

The JOURNAL

OF THE RUTGERS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

VOLUME XI

JUNE 1948

NUMBER 2

FROM TENNESSEE TO CALIFORNIA IN 1849

Letters of the Reeve Family of
Medford, New Jersey

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THE editor of the letters which are here published has devoted many years to the study of Western history. His first book, The Story of San Jose, California's First Pueblo, 1777-1869, came out in 1934, and has been followed by half a dozen works dealing with events west of the Mississippi during the past century. His latest volume, The Great Northwest, appeared last year. Dr. Winther is a graduate of the University of Oregon, holds a master's degree from Harvard, a doctorate from Stanford, and is at present an Associate Professor of history at Indiana University.

WHEN on December 5, 1848, President James K. Polk gave an official nod to reports of "abundance of gold" in California, excitement reached unprecedented heights throughout the United States. The President's message—delivered to Congress—combined with other reports of fabulous discoveries, prompted countless thousands to migrate to the newly acquired California.

It is, of course, on the personal records of those participating in this great adventure that much of the gold rush history must necessarily be based. A large part of the overland material is, however, repetitious; much, too, is woefully lacking in feeling and in human interest. But in these respects the material presented here, best referred to as the Reeve letters, is refreshing. In graphic fashion these letters tell the story of Clayton and Robert Reeve, brothers, and

their sister, Rebecca Foster Reeve, whose first lap of the California trek was aboard a homemade flatboat down the full length of the Tennessee River. And since most overland journals have for their beginning point a rendezvous on the Missouri River, it is of special interest and historical value to have here a letter which recounts by what means and over what route the "jumping off" place was reached.

The father, Mark Reeve, had been an iron manufacturer in Medford, New Jersey, and at the Falls of the Schuylkill, but had failed. In 1821 he and three sons, Caspar, Clayton, and Robert, moved into the mountains of east Tennessee where at places called Pactolus and Union Forge they resumed the manufacture of iron. Not until 1839 did Rebecca rejoin her family. The events immediately preceding the departure of Clayton, Robert, and Rebecca for California are not known. In the first of the following letters Clayton Reeve simply reveals that he liquidated his iron operations, joined Robert and Rebecca on their flatboat, and then proceeded down the winding Tennessee. His letter carries the narrative as far as Independence, Missouri, near which city their rendezvous with other Tennesseans was established to await favorable weather for the journey across the Plains.

The overland trek to Sacramento is recounted by Rebecca in a letter to her Medford cousins. In it she places emphasis upon the last lap of the journey over Lassen's Road, along which Clayton met death from the Modoc Indians. It is with deepest feeling and in great sorrow that Rebecca tells the story, not only of her brother's death, but of the sore trials of those of her train who traveled the ill-fated cut-off to the northern mines.

The remaining letters from Rebecca and her California-acquired husband, Dr. John Scott, have special interest in that they satisfy one's curiosity as to what became of individuals who managed to survive the overland journey. Robert later went to the Washoe mines in Nevada where he died, and Rebecca, it is revealed, lived for varying periods in Sacramento Valley and San Francisco Bay cities before she succumbed to tuberculosis in 1881.

Taken as a whole, the letters comprise a record of many unusual and certainly interesting and poignantly tragic events of three who were in the great army of California's immigrants in 1849.

A.

A LETTER from Clayton Reeve addressed to his cousin Josiah R. Reeve (son of Josiah Reeve, brother of Mark), Medford, New Jersey, April, 1849.

Largely in journal form the author recounts the flatboat journey of the Reeve party down the full length of the Tennessee River enroute to the California gold fields.

on the Tennessee River between
Carrollvill & Perry vill¹
4th month 9th [1849]

Dear Cousins

Thinking you would be anxious to hear how we are getting alonge, I take moments of leisure, as we pass along to informe of matters, and things; as I am off of Boat duty to day, will now make a begining; Robert,² & sister,³ started about the 12th of the 3rd month⁴ in the Boat; I had to stay a week longer to settle up varrious matters and things; and if ever a poor fellow went through a sorte of a Purgotory on earth, I went through it, the laste 2 or three weeks preveious to my departure; I not only had the rolling mill, and Cupella⁵ still to carrey on, but all the olde bussiness of yours to winde up; but I nerved myselfe up to the point, tolde one, and all; when I inte[n]ded to starte, and I did not intend to do aney business, after that period; as a natueral consequence, I was run night, and day, and closed all much better than I could have expected; paide up all work hands, wood cutturs &c, and many other matters; give new notes to those we could not pay, got alonge without aney difficulty with all; was up the moste of 7th day night, and engaged until the midle of 1st day; on 7 day eve a young man bounde for Callifornia by the

¹ Carrollville and Perryville, Perry County, are on the lower Tennessee River in west-central Tennessee. It should be kept in mind that this was the area in which Clayton Reeve began to write this letter-journal. The starting point of this flatboat journey was a little above Knoxville where the Holston and French Broad rivers join to form the Tennessee River in northeastern Tennessee. This indicates that the party journeyed the full length of the Tennessee River. The *World Almanac* places the length of this river at 652 miles. For a detailed description of this region see Mary U. Rothrock, ed., *The French Broad-Holston Country* (Knoxville, Tennessee, 1946), ch. 2.

² Robert Reeve, brother of Clayton Reeve, author of this letter.

³ Rebecca, sister of Robert and Clayton Reeve.

⁴ March 12, 1849. This date marks the beginning of the journey of the Reeve party to Sacramento, California, which journey was not completed until late December, 1849.

⁵ Cupola: a furnace for melting pig iron.

name of Henry Bridleman come on to our house agreeable to previous apointment with his waggon. I put in a horse and on 1st day eve we started, being well aware if we waited untill 2nd day morne, such a croude would gather that we would be hindrid; as it was, had quite a gathering, and the way some shed tears, it quite unmaned me; we had a muddy rainy trip; but had the great satisfaction of overtaking our boat, and friends, a little above Knoxville, which place we reached on 6th day eveing, 24th of the month; and as varrious matters had to be arranged conclu[d]ed not to leave before 2nd day morne: 1st day eve 3 young men from Green[e] County bound for Callifornia, come on; I advised them to buy a boat, put their waggon, and ho[r]ses aboard, lash their boat to ours and go in company, they agreed to do so; but before we starte permit me to give you a shorte description of our floating home on the watters; it is a flat boat, 50 feet longe, 16, wide the gunals made of large poplar; slightly raked, floored; and wethered, boared except about 10 feet of the bow which is left open for the bow oars and as a sorte of porch or out side sitting room; the Boat is roofed like the top of a Jersey waggon⁶ that is rounded down each side, the stearing oar is about 50 feet longe, is fixed on a pivit on the top of the roof, curving down to the water, and alonge on the roof where the steerman stands, and can look out for breakers Islands sawers [sawyers]⁷ &c the top of this roof also serves as a sorte of upper deck where we can sit, and look at passing objects steamboats &c; the inside of the boat is fitted up with 2 fire places; and wooden chime [chimney], bed steads and shelves with dishes; Bacon hams hangings on nails trunks Boxes and chairs &c all around quite house like;⁸ well 2 of theas boats lashed together now is and has been for some time passed our moveing home; now something respecting the River, it is sometimes verry rappid, dashing over roucks, and breakers; at other places moving on in a still deep Current; The River abounds with numourous Islands, some of them ten miles longe and from $\frac{1}{4}$ to 3 miles browd soil verry rich covered with

⁶ Jersey wagons were used as stagecoaches during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

⁷ Uprooted trees floating on the water.

⁸ The description given here meets the strictly technical definition of a "flatboat" commonly used on midwestern rivers before the flood tide of steamboats and railroads. Most boats of this type were, of course, used in the Midwest for conveying goods to the New Orleans market. Seymour Dunbar, *A History of Travel in America* (New York, 1937), chs. 16-17, contains a good account of the flatboat era; also illustrations.

heavy timber or came; the latter ar moste butifull; the Islands cut up the River in numourous slooses making the navigation rather dangers to those not acquainted with the River, as he would be as apt to take the wrong side of an Island as the right:⁹ Not aney of our company was acquainted with the River below Knoxville, and as we had not the means to spair to hire a Pilot, got a chart of the Boatman with the Islands and shoals laide down, and directions which way to take and conclu[d]ed to riske it; left Knoxville 2 day morn on the 26th, our crew a Presbeterian, wife, and family, Sister, Robert, selfe, H Brideleman & P White young men of Sullivan County, the 3 men of Green[e]¹⁰ making a working crew of 8 men; we now divide our time 4 serving from sun rise, to sun rise, that is 24 hours duty when no winde or shoals; have but little to do, but at others times, have to work verry harde, to keep the boats from striking the banks; nearly all covered with large leaning trees; had a very windy time but run on to Luavill [Louisville],¹¹ making a run of about 40 miles found 3 trading boats there; all formeing a fine little social boat town; all Cut out by sun rise, on th 27th 2 of our trading friends lashed together, taking the lead got on to Blairs ferrey; run about 40 miles; 28th delaided by winds, untill about 2 A N run on untill after midnight, we tracking our trading friends closely, rounding Islands runing through narrow channals &c, got on to the Mouth of Clinch River near Kingston; run perhaps 40 miles, 29th much to our regret had to leave our trading friends; they not being ready to start on now, got under way about 10 in the morn, run untill 10 at night; suppose made a run of 40 miles 30th Cut out early run on untill moon down about 11 at night landed in the Brush within 18 miles of Chatanuga;¹² this matter of landing a boat after night is a very nice and difficult matter; 2 things are nesary in Choosing a point of landing; edy watter a[nd] a bank clear of leaning trees, by, the by, places verry harde to finde; 31st run on to Chatanuga, a great place of trade,¹³ found maney

⁹ This well describes the Tennessee River as it was before establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

¹⁰ Greene County. ¹¹ Louisville, Tennessee, below Knoxville.

¹² Chattanooga, Tennessee.

