sweet wife and children with my pocket full of rocks. My dear sweet wife how much I have wished you were with me to enjoy the grand and beautiful scenery which is presented to our sight every successive day, though for the last week I would just as ??? you would be at home it has been so hot and dusty. Our road for the last week has been along the foot of the Black Hills, and from our camp I can plainly see the snow on their lofty peaks glittering in the sunshine. They appear to be about 4 miles off though they are I suppose 10. We have heard several rumors of murders by the Indians but there is no truth in any of them except one case a company crossed the Missouri River at Council Bluffs went up the north side of the Platte. When three days travel below the lower ferry of the river some 150 Sioux Indians came into their camp. They professed friendship but were discovered stealing some mules. The mules were regained and the Indians left the camp about 1/2 mile from the camp they met three of the party who were out hunting. They took some small articles from one, another escaped the third being still farther from the camp they killed and scalped but I suppose that he first fired on them or he would not have been hurt. Oh well give my love to all. Kiss my big boy.

Your affectionate husband, B. A. Watson

**William Charles Ludlum Letter From Council Grove
May 25, 1849**

*Journal, Monday, June 18, 1849.*¹⁶³

From the Plains.
Several letters were received this morning from our townsmen who are en route for California :
Mr. C. Ludlum writes from Council Grove, under date of May 25th, that his company had arrived there, all well. There had been some cases of cholera in the train, but none in his company.
Messrs. Randolph Moore and Wm. S. Moore, state similar facts in regard to their company. Mr. R. Moore also writes that grass is plenty, and is likely to continue so ; and that those who take the Santa Fe route will be likely to reach California before those who take the northern route.

¹⁶³ *Journal, Monday, June 18, 1849, p. 3.*

**52. Benjamin R. Biddle Journal: Journey to California
June 17, 1849-June 30, 1849**

We have been favored with the Journal of Mr. B. R. BIDDLE, our townsman, written while on his route to California, and which abounds with interesting descriptions of the country, and incidents which occurred on the route. We shall copy from this Journal, from time to time, all matters which shall appear to possess a general interest. We have no doubt this Journal will be found as interesting to our readers as if has been to us. The first date is:

Sunday, June 17th, 1849—633 miles from St. Joseph, 96 miles from Fort Laramie, and 1026 miles west of Springfield, Illinois.

I again embrace the opportunity which this day of rest affords, to continue my journal. The incidents of the last week have been of the most interesting character. Our road has led over hill and dale. The scenery was grand, the country sterile and barren, with, now and then, a mountain stream rushing on to mingle with the waters of the Platte—affording to the emigrant a cooling draught, amid the flying sand, which almost produces blindness. We have, to-day, encamped on the bank of the Platte, near a grove of large cotton wood, where there is a sufficiency of grass for our mules. We have been very lucky in getting good encampments on the Sabbath. While others are moving on—pleading necessity as a justification—we stop all day.

We reached this encampment on yesterday, at 3 p. m., which gave us an opportunity of doing some washing; as usual, it was done up in good style. Sattly and Doran went out with their guns and soon announced they had killed a buffalo, and asked for men and mules to bring it into camp. Volunteers turned out and, by 10 p. m., they came in, loaded with choice meat. The party pronounced buffalo plenty on the hills. Others went out fishing and caught some fish. The cooks were busily engaged preparing supper, which made the camp present a busy scene. Thus, you see, the hills furnish us meat, the streams afford us fish, and, to-day, the grove is vocal with the music of birds. The magpie, a bird not found at home, yields us considerable amusement by its tameness, eating out of our hands and chattering all the while. This bird can be learned to talk and is of considerable value.

This day finds us all well and in fine spirits. Our teams, I think, will take us through. We have nothing to fear, except the want of grass for our mules. The country here is very dry; but little rain has fallen; vegetation looks parched and dry. Some of those who are trying to get to the Promised Land, and think themselves endowed with the spirit of foretelling events, anticipate distress among the mountains; but we have no such forebodings. Our trip, thus far, has been of the most favorable character; and, by paying strict regard to the welfare of our mules, and taking our time, we shall succeed in getting over safe. There is a great rush, and some have injured their teams by traveling them too far. This part of the road is very gravelly and hard—a superior road to travel on with animals that are shod; but the oxen are getting sore feet; some have already been left.—The ferry across the Platte is between twenty and thirty miles from here, and they say is past fording. There is a great rush to make this point. There are twelve or fourteen hundred teams ahead of us. This will appear large to you. But admitting so many to be ahead of us, we are still in the first fourth of the whole number, as we thought, from the statement of others. The Platte, here, is a very insignificant stream, compared with what it appeared below; it has changed from a river of the plains to a mountain stream, rushing along with the sprightliness of an arrow. It is not more than a hundred feet wide at this point. We have seen some small deposits of gold in its sands; but not enough to tempt us to stop short of the great prize ahead. There is a rumor that gold, in quantities, has been discovered on Laramie's Peak—a very high spur of the Rocky Mountains, and that some wagons from Illinois had turned aside to go to it.

It is said, a man went to see the mountain, was several days from his train, and brought of what he saw there, which was pronounced gold. This Peak is covered with perpetual snow. Fort Laramie is 4,470 feet above the level of the sea, and this mountain is 2000 feet higher. We are getting up quite high; we are rising near a thousand feet a week.

I sent you a long letter from Fort Laramie, but doubt whether you will receive it. I have no confidence in the men. They have established themselves to make money; and from the way they swindle emigrants, I am disposed to believe, when they have got their twenty-five cents from us for each letter, that they don't care much whether they go or not, after we are gone.

I will now commence my daily journal, and continue it until I have a chance of sending it to you.

Monday, June 11th.—Pleasant morning. We moved off at five and a half o'clock, in advance of some sixty ox-teams. The road was fine indeed. To-day, the timber was a little more abundant than we have seen it before on the Platte.— We saw nothing of Fort Bernard, as set down in the books, eight miles from Fort Laramie. About 5 p. m. we came to the Laramie Fork of the Platte and in sight of Fort John, which is now deserted —nothing remains but its mud walls. This branch of the Platte river is about 50 feet wide, with a very deep and rapid current. Encamped 7 p. m. Distance 22 miles.

Tuesday, June 12th.—This morning is cool. Started at half past five. Drew up to the fort I have described in a former letter. We found a great many encamped in the vicinity, all anxious to sell provisions and exchange heavy wagons for light ones. Some would sell a wagon at \$5; others, in preference to taking so low a price, burnt theirs or left them by the road-side. Bacon, beans, powder, lead, trunks, &c., were left upon the plains.— It seems very wrong to throw to the wolves what the poor Indians might use to advantage, but for the cupidity of the fur-traders—men who give them scarce a tithe of what their furs and skins are worth,—we have seen but few Indians on this part of the route. It is said the traders have told them they must keep away from the emigrants else they will give them cholera, small-pox and the like. After leaving the Fort, we commenced ascending the Black Hills. They have not appeared to us half so bad to get over as they have been described by writers. We passed the Warm Spring—a most delightful spot in the midst of desolation. The water is clear as crystal, and not so warm but that man and beast can drink freely of it as it flows in great abundance. The thermometer was thrust into the water, by which it was ascertained to be 10 deg. warmer than the surrounding atmosphere. We filled our casks; and encamped at 5 p. m. where there was good grass. Distance 15 miles.

Wednesday, 13th.—Morning cloudy. Started after an early breakfast. Passed over an undulating country. Crossed Butter creek, a very beautiful and limpid stream, dancing down from a mountain on our left, whose summit is covered with perpetual snow. The grass is getting scarce, and the timber gradually becoming more abundant. The wood is mostly pine, and has a fine appearance at a distance, on the hills around. This afternoon the road has been very rough. The snow-peak is still in view. Encamped at 5 p. m. Distance 23 miles.

Thursday, 14th.—Clear morning. Sold a little wagon we had bought at St. Joseph, so as to be able to rest two of our mules, in turn. After traveling one mile, we came to Heber spring and a creek; from which we began the ascent of a very steep bluff; traveled over a rough, hilly road; crossed La Bonte, a small but rapid river. Encamped at 6 p. m.—grass very poor. Distance 20 miles.

Friday, 15th.—The sun rose this morning with a threatening look, but cleared up without rain, so we had a pleasant day of it. Forded a creek and traveled along a valley, and entered a region bearing traces of volcanic eruption. The valley and hills looked red like brick. There was no vegetation except immense fields of wild sage. Amid these ruins arises a lonely pyramid, composed of loose fragments of rock, to an altitude of several hundred feet. I clambered to

the summit. The alabaster, and red, grey and white sandstone, give to the whole of this picturesque country a singular appearance. The timber is small yellow-pine. There is but little grass. The road has been very crooked, to-day—following the winding of the ridges; but it is, certainly, the best natural road in the world. Crossed La Prele, said to be the largest tributary of the Platte above Laramie's Fork. Passed the dry bed of a creek. Encamped, at 6, on a hill—grass so scarce the mules did not have enough to eat—plenty of good water. Distance 21 miles.

Saturday, 16th.—Some appearance of rain— Moved off at 5. Roads broken and irregular.— Crossed Fouche Bois—too small to be called a river. Four miles from that, we came to the Platte, after having been away from it for eighty miles. Five miles further, we came to a fine fish-stream called Deer creek. The lack of an abundance of grass prevented us encamping there over Sunday. The wood and water were abundant, and some had stopped and commenced washing. We came on, however, some five miles from the creek to the spot we occupy.

Sunday, 17th.—The sun rose in smiles. Nothing has occurred to distinguish this day particularly from the Sundays which have preceded it, save a little excitement, in camp, in consequence of three buffaloes descending the hills and threatening to take our fortress by storm; they, however, turned their course a little. Game is very plenty. This afternoon closes rain-like.

I have written this under the shade of a tree on the river-bank, surrounded by clusters of roses, while the birds are discoursing melody among the adjacent hills.

Monday, June 18th.—The sun rose clear. We started at the usual time. All well. Our mules are lively and look well. We traveled up the river a few miles from our encampment. In descending a bad hill, we broke the 'hounds' of a wagon; but the united wisdom of the camp soon repaired it. The road is crowded with teams, all anxious to make the ferry so as to have their turn; but the ferry not being able to accommodate them in time, they have had recourse to rafting. We spent the noon near the lower ferry. The number of those waiting to cross is increasing very fast. It is five miles from this to the Mormon ferry— We found over a hundred teams before us. The ferry-boat consists of two rough canoes, lashed together, and a few rough pieces of timber laid across them for the wagons to run on. They take but one wagon at a time. They swim all the horses and cattle. Several men and horses were drowned in attempting to swim over, as the current is very swift. They are able to take over from fifty to sixty wagons per day, at the charge of \$3 per wagon. Six hands have charge of the ferry.— They have also a temporary black-smith shop, and charge \$4 for shoeing a horse, \$8 for an ox, and other work in that proportion. They have ferried over, in the three weeks preceding our arrival, seven hundred wagons; and, it is supposed, as many have crossed at other points—making the number, in advance some fourteen or fifteen hundred wagons; and, we suppose, we are in the first third of the emigration. Any one has the right to keep a ferry, or raft, and charge what he pleases. We encamped near the ferry at 5 p. m.— Distance, to-day, 16 miles.

Tuesday, 19th.—Cloudy morning. There being no grass in the vicinity, we had to take our mules some four miles, to the hills, to graze. Doran killed a mountain-goat—a very remarkable animal, with horns like our sheep, only a great deal larger. It is very strong, muscular and active. The flesh tastes like mutton. This day has been taken up pretty much in washing and cooking— Expect to cross the river, to-morrow. Our men are all well.

Wednesday, 20th.—Clear. Our wagons were moved up to the ferry, this morning, and our mules taken out to graze; we remained with them until 1 p. m., and then brought them in and swam them over without any accident. Our wagons were all got over safe, by 3 p. m.; when the government troops came up and took possession of the ferry, cutting off two wagons that had been in our company from St. Jo. This act, on the part of the commanding officer, was looked upon with indignation, and would have given rise to a conflict if our better judgment had not prevailed. Dividing a company by an officer of the government sent out to protect the emigrants, is an act too mean and contemptible for the meanest ox-driver on the plains to be

guilty of. The Mormons, knowing how we had been treated by this government dignitary, determined to bring the two wagons over after night, and did so. By their kindness, we were re-united, about 10 o'clock at night. Preferring not to be in the neighborhood of the officers whose duty it was to protect us, we encamped, at 6 p. m., 3 miles from the ferry.

Thursday, 21st.—Very fine morning. Started early. At 9 a. m. we bade farewell to the Platte. We all felt glad upon leaving it, though we had derived much pleasure from the contemplation of its wild and romantic scenery. It is a remarkable stream, carrying, in its course to the Father of Waters, the great volume of water from the vast expanse of plain, and the melting of the snows of the Rocky Mountains, yet it is a perfect nullity as to all the purposes of navigation. We ascended the bluff, passed several lakes of bad, poisonous water, and, at 3 p. m., came to a mineral spring and a filthy looking pond near by. We drank cautiously of the spring, though men and mules were very thirsty. The waters of this whole region are so strongly impregnated with salt, alkali and sulphur that most of it is undrinkable. The cattle seem to suffer most from its effects. The road is sandy and pulls very heavy. Encamped, at 5 p. m., between ranges of high hills, and opposite, on the left, to what is called the Buttes, composed of red sand stone; they look very pretty — Distance 21 miles.

Friday, 22d.—This morning is beautiful and bright. The mornings now are cool, but the days very warm. There has been but little rain here, and it is surprising how the vegetation has reached the maturity it has. Grass is scarce only in spots. Wild sage and a plant they call greasewood, dispute with each other the occupancy of the soil. They both burn freely, green or dry.— Water is scarce. Our course, this morning, lay between two ledges of rough, elevated piles of dirty looking rock; and, when we least expected it, we came to a spring of cold water, but not enough for our mules. Two and a half miles from that, we came to the celebrated Willow Spring—a feeble spring, but of good water, free from impurities. You can imagine how this beverage, given by a bountiful Providence to the weary traveler, was relished by us. We then ascended a long hill, from which we had a fine view of the surrounding country. At 4 p. m., we came to a pretty running brook, glittering like a serpent in the grass. At 5, we come to a creek of swift, pure water. Encamped 2 miles beyond it, at 7.— Gnats and mosquitoes very troublesome. Took our mules to the creek bottom to graze; and the guard took a tent down so as to watch them—Distance 24 miles.

Saturday, 23d.— Fine morning. The atmosphere of this mountain region is of the most invigorating kind. All of us are in the enjoyment of excellent health. I have increased some eight or ten pounds. All the company have increased in weight. There are few instances of fifty men being associated together, and taking their chances of camp life, who have enjoyed such perfect health. The road is very sandy, this morning, which makes it hard work for men and mules. About 9, we arrived at Independence Rock on the Sweet Water—a tributary of the Platte. It is thirty yards wide, and good but not cold. Independence Rock is a conspicuous land-mark. It derived its name from some of the first emigrants having celebrated the 4th of July upon it. It is a pile of granite, and resembles a ship turned bottom up. It is about one hundred and twenty feet high, and near three quarters of a mile around the base. Upon the summit, I found written thousands of names; ranging in date from the first to the last party of emigrants. We crossed the Sweet Water, about two miles from the rock, at a ford twenty yards wide. Here we found the carcasses of four oxen which had died from having drank poisonous water. Five miles from the rock is the Devil's Gate—a mountain gorge, between whose perpendicular walls of granite, four hundred feet high, the river, circumscribed in width to a few yards, dashes and foams over the rocks; having a fall of fifteen feet in three hundred yards. After traveling four miles, we encamped on the river-bank surrounded by the best grass and near one of the best springs we have found in this territory; the water is cold as ice. There is an abundance of wood on the bluff half a mile off. Distance, to-day, only 16 miles.



Independence Rock¹⁶⁴

Sunday, 24th.—Morning bright and cheerful, promising a warm day. Our mules, in sight under the mountain, having gratified their appetite, are resting to the left. On the summit of a lofty peak, to the east, the snow is glistening in the brilliant sunshine. The Devil's Gate is full in view, while, to the west, the still higher points of the Rocky Mountains are inviting us onward — Surrounded by such scenery, and in the enjoyment of the bounties of nature in this wild region, we are thankful that no accident or misfortune has happened us since we started from home. These mountains deserve their name of Rocky. The primitive rock, piled in grand profusion, with a few straggling, stunted pines and cedars struggling for a hold, cause them to present a rugged and singular aspect. The hills and mountains we are accustomed to see, are pigmies compared to them. We are six thousand feet above Springfield and are yet to ascend four thousand more before we get to the Valley of the Sacramento. Next Sabbath, we expect to be on the Pacific side of the South Pass. There is nothing to mar our expectations of procuring the full reward of our toil. There will, however, be a great deal of suffering, in many companies, before they reach their destination. There are many families among the emigrants—I pity them. There is a disposition to press on with the current—each one trying to get ahead of others, frequently urging the teams beyond their strength, all traveling farther, each day, than any emigration before them. Many press on regardless of the Sabbath, fearful, if they stop, that others will pass them; but we expect to be able to overtake them, by encamping over Sunday. The season has been favorable to emigrants; cool and rainy, affording abundance of water for the oxen.

Monday, 25th.—The morning clear. All reported well. Started at the usual time, and followed up the river. The road is of deep sand, which causes the wagons to run heavy. The scenery, along our route to-day, is very imposing. The Wind River Mountains, on our right, lift their hoary summits to the clouds, with a chain of granite hills between them and us. Several notches in the hills gave us fine views to the north. The snow lay in the valleys and hollows, on our left; which indicates that we are at a very great elevation. The boys engaged in snow-balling, this morning. The nights now are quite cold, and the days hot. The health of many emigrants has been injured by the water, the rarity of the atmosphere and the constant fatigue they undergo; but the general health is good. Though some of us have been affected, to some extent, by

¹⁶⁴ Independence Rock is a large granite rock, approximately 130 feet high, 1,900 feet long, and 850 feet wide, which is in southwestern Natrona County, Wyoming. During the middle of the 19th century, it formed a prominent and well-known landmark on the Oregon, Mormon, and California emigrant trails. Many of these emigrants carved their names on it, and it was described by early missionary and explorer Father Pierre-Jean De Smet in 1840 as the Register of the Desert. The rock is a large rounded monolith of Archean granite typical of the surrounding region and is an isolated peak at the southeast end of the Granite Mountains. It is located in the high plateau region of central Wyoming, north of the Sentinel Rocks ridge and adjacent to the Sweetwater River. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_Rock_\(Wyoming\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_Rock_(Wyoming))

some of these causes, we are getting along very well. The animals seem to be more affected than the men. We passed five dead oxen and one mule, to-day. Encamped on the Sweet Water, at 5 p. m —but little grass. Distance 25 miles.



Devil's Gate, Wyoming¹⁶⁵

Tuesday, 26th.—The morning pleasant. We started at sun-rise. From some high ridges, we had magnificent views of the snow-capped mountains. We left the river, and traveled ten miles on a very sandy road, when we came to the river again. We took the mules two miles up the river to graze at noon. Saw the carcasses, to-day, of six oxen and one mule. Here we took in water, as it is sixteen miles to the next watering place. Encamped, at 5 p. m., ten miles from the river. Distance 20 miles.

Wednesday, 27th.—Very pleasant morning. Had a fine rain last evening, which laid the dust and made it more pleasant traveling. A full view of splendid mountain scenery. After going six miles we came to the river where we spent the noon. Then left the river and ascended a long, high hill; traveled over a very barren and rocky piece of road, where there scarcely seemed to be any life in anything around. We descended from this scene of desolation among hollows, the hills surrounding us like walls. We stopped, for the night, near a hollow where there was ice three feet thick, the constant melting of which made a rivulet which afforded us good water. There was plenty of fine grass and the wild sage answered as fuel. We saw nine dead oxen to-day. Distance 23 miles.

Thursday, 28th.—Morning pleasant. Started at 5 a. m. Ascended a very gently sloping ridge, with beautiful little groves of willow, on the left, that seemed to receive their nourishment from a spring. Crossed a small creek and a short distance beyond came to a large one, and, beyond that, a few miles, came to the river, where the sparkling volume of water and gently sloping hills, on all sides, made a beautiful landscape. Here we left the Sweet Water for the last time. We were all sorry to part with it. We had often been benefitted by its refreshing waters, which had endeared the mountain stream to us. We had traveled upon its banks for more than a hundred miles— had followed it to its source in the mountains of snow. The snow is now lying in the hollows around us, notwithstanding the days are very warm. We now ascended an easily rising slope, which brought us to the far-famed South Pass— 7470 feet above the level of the sea. We passed the summit about a mile before we were aware that we had arrived at the dividing point. There is nothing to distinguish the spot. The ascent and descent is so slight that few would think they had attained that lofty elevation which divides the waters of the

¹⁶⁵ Devil's Gate or Devils Gate is a natural rock formation, a gorge on the Sweetwater River in Wyoming, 5 miles southwest of Independence Rock. Although the actual route of travel did not pass through the narrow cleft, the site was a major landmark on the Oregon and Mormon trails.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil%27s_Gate_\(Wyoming\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil%27s_Gate_(Wyoming))

Atlantic and the Pacific. Immediately after passing this point, we entered the Oregon Territory, and, traveling two miles, arrived at the Pacific Spring, the water of which is very cold. We encamped near it, with many others who had arrived before. The grass is cropped very short. Stopped at 6 p. m., and took our mules to graze on the hills near by. Distance 26 miles.

Friday, 29th.—Morning cold—thermometer, at sun-rise, standing at 52 deg. We have had other mornings colder. Started at the usual time; the road leading over an undulating country, resembling our northern prairies more than the rugged wildness of the Rocky Mountains. We found the distance between streams of water, along here, rather far for the comfort of our animals. Crossed the Dry Sandy; it had but little water in the bed of the stream; we did not give any of it to our animals, fearing that it might not be good. The water, in all this neighborhood, is strongly impregnated with alkali; and many who have lost their oxen attribute it to the poisonous quality of the water they have drank. Notices are placed on boards, all along the road, cautioning the emigrant against the use of the water in the lakes and ponds. We next came to Little Sandy—a swift-running stream, about forty feet wide and almost too deep to ford. Passed twenty dead oxen. The valley we are now in stretches far off to the south, and presents a delightful appearance. Passed, today, the forks of the road where the Mormon trail leaves for Salt Lake, by the way of Fort Bridger. Many have taken this route, but the majority have taken the right hand road. Encamped, at 6 p. m., three miles from Big Sandy. Distance 20 miles.

Saturday, 30th.—Clear, fine morning. Started early and reached the Big Sandy at 8. It is thirty yards wide—swift and deep. Here we held a meeting of the companies to decide whether we should go across the cut-off, which extends from this point to a distance of forty miles without water, or lay over until after 12 o'clock on Sunday night, and then starting make the drive in one day. It was decided we should lay over. This is Sublette's Cut-off. Encamped three miles above the ford, where we found good grass. There are many resting here to prepare their animals for the hard drive. Came only 6 miles, to-day.

**53. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From Camp
on the Sweetwater Near Devil's Gate, now Wyoming
June 24, 1849¹⁶⁶**

Camp on the Sweetwater near Devil's Gate
June 24th, 1849

My Dear Sweet Wife:

Another week has been added to the record of time and another week has been taken from the period of our separation and time of our happy reunion has approached that much the nearer. Oh sweet wife how much I long for that period which I shall always look upon as one of the grandest days of my life and which I now look forward to with more pleasure than I do to the possession of the gold for which we are enduring this hard divorcement. Well well deary there is a good time coming and really it comes on with rapid strides, for in a few days I will have been away from home three months, 1/8 of the time for which I set out to be gone. Cheer up, for when you receive this more than 1/4 of the time will have passed and you may begin to count my return time by months.

Oh joyful time. "Roll on sweet moments roll on" and let the wanderers come home. My dear love I suppose I shall probably not have an opportunity of sending these letters to you until I reach the Eldorado and I shall continue them more in the form of a journal than I have heretofore done. Though I shall keep them in readiness for transmission at any opportunity which may occur knowing how much it would gratify you to hear from me. Would to heaven

¹⁶⁶ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

I could hear from you I am sometimes filled with the most gloomy foreboding as to the extent to which the cholera has raged in the states then though I am I believe far beyond its reach while I am breathing this pure mountain air, do I blame myself for deserting my dear beloved family to its ravages oh that I were with them to throw my arms around them to endeavor at the least to avert the pestilence but God is more powerful than am I.

Monday, June 18th We left our camp on the "Platte" at 6 am. and traveled over rather a broken country up the valley of the river. Stopt for our usual noon halt. There has been considerable timber on the river today consisting of Cottonwood and Willow. We reached the ferry of the Platte at 3 PM. Found a crowd ahead of us camped close to the river and took our mules 3 miles from camp to graze. Distance traveled today 16 miles.

19th Today has been passed in camp waiting our turn to cross the river. The boat on which we cross is composed of three dugout canoes about 20 feet long bound together by cross ties and for the privilege of crossing in which and doing the work ourselves we are taxed three dollars per wagon. The ferry is kept by Mormons. They have a blacksmith shop and charge 8 dollars shoeing an ox. Coran brought a mountain sheep in camp this evening which proves to be the finest meat which we have yet had.

20th Today we commenced crossing at 1p.m. We were delayed some ox trains who were much troubled in getting their oxen to swim. Just as we were about half done the government train came up under the command of Major Simondson and violently thrust us aside leaving part of our train on one side of the river and part on the other. This officer who was sent out to protect and assist the emigrants instead of doing so has been guilty of a most mean and contemptible action coming up and usurping the rights of others leaving women and children to wait till he had passed. Not only that but he attempted to smuggle a train of wagons from Pittsburgh in ahead of them also because I suppose they had a supply of liquor on hand. Heaven save us from our friends if you call such men friends. We got our other wagons over after dark and above 2 miles up the river to camp all pretty well tired down.

21st We started at 6 A.M. across to the sweet water distant 60 miles over a sandy desert covered with the wild sage as far as the eye can see giving it a most desolate appearance. We did not find water for 16 miles except Alkali springs unfit for man or beast. After we rose upon the bluff I had splendid view of the Wind River Mountains covered with snow looking like vast banks of white clouds distant about 175 miles. Weather very warm and roads very dusty grass poor. Camped at 6 P.M. opposite the Red Buttes and near a mountain which was once evidently a volcano out upon which there is now growing large pine trees. 26 miles.

22nd This morning we got off at 5 ½ o'clock our route laying through the same desolate country. The Rocky Mountains is in full sight all around us. Good water is very scarce on this part of our route. We are beginning to find dead cattle very frequent. Distance 26 miles

23rd Started at 5 ½ a.m. from our camp where we were very much troubled with mosquitoes which seem to be of the largest size and of the ravenous ferocity. We gathered saleratus today from a lake??? A thousand barrels or upwards of the most excellent quality. We reached the Sweetwater at 9 a.m. and nooned half a mile west of Independence Rock, a vast mass of granite rising out of perfectly level plain. It covers about 160 acres about 800 yards long 100 wide and 40 high. There is a vast number of names of former travellers painted on its sides. We camped near Devil's Gate which is 5 miles above the rock. This is a fissure or gap in the Rattle Snake Mountains through which the river finds its way. It is about 30 feet wide and 300 long the walls are 400 feet high composed of granite and trap rock. We encamped at 3 o'clock on fine grass. The valley of the sweet water I think could be cultivated to advantage by irrigation of which it is entirely susceptible. Distance 20 miles.

Dear wife I must pause for the present as I have promised to go with some of the boys to the top of a mountain half a mile distant. Farewell my soul's brightest treasure. Next week I will give you an account of my explorations from which I expect to derive a great deal of satisfaction.

**54. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From Camp on Big Sandy
July 1, 1849**

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Camp on Big Sandy
July 1, 1849

Dear Beloved Wife:

I again avail myself of the opportunity of addressing you and of again assuring you of my undying love which increasing with the distance which I expect has become the all absorbing sentiment of my being. I am now my dear wife pretty well satisfied that I shall not have an opportunity of writing to you or rather of sending my letters until I reach California. Such being the case I shall unless I meet with an opportunity of sending defer the transcribing of my notes until some future day as I expect after I do as to be in California to find enough to talk about that will be of more recent occurrence. But to give you a description of our excursion to the mountains on last Sunday Evening we left camp at 2 p.m. and crossed the sweet water and proceeded due north to a mountain composed of granite rock with scarcely a particle of soil on it except where some very slight sediment had settled in the crevices of the rocks. When we approached the base of the vast mass of stone our hearts almost failed us but we continued to go on. Our ascent at first was easy enough but before we had climbed 100 ft. we reached a point where it took three men to assist one to get up. One time we thought we were fairly checked where we could not get either up or down by perserverance however we finally extricated ourselves from our dilemma after which our progress was more easy. After an hour of hard toil we reached the point for which we started and which we supposed to be the highest point in the vicinity but when arrived at it we found another peak just beyond much higher. After resting a while we concluded to go on. Our labor now became severe and dangerous. I really think we were foolish in risking our necks but I shan't do so any more, in two hours from the time we left the bottom we reached the highest peak of the Rattle Snake Mountains from which we had a most magnificent view of the Wind River Mountains distant one hundred miles. We lay on my ...[bed] and it went sailing down hundreds of feet on the opposite side of the mountain from which we had ascended. In going down to recover it we found a much more easy path to descend. At the bottom we found a noble spring of cold water where we rested awhile and reached camp by sun down in time for supper. I think my curiosity is entirely satisfied in climbing mountains. It is rather too much work.

Our road the first part of this week continued up the Sweet Water frequently crossing and recrossing the river to avoid hills and sand banks. On Wednesday about three o'clock we passed through the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains by the term "pass" you must not imagine some defile in the mountains just wide enough to admit a wagon to pass, surrounded by high rocks, and difficult of ascent, but on the contrary our ascent from the hill at the head of the sweet water has been so gradual that you could scarcely tell that we were going up at all. The "pass" is twenty miles wide a beautiful undulating plain almost as level as the prairie south of town it is so level that without instruments it would be impossible to determine the exact point of culminating.

I forgot to mention that we found on Tuesday evening the first bank of snow close to the road. It was really somewhat strange to see a bank of snow 5 feet in thickness on the ground. It was in a ravine. The thermometer at noon usually reaches 70 and upwards I cannot account for

¹⁶⁷ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

the snow remaining so long unless the air being so dry is the cause of it. Ice forms in our buckets every night.

On Saturday morning at 7 we reached Sublette's Cutoff on the Big Sandy upon consulting about the propriety of immediately undertaking the long drive we had about concluded to start at 3 P.M. when the doctor decided it would be very dangerous to go on with B. F. Taylor and ??? who were confined to their beds with a severe attack of bloody flux. We therefore had to remain in camp until Monday morning at 1 A.M. when our sick being better we started on the "Cut off". We had no difficulty in crossing it having more water along than we used the weather being cool having had a show of rain yesterday the first for a month and the road first rate until we go within ten miles of Green River when it become hilly. We reached Green River at 10 P.M. all very tired and wanting rest. It was 12 before we got supper. I think I earned fifty dollars today whether I ever get it or not. We found a great many wagons ahead of us to cross the river in a miserable little boat just large enough to hold one wagon and the current running with the most fearful rapidity. We lay at the ferry in dust shoe deep until Friday morning at three A.M. when we commenced crossing and got all over safe by 8. We have had to keep our mules about three miles from the river to get grass. On last Friday one man killed another for a very slight provocation on the opposite side of the river. The murderer fled. On the Fourth of July I went down to the camp of the government troops situated ½ mile below the ferry and saw the ??? Col. Simondson reviewing some fifteen or twenty men, the rest of the battalion having deserted. He was so drunk on alcohol for which he gave twenty five dollars a gallon that he could scarcely stand. He is truly one of Uncle Sam's hard bargains but I will say more about him in the future. Farewell my dear sweet little wife.

Alas I wish I was with you.

B. A. Watson

55. Benjamin R. Biddle Journal July 1-August 10, 1849

Sunday, July 1st.—The morning fine. This has been a refreshing day. Had preaching, at 9 a. m., by a Baptist minister, and at 4 p. m. by the Rev. Mr. Blakely, a gentleman who has traveled with us several hundred miles, and preached several times at our camp. A fine shower came down at 3 p. m. The crack of the ox-driver's whip is heard, at this hour, starting out on the long drive, taking the cool of the evening and night to make it in; calculating to arrive at the Green River by 10 a. m. We had another rain near night-fall. We have filled our casks with water to do us through the long drive.

Monday, 2d.—The night has been clear and bright, favoring our starting out early. The moon shone all night, so that we had everything ready for hitching up at 20 min. before 1 o'clock. Started quietly and in good order. At 6 a. m., we stopped to breakfast and gave grass to our mules. The road so far has been quite good. The landscape is undulating and presents a very barren appearance. We are traveling between ranges of mountains whose tops are covered with snow. We next came to several very steep hills; but our ascent or descent was attended with no accident. Halted again, at 12 m., to let our mules graze. Stopped two hours, and started afresh to complete the remainder of our journey to the river. Just before arriving at the river, we had a very steep hill to descend; we got down safe although it was in the dark. Encamped at 10 p. m. two miles this side of the river. But little grass. Distance 38 miles.

Green River

When they came to the ford of the Green River they found a man, by the name of Walsh, who was at work building a ferry. He agreed to carry them across if they would help him, for the rest of the day, while he finished his ferry. At times the river could be easily forded; but there had been an unusual amount of rain that Spring, which (while it made the feed more plentiful)

had caused the rivers to be swollen and almost impossible to ford. Mr. Walsh said that he was going to charge five dollars for each wagon he ferried across; and, as it would take almost an hour to cross the river and return for another load, he hoped to make at least \$75.00 a day, while the river was high; and then later he would sell his ferry to the first person who would make him a good offer. He was sure that he could make as much, or more, than he could at gold mining;—and hoped to reach California by October or November. As they helped with the ferry, and then rested in the shade on the banks of the Green River, they wished that they might risk their lives in boats on its clear waters instead of plodding slowly behind ox teams, through storm and dust and desert thirst. The rest at Green River refreshed their teams, and they were eager to press on.

Tuesday, 3d.—Clear but cold. Ice formed in the vessels of water. Started at the usual hour, and went down to the lower ferry, kept by several emigrants who bought the boat of some Mormons for five hundred dollars, and are now making two hundred dollars a day by the use of it. This Green River is three hundred feet wide, with a very rapid current, and flows directly from the mountains that surround us. To give you some idea how rapid it is, our mules when started in to swim had to go almost downstream, and came out on the opposite bank, three hundred yards below. Found several hundred wagons were waiting to cross, notwithstanding there are two other ferries—some charging ten dollars per wagon; we pay four at this one. We found no grass along the river, and were obliged to take our mules four miles out to the hills to graze. The government troops have come up with us again—a thing we did not desire, owing to the manner in which we had been treated by them on the Platte. Some of the men have been sick from diarrhoea, but are now better. I had a slight attack myself, but am convalescing. The distance from our last night's encampment is six miles. Encamped on the bank of the river, near the ferry, amid more dust and dirt than I ever saw before in my life. It gets into everything, and is so light that a breath will put it in motion. The sun beaming down upon us at the rate of 80 and 90 deg, accompanied by nights that freeze three quarters of an inch in still water, is rather a strange sort of climate. — Our elevation is between six and seven thousand feet above Springfield.

Wednesday, 4th. —Over-coats were in great demand this morning. The sick are all reported to be better; and, although there have been severe cases of diarrhoea, we entertain no fears of their not getting well. The atmosphere is much rarified from the elevation—the sun pouring such heat that it parches everything in a little while; a wet shirt will dry in 10 min. It also affects our breathing. It is impossible for a man to exert himself very much, particularly to run fast, without getting out of breath.

This is the glorious Fourth of July. We intended to have had a fine time of it, but the heat and dust are so annoying, and the bustle is so great that we do not enjoy it so well as we would otherwise. However, we had a good dinner. Among the dainties on the table was what the cooks called a black dog,—which needs an explanation — It consisted of dough rolled out thin and some stewed apples spread over it and then rolled up. Another was rolled out longer than the other and some dried cherries spread over it and rolled over the first roll; and so on. This was boiled and served up with sauce. All partook freely.

Many banners were floating in the breeze. The evening concluded with one of the greatest farces I ever witnessed. A murderer was arrested by the troop, and the emigrants were called upon to try him upon evidence. I was selected as one of the jury. We repaired to the Major's quarters and found him ready to receive us, but as drunk as Bacchus, together with his suite of officers.—

A man was appointed by the emigrants to preside; the troops being present to preserve order.—The prisoner chose, as counsel, a young Virginia lawyer; was brought in and the case opened by his denying that the emigrants had the right to try him. The Major and officers and men, being drunk, had a good deal to say. The Major insulted the lawyer, the officers insulted the Major. Each party swearing and calling the others hard names, and each threatening the other,

with an arrest. One little moustached fellow struck the Major; the emigrants looking on and laughing. The whole thing broke up in a row. The prisoner escaped and thus ended the whole affair. Thus it is that these officers and men protect the interests of the emigrant by getting drunk.

There is now a great stir on the river made by swimming over the cattle.

Another murder was committed yesterday. The troops went out in pursuit, but did not succeed in taking the murderer. We had the pleasure of meeting our Springfield friends, Eli Cook, Joseph Condell, Cook Matheny and others, all well and hardy, but dirty as any of us. They brought me a letter dated the 7th of April. We are told that Mr. and Mrs. Maltby will arrive here this evening. My health is better today. The sun shines very hot.

Thursday, 5th.—The morning cool. The dust becoming almost intolerable. The sick are all safe we think; I am a great deal better. We expect, by a tight squeeze, to get our wagons over the river tonight. The moon shines and we prefer it to the hot sun. We may have to lay here tomorrow. The mules are doing very well—so we shall be able to go ahead.

Friday, 6th.—Rose at 2 in the morning for the purpose of trying to cross over before the government troops moved up from their encampment to give us trouble, as they did on the occasion of our crossing the Platte. But this time they were more polite and did not interfere with us. The moon shone brightly and gave us much aid in our operations. We assisted others and they, in turn assisted us—for, be it remembered, that we had to do all the work and pay four dollars beside for the use of the ferry to pass over every wagon. We were all over by 8 o'clock. The mules swam like so many rats. We left the river at ten o'clock, and went over some rough road, 17 miles, to a creek, where was a mound. The creek was very rapid and we were obliged to cross it at two different points. After passing over some hills, we encamped, at sun-down, near a branch. The wild sage here was the largest I had ever seen, measuring, in height, from six to eight feet, and in diameter six to nine inches, near the root. The hills around look barren and dreary beyond description. Distance 18 miles.

Saturday, 7th.—Clear and dry. Started early. Passed several little streams which had their rise in the snow-banks in sight. Crossed a very high ridge, the gorges of which are filled with snow. Fir and aspen grow there, nurtured by the melting of snows. Here we crossed the dividing ridge between Green and Bear rivers. We had a fine view of the white-capped mountains near the Salt Lake. Snow is seen around us, dotting the hill-sides in a very pretty and fantastic manner. Among them, gush fine, cold springs of pure water. We here took a near cut which saved us several miles and enabled us to encamp on the bank of Ham's Fork of Green River—a beautiful, rapid stream, lined with excellent grass. Road quite rough all day. Traveled 20 miles. Distance from St. Joseph 968 miles. The distance has been calculated by ourselves, without any reference to books, or the estimated distances of traders.

Sunday, 8th.—This morning dawned brightly as that of an Italian sky. Our favorable location as to grass, sage and water promises a pleasant Sabbath. Those who were on our sick list are all nearly well. There are companies encamped near us who have preachers of the Gospel with them, pledged to preach for them every Sunday, yet they will have a sermon on Saturday night, so as to give them an opportunity to start early on Sunday morning. We are invariably left alone on the Sabbath. How it will be, as we advance, is past conjecture; we are resolved, however, to continue our observance of the rest-day.

Monday, 9th.—Started early. Men all well.—A heavy dew this morning; the first we have had for a considerable time. We ascended a long and steep hill—the road firm and good—grass very fine. The hollows of the mountains still contain snow; which nourishes handsome little groves of aspen and willow that were musical with the warbling of birds. Here we pass many springs, cold as ice and of crystal purity. On our left, were the far-off snow-covered ridges of Black's Fork of Green River. Today's drive carried us over the steepest hills we have met with

in our journey. We drove eleven hours—which is more than usual. The grass has been fine all day. Encamped at a fine spring. The dust is almost beyond endurance—blowing and covering us so we look like an army of millers. Distance 20 miles.

Tuesday, 10th.—Got off at the regular hour.—We are now traveling down the bottom of Bear River, and have crossed what is called Thomas Fork—very rapid and rocky. We have found a few lodges of friendly Snake Indians, from whom we purchased some moccasins, at a dollar a pair. They are quite handsome and take great pains to adorn their persons. They are small in stature with short square features. In the start, the road was rough for half a mile, and then smooth until noon. We were obliged to make a great bend in our course so as to avoid marshy ground and sloughs in the vicinity. The hills are high and of red appearance. Wild rye and blue grass are found here. In one of the hollows, we found a grave, said to be that of a squaw who was thrown from her horse and killed, near this spot. There was a cross at the head of the grave. Encamped at 6 p. m. Distance 24 miles.

Wednesday, 11th.—Had an early start. Ascended a very steep hill, a mile long. Very rough and hilly for four or five miles, and descended the steepest hill we have had yet, more than a mile long. All got down safe, and then looked back and wondered how. Next came to the river at a trading point, kept by a man they called Peg-leg Smith. Fine river bottom land—covered with luxuriant grass. In the afternoon, we crossed a number of streamlets, bearing their tribute from the masses of snow to Bear River. Encamped, to the right of the road, on a branch. Fine grass—willows for fuel. Distance of today's travel, 24 miles.

Soda and Mineral Springs

One Sunday evening, after they had had their song service, and just before the evening prayer, B. R. [Biddle] addressed the gathering, and said:

We have come from the Mississippi River, and are now beyond the summit of the Rocky Mountains—over the longest part of our journey; but the worst of it is ahead of us. There will be little or no rain from now on: and much of our trail lies over the Great American Desert: but we must remember that others have passed this way before us, and they have left a trail that we can follow if we have good judgment, perseverance and faith—and trust in the Lord. There are two things that we must keep uppermost in our minds,—1st, each and all of us can, if we try, do anything that others have done before us; and 2nd, the Lord does not do much for those who do not try to help themselves—but He does give added strength to those who do their utmost. After Brother Walker has led us in prayer, we will go, at once, to bed; so that we can all be ready to start tomorrow morning at sun up.

They made a stop at Fort Bridges—then went on through the Bear Valley to Soda Springs, and to Fort Hall on the Snake River. Here friendly Indians gave them fresh and smoked salmon, the first that any of them had ever tasted. After following the Snake River some distance they turned southwest, and over a steep mountain trail to Humbolt Wells. They then followed the Humbolt River to Tule Swamp (near the present site of Winnemucca). From there they went almost due west to Goose Lake and the head waters of Rio Sacramento (now called Pitt River). The trail here ran through lands claimed by hostile Indians, and they had to be careful to follow instructions in their Guide Book, which told them never to camp in the timber, if it could be avoided—never to let any Indians come among them—never to let Indians have any ammunition—never to neglect to keep the camp well guarded—never to fire a gun within five day's travel south of the Siskiyou Mountains (this was the area between the Siskiyou Mountains and Mount Shasta)—to keep as close together as possible, while traveling through the brush;—never to scatter to hunt game, or make any other division of their party— and to always keep their guns in best fighting condition. They went down the Lassen Trail to Lassen's ranch on Deer Creek; where they learned more about the "California Diggins," which consisted of the

Northern and Southern Mines. The Northern Mines, most of which had been discovered by Major Pearson Reading and his Indians, were considered the best.¹⁶⁸

Thursday, 12th—Started early. Continued down the river bottom, crossing many ravines, which made our road very rough. The dust was almost suffocating. Nooned at as fine and as cold a spring, bubbling out of the side of a hill, as I have ever seen. This is in the vicinity of the celebrated Soda and Mineral Springs. We occupied our noon-time in visiting a few of them. We went about a mile, to our right, to two white-looking mounds, which, on our approach, we found to be formations from these springs. They rise to an elevation of thirty or forty feet above the plain. On their summits, I counted twelve of these warm, sparkling fountains, boiling up and flowing down the sides of the mounds. I tasted the water, and found it to be very like our soda without the addition of any flavor. It was too warm, however, to be pleasant. We returned to camp, and traveled down the river. After crossing a small stream, we came to a very pretty cedar grove, where we found many encamped, enjoying the luxury of the shade. Not far from this, we visited what is called the Beer Spring; the water of a similar quality with the others, but much more limpid and abundant. I used some sugar with this and found it very good. Most of the company drank of it and pronounced it excellent soda. This spring throws out nearly ten barrels per minute. It effervesces and throws off so much gas that it is dangerous for a person to hold his head near it for even a minute, as it produces giddiness. A little below this is the greatest wonder of all—another spring denominated the Steamboat Spring. I am without words to describe justly this wonder of nature. In boiling up it produces a noise which has given it the name it bears. Very little water runs over the sides of a mound that has been formed by its overflow, but is thrown up in a jet, two or three feet, and falls back into the basin. Handkerchiefs were thrown into it and washed clean in a few moments. This whole country is volcanic, and presents all the remarkable characteristics of such regions in other countries. The quality of these springs is derived from mineral deposits in the surrounding hills. Bear River flows immediately by them; and, a few miles beyond, turns its course southward, leaving the trail and flowing toward the Great Salt Lake.

— We have passed, this evening, many interesting vestiges of volcanic action. There were many chasms and huge openings in the earth, of frightful depth, lined with iron and cinder. This is the point, on the route to Oregon, where the United States intend establishing a military post. If invalids could get from the States to this point and back again in the fall, it would, no doubt, become a place of great resort. The climate, altitude and scenery all would combine to render a residence here beneficial to the afflicted—especially to the consumptive. I regretted to leave the fine grassy bottoms of Bear River, for I never before saw such pasture, and our books gave us no account of grass, on our after route, that was encouraging. Distance 28 miles.

Friday, 13th.—Left camp at 5 a. m. Fifteen minutes after starting, we came to a good cold spring, crossed several boggy places, and, at 11, came to a sluggish stream, narrow and deep. We saw from thirty to forty Indians of the Snake tribe. In the afternoon, we traveled up the stream and, at 3 p. m., crossed it. The crossing was bad and the road bad from that until we encamped. — Passed several groves of dead cedar. Encamped at 6 p. m., on the left side of the road, where there was good grass, fuel and water. We are in the midst of high hills—the spurs of the dividing ridge between the waters of the Salt Lake and those of the Columbia river. Distance, today, 23 miles.

Saturday, 14th.—This morning, all is well. We passed the dividing ridge and came to the head waters of the Panack River. The road quite rough, with some steep places and fine springs.—

Fort Laramie was reached on June 11th, and South Pass crossed on June 28th.

¹⁶⁸ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 92- 93.

We then descended into the valley of the Pont Neuf—a tributary of Lewis' Fork of the Columbia. Encamped on the bank of a stream. Have had a down hill road most of the day. The mosquitoes have tormented us very much, and, I am afraid, will interfere with our enjoyment of tomorrow. Distance, today, 20 miles. This place is 1107 miles from St. Joseph, and 1450 from Springfield.

Sunday, 15th.—Had a visit from a number of Indian families, this morning. Our men got a buffalo robe from them in exchange for a string of beads that cost seventy-five cents at home. We gave them something to eat, and they soon packed up and were on the move to some other point— They are very homely, and always hungry. When the craving of their appetite is temporarily satisfied, they leave, without further trouble. They are a roving people, and seldom remain long in one place, and never have any provision on hand. Their villages are off among the mountains, but how they manage to subsist is a mystery. Thermometer stood 94 deg. at noon, and, at 2 o'clock, at 100—the warmest day we have had. The mosquitoes were so bad, we had to build fires before the doors of our tents, towards the close of day. We retired, at night, with a perfect understanding that we desired nothing better than to leave this place in the undisturbed possession of the natives.

Fort Hall

Monday, 16th.—All hands up early. There were a few scattering clouds, which served to render the morning pleasant. The insects still keep nibbling, so we have to carry a brush, or tie up our faces to keep them off. We stopped, occasionally, and, setting fire to a sage bush, stood in the smoke; which was the only hint to leave the insects would take. Six mules from camp, crossed a branch of the Panack. Four miles further, we came to Fort Hall; passing, on our way, over low, boggy ground, in which we were nearly swamped. The Fort is on Lewis' Fork of the Columbia. I was somewhat disappointed in the location of this post. It is situated in a broad valley, having all the advantages of a trade from the waters of three rivers which flow near it—the Panack, a tributary of the Pont Neuf, and Lewis' Fork or Snake River, into which the Pont Neuf empties, a few miles below the Fort. Lewis' Fork runs immediately by the Fort, and is a bold, rapid river, containing nearly or quite as much water as the Illinois, but not navigable on account of the numerous rapids. It is, however, an important branch of the great river of Oregon. The Fort is built, as are all the forts along the line, of mud on sun-dried brick. There is no farm attached to any of the forts. There is a store belonging to this one, and a trade is kept up with the Indians for their furs. There are a few Indians encamped around the Fort; but they have little to sell. — It is seldom a horse can be bought from them, and for a good one, they ask from sixty to eighty and sometimes as high as a hundred and fifty dollars. Some of their horses are very fine. They manufacture fur moccasins and a raw-hide rope they call a *lariat*—which they throw with a great deal of skill. The proprietors of this Fort treated us kindly. A Mormon had rented a room in the Fort, where he kept a sort of tavern, in which some of our men procured a meal of bread, butter and milk, for which they paid three bits. It was said here that all the men have left Oregon and gone to the mines. Towards evening, we crossed the Panack river—a swift and pretty stream and three miles further crossed the Pont Neuf, which we found deep enough to run into our wagon-beds, and about one hundred yards in width. We ascended the bluff, and encamped nine miles from the Fort. Distance 19 miles.

Tuesday, 17th.—Atmosphere dry. Very dusty. Traveled down the river. Nooned at a spring near the junction of the three rivers. Passed the American Falls, on Lewis' River. The descent of the cataract, to a depth of thirty feet, is attended with a stunning noise, and presents a grand and impressive scene. From the boiling basin beneath, the spray ascends like a cloud. The road along here is very bad, and, in places, broken by precipices which we were obliged to descend by means of ropes. Encamped near a rapid. The men caught some fish. Here we saw, for the first time, a very fine yellow currant, and the cane-grass, which resembles the cane. Distance, today, 21 miles.

Wednesday, 18th.—Well, but rather tired. The journey has been a long one, and the weather is hot and the road dusty. The most of our men walk the greater part of the way—their feet get sore—and, now and then, they get to thinking of the distance they have yet to travel and grow somewhat despondent; but it soon wears off. Could we hear some encouraging news from the Gold Region, it would cure their lameness, and all would be right, once more. But we apprehend no difficulty in getting through—for, as our loads get lighter, our men can ride the more. We expect soon to stop, a few days, and, take a good rest. — We continue our way down the river, and find it rough, rocky and hilly. Have been obliged to use the ropes, occasionally, in going up and down some of the steepes. At noon, we crossed Fall creek. Here we discovered we had left a mule at last night's encampment; and I was selected to go back and bring him. I found him and caught up with the train before dusk. The train left Lewis' River, four miles beyond where we had nooned—ascended the bluff, and traveled five miles, to Raft River, and encamped near the forks of the Oregon road. Distance 18 miles.

Friday, 20th.—Pleasant morning. Passed up a gorge of the mountain, along the same stream, to its head spring. Road pretty good. We now begin to see signs of packing. Wagons are left along the road, without any respect to quality or cost—the best wagons only selling to those who desire to use them, for fifteen dollars apiece. Hundreds have been burnt and otherwise destroyed. Pack trains are passing us every day; but that has no influence upon us. We intend taking our wagons through, if we can. Crossed several marshy places; otherwise, the bottom is fine—with rugged and stupendous ranges of granite hills, on either side, towering up to the clouds, and assuming every possible form of the grand and wildly picturesque. In the midst of such scenery, and after passing over half a mile of very rocky road, that endangered our wagons, we encamped where there was an abundance of good grass and water. Here the rocks, jutting up in high peaks, are of a kind of marble, susceptible of a fine polish. Distance, today, 21 miles.

Saturday, 21st.—This morning, we enjoy the luxury of a cloudy sky and a few drops of rain. Were I at home, I would be sure, from appearance we were about to have a fine rain; but, here, it is doubtful. We continued our route between ranges of hills. I clambered to the summit of one, from which a beautiful and extensive prospect spread around. Six miles beyond that, we came to the intersection of the Salt Lake road, and met some wagons having come that way. We suppose it to be about fifty miles farther than by Fort Hall. We wish we had come that way.— The road is described as being better, and extending, forty miles, through a settlement where we might have obtained plenty of milk, butter and cheese. We have lived on dry provisions so long that we often think of our tables at home covered, at this season, with every kind of vegetables, cherries and early apples. We all need a change of diet. Ascended a ridge, along the bank of a rivulet. Very rough road, with some steep pitches, where we had to use our ropes again. Descended to a branch, one and a half miles from Goose creek. Encamped near a spring. Grass tolerably good. Fixed one of our wheels that had given way coming over the hills. Dr. McKenzie encamped near us. Distance 16 miles.

Sunday, 22d.—Pleasant morning; some clouds. We had a little conference meeting last evening— Mr. Blakeslee, Mr. J. B. Watson, Mr. Weber, myself, Mr. [Augustus] Eastman and Dr. McKenzie, (the latter gentlemen is from Ohio, and seems desirous of spending his Sabbaths with us,) for the purpose of having a religious conversation with Mr. [Richard] Hodge, who has applied to Mr. Blakeslee to baptize him. We all enjoyed the meeting, and became satisfied that Mr. Hodge is a hopeful convert to the truth. We had preaching at 11 A. M. on the subject of the new birth; after which the ordinance of baptism was administered to Mr. Hodge by immersion. It was a scene that drew tears from many eyes—an occurrence that seldom happens on these plains. It was a solemn appeal to the emigrant, showing that even here, away from the advantages of churches, the heart can be reached by religious truth. Mr. Hodge has endeared himself to us by this act, and we will stand by him, sustaining him as best we can; and what a thrill of joy will it send through the hearts of his family and friends? We have seen and know enough of the man to state that he is no hypocrite in any thing he resolves upon doing. We believe in his honor, his integrity, his purity; and we can assure his family of

his usefulness and gentlemanly deportment, by which he has secured for himself the kindness and respect of the company. The story should be told, and it has taken wings with the wind, informing the emigrant that even in the swift pursuit of gold, the mind can be influenced to think of another state of the heart— as gold will not save the soul. —Thus ends another Sabbath,—one that many of us will long remember.

Monday, 23d.—The morning bright and beautiful. Soon after starting, we came to Goose creek—a small tributary of Lewis' Fork of the Columbia. Its water is rather warm to be palatable—being supplied from warm springs. We passed twenty miles up this stream, along which we found several hot springs—some hot enough to scald a hand plunged in the water. The road was good. The scenery more of the romantic and pleasing, than the abrupt and grand. The bottom furnishing good grass, we followed up a branch, through a gorge of the hills. Encamped in this gorge, between precipitous hills. Distance 23 miles.

Cross From Oregon Into California

Tuesday, 24th.—Morning cool. Started early, and followed up the branch between high hills, covered with a kind of cinder—evidence of this whole region having been heated intensely. Passed over to another valley, and followed down it five miles to some cold springs impregnated with sulphur—passed round the point of a hill—crossed over a sand-ridge to another valley having good grass but no water, where we encamped—six miles from the springs at which we had filled our casks. During the afternoon, we passed lat. 42° north—the line dividing Oregon from California. We have traveled, in the Territory of Oregon, 414 miles—most of the way close to its southern line. Except on Bear River, and the neighborhood of Fort Hall, the country is not at all inviting to an Illinoisan, and passing over into California does not place you among olive groves and vineyards. Neither does it afford a genial atmosphere of Italian warmth. But the good is beyond this, as you will see by following me to the region of the dust. That will make the country everything desirable. Without this dust (which I hope may not prove as detrimental to our souls as this we now inhale is to our bodies,) the country, though it be an Eden, will seem a barren waste, and the adventurer will return from it sick with disappointment. Distance 25 miles.

Wednesday, 25th.—Cool morning. Cold nights and hot days seems to be the order of the weather in this region. Started at 7 a. m. Traveled down the valley. Water scarce and impregnated with salt and alkali—some pools being of strong sulphur, of course not very good to drink. The day is sultry and dusty. Passed several pools which, if they run at all, soon lose themselves in the bottom. They are perfectly clear and pure, and look inviting, but are not pleasant to the taste— some hot and some cold. Encamped, at an early hour, on the bank of a small stream of warm water, which invited Mr. Weber and myself to do up our washing. The water being of the right temperature, we got through in half of the usual time. Distance 16 miles.

Thursday, 26th.—Breakfasted before sun-rise. Soon after starting, we came to the source of the warm stream, where were a great number of boiling hot springs, smoking and throwing off clouds of vapor. We could not endure our hands in the water. It boiled and bubbled like a pot, which proved that the furnace which heated it could not be far beneath. Continued up the valley six miles. Then ascended a ridge and nooned; after which we descended a gentle declivity into another valley—passed several pools of water. Encamped. Water and grass very good. Distance, today, 20 miles.

Friday, 27th.—This morning we called to mind that we had been absent from home four months, and that still it would require another month to finish our journey, if good fortune continued with us. Last night, one of our best mules died, from the bite of a rattle-snake. This is our first bad luck. We passed up the valley—came to some pools of sulphur water, and others which contained quantities of alkali. Our animals drank freely, which made some, for awhile, quite sick.— Passed through a "kenyon." The ground around the springs, and in the bottom,

showed strong signs of salaratus [*baking soda*, *Ed.*]. Crossed a ridge that opened into a fine large valley, that had a pleasant look after traveling among the hills so long. This valley is irrigated by numerous streams which take their rise from springs in it. Encamped. Grass and water tolerably good. Distance 20 miles.

Saturday, 28th.—Started at the usual time. All fair. Three miles from camp, we came to what we supposed to be one of the sources of Mary's River. It was four or five yards wide where we came upon it, and increased in volume as we followed it down—receiving the tribute of many springs and branches. We stopped where there was abundance of good grass, as well as small willows, which answered admirably for cooking purposes. Being on what we called the river which here is eight or ten yards wide, we concluded to remain until Monday, so as to afford our men a chance to repair and tighten up our wagons. The water is rather too warm to drink, so we fill our casks with it and let it cool. Our men are all well at this time. Our mules have done their part so faithfully that we would like to give them a little more rest than usual; but, I think, by Monday, they will be recruited. We have but three or four mules that are not as good as when we started. Distance, today, only 12 miles.

We are now 1339 miles from St. Jo. and 1682 from Springfield.

Sunday, 29th.—Morning quite frosty. Ice three-fourths of an inch thick, in our vessels. Today has been rendered memorable by a feast of frogs. The men having, on Saturday afternoon, observed large numbers of this interesting quadruped hopping about in the vicinity of the camp, took it into their heads, to go a frogging. Accordingly, they turned out, caught a great many, tore off their hides, and, when served up, they were, unanimously, pronounced excellent—quite a delicacy in the desert. Pharaoh knew nothing about turning one of his plagues to so good an account.

Thus another week of toil is ended, and we enjoy the rest of the Sabbath. During the last week we have had but little cause to complain. Water has been abundant, which is, indeed, a luxury in this dusty country. On Sunday mornings, we perform our weekly round of shaving—which circumstance has gained for us some notoriety, as the greater part of the emigration permit their beards to grow, which makes it difficult to determine to which of the races they belong.

Monday, 30th.—Cool morning. Thermometer 26 deg. at sun-rise—noon 88 deg. There was some show of white frost, and ice was formed in our vessels. Made an early start. Men all well. Mules well rested. Our road led around the slope of a hill, along the river. Passed the confluence of Mary's with a stream, from the north, of equal size. Crossed a ridge. Encamped in the bottom on the river-bank. No. 1 Wagon, to which I belong, got some little out of repair, and prevented our going two or three miles further. Distance 22 miles.

Tuesday, 31st.—This morning was mild and pleasant. I rose with a bad head-ache which lasted all day, so that I was obliged to ride in the wagon. Passed the grave of a young man, from Finley, O., who is said to have died of consumption. Continued our course down the river.—Toward noon, we were delayed, a few hours, by the breaking of one of our wagons. Several of the men complain of costiveness [constipation]—the cold nights and hot days do not agree well with them. Passed some very hot springs. Encamped, at the foot of a ridge, near the river. Distance 15 miles.—Stopped early, as, we are told, it is now eighteen miles to the next water.

August 1849

Wednesday, August 1st.—Started as the first sun-rays gilded the hill-tops around. Commenced the ascent of a hill, passing through a "Kenyon," and leaving the river to the left. Crossed the trail of the first emigrants three times, and saved about one-half their distance, they having been probably compelled, by high water, to take the route they did. About half way, we had the good fortune to discover three tolerably good springs, a short distance apart, from which we got a supply of water sufficient for mules and men. The road is very crooked, in consequence

of its leading through the gorges of the hills. Encamped a short distance below where we came to the river. Distance 18 miles.

Thursday, 2d.—Rose very early; three o'clock a. m. being our usual time for a cook and teamster to rise, and that is early rising for men who are tired at night. This time, we had breakfast before it was fairly light. At this point, we left the river again, and climbing over a hill, passed along the windings of the hollows. Came to the river, in the afternoon, but found no grass; so we continued down the river and crossed it at a very pretty ford, water warm and gravel bottom. Encamped three miles beyond where we came to the river. Grass poor; the mules seemed to prefer the young willows. Fears are entertained that grass will be poor along this river. Distance, today, 22 miles.

Friday, 3d.—Moved off at 5 a. m. down the river, in a north-west course. Crossed at 10 a. m. Grass very poor. Mules still seem fond of young willow, which is abundant. Scorching sun, and a stifling amount of dust. Very thirsty and the river water too warm to quench it entirely. We turned, in the afternoon, a south-west course, down a large, broad valley, which had, early in the season, afforded excellent pasture, but was now parched and sere; yet we managed to hit upon tolerable grass for the night—using the willow for wood. The hills, along here, present the most barren and sterile appearance of any we have yet seen. Nothing, on them, seems able to survive long. They are composed of volcanic rocks rising in a solid facade on either side of the valley. We are cautioned to beware of Indians along this route; but none, as yet, have made their appearance to molest us. Some few clouds are floating near the horizon; but rain cannot be expected, at this season of the year, in this climate. The men here went into the river to wash, and B. D. Reeves came near being drowned, but he was relieved soon and brought to consciousness by rubbing. This may operate as a caution to those who cannot swim well. After the alarm had subsided, everything moved on as before—the incident, as no harm was done, served to give an impulse to the conversation which all enjoyed. Distance 20 miles.

Saturday, 4th.—Our course still lay down the river, about sixteen miles, to the point of a mountain, around which we turned a north-westerly direction—leaving the river to make a great bend to the left. Had no grass or water for eight miles. Our fears were excited by seeing most of the vegetation dried up; but we succeeded in finding a grassy spot for our encampment. The sage predominates in this bottom and is of every stunted form and appearance. Two other valleys diverge into this—one coming in from the south-east, the other from the north. Encamped at 1 p. m. Distance 18 miles.

We are now on the north bank of Mary's River (or Humboldt's,) 1454 miles from St. Jo.—1797 from Springfield.

North Branch of Humbolt

Sunday, 5th.—The good Sabbath has come once more and another week of toil is ended. This day we enjoy very much. Contrary to expectation, we found a fine pasture in the bend of the river—discovered as it were by accident. Since we have started, we have never lacked good grazing, for our mules, on Sunday—enabling us to observe, scrupulously, that provision of our Constitution which has set this apart as a rest day.

This day is one to be remembered from the appearance among us of [Elijah] Cook Matheny, Reuben McDaniel and his nephew, each on a mule and leading one packed with a few necessaries. It gladdened our hearts to see them; but we were surprised they should be traveling in that mode and alone. There was a general burst of admiration for their daring. They acceded to our invitation to sojourn with us during the day, and their perils and troubles were related. Their adventures were of the kind encountered by most persons who get separated, voluntarily or otherwise, from their mess-mates. We learned from them that Gornley is alone, packing, and E. [li] Cook, Johnson McDaniel the hatter, and J [oe]. Condell are together with a wagon. Several of our Springfield folks have got scared and taken the shoot to Oregon. What a history of a great movement, by our American people, will be written when, upon the record

of the next two years, shall be revealed the signet, and all for? gold? For your gratification, I will collect some of the incidents that have befallen others, when I can command the leisure to do so, and the heat has somewhat abated so everything does not fizz when it is touched.

Monday, 6th.—All bright. We started early, and moved down the river until noon, which was very warm, thermometer standing at 98 deg. After which, we crossed a small hill, upon which we saw the grave of E. A. Bryson, aged 34, of Louisville, Ky., one of Bryant's company, who died July 15th, 1849. Traveled a north-west course. Encamped on the river. I am suffering from a bad cold. Distance 24 miles.

Tuesday, 7th.—This morning our road led to the north; then around a bend of the river, inclining southward, forming a half circle. In the afternoon, we crossed a sand-ridge, leaving the river and the old trail which is but little traveled this season. This road across the ridge was made by the advance portion of the emigration to avoid crossing the river which I presume was high. Encamped on the river. Distance 21 miles.

Wednesday, 8th.—Breakfasted before daylight. Left the encampment at sun-rise. Continued near the river during the forenoon. The afternoon, our road ran south-westerly. There are indications of the grass having been good during the early part of the season, but it is now all withered. Passed a grave sacred to the memory of A. C. Baldwin. Size of the willow is diminishing. It is not here more than an inch in diameter, yet we depend upon it, principally, for fuel. The river has not increased in volume, perceptibly, but has a muddier tinge and moves more sluggishly. The bottom is full of sloughs in which the bulrush is apparently the sole tenant. Distance 22 miles.

Thursday, 9th.—Took up our line of march early. Wm. Broadwell bought a horse, saddle and bridle for \$45. We came on a sand-bluff, which wearied our mules very much. We crossed the river, leaving this abominable sand for a bottom road. Saw several wagons that had been left by the owners on the road-side after having packed what they most desired. Small parties of packers are coming up with us constantly, all of them wanting some article of provision. Continued on the same side of the river, the road being good.— Encamped on the bottom. Grass poor and only growing among the willows. Distance, today, 15 miles.

Friday, 10th.—All well. Continued on the same side of the river for two or three miles, and then crossed to the right bank. The fording was deep. Here we found a great quantity of a very fine, red berry, resembling the currant. Its name we could not learn. Immediately before us rose a lofty mountain, with a valley opening to the southwest and another to the south-east. Mr. Shepherd the Daguerrean Artist,¹⁶⁹ came up with us on packs. His company went ahead and he remained with us until noon the next day. In four miles, we came to the bluff up which the road went. A note was left here, for us, by Dr. McKenzie, of Cincinnati, informing us of the sand road ahead and there being neither grass nor water for fifteen miles, and but little grass for seventy-two miles. We called a counsel at 10 a. m. to decide upon the policy of commencing this journey today. Determined to wait, let our mules rest, and start tonight at the rising of the moon. Made 6 miles today.