¹³ Then a river town of about 2,000 inhabitants. In Zella Armstrong, *The History of Hamilton County and Chattanooga, Tennessee* (Chattanooga, 1931), I, ch. 10, there is a brief history of the development of Chattanooga from a mere trading post—Ross's Landing—in 1837 to a bustling town in 1849 at which time it was served by the Western and Atlantic Railway.

boats at this point, one that was going right on to the mouth of Tennessee River; verry clever man, agreed to go on in companey, got a man on board who lives near the sucke,¹⁴ who agreed to Pilot us through for 1,00 landed near his house just above the Suck late in the night; found 3 boats there; soon after our companions boat came in; in the night a great storme of winde come up which coused our boat to twist and skreack [?] at a great rate, the Ideas of breaking loos and Floating down in the suck, at night was not verry comfortable so the Parson & Robert got up and give it an extra cable; 4th month 1st got our Pilot aboard and started for the suck; which I will now describe at this point the whole of the Tenness River is forced through the Cumberland Mountain, compress^d in a verry narrow channal: and is indeed a mighty rush of waters, for about 4 miles dashing, and whirling at a fearful rate, juste below this is the boiling pot, with edies on each side, in which, if a boat unfortunatly getts it is nearly impossiable to get out,¹⁵ we got through all safe; got in Company with the other boat run on untill late in the night, had to stop on account of high wind, run our boats in a Clu[m]p of willows making all crack [?] again, succeed in Checking the head way of the boat, and cabled to the willows, 4[th month]—2nd [day] started again in Company of the other boat; passed this day in Alabamia; fine looking Country, many new kind of birds, one large black birde, they call the water turkey a black looking thing like duck, only larger, then there is a new kind of Buzard their wings tipped with white, all is like summer now; I can not decribe to you the butifull country, we have and are passing through, the noble Tennessee, itts high banks, rich bottoms, fine Islands &c, you would have no idea of the vallue of this fine rich Country of land, and would be equally astonished, that so little of is [it] is improved, or put under cultivation. The finest kind of rich Islands containing thousands on thousands of acres, one unbroken forest with an under groth of cane, this cane is from ten to 60 feet high and presents the most butifull appearance, and then the deep still runing water under the high clifts; much indeed have I enjoyed the

¹⁴ The "Suck"—or as it was also called, the "Whirl," a part of which is called the "Boiling Pot"—is the stretch of the Tennessee River which, as stated subsequently in the letter, passes through the Cumberland Mountains. There the river is very narrow, deep, swift, and treacherous.

¹⁵ A vivid description of the Suck appears in John Donelson's "Journal of a Voyage," *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country* (Johnson City, Tennessee, 1928), edited by Samuel Cole Williams, 236-37.

trip thus far,¹⁶ but I will leave Sister to describe these things, but to returne, stoped at Belfont¹⁷ where we had the pleasure of finding some of our Carter friends,¹⁸ with a boat, run on, untill the wind rose made a good landing in the mouth of a Creek: 3rd started early and after a boasters time got on to Decatar¹⁹ a fine looking place about 10 in the morning; left there and run on near the head of the Muscel shoals,²⁰ got a Pilot for each boat at an expense of 10,00 each, here the river widens out about 2 miles, is verry rappid, intersperced with perhaps 200 Islands, and tow heads, the navigation is verry dangerous, much more so that we expected, and to make maters worse, a brisk wind blowing; and the River low, it is 30 miles through and all has to be done in a fue hours; the currents set in evry direction, so our Pilots had to be nearly constantly shifting their Course, making a nea[r]ly constant pull at the bow oars ne[ce]ssary to give it head way; we had like to have been washed down; in the midst of the shoals we passed a Cotton Boat just wrecked, it was in the midst of the rappid, right in our course, and it was with difficulty our Pilots run paste with out striking; their boat at a critical moment, had been rendered unmanageable by the wind, hit on a rouck, and was stove; they f[l]oated the cotton off; we got through safe, and was truly thankfull for our preservation; we run on to Florrence, the finest town we had seen, fine bridge over the Tennessee, magnetic Tenegrafe [telegraph] crosses her[e] on itts way to New Orlens; being all tired laide by here untill morne; I forgot to say lefte our Friend of the other boat above the shoals, he being detained in the night, did not overtake; perhaps detained not being able to get a Pilot through the shoals; now only one more danger[ou]s shoal ahead, vis colberts some 40 miles; got

¹⁶ This stretch of river passes through northern Alabama.

¹⁷ Bellefonte, northeastern Alabama. This place does not appear on modern maps. It did, however, figure in Civil War military operations around Chattanooga. The place appears on the cover pocket military map in James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States* (New York, 1899).

¹⁸ Probably refers to friends from Carter County, Tennessee.

¹⁹ Decatur, Morgan County, Alabama.

²⁰ Muscle Shoals, originally rapids in the Tennessee River near Florence, Alabama, now is the site of Wilson Dam. John Donelson, heading the first party to explore this part of the river, wrote in his "Journal," *op. cit.*, 239: "I know not the length of this wonderful shoal: . . . we must have descended very rapidly, as indeed we did, for we passed it in about three hours." During the summer when the water was low, the Shoals could not be passed. The spring of the year was most suited for navigating the Shoals, but even then only with the aid of pilots. Thomas P. Abernethy, *The Formative Period in Alabama* (Montgomery, 1922), 75.

directions of our Pilot, but unfortunately we did not reach it untill about midnight; and being directed to pass 2 Isaalands to the lefte we where [were] tolde wrong, or those on duty, did not see one, so when we got to the shoals, insted of leaving the Iisland to the left, and keeping to the right bank, we went to the left, and soon where [were] in the breakers, abounding with tow heads, and rouck, Robert, and selfe, with part of the crew, then had worke, as much, as possiable to remedy the eivel, and avoid the dangers and got through safe; no doubt we where in more danger here, than in the Mucel shoals, but where preserved; now we are moveing on night, and day this is the 9 th day of the month, and we want to reach Paduca²¹ by 5 day morne next if possiable; laste night it was my turne to steer, and I can not describe the sceine; a most butifull moon light night, the high clifts, or mountains, we where pasing through, the smooth water, not ruffled by a breath of winde; when we come to an Island now we can go either side with out danger, 1 st day of the week on the Steam Boat Fulton perhaps 40 miles from Independence²² I will again resume my pen as in all Probability we will get to Independence some time to night we got to Paduca at the mouth of the Tennessee on the 13th²³ had like to have got run over by a steam boat one verry foggy morne we had run all night and just after day we he[a]rd it but not thinke it was so near; they got moste to us before we was discovered; stoped their wheel still having so much head way struck one boat with considerable forse so much so it split the gnnell [gunwale] of our boat; we considered it a great escape we left Paduca 7th day near dark in the steamboat washington²⁴ for St Lewis, it took us 2 nights and 1 day; I forgot to say Paduca is a fine place; and one mile from there on the Tennessee River is a great manufacturing town Rising up,

²¹ Paducah, Kentucky, at the confluence of the Tennessee and Ohio rivers. Paducah was then emerging into city stature, and because of its proximity to four large navigable rivers—the two above named and the Cumberland and Mississippi—this place was an important trans-shipment point. In 1849 steamboats made regular and frequent runs between Paducah and St. Louis and on west to Independence. [Federal Writers' Project] *Kentucky* (New York, 1939), 223.

²² Independence was a principal jumping-off place for the overland trek to the California gold fields.

²³ This was April 13. Exactly 32 days had been involved in this flatboat journey down the full length of the Tennessee River. The average daily distance traveled was slightly over 20 miles.

²⁴ In Charles H. Ambler, *Transportation in the Ohio Valley* (Glendale, Calif., 1932), opp. 174, appears an illustration of a steamship *Washington*. It might be the one referred to here.

colled Jersey Citty owned and built by a Company from New Jersey near Mount Holley; one of them by the naime of Humes; Thease steam boats are very large and fitted up in co[n]siderable stile and are in fact great moveing [hotels ?]* There was about 150 passengers on the washington; we had to stay at St Lewis 2 days and one night it is a great Citty²⁵ the steam boats where closely wedged at the w[h]arfe for about 2 miles; and comeing and going evry little while; and such an amount of bussiness done was realy astonishing; this is great point the steam boats run here and then unload when othe[r] boats bound up the Missipia Missouri and other Rivers take the loads, the consequence is the wharfe or Levee presents a sceine of noise and confusion harde to describe; we reshaped on the Missoure boat Alexander Hammelton and started on the eving of the 17th and have now been about 6 days the navigation of the Misasipee and Missoure is verry difficult is verry rappid abounds with snags sawers and bars wrecks are frequent we have been on maney bars but they got the boat off about 10 or 15 died dailey at St Lewis with the Cholara²⁶ we where toldde we have 2 cases on this boat one was taken in the morn and about midnight they took him ashoar and burried him; a vasete maney are on their way to Califo[r]nia we have about 250 passengers aboard mostly Callifornians with their waggons; our boat has just landed to put out some loading there is a large Missisee boat here with about 200 on board it can not go up no furthur being too large and the pasengers want to go up on ours I am in hopes the C^t [Captain] will not let them as they have the Cholra verry bad amongst them is [it] is saide at our Campe on the banks of the Missoura River near Independence 4th moth 24th we got here about Midnight, night before laste, and was truly thankfull once more to be landed safe on shore; and off of that crouded boat which was verry disagreeable, after taking so maney more on board from that other boat; we will stay here a few days, and then move our Campe 1 mile the other side of Independence; where the other Tennessee friends are; Sister is much pleased with her trip thus far, and will write to Cousen Mary, in a fue days,

* Word torn out of paper.

²⁵ In 1849 St. Louis was, of course, the leading western mercantile and outfitting center.

²⁶ St. Louis was very hard hit by the 1849 cholera epidemic. By July, 1849, from 4,500 to 6,000 deaths out of a population of less than 70,000 had occurred. Steamboats, crowded with '49ers, were among the worst of carriers, according to J. S. Chambers, *The Conquest of Cholera* (New York, 1938), 238-39.

we wante to starte on our longe journey over the Plains about the 10th of next month;²⁷ if the grass will do; we have come now about two thousand miles, by water; and have yet to go 2 thousand by lande;²⁸ we want to get to our journeys end by the laste of the 8 th month; but some say it will take to the laste of the 9 th month; farewell; give my love to all; we will write if favorred to get to Callifornia Your Cousen
C Reeve

B.

LETTER written by Rebecca Reeve and addressed to her cousin, Mary W. Ely, Medford, Burlington County, New Jersey. It is principally a detailed account of the experiences, hardships, and disasters encountered while entering the Sacramento Valley by way of the Lassen Road during the late summer and fall, 1849.

Sacramento City. California—December 30th 1849

Dear Cousin

With what feelings of happiness could I adress a letter to thee now, my first from this pleasant City, this City grown up as if by magic,¹ this the end of our long and tedious journey, This our resting place and I expect future home, If we could number *three*, but Ah my Cousin, brother R and myself only lived to reach the end of our journey.—I have to nerve myself to look back and relate to thee the horrible death of our dear brother Clayton. I wish the task were not mine. I seem to almost feel the terrible arrows of the savage Indians piercing me as they pierced our dear brother.—He was indeed killed by them, killed by some of the most fierce and Savage tribe in

²⁷ This would be May 10, in good season for beginning the overland journey. Parties were compelled to await recession of swollen streams and the presence of sufficient grass for forage.

²⁸ The distance by water would be nearer 1,500 than 2,000 miles; the overland route taken by the Reeve party was over 2,000 miles. The total estimated distance of 4,000 miles is not far wrong.

¹ Sacramento was one of the first interior California cities to emerge as a result of the gold rush. Its nucleus was New Helvetia—John Sutter's Fort; its *raison d'être*: a Sacramento River supply depot for the northern mines. In January, 1849, Sacramento was in the lot-selling stage; in December, when the author arrived, it was a bustling city of tents, brick and frame houses and shops. Along the Embarcadero were numerous business establishments, and steamers operated regularly between this place and San Francisco. The population of Sacramento as of December, 1849, has been estimated at 4,000. H. H. Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco, 1884-90), VI, 447-51n.

North America. The Clamath Indians, of Clamath lake, Oregon.²—over at their hunting and fishing grounds upon Pit river, upper California, where the emigration passed.³—We were in the Train of Gen.

² The reference here is to the Klamath Indians who inhabited the Upper Klamath Lake region of south-central Oregon. But in later correspondence the attacking Indians are more definitely identified as the Modocs, linguistic brethren of the Klamath, whose holdings lay between the Lower Klamath and Tule lakes and the watershed of the Pit River (northern California). The route followed by the Reeves skirted Modoc country; and as to the hostile and treacherous character of the Indians there, the famed Modoc War, 1873, is one lasting, grim reminder. Before the coming of the whites, the Modocs habitually raided the Pit River area during which they slaughtered men, and took captive the women and children for sale on The Dalles, Oregon, slave market. The Modocs generally may be regarded as the most warlike of all California Indian tribes and at all times a serious menace to American immigrants and pioneers. A. L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Washington, 1925), 318-20. For cultural characteristics of the Modoc Indians, consult Erminie W. Voegelin, *Culture Element Distributions: XX Northeastern California* (Berkeley, 1942).

³ The route followed from Independence, Missouri, across the plains had been the Oregon, or California, Trail. But instead of following this trail all the way to Sacramento, the Reeves entered upon a widely used cut-off which began at a big bend on the Humboldt River northeast of the alkali Carson Sink. The turn-off place was called Lassen Meadow; the route followed was variously known as the Lassen Road, Lassen Cut-off, Lassen Trail, and Northern Route. It was also called by some, and later in this letter is referred to as, the Cherokee cut-off—so called because a "Captain Evans' Company" from Arkansas had passed through Cherokee Indian territory and on its last lap had taken the Lassen Road.

The first section of the Lassen Road passed across northwestern Nevada to the south end of Goose Lake (northeastern California) to which point the road was also a part of the South, or Applegate, Road leading into Oregon. From Goose Lake the Lassen Road dropped south and for 60 miles followed the rugged upper Pit River which stream according to [H. B.] *Scharman's Overland Journey to California* (n.p., n.d.), 39, was crossed and re-crossed no less than eleven times. Then through the lava bed area east of Mt. Lassen the route dropped south to Big Meadows at the headwaters of the Feather River; thence west along a ridge separating Deer Creek and Mill Creek to Lassen's Rancho on the Sacramento River. Lassen's Rancho may be designated as lying roughly halfway between Chico and Redding, California.

The Lassen Road was extremely treacherous, and the Indian menace was generally recognized. The route was followed by great numbers, partly through promotion by Peter Lassen who operated a supply post at his rancho, and partly through geographical ignorance which confused the Pit River with the Feather River, the latter stream being the goal of many of the miners. Immigrants often referred to Lassen Road as the "Death Route" and sarcastically as "Lassen's Horn Route"—as much a cut-off as Cape Horn would have been. Writes Asa Merrill Fairfield, the region's pioneer historian: "In fact, wagons, etc., were left all along the road. Their teams gave out or died, or were stolen by the Indians; and they had to leave their wagons, and go on the best they could. Some cut their wagons in two, and made carts out of parts of them; and on these they hauled their families and what little else they could." Asa Merrill Fairfield, *Fairfield's Pioneer History of Lassen County, California* (Susanville, California, 1916), 3-10.

Says Alonzo Delano, who had followed this route the same 1849 season: "the Indians were excessively bold and troublesome." A. Delano, *Life on the Plains and Among the Diggings* (Auburn and Buffalo, 1854), 210. See also *The Maps of the California Gold Region, 1848-1857*, edited by Carl I. Wheat (San Francisco, 1942). The best treatment

Row⁴ of Ohio, a fine gentlemanly set, as crossed the plains. The train had encamped upon the river.—I will explain cousin though I would gladly not refer, or let my thoughts dwell one moment on a scene so full, so overflowing full of grief, of of [*sic*] terror and distress.—Brothers obsrved in the early morning one of their wheels needed some little repairing, and remained to do it, The train passed on slowly, though some of them would have remained with us had brothers wished it. I did wish them to stay fearing to be by ourselves, as we had been so often warned to keep with the train that it was not safe to be in small companies, but brothers had so often laughed at my fears, I said nothin that morning only to beg them not to stay behind.—In an hours time we were ready to pass on to overtake the train then five miles ahead of us. we were more than a half mile from our camping ground, when Cleyton⁵ obsrved he had left his fishing line upon the bank and would run back, and soon overtake us, he reached the spot and we heard a loud cry of distress, brother R⁶ ran immediately, I after him as fast as possible,—brother R had almost reached the spot, he saw at a glance they had killed our dear brother, he was filled with arrows. a savage lay [w]rap [p]ed in his blanket on the ground ready for us. he saw all this then turned and saw me very near, and ran to save me, well knowing if I got a sight of Cleyton nothing would stop me. he took my arm and hurried me back as fast as possible, to the wagon, it would not do the animals were to slow, the savages would overtake us, we quit the wagon, left all for them, and ran for our lives. I was ready to drop with grief, terror, and fatigue, we followed the mountain sides, where they would not lay concealed so well, avoiding the river and its thick hedge of low willows. brother wished

of this route is found in *Gold Rush: The Journals, Drawings, and Other Papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff*, edited by Georgia Willis Read and Ruth Gaines (New York, 1944), I, 567-70n.; II, 1222-27, Appendix. The Bruff party was not far ahead of the Reeves. Rebecca Reeve later refers to having left the Humboldt, or Mary's, River, and entered the Lassen Road on September 22; the Bruff party evidently was at this point September 19th. See *ibid.*, I, 291. Hereafter cited as Bruff, *Journals*.

⁴ General George Rowe, native of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, had moved to Marion County, Ohio, where he was admitted to the bar and where he practiced law until 1849. After traveling overland to California in this year he first settled in Downieville, then resumed his law practice in Marysville. Information on General Rowe was kindly provided by Mabel R. Gillis, California State Librarian, Sacramento, California. See also Earl Ramey, "The Beginnings of Marysville," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XV (March, 1936), 28, 29, 33.

⁵ Clayton Reeve, brother of Rebecca Reeve, author of this letter.

⁶ Robert Reeve, brother of Rebecca.

to hide me in the rocks, for I was ready to drop, I would not stay, too well I knew we were watched from the wild heights around, he thought by doing this he could overtake the train sooner and get assistance.—When three and a half miles we saw a gentleman of the train upon the bank below he had his gun in search of game—he took the care of me as a kind brother, in a short time we met Robert returning with Gen Row and half of the train. The Physician met me, everything was prepared for me at the encampment. they were a band of brothers sending little delicacies into the tent to tempt me to eat, they tried to comfort me, I could take no comfort, but cried and called for my brother.—In the darkness of night we heard the signal gun, they were coming with our departed brother, we were in one of the very wildest mountain passes of California, their way was difficult and dangerous by night. they came up with the wagon and animals, in it lay our dead brother.—on their return to the spot where he was killed they found all standing in the road as we had left it. the savages saw us run, and thought assistance was near, as a tribe they are fierce as the wild hyenas, but sly and cowardly, the sight of a gun terrifies them, and they fly.—our dear brother, (Cousin it makes me turn sick even now with horror and sadness,) our dear inoffensive brother was shot through and through with eighteen of their horrible arrows, some had passed entirely through him and out again others in withdrawing them always left the terrible, pointed head within his body. Cousin I must stop for I cannot not go over it more.—In the morning his grave was made beneath a large pine, he was laid out in the tent of Gen R.—Oh the brotherly kindness of all the train we will never forget, even then some had to stand out on guard to watch the animals. the Indians were scaling the wild heights, this was their strong hold this long Narrow mountain pass. It seemed as if I could not give my brother up, and to leave him there, there in that terrible place, all alone, though in Heaven we hoped, yet his lonely grave, there with his murderers, and we must pass on and leave him Cousin I thought it would kill me.—We saw him in the deep cold grave, they placed his name and manner of death at the head, his name was carved in large letters upon the tree.—and a notice above it, a warning to emigrants, those coming on behind us,— — — — For more than a week the savages haunted us they followed the train, strict guard was kept every night.—the trees in the immense forest round

were set on fire, that they could be seen if they approached.—Next morning a gun, and a call was heard from one of the guards upon the hill above, of Indians they were driving away the animals, as many as could leave the encampment—in safety went with rifles in persuit, they had got some distance but seeing they were persuid fled.—They had twelve oxen, *four of our best*, but all were recovered.—These Indians caused great distress they stole hundreds of the animals of the emigrants, leaving them desolate with no way to persue their journey, woman and children left to travel on foot, they killed men at every opportunity men going out to look up their oxen would return no more—five young men in persuit of some they had stolen were never heard of after brother R and myself but just escaped with our lives. or me worse than a thousand deaths, Captivity among this horrid tribe.—Cousin now the very name of Indian is enough for me, I hate the sight of them, I dislike them of every tribe upon the earth, I turn away from them with sickning horror.—Cousin my former letters and extracts from my journal, was all the sunny side of the picture, all happiness—now I must give thee the dark side, the side filled with the suffering and distress of *hundreds*.—It was all bright and smooth till just upon entering upon the first desert, at the large pasture grounds upon Humbolt, or St Mary river⁷ where all paused to prepare hay for the desert.—The whole emigration had intended going by the sinks of Marys river,⁸ but there were cards put up at this pasture ground, addressed to the Captains of different trains, that there was a new rout discovered a great cut off, that is it shortened the distance very mutch, and instead of two deserts as on the other way, this had only 30 miles desert,—It took with large trains immediatly,, and companies of every discription, half the emigration changed their minds to come