¹⁶⁹ See footnote number 99.

56. Emily Watson Letter to Husband Benjamin A. Watson
August 3, 1849¹⁷⁰

From Emily Watson to B. A. Watson
 August 3, 1849

Your Pa thinks it is of no importance for him to write to you with feelings somewhat of disappointment not receiving a letter at this time but I know that you have written us two letters have been received from the company from Mr. Philip Webber and Mr. __ The only letters that were saved from the emigrants from 200 pounds that were lost at St. Louis where five boats were burned but dear we feel very glad indeed that a few were saved to tell us that you were alive and getting along well but how great would have been the pleasure if I could have received a letter from those dear hands which have so often clasped mine in theirs. Dearest all I ask is that our lives may be spared that we may meet again and that I will have two darling children to greet you with their smiles when you return to your home. Dearest love your boy is growing fast. He talks of his dear father a great deal and sometimes he helps ma to cry for him. Dear I never knew how much I loved you until now I do wish I had gone with you. Welly often asks me where is "fauny" if it is way over yonder pointing his little finger in some direction. Every piece of writing he finds he says it is pa's letter and wants me to read about pa. Welley has been quite unwell cutting four teeth. I have been very well all this summer except the toothache which I have now quite bad. I think I shall go and have two drawn tomorrow. I have several decayed but I think I shall wait a while before I have them done. I do not think I could stand it at this time. Dear I do wish you were here. I know that wish ... some of it has been so long since we parted. Dear I hope that you will come home before two years only tho how long and if your little girl should live how large she will be, about the little cousin we took to raise, Anne Maria could not keep her so I gave all claimed gave her to Emoline, but to my journal.

June 29 spent the day at Abigals stayed all night at Hetty's kissed Welly went to bed we talked of our dear husbands half the night

30th come from Het's done my washing and some sewing. Kissed the boy to bed.

July 1st at home in the morning went to Mother's in the afternoon. Julia come home with me stayed all night. I done my washing got dinner went down to Mother's stayed all night.

3rd went over to Emoline's stayed all day back to Mother's at night. Kissed Welly went to bed

4th at Emoline' all the morning went to Mother's to stay all night. Kissed the boy.

5th come home from Mothers went to spend the day with ??? Stayed all night.

6th all day at Mr. Little's come home in the evening. Kissed the boy.

7th worked hard all day. Kissed the boy.

8th rain hard all day. Nelly come up to stay all night.

9th Anne Maria spent the day. Mother spent the afternoon. Kissed the boy to bed dreamed of husband.

10th done my washing spent the afternoon at Hetty's. Stayed all night.

11th spent the day at Hetty's to help her sew. Spent the evening alone.

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

12th done ironing in the morning spent the afternoon at Abigail's home stayed alone. Kissed the boy to bed.

13th at home got dinner done some sewing up most all night with Welly he was sick.

14th Welly quite sick with the summer complaint. Stayed all night with Hetty. Kissed the boy.

15th took breakfast at Hetty's dinner at home supper at Mothers. Julia stayed all night with me.

16th went home with Julia alone went shoping spent the afternoon with Mrs. Fisher stayed all night at Mothers dreamed of husband.

17th at Mothers until after dinner come got supper ate alone kissed the little dear went to bed

18th at home got dinner Nelly stayed all night dreamed of husband

19th put in a quilt for the cradle done some quilting Nelly stayed all night

20th quilting all day. Julia come up to help me went over to Hets stayed a while.

21st done some washing and ironing the cars come up for the first time I went down to Mothers stayed all night

22nd at Mothers all day Welly quite sick all day got some better kissed Welly to bed

23rd went out shoping with Mother made some calls came home after dinner went with Father to see the cars come in.

24th at home went over to Hetty's come home kissed Welly to bed dreamed of my husband

25th at home Nelly come over Julia stayed all night

26th Julia spent the day we done some sewing I stayed all night with Hetty.

27th home from Hetty's done my washing got supper at home alone kissed the boy to bed dreamed of my husband

28th done my ironing went down to Mother to stay all night

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29th at Mothers all day

30th at Mothers came up home went out shopping stayed all night at Mothers

31st Walter took a carriage of family out blackberring we stayed all day I stayed all night at Mothers.

August 1st the morning at Emolines Mr. Ives and family called on took Welly and I riding come home Nelly stayed all night

2nd at home Emoline spent the afternoon got supper kissed your boy to bed

Dear you will say that I go to Mothers every day but I cannot help it for there is such a vacancy at home that I cannot stay. I think that when we get the room built that I will be more

contented. Your pa talks of commencing it this next week and then with our little baby and boy in my own room maybe I shall feel at home we have just got our paving done in front today the cellar is being filled we have a good garden we do not feel afraid to eat anything as the city is very healthy more that it ever was We have not had a case of cholera but it has been all around us as many as 140 deaths a day in St. Louis all of our family have had good health your pa's is better than it has been for some time. I have just been sent for to come over to Het's she is going to be sick she has begun a letter to Mr. Bilson, poor Hetty does wish Mr. B. was here today and dearest I shall wish for you the 1st October but I shall try to get along without you as you cannot come.

Dear I have so much to tell you that I cannot on paper. I shall have to wait until you come home. Welly the little dear wants me to write a kiss to pa. He tells everybody his pa is going to bring him a pony from "fauny". Dear I believe I have told you everything but how much I want to see you and that I cannot tell dear. I dream of you every night and think of you all day long. Dear I shall have to stop writing for Hetty wants me to come of as soon as I can all of the family send their love to you and Mr. B. Your boy is out watching the cars go out and riding in the wheelbarrow. Dear you do not know what pleasure it is to have the boy when you are from me I sometimes wish I could lend him to you. Dearest take good care of yourself don't work too hard I hope you will not [get] sick to take care of your health good care don't expose yourself for gold. Dearest love I bid you goodbye. Don't forget to write every opportunity

I remain your loving and affectionate wife,
Emily Watson

My letter has been delayed. Hetty has got a fine girl 6 pounds red head it is just the image of Mr. Bilson.

Your pa requests me to say that business is as good as could be expected your pa says that if you do not get gold we will have enough to start a business again. All except ice cream goes off well the people are afraid of it.

Maria Biddle Back in Springfield, Illinois

Birth of Edwin Webber Biddle

(1849–1928)

On August 11(18), 1849, Maria Biddle gave birth to her third boy, and named him Edwin Weber Biddle. Sarah Weber, Dr. Henry and Angeline were with her. Her kind neighbors seemed to vie with each other in doing everything they could for her, until she was strong and well once more. Maria needed all the love and tenderness they gave her for she was very lonely and sick at heart.¹⁷¹

Maria Biddle Pinched Financially

For the first time in her life, Maria was feeling the sting of poverty. The uncertainty of B. R.'s [Benjamin R. Biddle her husband] whereabouts kept her constantly worried and nervous. She was very busy throughout the day and found little time to think about herself and her troubles; but she could not sleep at night—or when she did sleep she would often wake herself by crying over some terrible dream. Then she would be in bed, trembling from shock and fright, after the terror of her dream.

She had no way of knowing if B. R. were alive and safe, or not: and she would think of the reports that had been brought back from the West—of the immigrants who had been murdered by Indians,—or had died from thirst or cholera. Her only solace was her faith in prayer—and

¹⁷¹ *And This Is Our Heritage*, p. 107.

she prayed fervently each day, that God, in his infinite goodness and mercy, would guide and protect B. R. (and the other Springfield travelers) on their perilous journey. ... The harvests were poor that year, and the rents and notes remained unpaid. There were many things needed for her little family, and money should be put away for taxes. B. R. had always attended to everything of that sort; and it worried her more than she would admit. Her own property was tied up so that she could not get anything from it; and she was unwilling to accept help from her family—who would have been glad to assist her if they had known of her plight. At last she decided to have some boarders, as well as roomers. She had her own vegetable garden, cow and chickens—and occasional meat from the farmers who could not pay their debt, to her, in cash: so she decided that a few boarders would almost pay her running expenses. With five children (and one of them a baby) this was no small undertaking; but “where there’s a will there’s a way”, and Maria took care of her family without any financial aid from others.¹⁷²

**57. Letter From William Charles Ludlum From the California Emigrants
Galiesto, 120 miles South of Santa Fe,
August 11, 1849**

Journal, Tuesday, September 18, 1849.¹⁷³

From the California Emigrants
Galiesto, 120 miles South of Santa Fe, August 11, 1849

Before leaving Independence we had reliable information of the successful working of the Taos mines, and finally concluded to take them in our route, and should we be able to make anything by working them, to spend most of the Summer there, and pass down by way of the Gila in the fall and Winter, and be ready for work to California in the spring. We had previously concluded to take the Gila route in preference to the northern, on account of the large amount of emigration that were going that way.

With this view we left Independence about the 15th of May, taking the old Santa Fe trail to the crossing of the Arkansas—thence up the Arkansas, via Bent’s Fort to a village built by the Mormons, where they stopped the first winter after leaving the States, and about 100 miles above Bent’s Fort. We have crossed the river to Green Horn (or horn) Fort, situated on a creek of that name, and about five miles from the base of that part of Rocky Mountains, known as the Spanish Peaks, and about forty miles from the Taos Mines. It is occupied by a party of traders, who gather up furs and robes from the Indians in the winter, and send them to the States in the Spring.

In the neighborhood of this place we had supposed, would be a suitable place to do the repairs which were necessary to be done to the waggon, and also to send out a detachment to examine the mines, before moving the train up to them. We encamped about five miles southwest of the Fort, and about three miles from the base of the mountain, on a beautiful plain, sloping off from the mountain, four and a half to four and three quarters wide and three miles long, bounded on each side with a stream of clear cold water, occasioned by the melting of the snows on the top of the mountain, running by.

From our camp we have a most beautiful view in our rear is a range of lofty mountains; although it is only about two miles distant, yet it would be a good day’s journey to reach its summit and return. About thirty miles to the south, are those two celebrated peaks, generally marked in all our maps; and about eighty miles the Raton mountains, celebrated for their beautiful and Castle like appearance, and about thirty miles to the east, is a range of high and lofty hills, striking out from the Raton mountains to the Arkansas, and about two miles distant on the north, are high and rock spurs running out five or six miles from the main mountain

¹⁷² *And This Is Our Heritage*, p. 107.

¹⁷³ *Journal*, Tuesday, September 18, 1849, p. 2.

and nearly at right angles. Taking the whole together it makes one of the most beautiful views I ever beheld.

It was on the 2nd of July we pitched our camp at this place, and immediately took measures to send forward the detachment to examine the miness.—The detail was made and they left camp for that purpose on the 4th. While they were absent, those remaining in camp burned two kilns of Coal—put up a couple of forges we had with us, and went on with the repairs of our wagons. There was scarcely any of the wagons but what wanted more or less repairs—they were generally new, —some made to order, others were bought of the manufacturer. The Mule part of the train, to which I am attached, consists of eighteen wagons, and all but three had to have the tire cut or otherwise repaired, and those three were wagons that had been used the year previous, and two of them belong to the mess to which I do.

I would advise any one in taking a trip of this kind, to purchase good second hand wagons, in preference to new ones.

The detachments which went forward to examine the mines returned in about eight days with an unfavorable report. It had been the intention of the company, to have crossed the mountains at the Mines, and go down the valley of the Rio Grande, which I suppose would have been done, had the commanding officer thought proper to have ordered the train forward; but he not liking the route appointed a board of road vieweres to report to the company the practicability of taking the train over that route, at present only a mule path, which reviewers made I believe about the following report:

From the camp by way of Raton Mountains, Vegas, Pec, Galisteo, etc. to Valencia, about 150 miles further than by the way of Taos and the Valley of the Rio Grande to Vslerncia. The distance from camp to the foot of the pass in the mountain, twenty miles, requires the labors of fifty men one and half days; from the foot of the pass to the valley of Santz Cristi, twenty miles, one half of this road is good, the balance dead timber and brush to cut, and some rock to remove, will take 50 men six days, no very steep grades to overcome; the road down the valley of the Rio Grande is good. The report was presented to the company, and the route of the Raton Mountains adopted.

Should there ever be much trade carried on between the States and that part of the valley of the Rio Grande, above Santa Fe, which by the by is considerable at present, this route across the mountains to the valley of the Santa Chirsti, will be adopted, and no doubt will be much the best pass that has ever yet been found. The advantage it will have over the other routes, will be the abundant supply of wood, water, and grass.

For a description of the route from Independence to Bent's Fort, and from the crossing Purgatory at the foot of the Raton Mountains, to Santa Fe, I refer you to Major Emory's very able and correct report made in 1846-7, with the advance guard of the army, of the west; and any person wishing to take this route need no better guide than his report.

The road from Bent Fort to Puebla is along the valley of the river and good. The road from Puebla to the Raton mountains is about 130 miles and was never traveled but with a small train before ours; it is generally three or four miles from the mountain and is as good a road, and as easily traveled with a load as the road from Springfield to Beardstown. The crossing of the Raton is about 30 miles from the crossing of the paurgatory; from the base to the summit is about 20 miles, and from the summit to the valley below, on the opposite side, about ten miles. Were it not for a rocky spur of the mountain of about one mile you have to pass in descending the road would be good. I asked some of the committee who reviewed the other route while passing this place, the difference between this place and the route they reviewed; they replied that the other road was smooth and level compared to this.

Our trip thus far has been rather pleasant than otherwise as far as traveling is concerned; the weather has been fine, the roads good and the health of the camp excellent. The company have to regret the death of W. W. Simms, of Jacksonville, who was accidently caught under one of the wheels of his wagon, and was so injured that he died in about two hours. It happened about 20 miles from Puebla on the Arkansas; he was taken to the village and buried on the point of a high bluff in the vicinity of several other graves.

We have had two or three alarms, but no trouble from Indians. While traveling on the Arkansas, near Mann's Fort, about 10 o'clock on Sunday morning, while the boys were generally washing and dressing, there was discovered about 2 or 3 miles distant on the opposite side of the River on a high rise of ground, something supposed to be a herd of Buffalo, but on a close examination with a glass they were found to be a large body of Indians riding to and fro, apparently in great excitement and haste; in a short time took up the line of march for our camp at full speed. The alarm was sounded and in a few minutes the stock was all corralled, (it being picketed near camp,) and the boys paraded on the bank of the river opposite to where the Indians had already arrived. Seeing our determination to oppose their crossing, they sent forward a flag of truce, when a party ensued. We then returned to our camp and the Indians were then suffered to cross when a brisk trade was struck up of Lassoses and moccasins, for trinkets of different kinds which the boys had with them. This has been dubbed the Battle of the Black Raven, on account of a raven's nest in a large cotton wood near by.—Their intention was plunder no doubt, as they were hovering round our camp, by spells for the next two or three days; since which we have not seen any, although we have been traveling through an Indian country all the time, and some of the most warlike kinds, especially the Utes, which range the very country we have traveled east of the mountains. I have just heard the same tribe that visited us had attacked a small train and took such things as they wanted, powder, lead, sugar, coffee, etc.

We have had generally a good supply of fresh meat since we left Independence; scarcely a day passed but what we had deer or antelope in camp; when we came in the vicinity of the little Arkansas we were in the range of the Buffalo, and it appeared that the whole plan for two or three hundred miles was one complete drive, and it was a common thing for the company to take four or five a day, and some days as high as ten or twelve, and frequently as many calves, which was some of the finest veal ever ate. Since leaving the range of Buffaloes we have had plenty of deer and Antelope; while passing along the foot of the mountains, large quantities of Pheasants were killed, which were about the size of the prairie hen, but far better; also a plenty of the hare and rabbit, many of which were killed daily. Since we came to the Moree creel where the Bent Fort and the old Santa Fe road meet, there has been no game, and there is none generally through the mountains.

We are now encamped at Galisteo, about 20 miles south of Santa Fe, where we have been for the last week, but will leave here for the Gila on day after tomorrow. I have just returned from Santa Fe where I have been for the last two days. It at present has something the appearance of Independence in the spring. There are a great many emigrants fixing there for California, some has come out by the regular travel route, many by Fort Smith, on the Arkansas. There is a company from New York camped near us, whose wagons have given out, and are now preparing to pack; there are several others about Santa Fe in the same fix.

They take almost every direction from here to California. Some go by way of old Spanish trail, some direct to Mormon settlement on the Salt Lake, some by way of Puebla on the Arkansas, by Fort Laramie to the South pass.—We met on the route one fresh company 300 men and another of 50 who had come by Fort Smith and Santa Fe. Those who are now leaving take the Gila route. Some eight or ten companies have left amounting to three or four hundred wagons; there are three or four companies to leave next week.

Col. Collier, collector of the Port of San Francisco is at Santa Fe and will leave for California in a few days, and will probably go out with us.

C. Ludlum

58. Benjamin R. Biddle's Journal August 11-31, 1849

Saturday, 11th.—In compliance with our resolution of yesterday, we started a little before 1 o'clock this morning. Ascended the bluff, which was very hard pulling; after which we found some sand but the road generally proved better than we had expected. Got across the fifteen miles by 7 a. m. Took breakfast and grazed our mules—resting three hours. Then followed the river, which makes a considerable bend, turning first to the north and then inclining to the south. The bottom gradually enlarges. The first or low bottom, along which the road runs, is walled in by a bench or range of sand—the whirlwinds raising columns of dust in every direction, the mountains entirely bare of vegetation—the only thing to attract the attention being the smoke that rises from the camp or the signal fires of the Digger Indians. These Indians manage to keep at a respectful distance. Encamped on the river-bank—making 25 miles, today.

Near this point is the fork of the Oregon road which was explored by Mr. Applegate, who conducted his emigration successfully along it to Oregon—making the head of the Willamette Valley in 1845. As I am writing this, I hear little else discussed around me but the merits and demerits of this new route. It leads into Oregon at or near the Willamette Valley, avoiding the Cascade Mts. near to Lewis' Fork of the Columbia—crossing the Sierra Nevada at a very favorable pass. Bryant speaks, in his book, of having had a very unexpected though pleasant and cordial meeting on this river, with the Messrs. Applegates, who had been three months exploring this route. A portion of the emigration, this season, propose going this way, on account of there being more water and grass along it than on the usual route to Sutter's Fort, and not increasing the distance to that point—a point in which we all feel a deep interest because of its furnishing us with provisions for the winter. This cut-off, as it is called, will take us from this (nearly sixty miles from the “sink” of the river) almost due west to the head waters of Feather River, in the vicinity of the Gold Region (that was,) or to the head waters of the Sacramento which are not far from Feather River. It will not require more than seven or eight days to accomplish the journey. The Oregon route will be left, a few days after taking it, and a trail taken to the left which was traveled, last season, with thirteen wagons, by a man named Claerson, who has since settled on Feather River, and has given Messrs. McGee and Myers, two mountain traders, a description of the road, which induced them to take it, this morning, with eleven teams. Others are following them during the day. We are laying over and will take a vote, on Monday, as to whether we will take it or not. We have discouraging news about the grass on the old route; and our mules, to take us through, must have grass.—The cut-off is supposed to have plenty, as it has not been traveled this season. It also places us in what was last year the Gold Region, and, we presume that the operators still there will have facilities for procuring provisions.

We are on the west bank of Mary's River, 1567 miles from St. Jo.—1910 miles from Springfield.

Sunday, 12th.—Another Sabbath has smiled upon us, and, under the protection of Providence, we have reached this point of our journey in health and peace, with nothing to alarm or make us afraid that in three weeks, or less, we shall not be in the settlement of Sutter's Fort.

Monday, 13th.—This morning a council was called and a vote taken upon what course we should take, which resulted in our selecting the new route—Ayes 14, Nays 6. Those opposing were R.[ichard] Hodge, E.[than] T. Cabanis, B. F. Taylor, B.[enjamin] A. Watson, E. Fuller and T. Billison. The remaining companies all following in our wake; but none of them agreeing unanimously to do so. In twelve miles, we came to a feeble spring and some grass. We dug holes and got nearly enough water for our mules. To this spring, we came nearly due west. Here we stayed three hours. At half past three, we started, and ascended and descended a mountain by gentle slopes. Passed through a bottom and up a gentle acclivity. Then descended into a “kenyon” and the road, which heretofore had been good, became rocky. The walls on either side were high, and it was night. Mr. J.[ohn] B. Watson, and others, went forward in search of water and grass, until half past 10 o'clock at night, when, having met with no success,

we encamped, tied our tired mules to the wagons, halted two hours for the moon to rise; and then, determined to find grass and water, all hands were called up at near one o'clock. We hitched up and were off in half an hour. Distance 28 miles.



Mary's River

Tuesday, 14th.—"O, Yes— all hands get up!" was heard as the moon rose above the hills surrounding our camp. All was stir, and in a little while, we were wheeled into the line of march. Our poor mules were hungry and thirsty, and remaining would not supply their wants. Our road soon took a north-westerly direction and continued so nearly all day. Sterility and volcanic desolation everywhere prevailed. The day was fine, but the warmth unfavorable to our thirsty mules. For fourteen miles, we traveled over the bed of a lake which is now dry. In the spring-time, it had been covered water. To our right, rose the black rocky point of a mountain, in the vicinity of which were several old craters. As we progressed, our mules began to show signs of fatigue. Passed several horses and cattle which had given out, and wagons that had been left in the desert while the owners went abroad, with the teams, in quest of water. At 2 p. m., when men and mules were almost exhausted, we found some water that was warm and hardly drinkable; and, some distance below, we discovered one of the largest and most remarkable boiling springs we had seen. Grass plenty. Traveled 13 hours. Distance 24 miles.

During the last two days, we have come fifty-two miles, and our teams are now more weary than they have been at any previous time. This is a hard place for stock to cross unless they be strong and in good order.

Wednesday, 15th.—Our mules had fared well, but we were obliged to move cautiously. The water being warm did not quench thirst as well as if it had been cold; and, here, all the water, both warm and cold, is strongly impregnated with salt, which renders it unpalatable. The men suffer from thirst. Nearly everything we eat or drink has salt in it, and nearly everything is hot. We put some boiling water into buckets at night, which cooled by morning so we could drink it, but it did not quench our thirst. The emigrants began to crowd in upon us with tired teams — many having come ahead, who returned to their trains with canteens filled with water. Mules and oxen were brought to drink, and taken back to the wagons at night. In justice to those who were behind us, we determined to leave this place and go to some springs that were a few miles ahead. In about three miles, we came to other springs so hot that some oxen, in their eagerness for water, rushed in and were badly scalded. Here there was grass, and some who were with us encamped. — Our company passed on three miles further and came to some water that was

not so hot where there was fine grass. Close to our encampment, is a boiling spring, in which we boiled a large piece of bacon finely. For supper, we had peaches, rice, bacon and a pot of tea. Cut grass to take with us, determined our mules should not suffer again. We learn that we have to cross another desert of twenty miles, to-morrow. Distance, today, 6 miles.

Thursday, 16th.—Everything ready — grass for our mules and casks filled with water. All rose at one o'clock and moved off at half past two to cross what is called the Salt Plain. We found the road to be very sandy in spots; sage was abundant and the ground covered with an incrustation of salt. Made a halt at seven; breakfasted and gave our mules grass. We then had a very heavy sandy road for five miles, when we descended a bank into a bottom, at the head of which, after traveling a north-westerly course, we came to fine grass and water in great abundance. We next turned the point of a mountain, inclining our course westerly, the prospect of having food for the mules became encouraging. After crossing a desert of seventy-five miles, our mules seemed brisk and lively. We stopped to give them water and allow them to feed several times during the day. There are only fourteen teams ahead of us, on this new route, and they serve to break the road and make it plain. Distance 23 miles.

Friday, 17th.— Two horses were reported to have been shot, last night. One of them was killed by a wound in the neck, caused by an arrow with a flint point. Missed one of our mules, this morning, and left a note requesting those behind to bring him up, if found. We started from camp with our road in full view, winding up a gentle acclivity, in a westerly direction. Near the summit, we came to an abrupt pitch where we had to use our big ropes to let down the wagons. This introduced us into a "kenyon" that opened into a pretty valley. After which, our road turned to the right and entered a very narrow defile, with walls rising, on either side, to the height of several hundred feet. Here we found grass and water. This place of gloom and shadows is a favorite resort of the Indians. A cavern yawned in the bold facade of high-piled rocks; and, from the indications, the savages had made it an asylum from the bleak winds and storms of winter. We passed beyond, about a mile, and encamped in a fine "kenyon," where there was excellent water and a rich variety of clover. We have prepared ourselves against the Indians by having our guns put in order and loaded. There is no place, since we have been among the mountains, where we have had so much occasion to be in dread of an attack. Stopped at 2 p. m. Distance, today, 12 miles.

Saturday, 18th.—Morning is quite cool — ice made — overcoats in use. During the night, the encampment was roused from slumber by the report of a gun, which was understood to be the signal for others to give the alarm. The denouement was rather laughable. It turned out that Mr. J. B. Weber being on the watch, and a horse having passed the line without being seen by him, he heard the noise, hailed three times, and the horse not answering, he fired but missed. The fellows laughed and said that he fired so as to hit if it were an Indian and miss if it were a horse. So it passed off as a good joke, and, the remainder of the night, our rest was uninterrupted.

Our road led, this morning, through a narrow and exceedingly rocky defile. Here we broke an axle-tree, but, having a few on hand, our mechanics soon put in another. We next came to a beautiful meadow of fine grass and well watered. It was, indeed, a cheering sight. Here the hills began to assume a gentler form, and we could, once more, see daylight, which was pleasant after being shut up so long in dark defiles and mountain gorges piled with frowning rocks. There are striking features in the scenery of this country to be noted by every traveler. The last "kenyon" was so narrow as scarcely to admit a wagon; and this the only pass through these interminable hills towering everywhere far above us. To our surprise, in the midst of these rugged places, we found good grass and fountains of cold, sparkling water. A knowledge of this, to those who are behind us, would be priceless—such is the anxiety felt about it. The road, this evening, is smooth. Encamped at 4 p. m., in a fine patch of grass, surrounding an excellent spring. Distance 15 miles.

Sunday, 19th.—Once more, we look back upon another week of our journey ended—a week that will long be remembered by our company. For a time, our lives and the lives of our poor animals hung suspended in doubt. I hope, from this forward, we shall not lack grass or water. Our men are generally well, and, in their rustic teamster's garb, it would be difficult for their old friends to recognize some of them.

During the last week, we made 103 miles. We are now in High Rock "Kenyon," on Applegate's route to Oregon—1675 miles from St. Jo. and 2018 from home.

Such has been our experience on the new route we have taken—a route of which we had but little knowledge, but which was preferred because a majority of us were convinced this would lead us to the Gold Region on the Sacramento or Feather River sooner than the route up Salmon Trout River, and across the Sierra Nevada at what is usually called the Bear River Pass, and thence down to Sutter's Fort. The tide of emigration will, doubtless, flow in that channel; but the ultimate result alone can determine which is the better route.— We have had no reason to induce us to believe that we have come the wrong way. We had arrived near enough to the sink of Mary's River and the fearful dangers of crossing the widely extended desert beyond, to warn us from that way if we could get grass and water on another route. In taking this course, we followed the lead of an experienced mountaineer, who by risking his own property gave us the best assurance that plenty could be found after two day's travel. The road had been gone over by Oregon emigrants, but the grass had not been touched this season.

We have traveled through the wildest region the imagination can depict. Volcanic desolation covers everything; and, but for the green little meadows appearing in the midst of wildness and sterility, one might think a civilized being had never trodden these deserts. Solitude claims this region as its dominion; and rarely is it interrupted save by the degraded, half-starved Digger Indian, whose characteristic is stealth, and who would scorn to possess himself of anything save by theft. Never before have I been in a region so wild and dreary and desolate, with not a tree to break the monotony of the view. We are now approaching the mountains, and, by the middle of next week, we hope to stand on the summit of the Great Sierra—from which we shall have a first glimpse of the Promised Land, whose tall trees, pure water, green valleys, and the consummation of our "golden hopes" will inspire our tired bodies and spirits with the vigor of new life. Our mules, too, will then have rest and food to recruit them after five long months of constant toil. You can hardly imagine with what interest we watch over them. When one shows any symptoms of fatigue, or sickness, the attention of the whole company is directed to his recovery. They have been our dependence to bring us through, and every mule has endeared himself to us until we feel towards them as friends.

During the last week, I have thought much of Springfield. As "Distance lends enchantment to the view," so absence brings to mind, more vividly, the endearments of home. Few men would wander from family and friends, if they did but take a philosophic view of things. The partner in our joys and sorrows, the children of our love—the affection of the one, the innocence of the others, would keep us all at home, if we would but take things as they are and accommodate ourselves to the circumstances of our condition. But, as the world is, there is a necessity for gold. There are a thousand and one ways in which money may be used, and society compels us all to have it. Very many have sacrificed every ennobling quality upon the altar of Mammon. There are many men, on these plains, who have adopted a coarseness of manners and language, and who violate the common courtesies of life with an impunity that would indicate their birth and education to have been in a less favored land than the United States. The gold obtained is but a small portion of the history of such an expedition. There is much to be learned of the manner in which the characters of some men are developed by peculiar circumstances, and all may learn lessons of wisdom by the study of themselves.

Monday, 20th.—All reported well. Soon after starting out, we passed through a very rough, narrow "kenyon." Doran and [Richard] Hodge killed a fine antelope, which was welcome enough, for we were sadly in want of fresh meat. Soon after, Eastman and Moffat killed

another, and others brought in some sage hens. After passing over a hill we saw, for the first time, proudly glittering afar, the snowy peaks of the Nevada. We now entered a valley whose principal vegetation is the sage—a shrub of whose sight we have grown weary; but, without it, in all probability, this vast extent of country could never be crossed. It has been our only fuel for hundreds of miles. At the end, a lake of salt water, we came upon very unexpectedly, as none of our guide-books mention it. We entered a mountain pass, and did not find a suitable place to encamp until after 8 p. m. The distance across the sage desert was sixteen miles, without water. We suffered some, in consequence of not having taken in a supply. Distance, today, 24 miles.

Tuesday, 21st.—Morning cool. Breakfasted on antelope steak. Continued up the pass until, once more, the Sierra Nevada burst upon our view.— Descended into a narrow grassy valley. The surrounding hills were decked with a few scattering cedars. Crossed a few rocky hills, and came to a hot spring where, as the grass was good, we encamped for the night. It is invariably the case, that the warmth of these springs cause them to be surrounded with luxuriant vegetation. We are in a large valley at the foot of a great mountain whose brow is veiled in clouds. Distance 14 miles.

Wednesday, 22d.—Our course is nearly north, this morning. Passed a smoking hot spring, from which issues a pretty stream. Crossed the bed of a lake, from which we had a good road to the base of the mountain—up which we traveled during the afternoon, passing some majestic pines and streams of pure, cold water. We nooned under a tree and enjoyed the shade. The first part of the mountain the ascent was moderate; but, the earth being mellow, it was hard pulling. Half a mile brought us to a pine grove, with grass and water in a gorge. Here the men built a big wood fire, which did up things brown. At this spot, we concluded to halt, and take the steepest of the ascent, in the morning, when all were well rested. On this mountain, we found the first large timber we have seen for many weary miles. It was refreshing to the vision to see the tall shafts rising proudly into the air, crowned with thick foliage which flung broad, grateful shadows along the steep mountain-side. Distance 17 miles.

Thursday, 23d.—Cloudy and every sign of rain. Course west. At 7 a. m., we doubled teams and commenced the ascent. A mile and a half from camp, we reached the summit; but the atmosphere was so smoky as to completely obstruct the grand view we had anticipated. By the time we had brought up *arrière*, the mules were much fatigued. When we got beyond the summit, the smoke cleared away and revealed the shaggy spurs covered with lofty pine and cedar, and a fertile bottom spreading beneath. An involuntary shout went up that made the welkin ring. We unanimously agreed that Hannibal and Napoleon—the regal conquerors of other times who scaled the Alps— might have boasted of such an achievement as that of scaling these American Alps. The descent was easy; and, at half past one, we encamped.— The hunters broke for tall timber and spent the evening in an unsuccessful search for game. We are all delighted with this side of the mountain. The air is softer, the climate milder, the vegetation of a deeper, brighter green. Distance 3 miles.

Friday, 24th.—Course north-west. Sprinkle of rain, last night. Air, this morning, pleasant. Traveled five miles down the valley. Crossed some low rocky hills, and again entered the forest, and descended a hill to Goose Lake. Encamped on a branch which pours its waters into the lake. The Oregon Trail leaves this at the south end of the lake. Distance 18 miles.

Saturday, 25th.—Morning cool and autumnal.— Piercing east wind made it necessary to put on overcoats. Rose at dawn, and traveled down the valley, along the base of the mountain from which flows many pretty rivulets of the purest crystal. These little streams all take a southerly course, and we suppose them to be head springs of the Sacramento. At the lower end of the valley, we crossed over some low, rocky hills. Nooned on the bank of a stream. Then crossed over some low hills and descended into a narrow valley with a brook into which the rivulets empty. This evening, we had some rough road. Timber rather scarce. Encamped in a bottom where there was good water. Distance 21 miles.

We are now 1773 miles from St. Jo. and 2116 from Springfield—on the western side of the Great Sierra Nevada.

Sunday, 26th.—This is the 22d Sabbath we have been from home. On the morrow, at 2 p. m. we will have been five months from home. Nor do we know how far we have yet to travel. We are wending our way south, and trust we shall arrive during the coming week to where we can hear something about gold. The distance has been greater than we supposed—consequently, it has taken longer to perform the journey; but, we are told, we shall get to the “diggins” early enough as it has been very sickly at the mines during the present season. We have met, on this route, some men with teams, in the employ of government, who have kindly given us considerable information.—Some of them knew Hamilton Campbell /*/ and said he was down among the mines and had not yet left for home. These men commended our having come this route, and were pushing on to bring the Oregon troops this way. This encouraged us.—They thought there was no doubt of our succeeding in our enterprise, if we would manage properly and save what we got. Mr. Weber and myself have repaired to the shade to enjoy the quiet and write our letters; but I have been attacked with a severe head-ache which prevents my saying more.

/*/ Hamilton Campbell is brother-in-law to Mr. Biddle, and long a resident of Oregon.

Monday, 27th.—Morning quite cold. Rose before day-break—got our breakfast and were on the line of march by sun-rise. I was still afflicted with a head-ache, which became so violent that I was obliged to ride in the wagon, and that did not afford me much relief, for the road was very rough. Crossed some points of hills, continuing our way down the stream. Distance 21 miles.

Tuesday 28th.—Very foggy morning—were unable to get anything like a satisfactory view of surrounding things. Our little brook is enlarging and now yields us some fine fish. Cooks were up by half past three, and we had an early start. Went over some very stony road. Saw several well constructed fish-dams, which put the men in a great way about fishing. The Indians have dug a number of deep pits near their watering places to entrap the game. Crossed the river eight times today. My head is better, but the excessive pain of yesterday has made me quite stupid. Distance 15 miles.

Wednesday, 29th.—Ice in the vessels, this morning. Something different this from the climate of Illinois. The high altitude at which we have traveled has made it necessary for us to wear overcoats, at night, during summer, and sleep under blankets. A dog that we brought from Naples, Illinois, was shot, last night, by the guard, in mistake for a wolf. The accident occasioned a general regret, for he was a good dog and we had hauled him a great deal in our wagons, to get him through to guard the camp. Our road during the forenoon was rough. Half past ten, we came to the much-desired Oregon road—the main trail leading from the head of the Willamette Valley to the Lower Valley of the Sacramento. Nooned two miles beyond, and caught a fine mess of fish. During the afternoon, we had a smooth road.—Encamped at the head of what Fremont calls the Round Valley. From this point, we have a view of Mt. Shasta and the tallest of the Sisters, both covered with snow. Mt. Shasta is 14000 feet high and is the highest peak on the Pacific coast. The Sisters are also high, and derive their names from standing near each other and, in a line, one above the other. The atmosphere is so filled with smoke that we can see but little that surrounds us. Distance 15 miles.



Mount Shasta, California

Thursday, 30th—This morning, fire felt comfortable. All well. Traveled down the valley, following the bend of the river. This valley seems to be very fertile and only wanting rain to develop its richness. Nooned 16 miles from our last encampment and near the lower end of the valley, in view of a steep acclivity, descending which we observed some packers who proved to be, as we had suspected, citizens of Oregon direct from the “diggings.” They gave us a great deal of information about the gold, the price of provisions, etc., and showed us some large lumps of gold. They assured us we could make \$30 per day, but gave us to understand that we were further from the Gold Region than we had supposed. Most of them knew Campbell—said he had been down in the mines, but was taken sick and had gone home by water about the time they were starting for home. They said it was twelve miles to the next water, so we concluded to wait until tomorrow. Distance 16 miles.

Friday, 31st—Round Valley is seventeen miles long from north to south. In view of the road ahead being rocky, all the men of our company we could spare, with men from other companies which had encamped with us, went ahead to clear some of the worst stones from the road. The road led from the river across a great many hills. At 4 p. m. we came to a stream of refreshing water—the first we had since morning. Went about a mile farther and encamped where there was an abundance of good grass and water. About 35 wagons were encamped here for the night.

Today, a species of the oak has made its appearance among the pine, for the first time. We seem now to be fairly among the mountains, where it is more rocky than any place we have yet seen. Distance only 10 miles. Biddle

William Charles Ludlum on Way to California

Journal, Thursday, August 23, 1849.¹⁷⁴

William C. Ludlum lived at the corner of Market and Sixth streets, three blocks from the Lincolns. He traveled to California with Dr. Roberts’s Company, that took the southern route.

Mrs. WM. C. LUDLUM, residence corner of Market and sixth streets. Mr. L. is now on his way to California; and his family take the Daily Journal in order to gather all the news that can be had of the travelers over the plains, and from that distant region. Mr. Ludlum is with Dr. Robert’s company, which has taken the southern route—a notice of whose letter to the Morgan Journal was given in our paper of yesterday.

¹⁷⁴ *Journal*, Thursday, August 23, 1849, p. 2.

59. Elijah Cook Matheny Letter From Sacramento, California August 25, 1849

From California

From California.
We have three letters from our young friend, Mr. Cook MATHENY, from which we make the following extracts:
Fork Sacramento, August 25, 1849.
We are at last among the California Gold Diggings. We struck the first diggings yesterday.— We are well—I mean Reuben McDaniel and myself. We had a great time with our wagons. We continued breaking them—and when tired of that broke down the mules. On arriving at Goose Creek we broke up the company and divided the mules. Reuben McDaniel and myself got two of the best, and with James Gormley packed—leaving the rest of the company with the wagons.— We have heard nothing from them since. We found Shepherd, the daguerrotypist, here. We have plenty of eating houses. Last night we got a common supper for \$2. A day's board is \$6.

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60. Elijah Cook Matheny Letter From Springfield, California September 2, 1849

Journal, Monday, November 26, 1849.¹⁷⁵

Springfield, California¹⁷⁶

Sept. 2, 1849

When our company packed, we had to throw away a part of our clothing and load the animals with provisions. We thus passed over 650 miles of the worst and most dangerous part of the road. After our arrival at the diggings we moved around some two weeks—was at half dozen places—and worked awhile myself at one or two—made nothing myself and found no one making any thing;—then started for Sacramento city, got there night before last, — found Capt. Roberts there and his cousin speculating in mules. Bill, his brother, working at his trade (carpentering) Wm. Todd is here and doing well, I saw Nurse yesterday; he was well, and doing well—He and Easton and Dan Cook are 25 miles from Sacramento city at a place they call Springfield, and by his invitation I am here.

I finish this letter at Sacramento city. I hear that McDaniel and Johnson got through to things two weeks after us. They had to pack on St. Mary's river. They left Joe Condell and Cook with a little wagon they had fitted up on the road. We have not heard from them yet—We fear for them. Several companies have started from this place to their assistance. Dick Oglesby is up in the mines and doing well; he has a store and digs gold. I am now engaged in business with Wm. Todd, that I think will pay well.

I would never think of making this country my home. Money can be made here yet. All a man wants here is energy, perseverance and economy. Yet I would advise all who are doing well at home to stay there; and especially do not come across the country. Washer after washer of the dirt did we clean out, and found but small particles of gold. Bradford is selling goods at

¹⁷⁵ *Journal*, Monday, November 26, 1849, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ Springfield received its name from the abundant springs gushing from limestone boulders. The town with its stores, shops, and hotel built around a plaza once boasted 2,000 inhabitants. It is believed to have been founded by Dona Josefa Valmesada, a Mexican woman of means with the reputation of aiding Americans in the war with Mexico. During the town's heyday, 150 miners' carts could be seen on the road, hauling gold-bearing dirt to Springfield springs for washing. <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/Detail/432>

Benicia; Mr. Eaton is sending goods up to the mines. Capt. Roberts is still trading in mules and horses. Maltby and his wife are keeping a boarding house.

E. Cook Matheny.

**61. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From Camp
on the Sacramento at Lassens, California
September 12, 1849¹⁷⁷**

Camp on the Sacramento
At Lassens, California Sept. 12, 1849

My Dear Wife:

At length I have the inexpressible gratification of addressing you from this long wished for county, from the promised land from the El Dorado of our hopes. We arrived here on Monday at 2 p.m. after enduring almost incredible hardship. We are all well we got all of our wagons in and all of our mules except one which was bitten by a snake and died on the Humboldt River. Lassens is situated on the Sacramento River somewhere what I suppose is the head of the lower valley, you will perhaps be surprised to find us coming into the country at this point I will tell you how it came to pass about seventy miles above the sink of the River we came up with a man by the name of McGhee who said he was looking for a road or old trail which led off to the Northwest and which he said was a better route and a shorter one. Many of our men tired with the monotonous scenery of the Humboldt River and tired of the bad water and bad grass eagerly caught at the idea. In six miles farther we found the road. It being Saturday evening we lay over until Monday morning then the company decided upon taking the new road. I [refused] it because I did not like to try experiments which might prove disastrous. We started on Monday morning and traveled 1 day and night for fifty-five miles with out grass or water over a plain of burning sand but the sand was fortunately good.

We reached the Black Rock Boiling Spring at 3 p.m. on Tuesday. The spring is boiling hot, one hundred fifty feet in diameter. It nourishes a patch of grass which we found green and good, but this nor the three other hot springs in the next five miles will furnish a sufficient quantity of grass for many teams if they should come this road. Next morning we travelled on to the last of the hot springs where we found very good grass which we cut to take along with us as our next drive was across a dandy salt plain of twenty five miles without grass or water. We started on Thursday morning at 2 a.m. and reached the entrance of High Rock Canon at 5 p.m. after a day of fatigue and toil for men and mules where we found good grass and water. That night the Indians shot a mule and horse in fifty yards of our guard. They belonged to a pack train camped near us. Our road lay next over a gradual hill covered with volcanic stone making very hard travelling. We had to let our wagons down with ropes a very steep hill two hundred feet high into a canon or as it is pronounced canon, which is a gorge or narrow valley in the mountains of the foot hills of the Sierra Nevada.

We travelled two days up this beautiful pass at times the pass not being more than 30 yards wide and others reaching 200 with perpendicular walls of granite reaching several hundred feet high. Many times on both sides at once our road still continued pretty good, except some rough stones, bearing North and West all the time mostly north

On Wednesday the 22nd of August we reached the main chasm of the Nevada Mountains and ascended for an hour when we encamped near a brook of good water under some fine pine trees being the first we have camped under trees since we left the vicinity of the Missouri River. Next morning we doubled teams and by 12 o'clock we had all of our wagons on the top of the

¹⁷⁷ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

Sierra Nevada but it was accomplished by immense labor of men and mules we drove down into a nice little valley and encamped for the day. Our camp is surrounded by mountains covered with majestic pine trees. Next day we struck ??? Lake or Pitt Lake when the road turned south road good grass on the lake very good. Next day struck Pitt River which is the East branch of the Sacramento. Not knowing the name of it I had called it Pyramid Creek from a number of stoney formations standing in a cluster and resembling pyramids in shape. We traveled down this several days the road frequently diverging from the river to avoid canyons and ??? in the river. On Thursday 30th Aug. at noon, we met a train of packers from California for Oregon who had been down in the mines digging gold. They showed us lots of the yellow stuff they told us we were 180 miles yet from Lassens. Our road now became as bad as a road could be and be passable for wagons. By reference to Fremont's map you will find Round Valley. Then strike a Southwest course to the mouth of Deer Creek on the Sacramento and you will see our road lay through the mountains the whole way some of the road was pretty good all of it except the last fifty miles lay through an immense pine forest of the most magnificent trees I ever beheld some of them measuring 25 feet in circumference and 200 feet high and 80 feet without a limb and perfectly straight. The last forty miles has been one of constant toil and hardship. The road running down one of the spines ? of the mountains. We capsized one of [the] wagons and smashed the top in, broke a number of the wheels of the others but which we temporarily repaired and was three days in traveling 30 miles never finding water in less than ½ mile of the road and that all the way down some steep and rugged mountain side. We found but very little grass for our mules.

About fifty miles from this place we met an expedition of the government going out to explore a railroad route for the Humboldt River. An expedition some 80 men strong at an expense of 18 or 20,000 dollars per month. They giving all their men from \$180 to \$1,000 per month truly no man knows the wastefulness of our government. We are now laying here repairing our wagons two of which will start tomorrow for Sacramento City for provisions. Three men will go down with them the balance of us will start tomorrow for Sacramento city for provisions. Three men will go down with them the balance of us will start at the same time for the upper diggings 60 miles North of us (there is a man now here who has been working in the mines and who showed us a plate full of gold, all larger pieces he says we can make \$75.00 per man per day) Dear if so I will soon have as much as we will want then away for home and its sweet enjoyments. I fear it will be some six weeks before I shall be able to hear from you and we have no post office in less than two hundred miles of us but we are going to make an effort to get one in our immediate vicinity though I may be more fortunate than the balance as I directed Cook Matheny who had with R. McDaniel left Eli Cook and was going through on pack mules to write to the post mission at San Francisco to forward my letters to Sacramento City if he attends to it I will receive my letters by the return of our wagons in three weeks. I expect to go down myself when the wagons return. I think the prospects are as good as if not better than when I left home. I feel almost confident of making a fortune in the coming year and if so hey day for a merry time we will have and that brings me to another idea. If our expectations were well formed you should about this time be giving me another pledge of love of that if so I need tell you cheer up and be of good heart for I know you will be so with your beautiful children around you and the thought that while you are reading this your husband is accumulating gold enough to make you and them comfortable and independent for life and that already that is when you receive this one third of the time will have already expired for which he left you and them. Have no fear of our suffering for provisions as account from below show that there is more in San Francisco than they can possibly consume in the country in the next twelve months and more arriving every day. As for personal security we are assured by those have spent some time in the mines that a man's more safe there than he would be in St. Louis. The miners have established a code of laws for their own protection which have been found amply sufficient. I must now bid you farewell again my love. I shall endeavor to keep you regularly informed of our success there will be a mail once a week from the ?? for the states. You must direct your letters to Sacramento city California. Tell Hetty to do the same with directions to the post master to keep them till called for.

Tell my noble boy Weldon, my first born to be a good boy and father will bring him a pony when he comes back, and lots of pretty things for the baby. Tell Father to write to me and tell me the news in general about business and tell Walter and John to write also. Take good care of your health. Send me a dozen kisses in your next letter. I must now bring my letter to a close. I should like to give you a description of the natives of this country but I must defer it to some future time. Suffice to say Fremont's description is correct about their wardrobe a bunch of grass serves the females for a fig leaf, the ??? of ??? ever so slight a covering. Farewell my adorable, lovely beautiful affectionate wife. Believe me more than ever your affectionate husband.

B. A. Watson

Benjamin Robert Biddle on Way to California

Journal, Wednesday, September 5, 1849.¹⁷⁸

MRS. B. R. BIDDLE,--residence on 7th street, south. Mr. Biddle is now on his way to California,--belonging to the Springfield, Illinois, Mutual Insurance Company. The last accounts we have had of this company they were on the point of leaving Fort Laramie. We suppose that they are now near their place of their destination.

Mrs. B. R. Biddle,--residence on 7th street south. Mr. Biddle is now on his way to California,--belonging to the Springfield, Illinois, Mutual Insurance Company. The last accounts we have had of this company they were on the point of leaving Fort Laramie. We suppose that they are now near their place of their destination.

62. Benjamin Robert Biddle's Journal September 1-17, 1849

Saturday, September 1st.—Rose before daylight. Started as the sun was rising, and began to ascend a mountain, some of our force having gone before to clear away obstructions. Some fine, scattering cedars were observed on the surrounding hill-sides. Atmosphere very smoky. Noon in a narrow bottom, which afforded us but a scanty supply of grass for our mules. We next crossed a steep hill; and after passing a spring our road entered a forest of large pines mixed with spruce, cedar and fir. This was a kind of timber I had not been accustomed to see, and seeing it in its loftiest pride of growth excited my wonder. — Some of these trees measure six and eight feet in diameter. The bark being covered with a long yellow moss, gave to it a very beautiful appearance. Just at dusk, we encamped in a small bottom, with but little grass and no water, and went to bed supperless and weary. Distance 20 miles.

Sunday, 2d.—Today, for the first time since we left home, we have been compelled to travel on the Sabbath. We started early in search of grass and water. Traveled over some exceedingly bad road in descending the mountain where we had passed the night. In five miles we came to a large bottom, where there was an abundance of good grass and pure, cold water. Cheered and animated by this good luck, we encamped for the day.

We are now 1870 miles from St. Jo. and 2213 from Springfield.

This Sabbath finds us in a place that I cannot better designate than by the name of the Camp among the Mountains. We are surrounded by mountains that seem to defy our escape. We have been struggling, for days, past, to escape from their rocky sides and summits without success, and now we are in the midst of them. Since we crossed the Sierra Nevada, the road is more rocky, and our wagons have been more endangered and injured than in all our previous progress. Our way has been impeded, and seemed to increase as we continued to advance. We have yet to travel eight or ten days before we arrive at the settlements. Yet we do not feel

¹⁷⁸ *Journal*, Wednesday, September 5, 1849, p. 2.

we have anything to regret in having selected this route; every body we meet confirms the wisdom of our choice.

Monday, 3d—All reported well. This morning was the coldest since we left home, decidedly. Thermometer stood at 22 at sunrise. Over-coats all on, and the cooks were crowded away from the fire by the men standing around. Started early. Road rough. Atmosphere smoky. Traveled thirteen miles before we came to water. Noon on the borders of a small lake, on whose banks flourished a new species of pine. This afternoon, we had a very rough road, but were obliged to travel fifteen miles and, to our disappointment, found little grass and no water. After a scant supper, we retired, intending to rise early and go in quest of grass and water. These long drives over bad roads with scant allowance for our mules, operates very hard upon them, but they are capable of great endurance. Distance 28 miles.

Tuesday, 4th—Rose, breakfasted and were on our way before sun-rise. In five miles, we came to an excellent spring gushing from the hill-side, which forms, of itself, a considerable stream below, fretting itself into a fury and then rushing with a loud noise along its rocky bed. There being some grass here we concluded to stop for dinner. During the afternoon, we passed through the finest forest of pine, cedar and fir I ever beheld. — Many of the trees are one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty feet in height. We descended a long hill and came to a fine, large, grassy bottom well watered. This is six miles from where we nooned, and, finding everything favorable, we encamped at 3 p. m. Distance 12 miles.

Wednesday, 5th—Fine morning. Caught a great number of small fish, last evening, which made us a capital breakfast. Followed the road down the bottom and beneath the shadow of the hills, upon whose sides grew lofty trees from among whose roots spouted many cooling springs. Came suddenly upon a precipice, down which we were obliged to lower our wagons with ropes. This introduced us to another valley; and, after fording a creek we came to the head of Feather River — a beautiful stream of the purest, clearest water I ever saw. The river is fed by large springs, and where we crossed, it was fifty yards wide and so deep that it came near running into our wagon beds. We crossed the bottom, and nooned at the foot of a ridge. During the afternoon, we scaled the ridge. Seven miles brought us to a tributary of Feather River, up which we traveled two miles and encamped in a small bottom of fine grass. The scenery here is picturesque and beautiful indeed. There is a wild loveliness in the view, environed as we are by snowy peaks, that I never saw exceeded. Game appeared to be abundant. Our hunters went out; but it was too near nightfall for them to be successful. Distance, today, 18 miles.

Thursday, 6th—Had an early start. Doran killed a deer, which was a treat, for we all wanted a taste of fresh meat. Grisly bears are numerous about here, and all hands desire to have a chance at one, but they are too shy for that. Their footprints are, however, plenty along the road. We traveled up this branch until we arrived at a point that divided the waters, and immediately we were traveling down a stream that flowed directly the other way, bearing the tribute of its waters to Deer creek. Our road next led us round the point of a high mountain, changing our course from nearly north to due west. Road rocky. In about eight miles, we came to where a stream flowed in from the north-east, which we learned to be Deer creek, forming by its junction with the one down which we had come, a fine, large bottom, furnishing an abundance of nutritious grass. Here we nooned, and found a large company of troops encamped—being an exploring expedition commanded by Capt. Warner, sent out to the Sierra Nevada to find a practicable route from the Sacramento to some pass in the Nevada Range. They had, for pilot, Peter Lawson, who claims to have brought the first wagons through this route. It savors rather of a wild speculation to talk of railroad through this part of the world; but they may do it. Uncle Sam can accomplish much. — The officers we found to be gentlemen, and they gave us much useful information. They had also shown their liberality and sympathy in furnishing provisions to many that were in distress. An expedition fitted out by the government with no other object, would have redounded more to her honor and credit, than all other exploring expeditions. Here I sold my little pony for \$100, and you would say that he was well sold; but the little fellow

had grown and got fat, notwithstanding he had had some man on his back all the way out. — From this point, we came over a very hilly and rocky road. At our noon encampment we cut grass for our mules for one day, — as we had been told by Mr. Lawson that we were now entering upon the most difficult and scarcest part of our route. We reached a spring, but found very little grass. Encamped. Distance 18 miles.

Friday, 7th.—We rose early, and had our breakfast over by the time it was light. Our road this morning was any thing but good, very hilly and much rock; about five miles to a spring, but no grass. Here we filled our cask, and then proceeded on. The timber continues to be very large. Today we discovered a very fine kind of raspberry, which grew on low bushes. — The fruit was just ripe, and we ate abundantly. — Our road lead us to the verge of a very deep “kenyon”—the deepest and wildest we have seen. — We nooned in the timber. The cones of the pine were very large, some measuring from 15 to 18 inches in length. In the afternoon we traveled on this ridge, which narrowed in places to near the width of our wagon track—the breaks in the ridge made steep hills to pull up and descend.— Between seven and eight miles from our place of nooning, we left the large timber and came to a barren ridge, with but a few trees to interrupt the desolate appearance of every thing around. This is strictly, in the language of the country, a “thrown up country”—and presents nothing but sterility and wildness—a fit haunt for the grisly bear and mountain goat. We had not got more than a mile into this region before we upset one of our wagons, which prevented us from reaching the place we designed for our encampment, called “Deep Hollow.” We encamped in the brush until morning. Giving our mules the last of the grass we cut on Deer Creek, tying them up all night, and without water; we now felt that our troubles had come. Our road increased in roughness. Our wagons were dry and we had no water to put on them. Our mules were, of necessity, growing weaker from the scantiness of their allowance. The men were wearied, being obliged to hold on to the wagons with ropes to keep them from upsetting and jolting to pieces. This of all others is the place to try men. But, let to-morrow tell its tale. Night when we encamped. Distance 19 miles.

Saturday, 8th.—Foggy morning. Rose early, and, before we breakfasted, the upset wagon was righted, and we started for the deep hollow where we expected to find water for our thirsty mules. In a mile and a half, we got to the top of the hill. The descent was very steep, but we reached the bottom in safety; and had to take our mules more than a mile for water. Here there was no grass. Breakfasted and hitched up, having to put fifteen mules to a wagon to pull it out of this bottom.— The ascent occupied nearly three hours, and was the hardest pull we have had anywhere since we left home. We all arrived at the top safe. Half a mile further, we found a bunch of dry grass, with which we fed the mules. From that, we came three miles over a road that exceeds any description that can be given of a rough road—therefore I must leave it to your imagination. We succeeded in getting over it without any material damage and encamped on the ridge, with no more room than is sufficient for our wagons to stand upon.— We found water, a mile to the left, in a deep gorge. The labor is great for the mules to get at it, or the men to bring it to camp. The grass market is decidedly inadequate to the demand. With all our toil and perplexity we only succeeded in making five miles today.

Sunday, 9th.—Pleasant morning this; and, if we could have been where we would have had what was necessary for us, we could have enjoyed the day even amidst the desolation around. But our mules were too much in want of grass for us to stay much as our men needed rest. It would have been our choice to have remained, but necessity compelled us to go on the doubtful quest of a better place. Such was the difficulty of obtaining water, at the encampment, that we did without our coffee at breakfast. Reluctantly, we started on our way, and had not proceeded far until one of the wheels of No. 1 wagon showed signs of giving away and we had to stop and fix it. Here we came to another body of troops under command of Col. Carey. They had stopped here to leave their wagons, intending to pack through. Not far from this, another wheel of No. 1 had to be repaired before going any further—the rest of the train being all in advance, except Mr. Walter’s wagon, which had also broken down. The team was taken to camp, three miles ahead, and the wagon left in my charge. Mr. Weber came back very timely to my relief with some water. After this, Mr. Broadwell came with more water, and remained with the wagons—

Mr. Weber, and myself, going to the camp for supper; after which we returned to B. with something to eat, and remained with him all night.

The encampment is in a hollow, within one mile of grass and water. This has been, with us, a day of troubles. On to-morrow, we hope to get through and make our escape from these everlasting hills and rocks. Distance 9 miles. We are now 1970 miles from St. Jo.—2313 m. from Springfield.

Arrive at Redding, Shasta County, California

Monday, Sept. 10. At 8 A. M. after some repairs of our wagons, we proceeded onward. Weather warm. At 10 1-2 we entered the great and beautiful valley of the Sacramento. We stopped a moment and unfurled the Star Spangled Banner from wagon No. 1. At 12 we nooned at Deer Creek, where there was plenty of grass. Afternoon proceeded and at 3 p. m. halted within a mile of Mr. Lawson's settlement. This is the first settlement we have seen in California. He is a German—speaks English well—and is rapidly accumulating a fortune here. His stock are worth \$60,000.

We have some gentlemen from the mines in our camp. They speak encouragingly of the prospects for obtaining gold. We are now sixty miles from the mines.

Wm. B. Ide lives 25 miles from here. He is well known as a successful miner and is said to be worth \$100,000. Today we saw Indians. Mercury 61 at sunrise—92 at noon—70 at sun set.

Tuesday, 11th.—Left camp at 8 o'clock, and moved to the mouth of Deer Creek—a beautiful stream—a mile below the residence of Mr. Lawson. We find excellent wild grapes here. The country around is thickly timbered with heavy oaks of low growth. We exchanged a poor mule for a fat beef, on which we dined—after which the company which was formed on the Nebraska, by unanimous vote was dissolved—the object for remaining together no longer existing; previous to which a vote of thanks was tendered to Mr. J.[ohn] B. Watson for the able and impartial manner in which he had discharged the duties of Superintendent during the journey. Our company subsequently decided to locate at Redding's¹⁷⁹ diggings, near the Sacramento; and that two wagons be dispatched for Sacramento City—under the direction of Messrs. Biddle, Smith and Sattley.

The Indians here are friendly—wash our clothes, bring us grapes, and execute other jobs—and are delighted with the old clothes we give them for their services.

Redding, Shasta County, California

Redding, officially the City of Redding, is the county seat of Shasta County, California, in the northern part of the state. It lies along the Sacramento River, is 162 miles north of Sacramento, and 120 miles south of the Oregon border. Interstate 5 bisects the entire city, from the south to north before it approaches Shasta Lake, which is located 15 miles to the north. The 2010 population was 89,861. Redding is the largest city in the Shasta Cascade region, and it is the fourth-largest city in the Sacramento Valley, behind Sacramento, Elk Grove, and Roseville.¹⁸⁰

Thursday morning, 4 o'clock, Sept. 13th.—Messrs. Biddle and his company leave this morning for Sacramento City, to purchase provisions.

¹⁷⁹ By 1849 Pierson B. Reading had made gold discoveries on the Trinity and near the later town of Shasta. Miners were pouring north past Ide's, and he probably profited at "prices current" for his products. The Weber letter may contain a clue of the location where Ide did some of his mining, because he was consulted regarding the Reading diggings.

¹⁸⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redding,_California

A few general remarks will now close this journal.

After traveling between five and six months, and passing over twenty two hundred and eighty nine miles, according to the time kept by our own company, which is one hundred miles shorter than some other companies make it, we reached this point in perfect health and fine spirits; having every reason to believe that our anticipations on leaving Springfield will be fully realised. No one of our company has been dangerously ill since leaving home, except Benjamin Taylor, who was soon restored to health and strength. The only loss we have sustained on the route is one mule, and that, we suppose, died from the bite of a rattle-snake. The kind treatment we have received from emigrants all along the road, prove that our company have acquired the respect and esteem of all that knew us; and we feel certain that no train has been more successful in getting through than ours. We would rejoice if we were certain that all would get through as safely as ourselves.

BIDDLE'S CALIFORNIA JOURNAL.
[Received by the last arrival from San Francisco.]

Monday, September 10th, 1849.—If you have read the date corresponding with this, which I enclosed in another envelope, you will remember you left us in trouble—our wagon broke and almost without water and grass; and myself, Messrs. Weber and Broadwell with the broken wagon, three miles from camp. In the morning, we had some assistance to repair the wagon, and, a little after breakfast, we were in camp and all hands ready for a start. The train was soon on its winding way. We commenced the ascent of a steep hill, and, after traveling four miles along a rocky road, we came into the Valley of the Sacramento. The joy felt by all, I cannot describe.

After we got fairly into the Valley, we formed a line, hoisted our little flag and gave three cheers for the victory we had achieved. It was evident we had not conquered without scars and broken bones. The men, with their long beards and dirty and ragged appearance, would have elicited the sympathy of our friends could they have taken a look at us. But we were all together—men, mules and wagons.

We regretted the smoky state of the atmosphere which obstructed our view of the surrounding scenery. After traveling four miles over a stony road, we came to Deer creek—which is here a fine, clear and beautiful stream. Crossed over, and two miles below encamped, at the distance of half a mile from Lawson's house. This is our first glimpse of civilization since we left Fort Hall. Distance 9 miles.

Tuesday, 11th.—This morning, at an early hour, we hitched up our teams and moved two miles lower down the creek, to where the grass was better. Here we resolved to stay, a few days, to get some fresh meat, do up washing, &c. We negotiated for a beef by giving a broken down mule in exchange. At this place, we were amused by the manner in which the Indians caught the cattle they desired to butcher. They would start after them, on horse-back, and, in a few minutes, bring them in, with a lasso wound around their horns and hind legs. In that condition, they would throw them and drag them in alive. The horses are well trained and draw by the horn of the saddle. The sport of lassoing is very exciting. We killed a beef and had a feast; after which a meeting was held and the union, which had, until then, subsisted among the different companies, was declared to be dissolved. A vote of thanks was tendered Mr. J. B. Watson for the impartial manner in which he had discharged the duties of Superintendent.

A meeting of our company was then called to determine which was our best course to pursue—when it was resolved that we should start two wagons down to Sacramento City, for provisions, forthwith, while the other wagons would pursue their course, up the Sacramento [River], to what is known as "Redding's Diggins;" and a committee was appointed to make out a report of what we wanted. At night, the report was handed in and accepted, and Messrs. Smith, Sattly and myself, were commissioned to accompany the wagons. It was determined we should start

on Thursday morning. Accordingly, we set about making preparations.— I was glad to be one of the men chosen to go to the City, as I hoped it would be the means of enabling me, the sooner, to get letters from home. The distance to the City of Sacramento, which is at Sutter's Fort, is estimated at 130 miles. The point to which the other wagons are going is 65 m. distant.

Wednesday, 12th.—This morning it was announced that all who desired to write letters home must have them ready during the day. After breakfast, all retired, and most of the day was spent in writing letters. Our wagons were put in trim, the teams selected, &c.

Eastman's company started up to the mines, today. They were not ready to send below, at this time. A great many Indians have visited us, and some have been employed to do our washing—which they do badly. Around this rancho, there are some of the most degraded Indians we have seen since we left St. Jo. They are perfectly naked, without shame, and lazy and filthy—although they are large, muscular men and every way adapted to some useful employment. All these ranchos have a hundred or more Indians attached who lead lives as servile as the most abject slave.

The buildings of this country are composed of sun-dried brick and covered with boards, and are kept by men who have no families, who are principally engaged in raising horses and cattle—the prices of which have raised considerably since the discovery of gold.

Thursday, 13th —We had the luxury of a cloudy morning. Looking around camp, at an early hour, it was discovered that two of our men were missing. They had absconded, during the night, taking with them all their valuables. Their names are Odenheimer and Jacob Uhler. They were sent out by Mr. Thomas Campbell, with Mr Weber as agent. They may come back, but we think not. When the thing is fully ascertained, I will say more about it.

At 8 a. m., the wagons were ready to start—so we bade farewell, and were soon on the road.— Traveled eight miles and nooned. In the afternoon, we followed the bottom—crossed the dry beds of several creeks—came to Potter's creek, upon the bank of which Mr. Potter and his family reside. The interior of the house presented a much better appearance than any we had seen, for a long time. Near this dwelling is an Indian village, called a Rancho-ree, comprising a population of one hundred. I saw here some very fine hogs. Encamped one mile from the house, under an ample oak, where there was an abundance of good grass.— Distance 21 miles.

Feather River

Friday, 14th.—Still cloudy. Started a little after sunrise. Passed through a belt of sparse, scattering timber. In five miles, we came to a brook, where were many vines filled with rich clusters of grapes. Five miles further, we crossed Butter creek—a stream forty feet wide, and rushing on its course with arrowy swiftness. Down this, we traveled two miles and came to Neal's rancho, where were five main buildings, in the midst of a thick grove. Mr. Neal has a fine looking family, and a great many Indians about him. We then emerged from the timber, and passed along a fertile prairie. Nooned ten miles from Neal's. Then traversed an undulating prairie with soil of a reddish cast; and next entered a forest, extending two miles to Feather River, and encamped beneath the branches of a large oak. These trees are not very tall, but many of them spread out so as to cover a surface of more than a hundred feet, some of the branches reaching to the ground. Grass good. The noise of the water aided us in making a good night's rest. Distance 30 miles.