⁷ The Humboldt was first called Mary's River, so named for the squaw wife of Peter Skene Ogden of the Hudson's Bay Company who probably discovered the river. Today a tributary of the Humboldt is called St. Mary, but the reference here is doubtless made to the main river. Effie Mona Mack, *Nevada* (Glendale, 1936), 41; Dale L. Morgan, *The Humboldt* (New York, 1943), 4.

⁸ The place referred to here is doubtless Carson and Humboldt sinks, alkaline lakes with no outlets, which are midway between Lassen Meadow and Carson City. This portion of the main California trail was the most dreaded; to Mark Twain it "was one prodigious graveyard." Knowledge of the Carson Sink area may well have influenced the Reeves to take their chances on the less familiar Lassen Road. See [Mark Twain], *Roughing It* (New York, 1904), I, 160. For a good modern map see Irene D. Paden, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner* (New York, 1944), 404.

this way, It was called the Cherokee cutoff.⁹ every one prepared ample quantity of hay for the thirty miles, we were (the directions said) to enter upon the desert soon after entering upon the Oregon road.¹⁰—we passed on cheerfully not dreaming of danger or deception.—Here Cousin I will refer to my journal—But first will lead thee on through California, and down the Sacramento, to the completion of our journey, *One week over nine months*,¹¹—We got over the Sierra Nevada very well.—In the very steep ascent near the top of the mountain nine yoke of Oxen were attached to the wagons. The view from the summit was undiscribly beautiful, down into the valley of California lovely with a bordering of pine forest, the finest growth of immense pines, Balsams, and other varieties quite new to us, with the valley clothed with a rich growth of grass looking in the distance so soft and tinted as if the painters brush had passed over it.—But I must hasten on, *I could be happy* then we had our lamented brother with us.—We thought all our troubles over, that our journey was nearly ended. Ah little did all the travellers upon that road know what was before them. we had been most dreadfully deceived.—On the day following we met the Government train, a train sent by the Gov of California with provisions for the emigrants.¹² all had a sufficient supply for the journey, but this rout instead of shortening the distance (added we were informed by that train) *three hundred and fifty miles* consequently many were getting short of provisions. they also informed us the road was rocky and hilly, and the way upon another desert we must cross, was difficult, and that *we must by all means keep in large companies, as the indians were troublesome and dangerous*. Ah could my brothers only have been less fearless.—Our train reached the branch of Feather river. here we were to provide hay for this desert.—enough was prepared then we had quite a *fall of snow*. It continued to snow occasionally,

⁹ Lassen's Road. See note 3 for explanation.

¹⁰ Oregon immigrants traveling the South, or Applegate, Road followed the main California Trail from Fort Hall to Lassen Meadow; from here to Goose Lake they followed the Lassen Road; thence over a separate trail to southern Oregon. Buena Cobb Stone, "Southern Route into Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, XLVII (June, 1946), 135-54.

¹¹ Many immigrant trains completed the journey in six months. In order to avoid heavy snowfall in the Sierra Nevada Mountains the journey should have been completed in early October.

¹² This relief party was headed by Major Daniel Henry Rucker. A depot was established by Rucker on the Feather River. Bruff, *Journals*, I, 221-23, 342.

this chilled and injured the animals so much they died one after another, the grass was covered with snow, the hay must be fed out to preserve their lives.—we continued on two days, so many oxen in the train died wagons had to be abandoned. at length near Deer¹³ creek the train had to abandon wagons and property, to pack the most valuable articles upon the five remaining animals, and try to pass through the snow.—Cousin I will tell thee the plain truth to prevent all others of my friends from being so fearfully disceaved.—We encamped for the night near Deer Creek it was snowing fast. Encampments were around us,—We heard the Government train would be up in the evening with the emigrants whose animals had been stolen by the Indians, and had died. *We were only two then*, our brother died upon Pit river,—brother R had a large fire prepared in front of our tent to warm them on their arrival, At length we saw them descending the hill, and such a sight I had never beheld. the wagons and the Carrage of General Wilson¹⁴ were drawn by Government mules.—men woman and Children wading through the snow, wet and chilled. among these were the wife and daughters of Gen Wilson, the Indian and Naval agent, sent out by Gen Taylor with a splendid outfit, and more than a hundred picked animals. They had all died. Government mules brought their carrage, and some little remaining property, on.¹⁵—What a mass of human beings they crouded round the glowing fire we made them welcome, they filled the tent.—The train encamped near by.—we were preparing to leave our last remaining wagon, a (light travelling wagon it was) our other had to be left with many of our comforts upon the first desert.—We had five animals left, these were to be packed with *some* of our clothing &c.—The Captain of the Government train gave me one of

¹³ This was the last stretch of the Lassen Road before reaching Lassen Rancho. See note 3.

¹⁴ General John Wilson. For details see note 15.

¹⁵ General John Wilson, Missouri, had been appointed Special Agent for California Indians by President (General) Zachary Taylor, to whom Wilson was related. Wilson had left Missouri with his family well equipped with wagons and mules. But in the severe storm encountered on Lassen Road all his mules had been lost and the General's family was left to travel on foot until relief came. Wrote General Wilson in a letter, 1850: "It snowed & rained alternately for 14 days & nights on us, before we reached Sacramento valley at old Peter Lassens, during which I feel sure 20 feet of snow fell on us." Frederic A. Culmer, "California Letter of John Wilson, 1850," *The Missouri Historical Review*, XXIV (January, 1930), 202. See also Bruff, *Journals*, I, 465-66, 621.

the strongest and finest mules of his train to ride. It was particularly kind of him many ladies had to walk, the whole train were so kind and interested for us. Gen W's family included, some of them helped us pack till the last moment. the train was to pass on in the early morning. I requested to travel with my brother, the Captain said I should travel any way I wished.—We left our tent filled with valuable clothing and treasures I grieved to part with. we could not take them, our animals would give out with their burthen—beautiful dresses, bonnets, my treasured books, table linnen and valuables of all kinds, these with all our trunks must be left, but we were better off than those around us they had left almost every thing in their wagons, they had far less than we had packed upon our animals.—we left all in our tent a lady her son and daughter would pack every thing away for us in the wagon and close it up. this gentleman told me he and some of his friends, seeing my brothers grave were so exasperated agains the indians, they led a party on in the night to their signal fires, and killed twelve of them. Till the last moment they helped us, they with a large company upon the hill above had to remain till an other train of mules came on, The Cattain [Captain] starting that morning express for them and more provisions, he was to travel day and night. It was fifty miles to the first settlements in the valley—We passed this encampment in the morning, Here were Gen W and his family, with a croud of men, woman, and children, some sick with scarce a shelter, having to leave their tents behind them, here was an open carrage with one man dead, an other dying, the storm beating down upon both as they lay nearly side by side, here were dead Oxen in great numbers, and dying mules streched all around,—but we must hasten on for our lives.—Our train had abandoned all thei[r] wagons and property except a little clothing, and provisions. these were packed upon their remaining animals. we passed on in a long line our packed animals first, our friends with Robert on foot following them mysilf upon my good firm mule.—we were travelling through snows *two and a half feet in depth* with a narrow pathway. It was snowing fearfully,—How anxiously we journeyed on, many of the animals giving out,—we had three left.—The second day we decended rapidly all the day, we were coming down from these snowy hights to the valley below, when at length

in the afternoon to our great delight we reached the Oak timber,¹⁶ with the snow all gone, with a sunny smiling valley below, very *lovely* in appearance, It had been a long time since we had seen Oak trees, not for months had we seen them. I must hasten on,—the rains in the valley (for winter had set in unusually early,) had made the roads almost impassible, now instead of snows, we had to contend with deep mud,¹⁷ the animals would mire down, it was dangerous to try to pass along it was dangerous to remain, but hasten on before the rains fairly set in. For our lives had we pushed out of the snows, and now was it equally dangerous.—But with patience and great perseverance we at length reached the first Ranche, P Davis's¹⁸ a Ranche is the spanish term given to a collection of houses, that is a house with outbuildings in connection with a large portion of land.—This was the home of P Davis, he emigrated from the states last year, lost nearly every thing on the journey, but is now very rich, with large tracts of land, here we found quite a village of tents. The tents of the emigrants scattered all around, The rains had so inundated the country it was impossible to get further except by men on foot,—Here we must then remain, but here, as throughout the entire journey we found none but friends, friends among strangers. they had heard of us they said, and were ready to show us every kindness.—We remained here two weeks, many pleasant ladies of my acquaintance, were also staying here, Then Robert got a small boat and fitted out to travel journey down the Sacramento river, Every one said the river was very dangerous to navigate, the boat was small, they said it would not do to take me, I begged to go with Robert but he feared to take me, I was not happy to remain behind even for a few weeks, and so feared Robert would be wrecked. In

¹⁶ May be identified as the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, before approaching the Sacramento Valley.