Saturday, 15th.—Remains cloudy. Our road led us down the river six miles, when we came to two rancho-rees. The tenements consisted of holes dug in the ground and covered with dirt, in the same manner as our vegetable houses. The door is so small that a person is obliged to get on his knees to enter; and a hole in the clay roof permits the smoke to escape in winter. They had in store cribs of acorns for their sustenance in winter. — Most of these Indians were naked. Two miles from this, we came to the crossing of the river, which is hereabout three

hundred yards wide. — Two miles down the river, we came to Rother's rancho—a rather poor thing, attached to which is a ranchoree. Five miles beyond, we came to Burch's house. Here there is a bend in the river, and the road leaves it, for some distance, making towards Juba River, [pronounced Uba.] Passed two miles through timber, then eight miles over prairie, with, here and there a tree and no grass. This brought us to the Juba—a pretty stream, one hundred yards wide. Crossed over and encamped, where we found excellent grass. Within view is a rancho of good appearance, where provisions are kept for sale. Distance 25 miles.

Sunday, 16th. We lay over here, today, and our mules are faring well. The wolves disturbed our rest, last night, by their barking and prowling about the camp. This morning, when we came to look, we found no meat for breakfast — the wolves had walked off with it, bag and all. — We breakfasted on coffee and crackers, and devoted most of the day to writing.

I am now fairly in the Valley of the Sacramento, and bound for Sacramento City—though not with my wash-bowl on my knee.

We are now 2067 miles from St. Jo., and 2410 m. from Springfield.

Monday, 17th.—Cool morning. Traveled down the bottom until we came to Feather River, which seems to have increased in size since we left it. — After traveling sixteen miles, we came to Bear River, which might, more properly, be called a branch, it being only six feet wide at the ford. — The banks are, however, very steep and it may contain a great deal of water in the spring-time. Four miles further, we came to Nichol's rancho. Mr. N. is putting up a very good two story house. Here we struck an extensive prairie; over which we went four miles to a pool of water. Two miles beyond this, we came to water again. We left the main road and encamped, about three-quarters of a mile to the right, near a pool. Distance, today, 26 miles.

The grass being far from good, we started early and proceeded across the prairie, finding no grass until we reached the timber bordering along the American Fork, at which we arrived at 2 p. m. This being but three miles from the City, and the pasture good, we concluded to encamp and stay here while we went in to make purchases. Very many are encamped around us.

63. Benjamin R. Biddle's California Journal, Concluded.

Wednesday, 19th.—After breakfast, Mr. Smith and myself started, for the City, on foot. Two miles from camp, we came to the American Fork, pulled our boots off and waded it. It is a limpid, pretty stream, one hundred yards wide at this point, which is a mile above its confluence with the Sacramento, and but a little distance above where the business of the place is now done.

Sacramento, California

In the Sacramento bottom, we came to the City. It is perfectly new and presents a singular appearance. There are but few frame houses put up as yet, except the light frames brought from Yankee Land. Many are, however, in the course of rapid construction. Large business establishments, selling their thousands monthly, are built of a few posts set in the ground and covered, sides and roof, with common muslin. These white tent-houses, scattered among green, over-hanging trees, make up a scene beautiful and romantic. There are some tolerably good houses, but none over a story and a half high. Lumber is scarce and commands a heavy price. Mills in the neighboring pineries are much needed. The Sacramento, at this point, is broad and deep, the tide running several miles above. Frigates, schooners and barques are lying here. Property is very high. Everything is selling at the top of the market. We learned the prices of some articles; and, to give you a general idea of the state of affairs, I will mention them— Bread 50c. per loaf, pickled pork 25c. per lb., fresh beef 30c. per lb., bacon hams 60c., sides 45 to 50c., cheese 60 to 65c., butter \$1 per lb. when sold by the keg; flour \$16 per bbl., pork \$40 per bbl., molasses 75c. per gal., sugar 16c. per lb., tea \$1 to 1,50 per lb., black tea ditto, crackers 20c. per lb., two-gallon tin pans \$3,50 to 4 apiece, canteens \$2, picks \$4 to 6,

shovels \$ 2,50, small crow-bars \$4, hay \$45 to \$60 per ton. Mules are worth from \$100 to 200—accordingly as they are fat or poor; oxen are selling from \$50 to 100 per yoke; wagons are in little demand, as the emigrants ate selling off a great amount of their stuff; horse-hire comes to \$10 per day. A common laboring man commands \$10 per day—mechanics something more, but how much I did not learn. Boarding can be had for \$3 or 4 per day.

The companies have nearly all dissolved and sold whatever they owned as common stock—Those big companies from the East, with large capital, which brought everything with them, have had the most to sell; but the prices have made the transportation of their articles a handsome business. Experience demonstrates that large companies do not hang well together. Very many, when they arrive here, do not feel disposed to go into the mines and dig, but there are so many ways of making money out of those who do go, that many are tempted to remain here. In preference to working in the mines, some resort to keeping eating houses, others open coffee houses, gambling hells, livery stables, &c., &c.

Today, I saw Wm. Todd, the Doctor's son, who has been here some time. He looks well and tells me he has enjoyed good health; and, from what I see and hear of him, he has done well.—He tells me that James F. Reed is living and doing well. Key's brother is in Monterey, working at his trade. Cook Matheny and Reuben McDaniel are here, and are not engaged at anything now, but have a prospect of business in a few days. Capt. B. R.s [Biddle] is here and making money by buying and selling mules. Young Swizler is with him. Mr. Cook and David Eaton are here. They have been trading and have done well. Mr. E. [aton] is spending this evening with us at the camp. Mr. Nourse is here, engaged in buying and selling. John S. Bradford is fifty miles below this, in company with Mr. Semple. Henry Spotswood started down to the Bay, today. I sent my Journal up to the 10th instanter, by him, to be mailed. I find no letters here for myself or any of our company, and have requested Mr. S.[potswood] to have our letters forwarded to this point. Not receiving any intelligence from home, after so long an absence, was, you may be sure, a severe disappointment. I feel encouraged, and, I think, with ordinary luck, we will have something to send home, in the spring. The mines are averaging, to every digger, an ounce a day—which is \$16.

The prices of the articles I have given you, are those of the City, and are doubled in the mines. Bacon, flour, coffee and sugar are often \$1 per lb. tobacco \$2.50 per lb., and boots, shoes and implements to work with, are put at an extravagant rate. Driving team is good business. I asked some teamsters what they would charge to haul goods to where we are going, which is two hundred miles, and learned they would not go for less than fifty dollars per hundred miles. Wages are regulated by what a man can make in the mines. Time, here, is more emphatically money, than any other place I ever saw.

I bought a newspaper, today, for 25c., in the hope that it might contain some news from the States. For five long months, we are entirely ignorant of everything which has transpired at home.

William Enyert Party Arrival in California September 19, 1849

Wm. Enyert, who was in company with Robert [S.] Lightfoot and James Callerman, arrived together with another company from this city, — Grant Addison, Spergin, Wm. Shields, John Smith and Giles Taylor. They arrived in California on the 19th of September.¹⁸¹ Robert S. Lightfoot, born on March 13, 1825 in Kentucky, came to Sangamon County with his parents, went to California soon after the discovery of gold and died there

¹⁸¹ Power, p. 293.

**64. Elijah Cook Matheny Letter From Sacramento River
September 23, 1849**

Journal, Wednesday, November 28, 1849.¹⁸²

Sept. 23, 1849

I am at this time on Sacramento river, in a schooner, going down the river. Of the country, I see but little;—the shores of the river being lined completely with willows and grape vines—The weather during the day is hot; in the night cold. We are meeting crafts bound for Sacramento city. Among them is the barque Harriet, just from round Cape Horn, with 100 emigrants,—all sanguine of success. O, bitterly, will they be disappointed: California is not now the place to make money that it once was; but many will still make money. I am here now—and glad of it—but would surely not advise any of my friends to come out. I would never think of making this country my home.

Money can be made here yet. All a man wants here is energy, perseverance and economy. Yet I would advise all who are doing well at home to stay there; and especially do not come across the country. Twenty millions would be no inducement for me to take that route again. No sirree! I will live here ten years before I will go that route again.

When I first came to the country, I took a claim and labored faithfully, but met with poor encouragement. Washer after washer of the dirt did we clean out, and found but small particles of gold. At length, one afternoon, when I had been toiling, and sweating and digging among the rocks, till I was almost dead. I again filled up my pan, poured it into the machine, saw it washed out;—and, as usual, it was a failure. I then threw away my pick, cursing the ill-fortune that had brought me to the country,—and saying “away with mining—I am for leaving this country CERTAIN!” So, we went down and settled our bills, sold our machine and tools, sent for our mules, and went off to Sacramento, expecting to go from there to San Francisco, and from there to the States. We reached Sacramento and there saw many friends; my mind underwent a change, and I am now perfectly well, and satisfied to stay in the country two or three years.

There is a great deal of sickness in this country—diarrhea and chills and fever. [John S.] Bradford is selling goods at Benicia; Mr. [R. S.] Eaton is sending goods up to the mines. Capt. Roberts is still trading in mules and horses. [Charles] Maltby and his wife are keeping a boarding house. Dry goods here are cheap. I have seen shirts sell at \$5 per dozen; woolen pants at from \$137 1-2 to \$4 per pair, etc

E. Cook Matheny

**65. David Logan Letter From Oregon
September 1849**

Journal, February 21, 1850

A letter from David Logan, Esq., dated in Oregon last September, states that he arrived in good health, made his claim, had secured a fair ferry which was yielding him a handsome return, that he was pleased with the country, and that he his prospects were good. He refers to another letter for particulars, which has not been received.

¹⁸² *Journal*, Wednesday, November 28, 1849, p. 3.

66. John B. Weber Journal*Journal*, Friday, January 25, 1850.¹⁸³**Mr. Weber's Journal**

(Concluded)

September 19, 1849- October 1, 1849

Wednesday, 19th-- Those of us who left the wagons at Cottonwood creek, got to the mines this morning, and had an opportunity to see how gold is taken from the earth and dig a little ourselves. In a few hours, Mr. Fuller succeeded in getting out about sixteen dollars worth, to which others of us had added some little when our wagons came up, and we ceased our interesting employment to conduct them over the hills to the place of our encampment, which is at Camp Hill Springs. This point is at the head of wagon travel; and the miners, generally, who work for miles around have located here. We have a fine spring to ourselves, and are encircled with a forest of pine and oak. Temperature -- sun-rise 64; noon 98; sun-set 79.

Thursday, 19th—To-day, most of our men were engaged arranging things in camp, whilst others were operating in the mines. About noon, Mr. Fuller dug out a lump of gold, mixed with gravel, weighing two pounds and a quarter, supposed to be worth about three hundred dollars. In addition to this he got about fifteen dollars worth. Others found but little. Temperature—sun-rise 68; noon 98; sun-set 82.

Friday, 20th—Our men were out “prospecting”—that is, looking for “undiscovered mines.” Some few discoveries were made; but time alone can tell whether they will prove valuable. Temp—sun-rise 70; noon 99; sun-set 80.

Saturday, 21st—This day has been spent in making preparations for the future; some few only hunting for gold, and those were nearly unsuccessful. Temp—sun-rise 72; noon 98; sun-set 84.

Sunday, 22^d —We are now spending our 26th Sabbath at Camp Hill Springs—where we expect to remain during the approaching winter. Our encampment is some four miles from the Sacramento; forty-five miles above the residence of Mr. [William B.] Ide; one hundred and eighty-four miles above Sacramento city, and thirty miles east of Trinity river. Temp—sun-rise 56; noon 98; sun-set 73.

Monday 24th—At a meeting of the company, held this mornings, several members were appointed to go to Clear creek to work on a bar containing gold. According to instructions, they left camp to-day. B.[enjamin] A. Watson was appointed to leave, also, with members of other companies, to “prospect” on the other side of the Sacramento. Thomas S. Bilson and myself were designated to leave camp on the morrow, for the proposed “prospecting” along the Trinity. Temp—sunrise 56; noon 98, sunset 73.

Tuesday, 25th—Mr. Dorand (in lieu of Mr. Bilson) and myself left at 8 o'clock a.m. for the Trinity river. After traveling six miles we crossed Cleer creek and continued up it ten miles; during which we forded it five times. We next arrived at a rapid little stream, which we followed up four miles, —and encamped where there was good pasture for the mules. Three miles below this point, we found several salt springs. Distance 20 miles.

Wednesday, 26th—Before sunrise, D. [Dorand] and myself took up the line of march over the hills, crossed a mountain and reached the Trinity about 11 a.m. Here we halted for two hours, and cut grass from the water's edge, with our pocketknives, to feed our mules. When rested, we proceeded a little north of west, leaving the river to our right. In the afternoon, we had a glimpse of the water, but lost sight of it again as we advanced over the hills. At 8 p.m., we encamped on the bank of the Trinity. Temp—sunrise 50; noon 96; sunset 65

¹⁸³ *Journal*, Friday, January 25, 1850, p. 2.

Thursday, Sept 27th.—This morning we left camp before sun-rise, and continued our journey over the hills. After traveling four miles we reached the encampment of Messrs. Simons and Parks, who informed us that the road further down the river was exceedingly bad, and very kindly offered to take care of our mules until our return. Their offer was thankfully accepted, and we continued our journey over the hills and down the river, with our provisions on our backs. At __p.m. we reached the bar named after Mr. Barrows, of Morgan county, Illinois, who it is said worked upon it very successfully. This is two miles below the Kenyon. After noticing the manner in which the miners operate in this quarter, and after having made some examinations ourselves, we left, and continued our journey homeward. At 9 p.m. we reached the encampment of Messrs. Simons and Parks, where we encamped for the night. Today we traveled 28 miles. Temperature at sun-rise 48; at noon 98; and at sunset 65.

Friday, Sept. 28.—Left camp at sun-rise, and proceeded homeward. We found much difficulty in getting our mules over the mountains, only 5 or 6 miles. We reached the foot at sun-down and encamped. Temperature—at sun-rise 40, at noon 95, and at sun-set 72.

Saturday, Sept. 29th.—Left camp before sun-rise, and continued our journey homeward. At 12 m halted, where we found grass, after which we resumed our journey; and at 6 p.m. reached camp and found Merrs. [Richard] Hodge, Broadwell, Reeves, Rodham, Johnson, [Thomas S.] Billson and Cabanis, upon their backs, — some with intermitting fever, and some with chills and fever; but none of them dangerously ill. To-day we traveled 25 miles. The whole distance from our camp to Barrow's bar, is 58 miles, and the whole route is made up of a succession of hills, — many of which are almost insurmountable. The country is thinly covered with inferior pines, here and there an oak. The Trinity is a very rapid stream, 40 to 60 feet, with a rough bed, and empties its waters into the bay of Trinidad. Temperature at sun-rise 58; at noon 94 and at sun-set 85.

Sunday, Sept. 30th.—James Gormley has been confined by sickness in our camp ever since we have been here. This morning Mr. [James] Dorand was added to our sick list, and is suffering with fever. This is our 27th Sabbath since we have been on our journey, and the time of the healthy is now well occupied in taking care of the sick. Temperature at sun-rise 67, at noon 101, and at sun-set 88.

Monday, Oct. 1st—This morning, B.[enjamin] A. Watson, Dean, and Whitehost are added to the sick list; —leaving but four well members, who are constantly employed in cooking and taking care of the sick. The most of our sick are using Dr. Hulbert's medicines, and will certainly be about in a few days. Temperature at sunrise 58; at noon 98 and at sunset 85
(to be continued)

67. Letter From Isaac Constant From Oregon Territory October 1, 1849

Journal, Springfield, February 26, 1850.¹⁸⁴

FROM OREGON.—The following is an extract of a letter from Mr. Isaac Constant, of Wolf Creek, in this county [Sangamon], who left this place last spring for Oregon, as well for his health as “to see what he could see”—dated

Oregon City, Oregon Ter., Oct. 1, 1849.

We arrived in the valley of Willamette on the 10th of September, all well and in fine spirits. I am in better health than I have been for the four last years. The boys who came with me have

¹⁸⁴ *Journal*, Springfield, February 26, 1850, p. 2.

gone to the gold mines. I shall stay here this winter, and shall go home in the spring if I can get company, and if not I shall wait till next winter and go round by water.

We have had a pleasant trip of the kind. We made the trip in four months. We left [John B.] Watson on the west side of the Black Hills. His company thought we traveled too fast for them. They will get in about twenty days after us.

I have been at Hussey's, Burden's, Bird's and Yocum's. They are all well and doing well. I have not seen much of the country yet, but I am pleased with what I have seen. It is a healthy country. The people look fresh and healthy. A man can make a living here with half the labor he can in the States.

Provisions in the city and through the country are high. Bacon is 25 cents a lb., beef from 8 to 12 per lb., butter and cheese 50 cents per lb., potatoes \$2 per bushel, onions \$4 per bushel, wheat \$2 per bushel, flour from 6 to 8 cents per lb. Wages are almost in proportion. Common laborers are getting from \$4 to \$6 a day, carpenters from \$8 to \$12, clerks from 1 to 2,000 dollars a year and board.

The people of Oregon have nearly all been to the mines. They have made from one to ten thousand dollars each. A man can make from 16 to \$50 a day in the mines, but it is very sickly. I thought if I wanted to labor, I could do well enough here. I can get \$16 a thousand for shingles, and can make from 10 to 1200 a day.

Tell G. M. that I have seen that big timber. I have seen trees 300 feet high. I have seen one acre of timber that I believe would fence 200 acres of land.

Wheat, oats, potatoes, onions and turnips are fine. They sow wheat from September to June, and harvest from July to October. This is not a corn country—the nights are too cold. But there is no necessity for corn here. The range is good the year round.

I have sold the wagon for one hundred dollars. The oxen I have not sold yet. I can get one hundred dollars a yoke. I have been offered \$150 dollars for my pony. . . .

Isaac Constant.

68. Benjamin R. Biddle Journal
October-November 1849
San Francisco, California

City of SAN FRANCISCO , U. C., [Upper California]
 October 29th, 1849.

In company with David Logan,¹⁸⁵ who stood in Irwin's store, I find myself in the Alcalde's office, scribbling this letter, with the utmost possible expedition. I came down, yesterday morning, in a sloop, for no other purpose than to get messages from home, for myself and the other members of the company. We have been treated very badly. There has not been a mail here, from the States, for four months. We have no intelligence from Illinois, whatever, save that contained in a letter to Augustus Eastman.¹⁸⁶ The mail steamer, with the back mails, is

¹⁸⁵ See p. 78.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas Eastman was born on December 5, 1771 in Kingston New Hampshire. He was married in 1792 in Augusta, Maine to Sarah Cummings. They had nine children born in Maine. Mr Eastman was captain of a cavalry company in the war of 1812 and was posted between the Kennebec and Penobscot rivers to carry dispatches back and forth Maine being a district of Massachusetts. He represented that district in the Legislature of Massachusetts four or five times. When Maine became a State, he was elected one of its Senators. He was also a Judge of the Court of

expected, daily; but it is impossible for me to wait, as two of our teams are now awaiting my return to Sacramento City, to load on provisions to take to the mines. This, you will observe, is my second trip. When I returned to the company, from Sacramento, in September, I found that most of the men had been sick—so it devolved upon me to return, to the City, for two more loads. When I arrived at Sacramento, finding neither letters nor papers had been forwarded, I judged it would be acting for the best interests of the company to come to this post-office—accordingly, I am here. Mr. [Richard] Hodge and B.[enjamin] F. Taylor are with the wagons. I find here David Logan, Mr. Grey, John Clifton and Mr. Hickox; and, I am told John Dermody is in town.

This is a place full of novelty, where everything is done on a large scale. Grey has made a fortune. If I had had the capital to operate, during the last ten days, I could have made thousands on pork and flour. Pork is worth \$45, flour \$24 per bbl., and sugar from 20 to 22c, per lb.—There is great scarcity of boots and shoes. Flour, pork, molasses and blankets are in demand. I am of opinion that every article will be run up to the highest figure, before the people of the mines will be entirely supplied. We have enough to do us, during the winter and spring; and, if winter does not come too hard upon us, there is no danger of harm to us. But we will be shut out from any news from home until spring.

Fortunes are being made here fast, by the lucky ones. A city is being built up, in a few months. There are people here from almost every clime— but the most curious are the Chinese. There are a great many Chileans mixed in with this floating population. The streets are crowded with people and there is a great show of business. The harbor is crowded with the vessels of every nation, with their national colors flying from the masthead. From the circumjacent hills, the view of the shipping, lying at rest in the harbor, is surpassingly beautiful.

I see but few ladies—and those, I think, had better remained at home.

There is but one church in the city—and that Baptist. Other denominations preach, but they do it in tents.

Weber, Taylor and myself, are the only persons who have escaped being sick, in our company. We have not done much yet but hope we may during the winter. I think, we are not discouraged. The gold is in the streams and hills—and we mean to get it out. If I find it is going to be sickly in the mines, during next summer, I shall go to Oregon, and come down again in the fall, so as to operate a few months before starting for home. I must say, in short, that I hope and believe our expedition will not prove unsuccessful.

Odenheimer and [Jacob] Uhler did not come back.

B. R. Biddle.

N. B. —Sold a lump of gold, today, for the company, for \$300. It weighed twenty-seven ounces but contained some rock. It was bought as a specimen. Mr. Fuller found it.

B. R. B.

Sessions in Waldo county where he lived. Mrs Sarah Eastman died on September 3, 1827 and Thomas Eastman was married in October 1828 in Boston, Massachusetts to Susan Frothingham a native of that city. They had one child in Maine and moved to Auburn, Illinois in 1836. Of his children only six came to Sangamon County namely David, born on October 20, 1794 and was married on January 1, 1817 in Maine to Salinda Wood, a native of Winthrop in the same State. They had four children and came to Auburn, Sangamon county, Illinois in 1836 or 7. Of their children Augusta born in Maine went from Sangamon County to California and died there.

69. John B. Weber Journal*Journal, Saturday, January 26, 1850.*¹⁸⁷**Mr. Weber's Journal**

(Concluded)

October 2, 1849-October 8, 1849

Tuesday, October 2 --the sick are better; but no work is done out of camp, in consequence of our sickness. This evening, we received information from Messrs. [Benjamin Robert] Biddle, [William P.] Smith and [Albert] Sattle being within ten miles, with our provisions, and Smith and Sattley being sick with chills and fever. Temperature -- sunrise 69; noon 97; sunset 84.

Wednesday, 3rd. -- Last night, the weather grew stormy and cold. This morning, our patients are convalescing. Immediately after breakfast, Messrs. J. B. Watson and Ben[jamin F.] Taylor left camp to meet Biddle's company, and Fuller and myself remained, in camp, to wait upon the sick. The weather has been pleasantly cool during the whole day. At 4 p.m., Mr. Eli Cook arrived here and took supper with us. He is well and in fine spirits.--At five, Messrs. Biddle, [William P.] Smith and [Albert] Sattley came into camp--their mules being in as good a condition as when they left Springfield. Temp. sunrise 56; noon 74; sunset 71.

Thursday, 4th. -- The sick are still improving; but no work been out of camp. At noon, Mr. Fuller was added to the sick list, being taken with chills and fever. Delightful weather. Temp sunrise 58; noon 75; sunset 63.

Friday, 5th. --Invalids slowly improving. [Lewis] Johnson, [John] Rodham and [Richard] Hodge are now helping to do the work in camp. Weather fine. Temp. -- sunrise 58; noon 78; sunset 65.

Saturday, 6th. [William B.] Broadwell, Bilson and [B. D.] Reeves are able to assist us. In consequence of sickness, on Monday last, our regular monthly meeting was postponed until this afternoon-- at which time the meeting was organized, and officers elected to serve until the first Monday in November, as follows: Jno. B. Watson, President; J.[ohn] B. Weber, Secretary, Lewis Johnson, Treas, and E. Fuller sup.

After the election, it was unanimously resolved that Messrs. Biddle, [Richard] Hodge and [Benjamin F.] Taylor be sent to the city for two more loads of provision. Temp. sunrise 58; noon 75; sunset 69.

Sunday, 7th. -- Sattley and Smith are sufficiently recovered to make pretty good hands at the table. Today is very pleasant. Temp. -- sunrise 58; noon 76; sunset 63.

It is now the mid-hour of night. All, but myself, have retired. Loneliness and darkness are all around me. Biddle expects to leave, on the morrow, for Sacramento city; therefore, I must finish my letter tonight-- Though, in doing so, I'm compelled to pass over many interesting details it would've afforded me pleasure to communicate.

We have received no information from Springfield, save what was contained in a letter to Augustus Eastman¹⁸⁸, written by his brother George. This letter was seen, at the office in San Francisco, by Henry Spotswood, who paid the postage, brought it to Sacramento and gave it to Mr. Biddle. In this way, by near accident, Augustus obtained his letter. Arrangements have been made to get our letters and papers from San Francisco; and we anticipate, Mr. B will bring any quantity of them on his return.

¹⁸⁷ *Journal*, Saturday, January 26, 1850, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ See footnote number 186.

Many reports, we learn, are in circulation in the states, of sickness and suffering and death on the plains. Doubtless, much that has been published, throughout the Union, is true; but nothing of a disastrous character happened to us. Our position in the line was such that we were happily ignorant of the distress in the rear. We succeeded in getting through as easily—perhaps, more pleasantly than any other company. Since we have been in the mines, the weather has been excessively hot; and our men, like all other strangers eager to learn something of mining, overexerted themselves, and, in this way, were made sick. For a while, indeed, it seemed impossible that any one could avoid the malady rapidly spreading on every hand; but the weather is moderating; and the sick, generally, are recovering. Some few have died. Of our company, none were dangerously ill; but all were down, except J. B. Watson, B. R. Biddle, Benjamin F. Taylor and myself. I never enjoyed better health than I have since leaving Springfield. The medicines which Dr. Holbert gave me are all used by our sick—and they are being restored to health. What shall we do in future? Tell the old Doctor to answer this question. Our men would pay any reasonable price for the red drops and pills, if they could get them.

We are here in the mines, and see no reason to feel discouraged. Though fortunes are not so easily acquired as anticipated by some, yet I am positive that men who will work can make, at least, from eight to sixteen dollars per day. My brother Philip [Weber] averages some twenty dollars a day, during the time he worked. Heretofore, when well, most of us were “prospecting,” so as to acquire such information as would enable us to take a judicious location for the winter. Notwithstanding the difficulties under which we have labored, we have dug two hundred and sixty-six dollars worth of gold, not including the lump found by Fuller, supposed to be worth three hundred dollars—making in the aggregate five hundred and sixty-six dollars. In eighteen days, three of our men with two teams brought 40 cwt. of provisions from the City, for which we paid three and four hundred dollars—whilst here they are worth three and four thousand. Therefore, if we should be disposed to sell, when our other provisions arrive, we might dispose of six thousand dollars of provision, twenty two hundred dollars worth of mules, two hundred dollars worth of wagons and five hundred dollars worth of other property—making in total, eight thousand-nine hundred dollars, or nearly three times as much as we paid into the treasury at Springfield.

Many are discouraged here, and thousands are preparing to return as soon as practicable. Still, I am confident, we shall be successful, and time will only prove it was well we engaged in the enterprise.

Our location is 184 miles from the nearest post office, which renders it difficult to send or receive letters; and, for all we know, when the rainy season comes on, the rivers may be too high to cross—so we shall be cut off from communication with the regular mails.

We are getting on a very full supply of provisions, and the people around us are pursuing the same course—so we shall be prepared for any emergency. California is flooded with everything to make the emigrant comfortable, and can be obtained for low prices at the towns along the navigable rivers; but the high prices paid for hauling enhances their value immensely at the mines.

Monday, Oct. 8.—This morning is very pleasant. B.[enjamin] A. Watson, Thos. Whitehurst and E. Fuller are now upon the well list. Messrs. [Ethan T.] Cabanis and [F. S.] Dean are the only members now sick; but they are improving, and I think will be well in a few days. Thomas Yocum is here from Oregon. He is working in the mines, and is doing tolerably well. He appears to be much pleased with Oregon.

70. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Wife
From Camp Upper Springs Reddings Diggings, California
October 7, 1849¹⁸⁹

Camp at Upper Springs Reddings Diggings California
 October 7, 1849

Dear Beloved Wife:

At length my dearest wife my pen is compelled to inform you of other than good and cheering news. The last letter I wrote to you from Lassens informed you of our safe arrival there and of our having determined on locating in these mines. Well two of our wagons and three men went from that point down to Sacramento City for supplies the balance of us started for this place full of golden expectations from the representations that had been made to us. We put the loads of four wagons on the two we kept with us we also kept the honest mules and we had the hardest kind of a time in reaching ??? with our loads we broke down a wagon and had to stop and repair it. We finally got here in a weeks travel and located on the side of a high mountain some 3 miles from the diggings there being no place nearer. We found the diggings anything else but ??? good they having been worked a great deal by Oregon men last summer and the best spots all dug out and I expect it is so all over all the mines in the country as we see people every day from the lower diggings who say that. We spent the first week in fixing up, looking round us, digging a little, some finding considerable gold the weather being so hot it was impossible to work much. Now for the bad news my dear. Last Monday week I was appointed to join a party who were going to cross the river and explore the country for new mines. We started 18 men strong but two backed out from fear of Indians it being understood that they were very numerous and hostile. We however went on and constructed a raft of logs and crossed the river in safety and spent three days in examining the county. We saw but very few Indians and they were timid as hares but we saw where numbers of them lived who have just fled from their habitations at our approach. I discovered a gold mine which may be of value to us but can't tell till we work it. I got back to camp on Thursday night and found Johnson, [Thomas S.] Bilson, [Richard] Hodge, [William B.] Broadwell, [Ethan T.] Cabanis, [John] Rodham and ??? down sick with Sacramento Fever as it is called, a kind of intermittent fever or chill and fever which is very debilitating and which they say everybody has to have. Next day I was taken down myself. Next after that some of the men who had been prospecting over in Clear Creek came home and one of them [Thomas J.] Whitehurst was sick. Next after that Weber and ??? who had been ??? to the Trinity River on the Pacific side of the mountains ??? and ??? was sick on the Wednesday following. ??? was taken down last Tuesday found us sick ??? Made things look very dull I assure you but thank kind Providence I believe all are getting over it and I think we will be able to go to work in the course of ten days. Do not give yourself any uneasiness about me my dearest love I am much better than I was three or four days since and have no doubt I shall soon be entirely well. As to the fortunes we were going to make so fast in this country, we are not near so sanguine as we were and if the prospects does not brighten you may expect me home in June next. If I shall not come then you may know I am doing well, so this certainly is good news to you my love for if I should not do well I will be sooner with you and if I should do well it will be a consolation to you for my absence.

When our wagons return again from the city (they start down tomorrow) we will have provisions to last us until May next and dearest that will I fear be the only chance I shall have of getting any news from you as they say is almost impossible to travel in this country in winter. But I shall have chances of sending letters to you persons will be going down the river in small boats but can not come up it by looking on the map you will find Mount ??? we are fifty miles south of that. I forgot to mention to you that Edenheimer and Jake Weber ??? the night before we

¹⁸⁹ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

left Lessens. You recollect that Weber paid the money for their outfit. Nobody was sorry that they went but Weber as they were no account in the world. We got some papers the Tribune of the 28th June from which I see the cholera is very bad in some parts of the country. In St. Louis particularly. [Augustus] Eastman¹⁹⁰ received a letter from his brother dated 24 June and you had not been affected by the epidemic ??? and I hope and believe you will not to any degree.

Dearest wife I hope you are well and happy. If God has ??? ??? by this time have another sweet

71. Charles Maltby Letter From Sacramento City, California
October 12, 1849

Journal, Monday, December 24, 1849.¹⁹¹

A letter from Mr. CHARLES MALTBY, dated at "Sacramento City, Oct. 12," states that he saw Mr. Biddle and Mr. Condell a few days before; and that the Springfield boys were high up on the Sacramento, doing well.

John B. Weber's Journal in California to be Published

Journal, Saturday, March 23, 1850.¹⁹²

THE DAILY JOURNAL.

We have received through the politeness of Mrs. J. B. Weber a continuation of Mr. W.'s Journal in California, which we shall commence in Monday's paper. It embraces a period from the 9th of October to the 23d December last.

Coming and Going

Journal, Monday, March 25, 1850.¹⁹³

About twenty teams have left Cass county this spring for California and Oregon. Mr. Wm. Miller, who was in the mines the season before last, and returned last summer, after his family, goes with seven teams to Oregon.

Mr. Benjamin Gatton, (whose letter to his son we published some time since,) has returned from California to his home in Mason county.— He does not like California, with all its gold. The country is sickly, and none but the strongest constitutions can stand the climate.

¹⁹⁰ See footnote number 186.

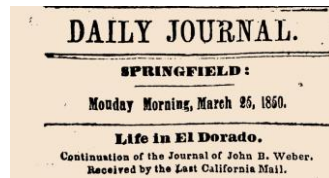
¹⁹¹ *Journal*, Monday, December 24, 1849, p. 2.

¹⁹² *Journal*, Saturday, March 23, 1850, p. 3.

¹⁹³ *Journal*, Monday, March 25, 1850, p. 3.

72. John B. Weber Journal

October 10-31, 1849

Journal, Thursday, March 28, 1850.¹⁹⁴

Life in El Dorado

Continuation of the Journal of John B. Weber,
Received by the last California Mail.Springhill Camp,
Dec. 23d, 1849

My last letter was written from this point, and contained my Journal up to Oct. 9th, 1849.

On the 9th, the weather was cold and foggy—Messrs. [F. S.] Dean and [Ethan T.] Cabanis still on the sick list. —At 11 a.m. it commenced raining, and continued until 9 p.m. Temp. at sunrise 58; noon 75, sunset 68.

Wednesday, Oct. 10th—Weather cool and foggy. C.[abanis] and D.[ean] are getting better slowly, and the other men are all at work. To-day Mr. [Richard] Hodge left for Sacramento city, expecting to overtake Messrs. [Benjamin Robert] Biddle and [Benjamin F.] Taylor at the hearing post, which is about 16 miles south of our encampment. At 6 p.m. it commenced raining and continued for several hours. During the whole day, I was confined to the tent with the sick head-ache—Temp. sunrise 52, noon 72, sunset 63.

Thursday, 11th—Clear and cool. Invalids improving; others all at work. Temp. sunrise 52, noon 72, sunset 58.

Friday, 12th—Pleasant and clear. C. and D. are helping do the work in camp. Messrs. Eaton and [Eli] Cook arrived here this evening, intending to remain. Temp. sunrise 48, noon 71, sunset 74.

Saturday, 13th—Fine and clear. All well. E. and C., having examined the mines in this quarter, abandoned the idea of remaining here, and left for the lower mines. T sunrise 58, noon 75, sunset 68.

Sunday, 14th—Weather clear and pleasant. We are spending our 29th Sabbath at Camphill Springs. The members are all well. This afternoon, about 3 o'clock, Mr. H. Keelin and brother arrived here and took supper with us. They were both well and in fine spirits. T sunrise 66, noon 78, sunset 74.

Monday, 15th—Weather good. Messrs. J. B. Watson, [E.] Fuller, [Albert] Sattley, and myself prospected for gold on Clear creek, about six miles from our encampment. With tolerable success; the company were working in camp and at other points. T. sunrise 62, noon 83, sunset 78.

Tuesday, 16th—Fine weather. Today B. A. Watson, B. D. Reeves and J.[ohn] Rodham joined us on Clear Creek, the residue being employed at other places, except the Dorand and Broadwell who were unwell. T. sunrise 53, noon 89, sunset 70,

¹⁹⁴ *Journal*, Thursday, March 28, 1850, p. 2.

Wednesday, 17th—Weather clear and beautiful. To-day, [Thomas S.] Bilson and Durand joined us on the creek. T. sunrise 52, noon 88, sunset 78.

Thursday, 18th—Weather beautiful. All hands employed as yesterday. T. sunrise 64, noon 91, sunset 78.

Friday, 19th—Beautiful weather. Bilson returned to camp unwell. T. sunrise 64, noon 89, sunset 74.

Saturday, 20th—Beautiful weather. T. sunrise 56, noon 90, sunset 78.

Sunday, 21st—Weather pleasant. We are now spending our 30th Sabbath at Camphill Springs. - [John] Rodham and Bilson are down with the chills and fever, the other members are all well. James Gormley is still with us, and, at present, is very ill - T. sunrise 56, noon 88, sunset 78.

Monday, 22 Pleasant weather, the two Watsons, Dorand, Reeves, Broadwell, Fuller and myself left camp for the Clear Creek mines. Gormley, Rodham, and Bilson are all getting better. Our earnings, on Clear Creek to-day amounted \$69. T. sunrise 64, noon 86, sunset 75.

Tuesday, October 23—Weather clear and pleasant. Members employed as of yesterday. This evening T.[homas] J. Whitehurst joined us on Clear Creek. Our earnings on Clear Creek to-day \$77. T. sun-rise 64, at noon 87, at sunset, 74.

Wednesday, October 24. — Weather clear and pleasant. Members employed as yesterday, our earnings amounting to \$116, on Clear Creek. Temperature sun-rise 60, at noon 75, and at sunset 69.

Thursday, October 25.—Delightful weather. Members employed as yesterday; our earnings on the creek being \$104.00. Temperature at sunrise 50, at noon 73, and sun-set 61.

Friday, October 26.—Weather very fine. This evening Mr. Smith joined us on Clear Creek. - To-day Benjamin Armstrong and Russell Watts of Oregon, formerly of Sangamon county, Illinois, together with J. D. Alvey, Wm. Fagg, Z. E. Elkin, C.[harles] C. Harvey, James Constant, Joseph Sealy, Thomas Baker, Wm Baker, Isaac Baker, Joseph Stafford, James McCleaso, and John Wells, all of whom came together from Oregon City, arrived in good health, and apparently in good spirits. Our earnings to-day amounted to \$80.

Saturday, October 27.—Weather clear and pleasant. To-day at noon those of us on Clear Creek left for our encampment at Camphill Springs, on reaching the camp we found Messrs. Rodham, Dean, and Bilson well, and Mr. Gormley improving rapidly. Our earnings on the creek to-day was \$75. Temperature at sunrise 62, at noon 79, and at sun-set 70.

Monday, Oct. 29th—Weather very fine. After breakfast Messrs. J. B. Watson, B.[enjamin] A. Watson, F. S. Dean, A.[lbert] Sattley, Wm. P. Smith, B. D. Reeves, Wm. Broadwell, H. Dorland and myself left here this morning for the Clear Creek digging, at a point 9 miles from our encampment.—After dinner we commenced work and continued until evening. Prospects unfavorable. Our earnings amounting to but 15 or \$20. Temperature at sun-rise 64, at noon 82, and at sun set 70.

Tuesday, Oct. 30th—Weather cloudy and cold. At 2 o'clock P. M. it commenced raining and continued by showers until midnight. During the day the members on the creek prospected several bars, all of which seemed rather poor. The amount accumulated was but little—Members all well. Temperatures at sun-rise 62, at noon 80, and at sunset 68.

Wednesday, Oct. 31st—Rained by showers until ___A. M. Weather cold and chilly. After breakfast those of us on the Creek moved down...

**73. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Sacramento Valley, California
October 16, 1849¹⁹⁵**

California

October 16th 1849

Dear wife & Children

After a long and tedious and I may say tiresome journey I landed in the Sacramento Valley about one month ago. You will of course ask why I did not write sooner. In reply, I will say I was sick and did not wish to write until I got better knowing it to be one of the most unpleasant things to hear of those near and dear to us lying in strange land sicked and now however in good health but weak but gaining strength very fast. And expect to try my luck in the mines tomorrow in reference to all the reports you have heard about gold the[y] are generally true but it is not every one that makes one or five hundred dollars per day it is a kind of a lottery two men may be working by side of each other one may make five hundred dollars and the other only five per day there is no danger however but what a man can make upon an average 8 or 10 dollars per day from the best information I can get with all the chances to do better. I am in the upper mines four hundred miles above San Francisco in the Sacramento River and two hundred miles above Sacramento City. A new town laid out last fall on the Sacramento River containing now a population of 6 or 8 thousand doing an immense business goods cheap almost as in Springfield except provisions and [y] are not dear flour is worth 14 to 16 dollars per barrel pork 30 to 40 pickled beef 14 to 15. Sugar 10 to 15 cents per __ coffee same. There is no doubt that it the greatest country make money in on the face of the globe. Wages for common labor is 5 to 10 dollars per day washer women up here charge a dollar a piece for washing a shirt. Boarding is a dollar a meal. However, most men cook for themselves.

I do and live very well on about one dollar per day. Perhaps you will hear a good deal about the sickness of the country that there is a great deal of sickness in the county cannot be denied intermitted fever is the prevailing disease but is easily cured if men will take medicine in time and take care of themselves but if men were to live in Illinois as they do here I believe they would more sickly than the one here there are perhaps on half of the population here who have no tents or shelter whatever but I ____ lay down of a night on the ground a cover with a blanket and get up in the morning chilled with cold and of course get sick in reference to the trip of coming as we did by land I look upon it as one of the most foolish things a man can be guilty of as I did before I left home the hardships and exposure are immense and completely takes a man down while men can come the water trip in 40 or 50 days fresh and healthy Our company dissolved long before we got to the gold region and divide the stock some packed on mules all in fact but [Joe] Condell and myself over Calafornia. I have not heard from McDaniel _ Johnson since the landed here. [Elijah Cook] Matheny and Rueben McDonald are in the City of Sacramento Condell also went there. Gornley is here and has ben very sick for about four weeks but is now is getting better. The Webber company are here. Most of them have been sick but are all getting well the most of the men from Springfield are well at present or getting well very fast except [William] Shields who is very sick. No more at present. I shall write again shortly do the best you can my love to you all Send the children to school as much as possible when you write send to Sacramento City

Yours affectionately

Eli Cook

¹⁹⁵ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 5.

November 2, 1849 Rain Begins

Biddle, Weber and Co. had most of the roof on their building when the rains started on the second day of November; and the rest of the building was all but finished. They had also started their log cabin across the street. The sidewalls were up and the rafters were in place; so they stretched a tent canvas over the top, and had very comfortable living quarters for temporary use. They had expected to finish it properly before winter set in; but the rain did not stop long enough for them to accomplish anything until the winter was almost over.

When the creeks and rivers continued to rise the miners all had to give up work; and soon the town became crowded with the drenched, homeless men, seeking food and shelter for the winter. It was soon impossible for wagons and ox-teams to make the trip to Sacramento, and return with merchandise. When the people realized how far they were from the source of supplies—with the possibility of being flood-bound in that canyon all winter—many of them became panic stricken and decided to leave while they could still get out on horseback. They offered to sell everything they had, which could not be carried out on their horses, for whatever anyone would pay.

R. J. Walsh, who had built the ferry at Green River, early in the summer, had made money rapidly, and then sold out at an exorbitant price. When he arrived at Reading Springs he got a lot next to Biddle, Weber and Co., where he also started a trading post; and having more ready money than any one else in the village, he was able to buy large quantities of supplies from the panic stricken miners, who wanted to get to Sacramento or San Francisco before the entire low-lands were flooded. He bought their flour for 20 and 25 cents a pound, which had cost (in freight alone from Sacramento) 50 cents a pound; and that winter it sold for \$2.50 a pound at Reading Springs.

Biddle and Weber's wagons of merchandise were the last to get through from Sacramento: so, while they did not get as much from the unfortunate miners, they were well supplied with goods when the floods started to close in on them: and were able to make an enormous profit during the long, wet winter. Considering that the settlement was new, and so poorly prepared for living through three months of continual rain, it was remarkable that there was so little real suffering.

Dr. Benjamin Shurtheff, a physician from Massachusetts (who had bought the corner of the R. J. Walsh claim next to Biddle, Weber & Co.) took care of the few who were sick and needed attention. James Mackley took up the claim north-west of Biddle, Weber W Co., on which he built the St. Charles Hotel; which, at that time, was the best hotel between Oregon City and Sacramento. February brought sunshine and a recession of the floodwaters that had held them prisoners for so long; and soon the little village was again a beehive of activity.¹⁹⁶

74. Benjamin R. Biddle's Letter to Maria: November 1849

In a letter written early in November, 1849, Benjamin R. Biddle said that they were having rain and that many people were leaving, for fear of a flood; but that the idea of a flood was ridiculous, as they were on high ground and the water drained off almost as fast as it fell: and that Mr. Reading (who had lived there several years) said that rains in November never lasted long—and that it would be six weeks before the real winter started.

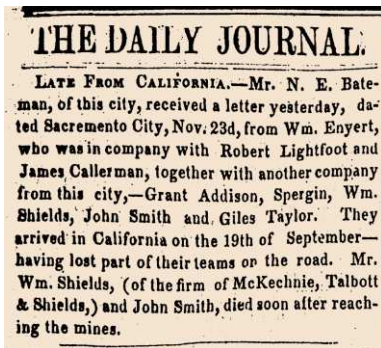
¹⁹⁶ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 91-95.

James T. Hardin Goes to California and Drowns There in Feather River
November 3, 1849
 (1813-1849)

James T. Hardin, born in Adair County, Kentucky, came to Sangamon County, Illinois with his parents. He was married on May 1, 1843, in Iowa, to Mary A. Pitzer. James went to California and was drowned by the upsetting of a skiff on Feather River on November 3, 1849.

75. William Enyert Letter From Sacramento City, California
to Springfield Relative
November 23, 1849

Journal, Tuesday, January 29, 1850.¹⁹⁷



Late from California.-- Mr. N. E. Bateman, of this city, received a letter yesterday, dated Sacramento City, Nov. 23d, from Wm. Enyert, who was in company with Robert Lightfoot and James Callerman, together with another company from this city, -- Grant Addison, Spergin, Wm. Shields, John Smith and Giles Taylor. They arrived in California on the 19th of September -- having lost part of their teams on the road. Mr. Wm. Shields, (of the firm of McKechnie, Talbot & Shields,) and John Smith, died soon after reaching the mines.

Journal* Newspaper Comments on Benjamin Robert Biddle *Journal

JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA. —Much has been said of California, and the way thither—much that were as well not said. Nevertheless, we have many interesting details from emigrants by ocean and land—the perusal of which may serve to keep us from growing dull during the long winter evenings—stories that will make more cheerful the cheerful fire-light as we ponder upon the romance of the actual. We have read what that rambling printer of the Tribune, Bayard Taylor, has chosen to tell us of the El Dorado in his Sketches of Travel, and have gone through with letters contradictory and innumerable; and, in all of them, have found nothing as interesting as Biddle's *Journal*—now in course of publication in *Journal*. True, it is not, in style, what the crabbed critic would pass muster as unexceptionable. In places, it sadly lacks logical arrangement, and the "inevitable best word" is not always at hand, yet, with all the blunders, there is in it a vein of simple natural beauty and graphic power, that fascinates and then holds you like a spell. Besides, it is the very thing we have been looking for—a vivid and truthful word-painting of a route a few years ago untraveled, but along which the living tide of emigration, is destined to flow onward to the Pacific Sea-board. We like this minute description of the scenery and incidents of every day's progress. It affords, to the reader, about the same satisfaction he would have in contemplating Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi. In short, it brings, to our hearths, a whole world of the wild and adventurous, to amuse and instruct.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ *Journal*, Tuesday, January 29, 1850, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ *Journal*, December 11, 1849, p. 2.

76. Phillip Weber Correspondent From San Francisco, California
November 26, 1849

Journal, Monday, March 25, 1850.¹⁹⁹

From our correspondent.

San Francisco, Alta California,
 November 26, 1849.

Messers S. Francis & Co. Gentlemen:-- I last had this pleasure, on the 30th of May last, on board the ship to Salem, when traveling blue ocean, to write you, per U. S. Brig Perry, from Rio, which, I hope ere long this comes to hand. And now I purpose giving you a little news of this country. It's political news, I leave for the "Weekly Pacific News", which I will mail you per steamer of the first proximo.

I was strolling through town, a weeks since, and picking my way through the mud, when, on turning the corner, an hombre accosted me with "Ain't your name Wiley?" On turning, I saw Franklin Hithcox, much to my surprise. I walked back to his house, and found him keeping the "Oahu" public house. There I saw [Elijah] Cook Matheny and [Eli] Cook and [David] Eaton, formerly of your town, and spent a very pleasant hour with them. They had returned from the mines with, I suppose, a "sizable pile." From [Eli] Cook, I obtain the following particulars:

There were, of Springfield boys, at the head of the Sacramento River, mining--John B. Watson, J.[ohn] R. Weber, [Thomas] Billson, Benjamin [A.] Watson, the three Keelings, Dean, Ben Reeves, William Broadwell, [E.] Fuller, [Richard] Hodge, [Ethan T.] Cabanis, T.[homas J.] Whitehurst, Smith and A[lbert] Sattley. Eli Cook and J.[ohn] S. Bradford work at Benecia.²⁰⁰ Robert [F.] Coffin was at the head of Feather River. Capt. Roberts was at Sacramento city trading and speculating, and making out well. Anderson, Addison and Maltby and wife were keeping boarders and making money rapidly. R. S. Eaton, D. S. Cook and S. R. Norris are in this town enjoying themselves as gentlemen of leisure-- Having made a high enough "pile" to last the winter. Of all the Springfield [people] at the head of the Sacramento, mining, [Eli] Cook says they are not making very good wages for California. Probably they average an ounce today. When he left, provisions were not so high as they have been, have since risen. Flower was \$.40 per pound, pork \$.75, sugar \$.50, coffee \$.50, tea \$1 potatoes \$.50, onions \$1.50 each, pickles per jar \$9, fresh beef 70s \$.05, salmon.

Augustus Eastman and Bowlin with their party are on the north fork of the American River, and had not been heard from since they had gone up. Cook Matheny has gone up, within the past week, to Puebla, where are Saunders and his wife and [William] Strawbridge. This place will probably be the seat of government during the winter, and will not be so apt to suffer as many others will, either from scarcity or high prices. They must now winter there, as all traveling has stopped. A mule sinks up to his belly and their sticks, when his owner either shoots him in the head or leaves him a prey to the wolves. There are plenty of deer, elks and antelopes all along the course of the rivers, and a few grizzly bears, but they're not troublesome.

A great many of the immigrants arriving at Sacramento city have turned their attention to cutting wood and hay. The latter, a very poor article worse than your Prairie hay, sells for \$1 for 16 pounds; and wood, on the River, fore.. pounds per cord-- It cost nothing but the labor of cutting. Hay is cut from the middle of July to the middle of November. You can judge when an animal can do feed only on this day. Send few feet a little Indian meal, but this being worth

¹⁹⁹ *Journal*, Monday, March 25, 1850, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ Benecia is a waterside city in Solano County, California, located in the North Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area. It served as the state capital for nearly thirteen months from 1853 to 1854.

\$16 a barrel, is not accessible to all. Barley, in ha., on which they feed cattle, has been sold here for \$22 dollars per bag of 3 bushels.

The valleys are fertile and capable raising fine crops of wheat and wild oats, and all the various garden vegetables. Cattle are fine. A Rancho, here where our boys are, contains 6000 head, nearly all wild-- it being harder to get a shot at them than a deer. ... I'll round them yearly and bring them to the "Kraut" for the purpose of branding. Wild grapes are abundant on the banks of the Sacramento. In town, they bring a dollar a bushel. They are very fine-- much better than Isabella though much smaller.

[Eli] Cook advises me never to go to the mines. He will never go again if he can make an ounce. Else taken into consideration,--that is better. He knew an "hombre," who had worked ever since the mines were discovered, as hard as he could, and he was a hail, Hardy Illinois Farmer,-- Mr. McKey, he thinks his name is,-- who had his horse stolen, was taken sick, and had not any money enough to buy another animal to come down. He was worth nothing, and uses one phrase, was, the victim of "Jill Locke." He says that just as soon as he shall be able to take a deck passage to Illinois, he will be off, --having had enough of this El Dorado. What size "Kyle" he will take home with him is extremely problematical.

Anyone who is in business in Springfield or elsewhere, making his living, had better never come to California; but those who work by the month, or at daily labor, and have no families, might come, -- as undoubtedly they would make out better than at home. A man of family, willing to bring his family here, can do well. Journeymen mechanics have recently had a meeting here to raise the price of labor. They were getting \$12 a day, but they wanted an ounce-- and for working for merchandise, \$20 a day. Their employers kick to this. Even at the former prices they can make money, as they can board and lodge very comfortably for \$22, saving \$50 a week.

Provisions continue high -- eggs are now one Dollar each: Cheese, \$1 to \$1.25 per pound, squashes a Rial per pound: meat, two rials per 1 pound, a small loaf of bread, \$1. Although flour has fallen to \$35 dollars per bushel, sperm candles, four dollars per pound, oil \$4 a gallon; butter crackers, 6 rials a pound; water crackers four rials; Wood, \$.40 a quarter on the wharf, then to be carted up town, costs at least dollars more. Having washed for myself for seven months, upon arriving here I sent seven pieces to a washer woman; but having to pay \$3.50 (six dollars a dozen) for them, I concluded hereafter to wash for myself. So every now and then, should you call on this quote on bread, send out of quotes you might better find him at the washtub. Water "EDI oh" (picky you out of) a bucket, or three cents a gallon in small quantities. Eating, drinking and sleeping costs money in California. In fact everything ...,-- nothing can be done for less than a dollar. A few days since, I sold a coil of rope line in our yard; our neighbors scales being near and more convenient. I would like nothing better than to roll coils of rope for the next year in California at that price.

November 25 I have not much news on hand to communicate since closing the previous page-- [Eli] Cook left yesterday morning for Pueblo. He is going to look for business. The distance is 50 miles; stage fair \$25.

A gun is just fired-- and I suppose it is the steamers signal. Of this I'm very glad,-- having had no letters from home direct for eight months-- the last team did not bring the Falcons meal's. A great outcry has been made here in regard to the mail, and indignation meeting was called just after the last deep steamers arrival. The consequences is that we have now "private mail" which will go and return by every steamer, delivering packages personally at our largest eastern cities. By this mail I shall hereafter soon.

Many miners have come down. The steamer *Senator* brought down yesterday about 250, and other boats are coming down. Many will winter in the Rivertown's, use all they have by gambling, and return to their work in the spring. A man stepping on board a steamboat missed

his footing, falling to the bay and was drowned. [Had] 50 pounds of gold dust in his belt around him. His body was found on Sunday.

The Mexicans and Spaniards are great gamblers. It will stake a dollar, the only one they possess. It will win; then they were stake or two, and win again, and so on--you'll see a pretty lady or two sitting at the table in a crowded bar, betting *cinqué pesos*-- When you're losing with the utmost _____?.

Truly yours, SRW

77. John B. Weber Journal December 14-17, 1849

Life in El Dorado

conclusion of Mr. John B. Weber's Journal.

Friday, December 14 --the morning was cold and cloudy. At eight a heavy rain commenced falling and continued until 1 p.m. at which time it became clear. Men all well, and in Camp mending clothes. T. Sunrise 40; noon 42; sunset 36.

Sunday, 15th --Last night was freezing cold. This morning we have considerable ice, and the weather is dark and unknown work. Watson and Jason worked on these _____, and made \$16.75-- Bill and myself worked close by and made but \$5.56. The gold is found in greatest abundance upon bars along the streams all of which are now covered with water consequently we are compelled to work upon the hillsides, sure above highway's sure high water, where rich places are seldom found.

We expect to do well after the rainy season is over. Today it began snowing about noon and lasted during the day and night. Rodham is still attending to Reeves, who is now convalescent. T sunrise 30; noon 39; Sunset 30.

Sunday the 16th -- This morning the snow is 8 inches deep and it's still falling with great rapidity. This is our 38 Sabbath in this place. We are comfortably situated in our cabin around a blazing fire. Love Pino. At noon the snow measured 11 inches, and the limbs and trees were giving away under its weight on every side. As we have observed similar traces of storms in former times, the presumption is that this is an unusually heavy snowfall. About three, turned to rain, and rained all night, and the whole day maybe something down is the most disagreeable one we have had in California. Oh well. Temperature sunrise 33; noon 35; and sunset 34.

Monday the 17th-- At day break we found snow it's snowing rapidly, and by noon it was 14 inches deep at which time it turned to rain. It.... she's raining at eight it recommenced and continued during the night. Is it possible to work in the mines, but we have a great deal. Noon 40; Sunset

From Our California Correspondent.

Our correspondent, who last wrote us from Ft. Laramie, has come up in California, and writes us as below. He was too much in a hurry to date his letter. From the statement given in the letter, we judge that the Illinois Mutual Insurance Company, No. 1, will winter on the head waters of the Trinity river—a stream that enters the Pacific a little south of lat. 42°—where gold placers have recently been found in the coast range of mountains.

SASSONIS, Sacramento River, Cal.

At length I have the infinite satisfaction of addressing you from this point—this land of promise—this El Dorado of our hopes. You may be somewhat surprised to find us here. Some of our boys anxious for adventure; others believing it would be to our advantage, and others desirous of emulating Fremont, in exploring unknown regions, determined to take a trail, leading off to

the north west, across the desert, to what they supposed to be the head of Feather river; but which turned out to be the very head spring of the Sacramento. We left Humboldt's river, about sixty-five miles from the Sink, on the 13th of August, and reached this point on the 10th of September, having traveled about 450 miles;—200 of which is the worst road, I think, that a wagon ever passed over. We were probably fortunate, being the first 50 wagons on the route, in taking this road, on account of there being so many teams ahead of us on the other route; but I would not advise any persons to take our route if they wish to strike the valley lower down,—and grass and water are very scarce on both ends of this route,—the labor of bringing wagons through being immense,—but we succeeded in getting along with all of ours, and every man perfectly well, (except J. T. Watters, who has been confined to his wagon three months with sore eyes,) and every mule we started with, but one, which died with a snake-bite on "Humbug river,"—so called, because we expected to find a great abundance of fine grass upon it, but we could not find it any place—except in the books!

The first man we saw after our arrival here, supposing that we were in a suffering condition, pulled out of his pocket a buckskin bag, and emptied about a quart of gold dust on a plate, saying he hoped it would do us good. I think it was about the richest dish I ever saw hashed up. That man is a philanthropist, and no mistake. It would have done you good to see the antics of the boys as they got sight of the "yellow stuff." You would have thought they had been taking laughing gas! About 40 miles from this point, we met Mr. Lassen, piloting a government team for a company who are exploring a route for a rail road across the Nevada. Mr. L. is getting \$1000 a month for his services, and every man employed, some 80 in number, including a Colonel and Captain, from that amount down to \$150. This will make our old Uncle pay pretty dear for this crotchet of "Old Bullion." The next morning after our arrival, we eat about half a beef, (for which we paid \$50, and it was the finest I ever saw.) We had been a little short of meat for the last week—a crow, hawk and owl, constituting our larder for the last three days. The boys, as you may suppose, went into the beef with a rush, roasting, boiling, frying and souping it up in all sorts of ways, until they were thoroughly satisfied. To-morrow morning we start two of our wagons for Sacramento City, distant 125 miles, for a supply of provisions,—where are told we can buy flour for \$16, pork \$35 per bbl.; molasses for 50 cts. per gallon; tea at 75 cts. per lb; sugar, 15 cts., and every thing else at proportionate prices. There is an abundance of provisions in the Bay to answer the demands of the country for a year. The balance of us will start for "Redding's Diggings," 60 miles north of this place, in the coast range, (we suppose this point to be on the Trinity river,) where we expect to locate this winter.— There is a perfectly good road all the way from Sacramento City to "Redding's," as they tell us here.

I shall be able to give you more information in my next in regard to the mines and the miners. I shall find more time now to keep you informed of our operations, and something more about the road by which we came to this county. As to the stories you hear about the discord and anarchy in the mines, we are assured by persons who have spent some time in them, that life and property are perfectly safe here; the miners having established a code of laws for their own protection which has been found entirely efficient. I came near neglecting to write, that we are hearing fearful news from the emigrants on the lower route. I know but little about our town people who were behind us. Eli Cook's Company separated on Goose Creek, Cook and [Joel] Condell are together on this route. [Reuben] McDaniel, Gormley and [Lewis] Johnson passed ahead of us on pack mules. Matheny and R.[euben] McDaniel passed us on the Humboldt, and must have got in safely on the lower route, as they had the best mules in their company. We heard that Jones had gone to Oregon, as a number of other emigrants had done. We heard that Sanford Watson and his company reached the Oregon road all well. N.[icholas] H. Shepherd passed us in a pack company on the Humboldt. You must excuse this brief communication. I have stolen the time from the performance of other duties to write.

I remain yours truly, "BEN." —————

78. Benjamin R. Biddle's Journal
1849 Winter Quarters. Camp Hill Springs, California
 December 6-24, 1849

Camp-Hill Springs [California]²⁰¹
 December 20th, 1849.

I address you from a point with which I have but little acquaintance—having arrived here but a fortnight ago.

Since we have reached the Valley of the Sacramento—having surmounted the difficulties and perils of the Plains and Mountains, and attained that goal in our journey where we could look around, and rest a few days from our weariness, and contemplate, with something of exultation, the distance we had come and the thousand things that rose in the mind as we reviewed the route—since then, I have not noted every thing which transpired, day by day, but only such events as I thought would be most interesting.

I have been to Sacramento City twice, and to San Francisco once. When at the Bay, I obtained letters for myself, the Webers and Watsons, and one for Henry Doran; but no papers for any of us. I purchased two *Tribunes* at a dollar a number, and a few California papers, the columns of which comprise the sum total of our information concerning the affairs of the world in general.

The bleak winter is now upon us with all its vigor and fierceness—whistling its shrilly music along the tops of the lofty pines, and howling hoarsely among the gorges of the jagged hills—while many trees that were the pride of the forest are bowed and broken beneath their burden of snow, and the mountain-torrents are sweeping impetuously to the valleys.

The course of trade being stopped, I will have leisure to devote to that other more pleasing department of duty—the retrieving myself from any charge that might be made against me of negligence to the claims of friendship.

I will now give you some items in relation to my return from the Bay to the Sacramento city and from thence to our camp at this place. On the morning of the date of my last letter to you I purchased some few articles for the company and got on board a schooner at 11 o'clock A. M. bound for “New York of the Pacific,” [*Pittsburg, Ed.*] a new place at the mouths of the San Joaquin river and the Sacramento, at the head of Suisun bay, distance from San Francisco 60 or 70 miles. Great efforts are making to bring this place into note—Its natural advantages I have not made myself acquainted with. There are but three or four houses there at present.

Benica, California Founding

Fifty miles from the city of San Francisco, is the flourishing little town of Benicia, which lies on the strait of that name, and at the foot of Suisun Bay. These straits are four or five miles long, and introduce you into the Pueblo Bay, a sheet of water equal to that of the Suisun. Benicia²⁰² was laid out by Dr. Semple, brother-in-law to Mr. J. S. Bradford, of Springfield, Illinois, but who is now at this place, in partnership with Dr. S.[emple] in the forwarding end commission

²⁰¹ *California Gold Camps: A Geographical and Historical Dictionary of Camps, Towns, and Localities Where Gold Was Found and Mined; Wayside Stations and Trading Center*, by Erwin G. Gudde (Author), June 1, 1975, University of California Press.

²⁰² The City of Benicia was founded on May 19, 1847, by Dr. Robert Semple, Thomas O. Larkin, and Comandante General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, on land sold to them by General Vallejo in December 1846. It was named for the General's wife, Francisca Benicia Carillo de Vallejo. The General intended that the city be named “Francisca” after his wife, but this name was dropped when the former city of “Yerba Buena” changed its name to “San Francisco,” so her second given name was used instead.

business. The place is rapidly improving, and will continue to grow. They are making strong efforts to have it made a port of entry. Two or three miles above the town, at a very commanding point, the U. S. have established a navy yard, with the advantages of a harbor, superior to that of San Francisco. The government is erecting suitable buildings, with all possible dispatch practicable. Crossing in my downward passage the bay of Pueblo [*San Pablo, Ed.*], we entered the bay of St. Francisco. Thus we cross three bays in going from Sacramento city to the city of San Francisco.

Arriving at New York, after a very pleasant sail of about six hours, with a fair wind, we exchanged our schooner for a pretension of a steam boat, making our way up the Sacramento to the city. Traveling all night, we reached the city at 8 A. M. It had rained all night, and the boat was so crowded that we got no sleep. On my arrival, I found Phillip Weber, [Augustus] Eastman,²⁰³ Parkinson, and all the members of No. 2 Company, having left the mines above, to winter in a more hospitable clime at the mines South. They were all well. They have since gone up the American Fork of the Sacramento river. Since then I have heard nothing from them. I here learned that [Richard] Hodge and [Benjamin F.] Taylor had not got back from their trip up to Weavertown. On Thursday, however they returned—having been gone nine days. We lay by on Friday, and bought articles to complete our loads for the company. I will now proceed to give you a history of the troubles and mishaps which afterwards befell us.

That night it rained steadily, the wind blew wildly, and it remained quite cold and chilly. In the morning, we put in our loads and left the City for the upper mines. We crossed the American Fork, which was deep fording, and encamped 4 pm. on our way.

On Sunday morning, we rose early, and went in quest of our mules. One lay helpless on the ground; in the course of the day it died. The rain setting in, the loss of this mule, and the straying away of the others, were the beginnings of a series of troubles, disappointments, and exposures, to which we had, until then been strangers. We searched all day for the mules, without seeing or hearing of them.

On Monday it rained most of the time; we were nevertheless abroad in hunt of our mules; but returned fatigued, and without them. Search enough had been made to convince us our animals had been stolen or had strayed beyond our ability to walk after them.

On Tuesday it still rained. It was then resolved [Richard] Hodge and [Benjamin F.] Taylor should go to town and buy a mule with which to hunt our mules; and that, if we were then unsuccessful, Taylor should be sent to the company to inform them of our situation and bring other mules to our relief; and that I should then write a letter to the company giving the history of our affairs. Next day, the letter was written; and the mule bought for \$100. Mr. Hodge went out in search of, and some ten or fifteen miles from the wagons, found five of them. We now had mules to ride; so the following morning Taylor started to the camp with the news.— The mud is now so deep that to haul our full loads would be impossible; accordingly we sent forward what provisions and other necessities we could by H[odge].

Along with [Richard] Hodge, I started after more of the mules. We rode all day, found none, and returned to camp late at night. Next morning, (Friday) I took a fresh mule, went out alone, and found two more of them; when I brought them in, I found [Benjamin F.] Taylor had come back; the Sacramento was high, and he was afraid to swim his mule alongside the boat. I felt much disappointed at his return.

On Saturday, it rained hard all day; we could do nothing, and so we determined to sell the heavy articles of our loads, and try to make our way back with only about 7 cwt. to the wagon. Another of our mules died today—and we know not to what cause to attribute it, unless it be to

²⁰³ See footnote number 186.

the chilling rains that have fallen during the last week. On the next forenoon the rain continued; in the afternoon Taylor was dispatched to a herding rancho some miles ahead, so as to be prepared for an early start, on Monday morning, in quest of the remainder of our mules. He brought in three more; but one remained to be found. I sold our flour today at \$32 per bbl., pork at \$45 per bbl., and one hundred pounds of hard bread at 18c. per lb. On the sale of these articles I made a clear profit of \$150. We delivered the property, and arranged to leave in the morning. Tuesday came, and with it rain all day. We learned that we could not get along on this side of the river—so we had of necessity to cross the American Fork, which now had to be ferried, go again through the City, cross the Sacramento, and try to get up on the other side. We had to wait our turn to cross the American Fork in the rain, and did not succeed in getting over, and reaching the City, until long after nightfall. When we arrived, we were wet to the skin and cold as we could be. We put our mules to hay for the night; then took supper with Mrs. Maltby.

The streets of Sacramento are covered with water. I repaired to my bed in the wagon; but, together with wet clothes and cold feet, you may be assured I slept but little; and the next morning I arose with a violent cold. The day was spent in crossing the Sacramento, at a cost of \$8 per wagon for ferriage. Eight miles from the city we encamped, where there was but little grass.

The next day we moved about ten miles through great difficulty, the mud being deep, and the mules being unable to draw the wagons.— We encamped, and had good grass for our mules. The next morning I was taken with a violent headache, and remained in bed in the wagon for the whole day, Mr. [Richard] Hodge driving the team, in an incessant soaking rain, to Fremont, a small place at the junction of the Sacramento and Feather rivers. This was on Friday; and we came to the conclusion, on consultation, that it would be folly to attempt to get up to camp, even with empty wagons. Whereupon we sold out the remaining portions of our load at this place, left one wagon in the care of a resident, branded our mules, and turned them out to grass till spring, reserving two of them to pack a few things and ride up to the camp. Here Hodge and [Benjamin F.] Taylor determined to go back to the city, in order to obtain work for the winter. I was resolved to reach the camp of the company, and make my report to them of the whole affair. I gave them some money, and on Tuesday we parted.

I came 12 miles and camped alone. It rained all night and until noon the next day. This was my first trial alone, with two mules, and the rain had set in, rendering the traveling very laborious and difficult. Next day I only went six miles through the rain, came to a rancho, and was permitted to store my baggage under shelter. — Turning out my mules, and furnishing my own bedding, which is the custom of the country, I lay on the floor before a large log fire. These were comfortable accommodations compared with those I had the night before. Here I met with persons from the up-country, who used every possible argument to dissuade me from undertaking so perilous, toilsome and difficult a journey; but I could not give it up until I had made a trial. The difficulty consisted in high waters and bottoms or low lands bordering the streams, “whose bottoms (as they expressed it) had dropped out—a horse or an ox miring down.”

I shall not attempt to take you through every mud-hole where I mired and had to unpack my mules, even to their saddles. I crossed creeks, sloughs and swamps with great difficulty, and at the risk of life and the property I had with me. As the details of all these trials and disasters would fill several sheets, I will sum all up to my arrival within twelve miles from camp, by saying, that so far as regards myself, I had better taken the advice of those persons who came from above. I exposed my person very much; was taken sick with a chill; lay by one day, when I very promptly broke it up with medicine; and in two weeks from my starting from Fremont, reached camp. The sufferings and toils I underwent in these two weeks, and indeed, during the whole trip, will be indelibly stamped upon my memory.

Twelve miles from this place, I met with B.[enjamin] A. Watson, F. S. Dean, Thomas S. Bilson, and Thomas [J.]Whitehurst, on their way to Sacramento City, and from them I learned that the company had separated; that the property in their possession had been sold and the avails distributed among the members, and that a spirit of dissatisfaction prevailed among them. I encamped with them that night, and the next morning made my way up to camp on foot, having left my two mules at the herding post, to be kept for us.

When I arrived I found no one at home but Mr. [John] Rodham, who was not well. The others were out mining. They came in about dark—J.[ohn] B. Watson, Fuller, Weber and Johnson. These compose one mess, and occupy one end of a double cabin two messes had built for the winter. [Albert] Sattley, [Henry] Doran, Broadwell, Smith and [B. D.]Reeves, had built a cabin to themselves about 200 yards off. The other end of this double cabin had been occupied by those who had gone away. I had been set apart with that mess, and had the control of the room alone. They all appeared glad to see me. I made a report of my trip; and although those who could work had done tolerably well, Fuller determined to go below for the winter. I then proposed to take his place in the mess, bought out his interest in the mess things, and in this way was enabled to avoid the necessity of keeping Bachelor's Hall. Ethan T. Cabinis had associated himself with some Oregon men, for the purpose of operating, leaving his connection with the Springfield Company entirely. Mr. Fuller started to go below on the 6th of December. From this point I will resume my journal.

December 1849

Thursday, December 6th—This morning I went over to Olney's creek, some six miles from the cabin, in company with Watson, Johnson and Weber. Mr. Weber and myself operated together. This is my first day in the mines;—and, of course, I could not reasonably expect to be very successful. We breakfasted before day-break, walked six miles before sunrise, and made but little by our labor.

Sunday, 9th—This is our 37th Sabbath; and as serene and beautiful as any that have preceded it. The men are all well, and seemingly cheerful in each other's society. I am now recovering from the effects of my upward trip . . . I was, indeed, almost entirely broken down. This morning, we resolved to have prayers at night, and to hold religious exercises every Sunday morning. This will be to us an additional bond of brotherhood.

Thursday, 13th—It is raining and snowing alternately. Some of us were employed making buckskin purses to hold our gold. It would make you laugh to see how large we have made those intended for use next summer.

We intend going next spring to Trinity—a river west of us some fifty miles, across the Coast Range, as the chain of mountains bordering the Pacific is called. This river empties into Trinidad Bay; the region through which it flows is but little known, but is rumored to be rich in gold. — It is a wild country to adventure in, but every obstacle must yield to the search for the yellow metal. We intend finding a passage along the Trinity to the Bay, and from the Bay to the Ocean before we leave California; and, it may so happen, we will secure to ourselves a favorable location for future speculation.

Friday, 14th—Still it rains. Nothing can be done out of doors in the way of digging. We find amusement in darning socks.

Saturday, 15th—Ceased raining this morning. Went to work, though it was cloudy and threatening. About noon it commenced snowing, which made our labor decidedly unpleasant.

Sunday, 16th—This is our 38th Sunday from home. It rained and then snowed all night. The snow is now eleven inches deep around the cabins, and much deeper on the adjacent hills. Every thing looks bleak and desolate; but the cold is nothing like so intense as the winters of

Illinois. We have spent the day pretty much in reading and writing; our little library affords ample food for the mind. Some of the back-logs in the fireplace measure two feet in diameter. As we look upon the merry blaze, and feel the generous warmth, we cannot help spending a thought upon those of our company who have gone to the Lower Country. If they did not reach the City before this weather set in, I apprehend they will encounter serious hardships.

Wednesday, 19th—The committee appointed to settle the business of the company sold the remainder of the mules I had left below, all the wagons and harness, and all the surplus property of the company. Weber and myself bought three of the finest mules in the lot, and two wagons and the harness. The sales amount to two thousand dollars.

The snow is from twelve to sixteen inches deep. Been snowing and raining all day; and the streams, from the mountain-side, dash onward in their pride of foam, as though wild with savage joy.

Thursday, 20th—The Genii of the Snow and Rain, among these mountains, seem to be twin spirits, forever holding alternate or blended control of the weather, as the shifting winds decide. Operations in the mines are almost entirely suspended.

Mr. W. has begun making a cradle in which to rock our favorite. He has studied the science of cradles until he can make one that will nearly rock itself. This cradle rocking we will be perfect adepts in—for it's rock rock-a-way, from morning until night.

Doran and Sattley intend going down to the City. The young men seem all to be taken with a fever for going below, to live cheap during the winter. In the Spring, before going over to Trinity, I will probably go to the City myself to purchase provisions.

Friday, 21st—Still stormy. We have completed what work we could in-doors; and have now only to turn to the enjoyment of our books and fire. I speak of these the more, because these hills never, until now, witnessed a scene like that presented by the interior of our cabin. Many of the most ancient ranches of the neighborhood are not so well provided; and the Indians, in their squalor and nakedness, never dreamed of such a thing as comfort. —

Saturday, 22d—This morning was misty, and had the appearance of a spring-thaw in Illinois. In the evening it commenced raining. The snow inflow melting away very rapidly.

Sunday, 23d—After being veiled from our view so many days, the sun shone out brilliant as ever. Sattley, [Henry] Doran and [B. D.] Reeves are preparing to go to the City in a big canoe. Their departure will leave John B. Watson, Lewis Johnson, John B. Weber, John Rodham and myself in a mess by ourselves; and we intend operating together during the next season. The other members of the company will be scattered to all points of the compass; and we cannot hope all to meet together in this world. The next summer may work sadly upon some; but upon whom the deeper shades of destiny will settle is with the months that are to come to decide. I trust many of those who have endured so much to get here, will be compensated (so far as wealth can compensate) for the toil and privations to which they have, in this voluntary exile from home, subjected themselves. In regard to the abundance of gold there is—there can be—but one opinion.

Monday, 24th—This morning was ushered in with smiles, with scarce a cloud to dim its clearness. Spring seems to have come to cheer us after the gloomy hours of the rainy season.

Mr. Johnson, in the capacity of cook, is now actively engaged in preparing a good dinner. It is true, we do not have here all the nice things at home, but we have quite enough to get up a tolerable entertainment, considering all the circumstances. Our bill of fare comprises the best quality of light bread, sweet-cake, beans, rice, coffee, venison, peach-pie and dried peaches.

I wish I could be with you all today. I know I shall be remembered when you gather around the Christmas board, and the wish expressed that I could be with you, and the desire to know where I am and how I am faring so far away.

I sometimes wonder at the swiftness with which time passes. It seems but a little while since I left home, yet a full year will soon have circled away—leaving only the memory of the past, its varied scenes and strange events. Many who started in this pilgrimage for gold have sickened and died; others who have reached this country will return poorer than they came; and some will go back to those they love blest with fortune. But these last will be few in number, and their story will be as sunny spots on the dark canvass that will picture forth this epoch in the history of our nation.

B. R. Biddle.

**79. Eli Cook Letter From Puebla, California
December 18, 1849**

Journal, Thursday, February 21, 1850.²⁰⁴

Sometime ago we published a letter from our young friend [Eli] Cook at Sacramento city, which he expressed himself pretty much against California and all her large treasures. Time works wonders; and we now find all which was a dark and gloomy, has become bright and beautiful-- except the modern San Francisco. We give below his last letter

December 18, 1849

Dear Brother.-- Again, after considerable long spell of silence, I commence with the purpose of writing to you.

At this time, as you will see by the above, I am living in Puebla-- and in the enjoyment of most excellent health. This is the country for which I started in search-- at last, I have found it. And, in no other country, would right now, under any consideration, make my home. Oh that you and all the family were here now. San Francisco and Sacramento are, either of them, better places of business than this-- but, in neither, can anyone live, with any kind of certainty, and comfort --

Here a man can live. Most of the old inhabitants say that Sacramento city will be entirely overflowed this winter-- And the general appearance of things would certainly convey that idea. San Francisco is the most businesslike place, I have ever seen and the muddiest. You can see, almost anywhere in the public streets, men in their last agonies-- their heads just sticking out of the mud -- surrounded by mules ... quantity. The street crossings are made of oxen that have been sunk down, one up on the top of the other. Yet you will see men turning around in all directions, passing each other, and all on the trap. Should a man happen to slip and fall he is a dead Indian, for you will surely be trodden into the mud. No one will think of stepping over, but right on him. No two men are acquainted there; all are strangers. You will see men from every clime and every race, from a Bombay Indian to an English nobleman, and from Chinese to Salce Islanders.

Merchandise, of every description, is, at this time, at the highest prices. I stepped into a store, the other day, to buy a pair of boots. Looking around, I discovered a pair of pretty genteel boots-- -- the price, and the reply was "4 ounces" (or \$64). I dropped them like a hot potato yet boots are still ... 6 ounces (\$96) Provisions are also high there now. Flour is from \$30-\$35 per bushel.

²⁰⁴ *Journal*, Thursday, February 21, 1850, p. 2.

But, away from San Francisco. This is the place, not only for living but for business. Were you here now with me, I earned a large stock of goods, of every descriptions, your fortune were at once, made.

Think you know J.[ames] F.[rancis] [Reed] Reid's place of residence, and he has become what we would consider in the states very wealthy. Here he is only one of many. I guess he would hardly take half a million dollars for his chance for a fortune -- exclusive of the silver mine, which is said to be very valuable, and for which he holds an undisputed title... Thousand to 5,000 per month. It's the other ones that are bad as you are, do not work hard, yet average \$10 a day. We are all well, pleased with the country. And nothing could induce any one of them to think I'm ever going back to live in Illinois. Roots family are perfectly contented and laughed heartily at Keyes for writing to them to come back. They're all well. Pussy is quite a fine girl. She has a splendid piano, and is taking lessons and music. She'll be quite an accomplished young lady.

But this is not the only family of genteel folks here-- I have already become acquainted with several. The place is rapidly filling up with Americans, yet still about two thirds are Spanish, with a plenty of money; and the people buy more goods here than at any place I was ever in. I can say nothing of those that crossed with me, rather that started. I've heard however, if they all got through, but had a much harder time after we left them, and got in about ... I saw Young Pearson the other day; he went through by Oregon, and left George Gaudy at Oregon City, working at his trade for \$2000 a year, - -Van Meter keeping school, Isaac Constant making shingles. Van Meter had got almost entirely well of his ...

Are you aware it is now winter, yet I am writing in a room where there is no fire and very open, yet I am perfectly comfortable. Another fact, as regards the mildness of the climate, neither houses of the Legislature have any fire.

The election of Col. Fremont and Dr. [William M.] Gwin as United States Senators, pleases the California people well.

In this country, the women have finer dresses and more of them, then any other in the world. So, if you see any milliners or Mantua - makers, who want to leave Springfield, send them out here.

Carpenters are getting \$16 per day, and other labor is in proportion; and \$6 only is the price per dozen for washing. Wages, however, to some extent must go down when things become more settled.

You wish me to write you in relation to the climate, country, etc. In answer, I say that you could not imagine a better climate for a country.--As to merchandising, I cannot say so much. Some have made their fortunes, and others have been broken by it. If you think of coming out here, by all means come by the Isthmus. Anyhow, don't cross the mountains.

80. Letter From Franklin Hickox in San Francisco, California

October 30, 1849

Journal, Tuesday, December 19, 1850.²⁰⁵

A letter from Franklin Hickox, dated at San Francisco, Oct. 30, says that he has seen Mr. B. R. Biddle, who was well, and that Richard Hodge, and the rest of that company were enjoying good health. No news.

²⁰⁵ *Journal*, December 19, 1849, p. 3.

**81. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to His Father From City of Sacramento, California
December 23, 1849**

Journal, March 23, 1850.²⁰⁶

To check some miss apprehensions that seem to be in circulation, Mr. W. W. Watson has handed us the following extracts from a letter he received a few days cents from his son, Benjamin A. Watson, for publication.

City of Sacramento
December 23, 1849

You we'll see from the date of my letter of today, that I have come contrary to my expectation, changed my location. Our company dissolved on the 26th of November. [Thomas S.] Bilson and myself concluded to come down to the city and spend the winter. By selling out our share of the provisions, we made enough to keep us in the city all winter.

As many citizens of Springfield are interested in the company, I will give the reasons why the company thought fit to dissolve. Every member of the company had become perfectly satisfied, that they could not do anything so long as they remained together. Another circumstance that had a strong influence upon our minds, was that we had not provisions enough, to last the whole company all winter, and the rains had set in and it was impossible to get them to the mines.

Mr. [Benjamin Robert] Biddle was put in charge of the wagons and teams and started after the second load of provisions to this city; and without instructions from the company or advice took a load of provisions out to the mines on speculation, and while at the mines lost all his mules and spent two weeks hunting for them. After finding them he returned to this city, loaded the wagons and started for our camp. We got as far as Fremont, a small village 20 miles from this place, when the traveling became so bad that he could get no further. He then sold out again and started to the city. After remaining sometime in the city, he started for our camp with two pack mules with provisions.

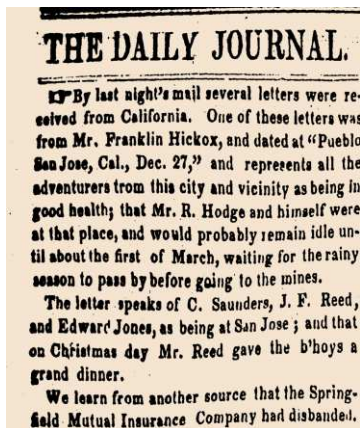
Bilson, [Thomas J.] Whitehurst, Dean and myself, left on the 3rd of December, for the city. On the night of the third day we met Mr. Biddle on his way to camp. The company had made enough to pay all their debts, and had all of their property left, and in 1400 dollars in the hands of Mr. Biddle, of which we have got no payment. We left the company all well, except John Rodham, who had not entirely recovered from sickness. Reuben McDaniel sick at Wm. Todd's. [Eli] Cook [Elijah Cook] Matheny and [Richard] Hodge are down at [James Frazier] Reed's. B. F. Taylor is a few miles below here, cutting wood. [E.] Fuller came to the city a few days ago. I believe most of them are going to the mines in the spring.

Johnson, Roadham and Hodge are not hopping to do the work camp. Weather fine. Temp-- sunrise sixty eight; new seventy eight; Sunset 65. Saturday, sixth-- Broadwell, Dawson's Sunset 69.

²⁰⁶ *Journal*, March 23, 1850, p. 2.

82. Letter From Franklin Hickox in San Jose, California December 27, 1849

Journal, Tuesday, February 19, 1850.²⁰⁷



By last night's mail several letters were received from California. One of these letters was from Mr. Franklin Hickox, and dated at "Pueblo San Jose, Cal., December 27, [1849]" and represents all of the adventurers from this city and vicinity as being in good health; that Mr. R.[ichard] Hodge and himself were at that place, and would probably remain idle until about the first of March, waiting for the rainy season to pass by before going to the mines.

The letter speaks of C. Saunders, J. F. Reed and Edward Jones as being at San Jose; and that on Christmas day Mr. [James Frazier] Reed gave the boys a grand dinner.

We learn from another source that the Springfield Mutual Insurance Company had disbanded.

83. Robert F. Coflin Letter From Juba River December 27, 1849

Journal, Friday, March 29, 1850.²⁰⁸

From Juba River. – Mr. R.[obert] F. Coflin writes under date of December 27th, and says–

We have established our quarters on the Juba river, a tributary of Feather River, and are now hard at work and doing very well for the season, called here winter, but I should call it spring. The mercury averages about 65°. The gold is here, and in great abundance. Took out on Christmas day hundred and \$50, and today \$130. It is hard work that gets it, and there is some luck besides. Any man who comes here earns his goal. Although there is some for all, many persons will go home as poor as they came. Some will make a fortune in a few months, but the fewest number. I will not advise anyone to come here with the expectation of getting a supply of gold suddenly and without labor. This is "all in my eye." If you get gold, you have to work hard for it.

We are 230 miles from St Francisco and 70 miles from Sacramento; all in good health and spirits. We have had no letters or papers from home, but are anxious to get some

Immediately prior to the discovery of gold in 1848, central California was home to Native communities; Mexican missions, ranchos, and pueblos; the small presidio—fortified military settlement—of San Francisco; and a few white American residents. Published two years later, this map testifies to the frantic pace of settlement during the California Gold Rush. By 1855, over 300,000 immigrants from the eastern United States, Europe, Latin America, Australia, and China established mining camps, towns, and roads. San Francisco grew rapidly. By the 1870s, California's Native population plummeted from an estimated 150,000 to 30,000. Thousands were forcibly removed from their homelands, enslaved, or killed. Early legislation in California made it lucrative to enslave Native peoples, or to be paid for exterminating them.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ *Journal*, Tuesday, February 19, 1850, p. 3.

²⁰⁸ *Journal*, Friday, March 29, 1850, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ Creator: Jackson, Wm. A. (William A.) Creator: Mudge, Theodore A. Creator: Lambert & Lane Name on Item: by Wm. A. Jackson. Date: 1850 Location: Boston Public Library Norman B. Leventhal Map Center Collection (local). <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/4m90fc37g>

84. Benjamin R. Biddle's California Journal Concluded.

Wednesday, 19th.—After breakfast, Mr. Smith and myself started, for the City, on foot. Two miles from camp, we came to the American Fork, pulled our boots off and waded it. It is a limpid, pretty stream, one hundred yards wide at this point, which is a mile above its confluence with the Sacramento, and but a little distance above where the business of the place is now done.

Sacramento, California

In the Sacramento bottom, we came to the City. It is perfectly new and presents a singular appearance. There are but few frame houses put up as yet, except the light frames brought from Yankee Land. Many are, however, in the course of rapid construction. Large business establishments, selling their thousands monthly, are built of a few posts set in the ground and covered, sides and roof, with common muslin. These white tent-houses, scattered among green, over-hanging trees, make up a scene beautiful and romantic. There are some tolerably good houses, but none over a story and a half high. Lumber is scarce and commands a heavy price. Mills in the neighboring pineries are much needed. The Sacramento, at this point, is broad and deep, the tide running several miles above. Frigates, schooners and barques are lying here. Property is very high. Everything is selling at the top of the market. We learned the prices of some articles; and, to give you a general idea of the state of affairs, I will mention them— Bread 50c. per loaf, pickled pork 25c. per lb., fresh beef 30c. per lb., bacon hams 60c., sides 45 to 50c., cheese 60 to 65c., butter \$1 per lb. when sold by the keg; flour \$16 per bbl., pork \$40 per bbl., molasses 75c. per gal., sugar 16c. per lb., tea \$1 to 1,50 per lb., black tea ditto, crackers 20c. per lb., two-gallon tin pans \$3,50 to 4 apiece, canteens \$2, picks \$4 to 6, shovels \$ 2,50, small crow-bars \$4, hay \$45 to \$60 per ton. Mules are worth from \$100 to 200—accordingly as they are fat or poor; oxen are selling from \$50 to 100 per yoke; wagons are in little demand, as the emigrants are selling off a great amount of their stuff; horse-hire comes to \$10 per day. A common laboring man commands \$10 per day—mechanics something more, but how much I did not learn. Boarding can be had for \$3 or 4 per day.

The companies have nearly all dissolved and sold whatever they owned as common stock—Those big companies from the East, with large capital, which brought everything with them, have had the most to sell; but the prices have made the transportation of their articles a handsome business. Experience demonstrates that large companies do not hang well together. Very many, when they arrive here, do not feel disposed to go into the mines and dig, but there are so many ways of making money out of those who do go, that many are tempted to remain here. In preference to working in the mines, some resort to keeping eating houses, others open coffee houses, gambling hells, livery stables, &c., &c.

Today, I saw Wm. Todd, the Doctor's son, who has been here some time. He looks well and tells me he has enjoyed good health; and, from what I see and hear of him, he has done well.— He tells me that James F. Reed is living and doing well. Key's brother is in Monterey, working at his trade. [Elijah] Cook Matheny and Reuben McDaniel are here, and are not engaged at anything now, but have a prospect of business in a few days. Capt. B. R. is here and making money by buying and selling mules. Young [Lewis] Swizler is with him. Mr. [Eli] Cook and David Eaton are here. They have been trading and have done well. Mr. E. is spending this evening with us at the camp. Mr. Nourse is here, engaged in buying and selling. John S. Bradford is fifty miles below this, in company with Mr. Semple. Henry Spotswood started down to the Bay, today. I sent my Journal up to the 10th instanter, by him, to be mailed.

I find no letters here for myself or any of our company, and have requested Mr. S. to have our letters forwarded to this point. Not receiving any intelligence from home, after so long an absence, was, you may be sure, a severe disappointment. I feel encouraged, and, I think,

with ordinary luck, we will have something to send home, in the spring. The mines are averaging, to every digger, an ounce a day—which is \$16.

The prices of the articles I have given you, are those of the City, and are doubled in the mines. Bacon, flour, coffee and sugar are often \$1 per lb. tobacco \$2.50 per lb., and boots, shoes and implements to work with, are put at an extravagant rate. Driving team is good business. I asked some teamsters what they would charge to haul goods to where we are going, which is two hundred miles, and learned they would not go for less than fifty dollars per hundred miles. Wages are regulated by what a man can make in the mines. Time, here, is more emphatically money, than any other place I ever saw.

I bought a newspaper, today, for 25c., in the hope that it might contain some news from the States. For five long months, we are entirely ignorant of everything which has transpired at home.

[At this date, the Journal closes, for the present. A bird's-eye glimpse of the movements of Mr. B. is given in letter 84.]

85. Letter of Elijah Cook Matheny Journey to California

Journal, November 26, 1849²¹⁰

From California

—I saw [Benjamin R.] Biddle today; he was well. Of the rest of the Springfield folks we hear nothing. We fear for them. Several companies have started from this place to their assistance. Dick Oglesby is up in the mines and doing well; he has a store and digs gold. I am now engaged in business with Wm.[Willaim L.] Todd, that I think will pay well.

I would never think of making this country my home. Money can be made here yet. All a man wants here is energy, perseverance and economy. Yet I would advise all who are doing well at home to stay there; and especially do not come across the country. Washer after washer of the dirt did we clean out, and found but small particles of gold. [John S.] Bradford is selling goods at Benicia; Mr. Eaton is sending goods up to the mines. Capt. B. R. [Roberts] is still trading in mules and horses. [Charles] Maltby and his wife are keeping a boarding house.

E Cook Matheny.

86. Benjamin R. Biddle's Journal 1849 Winter Quarters.

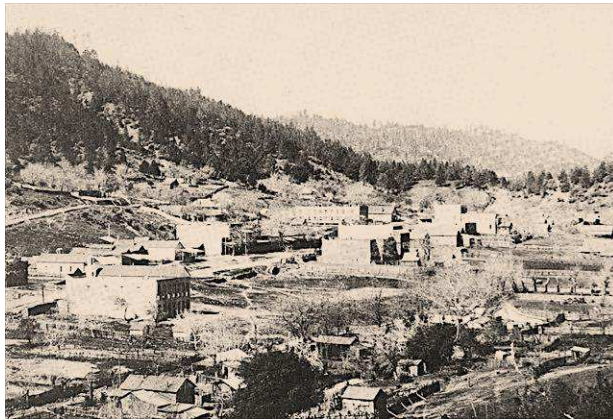
Reading Springs (later Shasta), California

Most of the Illinois emigrants decided to try their luck at Reading Springs:— which was described as a beautiful place, with plenty of fine spring water, about three miles from the Sacramento River and near a number of gold-bearing streams. They forded the Sacramento River near the mouth of Cottonwood Creek, and drove north parallel with the river until they came to Reading Springs. The place, and its location, had not been overestimated by those who had described it to them.

A bustling town of the 1850s through the 1880s, Shasta was for its time, the largest settlement in Shasta County and the surrounding area. Sometimes referred to today as "Old Shasta", the town was an important commercial center and a major shipping point for mule trains and stagecoaches serving the mining towns and later settlements of northern California. The

²¹⁰ *Journal*, November 26, 1849.

discovery of gold near Shasta in 1848 brought California Gold Rush-era Forty-Niners up the Siskiyou Trail in search of riches - most passed through Shasta, and continued to use it as base of operations.



Major Pierson Reading named his gold mining area Reading Springs.
By 1849, Reading Springs had become a permanent site for miners, and eventually
became the boomtown named Shasta²¹¹

Situated about six miles west of Redding, California along Highway 299, Shasta was once home to some 3,500 residents and a thriving commercial district. However, in the mid-1880s, the newly constructed Central Pacific Railroad bypassed Shasta, in favor of Redding and the town declined into "ghost town" status.

During the gold rush, the area that now comprises Redding was called Poverty Flats. In 1868 the first land agent for the Central Pacific Railroad, a former Sacramento politician named Benjamin Bernard Redding, bought property in Poverty Flats on behalf of the railroad so that it could build a northern terminus there. In the process of building the terminus, the railroad also built a town in the same area, which they named Redding in honor of Benjamin Redding. In 1874 there was a dispute over the name by local legislators and it was changed for a time to Reading, in order to honor Pierson B. Reading, who founded the community of Shasta, but the name was officially changed back to Redding by 1880. It has been called Redding ever since.²¹²

Merchandise Store at Reading Springs (later Shasta), California

Aside from the fact that there was no level ground, the place was ideally located for a mining town: and the few people, who had come from Oregon, had pitched their tents on the hill sides, and were delighted at the prospect of having a General Merchandise Store in their village. There was a road (or trail) running along the west side of the creek that divided the hills and formed a narrow valley, or gulch. It was little wider than a ravine; so the houses, on either side had to be built on an incline. Those pioneers named this narrow road "Main Street", and took up claims on either side for business houses and residences.

The firm of Biddle, Weber and Co., which consisted of B. R. [Benjamin Robert] Biddle, John B. Weber, John B. Watson, Lewis Johnson and Augustus Johnson, took up one claim, 62 by 250 feet on the west side of Main Street; and another 35 by 120 feet on the east side of the street. They put their wagons containing merchandise on the large lot on the west side of the street, where they started to put up their store building; and pitched their tents on the east

²¹¹ <https://shastahistorical.org/how-redding-got-its-name/>

²¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redding,_California

side, where they planned to build their living quarters. One or two of the men slept in the wagons, to watch over and protect their property.

There were a large number of miners panning gold from the creeks north and west of Reading Springs and their business was good from the start. They needed the goods they had shipped from St. Louis to San Francisco.²¹³

First Trip to San Francisco

B. R. [Benjamin Robert Biddle] and John Weber (who were also anxious to get mail from home) volunteered to take the wagons, and extra drivers with the ox teams, to the “City” for their supplies, while the other partners stayed at Reading Springs to finish their store building.

A friendly Indian went with B. R. and John [B.] Weber, to act as guide; and a number of men, on horse back with pack animals, wanted to accompany them as far as Sacramento; for they felt safer from hostile Indians if a number of men traveled together. However most of the Sacramento Valley Indians were Digger Indians, who were great cowards and usually friendly to the whites.

From Reading Springs they followed the western bank of the Sacramento River, through uninhabited country, until they came to the town of Freeport. It was a flourishing little village opposite the mouth of the Yuba River, which many of the pioneers considered the future metropolis of the Sacramento Valley.

Twenty miles further on, below the mouth of the American River, could be seen the tents and houses that made up the town of Sacramento. They crossed the ferry at that point, and B. R. [Biddle] arranged for their drivers to care for the oxen and wagons while he and John Weber went, by boat, to San Francisco.

San Francisco was the chief city of the Pacific Coast; and was always referred to as “The City”; so B. R. [Biddle] had always pictured it, in his mind, as a neat and orderly town, of well constructed business buildings and comfortable homes—with graded streets and board sidewalks. In reality the town had been built on rolling hills of deep and shifting sand. The streets seemed to run in several directions, instead of being parallel—in two directions—and making right-angle crossings at each intersection—as B. R. was sure they should in any well planned town. “The City” had a population of about 1500 people, many of whom were living in tents. The buildings had been poorly and hastily constructed of freshly sawed lumber. However, some new, and better, buildings were then being built of imported lumber and bricks.

As ships in the harbor unloaded, the goods and produce were thrown on the ground near the wharfs, where they waited to be claimed, or sold, or carted to shelter. There were a couple of warehouses near the water front; but they were entirely inadequate for the great ship loads of merchandise being brought into port. It was almost impossible to get carpenters or mechanics to work in “The City”; for when they heard of the fabulous riches that were found in the mines, they left their work, without notice, to go to the “dig- gins.”

Mr. Ware and Trip to Post Office

B. R.’s first impression of San Francisco was that it was a cold, bleak, shabby place filled with dust, disorder and confusion. As he started to walk up Kearney Street, toward the Plaza, he

²¹³ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 93-94.

met a Mr. Ware he had known in Illinois: but he was on his way to the post office; and was so anxious for letters from home, he could not stop to talk to any one.²¹⁴

Mr. Ware turned around and walked up the hill with him; and told him all about his experiences in California. He and Mrs. Ware had lived on Lick Creek, near Springfield; and had traveled by boat, and the Isthmus of Panama, to California. They started soon after B. R. [Biddle] and his party had left in March.

When they reached San Francisco they were able to buy out a man who had built a small hotel, or boarding house. Mr. Ware and his wife, with the help of a Chinese boy, had fixed the place up and made it as homelike as possible; and their home-cooked-meals proved such a novelty they could not handle all the people who applied to them for board: but, he continued, they could always make room for old friends like B. R. and John [B.] Weber, whenever they came to The City.

When they reached the post office, and received their mail, they had so many letters and papers, their pockets would not hold all of them; so B. R. had to stuff some of them into his carpet-bag before they went back, down the hill, with Mr. Ware, to the boarding house they had been hearing about. He gave them a small room that had just been vacated, where B. R. and John Weber arranged their mail in chronological order, and began to read. At noon they went downstairs to the best dinner they had eaten since they left Springfield—and met more Illinois friends at the table: but they could not stop to talk very long until after they had read all of their precious letters—

These letters were the first news of their families they had had since they left home, more than six months before. The friends they met at dinner understood, for they too were far from their homes and those they loved most.

The boys, Henry and B. R. Jr., wrote about their school and the games they played with the neighborhood boys—and about the horse and cow and chickens—and the chores they did for Ma, and all the childish family gossip:—but never a word about anything that might worry him or cause him to fear that all was not well in his home at Springfield.

In the last letter he read, B. R. Jr. told him about little Puggie falling into the cistern; but, he added: “Ma pulled her out right soon, so she is all right. Ma felt kind of sick afterwards and Mrs. Weber took Puggie over to her house for a visit. Emma is visiting Aunt Angeline.”

The letters from Maria told about their relatives and friends, the affairs of the church, and the incidents of her home life with the children, in a manner to lead him to believe that all was well at home. There was no letter from Maria written after little Puggie’s accident; and he was sure they were not telling him everything: for their sixth child had been expected in August; and he knew that Puggie’s accident must have been a great shock to her mother.

One of the steamers from Panama was several days overdue; so it was possible for him to get more letters before he returned to Sacramento. In the meantime he tried to make arrangements to have mail sent to Reading Springs.²¹⁵

Visit With Illinois Friends

That night he visited with his old Illinois friends at the boarding house. Many of them had newspapers from home; and they were read with eagerness, although the latest news was three or four months old. The friends were all enthusiastic about the West, and agreed that a man

²¹⁴ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 94-95.

²¹⁵ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 95-96.

who was sober and industrious could not fail to make money; but most of them believed that the prosperity was only temporary; and were planning to return to the States before the supply of gold, in the hills, was exhausted.

Some believed that many of the best class of emigrants would remain; and that San Francisco, with its fine harbor, would grow to be a great city—and those men were putting all of their available money into town lots. Some had already made fortunes buying and selling lots; but the lots were as high as they were in Springfield, where a fine city was already established and B. R., who had always been a speculator in land, said that he would not take one of those sand lots for a gift.²¹⁶

The next morning he went down to the waterfront to buy merchandise; and spent the entire day selecting goods to meet the needs of the miners who packed out from Reading Springs. He also laid in a meager supply of luxuries for the people of the village. Besides the boxes of freight he had sent from St. Louis; he bought coffee from Brazil; blankets, flour, and dried peaches from Chili; tea and rice from China; coconuts and yams from the Sandwich Islands; and dried apples, smoked meats, drugs, medicines, boots, shoes, mining equipment, hardware, ammunition; and a vast assortment of other things that would be needed in a rapidly growing mining community. As he made his purchases he arranged to have them loaded on the boat that was starting up the river, for Sacramento, the next morning. When he started back to the boarding house he noticed that people were all looking toward the top of the hill above the city, where some men were waving flags,—and some one said: “They are signaling to tell us that a boat is just coming into the bay, and will dock at the wharf before sundown.”

That night they went again to the post office and got the mail that came in on the boat. Among the letters was one from Maria— written while she was still in bed after the birth of their son, whom she had decided to name Edwin Weber Biddle—if that name met with B. R.’s approval. They also got mail for all of the other members of their firm; and for the rest of their overland party who were living at, or near, Reading Springs; for all of their letters had been sent to San Francisco, to await permanent addresses from the emigrants when they reached California. They had been told that the winters in California were very mild; and planned for members of their firm to go to San Francisco frequently to buy goods; but plans are not always carried out.

The purchases they made, on this trip, filled their wagons; and they were glad that they had brought their six-ox-teams to haul it over the rough roads.

Business was so good, it was only a short time before two other members of their firm made a trip to San Francisco for more stock: but before their return, rain had been falling for almost a week and the streams were so swollen, and the roads so slippery, they had great trouble getting back at all. However business continued to be excellent, for new miners kept coming in to try their luck at the “diggings”; and had to be outfitted before they went into the mountains in search of the gold-bearing streams. A number of Chinamen, who were panning gold along the creeks that ran into the Trinity River, bought enough rice to last all winter. Reading Springs was the only trading post north of Freemont; and soon pack trains were starting from there for Weaverville and Southern Oregon—as well as to the numerous mining claims in Northern California.²¹⁷

Money Sent Back to Illinois Home

The firm of Biddle, Weber & Co. had a large amount of gold on hand and decided to declare a dividend, of several hundred dollars each, to be sent home to their families: so, even before

²¹⁶ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 96-97.

²¹⁷ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 97-98.

the roads could be traveled by their teams, B. R. and John Weber started south, on horseback, with a train of pack mules. They expected to buy emergency supplies in Sacramento, which could be sent back immediately with an Indian driver, while they went on to San Francisco. There they could change their gold dust into negotiable paper, buy their merchandise directly from the ships, and send money to their families in Springfield by Adams and Co.'s Express.²¹⁸

When they went to the boarding house, in San Francisco, they met an old friend from Springfield who was sailing that afternoon, and offered to take letters for them to their families in Springfield: so, instead of sending their letters and packages by mail or express, they intrusted them to their friend for safer and more prompt delivery. As the Panama Liner, carrying their friend with their precious letters and packages, turned around the bend of the bay, a freighter from China was tying up at the wharf; and they went aboard to buy rice and other commodities for their store. As they were leaving the vessel they stopped to watch a Chinese merchant who was examining silks he was buying for his San Francisco store. Among the things imported were a number of beautiful, silk embroidered shawls. One of them was especially handsome—pure white, and embroidered so perfectly one could not tell which was the right—and which was the wrong side. The merchant held it up and said: “There is a shawl fit for a queen”. B. R. thought of Maria, his queen—and how beautiful she would look in a shawl like that. His Maria, who was living so far away with her infant son—and his four other children, and carrying the burden of their care alone. As he saw her, in imagination, with her plucky smile and undaunted courage, he wanted to do something special for her; and that shawl—fit for a queen, was a fitting gift for her. The shawls had been brought from China to sell for \$100.00 each, and the white one was the handsomest of them all. As the merchant held it up for them to see, B. R. took out his little buckskin bag of gold dust and his scales, weighed out \$100.00 of the dust, and told the Chinaman to do up the shawl for shipment to the States. Then he remembered that there were others at home who would like presents from San Francisco; so he bought two small shawls for his little girls, and two very small lacquered boxes. Into the lacquered boxes he put gold nuggets, in nests of cotton, for his boys. The gifts were then all packed in a handsome lacquered box, wrapped in waterproof cloth, and taken to Adams & Co. Express office for safe shipment to Springfield. Benjamin B. R. Biddle, and his party, left home in March, and it was Christmas before any of their families knew that they had reached California—and where they had located. Then letters came telling of the beautiful spot they had chosen for their new home. They told of the building claims they were taking up on either side of the main trail which led to the Trinity River mines. They said that their location was in the very center of the gold-bearing section of Northern California. They told of the beautiful snow covered mountains to the east; which they had passed after leaving the Oregon trail. The trail had taken them through dense forests and lava beds, infested by hostile Indians: but they had passed through without harm. Parts of the letters were published in the Springfield papers, and proved to be of great interest; for the people were interested in the adventures of their towns-people, who wrote from the California Eldorado.²¹⁹

Death of Robert S. Lightfoot

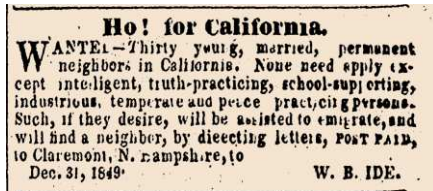
Robert S. Lightfoot died in December 1849.

²¹⁸ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 98-99.

²¹⁹ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 99-108.

William B. Ide Seeks Persons to Settle in California December 31, 1849

On December 31, 1849, William B. Ide advertised in the *Journal* seeking persons to settle in California:



Journal, Monday, January 14, 1850.²²⁰

Ho! For California.

WANTED--Thirty young, married, permanent neighbors in California. None need apply except intelligent, truth-practicing, school-supporting, industrious, temperate and peace practicing persons. Such, if they desire, will be assisted to emigrate, and will find a neighbor, by directing letters, POST PAID, to Claremont, N. Hampshire, to

W. B. Ide

Dec. 31, 1849

The high qualifications required may have caused the failure of this project. Nothing further is found pertaining to the venture. Considering the time element, it seems that Ide's trip was to a great extent by sea rather than directly overland. He had the choice of several steamers which left San Francisco for Panama in the fall of 1849: the *Oregon*, October 1; the *California*, November 2; or the *Panama*, November 15. The *California* seems to have been the most likely selection. On September 1, 1849, a convention had met at Monterey and Ide's return to California seems to have been during the summer of 1850. He says, "I have Tools, some I brought by steamer on my last trip from the East!" According to Edith Flanders Dunbar, Ide's wife Sarah died at Red Bluff in 1850. It is reasonable to suppose that the Ide family, being near, had been aroused by a whistle and had witnessed with wonderment the arrival of the little steamer *Jack Hays* at a point near the south boundary of their rancho in May 18___. Although Ide might have taken the *George Washington* from San Francisco to Sacramento, there was yet no regular steamer service on the upper river, so he would have continued thence overland to his home. The County of Colusi (later spelled Colusa) was formed in 1850.²²¹

The Other Side of The Picture—Gold Getting Scarce in California

—The following letter from a perfectly reliable source has been published the *New York Tribune* for publication. The writer is at the mines. You will be disappointed in the amount of gold sent by the steamer, but not more so than we have been by the result of our labors, during the last month, in the mining disiricts. The lorce on the ground is variously estimated from forty thousand; to fifty thousand who have obtained, perhaps, in all, one million of dollars, or but little more than, an average one of dollar, per diem, to each man. This is not satisfactory to you at home, but still less so to us here; but the truth is that the surface gold is rapidly disappearing and, although we have faith that the subterranean deposiies are large, we have not capital nor other requisites for deep mining. To this complexion we must come at last, like all the South Ameican States in which gold is found. California must be dug up wide and deep, if we hope for a golden harvest. Goods of nearly all descriptions are very cheap. Every body is anxious to return, so you may look out far a hegira of those who have means to pay their passage.²²²

²²⁰ *Journal*, Monday, January 14, 1850, p. 2.

²²¹ *Rogers*, pp 115-120.

²²² *Journal*, December 26, 1849, p. 2.

David Phelps Goes to California-1849

David Phelps was born in December 1815, at Hebron, New Hampshire and came to Loami, Illinois in 1836 or '7. He married on December 16, 1838, to Mehetabel Colburn, who died on March 7, 1842. David married on January 28, 1843, to Fanny Colburn. They had two children; one died in infancy. David went to California in 1849. Their daughter, Elmina, married A. J. McDonald, and lived at Grass Valley, Nevada County, California.

David Phelps was crushed while going through a mine, of which he was part owner, on July 6, and died on July 8, 1866. His widow married George Hutchinson and lived in California.²²³

William B. Foster Goes to California-1849

William B. Foster, born on April 9, 1822, in Page County, Virginia, came with his parents to Sangamon County in 1835. In 1849, he went to California where he married Emma Creamer. They had three children, and Emma died. William married again, and lived at Richmond, Sacramento County, California.²²⁴

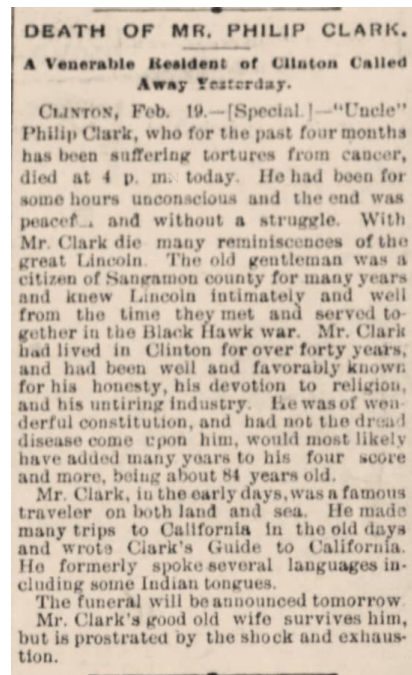
William G. King and Family Go to California-1849

William G. King was born in 1817 in Bracken County, Kentucky, and was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois. He married Sarah R. Tonguelet in New Orleans, and they had two children. William went to California in 1849 and died there in 1871.

Phillip Clark, Jr. Goes to California-1849

Phillip Clark, Jr., born on February 20, 1812, at Rye, England, embarked at London on May 1, 1824, and landed at New York City on June 18. He was a bound apprentice in New York to a tailor, who treated him cruelly and he ran away. He went to Boston, obtained employment in a glass factory, and saved some money. He went by water to Philadelphia. He walked from there to Wheeling, Virginia, worked his way down the Ohio River, and up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, on a keel boat. At St. Louis he fell in with Elijah Iles and Richard Smith.

He came with Elijah Iles and Richard Smith to Springfield, arriving on October 15, 1824. Both Iles and Smith knew his father. He was married on May 19, 1836, to Christiana Campbell, on Richland Creek, Illinois. They had four children near Rochester, Sangamon County, Illinois. He went to California in 1849 at age 37, and returned in March 1850. He moved to Clinton in November 1850.²²⁵ He wrote *Clark's Guide to California*.



The Pantagraph, Bloomington Illinois, February 20, 1897.²²⁶

²²³ Power, p. 566.

²²⁴ Power, p. 309.

²²⁵ Power, p. 202.

²²⁶ *The Pantagraph*, Bloomington Illinois, February 20, 1897, p. 1

Samuel B. Hall Goes to California-1849

Samuel B. Hall was born on July 18, 1824 in Virginia and brought up in Sangamon County, Illinois. He went to California in 1849. He returned to Sangamon County in 1874 and lived near Loami, Illinois.

John W. Yates Goes to California-1849

John W. Yates, born in 1825, started to California in 1849 and died on the way.²²⁷

Charles C. Harvey Goes to California-1849

Charles C. Harvey, born in June 1831, in Maryland, was raised in Springfield, Illinois. He went to California in 1849 and died there in 1853.²²⁸

William Strawbridge Goes to California-1849

William Strawbridge, born in June 1794, came to Sangamon County, Illinois in 1823. He married in 1834, in Jo Daviess County, Illinois, to Mrs. Mary Ames, whose maiden name was Mitchell. They lived in Sangamon County, Illinois until 1838, and moved to Jo Daviess County, Illinois where he was in the lead smelting business until 1849 at age 55. William then went to California. He died in December 1851, in New York City, while returning to his Illinois family. He left a widow and four children.²²⁹

Zacharia E. Elkin Goes to Oregon and Then to California-1849

Zacharia E. Elkin, born in November 1821, in Brownsville, Indiana, was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois. In 1849 at age 28, he went overland to Oregon and from there to California, where he spent several years in mining. He went to Idaho in 1860, and was married in October 1873 to Mrs. Harriet Luckett, and they lived in Idaho City, Boise County, Idaho.²³⁰

John R. Black Goes to California-1849

John R. Black, born on April 12, 1822, went to California in 1849 at age 27, and resided in San Francisco.²³¹

A. Fielding Goes to California-1849

A. Fielding, born on November 14, 1828, in Bracken County, Kentucky, was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois. In 1849 at age 21, he went around Cape Horn to California where he enlisted and fought Indians for three years during the rebellion. He lived at YouBet, Nevada County, California.²³²

William H. Marsh Goes to California-1849

Marsh came to Springfield and was employed by the State House Commissioners as foreman in erecting that edifice under direction of the architect. He was thus engaged part of 1837 all of '38 and part of 1839. He was next employed as foreman on the abutments of the bridge at the Sangamon River for the Northern Cross railroad now the T. W. & W. road at Riverton. When

²²⁷ Power, p. 791.

²²⁸ Power, p. 363.

²²⁹ Power, p. 694.

²³⁰ Power, p. 282.

²³¹ Power, p. 122.

²³² Power, p. 431.

gold was discovered on the Pacific coast, he attempted to go to California but became disabled at the Rocky mountains and returned. He was keeper of the Sangamon county poor house for ten years ending in the fall of 1859.

Dr. Francis Walton Todd Goes to California-1849

Francis Walton Todd was born on April 17, 1816, at Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky, and was brought by his parents to Springfield, Illinois, in 1827. He was educated at Jacksonville and graduated in medicine at Cincinnati Medical College in 1838. He was appointed surgeon in the United States army while in the City of Mexico in 1846. In 1849 at age 33, he went to California and was married there in March 1851 to Mrs. L. M. Jackson, nee Bullitt, of Nachitoches, Louisiana. They had no children. Dr. Todd was a member of the California State Board of Health, President of the Stockton Board of Health, and Secretary of San Joaquin County Medical Society. He lived in Stockton, California.²³³

William S. Hamilton Goes to California-1849

William S. Hamilton, born in New York a son of Alexander Hamilton, the distinguished statesman who was slain by Aaron Burr, came to Springfield, Illinois when it was regarded as the temporary county seat. He was elected one of the representatives of the county in the State Legislature of 1823-4. He was an advocate of the movement to make Sangamo Town the county seat. After that he went to Galena and engaged in lead mining. On the discovery of gold in California, he went there and died.²³⁴

Owen F. McCoy Goes to California-1849

In 1849 at age 29, Owen F. McCoy, born in February 1820, went to California for the California Gold Rush and died in San Francisco in 1856.²³⁵

Henry Shepherd Goes to California-1849

Henry Shepherd was born on December 3, 1807, in Virginia. In 1830, he went to Chillicothe, Ohio, and was married there to Margaret Peaff. They came to Sangamon County, Illinois in 1838. In 1849 Henry, at age 42, went to California, and died in Sacramento in the autumn of 1850, leaving a widow and one child.²³⁶

James H. McNabb Goes to California-1849

James H. McNabb was born on September 17, 1831, in Sangamon County. He went to California in 1849 at age 18, and was married there in 1859 to Mary Scudder, a native of New Jersey. James was for twelve years editor of the *Petalouma Argus*, and was State Senator, from 1862 to 1868. He was deputy collector in the United States Custom House at San Francisco, California, and lived there.²³⁷

²³³ Power, p. 716.

²³⁴ Power, p. 35.

²³⁵ https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/74790741/william-k_-mccoy

²³⁶ Power, p. 648.

²³⁷ Power, p. 508.

James M. Maxcy Goes to California-1849

James M. Maxcy, born on September 16, 1816, in Kentucky, lived in Springfield from 1834 to 1849, when he went to California at age 35. He was Quartermaster in the United States army during the Civil War and died in 1866.²³⁸

William E. Higgins Goes to California-1849

William E. Higgins, born in Kentucky, went from Sangamon County, Illinois to Missouri, and from there in 1849 to California. In 1851, he was on his way home and died on shipboard on the Pacific Ocean.²³⁹

William B. Foster Goes to California-1849

William B. Foster, born on April 9, 1822, in Page County, Virginia, came with his parents to Sangamon County, Illinois in 1835. In 1849 at age 27, he went to California and resided at Richmond, Sacramento County, California.²⁴⁰

George R. Steele Goes to California-1849

George R. Steele was born in December 1831 in Kentucky and was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois. He went to California in 1849 at age 18 and died from the caving in of a mine.

Levi D. Lewis Goes to California-1849

Levi D. Lewis was connected with his brothers Joseph and Thomas in the boot and shoe business for several years. In 1849, he went to California and died there on February 24, 1850.

²³⁸ Power, p. 485.

²³⁹ Power, p. 379.

²⁴⁰ Power, p. 309.

1850

By 1850, gold fever began to subside. Only 31 people left Springfield and headed west in 1850. Of the 14 letters in that year, seven were those of Benjamin and Emily Watson.

Most of the easily accessible gold had been collected, and efforts turned to extracting gold from more difficult locations. Gold that was increasingly difficult to retrieve, led some Americans to drive out foreigners to get at the most accessible gold that remained. The new formed California State Legislature passed a foreign miners tax of twenty dollars per month, and some American prospectors began organized attacks on foreign miners, particularly Latin Americans and Chinese.

In addition, many newcomers drove Native Americans out of their traditional hunting, fishing and food gathering areas. To protect their homes and livelihood, Native Americans responded by attacking the miners. This provoked counter-attacks by miners on native villages. The Native Americans, out-gunned, were often slaughtered. Those who escaped the massacres were many times unable to survive without access to their food-gathering areas, and they starved to death.

***Journal* Receives Letters From John B. Weber and George B. Goudy January 23, 1850**

A number of letters from our citizens in California, were received here last night. The letters from Mr. John B. Weber have been put into our hands for publication. We shall attend to them to-morrow. We have also an interesting and late letter from Oregon—from Mr. George B. Goudy.²⁴¹

87. Charles Maltby Letter From Sacramento City, California January 16, 1850

Journal, Monday, March 25, 1850.²⁴²

A letter from Mr. Charles Maltby, dated at Sacramento City, Jan. 16th, announces the death of Mr. Robert Lightfoot, a very worthy young man who went from this place in Mr. Eastman's company last Spring.

88. Benjamin A. Watson Letter to Wife From Sacramento City, California January 25, 1850²⁴³

Sacramento City Jan. 25th, 1850

Dear Wife,

I again take up my pen to commune with you, my life, my souls bright star, my beloved and sorry am I that I have no better news to communicate to you but I know it will be the best of news to you to know that I am in excellent health as good if not better than I ever enjoyed in my life. I weigh one hundred and sixty pounds, more than I ever did in my life.

²⁴¹ *Journal*, January 23, 1850.

²⁴² *Journal*, Monday, March 25, 1850, p.3.

²⁴³ *Benjamin A. Watson Letters*.

I expected to have received a letter from you before this telling me that I am the father of another little angel but I suppose that you could not write or if you did I have been unfortunate in not receiving it, but heard the joyful news from Hett's letter to Mr. Billson and right glad am I to know that you have come safely through your hard trials. Oh that I had been with you in the dark hour of your sufferings to have cheered and supported you, but once that I was I had absented myself from you but nay it will be the last time I promise you that.

I am happy that your wishes have been fulfilled and that the little cherub is a girl. If it resembles its mother in person and disposition, I will be a proud and happy father. Oh how I wish that I were now in the bosom of my interesting and beloved family. I could know no greater joy. The instantaneous possession of all the gold in California could not give me the joy I should feel to enfold, at one fond embrace, my beautiful wife and her charming children. But I must wait a little longer for there is a good time coming bye and bye.

Now something about myself and my prospects here. In my last letter to you I informed you of my safe arrival here for a more full description of my trip down here you may refer to a letter of mine published in the *New Orleans True Delta* signed B dated Jan. 16th in this city. Ask father to get the paper containing it also the one containing a letter dated "Reddings Diggings Jan. 1st, 1850. Same signature. I did not expect to make anything by my pen when I came here but one day I heard a man in the street say he would give me an ounce of gold if I would write him a letter about who had just come in from the mines, so I took him up and he was so well pleased with it that he said whenever I chose I might write and he would give me the same price so you may expect to hear from me through that source occasionally. Well in my last letter I informed you of my having ... to work and the house blew down and that I had rented the premises and was intending to carry on business but misfortunes never come singly just got ready for business when the water rose and caused the oven to fall down. My landlord having insured the oven to stand rather than build it up again took the house off my hands and I took a quantity of stock, tools, and ??? instead of money. I then made an arrangement with a gentleman who agreed to furnish shop and oven and half of the stock and go in partnership. Well just as we got the oven built and I expected to go to work next day there arose a tremendous storm which caused the river to rise and inundated the entire city. Fortunately the oven is still standing and as soon as the water leaves the city I shall go to work and do well I think as almost every oven in town has been destroyed by the flood, but it seems to me that I am the picture of bad luck but I really ought to make some money. I have made sacrifice enough to merit some return but it may be it is a judgment upon me for deserting my host of duty.

I shall continue in this city until the first of June, when I shall either start home or try the mines again until the weather becomes cool so that I can cross the Isthmus in safety for I must return to your arms by next Christmas. I could never stay away longer, and oh much and how tenderly I will love and cherish you and if you ever experienced a jealous pang about me you will never do so again. After you feel my faithful heart throbbing against yours. I am sure Bilson started for the mine about ten days since. I am surrounded by a noisy crowd and cannot (page 3) bring my thoughts to the proper degree of calmness and composure to write and besides I have told you about all I have to tell. I have written to the *Journal* by the same mail that will bring you this and you will learn of that some news that I have not written in this. Tell my dear noble boy to be good and father will be home soon. I fear that little fellow has forgotten me but I have joy in believing that there is one at home that remembers me yet. Kiss my boy for me and that other little one who has never yet felt the pressure of a father's lips. Take good care of your health my darling and keep your spirits up for more than half of the time of our separation has passed and you can now count the time of my return by months and soon by weeks and days, and you shall never know what it is to be separated from him who loves you again.

It rains a little almost every day or night here at this season of the year, but the weather is remarkable mild. I have not seen frost but once since I have been in this city. This city is situated at the mouth of the American Fork by reference to the map you will see it mentioned and you will like me be astonished at the remarkable mildness of climate. If this were a healthy country and it may be after the first season perfectly so I would like to live here if I had you and all the rest of the folks with me, but I must bring my letter to a close for I have nothing else to tell you but how much I love you and I have told you that already, so much that any one else but you if they should see this letter would laugh at me and think I was some love sick swain// his mistress for her fervor, but if you feel as I do you will never grow tired of being told of my love.

I shall ever remain, my dear beloved wife, your affectionate and confiding husband,

B. A. Watson

**89. Dr. J. G. Rogers Letter From California
February 11, 1850**

Journal, Saturday, April 27, 1850.²⁴⁴

From California

We were gratified in being presented a letter from J. G. Rogers, late of Petersburg, received by D. C. Brown, Esq. of that place. Dr. R. went by the Gila route²⁴⁵ to California, and as he had not been heard from before the reception of this letters, fears had been felt for his safety. We give some extracts from his letter.

San Francisco, Feb. 11, 1850

Dear Sir—At last, after a tedious and toilsome passage, we have arrived at the Golden City, and truly it is an enormous two-year old. I was prepared to see something pretty well grown, but I had no thought of seeing such a place as San Francisco seems to be, when I climb to the summit of some one of the many hills that environ it, and look down upon the immense mass of buildings that stud the beach; together with the forest of masts which cover the bay.

This is said to be one of the most unpleasant winters they have had here for years. It rained almost three months; but, for the last ten days, it has been delightful weather. The sun has been shining warm and bright as we usually have it in Illinois, in the middle of May. Vegetation is now wearing as lively a green as though it were midsummer. We are all in hopes the wet season is ended; and under this impression, hundreds are leaving for the mines.

I would not advise any of my friends, who are in business and comfortable situated at home, to come here. I have yet to be convinced that there is anything in California to pay a person for all the sacrifices that must be made in coming here; but as soon as I am convinced there is sufficient to compensate them for doing so, I will urge them to come. As yet, I do not regret coming, for I think I can make it pay tolerable.

For a man to live here and do nothing is rather expensive. Boarding is from \$10 to \$30 per week, with a cot to sleep on and blankets, but no sheets.

²⁴⁴ *Journal*, Saturday, April 27, 1850, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ Southern Emigrant Trail, also known as the Gila Trail, the Kearny Trail, Southern Trail and the Butterfield Stage Trail, was a major land route for immigration into California from the eastern United States that followed the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico during the California Gold Rush.
https://www.google.com/search?q=gila+route&rlz=1C1ZCEB_enUS845US845&oq=gila+route&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l5.4449j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

The boarding at \$30 per week is very good and would vie with that of the best houses in St. Louis. There are more lawyers and doctors here than old John McIlvain saw during his visionary visit to the old gentleman of the Lower House, the d--- and, when a man falls sick, he is soon surrounded by more doctors than a dead mule is, on the plains by wolves. I have been practicing a little, and had the pleasure of pocketing a \$200 fee, the other day. But it is not my intention to stay here. I expect to start to the mines to-morrow.

I would have told you something about our journey through, but it is a long tale, and I have now neither time nor patience to attempt it. To all our friends, I would say, never say, never take the same route. My respects to all my particular friends, and tell them I shall recur with pleasure to the many happy hours I have spent with them, and still look forward to the period when I shall once more take them by the hand.

Your sincere Friend, J. G. Rogers

**90. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Sacramento City
February 22, 1850²⁴⁶**

Sacramento City

February 22nd 1850

Dear wife & Children

I take this opportunity of addressing you a few lines informing you of my place of location. I am now in this City in business such as selling goods at auction and a general retail business in produce. I will _____ and anything that I can make money in. I came here about the 20th of December last year from the upper mines two hundred miles up the river above this place. At that place I remained about three months and during that time I did not have one day of good health. and much about I was able to be up and at it during the most of the time. I was ___ in that mines only about five days in that time and much about twenty dollars per day during the time as was here when I came here. I had not more than about three hundred dollars. The most of that was made in speculating since I have been here. I have been about three weeks out provisions at some expense of about five dollars per day which of course was money --- fast. I finally in connection with Mr. Dean and Mr. John F. Robeson bought a tent and went into business about the time got started the river rose and overflowed the whole City. Some places the water in the streets was ten to fifteen feet deep and in the shallowest places from two to three feet deep. During that time went aboard of a ship. On the river there are sailing vessels here from all the cities in the States besides from most of other countries. There are generally from thirty to fifty vessels lying here at the wharf and others found a new city is a very business place. It is about three times as large as Springfield [Illinois] and only one year old and more businesses done in it in one day than is done in Springfield in a month. We in our small business are selling from one to two hundred dollars per day and of course some being

And when the rainy season is once over, we shall not be troubled with rain again for at least 8 months so we can make ourselves easy on that share. We have no thunder or lightening in this country, such a thing is unknown. No ice. Sometimes a white frost is our coldest weather here in the valley of the Sacramento but we are surrounded by snow covered mountains winter & summer. I have scarcely been out of sight of snow since the first of July last when I first came thru the Rocky Mountains. In two days travel I could go where it is ten feet deep. Such is the climate and country that is covered with gold in this region. People ___ no vegetables no greens nor anything at all but Beef Cattle and some few hogs and them they never feel but the Beef is the finest in the world. The people that came from Springfield are scattered all over California that I cannot tell you much about them. Some are here in the city. Some _____ and are generally well. Captain Roberts and his company [are] here. The Ledlies are here but

²⁴⁶ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 6.

Robin Ledlie is very sick.²⁴⁷ Those that came with me are scattered all over the country. Mr. A. B. Johnson one of our Company is dead. He died in November. I believe Nathan McDaniel and Johnson was together at the time. Mr. Daniel is about forty miles from here. And was well when he left. Reuben McDonald was sick the last I heard from him two miles from this city. James Gormley came down to the City about the same time I did and is getting well and hearty. The Webers company have dissolved and scattered over the country as most all other companies have done and are generally well as far as I have heard except Mr. Rodham was quite unwell when I heard from him last. Mr. Saunders and his wife to Pueblo. Dr. Don Rosse where Mr. Reed lives and I have not heard from them since. I heard from Mr. Reed in the fall James _____ and family were well and he is very rich. One of his neighbors told me he was worth one Million Dollars. I believe I shall close this letter. At times I have been very negligent in writing but for the future shall write often. Heretofore I have been in the woods, two hundred miles from every _____ place and had no chance to send letters and was unwell and did not feel much like writing but I am now in tolerable good health and I think I shall enjoy good health for the future while I stay in this country. I cannot say at present when I shall return home not until I make considerable of money of course but hope you will get along very well without me. I shall send you some money the first good opportunity. I have not received a letter from you since I left St. Joseph Missouri. None since I have been in this country and of course am very anxious to hear from you all it is very hard to get letters from the States Thomse[.....] that are a great many have not heard from home since they left when you write direct your letter to this place and I think I shall get them without much trouble. Give my best respects to all enquiring friends and tell them if they wish to endure a great many hardships and _____ a great deal of suffering and make plenty

91. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Sacramento City

February 26, 1850²⁴⁸

Sacramento City

February 26th 1850

Dear wife

I received your letter dated last August and was sent to here from you all even at that late date it is the only letter I have had from you since I left Saint Joseph Missouri. Glad however to hear you were all well. Some of my Springfield friends have received letters as late as October which state the families of those here are generally well which is some satisfaction. I hope you will write at least once a month so that I can hear from you all. Don't mind your spelling that you speak of in your letter. It makes no difference to me. I never saw a letter yet I could not read in the English language. I am well and doing very well trading in this City. I do not know whether I shall remain here or go to the mines. The mines are very enticing. Some are making one to two hundred dollars per day but that is not the usual average. Most of the miners, perhaps not more than 12 to 16, is commonly made there but mining is very hard labor that however no one is afraid of if in good health and he can make plenty of Gold. I wrote to you about one month since and gave you a description of the country and places Mr. Robinson the tinner receives a letter from other Roberts of Springfield stationary. There had been about two hundred building built in Springfield the last season. That is good for Springfield but here we build that many in a week, almost I might say on a Sunday for there is no Sabbath in California alas. Sunday we sold about three hundred dollars in goods that is the way we spend the Sabbath in the City. Liquor and Gambling houses are wide open here every Sunday with full bands of music playing and thousands of dollars lost or won in the turn of a card.

²⁴⁷ Joseph Ledlie was a surveyor for Sangamon County. He did the surveying for the Chicago & Alton Railroad. Ledlie was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on January 18, 1812. His parents were Arthur and Catharine Ledlie who immigrated to this country from Ireland in 1801. Joseph moved to Springfield around 1846. He married Miss Emma Snell in 1881. Emma was born in Massachusetts on July 4, 1818 arriving in Illinois in 1865. Joseph Ledlie died on May 4, 1893 with Emma passing in March 1903.

²⁴⁸ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter 7.