¹⁷ The notoriously wet winter of 1849-50 is referred to in other contemporary accounts of this season. See Henry Ward, "Staging in Central California," Ms., Stanford University Library. See also John Walton Caughy, *California* (New York, 1940), 17.

¹⁸ This was Peter J. Davis, a native of North Carolina who with his family arrived in California in the overland migration of 1848 and established a ranch near Lassen's on Deer Creek. Describing his feelings upon seeing the Davis house, Alonzo Delano wrote in his *Life on the Plains*, 232: "Although it was a simple abode, standing within a rough paling [along the bank of Deer Creek], it was the first peaceful dwelling of civilized man which I had seen for months." See also H. H. Bancroft's "Pioneer Register and Index," Bancroft, *California*, II, 776n.; Bruff, *Journals*, II, 1024, 1046.

two weeks after Dr Walker¹⁹ and family (in whose train we had travelled some time) prepared to go down in a large boat then building, and wished me to go with them, to the City.—We started head winds tossed us about for near two weeks, the river rose very high with the rains, almost the whole country was inundated. we could scarce find ground sufficiently high to encamp upon at night.—twice we were wakened before day by the waves dashing up into our tents and then all had to retreat to the boat, a company of twenty two,—the water surrounded us, our fuel for the stove in this Ark of ours was cut from the trees above our heads, here we spent a day and a night.—(Our pilot or Navigator a very fine man from New Jersey who had but just arrived a few weeks before, and Came round Cape Horn,) had the boat fitted up with many oars. we came with locomotive speed upon the rapid current It is one hundred and fifty miles by land, three hundred and fifty by water. I do not believe there is sutch an other very winding river in the world. the almost sircles and half sircles it makes sometimes are wonderful to look at.—some of the country upon its banks is fine and beautiful, lovely situations for towns and farms upon the very high grounds.—Indian villages, or Rancharees as they are termed, in great number upon its banks, Cousin I hate the very sight of an indian now, of every race and tribe.—Fremont is a pleasant town thirty miles above this city, Virnon²⁰ a village just opposite to it on the other side of the river, boats were plying about the streets of the latter, it was inundated by water,—this City is situated at the junction of the American fork, with the Sacramento two miles from Suters fort²¹ and 60 from San Francisco, It has grow up with astonishing rapidity and is improving rappidly. It now has twelve thousand inhabitants,²² one hundred only are females. It is [?] so exposing at the different mines a great many

¹⁹ Not identified.

²⁰ Vernon, California, at the mouth of the Feather River; a rival town of Fremont. Owen C. Coy, "Paper Towns and Easy Money," *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association* (1928), 112-13.

²¹ Sutter's Fort was built by John Sutter, a Swiss-American, on a small creek flowing into the American River near the confluence of the latter stream and the Sacramento River. It was begun in 1839. This establishment was also referred to as New Helvetia. At Sutter's sawmill, at Coloma, gold was discovered by James W. Marshall, January 24, 1848. It was Marshall's discovery that occasioned the great California gold rush. Later the city of Sacramento grew up around the Fort. Bancroft, *California*, VI, 12-14.

²² This number is probably too large, although it is difficult to estimate the size of the floating population. See note 1.

have left them to winter here, Hotels, some very splendidly kept ones, and eating houses are in consequence almost numberless.—The City presents a novel appearance with the hundreds of tents and Canvas houses scattered throughout, persons wishing to have an occupant claim to a lot for a house will place a tent or house upon it, have it entered pay ten dollars and it is theirs.—then they live in these tents or houses till they have time to put up a fine one, the canvas houses, are white as snow. some of them quite pretty, a frame covered with thick canvass to turn the rain. there are several churches, one theatre, and the Lavee is lined with a long line of shipping steam ships &c— as many as at the Philadelphia wharves.—these with the steamers all came this year by Cape Horn, the latter are very large and splendid vessels. they ply constantly between this and San Francisco— This is destined to be a great City, it is in some parts overflowed with the high waters but as there will be a Lavee all round, to extend to Suters Fort it will not be so next winter.—Also below this two miles is Sutersville,²³ it also is rapidly improving,—The Society here will be fine some of the finest inhabitants of the states have emigrated to California, these cluster round at the Cities and villages.—Winter now as it commenced unusually early, is considered nearly over. the winter unlike what we expected, is not a continuation of steady rains, It will rain two or three days but frequently the afternoons of those days are quite pleasant, they will be followed by several days clear, sometimes windey but often delightful,—now we have occasional showers like April, the birds are singing, the grass growing fresh and green.—it never snows here, the winters are mild, more pleasant than San Francisco there they are visited by cold high winds which makes it often very disagreeable, That City is a very fine one most of the houses are fine ones there is a large fleet of shipping in the Bay, a fire destroyed a large portion of the City quite lately,²⁴—

²³ In 1846 John Sutter, Jr., laid out Sutterville, three miles below Sutter's Fort on the Sacramento River. Its location was not as favorable for growth as was that of Sacramento which emerged during the gold rush days. Bancroft, *California*, VI, 15, 447.

²⁴ This refers to the first great San Francisco fire which broke out on the morning of December 24, 1849. The area south of Washington Street, between Montgomery and Kearney streets, was destroyed. Damage amounted to over one million dollars. Frank Soulé *et al.*, *The Annals of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1855), 241-42, 598-99. Hereafter cited as *Annals of San Francisco*.

Forty miles from that City is the seat of Government Puebla,²⁵ a fine town, the climate there is delightful, the winters still more pleasant than here. There the tropical fruits all grow The Gold mines continue inexhaustable, there are a great many of them.²⁶ Trinity mines are considered the richest but the dangerous Clamath Indians are around them, they will kill and steal when and [any?] opportunity comes before them. of Course Robert will never go to those, there are others almost eaqually good.—he will be in business and we will spend the winter here, this may be our home altogether. we have a home on a lot in a pleasant part of the City we will try, if they are not all taken up to have one upon the street fronting the Lavee,—We meet with a great number of our acquaintance here, acquaintance formed upon the journey and have many friends.— — A man is just crying along the streets, “New York papers fifty cents a piece. [”] the prices of some articles in this citty are tremendous Potatoes one dollar a pound, onions, one and a quarter, bread stufs are now down quite reasonable indeed we can live here cheap enough, and have the luxuries of life.²⁷ This is a very industrious City the sound of workman is constantly heard, houses going up rapidly some have made their fortunes and are taking their ease, without going to the mines, others have been to the mines and have returned here to spend the winter.— — One week has passed away I am now at the Morris house, sitting in a pleasant room writing, I was brought here last night.—the City is all inundated by water, last night as we were sitting quietly at our home, a gentleman came, and said he was sent by some of my friends to take me to a place of safety, that the water would soon surround us, and be up into our house, I was ready quickly, and accompanied by brother R an other gentleman and two ladies, we journeyed through the various streets of this City for near a mile brother having to carry me again and again through the deep rushing waters flowing along the streets, The gentleman guiding us with care with a lamp, we at length arrived at the Morris

²⁵ This was San Jose, the first California capital of the American period. The first legislature, called the “Legislature of a Thousand Drinks,” convened there December 15, 1849. San Jose lies 50 miles south of San Francisco. Oscar Osburn Winther, *The Story of San Jose, California's First Pueblo* (San Francisco, 1935), 28-30.

²⁶ For an account of mining operations consult Rodman W. Paul, *California Gold* (Cambridge, 1947), ch. 5.

²⁷ For a more detailed discussion of prices see *Annals of San Francisco*, 213-14; “California Letter of John Wilson,” *op. cit.*, 203-4, 209; Paul, *op. cit.*, 121-22.

house we were shown to a pleasant room, the gentleman were kind polished, and all politeness. the pirson who came for me though his face looks familiar yet, I do not think I have met with him before, he is a merchant of Boston of pleasing amiable manners. an other gentleman, who is sitting on the opposite side of the table writing to his wife in Boston, is most agreeable with manners polished, and most truly kind, he and the pirson who called for me own the house in connection I think, they seem to have a brotherly care over me.— Robert is I expect on board of one of the ships at the Levee, indeed arks are mutch needed here, boats are passing through the streets, each street is a rushing stream of water, and sutch a confused sound of voices below calling for boats, and trying to pass about, I never heard. the lower rooms of this house are all in the water, pirsons, (boarders) keep to the rooms above, while others are going in boats about on their kind errands of assistance.—Thousands and thousands of property will be lost by this inundation. and as it is raining fast no one knows when the waters will cease to raise.—yet this is destined to be a great City, The inhabitants knowing this will prepare for it—the houses will be raised high, and in winter at high tides, boats can ply about the streets.—in summer it will be very delightful here, and indeed in winter it is quite pleasant excepting these overflows. The rain instead of continuing every day as we expected, only lasts perhaps two or three days, and often the afternoons of these days are delightful.—Then it will clear away delightfully, and it is so mild, one scarcely needs fire.— — The City presents now a strange scene, of houses surrounded, some all the lower floors under water,—and a sorrowful one in the poor animals, thousands will be drowned poor creatures, Oxen a great many, poor animals have toiled through the journey now standing with the water high upon them, others drowned, and no help for the poor creatures men are continually going about in boats on their errands of kind assistance, to return those in distress.²⁸—This [is] a great country to make a fortune. quickly a fortune can be made at sutch a variety of ways without going to the mines, a man can make one at farming in a short time, there are splendid situations, land fine and easily cultivated, place a house upon it and it is yours, with a market here for any thing you

²⁸ The 1849 flood was the worst in Sacramento's history. The rainy season began in November; during Christmas the city was flooded; and not until January did the waters recede. Caughey, *California*, 17; Bancroft, *California*, VI, 453.