Everything goes here. In the high pressure money is no object. Men make it fast and some spend it as fast as they make it. Mr. Hodge of Springfield came up a few days ago from where Mr. James F. Reed lives. Reeds family are all well and rich (sick?) as the _____

Virginia Reed was married a few weeks ago to a man named Mansfield, worth he says eighty thousand dollars. Capt. Keys is rich so is Miller that came here with Reed. In fact everybody is rich here that has been here any length of time if they tried to make and save money. Mr. Saunders and his wife are not. Pueblo de Oase Iase where Mr. Reed lives a keeping Gabean a - doing well. Some are doing well who came from Springfield and some are not. Some well and hearty are walking in street and doing something whmake 10 to 20 dollars per day but that is their own business not mine. Capt. Roberts is getting rich very fast all those from Springfield are in good health at this time as far as I know. Marshall McDaniel has gone to the mines. I have not heard from him for over a month. Mr. Gormsley is well and hearty and went to the mines about two weeks ago. Matheny s at Reeds. Mr. Dan is with me in business here and is well. He wishes when you receive this that you will send word to his house to that effect. Mr. D. F. Robinson is also with me in business and well. Mrs. J.[ohn] B. Weber, Biddle, Fulton, Richardson, Hodge, Spotswood, young _____ seen within the last few days. They are all well. Those died since we came here as far as heard from biz_____ are Shields the blacksmith, F. B. Johnson, Robert [S.] Lightfoot and Henry Shepherd. People are getting much more healthy than they were during the Rainy Season. That season is about over now and we shall no reason scarcely from you & mother. I forgot to state that S. D. Ledley[Ledlie] were here and that John Ledlie had been very sick but is recovering very fast. I would like to see you all very much but I should be very sorry to be in Springfield yet a while now & soon I may return I cannot say as soon however as I get well paid for crossing the plains & mountains. Write often direct to this City

My love to you and
my Children
Yours until separated by distance

92. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Sacramento City
March 21, 1850²⁴⁹

Sacramento City

March 21st 1850

Dear wife & children

I take this opportunity of once more addressing you a few lines informing you that I am well hoping you are likewise enjoying the same blessing. Mr. Lingfield is returning home and will hand you this letter. The people from Springfield are generally well. All are well as far as know except John Ledlie who is quite unwell as yet. I wrote by the last statement the particulars of where most of them were. Since then I know of no change in their locations or what they are doing. Mr. Dean Robinson and myself settled up our business, some of them wishing to go to the mines. Capt. W. E. Roberts and myself are now in business together selling goods in this city but trade at this time is rather dull. I think it is very probable we shall go to the mines in a few days. We cannot be ___ in Calafornia unless we make money fast in the mines. Men are doing well. I saw a man this evening who tells they are making in the mines thirty miles from this place from sixteen to fifty dollars per day. That is more than we are making here and of course we shall endeavor to go where we can make money fastest. This city is growing very rapidly perhaps too fast. I think there are more in business than will be able to sustain themselves at present; however, it is hard telling. People are coming every day from the states and I am told that there will be more emigration from the States this year than was last. How true that may be I cannot say. When you write please tell who is coming from Springfield. I

²⁴⁹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 8.

have not received but one letter from you since I have been in Calafornia. This is the fourth I have written. I hope you will write as often as possible and let me know how you are doing.

If you need any money write immediately and I will send it to you. The reason I have [not] sent you any was because I was speculating and could use at times to advantage but have still been making money and can send you some at any time. The raining season is now about over. We have had some clear days we will now have about seven months without a drop of rain which is much more pleasant however than five months rain which we have passed through. The nights are very cool and frosty but has not been cold enough here in the City to make ice this winter. Grass grows in the country all winter and is in many places at this time of year six or eight inches high. Perhaps I shall not be able to send letters as often as I have done here lately for the future but don't stop writing on that account. If I go to the distant mines I cannot ___ to those near here I can. I have not heard from Mr. McDaniel since he left here in December nor from Gormley since he left for the mines in February. Matheny has gone to mines south of this. Most of the Springfield men are north of this ___. Hickox has gone to the Trinity River mines two hundred miles north of this. He is in fine health and spirits and I think he will do well. You may think strange when I say I think he will do well but then you are not aware perhaps that these are great many in this golden country don't earn their board. I know men here well and hearty doing nothing -- refuse to work for one dollar per hour. Of course such men don't make money. Many had been sick and of course could not make money. In your letter I received, Mary Ellen sent her note. I was glad to see. Tell her and the others to do the same. I am glad to hear from them in their own writing and hope they will be good children while I am absent. I should be very sorry [upon] my return to hear they had not been good and obedient children.

Eli Cook

93. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Sacramento City
March 25, 1850²⁵⁰

March 25th 1850

Not having started my letter yet I take this occasion to add a few more lines to it. Capt. Roberts, Mr. Dean and myself with some others have concluded to go to the Trinity River mines from this City. Up the valley of the Sacramento River, the grass is fine being about one foot high. After we leave the valley we cross the vast range of mountains which are covered with snow. The distance across is only about 20 miles. The mines there are said to be very rich. Provisions are high there. Flour has sold there this last winter as high five dollars per pound or one thousand dollars per Barrel. Pork same price. We shall take our provisions with us which are plenty and cheap here. Flour is only fifteen dollars per barrel here. Since I commenced this letter I have heard from Mr. McDaniel. He is well at present about 40 miles from here in the mines. I heard from Mr. Coffin. He is well and doing well. Mr. Dormadey is here and has made money. Mr. S. R. Wiley came here a few days ago from San Francisco with a stock of goods. He is in good health and spirit. Mr. Fairchild is here playing in the Theatre instead of lecturing on temperance. He drinks like a fish. I will close this letter merly saying to you not to be disappointed or uneasy if you do not hear form me for two or three months. I shall be in a country where it will be difficult for letters. Since commencing this letter I received three letters from you and Emeline although written a long time since. I was glad to read them. They were all written in July last. Continue writing to me to this place. When I come down I can get them. My love to you all

I remain your affectionate husband & Father Eli Cook

²⁵⁰ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 9.

94. Charles Maltby Letter From Sacramento, California

Journal, Thursday, March 28, 1850.²⁵¹

From California -- Hints to Emigrants;--

We copy the following from a letter written by Mr. Charles Maltby, and dated at Sacramento city, on the 16th of January last. Mr. M. and his wife went with the overland immigration last spring, and arrived at Sacramento city on the 20th of September. He immediately went into business in that city as a tavern keeper, and is doing well. He hopes to make some money within a year -- "enough to gratify his moderate desires" -- and then he designs to return to Illinois and enjoy it. His whole letter is interesting; but as much of its contents has been anticipated by other correspondents, we shall only give the following extracts from it:--

The necessary outfit. --A word to those who intend to emigrate with their families to this part of the world. Provide yourselves with ____ of young thrifty cattle, from 5 to 7 years old. A light strong and well built wagon that will carry 2500 or 3000 pounds, double cover, strong cotton canvas tent, provisions for six months, anything that will keep good on the route. Start as early as possible say by May first. Pure water to drink (you will find much bad water which will kill cattle.) I don't _____ a couple of good milks cows will be valuable on the route

Instead of Mary's River take the Southern orroute. On Mary's River and vicinity vigilance and care will be required to prevent the Indians from stealing your cattle. Follow these directions and you may arrive in California by the first part of September or sooner, without much trouble processing.

The proper immigrants.-- There're two classes that would probably do well to immigrate to this part of the world. First -- those who are by misfortune or other causes, involved in pecuniary difficulties from which it is impossible to extricate themselves. Here, in a short time, by industry in a _____ economy, they may find a position to enjoy the comforts and luxuries of life. Second -- those who prefer the risk of acquiring wealth in a country where society is unsettled; where schools and churches will be unknown for years; and in the pursuit of such wealth, old associations must be severed, near and dear friends forgotten, all the happiness derived from them sacrificed -- if there are such men (and there are many) they may do well to come here.

There are not half a dozen floors in the city and I'm not under water -- and immense amount of property has been destroyed, and business is at an entire standstill. Any buildings have been moved from their foundations. The inhabitants removed to the islands. The country presents an appearance of almost entire waste of waters. The river in places is now from 20 to 40 miles in width. No lives were lost. The rivers now receding, and we hope that in a few days business and trade will be as brisk as usual.

Tuesday the 18th -- weather clear and beautiful-- temperature sunrise 32; noon 54 at 22

Wednesday the 19th -- our own members we were more or less affected-- all, except J. B. Watson, Ben Taylor and myself were prostrated ... Mr. Biddle was at this time absent and has so far escaped any sickness. Exceedingly disagreeable with rain and snow during the whole day and night. This evening we heard of three men having been murdered several days since about 3 miles from our encampment. Is supposed to have been done by Indians; this however, is uncertain. Temperature sunrise 32; noon 31; sunset 32.

²⁵¹ *Journal*, Thursday, March 28, 1850, p. 2.

Thursday the 20th -- cloudy and damp. At 5 p.m. commenced raining and rained at intervals during the night. Mr. Reeves, of the Young men's ____ is now so much recovered as to be able to take care of himself. Our men are all well. Temperature sunrise 20; noon 38; sunset 40.

Friday, December 21 -- today the weather has been exceedingly disagreeable, it having rained incessantly the whole day and night. The snow has been very heavy. It passes off slowly. Members are all well and I'm ____ in camp. Temperature at sunrise 41; noon 50; sunset 43.

Saturday, December 24 -- This morning it was foggy and extremely warm. The rushing water in the mountain ravines on every side are sweeping with a continued rush towards the Sacramento River. Lower grounds are already inundated in the streets. Watson and Johnson worked as ____, and raised \$10.50. Bill and myself went ____ making good gold mark. It commenced raining in the evening and continued all night. Temperatures as yesterday.

Sunday, December 25 -- the rain ceased this morning; the sun made its appearance, and the day has been beautiful over Oh well. The days spent in writing letters, which we intend to forward by ... Reeves, who leaves for Sacramento early on Tuesday morning in a canoe. Temperatures without much variation.

I now give you a plane and polished account of the acts and something of our company, day by day, from the time we left Springfield up to this date. Though you may see nothing very encouraging in them, we think we should feel grateful to it kind them and beneficent providence for the health and success that has at all times attended our movements compared with others around us. When we reach the gold region the weather was extremely hot which would have some sickness in every country. ... Mr. Robert [S.] Lightfoot ...died a few days ago.

95. John B. Weber and George B. Goudy Letters

John B. Weber went to California in 1849 with The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company. He returned to Sangamon County, Illinois in the fall of 1851.

A number of letters from our citizens in California, were received here last night. The letters from Mr. John B. Weber have been put in to our hands for publication. We shall attend to them to-morrow.
We have also an interesting and late letter from Oregon—from Mr. George B. Goudy.

Journal, Wednesday, January 23, 1850.²⁵²

Christopher Logan at New River

In 1849, Christopher Logan, in company with his brother David, came across the plains to California. The following is a report on his travels.

Mr. Heslep states that he found at New River, Christopher Logan, son of Judge Logan, of this city. He was well. He started last January for California, by the Panama route, and after various delays from sickness and other causes, is here in safety. In the spring he designs to proceed for San Francisco.

Journal, Tuesday, January 29, 1850.²⁵³

²⁵² *Journal*, Wednesday, January 23, 1850, p. 3.

²⁵³ *Journal*, Tuesday, January 29, 1850, p. 3.

96. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From Sacramento City, Upper California
February 24, 1850²⁵⁴

Sacramento City, Upper California,
Feb. 24, 1850

Mr. J. C. Planck:

The government is enlisting men down at the Bay, I understood, to go through with an exploring party to the States. They give them \$10 per day.

Many of our people will hardly ever have money enough, at one time, to pay their passage home—yet there is gold here, in vast abundance, in the mines in which I have worked; there is gold upon every square yard of the country for miles around, but it requires work! Work! Work! Work! To find it. It is very uncertain business, because men are not satisfied with three or four dollars per day, which they can make upon almost all the bars; but it costs about half of that for provisions.

After working awhile for that, they spend all they make in prospecting for better diggings, and about one out of ten find better diggings and make money, and about two-thirds of those who are successful lose all they make at the gaming table. Nearly everybody gambles. I have seen fortunes won and lost in an hour. There is no concealment of the practice here. The tables are in public places in the houses, and the houses occupy the most conspicuous places in the City.

Mr. J.[ohn] B. Weber arrived here yesterday from above. He says all of the company to which he belongs are well and have done tolerable well. Lewis Johnson and himself, he says, have made each some eight hundred dollars. Messrs. Weber and Biddle intend trading on the Trinity, next summer.

I have seen more money since I have been here than I ever saw before in my life—yet it will command ten per cent per month.

John Ledlie lays at the hospital very ill with the scurvy; but, I think, he will recover.

John Rodham has been sick all winter and unable to work. He has been up to Redding's Diggings. Hodge got up here from San Jose this week.

B. A. Watson

Death of Christopher Logan
(1828-1850)

Christopher Logan died in 1850 at age 22.

David Logan Moves to Lafayette, Oregon

In the spring of 1850, David Logan moved to Oregon and located at Lafayette where he practiced law.

²⁵⁴ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

William L. Van Doren Goes to California-Spring 1850

William L. Van Doren, born in February 1810 in New Jersey, married in 1832 in Warren County, Ohio, to Sarah Hagaman. They had one child, and moved to Sangamon County, Illinois, arriving in the fall of 1834, in what is now Curran Township. They had six children born in Sangamon County, and in 1845 moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where Sarah Hagaman Van Doren died in October 1848. In the spring of 1850, William at age 40 went to California, and there married, in 1853, to Cornelia Fulkerson. He returned east and came to Springfield and kept the Chenery House from 1866 to 1868. In August 1868, he returned to California, and resided in Petaluma, Sonoma County, California. His son, John S., lived in Petaluma, and his daughter, Anna, married John Rogers and resided near Petaluma.²⁵⁵

97. Alfred R. Elder Letter From Oregon

Late from Oregon.

Mr. J. C. Planck has kindly presented the following letter for publication. It is from a late old citizen of this county. The writer is in love with Oregon. We give the letter nearly entire—although, it will be seen it was not written for publication. We rejoice to learn that our old friend Durham, who was reported here as dead—is alive and reaping the reward due to his honesty, industry and enterprise.

OREGON TERRITORY, March 5th, 1850.

Mr. J. C. Planck.

Dear Sir:—I promised to write to you after we reached the place of our destination. I will now try and comply with that promise. I have a great many things to talk about that will have to be left unsaid, for the want of time. I am very busily engaged, when the weather is so that I can work. It is raining at present, which gives me an opportunity of writing you a short letter. Myself, John Kereth, and my boys, are employed in hewing timber for the ships, bound for the California market. We get 20c. per foot delivered on the bank of the Willamette river; which is not more than fifty steps. We make from eight to twenty dollars a piece per day, when we work. This no doubt will surprise you, nevertheless it is true. The Country is flooded with money, and every thing, except dry goods, is very high; potatoes have been selling for \$6,00 per bushel; onions at \$8,00; eggs at \$1,50c. per dozen; butter at \$1.00 per lb. and every thing else in proportion, —all owing to the demand in California. But while things are going this way, "your uncle Fuller," is wide awake. I have been building some chimneys for Mr Dunham just across the river from me, and I'll venture to say you can't guess what I get for building them. I will have to tell you. Well, I get twenty-five dollars for an inside chimney one story high. Oh! how I pity the poor bricklayers in Springfield. I fancy I see them just emerging from the pork house, covered in grease, while your humble servant is fine and fat, enjoying the genial air of an ever green forest. Tell the poor fellows to flee for refuge to this land of plenty, whose Mountains tall in majestic grandeur, rise, clothed with eternal snow;—the emblem of purity and of bliss;—a land of pure and limpid streams that rush in torrents from their mountain home;—a land of forests tall and green, a source of never failing wealth—a land of Valleys rich with luxuriant grass . * * * * Here I had to make a full stop, because I was interrupted by my youngest son, who came running in to announce the fate of a Deer, that had fallen by the unerring rifle of his brother Thomas.—James Williams, John Keneth, and myself went out and helped bring it in. I shall not attempt to give a description of this beautiful Country. It is more like the land of Palestine (from the idea I have formed of it) than any thing I have ever seen. I would undertake to give you a description of the route, and its grand and sublime scenery; but I suppose before this you have had letters from Ben. Watson, and of course he would describe those natural curiosities which are to be seen; but with all the powers we possess, with all the

²⁵⁵ Power, p. 739.

language we can command, it would be impossible to give you any just conception of the greatness and magnificence of those wonderful displays of God's mighty power. I will however, undertake to give you some idea of the soda springs, which are to be seen in the Valley of Bear River. These springs are situated on the north side of the river. At this point the mountain comes in near to the river, leaving a good smooth road for wagons to pass. The river bends to the south its course and empties into the salt lake. The springs are situated at different points among the cedar and pine, which give a very romantic appearance to the whole scene. Around each spring a crescent substance of a white yellowish cast, some have grown until they have formed a mound with a basin in the top. The gas not being sufficient to force the water any higher, it has been forced through another part of the mound. These springs differ from each other in many respects, very materially. They differ in size, and in quality, water in heat, and in cold, in stillness, and commotion. There is one spring just under the bank of the river to the left of the road, very strong and cold, and when taken with a little lemon syrup, the water is very fine, foaming and boiling equal to any that ever run from Watson's fountain. But the greatest curiosity is a spring a quarter of a mile below this, where the river turns to the south. It is called the Steamboat Spring. It throws the water from one to two feet high—giving out a sound like the puffing of a steamboat. It is a singular and beautiful place. The ground, as you pass over it, sounds as though it were hollow. It seems as if Nature had done this for the purpose of teaching man his weakness. While you are contemplating these magnificent scenes by which you are surrounded, you are suddenly called upon to consider what is going on below. Hark! what a death-like, hollow sound, as if some unknown monster lay hidden deep in the earth, in convulsive agonies, putting forth his dying powers! This is but a faint description of the Soda Springs and the surrounding scenery. If you wish to know anything more about these matters, you must get off that old leather seat of yours, and look at them for yourself. I must devote the rest of this letter to something else. If you and Moore were to come here; you with a good assortment of boots and shoes; and M. with tin-ware and stoves, you would both be richer than—in two years. Boots are worth from ten to fifteen dollars a pair; shoes from two and a half to five dollars; stoves are worth from forty to one hundred dollars. I paid one hundred dollars for a stove without pipe—about such a stove as No. 2 St. Louis Victory. George Goudy paid two dollars and a half for a coffee-pot holding a half gallon. This is a better place to make money than the gold mines. The Oregon people have had the===== pick and choice of the mines; and they are now improving their country with the gold. They are building mills and sawing up the cedar and the fir timber for the California market. Lumber is worth from eighty to one hundred dollars a thousand. While I am on the subject of mills and lumber, just let me tell you about Durham. You remember, it was said he was found dead in a mill where he was at work—that he was shot by some one. About the first man I met after I got into the Valley, was Durham, he is alive and rich.—He had two mills on Clackamas River. He sold one, for nineteen thousand dollars in silver. He owns half a ship. He has sold six thousand dollars worth of town lots. He bought a claim just across the river from where I live—gave four thousand dollars for it, and has since laid out a town on it. It has an excellent mill seat, and he has sold two-thirds of it for twenty thousand dollars. He has all his mill irons, and is building a mill. This is the death of Durham! I suppose you would like to die the same death. I am living, for the present, five miles below Oregon City, on the Willamette. The country around here is heavy-timbered and mountainous.

I intend going thirty-five miles further up the valley in April, to Yam Hill County. I have been up there and have selected a claim. It is a beautiful prairie country—consisting of valleys large enough to admit of settlements, sufficiently large for all social purposes. These valleys are surrounded by beautiful hills, covered with rich grass and white-oak timber resembling, at a distance, an old apple orchard. There is a town building up at the Yam Hill Falls, called La Fayette. It is the county seat.—There are four stores in it, and it is improving very fast. There is a large flouring mill being built there, which will be in operation in June.—I have three lots in this town. My claim is six miles north of the town. I have been offered twenty-five dollars a thousand for all the brick I can make this season. I expect to make about three hundred thousand. Yam Hill River is very deep, and is navigable for steamboats of a small size, as far

up as La Fayette. Beside this, there are seven hundred thousand dollars now in store for the purpose of building a rail road from this county seat to the mouth of the Willamette—a distance of forty miles. So you may judge of the prospects I have before me for making a fortune. I have already laid the foundation for a fortune, and, with the experience I have already had in our new country, I think, I shall be able to profit from the past. The day is not far distant when this will be one of the greatest commercial countries in the world.

Its commerce is increasing continually, vessels are coming in every day laden with goods and money; others are moving off with their cargoes of lumber, flour, potatoes, onions, eggs, &c., their canvass full spread before the breeze, carrying the star spangled banner in triumph o'er the pure and tranquil waters of the Columbia. I arrived in Oregon just in season to avoid the hard times we have to encounter in the settlement of a new country, and just in season to take a good start with the times. I have already made one thousand dollars; and you know I needed it, and I believe you will be glad to hear of my doing well as well as any body else. But I must leave this subject and talk of something that will please you better.

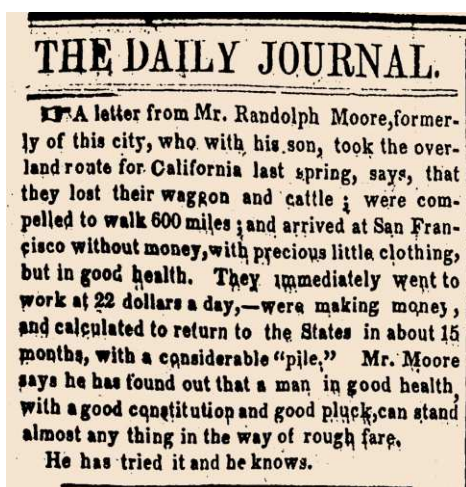
When we arrived at the Salmon Falls of Snake river, the Indians were there with plenty of Salmon of the finest kind. I thought they were the finest fish I ever tasted, but they are nothing to compare with those caught at the mouth of Columbia river; it would do your soul good to get a pull at these fine fish; and if you ever expect to enjoy yourself in Heaven, according to your theory, you will have to come and get some of this salmon, for in vain will you look with longing eye and increasing desire upon those who will be partaking of this delicious food. I judge this fish story will make brother Beers lick his chops a little. Tell him "to tarry not on all the plains." This is the country for him, I wish he were here. If I could have some of my old friends here it would please me very much; but I suppose your destiny is to sit on your old leather seat and pull out to the day of your death, and never know any thing but the knife, the awl and the bristle. Arise from your lethargy! Scatter your kit to the four winds and, like a man, stand upon your dignity. Strange that a man of your broad and expansive forehead should sit forever over a boot last and pegging awl, with uplifted hammer and eyes cast down. Why will you (as uncle Jack Turner said, in one of his mellow moods,) lead such a dysentery (sedentary) life? I know you would be delighted with the romantic scenery that would present itself to your view; for instance, the Devil's gate, and the Independence rock, on the Sweetwater. A great many persons traveled the road last season, who were in search of gold, and nothing but that could satisfy their curiosity. Nature had no attraction for them, the towering snow-capt mountain was nothing to him whose eyes were bound to Earth's glittering treasure. But with all these scenes of wonder, pleasure and enjoyment, we were called upon to mingle our tears with those who wept over the fate of their unfortunate friends and companions in travel. The cholera visited our ranks and slew many of the emigrants. Several were killed by the discharge of guns in the wagons, while taking out a tent, or some other article. I saw one man killed on the north fork of the Platte, at the mouth of Deer Creek. He was from Moultrie County, Illinois. He was walking at least forty yards from the wagon, when he was shot. In pulling out a tent it caught the hammer of the gun, the ball entered his breast, and he died immediately. The same company had previously killed two men by the same kind of carelessness. They were from Louisville, Ky. Many a poor fellow, whose hopes were high and flattering, was suddenly called to his long and dreary home, and now nothing but the raised earth and pine board mark the resting place of the weary dead. How still and peaceful is the grave, When life's vain tumult's past; The appointed place, by Heaven's decree. Receives us all at last. There kings and princes, small and great, Partake the same repose; And there in peace the ashes mix, Of those who once were foes. I must begin to bring this letter to a close, least I weary your patience. * * * * I think from all the accounts we have from California, there is a great risk to run in hunting for gold. All bear testimony to the sickness in the Sacramento valley. And if you could see the pale faces that are coming from California to Oregon, it would satisfy your mind in regard to the health of California. Oregon, without doubt, is a healthy country. I am satisfied with it. Here I can enjoy some satisfaction. I am not in continual fear of having to send for a doctor; and I can with proper care and industry make a fortune in a few years.

Common laboring hands get five dollars a day. I have just heard from Sanford Watson and his family. They are all well. He lives near his brother James—100 miles from me. Bolivar Alvey was offered twelve hundred dollars a year in Oregon City to clerk in a store, and his board thrown in;—but gold—gold—was the theme. I fear, he will not do as well in California. Mr. Constant is doing well here; he has been making about ten dollars a day, ever since he came into the Valley, making shingles and hewing timber at from ten to fifteen dollars per thousand. [Mr. C. left Illinois in bad health.] I have little room left now for compliments. I hope the members of the Old School are all living. If they are, give my love to them, one and all. Tell the learned and accomplished Dr. M— that I congratulate him on the success of the army of the French and the restoration of the Pope.— It is a strong proof of his infallibility. My kingdom is not of this world. Tell the Major, if he is alive, to attend particularly to the Doctor's case. And, to Uncle Jack, I would say, Be faithful in the discharge of your duty, as a presiding officer, in those warm and animated debates that so frequently occur between the Doctor and the Major. Keep them in order—if you can. And now, Jacob, I close. Give my respects to your family, and my friends in general. Excuse this hasty scrawl. Peace be with you.

Yours, in hope of seeing you again, Alfred R. Elder. =====

98. Letter From Randolph Moore in California

Journal, Thursday, March 7, 1850²⁵⁶



A letter from Mr. Randolph Moore, formally of this city, who with his son, took the overland route for California last spring, says that they lost their wagon and cattle: were compelled to walk 600 miles; and arrived at San Francisco without money, with precious little clothing, but in good health. They immediately went to work at 22 dollars a day,—were making money, and calculated to return to the States in about 15 months, with a considerable “pile.” Mr. Moore says he is found out that a man in good health with a good constitution and good pluck, can stand almost anything in the way of rough fare.

He has tried it and he knows.

99. Hart Fellows Letter From on Way to California

Journal, Wednesday, May 8, 1850.²⁵⁷

We see by a letter in the Rushville paper, that our old friend, Hart Fellows, is on the way to California. He was at Weston, Mo. on the 18th ult. He estimates from data he has obtained that the immigration across the plains this season, will amount to 30,000. The season is exceeding backward, and some who had left for the plains, were obliged to return for the want of grass for their cattle.

²⁵⁶ *Journal*, Thursday, March 7, 1850, p. 3.

²⁵⁷ *Journal*, Wednesday, May 8, 1850, p. 3.

100. Thomas C. Hammond Letter From California*Journal*, Wednesday, March 20, 1850.²⁵⁸

From California. -- The following is an extract of a letter from Mr. Thomas C. Hammond who left this town for California. Mr. H is a reliable man in his judgment on the subject of which he speaks, and it should have weight with those who know him. We have no doubt he gives the whole truth in a few words.

From all I had been able to see of it since I have been here, I have come to the conclusion, that, although there is money to be made here, yet, when you taken the account the amount of suffering a person has to suffer in getting here to say nothing of the sacrifices that will have to be made in company it will not pay even if a person should be certain of making a fortune after he arrives. My advice to everyone is to stay at home and be content with whatever lot may befall him there rather than risk their health and comfort in the pursuit of what so many are struggling for in this last of all countries. Mr. Hammond remarks that he intends to return in about one year. *Galena Gazette*

101. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife**May 16, 1850²⁵⁹**

May 16, 1850

Dear wife and children

I take this opportunity of addressing you a few lines informing you that I am in good health at present. In fact better than I have had since I have been in Calafornia. Hoping that are all enjoying the same blessing. I am now located for the present about one hundred miles from Sacramento City in what is supposed to be a good mining region; but streams are so full of water that there is but little a doing in the mines. The snow is melting from the mountains which will keep the waters up until about the first of August which makes the season short for mining. Up here in the mountains the snow ____ 8 miles from here is 6 or 7 feet deep. 20 or 30 miles higher up is 15 or 20 feet deep. But the weather is quite warm in the middle of the day; so much so that we do not wear our coats. In the night it is quite cool but not uncomfortable. I am selling goods and provisions here in partner ship with Captain N. E. Roberts and Mr. Lane a gentleman for New Jersey. They do the packing from Sacramento City and I stay up here in mountains and sell the goods. We have to pack the goods on the back of mules for we are in a mountainous country where a wagon never has been and perhaps never will be. We are not making money very fast but wish to be doing something until we go to work in the mines. We intended to go to Trinity two hundred miles north of Sacramento City, as wrote you in a previous letter, but the water were so high that we could not get there at that time. I received your letter dated February 5th and was glad to hear that you were all well and doing as well as possible but I was surprised to hear that you had not received but one letter from me. This is the sixth letter I have written you since I have been in Calafornia. Before this reaches you however, I have no doubt you will have received the most of them. You want to know what I have to eat and how I sleep. We have everything to eat that we can desire such as wheat bread, corn bread butter dried fruit potatoes onions cheese peaches in fact almost every thing that you can get at home. We have our store full of almost all these things at present for sale. The operation of sleeping in this country is very simple. Not much making of beds. When we are traveling, we carry a pair of blankets with us and when night comes we roll up in them and lye down under an oak tree if there is one handy. As for sleeping in a bed I have not done such a thing for one year. A pair of blankets and the ground is my bed on which I sleep very sound and suffer no inconvenience from doing so. In reference to the death of Mr. Shield I can only say that he died about the first of October last about directly

²⁵⁸ *Journal*, Wednesday, March 20, 1850, p. 2.²⁵⁹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 10.

after his company got into the Sacramento Valley. I was at Lawson when they came in. I saw Mr. Shield. He was quite sick. He was with Mr. Anderson & Addison. In a few days I left for the upper mines. I understand since that Mr. Shields was placed in the house of Mr. Lawson and I have no doubt have all the attention that could be given him until he died and was decently buried. The men from Springfield are scattered all over Calafornia. I have seen but few of them for the last two or three months. Capt. Roberts as I stated before is in partnership with me in business. Mr. Robinson the Linnes was here a few days ago and has gone a gold hunting higher up in the mountains. Mr. Dean was here last week. He is packing and selling goods. The last I heard of Mr. Mc Daniel he was at Auburn about 30 miles from here. The most of them as far as I heard are well. I was glad to see a note from Juliette at the bottom of your letter. Tell her I never forget her or my other children. It was for their benefit as much as yours and my own I came to this country and I think I shall succeed. I am not making money fast at this time. I suppose we are making about three hundred dollars a month each which is not very much for this country. We hope to do better when we get to mining. When I shall come home I can not say at this time. Please write as often as possible.

My love to you all Your husband & Father

Dear wife Agreeable to your request in a former letter I send you a lock of my hair. E. Cook.

102. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from California
June 13, 1850²⁶⁰

California

June 13th 1850

Dear Wife & Children

I once more address you a few lines informing you that I am well hoping you are all enjoying the like blessing. I received your letter of March 3rd and was glad to hear that you were all well your letters reach me regularly why mine does not go as regular I cannot imagine. you say you have not received but one from me. Yet since December last I have written to you regularly some of them I have sent by individuals going home and some by mail. After this I shall send by mail altogether which I think will carry them through with more safety, I am at the same place that I was when I wrote to you last month about 80 miles east of Sacramento City in the Mountains on the waters of the American River trading in partnership with Capt. Roberts and a young man by name of Lane from New Jersey. They pack the goods to me from the City and I remain here and sell them we are doing tolerably well but no making money very fast for this country. We are going to mining in a few weeks as soon as the water in the streams get low enough to work. The waters keep up very late in this country owing to the melting of the snow in the mountains which is very deep some places 20 or 30 feet. There is some snow at this time some 20 miles from this place 8 or 10 feet deep. Packed so from this place 8 to 10 feet deep. Packed so hard that mules and horses travel over it loaded. The sun shines so that while traveling over it that one has [to] go without his coat. Some are doing very well mining and others are not making much some make in this region as high as one hundred dollars per day some days others work hard all day and don't make enough to pay their board. Mining is a perfect lottery but there are few but what can make good wages if they use industry but there are more men in this country that idle their time away than any country. I have ever been in as strange as it may appear for wages for common labour is 6 to 10 dollars per day. I have only mined about 5 days since I have been in the country. That was when I first came in at that time I was unwell in the 5 days. I made 64 dollars since then I have been trading selling goods and done tolerably well but am going to try mining again. As said before thinking I may be one of the lucky ones. Capt. Roberts and Mr. Lane and myself will mine together. (page break)

²⁶⁰ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 11.

You say you heard by Mr. Wileys letter that I was with Mr. Bradford and that I had gone to Weaver Creek diggings and was sick. I have not seen Mr. Bradford since I have been in the country neither have I been on Weavers Creek since I came to the country so there must be some mistake. I was sick when I came into the country I took medicine and got better in a short time and went to the upper mine the 1st of Oct. last from which place I wrote the letter you received there I remained until the 10th of Dec. when I came to the City while there that is while at the upper mines, I was unwell the most of the time and unable to work. But was able to walk about and trade occasionally I have not been down sick since I have been in the country but have been able to take care of myself all the while and have always had plenty of money to get what I needed after I came to the City I got well in a short time and have been well ever since. I have weightd ____ than I ever did before. I was afraid ____ I was going to get too fleshy. So the alarm about my sickness is unnecessary and how Mr. Wiley made such a mistake I do not know. I saw Mr. Wiley in the City in March last he knew I was well then. (page break) Mr. [Reuben] McDaniel came here last Saturday and stayed with me until Monday morning. He is well. He has gone to the mines some 30 miles above here where Capt. Roberts and myself are going in a short time. He has done tolerable well since he has been in the country he was sick during the winter but is now well. Mr. Dean is at Auburn Landing he is well. Mr. Gormley is near Auburn working at his trade. He is not entirely well yet he has been sick ever since he came to the country but is getting better. Mr. Coffin is on the ____ River mining and has done well and had good health the most of the time. I have not seen him. Mr. [John] Rodham has been sick since he came to the country but has got better the last I heard from him he is on the Trinity River with J. B. Watson [John B.] Weber, Biddle and Johnson the carpenter John F. Robinson is up here and well. The Ledlies are in the City. John has been sick the most of the time. All except those mentioned are well as far as I have heard they are scattered all over Calafornia I have not seen one half of them since I have been in this country.

Yours affectionately husband parent Mrs. Sarah Cook children Eli Cook

**103. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Sacramento City, California
July 30, 1850²⁶¹**

Sacramento City

July 30th 1850

I drop you a few lines informing you that I am well hoping you are all enjoying the same blessing. I received your letter dated May 5th a few days ago. It gave me great pleasure to hear from you and that you were all well and doing well although separated from you many thousands of miles. Still my mind continually wanders back to the home of my wife and children and it would be a great pleasure for me to be with you all again. How soon I may return I cannot tell at present but shall do so as soon as I can consistently. But as I have went through the fatigue and hardship of coming to this country, it is certainly necessary that I should make something to recompence me for my troubles if possible. I cannot complain of my success since I have been here. I have not made money fast but have done tolerably well. How I may succeed hereafter of course I can not tell. Those from Springfield are well as far as I have heard. I have seen or heard from most of them within the last two or three weeks. They are generally doing well not making fortunes any of us but making some money. All kinds of trade are ___ done here almost as bad as in the states. Still some are making money and many will continue to do so. The mining season is about commencing and it is generally believed that times will be good this fall. That some will make fortunes in the mines there is no doubt. Mining is a lottery. Some make fortunes while others work as hard close by them and make nothing. I came down here about two weeks ago from the mountains. We closed our business there. Since then I have not been doing much. In a few days I shall go at something again either selling goods or mining. I have not decided which as yet. People are coming to this

²⁶¹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 12.

country as fast as ever. It is estimated that there are twice as many coming across the plains this year as did last. A great many have already arrived. They say there is a great amount of suffering in the world. That there is plenty of gold for them no one doubts if they are lucky enough to find it. But many a man works hard all day and for weeks I might say and does not make his board while others make their fortunes in a short time. Such is the fortune of mining. The country is improving rapidly and farms are being opened every___ well. Here we have plenty of all kinds of vegetables. Many here make fortunes in raising them. I was in San Francisco a few days ago. It is a large city and growing very fast. Everything is on the go ahead order here. I will close this letter not having much to write. I was glad to get notes in your letter from them. I want you all to do the best you can.

My love to you all
Your husband and Father
Eli Cook

PS Let Franklin tell the Editors of the Register and Journal to direct their papers to me in Sacramento City.

E. Cook

**104. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Sacramento City, California
September 8, 1850²⁶²**

Sacramento City

September 8th 1850

Dear wife & children

I take the opportunity of once more addressing you a few lines informing you that I am well at present hoping that these few lines may find you all enjoying the same blessing. It is generally healthy here in the city. It is very healthy as much so as any City. I have even known there is some sickness in some of the mines, but take the country altogether it is a very healthy country. I was unwell for about a week some two weeks ago so that could[not] get about but am now entirely well. The people from Springfield are generally well as far as I have heard from them. I have heard from the most of them within the last few weeks. The Ledles are here in town doing well. John H. Robinson is here ___ well Mr. Dean is at Auburn so is Mr. [Reuben] McDaniel both well. The others are scattered around the country in different parts. I frequently hear from them I have heard nothing from any that came out in my company except Mr. McDaniel & Mr. [Reuben] McDonald for several months. I have not heard from [Elijah Cook] Matheny, Condell or Gormley for those a four months and of course do not know where they are or what they are doing. Mr. [E.] Fuller and Hodge started home the first of the month and will be home before you receive this letter no doubt. Mr. Benjamin [A.] Watson starts home in a few days. I have received no letters from you since the one mentioned in my last dated the 5th of June. I think perhaps there is one in the office here ___for me. I shall go in the morning and see. I was told today by Mr. B. Watson that he has one. I just received a letter from his Father that stated that Emeline was married to a man by the name of Morgan and that you approved the match. All I have to say is that as she has made her choice, she will have to abide by it. If she has made a bad choice it will be to her own sorrow if a good so much the better for her. I hope she has made a wise choice and wish her great joy and happiness in her choice. Hoping it may turn out to be a good one, treat him kindly and make the best of it is the best way. Tomorrow I leave here for Nevada City which is about 70 miles north of here. I expect to remain there all winter. Myself and Capt. Roberts are in partnership in the business of selling goods there. He will remain here the most of time and buy goods and send to me and I shall stay there and sell. I cannot say when I shall return home. I have not made money very fast but have done very well. I do not like to come home until I make considerable of money. I think we shall do well in our operation this winter. Provisions get very high in the

²⁶² *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 13.

mines in the winter and we intend to have a good stock there by the time the rainy season sets in. The mines this season thousands have made nothing which makes time rather hard here. It is a much better place to make money yet than in the states and a great many are doing well.

Please write often and direct your letters as heretofore to Sacramento City.

My love to you and my children
your husband Father Eli Cook

Sept 9th I received your letter this morning of July and was glad to hear that you were all well. I do not know the reason you do not get my letters more regular I write every month. I receive yours very regular in your letter you confirmed that statement of Emeline's marriage All I have to say I hope she has done well, perhaps better than to have married Gormley. How he may do I can not say. He has been unwell since he has been in the country and got behind _____. I have a very poor opinion of him at least I had a crossing the plains last year.

Juliette and Mary Ellen want to know when I am coming home. I cannot say at present. I will send you money by the first opportunity. My love to you all Eli Cook

105. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
October 24, 1850²⁶³

Nevada City

October 24th, 1850

Dear wife & children

I once more send you a few lines informing you that I am in good health hoping these lines may reach you enjoying the same blessing. I have not received any letter from you since the one dated in July which makes the time rather long in hearing from you. I was glad to hear at that time that you were all well and answered your letter the day I received it. I am doing business in this city, the best mining region in California. Perhaps trade is very good here. Within__ miles of this place there is no doubt twenty thousand people. This city has a population of 5 or 6 thousand and about one hundred trading houses. I am still in partnership with Capt. Roberts and think we shall do well this winter. A good many of the Springfield men are returning home. Through them you will hear from this country. Some have done tolerably well. Others not so well. Those that are here are all well as far as I have heard from them. This is a very healthy country.

I shall send you some money the first opportunity I have to send it. I can spare you some very well at any time but there has been no one a going to our region from this place, but will be shortly. Do the best you can and keep the children to school as much as possible. I still receive notes in your letters from my children. I am glad to receive them, and long for the time to come when I can return and see you all. But after taking the trip to this country a long and laborious one, I think it my duty to stay until I can make something worth paying for the trip. So I cannot yet say when I shall return home. I received a letter from Father & Mother a few days since. They were all well.

This letter is badly written for I have twewnty customers in the store while writing it and has been done in a hurry.

I forgot to say that Mr. Armstrong and his family are here in this place and are at present in tolerable good health. The have lost their youngest child since they have been here. Mrs. Armstrong don't like the country. My love to you all.

Your Husband & Father Eli Cook

²⁶³ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 14.

106. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
December 17, 1850²⁶⁴

Nevada City

December 17th, 1850

Dear wife & children

I address you a few lines informing you that I am well hoping that you are all enjoying the like blessing. I received your letter of September the 15th and was glad to hear that you were all well. I am in the highlands in Mountains of California, and we are now in the mines of the Leising reserve. Up here we have rain & snow almost every day. This is one of the best mining regions of Calafornia. Some are making money fast a(t) mining while many others are mostly paying expenses. So goes the world in this country. This place is about 75 miles north of Sacramento City. We have a good stock of goods here. Am doing tolerable good business. I am in partnership with Capt. Roberts. He is in Sacramento City and I remain here. There are some of our acquaintances here Mr. Armstrong and his family are here keeping a boarding house all. Well at present although the most of the family have been sick since the have been here.

Joseph Cook my cousin is here in that place also well and doing tolerably well. Mr. Shepherd the daguerreotype likes taken is here doing well. Mr. Mc Clain is here and lodges in my store with me. His Father lives near Rochester. He is well and is a first rait young man. The balance of the Springfield men that have not gone home. I have not heard from lately the most of them will be home before you receive this letter. I am one of those that tarry long it may perhaps be one year yet before I leave this Country. I could perhaps come home with as much money at this time as any that have returned to Springfield but I am making money here and think it better t wish to return as much as others do but I think I have more fortitude than the majority of men and often going through the hardships of the trip I think it my duty to make the best of it and _____ make money in Cal (page break)

By Mr. [William] Weis I send you one hundred dollars in Gold dust. He will sell it in New Orleans and give the proceeds of what it brings which will be perhaps ___dollars more. One of the Mr. Weis will call and see you and give you any information which I may forget to write ---shall the most opportunity send you more money. I should send more this time but we have been lagging in ___ stock of goods for the winter trade, and are not very flush in funds at this time. I received a letter from Father & me that came across the plains from Illinois this year are out here. Mr. Johnson brother-in-law to Mr. Filed & Col spent 3 or 4 weeks here he built a house for us, he has gone a short time since day d in August the below at thiny were all well, some of the

At this time, [Reuben] McDonald nephew to Iles who came out in my company has been here all fall and is well. I was glad that Mary Ellen & Juliette sent their notes & love to l and shall return as soon as possible. My love to you all, do the best you can. I am very anxious to see you all.

Yours affectionally
 Eli Cook

P.S. Let the Franklins tell the Editors of the Register & Journal not to send their papers to me any longer. I have never received one of them since I have been in the country. Also tell the Editors (of) other papers to stop that is the one printed by Stephen Whitehurst when I left.

E. Cook

²⁶⁴ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 15.

The weekly

You can take the Register & Journal yourselves if you want them in place of sending them

Joseph Hall Goes to California-1850

Joseph Hall, born on March 19, 1828 in Virginia, was raised in Sangamon County near Loami. He went to California in 1850 at age 22.

Hyman Fairchild Goes to California-1850

Hyman Fairchild, born on December 2, 1832, in New York, was raised in Sangamon County, and emigrated to California in 1850 at age 18. He married there to Mrs. Mary J. Waddle, whose maiden name was Barker. They had twins, and Mrs. Fairchild died. Hyman then married in Sangamon County to Mrs. Susan Giger, whose maiden name was Benson. They had three children, and resided near Grafton, Yolo County, California.²⁶⁵

Joseph R. Young and Family Go to Oregon-1850

Joseph R. Young married Mary Hussey on February 27, 1829. In 1850 they moved overland to Oregon, with their three children. A son, David, died on the summit of the Rocky Mountains. A daughter, Margaret, died soon after their arrival in Oregon. Joseph died there in 1855 from the effects of a gun-shot wound received in the Black Hawk war as a soldier from Sangamon County. A son, Stephen, married and practiced medicine at or near McMinville, Oregon. Mary Young resided on her farm near McMinville, Yamhill County, Oregon.²⁶⁶

Charles H. Whitesides and Family Go to California-1850

Charles H. Whitesides, born in March 1819, in Fayette County, Kentucky, was married in Springfield to Emeline Sargent. They had five children, and moved to California in 1850 when Charles was 31. In 1872, they were in the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii].²⁶⁷

107. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From California²⁶⁸

Further from California.

We received yesterday morning several letters from California. We shall make a few extracts from them. They're not of a later date than Mr. Maltby's published on Thursday.

Advice to friends,-- Mr. B. A. [Benjamin A.] Watson says, what he would advise any of his friends whose creditors have suffered them to remain out of Mr. Wickersham's [William H.] morning house, to stay at home;-- still, there will be many who will only look to the bright side of the picture,-- who will listen only to the stories of fortunes amassed in a month by one of the thousand who come here, and pay no attention to the thousands who do not make anything, nor give heed to the warnings that must by this time have reached home, And you will do as 99 out of 800 will do, and bless their stars when they are safely return.

missing

²⁶⁵ *Power*, p. 295.

²⁶⁶ *Power*, p. 394.

²⁶⁷ *Power*, p. 765.

²⁶⁸

I am speaking my candid opinion. Why, sir, in this flourishing city of several thousand inhabitants, almost every other building is a drinking and gambling shop, and I have seen clustered around their tables many young man, whose indigent fathers have sent them out here, to shovel up a few bushels of the dust, and return home and share their joy dwelling days with ease and luxury-- Alas! many, very many, are deemed to be disappointed. And I have seen older men, whose families are even now anxiously looking for remittances from this land of riches to meet their pressing necessities, risking their last dollar on the turn of a card. Alas! Alas! they, too, are doomed to the most bitter disappointment. This is a fearful picture. I wish it were not true.

Our Townsmen.--I will give you the whereabouts of all of our people as far as I know. Lewis Johnson, John Rodham, J. [ohn] B. Weber, E. T. Cabanis, and B. R. Biddle are up in Reddin's Diggings.

They have a comfortable house to live in, and plenty to live on this winter. Phillip Weber, James Sheppard, Thomas Bilson and I think our R. F. Coffin, are on the Juba River-- James Parkinson, Joe Crane, and Mr. Bartin, are on the American Fork.

[Augustus] Eastman²⁶⁹ has gone up to the Sacramento River as engineer of a steamboat. R[ichard]. Hodge, Cook Matheny and C. Saunders are at San Jose. Louis Campbell and Thomas Moffa[i]t are cutting wood 50 miles below here. B. D. Reeves, A. Sattl[e]y, Mr. [William P.] Smith, Mr. Broadwell and H.[enry] Doran[d] are at Fremont. H. E. Roberts, H. and N. D. Spot[t]swood, Louis Swizler, Arthur and John Gadly, Charles Maltby and lady, William Prentiss, Lockwood Todd, Eli Cook, John Robinson, F. S. Dean, Fuller, Henry Shephard, R. McDaniel, and your humble servant, are in this city.

The following persons have died: William Shields,-- a young man of the name of Smith, who came out with S. G. Anderson, was drowned in the Sacramento ...; and Mr. Johnson, who came out with E[li] Cook. We have been very fortunate not to lose any of our number.

I must conclude, as I commenced, by advising all to be contented and stay at home; for few will be paid for leaving home, families, and friends to come to this country.

William T. Elkin Goes to California With His Father Garrett Elkin

William T. Elkin, born on February 5, 1832, in Springfield, Illinois, went to California with his father Garrett, in 1850, and succeeded well for a time, but returned on account of an affection of the eyes.²⁷⁰

108. Letter of George B. Goudy From Oregon: Word on Springfield Boys

Register, Monday, April 22, 1850.²⁷¹

Letter from Oregon,-- Mr. George [B.] Goudy, one of the publishers of the "Oregon Spectator" writes to Mr. Edward Connors of the city as follows, in relation to the Springfield immigrants, who went there last year.

²⁶⁹ See footnote number 186.

²⁷⁰ *Power*, p. 281.

²⁷¹ *Register*, Monday, April 22, 1850, p. 2.

A number of the boys from Springfield came here and afterwards went to California. Some are still here. Among the former are Bolivar, Alvey Charles Harvey, S. Elkin, James Constant, William Fagg, [Samuel] Fisher and a number of others. David Logan is here; has a ferry across a small stream. Watson settled about 100 miles south of this, where his brother was living. [Alfred R.] Elder is living about 4 miles from here. I'm making shingles at \$12 dollars per thousand. He and all his family are well and getting along fine. Dick Campbell who also came here is going to California. The rainy season has fairly commenced. It has not yet been very cold here. I believe the thermometers stood at 40° the coldest day we have had. Ordinarily rains here in the wet season almost constantly this season. It occasionally clears off. It is then beautiful. It has been clear now for several days passed. Last night I could see distinctly from a lot near the city with my naked eyes Mount Hood by moonlight. I cannot ...and Mount Hood is 60 miles from here. This is a tall story but it is true and whatever Oregon may have been misrepresented it has not been in regard to the beauty of the scenery. Turn which way you will, you are sure to see a grand landscape which justly deserves to be classed with the beautiful and sublime. There are many beautiful scenes in the Cascade Mountains. When I came through them the ... with which they are densely covered was on fire and the thought of falling trees across the road rendered it somewhat dangerous. A ... road passes within 3 miles ... and it is decidedly the grandest view I ever beheld. The rocks becoming heated from the immense quantity of timber burning around them were bursting apart apparently at regular intervals with a dull and heavy sound echoed among the hills. ... high above with the ... completely covered with piles of snow and ice which fairly glistened in the rays of the sun in innumerable cascades and rushing streams dashing and foaming among the rocks and the high rugged and wild aspect the unsurpassed grand view of the whole surrounding country all conspired to create feeling a feeling amounting almost to reverence. I gaze upon it for an hour and must confess I felt almost recompense for the hardships and toll of climbing over the mountains. If such scenes occurred occasionally on the rest of the journey it would greatly have beguiled time which hung heavily upon us.



Mount Hood by Moonlight²⁷²

Death of Henry Shepherd (1807-1850)

Henry Shepherd, born on December 3, 1807, in Virginia, went in 1830 to Chillicothe, Ohio, and was married there to Margaret Peaff. They came to Sangamon County, Illinois, in 1838. In 1849, at age 42, Henry went to California and died in Sacramento in the autumn of 1850. His widow and a daughter lived in Petersburg, Menard County, Illinois.²⁷³

²⁷² https://www.google.com/search?q=mount+hood+moon+light&rlz=1C1ZCEB_enUS845US845&sxsrf=ACYBGNRygqo2rm2uYe4NKv4D8d58SOE5Q:1577368169031&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiVk5SrutPmAhXsxlkKHVxyDBAQ_AUoAXoECA0QAw&biw=1536&bih=722#imgcr=ILZ7UbGGWaKywM:

²⁷³ *Power*, p. 648.

Thomas S. Billson Dies in California
(___-1850)

Thomas S. Billson went from Springfield to California in 1849, and died there in 1850.²⁷⁴

109. Eli Cook Letter From California

A letter from E. Cook, late of this city, now in California, dated in March, says, that the Springfield emigrants had so far made their expenses.

Journal, Saturday, May 18, 1850.²⁷⁵

John S. Bradford Sends Papers and Documents From California

Our thanks are due to J. S. Bradford, Esq., of the California General Assembly, for California papers and documents.

Journal, Saturday, May 18, 1850.²⁷⁶

110. Isaac Constant Letter From Milwaukie, Oregon
March 10, 1850

Journal, Springfield, July 18, 1850.²⁷⁷

FURTHER FROM OREGON.--We have received a letter from Isaac Constant, dated Milwaukie, Oregon, March 10. He had recovered his health, was pleased with the country, and wished that his family were with him. He had done well by his personal labor, clearing 13 dollars every working day. He speaks of the climate, and of the rains of winter, as others have done. He was contemplating a trip to Rogue River with a company, where gold had been found, in which case he should not return until fall, and then come home by the Isthmus. We judge from Mr. Constant's letter that he would be glad where he settled in Oregon, with his family and friends about him. He says it is a good country for industrious men to live in.

111. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From Sacramento City, Upper California
April 26, 1850²⁷⁸

My Dear Beloved Wife:

You cannot conceive how buoyant my spirits have been today since I received your letter dated Feb. 1. I should have received it a week since but I have been out of the city into the mountains for two weeks and just returned yesterday. I had almost given up hearing from you for I sometimes thought that you had forgotten me or that your love was growing cold to me but pride forbade me thinking so. Hope bade me cherish brighter visions and Faith in your spotless virtue and ?? carried me still to look to you as the beacon star of my existence and Time has rolled round with his untiring steeds and relieved me from all care and anxiety.. But dearest why did you not write sooner? Why did you not tell me when you did write how you passed through your confinement. Surely you know it would have been very interesting to me.

²⁷⁴ Power, p. 754.

²⁷⁵ *Journal*, Saturday, May 18, 1850, p. 3.

²⁷⁶ *Journal*, Saturday, May 18, 1850, p. 3.

²⁷⁷ *Journal*, July 18, 1850, p. 2.

²⁷⁸ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

I fear dearest you will weep when you receive my last letter. I fear I chided you to severely for not writing to me, but I wept while I was writing it, but I did not think of the trouble the children were to you preventing you from writing to me but it is all past now and I am again happy in the full confidence of my dear wife's love and I shall redouble my exertions to make a good noise and hurry home to enjoy that sweet love and that very (page 2) wife. Dearest you must ask father to tell you about what I am and have been doing as I have given him a full history of my business and prospects. I think I shall be able to bring home something very substantial with me if I have good luck this summer -- enough to make us independent at least.

I am very sorry to hear that you have so much trouble with the children and still more sorry to know that you should suffer yourself to be troubled with the Blues. Do not indulge in sad thoughts. Look always on the bright side of the picture and the dark will become bright soon. Cheer up I shall soon be with you though not so soon as I once thought I should for I now think I have a bright show ahead for making a pile.

I am exceedingly pained to hear that our son is so turbulent in disposition. I have told Father to exercise a father's care over him in my absence and I am sure you will sustain and aid him in any course his superior years and experience might dictate. I am glad you are aware of the danger of suffering Welly to be very often with Mother's children for while she is one of the best women she had got some pretty bad children the small crop I mean.

Dear wife when I travel over this country which at this time looks like an Eden, I sometimes wish that you were here to enjoy its beauties. In going up to the mountains last week (page 3) I gathered twenty two varieties of the most beautiful flowers. Far handsomer than any we cultivate in our gardens. In walking a hundred yards and during the trip I then saw a hundred different kinds all very beautiful and rich.

The weather here is mild as June at home and vegetation is as far advanced. We have had radishes and lettuce for six weeks. But up in the mountains where our store is it is another sort of climate altogether. It froze ice an inch thick last Sunday night. I think it will be very healthy up here this summer. The situation is very delightful indeed. If it becomes sickly here I shall retire to the mountains till fall and then I shall fly to your arms and never get out of reach of them again. I am driving one of our own teams to the mountains and shall start tomorrow morning again. I expect to be in this city over two weeks till fall rains set in when I shall sell all out and then for the "Bounding Billions" over whose crests I shall fly as fast as steam and wind can carry to my sweet wife and wee babies. Dearest let me entreat you to cheer up and be happy. You don't know what effect a cheerful smiling face has upon children and probably this is the reason your babes are so cross. Particularly the last one as you were so sad so much during the time you were ?? but it has to be very late and I must sign off with one page less this time but I am still many pages ahead of you. Tell Hetty Billson was here Thursday. I wanted him to write home but he was too lazy to do so. He was very well and hopes to do something this summer. I am in excellent health. Write me every mail till you know that I have started home. Give my love to all. Farewell my dearest beloved lovely wife.

Your affectionate husband, B. A. Watson

Missing California Emigrant: Meeting at Spring Creek Missing California Emigrant Found

That Mysterious Affair.
A meeting of the inhabitants of Spring Creek was held on the 24th, April, 1850, at the Spring Creek seminary, for the purpose of obtaining the public sentiment in regard to the mysterious disappearance of Wm. Duke. The meeting was called to order, and the Rev. Thomas Campbell was called to the chair, and Isaac Watts, J. W. Smith, and P. Van Orman, were appointed secretaries. After hearing the sentiments of those who joined in the search for the lost man, and what passed between them and the brother and partner of the said Wm. Duke, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:
Resolved, that it is the opinion of this meeting, that there was no violence done to the person of said Wm. Duke, in this country, by himself or others, but that he went from this place to parts unknown, in a state of insanity.
Resolved, that the president forward these resolutions to the editors of the State Register, and Illinois Journal for publication; and that the Morgan Journal copy. &c.
THOS. CAMPBELL, pres't.
ISAAC WATTS, Sec'y.
J. W. SMITH, Sec'y.
P. VAN ORMAN, Sec'y.

Register, Wednesday, April 24, 1850.²⁷⁹

THE LOST EMIGRANT FOUND.—We publish in another column, the proceedings of a meeting held on Spring Creek in relation to the missing California emigrant.

We learned last evening that he had arrived safely at his home in Indiana, on the 14th inst. He informed his friends that his party had been murdered, and he alone was left to tell the tale. This proves his insanity.

Register, Wednesday, April 24, 1850.²⁸⁰

112. Maria Biddle Receives a Letter From Benjamin R. Biddle May 1849

It was the first of May, just as Maria Biddle was recovering from illness, that a letter came from Benjamin, telling her of the hard winter he had just passed through; and saying that he was sending her a draft for \$300.00 by a friend who was starting for the States that day, and would be apt to reach Springfield before his letter. He said that his business was prospering; and that, as the floods were over and the roads were open once more he would write often and send money frequently.

Benjamin's letter, containing such good news, acted like a tonic. Maria's health improved rapidly, but as day after day passed and the draft, or the man who was to bring it, did not reach Springfield, Maria began to worry again. She was no longer able to keep boarders and, unless she received the money Benjamin had sent, she did not see how she could live without asking for help from her family in Tennessee.

One day, a package came from San Francisco. She thought that Benjamin had changed his mind and had sent the draft in a box with something else. There was great excitement in their home as the children gathered 'round to watch her unwrap the package, which contained a beautifully decorated (lacquered) box—unlike anything they had ever seen before. When the box was opened they unwrapped three lovely embroidered shawls that had been made in far off China. The girls were delighted with their white silk shawls, embroidered in delicately colored flowers and edged with heavy white silk fringe. The boys were all excited too when they saw their nuggets of pure gold that Pa had sent from far off California—but when Maria unfolded her shawl—her lips trembled and her eyes filled with tears. She had never seen any needlework that could compare with the fine embroidery on that shawl: and, as she unfolded it and tried it on, it was so large the fringe dragged on the floor as she walked across the room. It was only fit for a tall and stately woman who could show its beauty to advantage.

As the children ran out to show their gifts to their friends, Maria fell across the bed and sobbed as though her heart would break. She was not strong—and she needed money so desperately! She had expected, each day, to receive the draft B. R. had sent: and the expectation had been a stimulant to her, after the months of hard work and worry she had just passed through; but now, instead of the much needed money this beautiful, useless present had come. It must have cost enough to have outfitted the whole family! As she grew calmer she realized that Benjamin did not know of her financial difficulties; and that it was his love for her, and his desire to make her happy, that had prompted him to buy such a handsome present. He would never think that it might be too large for her. As she thought of his kindness she smiled through her tears, and wrapped the shawl carefully in oiled tissue and put it away, thinking that perhaps one of

²⁷⁹ *Register*, Wednesday, April 24, 1850, p. 2.

²⁸⁰ *Register*, Wednesday, April 24, 1850, p. 2.

their daughters might grow to be tall, like Benjamin's family, and would be able to wear it with pride and distinction. All well-dressed women wore shawls, at that time (even men wore heavy woolen ones when it was cold) and Maria had several handsome ones that were suitable for various occasions; and this one was, by far, the most beautiful of them all: but she never wore it as long as she lived. Her daughters too were short women so the gift that Benjamin hoped would give her such pleasure lay folded away for sixty years until it fell into the hands of a granddaughter who wore it and loved it, because it had been a gift from the dearest companion of her childhood to the grandmother she adored.²⁸¹

**113. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From Cold Springs
North Fork of the American River, California
June 8, 1850²⁸²**

Cold Springs North Fork of the American River Cal., June 8, 1850

My Dear Beloved Wife:

You perceive by the date of my letter that I am addressing you from another new point in the country, but dearest my stay in this delightful place will be but temporary for I am only stopping here for the purpose of recovering from a slight attack of fever with which I was attacked on my last visit to the city and that accounts my love for your not receiving a letter in its regular time. I did not like to tell you that I was sick and I did not think it right my sweet love to write to you and not tell you that I was sick and I did not wish to distress your kind loved heart unnecessarily and I was confident I should be well by the time that the next steamer would sail and my expectations have proven entirely correct.

This place is certainly one of the finest situations for health in the world at an elevation of some five thousand feet above the sea surrounded by forests of pine trees which fill the atmosphere with a strong aromatic flavor which is highly beneficial to the lungs and having a spring of the finest water you ever saw gushing out of the side of the mountain immediately at our door make this altogether the most delightful place I have been in since I have been in the country.

You will recollect that this is the point where Mr. Shepherd and I are doing business. He is now gone to the city with ox teams. I find ox driving is exceeding hard work over these mountains, but I believe it pays us about as much as anything we can go at. I could probably have put in my time better to have removed to the city than to drive the team but I was afraid of my health. I think it must be very sickly in that place this summer and I think I owe it to my family to take care of my health and I intend to do so. If I know how for oh my dearest love health and the society of my beloved family is of more importance to me now than gold, but I must stay here now till fall as all my money is invested in business and I think I shall be able to bring a very snug pile home with me. I cannot tell exactly how much we are making in our business but not far from seven hundred dollars a month each at all events it sounds like a large sum to make in a month don't it dearest but large as it is it will not keep me from starting home in November.

I long to throw myself into thy beloved arms there to remain till the great reaper cuts us down to rise no more in this world forever. Oh my angel wife how dear to me is the recollection of your tender love for me is it as warm and tender as ever? No I will not ask the question for I will believe that your love like mine has only become more tender more pure and more lasting by our separation and that if we loved one another before what shall call the sentiment that will fill our breasts when we meet again. If we looked with the kind eye upon each others faults

²⁸¹ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 109-110.

²⁸² *Benjamin A. Watson Letters*.

previous to our separation, I don't think we shall be able to see any faults at all in each other when we meet again. I am sure I shall never find one in you I am sure, for though I might once have thought you would have been handsomer by being a little taller. I now think you are just short enough and just tall enough just large enough and just small enough and with your dear sweet little Emily in your arms and my noble boy riding a stick around the room I do believe you are the loveliest woman in the world, but I must quit this theme or I shall go off "entirely". The very thought of such a scene fills my heart with ecstasy and sadness at the same time and if I should be so imprudent as to indulge longer in this fascinating subject I fear I shall do something very imprudent, sell out my interest here and lose my snug little fortune which I expect to be able to bring home with me in the fall.

The miners are not doing much in this vicinity on account of the water being so very high in the rivers this season, but over on Deer Creek some 20 miles from this place they are doing very well indeed. I do not know where Billson is at this time. I have not heard from him since he left the city two months since. I expect to hear from him when I go down again which will be on next Monday when I expect to receive letters from my dear wife as the mail was received there from the states the day I left last but would take them a week to arrange it for delivery. I will now pause and fill up my letter when I reach the city.

...at out store bringing me a package of letters and paper which Mr. Shepherd had for me out of the office containing besides your dear affectionate letter one from ??? and Father Jacob. (faded line is illegible) friends and relations fully appreciate the joy I feel when I receive your dear letters. When I am perusing them I seem to be by your side again. I sometimes fancy that I can feel your sweet warm breath fanning my cheek and your dear fine affectionate heart throbbing joy against mine. Oh ...

114. Emily Watson Letter to Husband From Springfield, Illinois June 24, 1850²⁸³

Springfield, Ill. June 24, 1850

My Dear Beloved Husband:

You letter dated Feb. 26th I received yesterday I was so happy to get a letter from you that I should hear how soon you were going to start home but sad disappointment it was to read that perhaps you would stay longer. If I were in your place I would not stay longer than fall not for two Californias full of gold. Dearest you must not, I cannot live without you any longer as my heart is set on Christmas for your returning. I am afraid you are working too hard do take good care of your health for that is more precious than gold.

Dearest I commenced this letter two days ago but Pa has been quite ill and I have been waiting for him to get better which he now is. He had a very severe attack of his old disease. He was very bad one day but was able to go to the shop yesterday evening. I think he works too hard that there is no need for it as there are those there beside him. The business is very good. You wrote to your pa to buy Mr. Wiley's place but it is sold and I am glad of it for I do not want to live there. If I lived in town I should rather live where I do than any place in town. Our place is beautiful now. We have fruit as much as we want. Our strawberries did not do very well this season. I think it was so dry after they bloomed, but grapes and plums we have in abundance. I wish you were here to enjoy our fine plums. The tree is full. I told you in my last letter that our nectarine tree was dead but a tree that you set at the east side of the stable is full of nectarines, but the choicest fruit we have is in the house it is the sweetest little girl you ever saw. Just imagine the prettiest and best baby that could be and then you see ours. She is

²⁸³ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

always laughing. She begins to talk. She says pa ma and by by. I wish you could see her kissing your pictures. She loves you already. Welly still talks about pa bringing him a pony. I think he will know you when you come home if you do not put it off too long. He needs a fathers care very much. He is in some kind of mischief all the time. He loves his sister very much but he teases her all the time. Welly grows tall and talks about what he will do when he gets to be a man. Today is Sabbath, a delightful day quite warm but a pleasant breeze. All of the folks gone to church but me and the children. I am writing. Welly is out playing with the calf. Sisee is asleep and as I sit by my window and look out and see the ??? sitting on a ??? to sun it makes me think more and more of my dear husband who is so far from me. Pa has just bought a fine cow and I tend the milk. Pa and Jim do the milking our heifer has gone off to the Prairie again and our red cow pa sold last fall. I wish you could have some of the milk. I wish I wish yes I wish all the time but it does no good. But one thing dearest husband do not chide me .for not loving you more, for to love more ardently is not in the power of women. How can I prove that I do love you better than I ever did? Bid me do anything and I will do it but do not chide, it is not justice. If you do not get letters from me it is not because I love or think of you less know indeed that I shall endeavor to send one every mail from this time. Dear I do hope that you will not get into any bad habits such as smoking and so on. I do not believe you will but when I read about so much vice it makes my blood chill, but I put my trust in the Lord that he will deliver you from temptation. W. Herndon has got to be very intemperate. Some of the family want his wife to leave him but whether she will or not I do not know. John Irwin's wife died a few days ago of consumption. Mr. Craddoe the gunsmith had a son to get drowned a week ago. He was wading at Hicox Mill when his foot slipt and he could not swim so he was lost. Our city is very healthy and improving very fast. A number of families have come here to live and there seems to be a constant coming and going which make one part of the town very lively every evening when the cars come in I think to myself maybe my love is going to surprise me today but I do not sit down and cry because you do not come but hope on trying to believe our separation is all for the best and I try to wear as cheerful countenance as possible. Dear husband I do not go moping around I know it will do no good it will only impair my health if I give up to my feelings and for your sake and our dear children do I try to preserve my health but when I read your letter saying that you sometimes thought that perhaps I had forgotten you it was almost more than I could bear. If I should not get a line from you until you return I would not for one moment doubt your love for me. Dear almost 15 months have elapsed and God has still preserved our lives. May we not forget his infinite goodness toward us. My dear I do want you to come home as soon as possible for I do think it is of great importance that we should have ??? to ourselves. Welly wants to do everything he sees anybody else do. As for Eme she is one of the most gentle and amiable little creatures you ever saw and I do not want her disposition spoiled. You want to know who she looks like? Everybody says she is like her mother but I think when she laughs she is just like her pa so I keep her laughing all the time. Her grandfather thinks she is the finest babe they ever saw. I know I must draw my letter to a close as the hour grows late take good care of your health come home as soon as possible. Don't doubt my love anymore and write every opportunity you have and tell me everything you know. Welly sends pa a hundred kisses and says he does wish his pa would come home and see his little children for he is so tired waiting. The families send their love to you. We are all in good health. Hetty and I are going to mothers tomorrow. I am still at home and mean to stay here until you shall return.

I remain your affectionate wife,
Emily Watson. Springfield.

Edward D. Baker Reports*Journal*, Thursday, October 10, 1850.²⁸⁴

Edward Dickinson Baker was born on February 24, 1811, in London, England, the eldest of five children. His father, Edward Baker, was an educated gentleman, and his mother a sister of Capt. Thomas Dickenson, of the British navy, who distinguished himself at the battle of Trafalgar. In 1815, his father and family immigrated to America, landing at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Here Baker taught. On account of the financial embarrassments of the family, as soon as Edward D. was old enough, he was apprenticed to a weaver.

In 1826 his father moved to Belleville, Illinois, where he opened a select school, and Edward D. Baker evinced such a taste for literature that the late Gov. Edwards, then a resident of Belleville, gave him free access to his library. From Belleville, Baker went to St. Louis, and drove a dray for at least one season. From St. Louis he went to Carrolton, Illinois, and began the study of law and at the same time acted as deputy in the county clerk's office. He was married on April 27, 1831, to Mrs. Mary A. Lee, a widow with two children.

In the spring of 1832, Baker enlisted in the Black Hawk war, and in 1835 moved to Springfield, and soon after became a law partner of Stephen T. Logan. On July 4, 1837, he delivered the oration at the laying of the corner stone of the old State house.

Latter he was elected to the General Assembly to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Dan Stone, and was re-elected the following year. In 1840, Baker was elected State Senator for four years, and elected to Congress in 1845.

When the war broke out with Mexico, Baker hastened home, raised a regiment, which was accepted by the government as the 4th Ill. Inf., Col. E. D. Baker, commanding. Arriving on the Rio Grand, he discovered that the troops were in need of additional tent equipage, munitions of war, etc., and for a few months accepted the position of bearer of dispatches to the war department, and repaired to Washington. Congress was in session, and not having resigned his seat in the House, availed himself of his privilege as a member, and made a speech of great and almost magical power in favor of a vigorous prosecution of the war, and in behalf of the volunteers then in the field, and rejoined his regiment. After the battle of Cerro Gordo, the term of Col. Baker's enlistment expired, and his men not wishing to re-enlist, he reluctantly left the field, and, returning home, resumed the practice of his profession.

In the spring of 1848 he moved to Galena, Illinois. As one of the Whig electors for the Illinois at large, he took an active part in the Presidential campaign of 1848. He took his seat as Representative in Congress, the second time, in December 1849.

In 1851 he entered into an agreement with the Panama Railroad Company to grade a portion of that road, but after several months exposure to a tropical sun, he and his men fell sick and abandoned the country.

²⁸⁴ *Journal*, Thursday, October 10, 1850, p. 3.

THE DAILY JOURNAL.

A rare chance for California.

We have been informed that Col. E. D. Baker, acting under authority from the Panama Rail Road Company, is about proposing to those who desire to visit the gold mines, a proposition something like this: He will transport them from St. Louis or some other convenient point, to Panama,—pay all their expenses—furnishing them every thing necessary to their comfort, (including medical attendance,)—for which they are to labor upon the Rail Road, (in building and laying superstructure, &c., &c.,) for one hundred days; after which, the Company will transport them free of all charge or expense from Panama, and land them in San Francisco city. It is proposed to leave for Panama, some time prior to the 15th day of December next, so as to reach Panama about the 1st day of January, 1851; the hands to labor during the months of January, February and March; and will be landed in San Francisco city about the 1st of May next, in time for a full mining season. By this plan, a man will reach the gold mines just as the mining season commences—instead of reaching there, as they do by the plains, just as the season closes, and in about the same length of time, and without the outlay of a single dollar in cash.



In 1852 he immigrated with his family to California, establishing himself in practice in San Francisco. There he delivered the funeral oration of two of his early friends, fallen by the fatal bullet of the duelist, Ferguson and Broderick. The latter stands alone as the most brilliant funeral oration ever delivered on the continent of America.

After the death of Broderick, Col. Baker moved to Oregon, and was elected U. S. Senator from there in 1860. For the first time in his life he was placed in a position congenial to him. The decorum and courtesy that usually marks the intercourse of Senators, was most grateful to his habits of thought and feeling.

Soon after the fall of Fort Sumter, he recruited a regiment in Philadelphia and vicinity, which was called the California regiment. Soon after, President Lincoln tendered him a Brigadier-General's commission, but he declined it, probably because it would have vacated his seat in the Senate. At the first session of the 37th Congress, convoked by President Lincoln, July 4, 1861, Col. Baker was present and participated in the passage of those measures necessary to place the nation on a war footing. On the adjournment of this special session, Col. Baker rejoined his regiment, which was attached to and formed a part of the army of observation on the Potomac. He, however, was restless in camp. He returned to Washington, settled his affairs, and called to bid the President and family farewell, when Mrs. Lincoln was gracefully mindful of early friendship, gave him a bouquet of late flowers.

On October 21, 1861, he was leading his men at Ball's Bluff, and, when ten feet in advance of them, fell, pierced by eight bullets. His body was borne tenderly away, embalmed, and removed to Washington City, where appropriate funeral honors were paid to his remains; then sent to New York City, and from there by steamer to San Francisco, where he was buried in Lone Mountain Cemetery, of that city.²⁸⁵

Buildings of Biddle, Weber & Co. Completed in Reading Springs and Town Name Changed to Shasta²⁸⁶

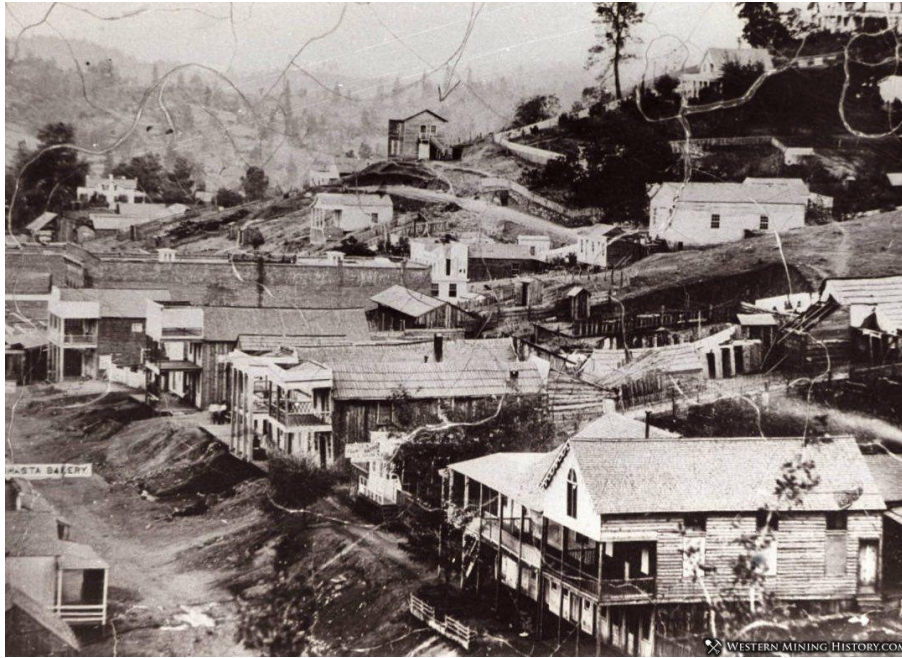
Shasta History

Gold was discovered near the site that would become Shasta in the spring of 1849. The discovery was far north of the Mother Lode discoveries and sparked a second gold rush within California as miners from

²⁸⁵ Power, p. 88.

²⁸⁶ Shasta, Shasta County, California, sits at an elevation of 843 feet. The 2010 U.S. Census reported Shasta's population was 1,771. Shasta State Historic Park located at Shasta is a ghost town and California State Historic Park.

California and Oregon flooded into the newly discovered northern California gold fields. The initial settlement was known as Reading's Springs and was a tent city of over 500 miners and merchants by October of 1849. In 1850 the settlement's name change to Shasta, and was often referred to as Shasta City. In 1851 the town became the county seat of Shasta County. The camp was extremely isolated in what was nothing but California wilderness at this early date, with the only connection to the towns to the south being a mule trail over 180 miles long that lead to Sacramento. With extremely high freighting costs to Shasta and resulting low quantities of food stored, the first winter at Shasta was a difficult one, and many at the isolated camp began to head back to the more established towns in the Mother Lode area in the central part of the state. It wasn't until 1851 that the first road was built to the isolated region, and the first stagecoach rolled into town. It is difficult to imagine that this boom town of thousands existed for almost two full years supplied by nothing but pack trains, and that the arrival of the stagecoach was considered a major improvement in transportation at the time.²⁸⁷



Reading Springs, later Shasta
Elevation: 1,047 Feet (319 meters)
Date Settled: 1849
Current Population: 1,771
Peak Population: Around 6,000*

The buildings of Biddle, Weber & Co and the St. Charles Hotel were the first buildings finished; but log and frame houses sprang up all over the hill sides. There were even some houses that had been built in sections and shipped around The Horn, from the States, all ready to put together upon their arrival. Gold seemed plentiful, and new strikes were made along the numerous creeks, as prospectors and strangers, from all parts of the world, flooded the community. Slow moving ox teams were constantly on the road, bringing fresh supplies from San Francisco and Sacramento. As there were no roads beyond Reading Springs, pack trains, of mules, were used to carry supplies from these, over the mountain trails, to the Trinity, Salmon, Scott and upper Sacramento mines—and as far north as Oregon. Almost overnight the village, that so many miners had forsaken the winter before, became the great wholesale and retail distributing center of northern California. ... a goodly number of its first inhabitants were recruited from that band of honest, self-respecting, church-going Christians from central Illinois, who had brought their Christianity and their ideas of law and order with them while the town contained a large number of

²⁸⁷ <https://Westernmininghistory.Com/Towns/California/Shasta/> Western Mining History

professional gamblers, and the saloons ran wide open, it also had several churches that were well attended. Although Sunday was the day when miners came to town to drink and gossip and buy their supplies, Biddle, Weber & Co. never sold or delivered goods on that day. However the quality of their merchandise, and their reputation for courtesy, honesty and reliability, insured them the cream of the business. Although the town was an outpost of the early California settlements, law and order prevailed from the beginning.

By the spring of 1850, Reading Springs was lighted at night by oil lanterns hung at intervals along the Main Street that was crowded night and day with freighters and pack animals. Sometimes, at midday, the confusion was so great it was not considered safe for women to cross the street without help. At a public meeting held on June 8th, 1850, in front of R. J. Walsh's store, the name of the town was changed from Reading Springs to Shasta. California had now become a State.²⁸⁸

In September representative men met in front of the St. Charles Hotel and nominated John B. Watson, of Biddle, Weber & Co., for the State Assembly. He first taught school in Springfield, then later he was elected County Surveyor and was one of the engineers selected to build the Great Western Railroad. He would have been an ideal member of the California Legislature.

However, a few days later, a tall, lean, long-legged young man on a small, thin mule—with his feet almost touching the ground, rode up in front of a saloon, dismounted, tied his mule to a post, and turning to the gathering crowd said: "I understand you all had a meetin' in town and nominated a candidate fo' th'sembly." Some one spoke up and said: "Yes we nominated Mr. Watson". Where upon the stranger said: "Well Boys, my name's A. Z. McCandless, and I'm a candidate fo' th'sembly; and whiskey's my platform;— and whisky's goin' to win this here fight! Let's all go in and have a drink." They all joined him, without a dissenting voice, and the McCandless boom was on. He stuck to his platform and was triumphantly elected: for whiskey won over brains, character and personality, in that first election in Shasta County, in the new state of California.

In September 1850, the people of Shasta experienced a real Eastern thunderstorm, accompanied by a heavy rain that lasted all night so the grass started to grow and there was soon plenty of fresh feed for the stock.

The fall and winter were mild. The roads had been improved, the riverboats brought freight as far as Freeport and the ox teams were on the road, all winter, and carrying supplies to Shasta for the northern mines.

Isaac Constant Returns to Sangamon County From Oregon

August 28, 1850

Journal, August 29, 1850.²⁸⁹

Mr. Isaac Constant reached his home in this county, on Wolf Creek, yesterday, from Oregon. He came by the overland route—packing one horse and riding another. We have not seen him.

²⁸⁸ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 100-101.

²⁸⁹ *Journal*, August 29, 1850, p. 3.

115. Isaac Constant Returns to Sangamon County From Oregon Neighbor Remembers His Stories

In the fall of 1850, Isaac Constant, a near neighbor, whose farm joined ours, returned from Oregon. He had crossed the plains with ox teams in 1848 and returned with saddle and packhorses. It is needless to say that Mr. Constant was the center of interest for the neighborhood. The glowing accounts he gave of the beauty of the country, of the mildness of the climate, the fertility of the soil, and the fact that a man and wife were entitled to a half section of land to be selected by themselves in a new country where the hand of the white man had not yet made his mark. Mr. Constant also brought some gold dust, which I remember was shown in a glass dish, which excited and fired the imagination. Mr. Constant was a man that commanded the confidence of his neighbors. He was a well-to-do farmer, was the owners of one of the finest farms in the best part of Illinois. His trip to Oregon was to spy out the land. But unlike the Israelites that were sent by Moses to spy out their promised land and brought back a conflicting account of the country, one bunch of grapes, some pomegranates and a few dried figs, Mr. Constant brought gold dust and a truthful account of the fertile valleys, clear-running streams, the wonderful forests and mountains of Oregon.

It is needless to say that in our neighborhood there was great planning to come to Oregon. Farms were offered for sale, but there were few buyers. My father alone succeeded in selling his farm, and no doubt at a great sacrifice. As I remember, my father received about \$3000 for 160 acres of finest farming land and 40 acres of timber land in the Sangamon River bottom.

Mr. Constant failed to sell his farm, remained another year, and finally selling out, crossed the plains in 1852 and settled in Jackson County, the town of Central Point being a part of his donation claim.²⁹⁰

Isaac Constant Returns to Sangamon County From Oregon

Journal, September 3, 1850.²⁹¹

From Oregon.

Having understood that Mr. Isaac Constant had returned from Oregon, we visited him at his residence, on Wolf Creek, in this county, on Saturday last. We found him in good health, where he arrived on Thursday night, having left Oregon City on the 5th of June.

Mr. Constant left this county a year ago last March for Oregon, mainly in the pursuit of health, but with a determination to see as much of the country as his circumstances when there would permit. His company consisted of two young men beside himself, and he had one wagon and a team made up of two yoke of steers and two yoke of heifers. He states that the worst part of the way he passed over was between this point and St. Joseph--that he met with no serious difficulties beyond, and no difficulties at all which were not surmounted. Most of the road was fine--as broadly marked in many places as our own streets. There were occasionally beyond the mountains patches of light sand or ashes, in which the cattle would sink some inches, and which would cause very great dust, but they did not often occur, and scarcely ever extended over from five to seven miles. He had never occasion to stop at any place without water but once, and that was beyond the pass between the Big Sandy and Green rivers. Between these rivers there is a stretch of near forty miles without water. In the center of the distance, however, there is tolerable grass. Over this portion of the route, they commenced their journey in the afternoon, fed when they arrived at the grass, and the next day about ten o'clock reached Green River. In that elevated country, the nights being cool, the cattle did not suffer for water. In fact, when they arrived at the Green River and drove the cattle into it, they seemed not greedy

²⁹⁰ *History of Early Days in Oregon*, George W. Riddle, Riddle Enterprise, 1920, p. 4.

²⁹¹ *Journal*, September 3, 1850, p. 2.

to drink. This obstacle was easily surmounted. Mr. Constant lost one of his cattle on the Platte by drinking saleratus water, the watchman having fallen asleep.

Mr. Constant was but three days and a half in going through the Cascade Mountains. Some persons who wait until late and mope along are six or eight days in going through. The road is cut through the timber, is somewhat rough, but can be passed over in safety by patience and labor. One hill has a high grade, and, descending west, it is more than a mile to the foot of it. Some lowered their wagons by means of long ropes. His cattle, however, took his down, somewhat in a hurry, to be sure, but safely. He arrived at Oregon City on the 10th of September, and soon sold out his wagon, team, provisions left &c., for more than the whole cost of the outfit.

Mr. Constant, having recovered his health, found business at Milwaukie, and worked there several months. He found time to make an excursion into Yamhill country to see his old county neighbors, who had emigrated there, make a claim, and also to go up the Upper Willamette to the forks, we suppose a distance of about a hundred miles. He found the country as usually represented--small rivers emptying into the Willamette on each side--hills between the rivers, covered with short oaks, having the appearance of oak openings--high bottoms and sides of hills suitable for cultivation. Many of the bottom prairies were to appearance as rich as lands in Illinois. The hilly land did not have that appearance, but produced fine wheat--as beautiful as he had ever seen. All small grains appeared to flourish, as well as vegetables. The potatoes were fine. Of cultivated fruit, there was but little. In the French Prairie, there was a species of small apple--called the French apple--that produced wonderfully. Peaches succeeded well, though the variety was small. A gentleman from Iowa had carried through successfully grafts of several varieties of apples, and was then selling small trees for one dollar each. All kinds of produce were high--for instance, oats \$3 a bushel, and sheaf oats \$2.50 per dozen bundles.

The discovery of gold in California had interrupted regular farming operations. Many farmers had left their business, and young men who had been successful in digging gold could not be induced to work. Still, those farmers who attended to their business were reaping a golden reward, which seemed to be of service to them. It was, however, apparent that farmers do not work in Oregon as they do in the States. Being relieved from raising food for supplying stock in winter, they have abundant time to make improvements, which, however are much neglected. As an evidence of the amount of wheat which can be raised by one man, it is stated that a single individual raised and harvested ninety acres. The sowing of the wheat took place during several months, and the fields ripened in succession, and thus was the farmer enabled to cut and secure it. Stock was also high--hogs, cattle and horses--and all were raised with little attention. Dry goods were about double the price they usually are here; groceries still higher; iron 12½ cents per lb., but when worked up by a blacksmith the price was above all reason. Cooking stoves which are worth \$35 here would bring \$200 in Oregon.

Labor was high, but the towns were progressing in improvements. Vessels of different kinds were constantly arriving and departing from the river. Money was plenty, and there was great activity in all kinds of business.

Mr. Constant, in company with six others, left Oregon, as before stated, on the 5th of June. Each man rode one horse and packed another. They were well armed. In passing through the Cascade Mountains they came over snow, in some places six and eight feet deep. When they arrived at Deschutes River, at the east base of the Cascades, the Indians wanted them to stay and dig gold. They exhibited fine specimens of gold which they had found in the river. One of the company washed two pans of sand, and also found gold. In coming on, crossing Powder and Burnt rivers, they found every appearance of gold. Gold had been found, too, in the streams which run into the Willamette, though not in sufficient abundance to pay well.

On this side of the Rocky Mountains they met the party of Brown, Young, Hussey and Dr. Ambrose. He learned that Mr. Young had lost his oldest son on the Platte, of diarrhea--sick only two days. There had been much sickness among the emigrants on the south side of the Platte, attributed to bad water, which they took from holes dug in the sand. Mr. C. came down on the north side of the Platte, where the water was fine, and although a great emigration had gone that way, he heard of no sickness. He followed the Platte down, and crossed at Old Fort Kearny. The company traveled every day. They killed some game. Mr. C. killed four buffaloes. They were not troubled at all by Indians. They stood guard only five nights during their trip, which was on Snake River, to prevent their horses from being stolen by the thievish Indians.

Companies can pass over the route faster by packing than in any other manner, but not so comfortably as by having a team and wagon. Mr. C. says that with a light wagon and suitable team, he can go from the Missouri River to the Willamette easily in three and a half months, and would want no longer time.

Mr. Constant communicated to us a variety of other interesting information, which we have not now time to give. He freely expresses his opinion of the country, the proper means of reaching there &c., but he will advise no man to go to Oregon. Things which were not disagreeable to him might be so to others; obstacles which he surmounted might be too great for those who should follow him, the country which struck him favorably, the advantages it appeared to him to offer to the ambitious and enterprising--might present a different aspect to those who might follow after him. Mr. C. left home with his constitution greatly impaired; he regained his health on the route; he never enjoyed better health than in Oregon, and although much is said here of the rainy winter season there, he worked nearly the whole winter season outdoors, without serious inconvenience, and although he had suffered here winters severely with rheumatism, there he had but a single slight attack, early in winter, and which was of short duration.

Some Other Oregon Items. *Journal*, September 4, 1850.²⁹²

Mr. Constant confirms the statement that several Indians came down from the Spokane country in May with a quantity of sand gathered in that country, which they supposed in their simplicity was the material of which the whites made powder. This they gave to Capt. N. Crosby, an extensive merchant of Milwaukie. It resembled the sands in which gold was found on the Sacramento, and on washing it, it was found to contain a large portion of pure gold. Capt. N. ascertained of the Indians the locality where the sand was found, and immediately proceeded to make up a company, and, with a large stock of goods, to proceed at once to the spot. There was apparently no doubt among those who knew all the facts in relation to the matter that the Spokane country was likely to prove an El Dorado, if not the El Dorado of the day. It is a healthy region, in the neighborhood of that beautiful valley in the Blue Mountains which every wearied traveler admires, known as the "Grand Ronde"--a valley of prairies and groves, streams of pure water and rich soil--seeming to tired emigrants as beautiful as the valley of Rasselas. In this neighborhood also there are large settlements of Indians, who are rich in stock, raise potatoes



²⁹² *Journal*, September 4, 1850, p. 2.

and some other vegetables, and whose labor might be made available by the whites in their search for gold. Capt. Crosby was quite certain of amassing fortunes for all the members of his company, and strongly urged Mr. Constant to be one of them, but he had made up his mind to return home--and home he did and would come

The five Cayuse Indians engaged in the murder of Dr. Whitman's family were hung the day before Mr. C. left Oregon City. There was a large collection of people present. The inhabitants far and near seemed to have turned out to witness the exhibition. Mr. Meek, Marshal of the Territory, performed the sad duty of their execution. The Indians expressed a willingness to die for their people, but they had an utter repugnance to the fatal rope. They said if the whites would take them down and shoot them, they would be perfectly satisfied. The sentence of the law was inexorable. The five Indians were soon swinging in the air. Many Indians were present, and, it was understood, many of the Cayuse tribe. These executions will put a stop to all outrages against the whites by those Indians who can be reached by our arms.

We shall not undertake to give a statement of the amount of fir timber upon one acre of land. It is great beyond conception--not room sufficient to lie upon the ground. When land is to be cleared of this timber it is burnt green and standing; the turpentine in the tree enables this to be effected without difficulty; for timber, plank &c. the trees are not generally cut down; they are burnt down. This is easily done. Chips are cut out near the ground--a fire is made up of some dry material by the tree; the turpentine oozes out from the wound, takes fire; the wood soon ignites about it and burns until the tree falls, without injury to the timber. Fir makes excellent shingles, and perhaps it will interest our shingle makers to know that the timber can be more profitably worked up into shingles by hand than by machinery, and the handmade shingles there are regarded as much the best. Fir is the most plentiful of the evergreen timber that grows near the mouth of the Willamette.

Mr. C. made an excursion up the Willamette in a pirogue [a long, narrow canoe made from a single tree trunk], propelled by Indians. They are at home in this employment. He found some slight rapids in the river, but believes with improvement it can be made navigable for steamboats of a small size. The banks of the river were generally covered with timber. But few fish in this stream. Salmon cannot scale the falls at Oregon City. The river will soon become a great artery for commerce. Settlements are steadily progressing south. James Watson's farm is high up in the Rickreall, which heads in the Coast Mountains.

Mr. C. admired the Yamhill country. It embraces hills and valleys, beautiful streams, timber and prairie. The settlement of the Messrs. [Steven] Hussey, Burden, Branson, Bird, Eaton and [Thomas] Yokum is in the Yamhill country. Messrs. Sanford Watson and [Alfred R.] Elder had made claims in the same section. Mr. Hussey's residence is but eighteen miles from Clatsop Bay, on the Pacific. There is a trail passing directly by his place to the bay. On a clear night, the roar of the surf can be distinctly heard from this point.

116. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From California

September 28, 1850²⁹³

This is an incomplete letter, with only pages 5 and 6. Dating is based upon a date of Saturday the 28th contained in the letter.

page 5

For it seems to me impossible that all should get through before snow falls in the mountains. Great efforts are being made for their relief here and in other portions of the country. I have

²⁹³ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

seen and conversed with numbers who have lived for weeks on putrid flesh cut from the carcasses of dead animals that line the road sine of a large proportion of those who have got in have come in without their stock or property of any kind and are dependent upon charity for a living, and thousands have fallen by the wayside from disease and starvation in many instances their bodies being left by their panic stricken friends without the rites of burial, a prey to the prowling coyote or more ??? savage, their bones whiten the plains and will sure for years to come, to mark out the path of the Pilgrims of Mammon.

If there is one reflection more than another connected with this California movement that is a matter I can think of with pleasure, it is a consciousness that I at least have endeavored to tell the whole truth from the time I first arrived in the country and I sincerely hope that I have been the means of keeping many from coming here, who might otherwise have come.

page 6

The old Spainards all lay the blame upon "Los Americanos" believing in their superstitions that the Yankees have even the power of changing the climate. Well I don't wonder much at their thinking so far it is enough to make sounder heads than they possess swim to see thee rapid changes that are going on around us. Only think that where less than two years since was an untenanted wilderness is now a large and flourishing city of ten thousand inhabitants. It is certainly enough to make the Spaniards cry out "curaho?"

Saturday 28th Last night the theatre was opened for the benefit of the overland emigration and the house was filled by tickets at a high price some twelve hundred dollars being raised in this way. I attended myself, does not the end justify the means? I thought so! The weather for some few days has been delightful. We have had some hard showers during the past two weeks, a thing unprecedented during the past history of the country.

Monday 30th The mail closed today 12 o'clock and I must bring my letter to a close. Yesterday I met Mr. T. L. Anderson who told me he had just received a letter from Mr Hurst who had mentioned that Father had been doing a very fine business but that his health was poor. I do hope you will use your utmost exertions my dear wife to keep him from working at all in the shop there is no use of it at all. Tell him I would much rather the business should stop entirely than that his health should be injured by it. Console poor Hetty all you can. Tell her as long as I have a dollar left she shall share it. I hope that our boy will turn out a better boy then present accounts seem to indicate. Keep him under firm but moderate control. Do not break his spirit by whipping him, there is a much better way than that. I am very happy in hearing our daughter promises to be so amiable in disposition. She would not be like her mother were she otherwise. Biddle, [Augustus] Eastman²⁹⁴ and Johnson are now in the city, they report all well above. Cabinis will be down in two weeks to go home. I shall wait for him for company. Do not be alarmed about reports of cholera here. There is none here. Give my love to all. Farewell for a short time.

Your affectionate husband
B. A. Watson

²⁹⁴ See footnote number 186.

117. Isaac Constant Communication From Oregon

Journal, November 15, 1850.²⁹⁵

COMMUNICATION. OREGON.

It is understood that there will be a considerable number of persons leave the central counties of Illinois the coming spring for Oregon Territory, by the overland route. It would be well, probably, that there should be an understanding at what time these persons will leave for the frontiers of Missouri, and at what point they design to start from to the plains. Mr. Isaac Constant, who has been to Oregon and back, gives it as his opinion that the route on the north side of the Platte is far the best, on account of health, of good water and grass. There has been sickness on the south side of the Platte—there has been none on the north. To reach the north side of the Platte, emigrants must cross the Missouri near the Council Bluffs. The time and place of starting should be known, and this can only be done by concert.

The object of this paragraph, Messrs. Editors, is to suggest that letters should be sent to you, or to some person in Springfield, containing the names and numbers of persons who design to go from this section of country, where they now live, and other facts which may be important.

W.

To accomplish this design above stated, letters may be directed, if by mail post paid, to “Isaac Constant, care of the *Journal* office, Springfield.”

E. Fuller and Richard Hodge Return From California

It affords us pleasure to announce the arrival, to their homes and anxious families, our townsmen Messrs. E. Fuller and Richard Hodge. They left this city a year ago last spring for California. As to the amount of “dust” they brought, we made no enquiries—it was gratifying enough to see them look so well and hearty.

Journal, Wednesday, October 16, 1850.²⁹⁶

Richard Hodge, born on May 19, 1819, in Smithfield, Jefferson County, Virginia, was married in April 1838 to Catharine Divelbiss in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. They moved to Springfield in the fall of 1839, and had five children. Richard Hodge died on May 30, 1852, on his way to California. It was his second trip there.²⁹⁷

E. Fuller Returns From California-Resumes Butchering Business

CALIFORNIA.
E. FULLER, having returned from California, has resumed the BUTCHERING BUSINESS with his partner James Dawson, at their old stand, south of the American House, where they will be pleased to wait on all, old or new customers, as formerly. They intend to enlarge their business so as to meet the wants of the public.
Shop open from 1 A. M., till 9 P. M. nov11

Journal, Tuesday, November 12, 1850.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ *Journal*, November 15, 1850, p. 2.

²⁹⁶ *Journal*, Wednesday, October 16, 1850, p. 3.

²⁹⁷ *Power*, pp. 381-382.

²⁹⁸ *Journal*, Tuesday, November 12, 1850, p. 3.

John T. Bondurant Goes to California and Dies

John T. Bondurant, born on June 5, 1824, in Kentucky, was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois. He married near Des Moines, Iowa, in 1848, to Virginia Cooney. In 1850 he emigrated to California, and died in Sacramento, on December 23, 1850, of disease contracted while crossing the plains, leaving a childless widow.²⁹⁹

Jacob Braughton Died on Road to California

Jacob Braughton came to Sangamon County in 1836. He never married but was engaged in farming for several years. He started overland to California and died on the road between 1850 and 1855.

²⁹⁹ Power, p. 125.

1851

In 1851, Sangamon County, Illinois natives who had emigrated to the west coast wrote twelve letters back home. Seven of those letters were written by Eli Cook, former Springfield Mayor, to his wife back in Springfield. During the year, five adults and seven children emigrated from Sangamon County to the west coast. In 1851 there was an important but lesser-known surge of prospectors into far Northern California. Discovery of gold nuggets at the site of present-day Yreka brought thousands of gold-seekers up the Siskiyou Trail and throughout California's northern counties.

: **118. Benjamin R. Biddle's Letter From San Francisco, California
January 1, 1851**

As they were expecting a large shipment of goods on the Steamer *Panama*, which was due on December 20, 1850, Benjamin R. Biddle went to "The City" to personally check and reload the merchandise. For some reason the steamer did not arrive on time, so he waited—hoping to get word of the missing boat. On the first of January, he bought some stationery on one side of which was printed a picture of San Francisco. He went back to his boarding house and wrote the following letter:

San Francisco, January 1st, 1851, My dear Maria: As I was passing from my boarding house to the Shipping, I met very unexpectedly Wm. Taylor, Mr. Ware and Sam, who lived on Lick Creek; and as they are going immediately to Springfield, I send you a few lines. There has nothing occurred of interest since I last wrote, except that the weather had been as beautiful as Spring. On our table today we have lettuce of large size, and radishes. There are no public displays today—except the semi-annual meeting of the Pioneers of California, but every person looks glad—greeting their friends with a Happy New Year. There are many things got up for the day. As the steamer *Columbus* leaves today at 3 o'clock P.M. the sheet upon which I am writing was issued this morning, and they are taken as fast as they are struck off, to send home to friends. It gives some idea of what this place is. I have several other views which I will send as I find matter to write. As I wrote before, I shall remain here a week, and shall address you again—also the boys. The Mail Steamer *Panama*, due at this port 10 days ago, has not arrived and much anxiety prevails about her probable fate. My delay here is in part owing to my wish to get letters. I feel sure you have written—together with my boys. As I stand on the wharf and see the faces that are made bright at the prospect of soon reaching their homes, my thoughts are carried with them and I anticipate the joy of my return. I am afraid it makes you feel sad that so many are coming and leaving me behind. I don't know of any others from Springfield who will reach home before me. I remitted by Adams and Co. Express on yesterday, a package containing \$703.00, upon which freight and insurance was paid to Springfield, Ills., directed in the care of James L. Lamb. You will pay it over as marked on the several packages. Mr. Starr informed me a few days ago that there had been some neglect about the first draft I sent you for \$300.00, on the part of his brother. I hope all is set right. The draft is good. I have but a few minutes left to conclude this letter. I will close by wishing you all a Happy New Year—That it may bring in its train the richest blessings of life,—that we may meet in love and the enjoyments of home,—that the children may be good children,—growing up in intelligence and virtue—rewarding our hearts and making us glad. Accept this sheet as a small token of love and regard—cherishing it for having been sent on the first day of the year 1851, from the City of San Francisco, State of California. It represents this, the greatest City of the Pacific Coast as it is today. Keep this profile and contrast it, if we live, with what it will be in 1852. Present my New Years Compliments to all the friends,—to Angeline and the Jacksonville folks. To the children I say—I have thought of them often today. I hope they have been merry today—and I wish a very happy New Year.

As ever I remain yours in affection and Love, Ever— Farewell— B. R. Biddle.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 102-103.

He took the letter down to the steamer and watched his friends start on their homeward journey. His heart was sad for he longed to be with his loved ones. But he must first go back to Shasta with his merchandise. Then he could settle up his business affairs and make his plans for going home. But he wanted to pay a short visit to his sister in Oregon before returning to the States.

He was fully convinced that the West offered the best opportunities for young people. He wanted to bring his boys to a place where land was fertile and cheap and where they could grow up in a new country and help with its development. He thought that the gold in the hills and streams of California would be exhausted in a few years and that the great potential wealth of California was in agriculture.

John Weber was also anxious to get back to his family in Illinois. While he was delighted with the results of his business venture in Shasta, he had decided to return permanently to his home in Springfield. His trip across the plains, and that first hard winter in California, when every man had to work under stress of storm or flood or desert heat—had shown him again and again that the loss of his hand was a serious handicap in a new country. He was sure that he could make a living and be much more comfortable in his hometown than in a pioneer country.

A friend, by the name of James Deigh, wished to buy out their interest in their business, and, as he would make an acceptable partner to the other members of the firm, the transfer was arranged at once.

Mr. Wiley Letter From California

Journal, Monday, January 6, 1851.³⁰¹

A letter to Mr. E. R. Wiley, of this city, from his brother in California, received this morning, contradicts the statement of the death of John C. Ledley, at Sacramento City.

119. James Watson Letter From King's Valley, Benton County, Oregon Territory

Journal, Saturday, May 3, 1851.³⁰²

KING'S VALLEY, BENTON COUNTY,
OREGON TERRITORY, Jan. 3rd, 1851.

Dear Sirs. - —About the 1st of October last, I received yours of the 4 in of July, —and some three monhs before that I received yours of a previous date, nearly worn out, having been some twenty two months on the way. It affords me great satisfaction not only to hear from my native land but to know that my old friends have not forgotten me.

We have lost one of our children, Benjamin Franklin; -he departed this life on the 10th of September last, after a painful and mysterious illness of seven days. His death originated from a pain in his ancle. He was 5 years 7 months and 21 days old. With the exception of this affliction my family have enjoyed good health since we have been in Oregon.

So far as my practical and experimental knowledge extends, I am well pleased with Oregon . — I see nothing to prevent a farmer from enjoying all the comforts of a farmer s life here, with far less labor than in any country that I have ever lived in. It is true we are in a new country,

³⁰¹ *Journal*, Monday, January 6, 1851.

³⁰² *Journal*, Saturday, May 3, 1851, p. 2.

deprived of the society of our old friends, and have to encounter some of the difficulties that are common in all new countries, the most of which we hope to outlive.

As to the products of this country I find but little fault, although it may have been a trifle overrated by some. I raised on my farm last summer, fall and spring wheat, rye and oats and barley, all of which produced good crops. As to the products of my garden or "truck patch," they far surpassed my expectations. We had all of that great variety that is common in your gardens, sweet potatoes excepted. The common May Pea grew as high as my head, and furnished us with green peas about two months and a half from the same planting. The cabbage of this country never dies. We have excellent cabbage in our garden now on the old stalk.

:

The hills and vallies of the country are now covered with green pasture, and whilst I am writing I hear the music of the frogs. My cattle are now as fat as they were the 1st of September, — The butter and milk of this country far excels that of any country I have ever lived in. Our hogs get to be good pork on the acorns. The hills and mountains abound with bear, deer and elk; and the coast streams with salmon. You will see from the above Facts (for Facts they are,) that those who get to Oregon are in no danger of starving.

I have not taken any part in the speculations of the day, except one, and that commenced when I left Sangamon county for Oregon. I have settled a favorable situation for farming and stockraising, and have a site for a mill besides, where I can bear the roaring of the Pacific and enjoy the refreshing breezes of the same, —; and according to the Oregon Land bill, twelve months longer of faithful residence, and we will be entitled to our claim of 640 acres. This is speculation enough for me.

The emigraion to this country overland the last season was not large, and part of them, are gold hunters, and I suppose will leave in the spring for that place of disappointment. On account of the gold excitement, there has been but little improvement going on in this country for the last two years. There has, however, been a great amount of money brought to the country. Times are now changing for the better, though labor is yet too high to justify much improvement. There are seven mills building in this county, and a steamboat is building on the upper Willamette river. These are improvements very much needed. We want books, school teachers and mechanics also.

I like the climate of Oregon much better than that of Illinois. The summers are cool and pleasant; the winters are generally mild, though not so mild as to make them unhealthy. We have had but one snow this winter, and that was not more than an inch deep, and went entirely off in about two hours. We had but one rainy day in December. January has been rainy.

I was out on the hills a few days since. I saw the strawberry in blossom, and other flowers had also made their appearance. I have no fears about supporting my family in Oregon. Six or eight good cows, well attended to, will do this. There will be a general rush from this part of the country in the spring to the newly discovered gold mines on the Klameth, near the southern boundary of Oregon. The mines there are said to be very rich.

Enclosed you will find a \$ 2 50 gold piece. Send me your Weekly Journal. I want to know how you are getting along in Illinois. Direct it to Marysville, Benton County, Oregon. Your old friend, JAMES WATSON.

120. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City**January 25, 1851³⁰³**

Nevada City

January 25th, 1851

Dear wife & children

I am in tolerable health at present. Hoping you are doing well and are enjoying good health. I have received no letters from since the one dated the 13th of November. I was glad to hear by that you were all well except Adeline and Angeline. I was sorry to hear that they had been unwell but glad to hear that they were recovering. Why don't they send me some notes in you letters as the others do? I should like to hear from all my children. Since I received your last letter I have written home to you by Mr. Weir who lives not far from Berlin near the Jacksonville Road. I also sent by him one hundred dollars in gold dust which will amount to over ----- which I directed him to do. That sum when he gets it changed into coin. However before this reaches you if he gets home safe you have received it. I shall send some more funds as soon as I can get an opportunity of sending it safely There will be some others going home before long. Many of our friends have already got home if they have had no bad luck on the way. (page break)

Capt. W. E. Roberts and myself are still together selling goods. So far we have done very well and are still sell tolerable fast at fair profits. If it should rain shortly we shall make considerable money in the operations at this place. We have a stock on hand of about eight thousand dollars. Goods have fallen below in San Francisco and Sacramento city. If it don't rain shortly so that the teams cannot run we shall not make as much on our goods as we expected as a great many articles of goods are as low in San Francisco at this time as the are in Springfield. Flour is only 7 or 8 dollars per barrel. Pork only 12 dollars per Bll. Shoes and Boots as low as they are at home. Hats also. So you see things are getting plenty ad cheap, but still I think we shall do well with our goods. We have no rent to pay. We built a store house here which cost us twelve hundred dollars. 18 feet wide and fifty feet deep and have a good plank floor in it. So you will observe we have quit sleeping on the ground. We still cook for ourselves except occasionally go and take dinner with Mrs. Armstrong.

Mr. Armstrong and family are well and doing tolerably well. They are keeping tavern only three or four doors from us. Mr. Michael McDaniel is dead as you no doubt will hear before this reaches you. He died at Ophies near Auburn 5 or 4 weeks ago with the cholera. Doctor Slater that used to live with Doctor Jane in Springfield attended to him while he was sick. Which was only a day or two and had him decently buried he tells me which will be some consolation to his family he made but little since he has been in the country. I have not seen him since last June. I received a letter from Father & Mother dated 22nd of August last and was glad to hear that them and other relations were generally well. I have seen but few of those from Springfield lately. The Ledlies are in the city of Sacramento doing well. I am told the cholera has been very bad in San Francisco and Sacramento City and proved very fatal but has entirely subsided. The weather is very fine here this winter. Tthe finest I have ever seen. One thing is certain that Calafornia has one of the finest climates in the world and the most gold of any yet discovered

There has been a good many new discoveries & rich mines higher up in the Mountains and will be a great rush to them in the spring. In fact the whole country is full of gold but takes time to find it and hard work to get it out. A great many become discouraged and say if they had money to take them home they would go. But I think in a country where a man can (get) 5 or 6 dollar a day for common labor is not the worst in the world. However I would advise no one who is comfortable at home to come to this country. He might be disappointed and blame me

³⁰³ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 16.

if I should se advise him. Send the children to school as much as possible. Tell them I want them to learn as fast as possible by studying at home as well as at school. I cannot yet say when I shall be at home. I shall come as soon as possible. Many and often has been the time that I have wished that I could consistently return and be with you all again.

My love and best respects to you all give my best respects to Emeline

Your Affectionate husband and Father
Eli Cook

: **121. James B. Powell's Letter to Benjamin A. Watson**
February 25, 1851³⁰⁴

(This letter is from a fellow member of Watson's overland company, James B. Powell)

Millsport, Kentucky, February 25, 1851

Friend Watson:


You favor of the second is at hand. I am pleased to learn that you reached home safe and found all well. I found my friends all well and shall I say there was much joy in the camp when I reached home.

I may say with the fact the joys of meeting pay the pangs of absence and those only who know have been to California can realize it. I had been home only a few days when by business called me to New Orleans. I had a pleasant trip and had the pleasure of hearing Jenny Lind. Such excitement as she creates in the city has rarely ever been seen before. Her tickets sold for some \$20,000. I called at ??? as I came up to see my acquaintances there and had a very pleasant time indeed. John H. Showed me a letter he had from you which was before I received yours. I told him to direct you to send our ??? receipt to Mills from the director to me as the matter is in my hands now. If you could have seen his ??? When he found he had left his receipt you would have been perfectly satisfied without seeing Jenny. I said nothing for some time until I thought his cup was full and running over then I told him it would be all right so he left for home perfectly satisfied. I was sorry to hear of Bailey's loss of \$700. He returned to ??? A few days after we'd passed to wait the return of the Pacifick. He supposed in packing up his money in his state room that he had dropped this package of \$700. I think he waited some 8 or 10 days. He then bought a horse and started home by land with full determination if he could not reach home by land never to take water.

As our friend Maloney and myself passed up the bank after leaving the boat we met some four or five girls of my old acquaintance and they took us by storm and compelled us to go back to one of their houses and I was so completely carried away that I forgot my friend until he turned round on his chair and faltered out "I feel like I was lost". Some of the girls had too good control of their feelings to laugh, but as for me I would have laughed if the ship had sunk, but this was no place for us long for my Cate was not there and as soon as dinner was over we started ??? up to my house and then left my verdant companion and struck a beeline for Kate's house. Ben, I would be glad I can't describe our meeting but you can imagine it better than I can describe it. She was disposed to be a little jealous of some letters ??? I wrote but when she knew all she were fancied she love the giver. This is nonsense enough to make a married man sick so I shall stop.

Your sincere friend, James B. Powell P.S. Kiss the babe for me
and write soon.

³⁰⁴ Benjamin A. Watson Letters.

Robert F. Cofflin Returns From Gold Diggins and Resume Blacksmithing


BLACKSMITHING.
 R. F. COFLIN, having returned from the Gold Diggins, has concluded to try his old trade, and 'dig gold' by hammering at the anvil; and for that purpose he and George Anderson have entered into partnership, and have taken the shop south of Bunn's, and next door to Talbott & Briggs, (Anderson's old stand.) where they carry on a
General Job Blacksmithing Business.
 They are prepared to do work promptly and well; and respectfully ask for a portion of the patronage of the public. (mar26) **ANDERSON & COFLIN.**

Journal, Saturday, May 3, 1851³⁰⁵

122. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City

April 26, 1851³⁰⁶

Envelope Addressee:
 Mrs Sarah Cook
 Springfield, Illinois

Nevada City

April 26, 1851

Dear Wife & Children

I take up my pen once more to inform you that I am well hoping that you are all enjoying the same blessing. I received your letters of January and February a few days since the February letter I received before the one dated in January. I was very glad to hear that you were all well you should have received the letter I sent by Mr. William Weis also one hundred dollars I sent by him to you at the time you wrote the letter in Feb. I suppose however you received it in a few days from that time. On the latter part of March I sent you a letter by Mr. Henry Prather of Decatur with whom I also sent you one hundred dollars which you will have received before this reaches you if he should return safe. I am still in business selling goods in this City with Capt. Roberts. Business here is only tolerably brisk. I wrote in the letter I sent by Mr. Prather that we had been burnt out and lost about three thousand dollars we have rebuilt again and are going ahead again. The people from Springfield are well as far as I know. Mr. Ledlie are well. Armstrong and family are well. In fact this is a country that people are always well as a general thing.

I cannot say yet when I shall start home. Give Mrs. Dregan my best respects and tell her she will have to smoke the pipe alone for some time yet. I am very glad that she still calls to see you. Julie I cannot write you a letter this time. I am writing in a hurry but next time. I will take the time and write you and Mary Ellen letters you have both been so kind in sending me letters.

I will close this by sending my love and best wishes to Emeline

Your affectionate husband & Father Eli Cook

³⁰⁵ *Journal*, Saturday, May 3, 1851, p. 2.

³⁰⁶ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 17.

123. Dr. Anson G. Henry Letter From the Isthmus*Register*, Wednesday, May 7, 1851.³⁰⁷

From the Isthmus

Dr. Henry, formerly of this city, and surgeon to Col. Baker's force of employees on the Isthmus railroad, writes as follows, to a friend in the city. We copy from the *Journal*:

Some 30 of our men will get off for California by the 1st of April; and I hope the balance who go through will be able to leave by the 1st of May; at which time I designed to take passage for Boston. I yet consider Illinois as my home. I have abandoned all intention of going to California or Oregon. This trip, I think, has cured me of all disposition for wild adventures in new countries."

The first news received of a Cuban invasion was that Col. Baker had engaged a large number of hands ostensibly to work on the Panama railroad, but really to capture Cuba. Nine tenths of the rumors in relation to this are as absurd as this.

124. Benjamin A. Watson Letter From California*Journal*, Thursday, April 3, 1851.³⁰⁸

"Westward, Ho!"

While we are sitting at our table, a large drove of stock, with some six or eight wagons, with some twenty persons, passing by,—being their first day's drive on their road to Oregon. These wagons and stock belong to Mr. David Newsom and Mr. Willoughby Churchill.

We will endeavor to obtain a list of the families with us to leave us.

From a little observation, we are satisfied that the immigration thus referred to, will be of a very choice character. They embrace some of the best farmers in the country, possessing ample means for the enterprise. There're also many valuable young men with them.

We confess that we feel a pain at this separation. It is a great undertaking to leave comfortable homes for greater advantages than our own State possesses, in Oregon. There is a toilsome journey before them. Long and tiresome it will be. True there will be many circumstances that will render portions of it interesting; still it will be tiresome, and at times must come among the emigrants feelings of anxiety for the end. Those who leave this section of the country will be well fitted out,—and the results will depend much on themselves. Men show what they are on the plains—(and women, too.) Many who seem to have little energy at home, where, when left on their own resources, make the best companions and travelers;—dad and others they leave, develop upon the journey, the most unimaginable traits.

If our friends are fortunate in reaching the frontiers and start early — pushing their way as rapidly as possible with safety to their stock, — they can reach Oregon city in the last of August. Never delay. It is often fatal; — it always causes difficulty. Be early at the Cascade Mountains, and you can pass through them in three or four days.

Arrived at Oregon city,—is an hour of rejoicing as well of test trial. What is then to be done? There are many immigrants from Sangamon County now in Oregon, who we trust, act the part

³⁰⁷ *Register*, Wednesday, May 7, 1851, p. 2.

³⁰⁸ *Journal*, Thursday, April 3, 1851 p. 2.

of friends, and be present to provide, assist and advise, the new immigrants. Kindness then, cannot, will not be forgotten. A deep feeling of gratitude will remain in the hearts of the immigrants for kindness then exhibited, which will end only with life. We know speak to you, Hamilton Campbell, James Watson, Sanford Watson, Dr. Ambrose, A[lfred]. R. Elder, David Logan, John Dunham, James Brown, Steven Hussey, and others that we might name. Your old friends in Sangamon remember you; and they ask you not to forget those of your country men who are coming over the Plains to you this season.

We believe that the indomitable energy that has induced the enterprise to Oregon, will be certain to make successful and valuable citizens, when such reach there. — Those who have left us tell but one story; — they are pleased with Oregon; — they like the country; they make money at farming or other employments; they regret not their journey; they are doing well, enjoying health and all other blessings which should make them happy. The business of man is to “subdue the earth” and make it the desirable home of their race. God prosper our friends in their mission.

Benjamin R. Biddle Visits Sister Harriet Campbell in Salem, Oregon

When the Shasta property was disposed of, Benjamin R. Biddle prepared to accompany one of the Oregon pack trains and made the trip to Salem without any unusual difficulty. As he rode over the country, he was impressed by the grandeur of the scenery and the apparent fertility of the soil. He found his sister Harriet Campbell and her family well and happy—and over-joyed to see him again after the lapse of twelve years.

Her husband, Hamilton Campbell, had taken up land in the Willamette Valley. When the Jason Lee Mission had been abandoned in 1844, Hamilton purchased their stock, so he had a well-equipped farm where he spent much of his time. Harriet lived in town where the children could go to school. She was a much handsomer woman at 34 than she had been when she left home at 22. Her four girls were as fine looking children as B. R. had ever seen.

Benjamin R. Biddle Decides to Move Family to Oregon

B.[enjamin] R. [Biddle] was delighted with Oregon—with its snow-capped mountains, beautiful forests and fertile valleys. Everything that was planted seemed to grow luxuriantly. B. R. decided that that was the place to establish his family. The government was offering 320 acres of land to every man and wife (160 acres to each) who would settle in Oregon Territory. This was B. R.’s inducement to bring his family as soon as possible.

The early missionaries and their friends who had gone to Oregon to carry Christianity to the Indians and to build an American colony in the far west, had been a very different class of people from those who had rushed into California when gold was discovered. B. R. liked that environment better for his growing family. Good schools and churches were already established in the towns of the Willamette Valley. The Indians furnished cheap and satisfactory labor, and living conditions seemed to be ideal.

B. R. and his brother-in-law, Hamilton Campbell, spent a couple of weeks riding over the country, looking at land and planning for the future. They decided that the greatest need for that part of Oregon Territory was a nursery where the settlers could buy fruit trees and berry vines to plant around the new homes that were being built.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁹ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp. 103-104.

**Benjamin R. Biddle Leaves Oregon on Trip Back to Springfield
June 20, 1851**

B. R. Biddle planed to return to Illinois to take his wife and five children to the Willamette Valley in the Oregon Territory where his sister Harriet and her husband Hamilton Campbell had settled some years earlier. B. R. Biddle would come home on horseback as that would take less time than it did going West with the ox-teams.

On June 19th, B. R. Biddle wrote that he and a couple of his friends were starting, overland to Springfield, in a few days. Two of B. R.'s old Springfield friends who had gone to Oregon to learn about the country at first hand, met him at Oregon City and they started home together on June 20, 1851—full of enthusiastic plans for the homes they planned to build for their families in the Far West.³¹⁰

Late in July B. R.'s Springfield family received a letter from "Pa," telling about his visit with his sister in Oregon Territory. He was delighted with that country, and the opportunities offered by the Government, to married men and their wives who would settle there before 1854. He told Maria that he would soon be home, to sell the rest of his property and settle up his affairs so that he could take his family back there to make a permanent home.

He wrote that he was bringing something that the children would all like. There was great excitement over the news, and the children wondered what their father could be bringing to them from Oregon. They did not expect him home before the middle of October for even horses cannot travel very fast on a two thousand mile trip over roads like the Overland Trail.

B. R. said that he and his friends had returned by the Snake River route, but he considered the trail through Northern California and Central Oregon much better and safer. When they reached the Platte River, on the way home, they met a party of eight men traveling with packhorses from California who joined them and traveled with them all the way to St. Joseph.

They met occasional bands of Indians, but had no trouble with any of them. On their trip home they met 685 wagons, 379 families and 2962 head of stock going to Oregon—which showed how fast the West was filling up. As they passed parties on the road, they always stopped to talk—to exchange ideas and news of the road. They usually nooned and stopped over night with some of the west bound wagon trains who were glad to meet people coming from the West. They could give them reliable information about the roads they would have to travel.

It took B. R. and his friends just 83 days to make the trip from Oregon City to St. Joseph. They laid by seven days on the way: so, as they looked back, it did not seem a very hard trip.

B. R. wrote that, like other men of the West, he was wearing a beard. The children wondered if they would know him. In fact he had been away so long, the little girls seemed to have forgotten just how he looked. They studied his old daguerreotypes and talked about his eyes and his smile, and the curl in his hair. The boys remembered, especially, how straight he stood, how fast he walked, and how searchingly he looked at them—straight in the eyes—as though he could see their very thoughts—and they remembered, most of all, how kind he was!³¹¹

³¹⁰ *And This Is Our Heritage*, p. 104.

³¹¹ *And This Is Our Heritage*, p. 112.

**William Enyert Returns to Springfield From California Gold Mines
June 1851**

William Enyert, born on June 25, 1825, in Hardin County, Kentucky, was married in Sangamon County, Illinois, on January 13, 1852, to Sarah Elder. They had four children in Sangamon County. William left Springfield on March 25, 1849, for the gold fields of California. Only three of the eight others who went with him returned. William was gone two years and three months, and made enough to buy himself a good home.³¹²

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**125. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
June 11, 1851³¹³**

Nevada City, California

June 11, 1851

Dear Wife and Children

I once more drop you a few lines informing that I am in tolerable health. I cannot say that my health is really good at this time. I have been confined in the store so long closely, for the last eight months that I feel considerably debilitated. For that whole time I have not been out of store perhaps one hour at a time day or night except at the time a few days when we were rebuilding after we were burnt out. However don't understand me that I am down sick. I am attending to business as usual and a doll or two of medicine and a little exercise I think will make me well and hearty. Hoping you are all enjoying health and happiness, it appears to me a long time since I have seen you all. I wish I was ready to start home in the Steamer. that carries this letter for I am really homesick. But for your interest as well as my own, I must stay a little longer. How soon I may start home I cannot say. I shall not be long about it when I once make up my mind to start

I have received two letters from you since I last wrote. The one with Angeline's enclosure directly after I had written and the one of the 30th march a few days since. I was glad to hear of your good health in general. It has been a great comfort to me that you have all escaped sickness so well since I have been absent. I shall send Angeline an answer in my next writing. Mary Ellen and Julieta have written so often that I felt under obligation to write each one of them a note. I have not received Adeline's letter yet. I will write to her also and to Franklin and Elbridge hoping they will be good boys and pay as much attention to getting a good education as possible. I wrote to Emeline about two weeks since directing it to her at Petersburg. The people from Springfield are generally well as far as I have heard from them. Mr. [David] Phelps has been quite sick for some time they used to live in Springfield they live in this city Mr. Maltby and his wife keep Tavern in this City and are well. Maltby has a fine boy which she is very proud of. They never had any children until they came to this country.

Mr. Armstrong and family are well. Mr. [Reuben] McDonald is well. He stays in this city most of the time. He has gone to Sacramento City at this time. Give my respects to Mr. Joseph Ledlie also Mr. & Mrs. Ledlie and say to them I heard from Arthur & John Ledlie a few days since. They were both well. Those mentioned I believe are all the persons I have heard from lately from our place. I saw Doctor Slaten a few days since. He tells me he wrote to Doctor Jayne and enclosed a letter to Mrs. McDaniel about the time I wrote informing you of his death which perhaps she has received before this time. In the letter he says he enclosed a draft for one hundred dollars He has handled me the second of same draft which I enclose in

³¹² Power, p. 92.

³¹³ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 18.

this letter. You will please hand it to her. If she has received the first and drawn the money on it, this will be of no use to her. If she has not, she can draw the money on this the ____ same. Doctor Slaten tells me that Mr. McDaniel during his sickness which was short was insensible and had nothing to say about his family or any other subject that was intelligible. There are some few things he tells me that he will sell and send what they bring to Mr. McDaniel. They do not amount to much however.

Capt. Roberts, Mr. Laing and myself are still in partnership selling goods and mining. I attend the store in the City. Mr. Laoing attend our store at Gold Flat about a mile from here and Capt. Roberts attends to mining at present. We are doing tolerable well. We sell about a thousand dollars' worth a week at fair profit and of course are making something. We have not been a mining long and can not tell how it will pay yet. We have paid out about twelve hundred dollars for mining claims and will try our luck for mining [is] a complete lottery. Some make fortunes at it while others work hard and make nothing. Scarcely. Wages here for hands mining is 5 to 8 dollars per day. We have paid for a good hand to work 25 feet under ground 10 dollars per day.

The first opportunity I will send you some money. I must close by sending my love and best wishes to you all. Give my best respects to all acquaintances friends

Your affectionate husband & Father
Eli Cook

**126. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
July 12, 1851³¹⁴**

Nevada City

July 12th 1851

Dear Wife & Children

I take the present opportunity of addressing you a few lines. I have been very sick since I wrote you last. I was two weeks unable to set up scarcely any part of the time. I am now mending slowly although I am very weak in this warm climate a person regains their strength very slowly. I am able however to get about and hope I shall be within a short time I have received no letter from you the last two mails and of course am very anxious to hear from you I see it stated in a New Orleans paper the Cholera is in Springfield which give me much uneasiness our acquaintance from Springfield are all well as far as I have heard Armstrong and family are well Mr. McDanial is well I am boarding with Mr. Maltby himself and family are well We have rented our store in the City and are mining and keeping a store at gold flat one mile from here. Direct your letters as heretofore to Nevada City. I must close for I do not feel much like writing this evening. My love to you all

Your husband & Father

Eli Cook

³¹⁴ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 19.

127. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City
August 11, 1851³¹⁵

Nevada City

August 11th 1851

Dear Wife & Children

I embrace the present opportunity of writing you a few lines informing you that I am in tolerable health. I have nearly regained my health from my late indisposition although I have not fully recovered my strength as yet. Still hoping these lines may reach you enjoying good health. I had sold out my interest in the store and mining claims to my partners Roberts & Laing and have been doing nothing for the last two weeks. I have the store house in this City which I am renting at one hundred and fifty dollars per month and shall either commence mining or trading in a few days. Trading is rather dull here at this time and profits very small. Mining is as usual a perfect lottery. Some making money fast and others wise not paying expenses. Wages are good. 6 to 8 dollars per day are the regular wages. I shall remain here this fall and winter. I perservere and try what I can do. I think by spring I shall have given the country a fair trial.

I received your letter dated up to May 18th and was glad to hear of your good health also of Emeline's good health. Do the best you can and I will try and do the same. I shall send you some money in a short time which I have no doubt you need. So far as I have heard all our friends and acquaintances are well that are in this country. There are but few of them in this section of country. Mr. Armstrong & family. also Mr. Maltby & family. Mr. [Reuben] McDonald is also here as well. I have not heard from the Ledlies for several weeks. They were well when last heard from. In your letter I received a note from Franklin. He says he is out of employment and going to school in a few days. I would say to him be employed in some way if not at work go to school pay as much attention to learning as possible.

Give my love and best respects to Emeline.

I send my love and best wishes for your prosperity and happiness to you all

Your affectionate husband & father
Eli Cook

128. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City
September 27, 1851³¹⁶

Nevada City

September 27th 1851

Dear Wife & Children

I once more address you a few lines informing you that I am well hoping you are all enjoying the same blessing. I have been in bad health for the last three months but have now regained my health. I am commencing business in this city again and expect to remain here until spring. I am really in hopes that I shall be able to return home by that time or in other words make enough to justify me in doing so. I received your letter of July 14th from Ohio and was very glad to hear from you and my relatives. I was sorry to hear of the bad health my mother and brother but it was encouraging to hear that they were improving

³¹⁵ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 20.

³¹⁶ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 21.

It has given me much trouble to hear of the situation of Emeline. I hope her indisposition will not be of long duration and be in far away far from her and not knowing the particulars of the case of course I am not able to advise what is best she ought not to have received any communication or letter from that source after she was married. Please on the receipt of this letter write me how she is and all the particulars of the case.

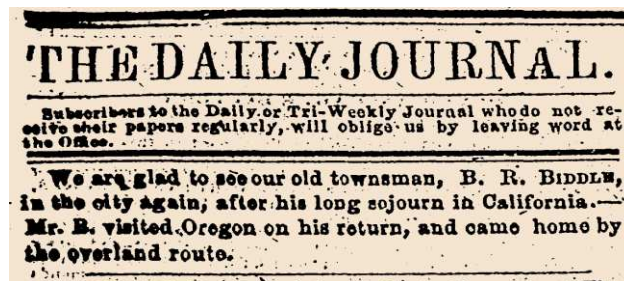
I was in San Francisco last week purchasing goods. I saw several of our old acquaintances there Were all well. I saw J__ Saunders. Him and her family are well and doing well. He says I also saw Mr. James F. Reed for the first time [since] I have been in the country.

: Mr. Reed don't appear to have changed any in appearance and is as jovial as ever His family are all well and could not be induced to leave California. Mr. Caden Keyes is to be married in a few days. Mr. Lusbaum from Springfield is in San Francisco selling goods. He has made money. I staid two or three nights with the Mr. __ Ledlie in Sacramento City as I went down and returned. They are well and doing very well. Reuben McDonald is at Auburn about forty miles from here. I saw him a few weeks since. He was in good health. Mr. Maltby and his family live here and are well. Also Mr. [Benjamin] Armstrong and his family are well and all of our acquaintances so far as I have heard. Capt. Roberts will start home in two weeks he says. So it appears I have to stay here as long as any if not longer but I shall make my stay as short as possible.

I should by all means have sent you some money before this time but having just commenced business again. I must post pone until the next mail. At that time I will send you some. No more at present

I send my love to you all
Your Husband and Father
Eli Cook

Benjamin Robert Biddle Returns From California



Journal, Friday, September 26, 1851.³¹⁷

129. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California November 12, 1851³¹⁸

Nevada City

November 12th 1851

Dear Wife & Children

I once more send you a few lines informing you that I am well hoping you are all enjoying the same inestimable blessing. I am very anxious to see you all once more. It is a long time since I have seen you. I hope it will not be a great while longer. It will be several months however.

³¹⁷ *Journal*, Friday, September 26, 1851, p. 3.

³¹⁸ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 22.

Capt. W. E. Roberts started home the first of this month as I informed you I believe in my last letter. I am in partnership with a gentleman from Vermont by the name of I. I Gray a real go ahead business Yankee. He is at San Francisco nearly all the time buying goods and sending them up to me. I remain here and sell them. I was down to San Francisco about five weeks since as I informed you in my last letter. I saw Saunders, Reed, Ludlem, Wiley and the Ledlies. They were all well. So far as I have heard our friends are all well in California. Mr. Maltby & Family are here and well. Mr. Armstrong and family are here and well except Mrs. Armstrong. She has a girl three or four days old and I presume does not feel very well at this time. Times are as good as ever in this country. Wages for men are six dollars a day. Mining is good and will be for years. I have several quartz mining claims. They have not cost me much yet. I think I could sell them and make about one thousand dollars on them but shall hold on to them for some time yet. I however devote all my time to business in the store and have as much as I can attend to. With a man to help me we sell on an average two thousand dollars a week. In fact our sales are not short of ten thousand dollars for month if we do not have fire or some other bad luck. I think it will be a safe estimate to say we are making a thousand dollars a piece per month. You will perhaps ask why I do not send more money to you. I will merely say that I was out of business for some time after selling out to Roberts & Laning and it was necessary to retain my funds to commence business again and at this time we keep our money moving. We have a large stock of goods over then thousand dollars' worth at first cost and prospects flattering. How it[will] end I cannot say. I have been in business so often. I send a draft for one hundred dollars which Mr. Bunn or any of the merchants will cash by you signing over to them. As soon as you received it write to me whether it is paid or not. Please write the amount you owe. I want to send money in a short time to settle all ____

The rainy season has not commenced yet all thought it is later than it was in 1849 by some week or . We are very anxious for it to commence. When it does commence in earnest or if it should as it did the first season I ____ more goods will rise to double the price they are-- more in the mining region and we are well prepared for it. Our stock is the largest in this region. Please write me what is going on in Springfield and how the returned Californian are doing which of them came home with fortunes and what say about the Country and who are coming out next season. Give my best Respects to all enquiring friends. I hope Angeline & Addeline will excuse me for not writing this mail. I will write to them by next. I have never received Addeline's letter. I will also write to Emeline shortly. Why don't she write to me. Give her my best respects & love. My love and best wishes to you all Most Respectfully

Your Husband & Father
Eli Cook

Eaton R. Hickox Goes to California-1851

Eaton R. Hickox was born on November 1, 1827, in Jefferson County, New York, the son of Addison and Rhoda Hickox. Eaton was raised in Springfield, Illinois. In 1851, he went to California and returned in 1857.³¹⁹

John A. Gibson Goes to California-1851

John A. Gibson was born in 1827 in Kentucky, was brought up in Sangamon County, Illinois, and went to California in 1851. He was last heard from in 1865.