can raise, prices high for hay and all kinds of grain, vegetables &c, Indeed this is a great and splendid country, and instead, of meeting with the lawless set we heard of before starting on our journey, here are thousands of a fine class of people, respectable and seeming to wish to always act so as to be respected by all, a class of the first of some of the most honourable persons of the states, intelligence, honour, enterprise, and refinement of manner is only met with. and warmhearted kindness from perfect strangers at every turn, One week and a half has passed away, We are at the Morris house yet, the water continued to rise. rapidly, it was a rushing tide through the streets 4 or 5 feet in depth, boats passing in every direction, this street being a very publick one it is one scene of great activity. at night the boatman pass up and down singing the sailors songs, their profits are very great, as they charge 3 and 4 dollars for taking a person 3 or 4 squairs, There has been an immense loss of property, it is said a million and a half, the water rising up two feet in depth in the stores, goods were injured to a great amount, the water was 2 feet in depth on the lower floors of this house, the upper ones only are crowded, they have a great many boarders.—Our evening circle round the table, or through the day is varied and agreeable,— — — We have two German girls, well educated, they understand the french language &c The gentlemen are various in character, in disposition. but all highly gentlemanly. One a middle aged gentleman with polite social manners, is a German Baron, “The Baron of Heartenstein, [”] there are Castles bearing his name in Germany. he makes one in our evening circle every evening at his favourite amusement a game of Chess. He is very kind to me. in coming here that night I took a severe cold, each evening he brought me medicine till he quite cured my cold.—his wife an (American lady) is in the states. The variety of character I met with there quite amused me.—When the water Subsided and left the streets, gold could be found in nearly all of them throughout the City, strange as it may seem to you Cousin yet it is strictly true the rushing waters washing over the earth left this gold upon the surface glittering, It could be picked up in front of the Morris house, one piece worth forty cents, but generally smaller particles.—the bricks of their baking oven were made at Suters fort, the water was so high it washed this oven down, now the glittering particles of gold can be seen all over them, Also upon

the lower part of a brick house where it was washed by the water, can be seen countless particles of gold,²⁹ these bricks were also made at Suters fort, One man picked up nine dollars worth of gold in a short time an other washed out an ounce,—At the end of two weeks the waters had subsided so that we could again return to our homes. but yet tis very uncertain how many days we may be permitted to remain here, One severe rain sutch as the last I fear would be sufficient, It is lovely now mild and beautiful. but the wind this evening turns south, by tomorrow evening it may rain again, If there is an other overflow our retreat will be upon a ship just by, at the Levee. we will take a room there,—All the ships were crouded during this flood. A gentleman of our acquaintance called as soon as we returned told us he enquired for us again and again expecting us on their ship but could hear nothing from us.—Its strange but true durin the very hight of the flood lots were selling at a thousand dollars a lot.³⁰—They had an amusing tale out, that the auctionier cried them off from the top of one building and the buyers stood upon the roofs of buildings opposite.—But as there is to be a Lavee run round to secure the City they feel secure, for an other winters rains. Several steamers now run between this City and San Francisco. all large steam ships brought round Cape Horn, except one “The Elderado” a beautiful new one brought out, and put together at San F.— — — It came up the first trip a few days since crouded with passengers. and was recieved with tremendos cheering. each one comes crouded, San F.— is also full to overflowing.³¹—There is a fine City commenced and growing rappidly upon the Huber river, Called “Huber City” beside lots of others, we hear of towns commenced, a few weeks pass away and they are quite large, thee may believe me when I tell thee, But last June this place was a wild uninhabited portion of land containing one small log house only, now it is a busy City of fifteen thousand inhabitants. so many thousands of people crouding into California, upon every vessel and steamer, and the greater part of these wishing homes, it is not to be wondered at that these towns,

²⁹ Most likely she saw “fool’s gold.”

³⁰ Lots in Sacramento rose from \$50 to as much as \$3,000 during 1849. Bancroft, *California*, VI, 448n.

³¹ For a reliable account of steamship operations on the Sacramento River, see Jerry MacMullen, *Paddle-Wheel Days in California* (Stanford University, 1945). The *El Dorado*, 153 tons, was built in 1849.

and Cities spring up so like magic around in every direction,³²—One commenced out at Suters Fort just in sight of this City (but on high ground) *during the flood* the last I heard it was improving fast and had a fine house of entertainment put up, perhaps the next time I hear from it, or by next autumn at farthest it will be a City.— —Thee may suppose my strong wish to live in *this City* is somewhat lessened. We expect to leave it in a few weeks before the warm weather sets in, It is excessively warm here in summer, it is feared this flood extending over the land for so many miles round will cause sickness, when the waters all dry away in the spring, and Robert wishing to go to Mormon Island 25 miles from here upon the American fork we expect to go.³³ There is a town there, also a excellent gold mine, or gold washings, we have some friends there from Tennessee. they are anxious for us to come, and a Gentleman of this City will go in partnership with brother in a store, a store keeping all articles suited to those at the mines round, this will be very profitable, beside the gold washing—he will have that carried on at the same time.—Beside that Our friends are quite weary of keeping house by themselves and wish to board with us.—They are pleasant and agreeable, we are quite willing to have them, and beside as boarding is three dollars a day for each pirsion, it will count up fast, and be to our advantage. we will have a regular baker, and with other help my cares will only be enough to interest me, and will keep an excellent table, all the luxuries of life can be had at this city. As we only wish to spend the summer there, and there is no rain during the summer, our house will be a range of rooms of white canvass fitted up neatly they will be both pretty and pleasant.—A friend of ours from Tennessee, (a lawyer) says he also will go to the Island and would like to make his home with us.—Yow hear mutch of the wealth of the mines of California but nothing to eaqual the real truth, the golden treasures are abundant and inexhaustable. the mines are numerous, there is room

³² For an account of the rise of gold rush towns, many of which became ghost towns, see Coy, "Paper Towns and Easy Money," *op. cit.*, 103-25.

³³ Mormon Island, in the northeast corner of Sacramento County, marks the place of the second major gold discovery in California. Two Mormons enroute to Sutter's Mill made the discovery. For a time Samuel Brannan, the Mormon leader in California, maintained a preemption claim to the place and exacted royalties of all who dug gold at Mormon Island. Fire destroyed most of the town in 1853. H. E. and E. G. Rensch and Mildred Brooke Hoover, *Historic Spots in California: Valley and Sierra Counties* (Stanford University, 1933), 313-14.

and treasures for all, hundreds are there this winter, but it is too exposing and thousands leave till spring opens.³⁴—we see the snow-crowned mountains in the distance, but they do not affect us here, 'tis lovely as spring and we *hope* the rains are nearly over.— — — Prices are coming down for all kinds of provision,—fine Chili flour for 10 cents per pound. pilot bread ten cents,—but yet some articles are yet high. Potatoes 25 cents a pound, sweet potatoes 35 cents per pound. these are brought from the Sandwich Islands.—Eggs 8 *dollars a doz*, Butter a dollar and half a pound, cheese a dollar and a quarter.—but dollars are not valued here as they are with yow, these articles are bought up, but it is that makes boarding so high, one is obliged to have all these things for the table, and boarders must pay in proportion, three dollars a day is the invariable price of boarding, and no one complains, they can refill their purses at the mines.— — — milk is 50 cents a pint, one keeping cows—here could soon make a fortune. — — — The grapes of this valley are in the greatest abundance and most sweet and delicious.³⁵—As we came down the Sacramento they hung in immense masses upon the vines on the banks of the river.— — — There were a great many Grisley Bears, these animals are huge dangerous creatures. the grown ones are as large as a good sized ox, we could see their foot prints upon the earth around us, I could not cover one of them with both my hands spread out over it. so thee may judge of their paws.—The game brought to this market is fine. Wild cattle, this meat is tender and delicious.—Elk, Deer, Bear meat, a variety of fine fowl, geese, Ducks, swan, and other birds, with fish, The Salmon Trout are very large and fine.— — — — Cousin an other week has passed away, I would not write and send my letter immediately I wished to see and know more of this our adopted land first. my letter is very long, and I fear will weary you, but thought yow would like to know of California from your Cousins, or as it first strikes us,—And now at the commencement of an other week I can say I am most truly pleased, winter appears to be quite over, the weather is gloriously beautiful, with cloudless skies, warm suns and every thing breathing

³⁴ Statements referring to the almost limitless gold resources were everywhere current during 1849. Within limits these conjectures were sound. In 1849 California produced \$10,151,000 worth of gold; a peak was reached in 1852 with \$81,294,700; and on through the 1870's production remained above \$17,000,000 a year. Paul, *California Gold*, Appendix A, 345-46.

³⁵ See note 27 concerning prices.

the joyousness of spring.—my mind is also changed within the past week with regard to making this City our future home, If life and health is given us, if we are blessed with health we will go to Mormon Island in a few weeks and spend this summer, then we expect to return to the City. This is to be a great City,³⁶ San F. will be a second New York, it is growing rapidly a gentleman told us last eve, who just returned from that City,—and this is to be its equal, that is dependent on this,—here is the gold, when business is flourishing here, then all is prosperous there, but at the flood when all business was stoped at this City, it was most sencibly felt there, all was dull, now when this has commenced with all activity and life, that is, life also, the gold is here, the wealth of mines are all around and above us, this is the centreing point.³⁷ We have four fine steam ships now, and the new steam boat Eldorado constantly running between this and San F — — — Beside a great many smaller steam boats running up the river, to Fremont, Huber City, and all those towns above us. One started for Huber City a few days since crouded with passengers for the mines. The Huber mines 25 miles from that City upon Huber river, they are very rich mines, the City is 40 miles above this place.—opposite that on the other side of the river is a fine town called Marysville.³⁸—A new steam ship just arrived yesterday from the States, and was recieved with a salute from the ships lying at the Lavee, this is one belonging to a company of New York, they now have a line of steam ships from their City to this, constantly running. As this is now a State³⁹ they have commenced laying off the Counties, Their Publick

³⁶ San Francisco was the place where most miners who traveled water routes disembarked before shuttling off to the mines. It was likewise the main depot for supplies, and to it gravitated the bulk of people not engaged in active mining. The main lines of its development were visible by the end of 1849; would-be competitors in the Bay area were already beaten. The writings on San Francisco are numerous; as good as any is Bancroft, *California*, VI, ch. 10.

³⁷ Sacramento became the leading inland depot for the northern mines. Goods were shipped by river steamers to this city; thence either by water or overland to the numerous mining towns. Oscar Osburn Winther, *Express and Stagecoach Days in California* (Stanford University, 1936), 13.