³¹⁹ Power, p. 375. www.findagrave.com/memorial/24292259/eaton-r.-hickox

John W. Gibson Goes to California-1851

John W. Gibson born on November 18, 1834 in Sangamon County, Illinois, went to California in 1851, and lived at Saratoga, Santa Clara County.

William S. and Sarah Young and Seven Children Move to Oregon

William S. Young was born on November 2, 1809, in Green County, Ohio. He was married on December 18, 1834, in Sangamon County, Illinois, to Sarah Yocum. They had seven children, all born in Sangamon County, and in 1851 moved overland to Oregon.

William E. Higgins Dies on Shipboard on Pacific Ocean on Way Home

William E. Higgins, born in Kentucky, went from Sangamon County, Illinois, to Missouri, and from there, in 1849, to California. He was on his way home, and died on shipboard on the Pacific Ocean in 1851.³²⁰

James Harvey Slater Goes to Corvallis, Oregon

James Harvey Slater left home on March 28, 1849, driving an ox team over the plains, and arrived in California in September of that year.³²¹ In the autumn of 1851, he went to Corvallis, Oregon, and was one of the delegates to the territorial legislature of Oregon (1857-1858), and also a member of the constitutional convention. He was married there in 1853 to Elizabeth Gray, a native of Georgia. They had nine children. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1854. He was clerk of the district court of the Territory of Oregon for Benton County 1853-1856; member, Territorial assembly; member, State house of representatives 1859; published the Oregon Weekly Union at Corvallis 1859-1861; district attorney for the fifth judicial district of Oregon in 1868; presidential elector on the Democratic ticket in 1868; elected as a Democrat to the Forty-second Congress (March 4, 1871-March 3, 1873); elected as a Democrat to the United States Senate and served from March 4, 1879, to March 3, 1885; resumed the practice of law in La Grande, Oregon; member of the State railroad commission 1889-1891; He lived at La Grande, Union County, Oregon³²² and died in La Grande, Oregon, on January 28, 1899, and was buried in the Masonic Cemetery.³²³

Squire Waddell Goes to California

September

In 1851, Squire Waddell left Springfield and went west to California. He would return home the first of September 1853.

William Strawbridge Dies on Way Home From California

William Strawbridge went to California in 1849. He was returning to his family, and died in December 1851, in New York City, leaving a widow and four children.³²⁴

³²⁰ Power, p. 378.

³²¹ Power, p. 664.

³²² <https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/james-harvey-slater-24-bkn7g>

³²³ <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=S000476>

³²⁴ Power, p. 694.

John S. Bradford Returns Home

In 1851 John S. Bradford returned home to his family who had remained in Springfield, and continued his business relations with Mr. Johnson. In 1857 he served as Superintendent of Public Instruction in Sangamon County and he was one of the Commissioners to divide the county into townships and name them. He served as Treasurer, Alderman, and Mayor of Springfield at various times.

John B. Weber Returns Home

John B. Weber went to California in 1849 and returned in 1851. In about 1851, he constructed what is known as the Sprigg House. Mrs. Julia Sprigg, a widow, purchased it from Weber in 1853 for use as a residence for herself and her children.



John B. Weber House 1851-1853 Sprigg House³²⁵

Letter from John B. Weber to Joseph Smith January 6, 1840

Springfield Jan 6th. 1840

Gentlemen

Your letter of the 19th ult came to hand ten days after date, immediately after which, I called in many of the prominent members of the Democrattick party, with a view to unite them and their influence in your behalf; all of which expressed a willingness to aid in bringing about justice.

But, I regret to inform you that but few have exhibited that energy in the matter which might reasonably be expected from all lovers of liberty and advocates of equal rights.

Your energetick friends were first of the opinion that an effort ought to be made by our Legislature to memorialize our Representatives in Congress to use all honorable means to accomplish your desires; But after holding a consultation it was believed that such a course would create a party strife here, and consequently opperate against you in Congress; Therefore it was agreed that as many as had friends in Congress should write to them immediately, desiring their aid in your behalf. If convenient, you will please write again [p. 94]

Any information respecting your mission will be thankfully received, and made known to your people here

Very respectfully yours

Jno. [John] B Weber³²⁶

³²⁵ National Park Service Photo.

³²⁶ John B. Weber, Letter, Springfield, IL, to JS and "Associates," Washington DC, 6 Jan. 1840; in JS Letterbook 2, pp. 94-95; handwriting of Howard Coray; CHL.
<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-john-b-weber-6-january-1840/1>

1852

There were fourteen letters in 1852. Of those 14 were letters from Eli Cook, Springfield former mayor, to his wife. There were eleven Sangamon County resident who traveled west. Four traveled with families and those family members are not included in the count.

Gold Mining Declines

Though gold mining continued throughout the 1850s, it had reached its peak by 1852, when some \$81 million was pulled from the ground. After that year, the total take declined gradually, leveling off to around \$45 million per year by 1857. Settlement in California continued, however, and by 1860 the state's population was 380,000.

By 1852, the California population reached at least 200,000. There were, observers complained, too many miners relying on too little gold for support. In 1849, a miner might have made \$16 per day or more. Miners depleted the placer deposits and more men arrived, reducing the average daily "wage." Even without these figures, miners knew at the time that the easy days of the placers were over.³²⁷

130. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California January 27, 1852³²⁸

Nevada City

January 27th 1852

Dear Wife & Children

I am well at present and doing well. Hoping you are enjoying good health. I have not received any letter from you for some time. Not any by either of the last two mails and of course am very anxious to hear from your. Business has been very good with us this winter. Much better than last. The weather here is as fine as I ever saw. Saw it in the month of May at home. In fact it could not be finer. Our friends from Illinois are well as far as I have heard. Mr. Elijah Cook Matheny & family are here and well. Mr. Ledlies were well. I A few days since I heard from them Mr. McDonalds I was here a short time since and was well. Mr. [David] Phelps and family are well. I I am boarding with them at this time. Board is cheap now only twelve dollars per week. You will say that would be a large price to pay in Springfield but we do not consider it high. I've enclosed I send you draft on Adams ___ St. Louis for two hundred dollars. Which you can sell to any of the merchants for cash in Springfield. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends.

My love to you all. Your Husband & father
E. Cook

³²⁷ Rogers, p. 40.

³²⁸ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 23.

**131. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
February 11, 1852³²⁹**

Nevada City

February 11th 1852

Dear Wife & Children

I take pleasure in sending you a few lines once more informing you that I am well and doing well at present. Hoping you all are in good health and happy. I received your letter of the 5th Dec. last and was glad to hear that you were all well. Although it is very unpleasant and disagreeable to remain so long awhile from you. Yet it is a great comfort to hear of your general good health the most of the time. Perhaps there was not one who came to California at the time I did who would be more anxious to return home than myself. But I conceive it to be my duty to remain awhile longer. In fact it would be imprudent in me to quit a good business and return immediately for in so doing I should have to go into business there from eight to two thousand dollars per month cash. I do not think we could do the same in Springfield. Although we keep a heavy stock of goods on hand. If I do not make money it shall not be for the want of attention to business. Our store is never closed until about 12 o'clock at night and is opened at day light in the morning. I am not the one that gets up so early in the morning, however. But am the last one up at night. Mining in the country is good yet some find as rich mining as when I first came to the country. But as a general thing it is not so easy to find rich diggings. Wages are one hundred dollars for month and _____ found so you will perceive that this is not a very hard country for those who wish to work. But still I believe there is more men become disheartened in this country than any other. I have been in the season of that however is plain they came to the country expecting to get their gold without much trouble or Labour but of course were disappointed.

Our acquaintances are well as far as I have heard. I send you the second of Draft on Adams & Co. for two hundred dollars. If the first has not come to hand you can draw on this. Please write if you received the one for one hundred dollars. I have not sent the 2 of that. Give my love to Emeline and my best respects to all my friends, My love to you all.

Your husband & father
Eli Cook

**Benjamin R. Biddle and Isaac Constant Leave Springfield for Independence, Missouri
to Prepare for Trip to Oregon-February 17, 1852**

Journal, February 18, 1852.³³⁰

Messrs. B.[enjamin] R. Biddle and Isaac Constant left here yesterday morning for Independence, Mo. for the purpose of supplying themselves with stock, wagons &c. for their trip to Oregon.

³²⁹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 24.

³³⁰ *Journal*, February 18, 1852, p. 3.

132. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
April 11, 1852³³¹

Nevada City

April 11th 1852

Dear Wife & Children

I send you a few lines informing you that I am well hoping you are all enjoying the same blessing. I received no letter from the last mail but there is another mail now and by which I hope I shall hear from you. I sent you a draft some time since for two hundred dollars which I hope you have received before this time. Please write ofthen and let me know how you are doing. I sent a letter by ,alast mail to Emeline buet omitted to send one to you. I am doing well in this country at this time of making money is doing well. I am making at least one thousand dollars per month and using myself up to do it. I am engaged in business from early morn until 12 o'clock at night and begin to feel the effects of it. Our sales are generally from 3 to 400 dollars per day. I presume I shall come home before many months roll round and perhaps return to California again. I could come home now with about ten thousand dollars so you see I have not been idle.

My love to all
 Yours Eli Cook

George L. Eastman and Hiram Bristol Leave for California, and Dr. Anson G. Henry and Family, Benjamin R. Biddle and Family, Isaac Constant, William R. Merriman and Family and Charles Halsted Leave Springfield for Oregon
April 6, 1852

FOR THE WEST.—Dr. A. G. Henry and family, Mr. Biddle and family, Isaac Constant and family, Wm. Merriman and family, and Charles Halsted, left here yesterday morning for Oregon, and Messrs. George Eastman and Hiram Bristol for California—all valuable citizens.

Register, April 7, 1852.³³²

Quite a number of persons left this city on Tuesday morning for Oregon. Among them were Dr. A. G. Henry and family, Phillip Stone and family, J. H. Kendall and family, Isaac Constant and family, Wm. Merriman and family. Messrs. George Eastman and Hiram Bristol also left for California. About a week since, Jacob Johnson, Elijah Johnson, Samuel Estill and Robert Hill left Indian Creek Menard County, for Independence, designing to go out with the above company. *Journal*, April 8, 1852.³³³

We omitted to state on Wednesday, that B. R. Biddle and family were among the emigrants who left this place on the day preceding for Oregon. His brother-in-law, Mr. Cardwell, and family, of Jacksonville, joined them at that place.

Journal, April 10, 1852.³³⁴

Dr. Anson G. Henry Goes West to Oregon Territory

In April 1852, Dr. Anson G. Henry (1804-1865) went west to Oregon in search of greater opportunity. As in Illinois, he combined his medical practice with the pursuit of political positions. And as in Illinois, he gained both political friends and political enemies. Historian

³³¹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 25.

³³² *Register*, April 7, 1852, p. 2.

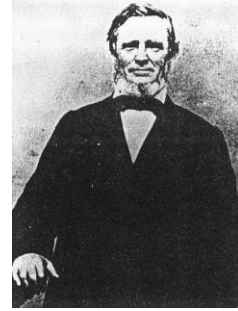
³³³ *Journal*, April 8, 1852, p. 3.

³³⁴ *Journal*, April 10, 1852, p. 3.

Paul M. Angle wrote that Dr. Henry had “a capacity for making two bitter enemies for each warm friend.”

Dr. Henry was a close political ally of Mr. Lincoln, who relied on him for medical as well as political help. Lincoln also sought to augment Dr. Henry’s income by seeking political appointments for him. In January 1841, Lincoln wrote Congressman John T. Stuart:

“What I wish now is to speak of our Post-Office. You know I desired Dr. Henry to have that place...



Dr. Anson G. Henry

Lincoln made another patronage recommendation for Dr. Henry in 1850:

“I understand you have under consideration the question of appointing Dr. A. G. Henry to some Indian Agency,”

He eventually was named Indian Agent for Oregon, but he didn’t actually move to Oregon until two years later.³³⁵

Isaac Constant and Family Leave Springfield and Go to Oregon

Isaac Constant, born on April 5, 1809, in Clarke County, Kentucky, was married in Sangamon County, Illinois, on February 14, 1835, to Lucinda Merriman, daughter of Reuben Merriman. Isaac was in the Black Hawk War from Sangamon County. In 1849 at age 40, he went to Oregon and took a claim under the homestead law. In 1850, he returned to Illinois, disposed of his property, and with his family and some of his neighbors, emigrated to Oregon in 1852 at age 43. They were among the first families who settled there. After they arrived, Isaac had to go two hundred miles with pack animals, for provisions. The valley was teeming with Indians, but he lived to see them all pass away, and surrounded by a large circle of friends, he lived near Jacksonville, Jackson County, Oregon.³³⁶

Setting out from Independence, Missouri, with a large wagon train, the Constants spent a hazardous summer crossing the plains and arrived in Jackson County [Oregon] late in the fall of 1852. Here he took up a donation land claim lying east of what was later to become the city of Central Point.³³⁷ He later acquired a tract of land west of the county road and now included in the present city limits (known as the Constant Tract).

Central Point, Oregon

Central Point’s geographical location at the intersection of two pioneer wagon trails inspired early settler Isaac Constant in 1852 to name it just that: Central Point. It lay at the hub of roads leading north to the Willamette Valley, and east and west to Butte Falls, Sams Valley and Jacksonville, Oregon.

It took about six months to make the trip with ox teams taking the Oregon Trail. They had to consider getting food and water for the animals along the way. They could buy some grain and hay, which could be used for a short time after leaving Independence, but from there on, they had to depend on the small amount of grain they could carry and the grass that grew near the trail. Very

³³⁵ Harry C. Blair, *Dr. Anson G. Henry: Physician, Politician, Friend of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 19. (Portland, Oregon, 1950). Richard W. Etulain, editor, *Lincoln Looks West: From the Mississippi to the Pacific*, p. 185. (Paul M. Zall, *Dr. Anson G. Henry (1804-65): Lincoln’s Junkyard Dog*).

³³⁶ *Power*, p. 221.

³³⁷ To be eligible for free land under the donation land law, they had to be in Oregon and file a claim before December 1853.

little grass was high enough for grazing before the first of April—and yet, if they waited too long, other trains would go before them and take the best of the feed. They also had to remember that, near the end of their journey, high mountains had to be crossed before the snows (which sometimes came in October and November) would close the trails.³³⁸

133. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
April 27, 1852³³⁹

Nevada City

April 27th 1852

Dear Wife & Children

I once more write you a few lines informing you that I am well hoping that you are all enjoying the same blessing. I received your letters of Feb. 24th and was glad to hear that you were all well. I have sent you 1st & 2nd draft on Adams and Company St. Louis for two hundred dollars which I have no doubt you have received before this time. I presume by your letters next mail I shall hear of their safe arrival at least one of them which will answer the same purposes as both. Times are good here about as usual. Myself and partners are making about a thousand dollars per month each. How long I shall stay in California I cannot say but will make it as short as I can to do in justice to you all and myself for it is certain that I can not do business at home any more after being in this country as long as I have been. The trade is so very different from what is at home. It is as easy to make one dollar here as it is to make five cents in Springfield.

(second page)

We are doing the largest business of any house in Nevada. Our income out of the store is over two hundred dollars per month. Mostly money lent out at five per cent per month. If I stay in this country much longer I shall become as much of a show as Mr. Klein in Springfield but so it goes. Money makes money. My self and partner have over twenty thousand dollars invested in business. I have made nearly all that. I have made in the last seven months. So I can not regret of coming home before. I was in partnership with Capt. Roberts for more than one year and could make nothing while I was with him. But since then as well as before. I made money but still I have nothing to say against him for I have made twice as much in this country as he did. Our friends are all well as far as I have heard. I heard from the Misses Ledlies this week. They are both well. Mr. & Mrs. Maltby are well. Mr. Phelps and family are well. I have not heard from Mr. Gormley for two years.

My love to you all
Eli Cook

I will send you more funds in a short time in fact as fast as you need them. Write when you want.

E. Cook

³³⁸ *And This Is Our Heritage*, pp.113 and 114.

³³⁹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 26.

134. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Sacramento City, California
June 10, 1852³⁴⁰

Sacramento City

June 10th 1852

Dear Wife & Children

I send you few lines once more informing you that I am well hoping that you are likewise enjoying good health. I have received no letter from you by the last two mails but presume I shall by the next. I htion .

I have nothing new to write. Times here are about as usual. I am still doing well so far as making money is concerned and every other way as far as I can judge for I have no time to attend to any thing about business. I received a letter from my Brother Amos last mail our relative were all well except Lacy. She is very low and helpless he says with the consumption.

Franklin he says is a good boy, and, has grown so that I would not know him. I had written a letter to Franklin some time since requesting him to go to school all the time until I returned. I have sent one hundred. Will send you another draft for more funds send dollars to Amos to pay his expenses and hope he will go to school all the while. Sgo to school send the to school by all nend the children to school as much as possible you write that Adeline and Angeline should go to school send them to school by all means and to a good school at that if there is any in the place It is time and money lost going to a poor teacher. I am afraid Mr. Wright is not doing much for the other children if she does not do her duty send them to some other place. I send you drafts on Adams & Co. for two hundred dollars. Next mail (two weeks)_____ another draft for more funds I will send you. So do the best you can. I shall be home tehe time I wrote you I send Lewis & Adams a draft on Adams & Co for five hundred dollars ask them if they have received it. I shall send them five hundred more next mail. I should have sent more this time but thought I was risking enough at one time and two weeks could not make much difference. Give my love to Emeline.

My love and best respects to you all.

Your affectionate Husband & Father E. Cook

135. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
July 27, 1852³⁴¹

Envelope addressee:
 Mrs. Sarah Cook
 Springfield, Illinois

Nevada City

July 27,th 1852

Dear Wife & Children

I am in good health at present hoping you are all enjoying the same blessing. I received your letters of the 24th May about ten days ago and was glad to hear that you were all well. Times are tolerable good here. Not so good as it would be if there was plenty of water. The great difficulty of mining in the Mountain region of California in the summer and fall of the year is the scarcity of Water. Recollect it does not rain here from April until November. The weather here is excessively warm here this summer. The Thermometer has run up as high as 130 degrees some day in Sacramento City. That is more than 20 degrees hotter than it ever has

³⁴⁰ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 27.

³⁴¹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 28.

been in Springfield. So [you] may know we are not suffering with cold weather here. I get very anxious to return home at times. But am still afraid if I should do so at present I should regret it and blame myself for leaving while I am doing so well. But I shall come at the time I have stated whether I am doing well or not.

I am in good health. Our acquaintances here are well as far as I have heard. Mr. [David] Phelps and family & Mr. Maltby and family are all that are here from Springfield. I heard of Mr. Ledlies a few days since. They were both well. I also saw Doctor Slater a few days since. Mr. [Reuben] McDonald is with him near Auburn. They were both well. This years Emigration across the Plains & Mountains are coming in quite fast. I have seen none get from Springfield. They say they got along very well and have made the trip quite quick but I suppose a great many of them will get the blues after they get here for I have seen more men this country dishearted than ever I have seen in any country. Within the last year there has [been] four men committed Suicide in this City. One man killed himself here last Sunday evening. He was a merchant here and had his family with him and it is not known for what cause that he committed so rash an act unless as some supposed from excessive drinking. Give my love to Emeline,

Your Husband & Father
My love to all. Eli Cook

136. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
August 11, 1852³⁴²

Nevada City

August 11th, 1852

Dear Wife & Children

I received your letters of June 13 and was glad to hear you were all well hoping these lines will reach you enjoying the same thing. I am in tolerable good health at present but very low spirited this evening from some cause or other. I do not however ___not for the ___ of ___ today for ___ our ash today is five hundred dollars. I used to think if I had plenty of money I should be [happy] and content. ___in that belief __ was ___ now I am ___ at least fifteen thousand dollars and get the Blues or become low spirited occasionally as usual times are good here with us at least others say they are dull. We sell more I presume than any 3 stores in town. Our acquaintances are well as far as I have heard. I should have sent you money by this mail but the premium for drafts here are so high that I will buy in one of the cities below and send by Mr. ___ five hundred dollars.

I hear that ___ was dead. He left this country in very bad health. That however is the fate of all. We use expectations and fret and expose ourselves to make money and then die. So goes the world. We are of no particular use here and soon forgotten after we die. Write to me. How are the returned Californians are getting along. The emigration is getting in very fast ___ the ___ a great many families are c _____. We come to settle in this country that may do well _____ but little -- of coming _____ of making --- a __ going home in a year or two. Give my best respects to all inquiring friends. Also give my love and best respects Emeline

My love to you and the children

Your affectionate
Husband & Father
E. Cook.

³⁴² *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 29.

137. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
August 27, 1852³⁴³

Envelope address:
 Mrs. Sarah Cook
 Springfield, Illinois

Nevada City

August 27th 1852

Dear Wife & Children

I send you few lines once more informing you that I am well hoping that you are likewise enjoying good health. I have received no letter from you by the last two mails but presume I shall by the next. I htion .

I have nothing new to write. Times here are about as usual. I am still doing well so far as making money is concerned and every other way as far as I can judge for I have no time to attend to any thing about business. I received a letter from my Brother Amos last mail our relative were all well except Lacy. She is very low and helpless he says with the consumption. Franklin he says is a good boy, and, has grown so that I would not know him. I had written a letter to Franklin some time since requesting him to go to school all the time until I returned. I have sent one hundred. Will send you another draft for more funds send dollars to Amos to pay his expenses and hope he will go to school all the while. Go to school send the to school by all nend the children to school as much as possible you write that Adeline and Angeline should go to school send them to school by all means and to a good school at that if there is any in the place It is time and money lost going to a poor teacher. I am afraid Mr. Wright is not doing much for the other children if she does not do her duty send them to some other place. I send you drafts on Adams & Co. for two hundred dollars. Next mail (two weeks)_____ another draft for more funds I will send you. So do the best you can. I shall be home tehe time I wrote you I send Lewis & Adams a draft on Adams & Co for five hundred dollars ask them if they have received it. I shall send them five hundred more next mail.

I should have sent more this time but thought I was risking enough at one time and two weeks could not make much difference. Give my love to Emeline. My love and best respects to you all.

Your affectionate Husband & Father E. Cook

George L. Eastman Leaves Springfield and Moves to California

George L. Eastman, born on May 5, 1833, in Maine, was brought up in Sangamon County, Illinois. He went to California in 1852 and returned to Springfield in 1870.

138. Daughter Reviews the Life of Father Isaac Constant³⁴⁴

Father returned after being away for about two years and was accompanied by two of the young men. I had been on a visit to Springfield, the home of a cousin of mine, and while on my way home, someone told me that my Father had returned. He was standing on the lawn and I thought to myself, 'why that looks like Father, but he seems too young!' But it was my dear Father.

Our home and surroundings were beautifully situated, a blue-grass lawn almost surrounded the house. Many large trees and flowering shrubs and flowers made a charming picture. "Father

³⁴³ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 30.

³⁴⁴ As told in part by his daughter Lavinia Jane (Constant) Robinson to her son Thomas Maury Robinson and contributed by Kevin R. Biersdorff.

wanted to sell his farm and move with his family to southern Oregon, but mother said 'you wait a year and if your health begins to fail, we will go and never say a word.'

Isaac Constant sold his farm and made ready for the long trip west. "On March 2, 1852, we left Springfield taking the train to St. Louis, remaining there two or three days, visiting with my Aunt Jones. I was then eighteen years old, my brother, Tom, was fifteen, sisters Julia and Margery were little girls, and Alice a baby. Sister Elizabeth was a beautiful girl, about sixteen and proved a wonderful helper along the way. While visiting Aunt Jones, she had my picture taken.

We were to take the boat from St. Louis to Independence, but when we arrived at the wharf, we learned that the boat was over-crowded and so had to wait for another boat, and it was fortunate for us that we did as the one we intended to take was blown up, killing and wounding many of its passengers. It was reported that this and another boat were in a heated race, and that the Captain had stated 'I will pass that boat or blow this one to hell'.

Isaac Constant's outfit was well planned, consisting of five large covered wagons, built strongly and also when encountering high water in the rivers, the wagon beds were constructed so that if necessary could be raised two feet or more. The wagon beds were also made water tight. Horses and mules were taken to pull the wagons, and as a precaution he took along well broken oxen to the yoke. For the convenience of his immediate family he had ordered made a four-seated "hack" to be drawn by four mules.

Mother says there were two large perfectly matched mules at the wheel and two white mules to lead. The wagons, mules, horses, oxen and cows were shipped out ahead of us by water from St. Louis.

Uncle William Merriman, mother's brother decided to make the trip with us. His wife was very sick when we started. They had two small children, a boy and a girl.

The early days of April, 1852, everything was in readiness for the start. There were many other families with their wagons who desired to join the 'Isaac Constant Train', making a setup of some 25 wagons. Permission was granted and Isaac Constant was elected Captain and so continued until the journey's end.

Sunday was always to be considered a day of rest for families and livestock. "The 'Indian Country', so called by many, was said to commence about eight miles southwest from Independence, where in early days was established the "Methodist Shawnee Mission".

It was here that many Indians were taught farming, some becoming quite expert in that line of work. This Mission was the first stopping place of the wagon train, taken in order to arrange the wagons into a better workable position.

"Uncle William's wife, as stated, was very sick when we left Independence. She died at our first stop and it was necessary to send back to Independence for a casket. On the night she died a few Indians came into our camp, perhaps to investigate, and ascertain our strength. I remember that I was very much frightened on seeing them.

Junction of Oregon and Santa Fe Trails

Continuing our journey - some 41 miles north-westerly from Independence the train reached the junction of the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails and another trail running northerly to Fort Leavenworth, a government military fort. Here it is said was the real beginning of what is known as the "Oregon Trail."

Continuing - the train proceeded northwesterly, crossing several small streams without difficulty. Good feed was found for the stock most of the while paralleling the Kansas River. Two trails, the upper and lower, followed the meanderings of the river. Captain Constant took the lower trail as it was reported to be the safer of the two, where it crossed the Kansas. The water of the river seemed to be quite high, yet but little trouble was experienced from crossing over to the North from the South bank. This crossing of the Kansas is near the present site of Uniontown, and distant about eighty miles from Independence. The train was soon passing through the territory of the Kaw Indians, known to be a lazy lot as well as a bunch of sneak thieves, but we had no trouble with them.

Rain and snow storms were frequent, and some of the emigrants found that it was hard to keep things dry on account of improper coverings on their wagons, and flimsy material used in making their tents.

Mother said, "I don't remember how long we had been on the trail when a young man was taken down with cholera. We could hear him screaming with pain. Father took him in charge, doctored him, and soon he was fully recovered. We passed many people who had turned off the trail, administering to their sick and burying their dead, resulting from the ravages of cholera."

Our train had increased in size to such an extent that Father deemed it necessary to divide it, forming two trains. Father named the Captain of the new train and it soon started out ahead of ours. The haste they made in getting underway, one would suppose that the new Captain thought we were traveling too slow. In about two days we overtook them, learning that they were forced to stop and rest their stock. Father cautioned them, telling them to go slower, or their stock would be worn out before reaching their destination.

Our train overtook the new train several times and some of my girl friends would visit me, but Mother would not allow me to visit in any other tent other than our own. Doctor Henry of Springfield was with the other train. The young man who had been sick with the cholera was his nephew. One day he said to my Father, 'Captain, you gave me the same kind of medicine you took, and see, now I am well.'

We stopped one day each week to wash clothes, iron and bake. Mother was not well, so it was my lot to assume and do these tasks. I made it a rule to prepare dough in advance for baking, and consequently we had hot rolls for breakfast. We also had a special milk can in which milk was kept for churning, but found it was not necessary to churn, owing to the swinging and jolting of the wagon and in the evening would be found a large ball of fresh butter, and a good supply of delicious buttermilk.

Father, before leaving Springfield, purchased a fine new, large cooking stove to be used on the trail and for our home to be made in southern Oregon. We also had a large dining tent, room enough to accommodate the family. One wagon was used entirely for carrying necessary food supplies; the tent, kitchen utensils, tables and chairs, and at the rear end of the wagon the cooking stove so arranged that it could be lowered to the ground without lifting.

The wagon train traveled westerly along the north bank of the Kansas River to St. Mary's Mission, and continuing, crossed the Little Red River, about 119 miles west from Independence. Here was found a good supply of timber and quite a quantity was cut and packed away for future use. Along this section of the trail many severe rainstorms were encountered which somewhat retarded the advance of the train.

Father had a man to drive the four mules of our 'hack'. A very heavy rainstorm was encountered, and the mules becoming frightened, started to run away. Some of the men ran out and seized the bridles and held them until they were over their fright.

Continuing - Soon the train reached the crossing of the Big Blue River, near the site of the present town of 'Marysville', about 170 miles from Independence. Here a rest was taken in order to again rearrange the train and give the travellers time to relax and rest, and the stock to feed and regain lost strength. This was certainly a most beautiful place to pitch our tents for a few days.

The grass had a blue tinge, and so the early emigrants gave the place the name of 'Blue Prairies.' Crossing the Big Blue River, the train continued on until it came to the Little Blue River. This country was the favorite hunting grounds of the Pawnee Indians, said to be a rough and daring tribe.

The Indians here gave the train no trouble, possibly, for the reason that it was well picketed with armed guards, ready for any emergency.

Fort Kearney

Leaving the Little Blue, the train slowly meandered its way north and west until it came to the Platte River, some 316 miles westerly from Independence, at or near 'Fort Kearney', established as a U. S. Military Post in 1848.

The Platte River, some writers say, 'is the most magnificent river and the most useless of rivers. During the dry season it is a small and sandy stream, while during the wet season and after heavy rains or melting snows in the mountains it is a big and roaring muddy stream, abounding in treacherous quicksands and a very difficult river to cross, and no time should be lost in taking the emigrant wagons across.'

The train arrived at the Platte River a few miles below the head of Grand Island. DeSmet gives another picture of the Platte River, a more pleasing picture than the one just quoted, abstracting from its defects, nothing could be more pleasing. . . its islands. . . have the appearance of a labyrinth of groves floating on its waters.

Their extraordinary position gives an air of youth and beauty of the whole scene. If to this be added the undulations of the river, the waving of the verdure, the alternations of light and shade, the succession of these islands varying in form and beauty, and the purity of the atmosphere, some idea may be formed of the pleasing sensations which the traveler experiences on the beholding a scene that seems to have started into existence fresh from the hands of the creator.

There was but little timber between the Little Blue and the Platte Rivers, excepting Cottonwood trees and Willows, but Grand and the other islands in the Platte were well wooded.

Captain Constant's train arrived at the Platte River early in the afternoon and camped; and everything was made ready to begin the crossing of the river early the next morning. The river was deemed low enough to make safe fording. As previously stated, Captain Constant's wagons had been specially built for fording streams containing high water, as the beds of the wagons could be raised some two feet in order to protect their contents from becoming wet and damaged. A wise idea it proved to be for the crossing of the Platte, not so much on account of high water, but from quicksands which were at all times shifting, forming and re-forming shoals, alternating with deep water which had to be taken into account while fording.

Captain Isaac Constant, as he had planned, was ready in the early morning to move his wagon train through the waters of the Platte to the far shore or bank. All stock not to be used were driven across before the wagons were taken over, resulting in the loss of only one animal. To the first wagon to make the venture, twelve oxen were yoked, and eight more taken over to Grand Island, yoked to a long cable or rope securely fastened to the tongue of the wagon to be first taken across. The command was given to start, and into the river drawn by the twelve oxen, assisted by the oxen on the island yoked to the long cable. Each section did nobly and

not a moment was lost during the time the wagon was on its way through the water and over the quicksands to Grand Island, its midstream destination. All the wagons of the train underwent the same procedure and were safely moved over. The same method was followed in conveying all wagons of the train to the island and from the island to the opposite bank of the river. This was a two days hard and wet work, successfully accomplished, and after a few days rest the train moved west on its way to Oregon.

The Captain of most every train, as well as the emigrants, learned that the personnel of the train must be protected from Indian and outlaw raids, as well as safeguarding the horses, oxen and extra livestock. Most every night, particularly while traveling through infested country, this kind of a corral would be formed. The wagons would be formed into a circle, the front of one interlocked with the next and securely fastened together with chains, until the circle of wagons was complete. Safely within this circle the men, women and children felt that they were reasonably protected from molestation from Indians or outlaws. After feeding time the livestock would be driven to a safe haven within the enclosure, and sufficient guards were posted as an additional protection.

The train was now entering the 'Buffalo Country' and there was no trouble in keeping all well supplied with fresh wild meat. On account of the scarcity of fire wood, it was found necessary to gather large quantities of 'buffalo chips' to be used in the place of wood, and many substantial meals were cooked over these burning chips, and were also a means of driving away swarms of annoying mosquitoes.

... The train continued along the trail and many changing scenes appeared. [They left] behind the rolling plains, and the rivers abounding in quicksands, where the buffalo lived at one time by the millions, later reduced in numbers to only thousands by ruthless slaughter, not for food but for their hides. Now in the railroad days, the wild life of the plains as seen by the emigrants of the wagon train days is a thing of the past. Gradually these great plains of the middle west have become the homes of many people.

Like the early pioneers who settled farther east, built their homes of logs or adobe, and their habits and modes of living were simple and frugal. Personal wants were very few; all are workers, and the boys and girls as soon as the acquired muscular power were taught to apply it to some useful purpose. Everyone was required to work and to make the most of life and none were allowed to waste it in idleness. All this can be said of the courageous wagon-train emigrants who wended their way to the far west to establish for themselves and loved ones, new homes in which to begin life anew.

Chimney Rock

When Chimney Rock came into view, it was a wonderful sight to behold by the people traveling 'over the plains'. Its massive foundation and its tall chimney formation were before their eyes, and many wanted to pay a visit and carve their names in this great stone monument, perhaps, to give notice to others following along the trail, that friends had safely arrived here before and that all was well.

Before reaching Chimney Rock, traveling along the trail, our hack leading, our attention was called to a little dead calf lying in the road, our mules became frightened and dashed off the trail, running at great speed toward a deep gulch. Our regular driver was holding the lines, but Father, who happened to be in the seat with the driver, took the lines from him and in his gentle way, talked to the mules, quieted them just a short distance from the hazardous pitch. Some of the men left their wagons to help and in the excitement one of the wagons was overturned, and a woman, a very dear friend, was seriously injured."

Some few miles to the east of Chimney Rock, the 'California Ford Trail' again joins the old original trail, and another day's travel brought the train to 'Scotts Bluff'. Continuing, the train

halted at the south of 'Horn Creek' some 630 miles westerly from Independence. Scotts Bluff was the place where an Indian Council was held in 1851, and a treaty of peace was signed by the U.S. government and the warring Indians, so no trouble was expected along this section of the trail and none was encountered.

The women of the train seemed to enjoy the journey and its excitements and did their share of the work most nobly, even during the rainy days which were very depressing. Their work was difficult and disappointing. Often they were forced to dispense with cooking their meals as water was everywhere.

Mother says, "Father prepared for every known emergency. We had not only the big dining tent in which to partake of our meals, to shelter us from the storms, and during the severe rain storms we had a large cover tent to hang over our stove to protect the cooking, by lowering the side and end strips not only from the rain but from the dust storms which at times whirled in clouds everywhere. As I told you (Granddaughter Ethel Robinson) Ethel, mother was not well and it was my work to do all the family cooking, washing and ironing, and noticed that many families of the train were not properly equipped for this kind of work, consequently they did but little cooking or washing on rainy or dusty days. After washing, drying and ironing the family clothes, I know that I had done a good job and was happy. Some of the families just washed their clothes but never ironed them and, of course, I enjoyed to see our folks wearing nicely ironed clothes.

Fort Laramie

Before reaching Fort Laramie we crossed the Laramie River, quite a large stream, considering that the train was high in the Rocky Mountains and as far as we could judge near the source of the river."

At the Fort, the Oregon and Mormon Trail unite. After a two day's rest at Fort Laramie, the train came to a halt at 'Big Springs', and another day of rest was taken. The journey up to this point had consumed about fifty-five days, at least that was the report, which all considered to be very good time, as frequent snow and rain storms had retarded our journey to some extent. So far no real Indian trouble was experienced, just a scare or two, making it necessary to quickly form the wagons into a circle and station out the guards.

The camping ground at Big Springs was delightful, an abundance of pure, fresh water and meadows of rich green grass. The supply of wood was good, and the weather perfect. After viewing these splendid surroundings, Captain Constant ordered the train to stop and rest for a few days so that the weary travelers could be relieved of the strain of mind and body consequent to the long and fatiguing journey. The livestock too would have an opportunity to recuperate.

From Big Springs on, the trail was going to be more severe and more difficult, the hills becoming much steeper and covered with rocks and boulders. Leaving the springs and crossing Horseshoe Creek the train arrived at the North Platte River Canyon, after having taken a short cut and again reaching the main trail, crossing LaBonte Creek and several small streams the train came to a halt at Deer Creek, 760 miles westerly from Independence. The Deer Creek country was found to be well watered and wooded, and [there was] a good growth of grass for the stock.

The train arrived at and crossed Muddy Creek, a few miles above where the present city of Caspar, Wyoming is now situated, and is about 790 miles westerly from Independence. In due time the train arrived at the crossing of the North Platte River, crossing from the south to the north bank. The river was not at flood waters and no trouble was had in negotiating the crossing. The train followed the course of the North Platte River in a southerly direction, passing the Red Buttes, often mentioned by travelers who have passed that way before . . . these two Buttes, quite high and on the left of the trail. Here the train finds the river flowing though a deep canyon, called the 'Firy Narrows', and it was at these narrows where J. C. Fremont was

wrecked in 1842. Since then the trail had been greatly improved, consequently the train had but little trouble in passing through the narrows. On reaching Willow Springs Creek another day's rest was enjoyed. This certainly was a delightful place, good pure water, rich green grass and an abundance of Willow wood for fuel.

Independence Rock

Continuing - the train now seems to almost encircle 'Independence Rock'. This rock is said to be one of 'the most solitary pile of gray granite, standing in an open plain, one-eighth a mile long, six or eight rods wide and sixty or seventy feet above the plain, with the beautiful Sweetwater River running along the south side, leaving a strip of grassy plain for a roadway.' Independence Rock was sometimes called the 'Great Register', for the reason that so many of the travelers took time off to cut their initials or names on its granite surface. This general practice was followed by many of the men and women on this train. Captain Constant halted his train for a week at Independence Rock on the banks of the Sweetwater. It was a large granite rock, white, solid and smooth. Father cut his name there and so did many others of our train. I went up some steps to its top, probably these steps were natural, or cut or hewn out by some people who had camped there before. To me it looked as if there had been a house built on top of the rock and that portions of a cellar wall had fallen into an excavation. Camping on the Sweetwater was perfectly delightful and a charming place for rest and quiet. By the train's log, Independence Rock was 838 miles westerly from the town of Independence.

Soda Lakes

Continuing - the train leaves this beautiful sweetwater camping spot and winds its way up the river to where begins the eastern approach to the 'South Pass', passing the well known 'Soda Lakes'. The South Pass has no perceptible grade, seeming like a broad valley some twenty miles wide, and so gradual was the slope of the pass that the ascent on the eastern side and the descent on the western side that it was almost impossible to determine just when the summit of the pass was reached.

Big Sandy River

Continuing - the train is now traveling along the old 'Oregon Trail' to the Big Sandy River, then along its north bank, down its course to a few miles above where the Big Sandy flows into the 'Green River', and then continuing along the trail, in a southerly direction the train comes to a rest at the crossing of Green River, a distance of about 1,014 miles westerly from Independence.

Green River

The Green River at this season is a beautiful clear running stream, and now recognized as the main branch of the Colorado River. It was this river that for untold ages used its mighty powers to carve one of the scenic wonders of the world, the 'Grand Canyon of the Colorado', and then comes into life the massive 'Hoover Dam', the achievements of man's power, which in time will back the waters of this river, forming a lake extending up the canyon for a distance of 115 miles, and in time will be the largest artificial lake in the world. These wonders, both natural and artificial were unknown to the wanderers following along the Oregon Trail, yet many of these early emigrants have had the opportunity to visit and view the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

The Green River was found to be fordable if proper care was taken. The wagon beds were raised as heretofore when encountering high water. The train was conducted to the far shore without any difficulty.

Fort Bridger

Continuing - along the trail southwesterly, soon pulled up at old 'Fort Bridger', established in 1843, about 1070 miles westerly from Independence.

Soda Springs

Continuing - the train slowly winds its way over the 'Bear River Divide', descending Bridger Creek to the Bear River and then on to 'Soda Springs'. The following is what Mr. Bidwell wrote of these springs and their beautiful surroundings. "It is a bright and lovely place. The abundance of soda water, including the intermittent gurgling, so called Steamboat Springs, the beautiful and cedar covered hills - all these, together with the river (Bear) lent a charm to its beauty and made the spot a notable one." The train was camped here for several days, and the delightful days spent at Soda Springs were long to be remembered by all.

Fort Hall

Again the train was in motion and on its way to Fort Hall, well known to all who had traveled the trail. Fort Hall is located on the banks of the celebrated Snake River and was erected by one Nathaniel J. Wyeth in 1834, while on his way to Oregon with two missionaries.

Fort Hall was the place where all trains stopped for rest, reorganization, refitting and rerouting. Those of the emigrants who desired to continue along the old Oregon Trail toward Fort Boise and the Columbia River would elect their officers and make up their train. Those bound for California and southern Oregon would do likewise. Both the Oregon and California trains would travel together through the Humboldt Country before parting for their different destinations. Those bound for Oregon by way of Fort Boise and the Columbia River would turn northerly from Raft River. Fort Hall by the train is 1,288 miles from Independence.

Snake River

Continuing - after a few days spent at the Fort, the train took to the trail once more, following the south bank of the Snake River to where the Raft River flows into the Snake. While travelling along the Snake many Indians were encountered. They were friendly and visited the train, bringing fresh and smoked salmon to sell or trade with the emigrants. The Indians did good business, everyone appreciated their friendship as well as the eating of good fresh salmon, this being the first salmon most of travelers had ever seen.

At this point, the junction of the Raft and Snake Rivers, all emigrants bound for Oregon via Fort Boise and the Columbia River would take the trail leading north keeping to the Oregon Trail. Those bound for California and southern Oregon would turn southerly and follow the California Trail. Consequently, the train was divided, good-byes said and each division started on its way.

California Trail

Isaac Constant continued as Captain of the train traveling westerly along the California Trail, crossing the northeast corner of what is now Elko County, Nevada, and joining the old California Trail from Utah, at or near the present town of Wells, Nevada, and the source of the Humboldt River. Wells is about 1410 miles westerly from Independence.

Captain Constant was more than pleased with his progress "OVER THE PLAINS" up to this point and expressed his sincere hope for continuing success. No serious accident happened to any of his fellow travelers. Only one death, bringing sorrow to his immediate family, that of his wife's brother, William Merriman. The health of his wife, having shown wonderful improvement, and the health of his children was the best.

It was certainly pleasing news to the emigrants when Captain Constant informed them that the next few hundred miles would take the train through the Humboldt Springs country, a country with a thousand springs, furnishing an abundance of good water, and that the meadows along the Humboldt River would supply a harvest of wild timothy grass, and that the livestock would

be in fine shape when the time comes to bid farewell to the country and river at the next turning point to the north.

Valley of the Humboldt River

Continuing - the train pulled out from Wells and proceeded on its way down the Humboldt. The trip down the Valley of the Humboldt was enjoyed by all, and that every prediction made by the Captain was fully confirmed.

Mother says, "I don't remember ever seeing such wonderfully green meadows. The wild timothy was waist deep, and the water from the many springs was pure, cool and invigorating. Hot springs too were encountered at many different places, the weather warm, and bathing in the river was pleasant and enjoyable. The Indians seemed to be quite friendly and appreciated many little gifts handed to them."

At the valley at Humboldt Lake all water casks and every receptacle that would hold water were filled so that the coming desert could be negotiated without much loss of livestock. The desert was said to be a barren waste and waterless.

Desert

Continuing - leaving the lake, the train turned northerly approaching the desert, all wondering what the outcome would be. The train is about 1840 miles westerly from Independence. "We entered the desert in the evening, just after we had passed through a plum thicket, and the trees were loaded with delicious red, ripe plums. The trees looked as though they had been planted and possibly they were by the Hudson Bay Company. We took time out to gather several baskets of this delicious fruit.

While camped at the lake we found many gooseberry bushes with ripe berries and, of course, the young folks rushed in to pick what they could, picking and eating seemed to be the rule, and we were surprised to see an Indian boy emerging from the thicket. We all hurried back to the wagons for protection, for as a rule when you see an Indian dog, the Indian is not far away. My brother, Tom, had eaten so many of the berries he was taken very sick and in a day or two was about well. Mother would not let us see him until he had fully recovered.

We finally entered the desert, sagebrush and sand was all one could see, and the whirling sand almost blinded the emigrants. We passed many skeletons of animals, toll of the desert. We come to a deserted carriage just off the trail, and Father exclaimed, 'why that looks like Mr. Riddle's carriage', and sure enough it was; for Father, on examination, found his name on it. Father said the family must have lost their mules and had to abandon the wagon. He knew Mr. Riddle had left to cross the plains, but did not know he had come this way.

Goose Lake

Continuing - "The train succeeded in navigating the desert with no loss of livestock nor any of the equipment, and but very little sickness. The train was now approaching 'Goose Lake' country and grass becoming more plentiful and the water contained less alkali. Everyone seemed to be in better spirits as they drew nearer and nearer to the end of the long journey.

Our first camp site was Goose Lake. Father, in making his usual survey of the camp grounds noticed that wild parsnips were growing where the stock was to feed and instructed his men to pull them up and burn them as wild parsnips are poisonous when eaten. Uncle William kept the milk of one cow for the baby. This cow must have eaten some of the wild parsnips, for the baby became sick with convulsions and only lived a few hours. The baby's mother, as I told you, died soon after leaving Independence.

In crossing the desert the train had to travel during the day and most of the night, and did not reach the lake until midnight of the third day. Making camp was so late that the guards went

to Father and said, 'Captain, can't we lie down and get some sleep?' Father thought for a minute and answered, 'Well, I guess you can as you deserve a good rest, but see that the wagons are formed into the circle and that the mules and horses are securely fastened within the circle'. This was done, and everyone being so tired they must have slept soundly, for in the morning there was there was not a mule or horse to be found, as all had been stolen and driven away.

Breakfast was hurriedly prepared and eaten, and most of the men left the camp to try and locate the stolen animals if possible. The old men and boys were left to guard to camp. The searchers came to a high and rocky portion of the mountain and could see the animals being led to the top. They also found where the thieves had camped, that one of the mules had been killed - one of the blue mules - and one quarter was on the fire roasting, and the rest hanging in a tree close by. Everything else had been thrown on the fire, including the baskets of ripe plums we had gathered. The thieves, probably Indians, kept urging the animals up the steep mountainside, so steep that the animals seemed to be standing almost straight up. The men were crazy to go after them, but Father said, 'Not one of you shall go, for I would rather lose them all than one of you brave men.' Returning on their way to the camp they located the two white mules and Father's riding pony wandering back toward camp. Supper was ready when the men returned and it was then that this story was told.

Just outside, and very near the camp, after the men left for the chase, we girls located several cherry trees and gathered what fruit we could. My share of the cherries I made into pies, baked hot rolls and in fact cooked other good things to eat for the tired and hungry men.

When we camped that night we failed to see another train camped but a short distance from ours. They had five wagons. Father asked them if they had any horses for sale. They said, 'no', but that a large train had passed them that day and if you can overtake them, you may be able to purchase a few horsed or mules. Father mounted his pony and soon overtook the train and succeeded in buying two horses, which he used for the wheel of the hack, putting the two white mules in the lead.

The next morning we continued our journey and as usual. Father went ahead scouting, and soon came to a fork in the road, one the old emigrant road, and the other a new road which skirted the lake on its far side. Father followed the old road and had followed it for quite a distance when some voice seemed to say to him, 'turn back'. He could see no one and continued on, and again the voice seemed to say 'turn back'. Once more he halted and listened and could see or hear no one. For the third time he started on his way, and again the warning 'turn back'. He paused, looked and listened - nobody. 'Well,' he said, 'this third warning 'turn back' does the trick and I will go back. He returned to where the roads forked, posted a sign for the train to take the new road. When the wagons reached the forks of the road, one of the men came to mother and said, 'Mrs, Constant, it is too early to camp and what does the Captain mean by taking this new road?' Mother replied, 'Obey your Captain'. 'Of course we are going to obey him, we believed this to be only a camp road'.

Father followed the new road until he located a good place to camp and it was not long before a company of soldiers arrived at the place he had selected for the train to camp. The officer in charge told Father, 'We are out on the road to protect the emigrants'. Father then related to him the mysterious warning he had received. The officer said, 'It was a warning, and you did well in following it, for the train ahead of you train was ambushed by the Indians while camped for the night in a little prairie, many of the emigrants were killed - but few escaping!' Father always claimed, 'That it certainly was a warning from on high'.

The officer gave Father instructions as to the best and safest way to travel to reach southern Oregon. He said that he had heard of our train from trains ahead and had been sent out to protect us. I felt at the time and ever since, that the Lord had been with us all the way as ours was a good Christian train.

The train continued on its way from Goose Lake, crossing the mountains to the headwaters of the Pitt River, climbed the reaches of the Cascade Mountains, up and over the pass of the Siskiyou Mountains, and down the mountain to Rogue River Valley, and then on to Jacksonville, Oregon, about 2210 miles by the log of the train from Independence. Rogue River Valley

Thus ended the trip 'Over the Plains' of the Isaac Constant wagon train, starting from Independence on the Missouri River early in April, 1852 and arriving at its destination in September of the same year, having partaken of its many joys as well as hardships during the months of traveling along the many miles of the trail to the Rogue River Valley, southern Oregon, all to begin life anew in a beautiful pioneer land.

THE NEW HOME IN OREGON

On arriving at Jacksonville, Oregon, we pitched our tents. Father purchased a fine ranch at and adjoining what is now called Central Point. Bear Creek intersects the farm from north to south. On the ranch was a small log cabin, but not large enough for our family, so a larger one was built for accommodation. Also a barn and several other log houses essential for the use of a good rancher.

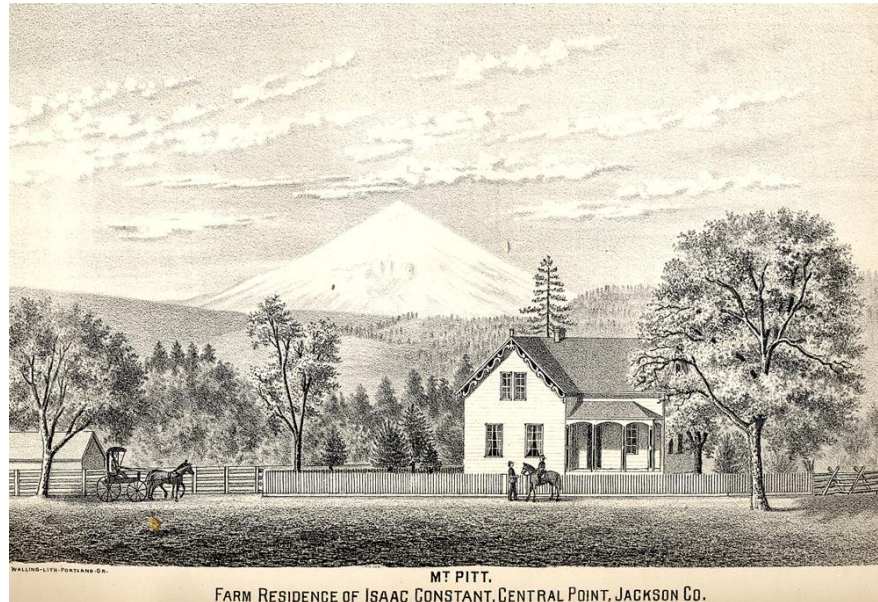
After these improvements were finished we moved to the ranch to begin life anew in the 'Great West'. During the spring months Father planted a fine garden of potatoes and other vegetables, some forty acres of wheat and half that acreage in oats.

The following winter was very severe, cold and with deep snow in the mountains, driving starving Indians down into the Rogue River Valley, and along Bear Creek the Indians set up their wigwams. Father saw that they were starving so visited their camp and took the Indian Chief to the potato patch and pointed out to him where he could dig all the potatoes he needed as he desired to save their lives. The Chief was very grateful, and later when the Rogue River Indians went on the war path, young white men came out from Jacksonville and picketed our house. The Chief came to Father and told him not to go away, 'As I have Indian guards out to protect you from them'. The Indians had murdered many people along the river and in the valley. Families had been gathered together for protection and we were urged to go, and Father said 'Take the family, but I shall stay at the ranch'. One of the Indian guards came to Father and asked him why he sent the family away, and he replied the people wanted them to go.

(Mother told of many outrages perpetrated by the Indians, but I will not quote these stories in this review).

Before peace was declared, it was necessary to select a few young men who would cross the Rogue River to hold council with the Indian Chiefs. The men selected would not go, and so Father went alone to the meeting and held council with them, which finally led to a peace agreement. The Indians said, 'Your young men are cowards'. Father said they were not cowards and 'The reason of my coming to the meeting was, that I had faith in the promise of your Chief, your old Chief, given to me when his Indians were starving for lack of food which I cheerfully furnished him.'

The old Isaac Constant house still stands on the east side of the old county road which separated the Constant farm from the city of Central Point (now known as the Freeman Road).



Farm Residence of Isaac Constant, Central Point, Jackson County, Oregon³⁴⁵

Isaac Constant and family continued to live in the log cabin until he built a large and commodious frame house south of but not far from the old home. The new residence faced the county road leading through the valley from north to south. It contained five bedrooms, parlor, living room and kitchen, a large pantry and several closets. It had a large front and rear porch, and underneath the house was built a large stone-walled. The rear porch during hot weather was used as a dining room. "He also caused to be built a large and commodious barn, a smoke house and granary. This splendid home and farm was his home, his place of abode until the angels called him to his heavenly home, to live forever in the land beyond the grave. Isaac Constant died on January 31, 1890 at the age of 80 years, 9 months and 16 days. Lucinda M. Constant, his life partner, soon joined her loving husband, waiting for her in that promised mansion, forever in the Heavens. Lucinda died March 7, 1890, at the age of 77 years, 26 days. They were two of the best people in the world, always kind, generous, considerate and lovable. Their goodness was transmitted to their children, a worthy and splendid inheritance...

The End

My name is Stephenie Flora.³⁴⁶

139. Letter From Miletus Ellis About Isaac Constant in Oregon Territory

Journal, Springfield, December 14, 1852.³⁴⁷

A late letter from Miletus Ellis, in Oregon Territory, mentions that Isaac Constant took the southern route to Oregon, and that he has bought an improvement and located in Rogue River Valley, near the mines. He was concerned in the Indian fight at Klamath Lake and lost some of his stock.

³⁴⁵ http://www.orwww.org/History/SW_Oregon/References/Walling_1884/Illustrations/Central_Point_084.jpg

³⁴⁶ <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/constant.htm>

³⁴⁷ *Journal*, December 14, 1852, p. 3.

140. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
October 13, 1852³⁴⁸

Nevada City

Oct. 13, 1852

Dear Wife

I received your letter of August 22nd. I was glad to hear of continued good health and this may reach you still enjoying the same. I still enjoy good health. It is geneareally very healthy in this country this season. Our friends and acquaintences here are all well as far as I have heard. I see by your letter that you have had the Cholera in Springfield again. Mr. Watsons fate is a hard one. After being absent so long from his family to be taken away so soon after his return. But that will be the doom of all of us sooner or later. So let it come when it may it is useless and unavailing to murmer. I received a letter from Franklin dated August 23rd. He said he was well and the rest of our relations except Mother who had been unwell but was mending and Lacey who was quite feeble. He would start to school in a short time he said I had written to him to go to school.

Second page

I wish I had written to you some time since to send Adeline & Angeline to the school you speak of in St. Louis and I think you had better send them there if you had not already done so. The schools in Springfield are very inferior concerns generally It is as Mr. Harvey says one year at the school he mentions is better than three in Springfield. If you need more money before I return write to me and let me know and I will send you more. I am doing as well as usual. Making over a thousand dollars per month and as I have written before shall start home in the Spring which will make four long years that I have away family and friends and all those near and dear to me. But should fortune and return safe it will be to the mutual benefit of us all. I hope I send you second of Exchange on Adams & Co, St. Louis for three hundred dollars having sent the first by last mail. Give my love and best respects to Emeline and all the other children. My love to you.

Your husband Eli Cook

141. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
October 29, 1852³⁴⁹

Nevada City.

October 29, 1852

Dear Wife and Children

I drop you a few lines I am not very well at present, and consequently cut my letter shor nothing serious however only I have been taking a dose of Medicine having been slightly unwell for a few days Josh our friend and acquaintance are all well as far as I have heard. Hoping these line will find you all well and contended times good here at least as far as we are interested we are selling goods as fast as ever but still intend to close out Early in the spring. I am for it has been a long time since I have seen you all.

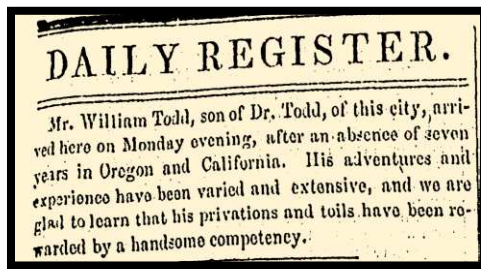
Give my best arespects to all including friends give my love and best respects to Emeline.
 My love to you all

Your affectionate Husband and Father
 Eli Cook

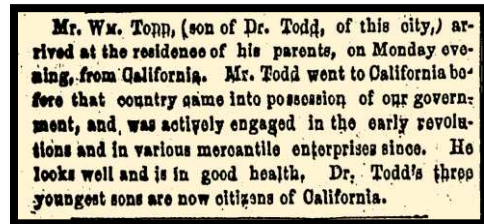
³⁴⁸ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 31.

³⁴⁹ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 32.

William L. Todd Visits Springfield



Register, Tuesday, May 18, 1852.³⁵⁰



Journal, Wednesday, May 19, 1852.³⁵¹

William McK. Helm Goes to California

William McK. Helm was born in 1836 in Sangamon County, Illinois. In 1852, he was sixteen years of age. He went to California and was with the Walker (Nicaragua) expedition. Returning home, he studied medicine, graduated at the McDowell Medical College of St. Louis. He practiced medicine. Dr. Helm married Harriet Wilson. They had four children and resided at Mt. Auburn, Christian County, Illinois.³⁵²

Edward D. Baker and Family Move to San Francisco, California

In 1852, Edward D. Baker emigrated with his family to California, establishing himself in the practice of law in San Francisco. There he delivered the funeral oration of two of his early friends, fallen by the fatal bullet of the duelist, Ferguson and David C. Broderick. The latter stands alone as the most brilliant funeral oration ever delivered on the continent of America.

Death of Richard Hodge

May 30, 1852

(1819-1852)

Richard Hodge, born on May 19, 1819, in Smithfield, Jefferson County, Virginia, was married in April 1838, to Catharine Divelbiss, in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. They moved to Springfield in the fall of 1839, and had five children. Richard Hodge died on May 30, 1852, on his way to California. It was his second trip there.³⁵³

Death of William B. Ide

December 1852

(1796-1852)

William B. Ide died of smallpox in December 1852, at the age of 56. He is buried in a small cemetery on the east side of Highway 45, 5 miles south of Hamilton City, California, at the former site of Monroeville where a monument is visible from the road.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ *Register*, Tuesday, May 18, 1852, p. 7.

³⁵¹ *Journal*, Wednesday, May 19, 1852, p. 3.

³⁵² *Power*, p. 368.

³⁵³ *Power*, pp. 351-352.

³⁵⁴ On June 7, 2014, new gravestones, created by William B. Ide Adobe State Historic Park docent David Freeman, were dedicated by S. Dennis Holland, President of the California Pioneer Heritage Foundation & Director of Public Affairs of LDS Historic Sites in California.

William Stokes Goes to California

William Stokes, born on January 30, 1830, in Kentucky, was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois and went to California in 1852. He died there in December 1862.³⁵⁵

William Stokes was born in 1810 in Cabell Co. (present Wayne Co.), Virginia and died in 1859. He married Laura Ann Selover on May 20, 1852 in Oregon Territory. Laura Ann Selover, the daughter of Peter Selover & Elizabeth 'Betsey Meade, was born Jan. 11, 1823 Trumansburg, Tompkins Co., New York, and died in Forest Grove, Oregon. Children: (1860 Washington Co., OR Census): Alice A. born c. 1853 O.T.; Ella born c. 1855 O.T.; Charles born c. 1856 O.T.; Laura born c. 1857 O.T. Ref: Stephenie

Flora e-mail: "William Stokes is an elusive individual. Part of the problem is he died so early that he didn't establish himself long enough to earn a place in one of the early biographies. Some of the notes I have state that he married first to Tabitha Brown and may have had a couple of children by her. Since he was in his 40s when he married Laura it is easy to assume there was a prior family. His donation land claim states he arrived in Oregon Territory in 1851. He shows up on the Washington Tax Rolls in 1849 but there are no records of him in Oregon Territory that I have found, prior to that. I am assuming he may have gone down into California. It appears he was back in Washington County for a brief time in 1849. He died in 1859 and his (second?) wife, Laura, remarried several years later. According to the census it appears he had 4 living children by Laura. I have also seen Laura's maiden name as Selover." *Laura had infantile paralysis during childhood & was lame the rest of her life. Laura had gone out west to the Oregon Territory by covered wagon in 1851 with her sister Esther and brother-in-law Freeman Lockhart After the death of William, in about 1861, Laura married Robert M. Porter." Ref: History of Oregon by H.K. Hines - p.264: Robert Porter went to Oregon Territory in 1850 and took up a donation claim near Forest Grove. In 1852, he was married to Caroline Brown of Missouri and had three children. Caroline died in 1859, after which he married Laura (Selover) Stokes. Children: (1870 Washington Co., OR Census): Ebenezer born 1854 OR, O.T.; Mary born 1856 OR, O.T.; Tabitha born 1858 OR, O.T.; Estella born 1863 OR.³⁵⁶

142. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California December 13, 1852³⁵⁷

Nevada City.

December 13, 1852

Dear Wife and Children

I have just received your favors of Oct. 17 & 24th both letters came by the same mail. I was glad to hear of your good health although far from you. It is a great consolation to hear that you all generally enjoy good health. I am glad to hear that the children are all going to school. A good education is far more valuable than Gold. Although I am fond of Gold also.

I received Mary Ellen and Julie's. They say they are going to school to a good Mistress. I hope they will improve their time and learn fast.

Elbridge must attend to his studies also When he grow up to be a man, he will not regret it but will say it was the best spent time of his life.

³⁵⁵ Power, p. 690.

³⁵⁶ http://www.oregonpioneers.com/DonUbben_Notes.pdf

³⁵⁷ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter #33.

I wish you had sent Adeline & Angeline to the School at St., Louis in preference to those you mentioned but perhaps the are very good Schools. I received a letter from Franklin of Oct. 17th He is going to school he says to the best teacher he has ever went to and thinks he will learn fast. Say to Messrs, Lewis & Adams that I received their favors of 14th Oct and send them my best respects. All friends in this Country are all well as far as I have heard. Joel Cook was here to day himself and brothers are well. Times here are very good as good as they have been since I have been in the country I expect I shall regret leaving so good a business at the time. I have promised to return home but of course shall return at the time appointed some time next Spring for if I should remain in the Country as long as I could could make money fast. I presume I should stay the balance of my days but I have been absent from family and friends long enough more especially my family which every man of honor is bound to attend to their comfort, happiness and educate his children. This country has every temptation to inence a man to make it his home a fine and healthy climate no winter except fine showersof rain money plenty and every thing else that you want. It may be that after remaining awhile at home I shall bring you all to this Golden Land and make it our home but as to that I cannot say until after I retur. I am in good health. Hoping you are all enjoying the same.

Give my love to Emeline.

My love to you al

Your Husband & Father
E. Cook

**143. Eli Cook Letter to His Wife from Nevada City, California
December 28, 1852³⁵⁸**

Nevada City.

December 28, 1852

Dear Wife and Children

I have receid your favor of Nov. 8th and was glad to hear of your good health and thast children were all going to school I hope the school that Adeline & Angeline is going too is a good one and that they will learn fast. Also th4e other children I want all of them to be acvery attentive to their studies that is the great secreat on obtaining a good education merely beoing attentive to books while at school and theinking nothing more about them when out of school never procured any one a good education. It must be gained by close study and perserverance. I received a letter from Franklin dated August 23rd he said he was well and the rest of our relations except Mother who had been unwell but was mending and Lacey who was quite feeble. He would start to school of us

I wish I had written to you some time since to send Adeline & Angeline to the school you speak of in St. Louis and I think you had better send them there if you had not already done so. The schools in Springfield are very inferior concerns generally It is as Mr. Harvey says one year at the school he mentions is better than three in Springfield. If you need more money before I return write to me and let me know and I will send you more. I am doing as well as usual. Making over a thousand dollars per month and as I have written before shall start home in the Spring which will make four long years that I have away family and friends and all those near and dear to me. But should fortune and return safe it will be to the mutual benefit of us all I hope I send you second of Exchange on Adams & Co, St. Louis for three hundred dollars having sent the first by last mail. Give my love and best respects to Emeline and all the other children. My love to you.

Your husband Eli Cook

³⁵⁸ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 34.

Afterwards

Lasting Impact of The Gold Rush

After 1850, the surface gold in California largely disappeared, yet miners continued to arrive. Mining was difficult and dangerous work, and striking it rich required good luck as much as skill and hard work. The average daily take for an independent miner working with his pick and shovel had by 1850 sharply decreased from what it had been in 1848. As gold became more and more difficult to reach, the growing industrialization of mining drove more and more miners from independence into wage labor. The new technique of hydraulic mining, developed in 1853, brought enormous profits but destroyed much of the region's landscape.

1853

Benjamin R. Biddle and Family Arrive in Oregon

Journal, January 26, 1853.³⁵⁹

We learn by letter that B. R. Biddle and family arrived safe in Oregon. He however lost his youngest child after arriving there. Charles Clark, son of Edward Clark, Esq., of this county, who went out with Mr. Biddle, is dead.

Charles F. Hazlitt Goes to California

Charles F. Hazlitt, born on February 29, 1832 in Sangamon County, Illinois, went to California in the spring of 1853 at age 21 and lived at Tehama, Tehama County California.

William H. Wickersham Goes to California

William H. Wickersham was born on March 7, 1836, in Versailles, Kentucky. He learned the business of printing in the *State Journal* newspaper office in Springfield, Illinois. He went to California in 1853 at age 27, and returned to Springfield in 1859. He enlisted in August 1862, for three years in Co. C, 124th Illinois Inf., served until the end of the Civil War, and was honorably discharged. He then worked in the *Journal* office.³⁶⁰

Isaac Constant Feeds Hungry Indians, Makes Friends

Central Point Herald, February 15, 1912.³⁶¹

...Isaac Constant, who came to the valley with his family in 1852. He secured a donation claim on a portion of which part of this city now stands. In February 1853, he planted his potatoes and garden stuff, even beans and other tender vegetables. These all grew rapidly and were not injured in the least with frost.