³⁸ Marysville emerged around a pre-gold rush establishment called New Mecklenburg, a trading post. When the gold miners rushed into the Feather River region Marysville, on navigable waters of this stream, sprang into prominence. Earl Ramey, "The Beginnings of Marysville," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XIV (September, 1935), 195-214; Bancroft, *California*, VI, 463n.

³⁹ California was not formally admitted to the Union until September 9, 1850. But during October, 1849, a constitution had been completed; the next month it was ratified; and, not waiting for admission, the first elected legislature met and Peter Burnett was in-

buildings will go up fast, & there is to be an appropriation from Congress to run a Lavee round this City, so by an other winter it can be secure, I think I would prefer liveing here to any other in California, The climate is as pleasant as one could wish. There are many places further south also delightful, Puebla, or the spanish pronunciation is Pur,ba,loe.—Then there is Losangalos a fine town and charming climate, where the tropical fruits grow, but 5 hundred miles further down, and Saloma, beyond San F — — that also is a fine place, — — — — Now Cousin I will lead thee back to the first desert we crossed Then, *Ah then*, we had our ever lamented brother with us, dear brother can I ever learn to give thee up, was thee only with us now how happy could I be, & he was so glad he was so near his journeys end, and talked over and over his plans with us of our homes in California, but after a while he said he would return to the states perhaps to live, dear brother he lies in that horribly wild mountain pass, when his dreadful death comes over me I try to drive it away.— — I have his likeness but it is so exactly like him I cannot bear to look upon it.—But I must refer to my journal — — After leaving Marys river, we take the new rout, and are soon upon the desert.—We see the white parched earth, and the dried Artimesia all around, with the lofty mountains beyond.—We travel late till the Moon is sinking behind them and stop to encamp for the night,—The animals are chained around the wagons, and in this lonely desert we sleep as well as at a peaceful home of comfort or luxury.—The animals have a fine supper of the hay they have brought along.—Seventh day, September 22^d—We rise and eat our breakfast before light, to accomplish our journey before the heat of day, we reach the springs before noon, this is the first watering place after leaving Marys river.—We remain here some hours to rest the animals till the cool of evening and cross the Mountain by twilight and the light of the moon.—The road is a good one, we decend the mountain rapidly, and encamp at a late hour in the valley, with other company around us.—First day we are compelled to push on for the safety of our animals, we have breakfast again before light,—The morning is lovely we have an other mountain to cross this morning, but the wind comes cool and delightful, it is not fatigueing.—Our road is fine we reach the wells before eleven, 19 miles from our last watering place.

stalled as governor. An American government was therefore functioning when this letter was written in December, 1849. Bancroft, *California*, VI, 302-7.

9 miles and we are over the desert, we must go that this evening to Mud creek. there we will again find grass for our animals.—*What a mistake.*—we continue on, the desert increases in dreariness.—Toward evening we come to a collection of small wells, here we find an encampment. we have met with them before on our journey.—We pass on, and on, night closes in, but it is bright moonlight.—We see dead, and starving oxen all along the way.—Instead of appearances of approaching greenness the desert increases in dreariness.—on, on we go it will not do to stop. Our animals have no food, no water we must hasten on to save their lives, we see two deserted wagons by the way, dead animals around, some starving and wandering about in search of food, and in their hunger licking the hard baked clay.—Then we come to 4 deserted wagons, with oxen all around dead, all except one poor creature. we try to drive it along to save its life, It was useless had we known all before us.⁴⁰—We now know there must be a cause for all this, and instead of the 35 miles desert, we are on the Lawson pass⁴¹ rout, and desert of more than 70 miles,⁴² and had only hay provided for the first.—It was all gone.— — we pass on and come more deserted wagons, and then to one with an old german and his wife within,—their companion had started early in the morning with the

⁴⁰ J. Goldsborough Bruff, who passed over this desert three days earlier, confirms this situation. For September 19th he wrote: “1st 4 m of road [after leaving forks] fine w. [white] dust—where not cut, hard & smooth & level surface; cracked by sun—perfect desert.” For the 20th he wrote: “Train moves very slow. Road now N. W. through a curious formation of most delicately tinted clay bluffs. A well (not sp[rin]g) was found round a low bluff to right of road, close by another well hole, with hind parts of an ox sticking out. Dead oxen all around. Air foul. (*At least 30 dead oxen*) Proceeded on road—W^{ly} then S. W. to a level white clay hill, beaten bare by numerous camps, & strewed with carcasses of dead oxen & other animals—at least 100 in midst this Grave.

[‘]M. De Morst, of Col. Ohio
Died Sept. 16th, 1849, aged 50 years
of Camp Fever.”

Bruff, *Journals*, I, 291-92.

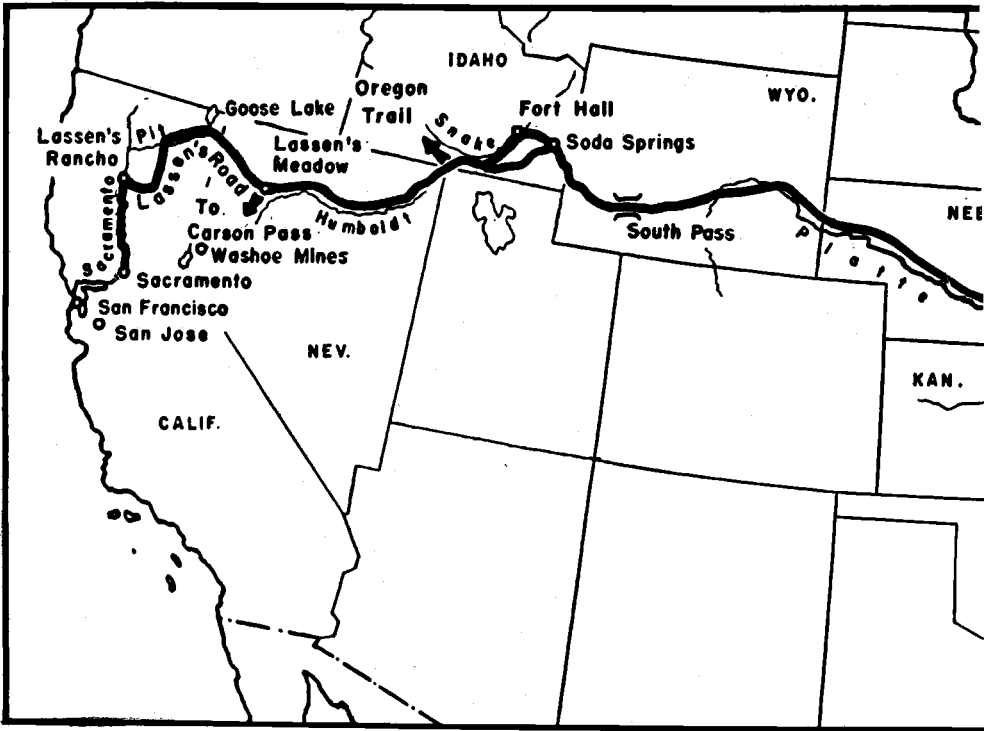
⁴¹ Lassen Road.

⁴² The “Cherokee Guide,” reprinted in Bruff, *Journals*, I, 286, places the distance from the turn-off place (Lassen Meadow) to Mud Lake—the dry stretch—at 65 miles. This stretch, wrote David R. Leeper in *The Argonauts of 'Forty-Nine: Some Recollections of the Plains and the Diggings* (South Bend, 1894), 59, “was to all appearance destitute of feed; and from Rabbit-Hole Wells (thirty-seven miles out) to Mud Lake, there was no water except such as from its temperature or its mineral properties rendered it a very poor makeshift.” Commented a German upon seeing the vaporous brimstone: “Schure, hell ist nicht more es one mile von dis blace.” *Ibid.*, 60. The *Narrative of Geo. J. Kellogg from 1849 to 1915* (n.p., n.d.), 7-8, has as an entry for September 6, 1849: “Had camped at Rabbit Springs, at these Springs I caught one quart of water in one minute and forty seconds, for 10 oxen. . . . 30 dead cattle in sight at one time, . . . Death to all who drink much of this water.”

oxen to find grass but had not yet returned. then we knew It was far ahead.—We moved on, animals all along the way left by the different trains, and companies but a few hours ahead of us.—One of ours drops to the earth. we try to get him along, he can go no further we must leave him with sorrow to pass on and try to save the rest.—The very air we breathe comes fresh from the poor dead creatures. it is horrible. we fear all of ours will share the same fate.—We consult in the middle of the night, and conclude it best to leave one of our wagons, our baggage wagon with many of our comfortts—we put some articles into the other, put all the oxen to it, then they can pull with ease. it is a light travelling wagon with four yoke of oxen to draw it. Two gentleman come to us, they seem much alarmed, they had been on some miles and all was dreariness.—We journey on till near morning, two of our oxen drop in the way, brothers let them all lie down there to get a little rest by day light we again move on our animals seem somewhat refreshed and all patiently pirsue their way seeming to know there is nothing for them.—I look around us with horror, daylight reveals the utter desolation all around us, far as the eye can reach is one vast lake of hard baked clay. solid it is our road passes all along over it our animals can pull with ease. that is all that saves them.—I never knew before a desert was sutch a horrible desolation. at nine in the morning we see the joyful sight some persons returning then we know it is not far to water.—They belong to Captain M^s train with whom we have been traveling, but got separated from them. Cap M left directions for us at nearly all the watering places,—They meet us with smiles. and kind greetings on our safety they are returning with water, and meal for their poor oxen, to give them strength to go on to grass.—we reach the springs, how reviveing is the water to our poor animals.—pirsons of different trains and companies come to greet us, congratulating us on our savety.—Here is a large boiling spring—it is a great curiosity—a steam is passing off from it, round this are springs of cold water.—We pass on a short distance to grass, here are many boiling springs boiling up out of the earth with a hot steam, we take our seats by one and make our tea, It is scalding hot sure enough but very fine, we pass on to better grass.—here are the largest boiling springs we have seen.—Two immense craters of boiling water with small ones all around them, all boiling—I could gaze into their depths for hours and not be weary,