Isaac Constant raised a bountiful crop, having more potatoes than he could use. The following winter, however, a heavy snow fell, and the Rogue River Indians, who had failed to put up their usual amount of food, were starving. Constant supplied them with spuds from his bountiful supply, and their lives were saved.

Two or three years later, during the Indian war, Chief Sam and his followers came down from the upper Rogue River in war paint and trappings intending to massacre all the whites in the country. They camped at Table Rock and while there old Sam remembered the Constant potato episode. "No

³⁵⁹ *Journal*, January 26, 1853, p. 2.

³⁶⁰ *Power*, p. 566.

³⁶¹ *Central Point Herald*, February 15, 1912, p. 1. This article was reprinted in the *Medford Mail Tribune* of February 19, 1912, p. 5.

killum Constant, no killum him neighbors,” declared Chief Sam, and he forthwith sent his young daughter, Mary, to tell Constant that no harm should befall his or his neighbors’ families. The girl swam Rogue River in the night and walked to the Constant ranch, where she delivered her welcome message. The Indians continued on down the river to the Galice Creek mines, where they planned to kill all of the miners, but fortunately the miners had been reinforced by soldiers, the Indians were repulsed and scattered. This raid practically ended the war.

**Death of Eli Cook
(1809-1853)**

Journal, May 9, 1853.³⁶²

Eli Cook left for the Pacific Coast in 1849 and died in Nevada City, California on March 25, 1853.

DEATH OF ELI COOK, ESQ .

The information of this event, which we learned just as our last paper was going to press, has produced a deep sensation in this community—and especially it has brought untold sorrow into the bosom of his family. Mr. Eli Cook left this city in company with six other persons, some four years since, for California, with the hope of benefitting his condition. Of those six persons, only one now survives! Mr. Cook, after much hardship and toil, had succeeded in obtaining a prosperous business as a merchant in Nevada, and was making his arrangements to dispose of his property, collect his means, and return to his family, when the event we are about to speak of, took place. He was in the habit of furnishing packers with goods for the mines. One of them returned, and complained that an article was not as good as represented. Mr. Cook replied that he might return the article, and he should receive his money back. The man continued to grossly abuse him, and Mr. Cook ordered him to leave the store. This he refused to do, and Mr. Cook took bold of him to put him out. The man drew his dirk knife, and inflicted two stabs on Mr. Cook—one in the shoulder and the other in the abdomen. This took place on the 23d of March, and he died on the 25th. He had previously made arrangements with a gentleman from Michigan, to return with him. When Mr. Cook found that he was mortally wounded, he directed this gentleman to settle up his affairs, and bring the means he should obtain to his family, — which will be done. The family of Mr. Cook were every day expecting his arrival here. His younger children had been brought from school to receive him. His family were anticipating, after his long absence, his happy arrival. But this is not to be. That late happy family are now struck down with sorrow. Alas, what shadows we are, and What shadows we pursue? May He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, be their Guide and Protector.

**144. Hiram C. Hodge Letter to Eli Cook’s Wife from Nevada City, California
April 24, 1853³⁶³**

Nevada Cal

April 24th, 1853

Mrs. E. Cook

Dear Madam,

Some two weeks since I wrote to you and enclosed a Draft for Eight Thousand Dollars. I now forward to you another for the sum of one thousand Dollars. Will you be so kind Madam as to acknowledge the receipt of the same on receipt thereof

I advise you to take out letters of Administration there which will be best to do. Anything which I can do for you will be done with pleasure. It is my intention to render the property here with money as quickly as possible and remit the same to you by Draft. As ever Madam

I remain your obedient servant & friend. Hiram C. Hodge³⁶⁴

³⁶² *Power*, pp. 227-228.

³⁶³ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 35.

³⁶⁴ Hiram C. Hodge was county treasurer in 1853. He was also a practicing attorney.

Hugh Breckenridge and Greenberry Williams Return From The West Coast

Journal, Saturday, November 19, 1853.³⁶⁵

We have had the pleasure of seeing two Sangamon boys, just arrived from California --Hugh Breckenridge, son of Mr. Preston Breckenridge, and Greenberry Williams, son of Mr. Elias Williams, both of South Fork, in this county.—They left San Francisco on the 16th of last month. They went out to Oregon, by overland, in 1852.—They worked in the South part of Oregon last winter—made enough to bring them back, and we guess a little over. Some miners do better than they have done, and a majority a great deal worse. They report that Mr. John Rodham may be expected on the next steamer. After all the lands and scenes they have seen, they can say of old Sangamon County—

“Where’re we do go, whatever lands we see,
Our hearts untraveled, fondly turn to thee”

John B. Campbell Goes To Oregon

John B. Campbell, born on October 26, 1829, in Sangamon County, Illinois, went to Oregon about 1853 at age 24. From there, he went to California and was last heard from in 1867 at Petalouma, California.³⁶⁶

William A. Clark Goes To California

William A. Clark, born on January 4, 1829, on Fancy Creek, Sangamon County, Illinois, was apprenticed to the drug business in Springfield. He was a salesman from 1851 until 1853, when at age 24 he emigrated to California, crossing the plains. He was married in Redwood City, California, on September 18, 1866, to Rebecca E. Teague, who was born on July 1, 1849, in Springfield, Missouri. They had two children. The family resided at Redwood City, San Mateo County, California.³⁶⁷

James Davis Goes To California

James Davis, born on January 23, 1832, in Maryland, was brought up in Sangamon County, Illinois. He went to California in October 1853 at age 21. In 1876, his family had not received any reliable information from him since June 8, 1856, and had no hope that he was living.³⁶⁸

Squire Waddell Returns to Springfield From California-September 1853

In September 1853, Squire Waddell returned to Springfield from California. He discovered that his wife Rebecca had committed adultery and in November filed for divorce. Lincoln and Herndon were his attorneys.

Squire Waddell Sues Wife Rebecca For Divorce-November 1853

Waddell v. Waddell

Squire Waddell retained Abraham Lincoln and William H. Herndon and sued Rebecca Waddell for divorce on the grounds of adultery. Squire Waddell claimed that he left for California for two years and, after his return, discovered that his wife had committed adultery. Rebecca Waddell failed to appear, and the court ruled for Squire Waddell and gave him custody of the two children.

https://archive.org/stream/historyofnevadac00well/historyofnevadac00well_djvu.txt

³⁶⁵ *Journal*, Saturday, November 19, 1853, p. 2.

³⁶⁶ *Power*, p. 176.

³⁶⁷ *Power*, p. 204.

³⁶⁸ *Power*, p. 246.

Bill for Divorce Of the November Term of the Circuit Court of Sangamon County A D 1853. In Chancery.

Your orator Squire Waddell would most respectfully shew [show] unto your Honor that on or about the first of April A D 1847 he was intermarried to one Rebecca Johnson, now Rebecca Waddell and which said marriage was in Sangamon County and State of Illinois Your orator would further shew that he went a trip or Tour to California in 1851 and returned about the first of Sept'r 1853 and that said trip was with the consent of said Rebecca; that your orator left said Rebecca enough to support well herself and two children.

Your orator would shew that since he has returned home he has been informed and so charges that said Rebecca has commit[ted] adultery or fornication with William Welles and others and verily believes the same to be true; that he your orator has never had communication with said Rebecca since his return from California; that the same charge of adultery or fornication has been told your orator by various person of undoubted truth and veracity. Your orator would shew that he has had by said Rebecca Waddell two children one Jane Waddell about six years of age, and Francis Waddell aged about four years. Wherefore your orator prays a divorce and dissolution of the marriage contract with said Rebecca and for a decree allowing your orator the said children. Prays for the said Rebecca Waddell be made defendant; that the People's writ of subpoena to issue and that said Rebecca be compelled to answer this bill and for such other relief as may or shall be meet or just in the premises and as in duty bound your orator will ever pray &c. Squire Waddell by Lincoln & Herndon Sols.³⁶⁹

1854

Elijah Cook Matheny Returns From California

Elijah Cook Matheny, born on June 13, 1826, in Springfield, crossed the plains in 1849. He remained on the Pacific Coast until 1854, when he returned to Springfield. He was married on February 3, 1857, in Springfield to Alletta L. Vannordstran.³⁷⁰

John Green Goes to California

John Green, born in Loudon County, Virginia, came to Sangamon County, Illinois in 1839, with his mother and brothers. After a few years, he went to the Wisconsin lead mines and then to the northern pineries. In 1854, he went to California and lived near Merced, California.³⁷¹

John S. Baker Goes to California

John S. Baker, born on November 7, 1826, in Kentucky, taught school in Sangamon County for many years. He went to California in 1854 at age 28, and died on July 30, 1873, in San Francisco.³⁷²

³⁶⁹ The Lincoln Legal Papers Curriculum Social Role and Status: Marriage on the Illinois Prairie 138 Document 5-D, Document Signed, Abraham Lincoln, Express Authority, 30 October 1837, Privately Held, Copy in Henry Horner Lincoln Collection, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois. 143 The Lincoln Legal Papers Curriculum Social Role and Status: Marriage on the Illinois Prairie 139 Document 5-D (transcription)

³⁷⁰ *Power*, p. 480.

³⁷¹ *Power*, pp. 340-341.

³⁷² *Power*, p. 91.

1855

James Short Lost on Ship Returning Home

James Short went to California and was on his way home in about 1855 when he is believed to have been lost on the ship *Central America*. Hannah Short, born in Ohio on June 5, 1818, married in Sangamon County to James Short and had two children.

Rogue River War, Southwestern Oregon

The Rogue River War began in October 1855, when a mob from the mining town of Jacksonville, in the Rogue River Valley in southwestern Oregon, killed at least twenty-eight Indian people who were camped near the Table Rock Reservation.

This and several subsequent attacks on Rogue River Valley Indian people were meant to start an Indian war that would employ miners unable to mine because of a drought. Land was not an issue. Leaders of the southwestern Oregon Indian people had signed treaties giving up most of their territory.

Indian people who elected to fight, led by Tecumtum, took shelter in the Coast Range. They successfully resisted attacks, most notably in the Battle of Hungry Hill at the end of October. Others elected to put themselves under the protection of regular troops at Fort Lane.³⁷³

**145. Joseph Ledlie Letter to Brother from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
May 30, 1855³⁷⁴**

On May 30, 1855, Joseph Ledlie penned this letter to his brother, explaining in detail the situation that had been uncovered on the Base Line in regard to Johnson's corners.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas Territory May 30, 1855

Dear Brother – It is now a long time since I heard anything from you and I feel that I have been derelict in duty in not writing to you more frequently. I came out to this country prepared to execute such contract, or contracts for surveying as I might be able to obtain from the Surveyor General. I have now in my employ ten men; have two teams of mules and all necessary equipment for a regular camp siege. Mr. Charles A. Manners, late surveyor of Christian County, Ill., with a like number of hands is associated with me in the enterprise. We arrived here on the 25th of April last, and shortly afterwards entered into our respective contracts (for the contracts have to be taken separately) with the Surveyor General. My contract was for the survey of the Guide Meridian line between Kansas and Nebraska at a point 60 miles west of the initial point on the Missouri River thence running south on a true meridian 120 miles. Together with four standard parallels or correction lines. The first standard parallel to commence on the guide meridian 30 miles from my starting point and running thence on a true parallel east to the river, which will be about ten miles above this place. The second standard to commence on the said meridian 30 miles south of the first standard. This will strike the Missouri River near the mouth of the Kansas River. The third to be thirty miles south of the second and so on. The contract is estimated at 474 miles. The price per mile \$12.00. Mr. Manners obtained a contract for a similar survey to be made in Nebraska. He is to commence at the same point I do

³⁷³ This account is based on the research for the book *The Rogue River Indian War and Its Aftermath, 1850-1980*, E.A. Schwartz, University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. California State University, San Marcos Native American Document Project
Source: <http://public.csusm.edu/nadp/subject.htm> See also: Index To Rogue River War And Siletz Reservation Documents Source: <http://public.csusm.edu/nadp/dindex.htm> end ngIf: item.type

³⁷⁴ <http://www.penryfamily.com/surveying/images/1gme.pdf>.

and run north to the Missouri River, making his standard parallel every 24 miles. His contract amounts to 372 miles by estimate. Mr. M. has also a contract to plant the iron monument at the initial point on the Missouri River, and also another to examine and test the base line as ran by Professor Johnson last fall. In addition to our written instructions, I received verbal instructions from Gen. Calhoun to test the beginning point of the Guide Meridian line, and if I should find any serious error in the survey of the base line at that point to remain in camp until Mr. Manners should arrive. The Gen. also gave Mr. M. instructions to the effect that if he discovered any error in the base line to push through to my camp with all possible dispatch; and in the event I had started out on my line to follow after, bring me back, return to the office and await further orders. On the 4th inst. we both left for our respective places of destination. Mr. Manners via St. Josephs, thence to the initial point above St. Josephs, thence west on the base line, testing the same as he advanced. I by the way of the California road or old military road to Laramie. The road from this place to Laramie intersects with the St. Josephs road about eight miles east of my beginning point which is situated about two miles north of the road on the waters of the "Big Blue" river. I arrived at my place of destination on the evening of the 8th. On the night of the 9th made the necessary observations of the Polar Star when on the meridian, and again when at its greatest eastern elongation thereby establishing very satisfactory a true meridian. I now felt pretty well contented and felt strongly in hopes that I could be able to proceed next morning. The next morning I tested the base line by the meridian thus found; and to my horror and astonishment found the base line wrong. At this point it ran south of west nine rods per mile. This was a fix. I was compelled to desist from running - and finally I concluded to start east on the line and meet Mr. M. I left my men in the camp (except one) and taking one of my lightest wagons I proceeded on east, and on the evening of the 13th met Mr. M. 33½ miles from my camp; he was encamped on the waters of the Nemaha. He had not discovered any mistakes so flagrant as those I had discovered though there were inaccuracies more or less most of the way. That night I established a true meridian at his camp with my transit instrument and the next day compared it with Mr. M.'s solar compass, and found to agree to a hair. He continued on his line, westward making the necessary examinations. I continued with him up to my camp where we arrived on the 17th. He found the line worse and worse as he advanced and unfortunately was compelled to make report to the office forthwith as it was evidently too erroneously run to be passed over in silence. We found some places where the old line was run 1 degree south of west, and where there were elbows in the line of six rods to the mile. On the 18th we started on to this place for the purpose of making report, and arrived on the 21st. We found, on arriving here that the General had returned to Springfield, Illinois. The next day we proceeded (in company with Mr. Ream, chief clerk of the office) to Weston, Missouri, for the purpose of communicating with the General by telegraph. We sent a dispatch on the morning of the 22nd - no answer. Again in the evening I sent a dispatch to Lauphin & Walker, asking if Calhoun was at home. The next day, in the afternoon, I received a dispatch direct from Calhoun informing me that he was at home. Mr. Ream had returned to the office, but before leaving he had made out a dispatch to be forwarded. As soon as I learned that Calhoun was at home, I forwarded Mr. Ream's dispatch. The next day the lightning took possession of the wires and we have not been able to obtain any answer to our dispatch as yet. On yesterday morning we dispatched a special messenger to Springfield fearing that the wires could not be relied upon. When we shall be able to get away from here is veiled in the future. Our expenses amount in the aggregate, to about \$600 per month. This looks like a very heavy expense, and is so in reality, now while we are earning nothing; but when we get to work we shall be able to make it tell pretty well. We can each earn about \$100 per day on our contracts. Having a bad opportunity for writing; being confined to a small tent, and that too by candle light. I shall here close promising you something more in the future. Write as you can. Direct to Leavenworth City, Kansas Territory. Joseph Ledlie.

Nancy McCrea Files For Divorce From Charles McCrea-1853

Charles McCrea was born in 1818 in Pennsylvania. He and his wife Nancy moved to Beardstown, Illinois, where they had two children. McCrea went to California in April 1849 at age 31. He was about to start for home when last heard from in 1855 and it is believed by his friends that he was murdered for his money.

Nancy McCrea retained Abraham Lincoln and William H. Herndon and sued Charles McCrea for divorce on the grounds of desertion. Charles McCrea had gone to California in April 1849, apparently to mine for gold. In the spring term of 1856, McCrea defaulted, and the court granted Nancy McCrea a divorce and custody of the two children. The court postponed the alimony hearing.

Bill for Divorce, Affidavit To The Honorable David Davis Judge of the Sangamon County circuit court in chancery setting. Humbly complaining your oratrix Nancy McCrea would show unto your Honor that she was intermarried with Charles McCrea on or about the day of April Eighteen hundred and forty six in the said County of Sangamon and State of Illinois, That your oratrix and her said husband lived together as husband and wife in said County for about the period of three years in a reasonably happy matrimonial state, and before the desertion of her said husband as hereinafter stated, your oratrix bore to him two children now living who have been supported by your oratrix since the absence and desertion of her said husband your oratrix further states that her said husband on or about the day of April Eighteen hundred and forty nine willfully and without reasonable or just cause wholly abandoned your oratrix and deserted her, and during the whole time of his said desertion your oratrix has supported herself with[out] aid or assistance from her said husband. In tender consideration whereof your oratrix prays that a subpoena in chancery may issue for said defendant, That said Charles McCrea be party defendant to this bill of complaint that he be required to answer the allegations herof, fully and particularly as though specially [interrogated] thereto and that your honor would render a decree dissolving the bands of matrimony between her and her said husband and that such other and further relief be granted your oratrix as her case may require.

W. H. Herndon Sol [icitor]. for Comp [lainant].

Nancy McCrea vs In chancery for Divorce Charles McCrea Nancy McCrea the complainant in the above entitled cause being first duly sworn doth depose and say that the defendant therein named is not a resident of the State of Illinois, but of California so that process cannot be served on him. Nancy McCrea Subscribed and sworn to before me this 9. Jan'y 1855 Jos Matheny Clerk 140.³⁷⁵

1856

146. Julia L. Letter to Eli Cook's Wife from Sacramento, California July 26, 1856³⁷⁶

Sacramento

July 26th 1856

Mrs. Cook

My dear friend would you believe it that I am yet in the land of the living and have never written to you yet. Well it is ever so but this is not the first time I have thought to do so for I have thought of you and yours many times, of the hours we have passed together some in pleasure and some in sadness. I often dream of you. Once of being at your house and seeing Emeline, married. I thought it gave you a great deal of trouble and again I dreamed I went to see you and you were just leaving your beautiful new house bag and baggage and Franklin was sick and you in great trouble. Now my friend do not think me superstitious, but I cannot help thinking of you and fearing some of you may be sick or in trouble and what makes me feel worse about it Arthur came in the other evening and says "OK mother you can't guess who is in Town. I just now met Ed Baker and Hank Wickersham and they said Frank Cook was here. I told them it was very strange he did call to see my Hawk since he did not see him yet for Ed had first told him the news. Ed spoke up once said Frank had been here some time and was keeping Bar for some house on 8th st. He had forgotten exactly where. I told Arthur not to believe it, for young Baker was found of telling big stories when at home that I

³⁷⁵ The Lincoln Legal Papers Curriculum Social Role and Status: Marriage on the Illinois Prairie 135 Document 5-B (transcription) McCrea v. McCrea Case.

³⁷⁶ *The Society of California Pioneers*, CO57958 Eli S. Cook Letters. Letter # 36.

suppose he has not forgot him yet. I however still feat it may be true. Iif so, he never will be sorry but once for two thirds of those I have spoken on the subject wish they had never heard of California. The day has passed for making fortunes quick here, as far as my experience goes. It just as good place in Illinois to make money and save it as this is There is many reasons why I prefer Springfield to this place and I hope someday to be with you again, and then won't we have a good time and a long chat. Do write as soon as you get this for at least it will be two months before I could get an answer. Tell me something about all of the family and especially Emeline. Whether Morgan has caused her any more trouble. And if Frank is with you tell him I say never think of this place. No not sooner that he jumps into the fire for it is death to hundreds and worse than death to thousands. If I thought your son was here I would go myself and tell him whether he had employment and a decent house. For there are hundreds that land here without a dollar and find too late the gold is not to be picked up here but many miles off, and that they can neither travel or eat with money.

Ada and A—you will write to me wont you. How I wish I was there to tease you just a little bit, scare Molly you and Sccole. Tell me all about the other girls. Whether they have been good girls since I left or where they have been running after the fellers as expect they have seeing as how it is leap year. I know you would not do sich naughty things would you. Tell Elbrige Arthur is well and grows fast but is awful homesick. Mary says I may tell you she going to write a letter for herself next mail to Malby Ellen, and you may look for it if she does you must be sure to answer her, it will encourage her to try and do letter next time. Now do not forget me but write me a long letter there enough of you to fill up two sheets and write but little ____ I cannot write to each one separate so take this for all. But the first one that writes to me answer first tell me have you fruit this season if you jave send me some for I may be home by next April.

Mr. Leadlie and his Brother are well, and quite out with California in all respects except the climate, they respect name and memory of Mr. Cook very much and although he had better luck than most men here, no man could say he got it dishonestly. He was respected by all who knew him.

Give my love to all my friends and especially to your own family

And believe me you true
Friend Julia L

Gold Discovered in California's Santa Cruz Mountains

In 1856, gold was discovered in the Santa Cruz Mountains in California.³⁷⁷ Once again, James F. Reed set out to prospect. Taking two of his sons, he leased a mining claim from Rancho Zayante. The area never produced much gold, but the area near present-day Felton is still known as "Gold Gulch."

William F. Barger Goes to California

William F. Barger, born on February 12, 1833, in Sangamon County, Illinois, went to California, in 1856 at age 23 and resided there in Nevada City, California.³⁷⁸

David Huffmaster Goes to California

David Huffmaster born on February 17, 1831, started to California overland in 1856 at age 25. He lost his life playing with a favorite dog while holding a gun in his hand. The dog struck the hammer and the gun went off lodging the charge in the Huffmaster's shoulder, causing his death in a few days.

³⁷⁷ The Santa Cruz Mountains, part of the Pacific Coast Ranges, are a mountain range in central and northern California, United States. They form a ridge down the San Francisco Peninsula, south of San Francisco. They separate the Pacific Ocean from the San Francisco Bay and the Santa Clara Valley, and continue south to the Central Coast, bordering Monterey Bay and ending at the Salinas Valley.

³⁷⁸ Power, p. 96.

1857

Death of George B. Goudy (18__-1857)

George B. Goudy came to Illinois with his parents in 1832. He attended Illinois College in the years 1844-5 and 1846-7 being then resident of Springfield Illinois where he was employed as a printer. Goudy left Springfield in May 1849 becoming one of the Argonauts of 49 going to Oregon City, Oregon in September of that year. There he became publisher of the *Spectator* a weekly newspaper. He soon went to Lafayette, Oregon where he held the offices of circuit auditor and sheriff. In the summer of 1854, Goudy married Elizabeth Morgan of Lafayette. One child was born to them. In April 1855 Mr Goudy removed to Olympia Washington where he was unanimously elected public printer by the Legislature. He then conducted *The Pioneer and Democrat* a weekly paper and did the territorial printing. He died in Olympia on September 29, 1857. Mr Goudy was a man of great industry and attained much personal popularity. He was one of the early pioneers of the Pacific Coast as his parents and grandparents had been of the east and assisted in giving it a start in the course which has since developed that region.

1859

Abraham Prather Goes to California

Abraham Prather went to California in March 1859, and after a few years absence was not heard of until 1875.³⁷⁹

1860

Abram Gamble and Family Go to California

Abram Gamble, born on May 5, 1838 in Sangamon County, Illinois, was married on June 4, 1857 to Mary Catherine Poley who was born on December 25, 1825 in Carroll County, Ohio. They had three children Charles E., Fannie L. and George A. In 1859 Mr. and Mrs. Gamble moved to Kansas and in the spring of 1860 they were joined by Elisha Poley with his family and Benjamin F. Poley and moved overland to California. Abram and Mary Gamble returned to Auburn in 1866. Not enjoying good health here they started in the spring of 1867 and crossed the plains to California. They settled in Napa City, Napa County, California.³⁸⁰

Elisha Poley and Family Go to California

Elisha Poley was born on September 20, 1826 in Muhlenburgh County, Kentucky. He married in Sangamon County to Sally Shaver who died and he married Mary E. Thrasher. They moved overland in company with his brother-in-law, Abram Gamble, arriving with their families in Solano County, California in September 1860. In November, Mr. Poley and Mr. Gamble rode five miles on horseback without saddles to vote for Abraham Lincoln. A few years later, Mr. Poley moved back to Auburn, Sangamon County, Illinois. They had three children Joseph G. and Elbert born in California and Harry born in Sangamon County. Elisha Poley is a member of the firm of Poley & Butler

³⁷⁹ Power, p. 727.

³⁸⁰ *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of Coast Counties* ..., James Miller Guinn, p. 1063. <https://books.google.com/books?id=eMoPo5ce3IIC&pg=PA1063&lpg=PA1063&dq=Abram+Gamble&source=bl&ots=aGBVmeymjs&sig=ACfU3U28dfnGe6taUevcz5zK5SnU0G7A8Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjFtsnmdPkAhUCb60KHUHiCIAQ6AEwBH0ECAYQAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false>

commission merchants in Chicago, Illinois and in August 1876 expected to move his family there from Auburn soon.³⁸¹

December 1860

Benjamin R. Biddle's Letter From Abraham Lincoln

The Benjamin R. Biddle family were members of the Union Party. They were personal friends of Abraham Lincoln. As a young lawyer in Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln was their next-door and then near neighbor for over 15 years and Benjamin was his tailor.

In December 1860, Benjamin R. Biddle received a long letter from Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln told all of the latest gossip of their mutual Springfield friends, and gave a personal account of his campaign and election to the presidency. He also enclosed a small picture of himself, mounted on a piece of blue calico, which had been one of his campaign badges—and had been worn pinned on the lapel of the coat of a political follower. Many thousands of them had been worn in the North, before the election; but it was the first one B. R. had seen.

1861

John S. Burch Goes to California

John S. Burch, born in July 1840, in Sangamon County, Illinois, went to California in 1861 at age 21. He drowned on March 3, 1865, at San Juan, Nicaragua, while on his way home.

1862

Francis M. Perkins Goes to California

In the summer of 1862 at age 30, Francis M. Perkins, born on November 19, 1832 in Sangamon County, Illinois, went to California and Oregon and from there to Idaho. He left Fort Berthold on the Missouri River for home with about twenty others in a boat and all of them were massacred by Sioux Indians below that Fort on August 3, 1863.

John M. Leeds Goes to California

John M. Leeds went to California in 1862 and on returning was killed by Indians in the Sierra Nevada mountains. His widow and two unmarried daughters lived in Clinton, Dewitt County, Illinois.

Death of William Stokes in California

(1830-1862)

William Stokes, born on January 30, 1830, in Kentucky, was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois and went to California in 1852 at age 22. He died there in December 1862.³⁸²

³⁸¹ Power, p. 575.

³⁸² Power, p. 690.

1863

Murder of Hamilton Campbell

1863: "THE MURDER OF MR. HAMILTON CAMPBELL- The following particulars of this tragic event have been handed to us for publication, as they will doubtless be of interest to a large circle of friends and acquaintances in this state, where Mr. Campbell resided for many years.

At the time of his murder he was superintendent of the Teramarra mine, situated about 150 miles from Guaymas, and owned by Robt. Campbell, a Mexican named Neuratta and another person. Mr. R. Campbell had gone to the mountains on a prospecting tour, leaving the superintendent in charge, and as the latter did not understand Spanish, Neuratta was requested to furnish him with some reliable workmen. and two peons were sent as such. One of these Mr. C. had occasion to send on an errand to San Antonio, about 6 miles from the mine, and during his absence the murder was committed by the other peon. This occurred on Friday, June 12, in the afternoon. Mr. Campbell at the time was kneeling down by a large jar of water, in which he was washing and assorting silver ore, with the intention of sending it for assay to San Francisco, when the cowardly assassin, standing behind him, struck him on the head with a steel bar, crushing the skull in a frightful manner. Death must have been instantaneous, as only one blow was struck. The murderer then robbed his victim, taking from his pockets between forty and fifty dollars and a pistol, and escaped to the mountains. The only motive was plunder, as there could have been no cause for revenge, The other peon, on his return the next morning, discovered the body, and having procured assistance, carried it to San Antonio, where it was buried under the supervision and charge of the American residents, in the ground attached to the church there. Before the steamer left Guymas for San Francisco, it was reported that the murderer had been arrested and executed."³⁸³

Francis M. Perkins Massacred by Sioux Indians Near Fort Berthold

Francis M. Perkins, born on November 19, 1832 in Sangamon County, Illinois, went in the summer of 1862 to California and Oregon and from there to Idaho. He left Fort Berthold on the Missouri River for home with about twenty others in a boat and all of them were massacred by Sioux Indians below that Fort on August 3, 1863.

Alfred R. Elder Writes to Abraham Lincoln

On October 24, 1864, Alfred R. Elder wrote the letter below to Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln had appointed Elder the Indian Agent for the Medicine Creek Agency in the Washington Territory.

Olympia W. T. Oct 24th 1864.

Dear Sir.

The inclosed slip is taken from the *Washington Democrat*, a paper published by Urban E. Hicks, he is one of the men employed by Elwood Evens Esq. the Secretary of this Territory to do the Territorial printing. Here is a viper warmed into life, by the patronage of the Government, through Mr. Evans, and, if Mr Evans is suffered to remain in Office, he will continue to bestow the patronage of the Government upon these same men, McElroy and Hicks. Mr. Hicks published his prospectus, over the signature of Urban E. Hicks & co. by which, we understand, Hicks, McElroy and Evans. The paper, is a disgrace to our Territory and to the Government. I send you the 1st number of the paper,

³⁸³ *Oregonian*, July 30, 1863, p. 4, col. 1 This original dispatch was relayed in Salem by the *Oregon Statesman*, July 27, 1863, p. 2, col. 6. and the above report appeared in the *Oregon Statesman* on August 3, 1863, p. 4, col. 2.

the slip is taken from another paper, but the same No'. Excuse me for troubling you, at this time, I know you will view this as a very smatter, in comparison to the great and mighty events that transpiring around every day but though it may to you be an inconsiderable matter it is an important one to us. I would suggest Arthur A. Denny, in his place, he is a true as his Father, and you know him.

Mr. Denny would be acceptable to us all, and particularly so, to Gov. Pickering, for I have conversed with him very recently upon the subject.

Very respectfully
Your Obt. Servt
A. R. Elder³⁸⁴

1865

**Abraham Lincoln, Speaks to his Friend Charles Maltby,
Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California
March 25, 1865.**

I have long desired to see California; the production of her gold mines has been a marvel to me, and her stand for the Union, her generous offerings to the Sanitary (Commission), and her loyal representatives have endeared your people to me; and nothing would give me more pleasure than a visit to the Pacific shore, and to say in person to your citizens, 'God bless you for your devotion to the Union,' but the unknown is before us. I may say, however, that I have it now in purpose when the railroad is finished, to visit your wonderful state.³⁸⁵

**President Abraham Lincoln and California
April 14, 1865**

President Abraham Lincoln very much wanted to visit California but never got to the Golden State. One of his last conversations before he left for Ford's Theater on the night of his assassination was with House Speaker Schuyler Colfax, who was himself about to depart for California. The two leaders discussed Colfax's trip, prompting Mr. Lincoln to say in farewell:

Don't forget, Colfax, tell those miners that that is my speech to them, which I send by you. Let me hear from you on the road, and I will telegraph you at San Francisco. Pleasant journey and good bye.

Mr. Lincoln, who that afternoon had discussed visiting California with his wife, told Colfax of the importance of the California miners' work:

During the war, when we were adding a couple of million dollars every day to our national debt, I did not care about encouraging the increase in the volume of our precious metals. We had the country to save first. But now that the rebellion is overthrown and we know pretty nearly the amount of our national debt, the more gold and silver we mine makes the payment of that debt so much the easier." He said: "Tell the miners from me, that I shall promote their interests to the utmost of my ability; because their prosperity is the prosperity of the nation, and we shall prove in a very few years that we are indeed the treasury of the world."³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ *Collected Works*, VII, p. 188.

³⁸⁵ Charles Maltby, *The Life and Public Services of Abraham Lincoln*, Daily Independent Steam Power Print, 1884, p. 134.

³⁸⁶ *Abraham Lincoln and the Western Territories*, Ralph Y. McGinnis, Calvin N. Smith, Rowman & Littlefield, 1994, p.68.

Death of Robert Caden Keyes
September 14, 1865
 (1819-1865)

Robert Caden Keyes died on September 14, 1865, at age 46. He was buried in Oak Hill Memorial Park, San Jose, Santa Clara County, California. He was born on September 13, 1819 in Virginia, the son of Humphrey Keyes Jr. and Sarah Handley.³⁸⁷ He came to California in 1845.



1866

Grandison B. Crow Returns to Sangamon County, Illinois

Grandison B. Crow, born in Chester County, Kentucky, was raised in Sangamon County, Illinois. He went to Oregon in 1847. In September 1848, he went to California, gold having been discovered there in June 1848. After spending eighteen years there, he returned to Sangamon County in 1866, and lived at the family homestead in Ball Township.³⁸⁸

Death of John C. Maxcy in 1866
 (1816-1866)

John C. Maxcy, born on September 16, 1816, in Kentucky, lived in Springfield from 1834 to 1849, when he went to California. He was Quartermaster in the United States army during the rebellion, and died in 1866.³⁸⁹

Death of David Phelps in California Mine
July 8, 1866
 (1815-1866)

David Phelps was born in December 1815, at Hebron, New Hampshire. He went to California in 1849. On July 6, 1866, David Phelps was crushed while going through a mine, of which he was part owner, and died on July 8, 1866. His widow married George Hutchinson, and lived in California.³⁹⁰

1868

Marriage of William L. Todd and Clarissa J. Pike, nee Chase
April 14, 1868

William L. Todd was married on April 14, 1868, in California, to Mrs. Clarissa J. Pike, whose maiden name was Chase. She was born in 1823 in Dutchess County, New York.

³⁸⁷ *Power*, p. 428.

³⁸⁸ *Power*, p. 235.

³⁸⁹ *Power*, p. 485.

³⁹⁰ *Power*, p. 565.

1873**Death of John S. Baker in San Francisco****July 30, 1873**

(1826-1873)

John S. Baker, born on November 7, 1826, in Kentucky, taught school in Sangamon County, Illinois for many years. He went to California in 1854, and died on July 30, 1873, in San Francisco.³⁹¹

1874**Death of Clarissa J. Pike Chase Todd**

(1823-1874)

In March 1874, Clarissa J. Pike Chase Todd, the wife of William L. Todd, died childless in Sacramento, California.

Death of James Frazier Reed**July 24, 1874**

(1801-1874)

James Frazier Reed died in San Jose on July 24, 1874, at age 73. He was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery.³⁹²

1890**Death of Isaac Constant in Central Point, Oregon****January 31, 1890**

(1810-1890)

Democratic Times, Jacksonville, Oregon, February 6, 1890.³⁹³**DIED.**

CONSTANT.--At his home in Central Point [Oregon] on Friday, January 31, 1890, Isaac Constant, a native of Kentucky; aged 80 years, 9 months and 26 days.

A prince of hospitality, a chief among pioneers in the days when a man was judged by worth alone, is the summary of the life story of Isaac Constant. No man ever came to the valley who more richly deserved the tribute, and none of the pioneers preserved to the day of his death more nearly the habits and customs of early times and the open-handed mode of living of early days than he. There was in his composition that union of all the elements of true manhood, embodying justice, humanity and morality, which made every man his friend, and gave him a place in the affections of even comparative strangers. Coming to the valley in the early fifties, he settled on the donation claim which continued his home until his death. Here, with his faithful wife, who still survives him, he saw four loving daughters and one son grow to years of maturity, and one by one depart from the parental roof to preside over homes of their own. Here he saw the wilderness develop into the garden spot of southern Oregon, through Indian wars and times of sunny peace, through the halcyon days of the stagecoach and the bustling life of the railroad.

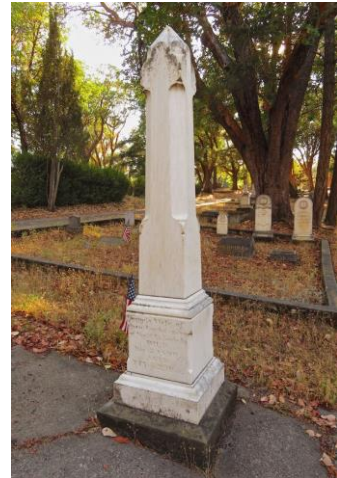
³⁹¹ *Power*, p. 91.

³⁹² *Power*, p. 600.

³⁹³ *Democratic Times*, Jacksonville, Oregon, February 6, 1890, p. 3.

One of his first crops was devoted to the cause of humanity. The Indians, after the hard winter of 1852, were reduced to a condition of absolute starvation, and many of them must have perished had not Mr. Constant placed his store of potatoes at their disposal. They never forgot his humanity, and when the Indian war of 1855-6 was raging, he and his family alone, of all the inhabitants of the valley, were allowed to remain unmolested on their ranch, secure from harm because of an act of kindness. [No families in the Bear Creek Valley were harmed in 1855-56.]

Mr. Constant's sense of justice was remarkably keen. A miscreant, having murdered an innocent Indian boy who rendezvoused at Mr. C.'s place, on the desert, was boasting of the deed to him at his ranch gate, when, without a word, he started to run to his cabin, and the fellow taking the hint was out of gunshot before he appeared with his rifle. "If he'd been a little closer, I'd have shot at him," said the old gentleman recently, "so mad was I at the wanton outrage."



Of his children, four daughters, Mrs. W. T. Leever, Mrs. Wm. A. Owen, Mrs. C. Magruder, all residing in the vicinity of the old home, and Mrs. Jesse Robinson of Oakland, California, survive him; an only son, Thos. Constant, having died some years ago.

The funeral was announced for last Sunday, but the great storm and flood, which culminated on that day, cut off access to the family burying ground in Jacksonville Cemetery, so it became necessary to embalm the remains and hold the body at Central Point until such time as the streams subside and the roads become passable.

The funeral of Mr. Isaac Constant, a Southern Oregon pioneer, who died at Central Point January 31, took place in Jacksonville yesterday. The storms of the past two weeks had rendered the roads impassable, and the funeral obsequies had to be deferred until this date.³⁹⁴

1893

Death of Joseph Ledlie in Springfield, Illinois January 27, 1900 (18__-1893)

Obituary of Joseph Ledlie - Died, at his residence, corner of Edwards Street and Douglas Avenue, Thursday, May 4, at 8:45 p.m., Mr. Joseph Ledlie, aged 81 years. Those who had been following the progress of his illness were not surprised when death called him away, as there seemed no hope for a day or two of his recovery from a severe attack of pneumonia. The news of his death, however, will be learned with profound regret by those who knew him. Joseph Ledlie was born in Philadelphia, Pa, Jan. 19, 1812. He was the son of Arthur and Catharine Ledlie who emigrated to this country from Ireland in 1801, and settled in the East. The family removed later to Ohio and began farm life there. Joseph remained there until he was 25 years of age when, in company with his brother Arthur, he came to Illinois. They returned to Gallipolis, O., the next year and taught



³⁹⁴ *Southern Oregon, Statesman Journal*, Salem, February 13, 1890, p. 1.

in the academy there. Joseph's longing for the western prairies seems never to have left him and he returned to the state in 1838, settling with his sisters and brothers in Macoupin county, where they farmed and taught school. Joseph came to Springfield in 1846. Mr. Ledlie had inherited an inventive and mathematical mind from his father and it was a natural that he should be appointed by John B. Watson, deputy county surveyor soon after his arrival here. Mr. Watson subsequently went to California and left the office to Mr. Ledlie who conducted it with credit and ability. The following year he was formally elected to the office. In 1855 he was appointed United States Deputy Surveyor of Kansas and Nebraska and remained in the west until 1857. In 1860 he was nominated by the Democratic Party as a candidate for the legislature against Hon. Shelby M. Cullom, but was defeated by a small majority. He has ably filled the office of county surveyor for several terms. He was also a member of the West Springfield board of trustees and leaves a very creditable record in that capacity. He was city scales inspector during Mayor Hay's administration. He was never married until 1881, when Miss Emma Snell became his bride and she survives him. Mr. Ledlie was a man of sturdy constitution and one whose appearance belied his age. No one would have judged that he was beyond 65 years of age as his step was light and agile, his eyesight and hearing were good and his voice was like that of a young and vigorous man. He was possessed of an unusual social disposition and was communicative and frank with young and old. He had a fund of information always at command which he told in an interesting way and so unassuming that everyone listened to him with pleasure. The funeral services will be held at the residence tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock.

From the Illinois State Journal of May 5, 1893, Page 4. Transcribed by Steven S. Brosemer

1900

Death of Charles Maltby in San Francisco, California

January 27, 1900

(1812-1900)

LINCOLN'S FRIEND DEAD

Remains of Charles Maltby Will Be Buried in Los Angeles

San Francisco, Jan. 27.—Charles Maltby, the former business partner, companion-in-arms and life-long friend of Abraham Lincoln, was found dead in his bed yester'day morning at the residence of his son, Charles F. Maltby, 1622 Ellis street, with whom he had made his home since the death of his wife in 1885. Maltby was a native of Vermont, and was 88 years 8 months and 10 days old at the time of his death. In his youth he fell in with Abraham Lincoln, and the two became firm friends and opened a general merchandise business in the little town of Waynesville, Ind., [Maltby clerked with Lincoln at Denton Offut's store in New Salem, Illinois] which they conducted jointly for three years. Both fought the Indians and made the campaigns against the Blackhaws together, lighting side by side, sharing all perils and privations for months of rough campaigning, which only strengthened the friendship of the two until Lincoln's death. It was through the influence of Lincoln that Maltby received his first federal appointment as melter and refiner in the San Francisco mint. When Lincoln was elected president he appointed Maltby collector of internal revenue for the Fifth district of California and later superintendent of Indian affairs in California. After Lincoln's death, President Johnson appointed him Indian agent at Tule river, Tulare county, which position he held for eight years. Later he was United States gauger in San Francisco and government storekeeper at Stockton and Los Angeles. While at Stockton he wrote the "Life of Lincoln," which was published in Stockton in book form and had a good sale. His resemblance in face and figure to the president was so marked that they were often taken for one another. Especially was that the case during the winter of 1863, which Maltby spent in Washington, and was much in the society of the president. They were of the same build exactly. Maltby wore a beard just like Lincoln. When apart Maltby was often mistaken for Lincoln, and when together persons would point to him as the president's twin brother. After Lincoln's death Maltby was often pointed out by children, who said: "There Is Lincoln." It was then that he changed the style of his beard, which obliterated the resemblance. Maltby was hale and hearty on retiring last Thursday night. Friday morning he was found dead in his room, having peacefully

expired during the night. He was a veteran of the Mexican war. The remains will be conveyed to Los Angeles, where they will be interred by the side of those of his wife.³⁹⁵

1905

Death of Charles Elijah Cook Matheny in Springfield

December 13, 1905

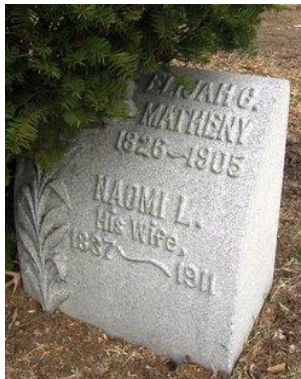
(1826-1905)

Journal, Saturday, December 16, 1905.³⁹⁶

Charles Elijah Cook Matheny died on December 13, 1905 at age 79 years and 6 months. He is buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield, Illinois.

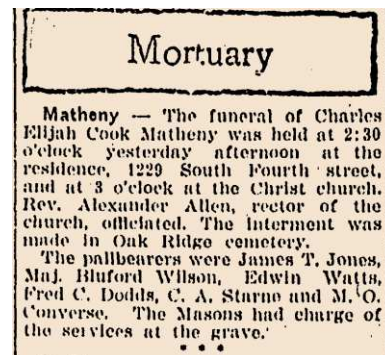
He was married on February 3, 1857, in Springfield, to Alletta L. Van Norstrand, and they had two children, John R. and Louisa I.

Alletta Matheny died in June, 1864. Elijah was married in 1865, to Mrs. Naomi L. Rittenhouse, a native of Pennsylvania, whose maiden name was Schroyer. They had three children: Mima, the wife of George H. Simpson; Ada L. Matheny, the wife of George Whiting, and Phillips G. Matheny, manager of the Barclay Coal and Mining Company, of Springfield.



Elijah Matheny was Deputy United States Marshal for the Southern District of Illinois for about nine years, and during that time sold over \$2,000,000 worth of confiscated property, at Cairo.

Elijah died on December 13, 1905, age 79, and was buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery. He was a man of unusual information and at the time of his death there was probably no man more familiar with the early history of Sangamon County. He had a remarkable memory and was a man of wide reading, and up to the time of his death kept himself fully informed regarding the public and local matters. He had been a member of Masonic fraternities for many years.³⁹⁷



Death of George L. Eastman

(1833-1905)

Register, December 22, 1905.

George L. Eastman was 72 years of age when he died in 1905. His death, while attributed to senility, occurred shortly after an unsuccessful operation at Rochester, Minnesota. The older residents of Sangamon County remember George as one of the early settlers. He was born on a farm near Auburn, Illinois, in 1833, and lived there until about 1852.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ *Los Angeles Herald*, Number 121, January 29, 1900.

<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=LAH19000129.2.170&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>

³⁹⁶ *Journal*, Saturday, December 16, 1905 p. 6

³⁹⁷ *Register*, Thursday, December 12, 1905.

www.findagrave.com/memorial/30086879/elijah-cook-matheny

³⁹⁸ See footnote number 186.

1948**New Bridge Across Bear Creek, Oregon to Carry Name of Valley Pioneer: Isaac Constant**Central Point American, October 21, 1948.³⁹⁹

Yesterday the county court [of commissioners] passed a resolution fixing a name for the new cement bridge across Bear Creek on the Central Point market road east of this city. The huge structure will hereafter be known as the "Isaac Constant Bridge" in honor of the man who first took up a donation land claim on the land upon which the bridge stands in 1852. This is in accordance with the present custom of the court in naming major county bridges in honor of some pioneer who lived in the vicinity in the early days of the county's history.

The name of this bridge is particularly appropriate on account of the fact that both roads leading to the new bridge from the east city limits of Central Point and from the Hamrick Road, as well as the bridge itself, are upon land once a part of the Constant claim.

³⁹⁹ *Central Point American*, October 21, 1948, p. 1.

Appendix

Springfield and Sangamon County, Illinois Emigrants to California and Oregon

The Donner Party Total of 39 Left Springfield

The Illinois and California Mutual Insurance Company March 27, 1849 Group Total of 23

See page 80.

Travelers to West After March 27, 1849 Group and Before 1853.

Total of 158

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Grant Addison-1849 | 28. Joe Condell-1849 |
| 2. S. G. Anderson | 29. Isaac Constant-1849 & 1852 and Family |
| 3. Edward D. Baker and Family-1852 | 30. James Constant and Family-1849 |
| 4. Bartin | 31. D. S. Cook |
| 5. Benjamin Robert Biddle and family-1852 | 32. Eli Cook-1849 |
| 6. Henry Bird | 33. William Cooper ⁴⁰² |
| 7. Margaret J. Hussey Bird | 34. Joe Crane |
| 8. Bird Child 1 | 35. Joel McD. Cross ⁴⁰³ |
| 9. Bird Child 2 | 36. Grandison B. Crow-1847 |
| 10. John R. Black-1849 | 37. William F. Cutter-1848 |
| 11. John T. Bon Durant-1850 | 38. Henry Doran-1849 |
| 12. Bowlin-1849 | 39. Augustus Eastman-1849 |
| 13. Bolivar-1850 | 40. George L. Eastman-1852 |
| 14. John S. Bradford-1849 | 41. R. S. Eaton-1849 |
| 15. Jacob Braughton ⁴⁰⁰ | 42. David Eaton-1849 |
| 16. Hugh Breckenridge | 43. Alfred R. Elder-1846 |
| 17. Hiram Bristol-1852 | 44. S. Elkin-1850 |
| 18. Abigail Brown | 45. Garrett Elkin-1850 |
| 19. James M. Brown ⁴⁰¹ | 46. William T. Elkin-1850 |
| 20. Bush | 47. Zacharia E. Elkin-1849 |
| 21. James Callerman-1849 | 48. William Enyert-1849 |
| 22. Dick Campbell | 49. Hyman Fairchild-1850 |
| 23. Lewis Campbell-1850 | 50. William Fagg-1849 |
| 24. Phillip Clark Jun.-1849 | 51. Hart Fellows-1850 |
| 25. Robert F. Coflin (Coughlin)-1849 | 52. A. Fielding-1849 |
| 26. Ebenezer Colburn | 53. Samuel Fisher-1849 |
| 27. James Cohsiant | 54. William B. Foster-1849 |
| | 55. Arthur Gaddy-1850 |

⁴⁰⁰ Jacob Braughton came to Sangamon County in 1836. He never married but was engaged in farming for several years. He started overland to California and died on the road between 1850 and 1855.

⁴⁰¹ Abigail Brown, born in January 1822 in Kentucky, married James M. Brown in Sangamon County. They had two living children and moved to California. He was murdered and robbed there of \$3,000 in gold in October 1870. His family moved from California to Nevada thence to Oswego Kansas.

⁴⁰² William born in Tennessee, raised in Sangamon County, went to California, and was married there to Sarah Ide. He came back to Sangamon County and after a stay of some years started on his return to California with his family. He died at sea one day's sail from New Orleans leaving a widow and two children. Ann E. is married and lives at Lebanon, Linn County, Oregon. Alice and her mother reside at Red Bluff, Tehama County, California.

⁴⁰³ Born in 1827 or '8 in Johnson County, Illinois, raised in Sangamon County, went to California, married, has two children and lived there.

56. John A. Gibson-1851
57. John W. Gibson-1851
58. James Gobbett⁴⁰⁴
59. George B. Goudy-1849
60. James Gourley
61. Duff Greenberry
62. Sowell M. Green
63. Joseph Hall-1850
64. Samuel B. Hall-1849
65. Charles Halsted-1852
66. William S. Hamilton-1849
67. James T. Hardin-1849
68. Harris
69. Charles C. Harvey-1849
70. William McK. Helm-1852
71. Anson G. Henry and family-1852
72. Eaton R. Hickox-1851
73. Franklin Hickox-1849
74. William E. Hickox
75. William E. Higgins-1849
76. Richard Hodge-1849
77. Sarah Grout Haskell Ide-1845
78. Lewis Johnson-1849
79. Edward Jones-1849
80. Robert C. Keyes aka Robert Caden Keyes-1845
81. William G. King and family-1849
82. John C. Ledley-1850
83. Arthur Ledlie
84. John Ledlie
85. William Leggott
86. Levi D. Lewis -1849
87. William Lightfoot
88. Robert S. Lightfoot-1849
89. Joseph Logsdon⁴⁰⁵
90. Christopher Logan-1849
91. David Logan-1849
92. William C. Ludlum-1849
93. Charles Maltby and lady-1849
94. Elijah Cook Matheny-1849
95. William H. Marsh-1849
96. James M. Maxcy -1849
97. NANC Mitchell⁴⁰⁶
98. William R. Merriman and family -1852
99. James McCees⁴⁰⁷
100. Owen F. McCoy-1849
101. Charles McCrea-1849
102. Reuben McDaniel-1849
103. James H. McNabb-1849
104. Thomas Moffit-1850
105. Randolph Moore and son-1849
106. Morgan
107. S. R. Norris
108. Richard Oglesby-1849
109. James Parkinson
110. Pearson
111. David Phelps and wife-1849
112. Benjamin F. Poley
113. Charles Rollins Post-1849
114. William Prentiss
115. B. D. Reeves-1849
116. Henry E. Roberts-1849
117. John Robinson F.-1849
118. Lewis A. Saunders-1849
119. Henry Shepherd
120. James Shepherd
121. Henry H. Shepherd-1849
122. Nicholas H. Shepherd
123. William Shields -1849
124. James Short
125. James Harvey Slater-1849 and 1851
126. John Smith-1849
127. Spergin-1849
128. Henry M. Spotswood-1849
129. N. D. Spotswood-1849
130. George R. Steele
131. William Strawbridge-1849
132. William Stokes-1852
133. Louis Swizler-1849

⁴⁰⁴ Born on January 5, 1820 in New York, married in Sangamon County, moved to California and died there leaving a widow and two children.

⁴⁰⁵ Born about 1780 in Madison County, Kentucky. He was there married to a Miss Simmons. They had several children born in Kentucky and moved to Sangamon County, Illinois, arriving in 1824 in what is now Ball Township near where St. Bernard church stands. In 1832 or '33, he moved his family to Missouri and from there to Texas. He died in 1848 on the road from Texas to California. The first religious services ever

conducted by a Catholic priest in Sangamon County were held at his house in 1829.

⁴⁰⁶ Born on October 28, 1823 and married Willard Mitchell. They had two children. Mr. Mitchell was at one time employed on the Panama railroad. He contracted disease, went to California, and died there in 1850.

⁴⁰⁷ James McCees, born on October 17, 1820 in Kentucky, went from Sangamon County to California soon after the discovery of gold and has not been heard of since about 1850.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 134. Giles Taylor-1849 | 145. Charles H. Whitesides and family-1850 |
| 135. John L. Taylor | 146. Mr. Wiley-1851 |
| 136. Lockwood Todd-1849 | 147. Amos Williams |
| 137. Francis Walton Todd-1849 | 148. Greenberry Williams |
| 138. Turley | 149. George W. Willis |
| 139. William L. Van Doren-Spring 1850 | 150. Richard Willis |
| 140. Van Meter | 151. John W. Yates-1849 |
| 141. Mr. and Mrs. Ware-1849 | 152. Joseph R. Young and family-1850 |
| 142. John B. Watson-1849 | 153. William S. Young and Sarah Young and seven children-1851 |
| 143. Sanford Watson-1846(9) | |
| 144. Phillip Weber -1849 | |

Travelers to West After 1853-1862

1. John S. Baker-1854
2. William F. Barger -1856
3. John S. Burch--1861
4. John B. Campbell--1853
5. William A. Clark--1853
6. James Davis 1853
7. Abram Gamble and family-1860
8. John Green - 1854
9. Charles F. Hazlitt-1853
10. David Huffmaster-1856
11. John M. Leeds-1862
12. Francis M. Perkins - 1862
13. Elisha Poley and
14. family-1860
15. Mary Catherine Poley-1860
16. Abraham Prather-1859
17. William H. Wickersham-1853

Total Numbers of Those Going West From Sangamon County, Illinois

The Donner Party	39
The Illinois and California Mining Mutual Insurance Company	23
Travelers to West after March 27, 1849 Group and Before 1852	153
Travelers After 1852	<u>17</u>
Total	232

Those Who Achieved High Positions in West

Edward D. Baker

1860: U. S. Senator from Oregon

Benjamin R. Biddle

1858: a founder of Corvallis College, now Oregon State University

John S. Bradford

1849: When a government was formed for a new State of California, he was elected to represent a district extending north to Oregon, east to the Sacramento River, and south to the Bay of San Francisco

1850: re-elected as a member of the Legislature, his district having been reconstructed to include five counties

George B. Goudy

1852: worked on the Oregonian.

1853: went to Olympia and one of the publishers of the *Pioneer and Democrat*.

1855-56: during the Yakima war he commanded Company C

Anson Henry

1850: Indian Agent for Oregon

William B. Ide

1846: President of the Bear Republic

Robert Caden Keyes

Superintendent of Alamada Quicksilver Mines

David Logan

Finest trial lawyer of his time

1854: served in Oregon Territorial legislature

1864-1868: Mayor of Portland, Oregon

Maltby, Charles

Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California

melter and refiner in the San Francisco mint

collector of internal revenue for the Fifth district of California

Indian agent at Tule River, Tulare County for eight years

United States gauger in San Francisco

government storekeeper at Stockton and Los Angeles.

wrote the "Life of Lincoln"⁴⁰⁸

James H. McNabb

Editor of the *Petalouma Argus* for twelve years

1862-1868: California State Senator

deputy collector in the United States Custom House, at San Francisco, California

⁴⁰⁸ *Los Angeles Herald*, Number 121, January 29, 1900.

<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=LAH19000129.2.170&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>

John Henry Slater

member of the Oregon constitutional convention
1853-1856: clerk of the Benton County district court of the Territory of Oregon
1857-1858: delegate to the territorial legislature of Oregon
1859: member, Oregon house of representatives
1859-1861: published the *Oregon Weekly Union* at Corvallis
1868: district attorney for the fifth judicial district of Oregon
1868: presidential elector on the Democratic ticket
March 4, 1871-March 3, 1873: elected and served as a Democrat to the Forty-second United States Congress
March 4, 1879, to March 3, 1885: elected as a Democrat to the United States Senate

Francis Walton Todd

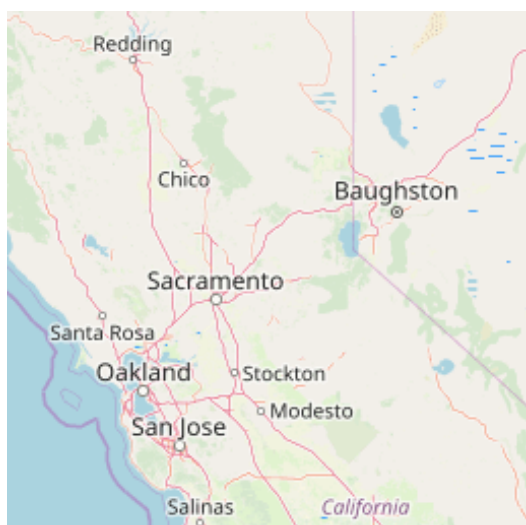
member of the California State Board of Health
President of the Stockton, California Board of Health
Secretary of San Joaquin County, California Medical Society

William L. Todd

1846: designed the Bear Republic flag, now the official State of California flag.

They Knew Lincoln

Edward D. Baker
Benjamin Robert Biddle
John S. Bradford
Isaac Constant
Anson G. Henry
Christopher Logan
David Logan
William Charles Ludlum
Charles Maltby
Elijah Cook Matheny
Charles McCrea
Richard Oglesby
Alfred R. Elder
Nicholas H. Shepherd
Francis Walton Todd
William L. Todd
John B. Weber



Maps of northern California and the Gold Fields⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sacramento,_California.

RICHARD E. HART



Richard E. Hart was born in Ottawa, Illinois, and attended school and was raised in Springfield. He attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he received his B.A. in 1964 and his J.D. in 1967. He was admitted to practice law in 1967 and has been a practicing attorney in Springfield for the last fifty-three years. He is a partner in the firm of Hart, Southworth & Witsman. Hart is married to Ann and they have three children and seven grandchildren.

Hart is a past President of The Abraham Lincoln Association and member of the Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. He is a past President and board member of the Sangamon County Historical Society, past Chairman of the Advisory Board of The Lincoln Legal Papers, and past President and member of the Board of Directors of the Elijah Iles House Foundation. Hart was largely responsible for raising the funds and managing the day-to-day restoration of the Elijah Iles House and the Strawbridge-Shepherd House, two ca. 1840 Greek Revival residences.

Hart is also past President of Springfield Preservation, Ltd., a for-profit corporation that has restored and leased five Lincoln-era houses in Springfield's German Settlers Row.

Hart suggested the format for the *Looking for Lincoln* project in Springfield and donated his personal historical research and ideas that were used for that project.

Hart and his wife Ann were also responsible for proposing the design for the City of Springfield's streetscape. Their design proposal and advocacy was adopted in lieu of another proposal for a contemporary design. As a part of their advocacy, the Harts purchased and donated the first period lights for Springfield's streetscape. Since that first donation, the use of the design has spread throughout downtown Springfield and is now moving into several neighborhoods, including the Enos Park Neighborhood.

In 1999, Hart was given the City of Springfield's Preservationist of the Year award.

In 2012, Hart was presented with the Logan Hay Medal. The bronze medal is awarded infrequently and is the highest honor given by The Abraham Lincoln Association to recognize individuals who have made noteworthy contributions to the mission of the Association.

In 2014, Hart was awarded the Illinois State Historical Society's Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding contributions over the decades to promoting the history of the Prairie State.

In 2015, Hart was awarded the Springfield NAACP Chapter's 2015 Legal and Political Award.

From 2003 until 2015, Hart served on the Board of Managers of Oak Ridge Cemetery and was Chairman of the Board of Managers of Oak Ridge Cemetery. He is a founding member of the Board of Directors of Springfield Illinois African American History Foundation Museum. Hart remains a member of the Board of Directors of The Abraham Lincoln Association and of the Elijah Iles House Foundation.

For at least the last ten years Hart has been the editor of For The People, a newsletter of The Abraham Lincoln Association, and the Iles Files, a newsletter of the Elijah Iles House Foundation.

Hart's personal interest has been in the history of Springfield during the time that Abraham Lincoln lived there and in particular in the presence there of African-Americans. He is also interested in particular areas of Sangamon County during the period of early settlement. He has divided his published research on these two areas into the Spring Creek Series focusing on Lincoln's Springfield, and the Sugar Creek Series focusing on the early settlement of Cotton Hill and Ball Townships in Sangamon County.

Spring Creek Series

Lincoln's Springfield – The Public Square (1823-1865) (2004)
Springfield, Illinois' Nineteenth Century Photographers (2005)
Early Sangamon County Antiques – The Barringer Exhibit (2005) (Editor)
Lincoln's Springfield – The Underground Railroad (2006)
Lincoln's Springfield – The Early African American Population (2008)
The Early Court Houses of Sangamon County, Illinois (1821-1837) (2008)
Lincoln in Illinois: The Bicentennial of the Birth of Abraham Lincoln (2009) (Editor)
Lincoln's Springfield – Abel W. Estabrook: Robert Todd Lincoln's Abolitionist Teacher (2009)
Lincoln's Springfield – Springfield's Early Schools (2009)
The Colored Section, Oak Ridge Cemetery (2009)
Lincoln's Springfield – Greek Revival Architecture on the Prairie (2011)
Camp Butler: A Civil War Story: Photographs of Union Soldiers (2013)
Circuses in Lincoln's Springfield (1833-1860) (2013)
Preston Butler: Photographer in Lincoln's Springfield (2014)
Jameson Jenkins and James Blanks, African Americans in Lincoln's Springfield (2014)
Lincoln's Springfield: The Funeral of Abraham Lincoln: May 3rd and 4th, 1865 (2015)
Lincoln's Springfield Neighborhood (2015)
Lincoln's Springfield: Entertainment in Lincoln's Springfield (1834-1860) (2017)
Lincoln's Springfield–Chair and Cabinet Makers (1831-1860) (2017)
Lincoln's Springfield: Benjamin Robert Biddle: Lincoln's Tailor and Friend (2018)
Lincoln's Springfield: Elizabeth Jane Todd Grimsley Brown (2018)
The Collected Works of Thomas Lincoln Carpenter and Cabinetmaker (2019)
Lincoln's Springfield: Letters of Springfield Ladies (2020)
Lincoln's Springfield: Letters From California and Oregon 1845-1852 (2020)

Sugar Creek Series

Jones Cemetery Tour: Ball, Cotton Hill & Woodside Township, Sangamon County, Illinois (2002)
Philemon Stout Cemetery: Ball Township, Sangamon County, Illinois (2006)
Christopher Newcomer Cemetery: Woodside Township, Sangamon County, Illinois (2009)
Sugar Creek Cemetery: Ball Township, Sangamon County, Illinois (2010)
Vigal Cemetery: Cotton Hill Township, Sangamon County, Illinois (2010)
David Brunk Cemetery: Ball Township, Sangamon County, Illinois (2010)
Cumberland Sugar Creek Cemetery, The Old Burying Ground (2012)
George Brunk Cemetery, Cotton Hill Township, Sangamon County, Illinois (2012)
The Strawbridge – Shepherd Farm Site
Thomas Royal: Revolutionary War Soldier and Early Sangamon County Settler (2016)
A Genealogy of the Descendants of John Ashmore: A Tribute to James Newton Ashmore (2016)

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THE CALIFORNIA EMIGRANT.

BY "ONE OF 'EM."

Tune—"Oh! Susannah!"

I come from Salem city,
 With my wash bowl on my knee;
 I'm going to California,
 The gold dust for to see.
 It rained all night the day I left,
 The weather it was dry,
 The sun so hot I froze to death—
 Oh! brothers! don't you cry!
 Oh! California!
 That's the land for me!
 I'm going to Sacramento,
 With my wash bowl on my knee.

I jumped aboard the 'Liza ship,
 And traveled on the sea,
 And every time I thought of home,
 I wished it wasn't me!
 The vessel reared like any horse
 That had of oats a wealth;
 It found it couldn't throw me, so
 I thought I'd throw myself!

I thought of all the pleasant times
 We've had together here;
 I thought I ort to cry a bit,
 But couldn't find a tear.
 The pilot bread was in my mouth,
 The gold dust in my eye,
 And though I'm going far away,
 Dear brothers, don't you cry!

I soon shall be in Francisco,
 And then I'll look all 'round,
 And when I see the gold lumps there,
 I'll pick them off the ground.
 I'll scrape the mountains clean, my boys.
 I'll drain the rivers dry,
 A "pocket full of rocks" bring home—
 Oh! California!
 That's the land for me!
 I'm going to Sacramento,
 With my wash bowl on my knee!

Journal, Monday, January 22, 1849.⁴¹⁰⁴¹⁰ *Journal*, Monday, January 22, 1849, p. 3.

During the last week, I have thought much of Springfield. As “Distance lends enchantment to the view,” so absence brings to mind, more vividly, the endearments of home. Few men would wander from family and friends, if they did but take a philosophic view of things. The partner in our joys and sorrows, the children of our love—the affection of the one, the innocence of the others, would keep us all at home, if we would but take things as they are and accommodate ourselves to the circumstances of our condition. But, as the world is, there is a necessity for gold. There are a thousand and one ways in which money may be used, and society compels us all to have it. Very many have sacrificed every ennobling quality upon the altar of Mammon. There are many men, on these plains, who have adopted a coarseness of manners and language, and who violate the common courtesies of life with an impunity that would indicate their birth and education to have been in a less favored land than the United States. The gold obtained is but a small portion of the history of such an expedition. There is much to be learned of the manner in which the characters of some men are developed by peculiar circumstances, and all may learn lessons of wisdom by the study of themselves.

Benjamin R. Biddle’s Journal, August 11, 1849



**Picture of Original Bear Flag That Was Destroyed in San Francisco Earthquake Fire
Created by William L. Todd**

Many who started in this pilgrimage for gold have sickened and died; others who have reached this country will return poorer than they came; and some will go back to those they love blest with fortune. But these last will be few in number, and their story will be as sunny spots on the dark canvass that will picture forth this epoch in the history of our nation.

Benjamin R. Biddle
December 24, 1849