the water is so clear we can look down to a great depth, in one we see a large caverns yawning mouth—I gaze with delight, yet it looks fearful, but slip and you are gone forever,— In one brother R cooks ham, in the small ones rice, fruit &c filling the vessels with cold spring water and placing them in the boiling springs.—We pass on in the evening to better grass.⁴³ this is all a volcanic region highly interesting, with mountains on either side Looking blackened and scorched as by some mighty volcanic fires, many high points of these mountains look as if they had been craters all burned and scorched around their edges. all is desert still with pasture now and then.— here are large encampments all around us.—It is so very warm, it is thought best by all the trains to lay by in the day and travel by moonlight, for the benefit of the animals—We have early supper and all pass out.—The night is lovely, how very grand and beautiful are those ranges of mountains of solid rock looking blackened and scorched, or in places white, or of a red cast, as if burned and scorched by some mighty fires.—As we approach the encampment I [t] looks cheerful and animated, many trains are here, the fires burn brightly, music and the busy hum of voices is heard around us.—A village upon the desert, who in this animated scene would think themselves upon a desert—27th—The day is excessively warm, just before sunset we all move out for our nightly journey of 17 miles of desert—It is not lonely now, the moon shines brightly, the animals move on finely, we see no suffering creatures around us.—At midnight we stop to take supper and rest the animals for an hour, other trains follow our example The bright fires send up a cheerful light of burning artimesia, (wild sage) far before us, behind, and at our own pleasant train, The excellent coffee is boiling and we soon have our refreshment.—In the morning we reach a fine large meadow of grass, where are fine cold and warm springs.—we are to remain here till tomorrow evening large encampments all around us.—How very grand in appearance are the lofty volcanic mountains around us.— —We start before sunset, our journey to night is still on this continued desert,

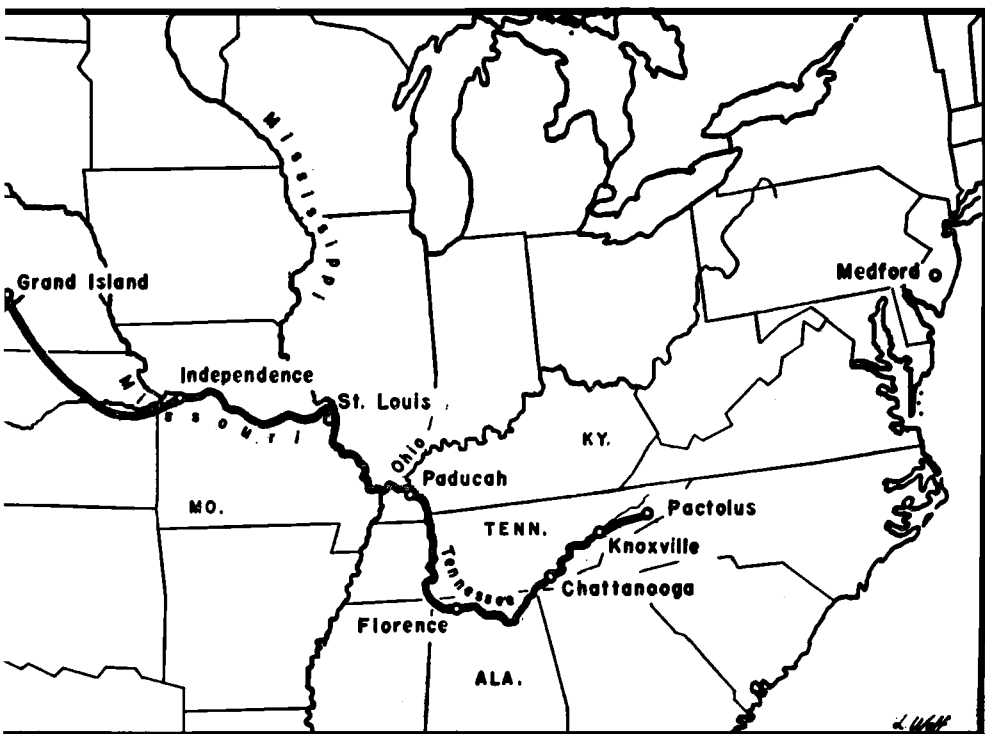
⁴³ Probably Rabbit (Hot) Springs, the first on west side of the Blackrock Desert across which the party had passed. Note location on "Lassen Trail" map, Owen C. Coy, *The Great Trek* (San Francisco, 1931), 193. For a fuller description of these springs see Bruff, *Journals*, I, 293-94. Bruff, September 22nd, mentions boiling coffee in these springs; also an ox "thoroughly done." Around these springs were clusters of bunch grass, then more grass on the foothills beyond. *Ibid.*, I, 296.



ROUTE FOLLOWED

Train after train move on in regular line—How lovely is the night, how bright the moonlight,—we journey through a remarkable pass in the mountains to night, The scenery is the most wildly beautiful we have yet seen, It is perhaps one of the wonders of the world, It is a narrow pass between two mountains, reaching 25 miles, the mountain on either side is a high wall of solid dark rock 300 feet high. one continued wall, very grand in appearance, and in places torn and burned as by a volcano—and now fluted and towering high, then further on projecting over as if it were danger to pass beneath, now it is towering high again, with a cavelike opening below, some of our party have righted[?] it up,—I jump from the wagon and look within, it is a circular room, but soon am away again to view new scenes. each turn brings the wild variety.⁴⁴—But I must stop my poor journal, my sheet is nearly filled, but worthless as it is, I *would like* to lead thee on if I had room, to the foot of the Sierra Nevada.— —we con-

⁴⁴ Says Leeper of this stretch of road: "It cuts through a range of lava that is some twenty miles in width and are as bare of vegetation as if it had cooled but the day before. . . . On the farther side of this plain, lying directly across our front, and stretching away to the right and to the left as far as the eye could reach, arose a magnificent range of mountains." Leeper, *op. cit.*, 64-65.



THE REEVES 1849

tinue for a long time to journey through this volcanic region, we see large masses of rock by the way side cemented together as if thrown hot, and burning from the dark mountains of solid rock above.—We make a fine collection, for a cabinet, in California, Cleyton assists in collecting some beautiful specimens, but where are our valued curiosities? in our wagon near deer creek, burried in the deep snows, with our other valued treasures. And where is our Grandmothers China, that china we brought so far for her sake, though we knew there was plenty of the article here, but I could not think of leaving our Grandmothers china behind,—and where is it now,—burried in the terrible deep snows in our wagon, If indeed those horrid Indians have not distroyed every thing, I expect my beautiful candlesticks are worked up into ornaments for their ears.—and my pretty bonnets adorn the heads of the ugly squaws.—and my books, I heard from a late traveler, were scatered over the snows, and my pretty dresses, not made up, and other fine clothing we know not their fate,—We also had the books of a friend of ours from Tennessee, a Physician, we like him as a dear kind cousin, he came up on a horse with some other friends and is in California his books also are there,—Then we

had some costly clothing of Captain Mauk a officer in the army,—he graduated at West Point, we traveled in his train, afterward (Gen Rows train)—that is also there.—Gen R told me lately he would return to his wagon for his uniform of great value, as soon as the roads would permit and would bring some articles I wished, if all were not destroyed— —When near our journeys end, Or near Davis Ranche a pleasing gentlemanly young man stepped up and introduced himself to us, and told us with much feeling kindness, that he had avenged the death of our brother, he had met with Cleyton on the journey, and the sight of his grave So exasperated him he led a party on in the darkness of night to a large signal fire on the mountain—they killed eighteen near where our brother met his death.—after talking with us for a short time, he bade us a warmhearted adieu. hoping he said, We should meet under happier circumstances.—Ah we met with so much kindness on our journey, we meet with i[t] here.— —I must conclude this long, and I fear wearisome letter,—we pay a dollars postage on our letters here before they go so I thought I would have the benefit of it, and write thee a great deal, but a dollars postage seems but trifling here when writing to our dear friends. I tell thee dollars are not valued as they are in the states.—Robert will write after a while to some of you, to Cousin J N. Reeve of Wood Lawn perhaps,—We should be most truly glad to receive letters from you soon, as soon as this reaches you, which perhaps will be in thirty days. do write immediately, direct to Sacramento City, if we are at the Mormon Island,—the distance from this is so short, and communication so frequent we can get them at any time.—give our love, and kind regards to all relatives and friends, tell them not to forget us though far, far away, and should any of them come to California (and we hope they will) we shall be ready to greet them with the greatest pleasure,—but I would advise them to come by Panama,—or if by the land rout,—by the sinks of Marys river.—shun the Lauson pass rout, as they would shun some terrible death.—include thyself in affectionate love, with respects to the Doctor—yow shall hear from me again in two or three months.

thy cousin R

yesterday as I was writing, I raised my eyes and to my surprize and delight a well known face was before me, a Lady one of my com-

panions on the steamboat from St Louis to Independence she heard I was in the City—heard I was taken to the Morris house at the flood, and came to search me out, how glad I was to see her, and to hear all my female companions on that steam boat were here, and were coming soon to see me, now I shall have some pleasant female friends here.—And we meet with so many we know and became acquainted with upon the journey. It makes one feel quite at home. many call to see us. This is February 3^d the last of this month we are told the earth is covered almost with the most beautiful flowers.—D^r D and some other gentleman are having a fine publick bathing house put up on the Levee, with Parlours baths and a suit of rooms joining them Robert sends his love to all,—and will write soon he is well, I have fine health and my friends say look so much better than before I left Tennessee, I never felt better at any time than now in health, I ought to feel very thankful I am sure.—Ah! if we only had our brother alive and with us now, how happy we should be, If I do wrong in so mourning his dreadful death I hope to be forgiven, dear brother could he only have been spared, I think of him so often so very much and regret and sorrow at his death so much.— — brother Whitall did not come with us, but he was not going to remain in Tennessee,—We are *only two now*, but have many warm friends here in California, some I like as my cousins, some I am glad are here.—But of all our own family, only three left

“Their graves are severed far and wide
By mount, by stream, by sea.”

On the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, just before we crossed, at our fine pasture ground brother C collected a variety of fine grass seed for Cousin J R Reeve, through all the treasures, and my beautiful collection of flower seed left I preserved that grass seed for my brothers sake, that I might comply with his wish,—I send it now, if cousin J would plant it in a bed and get the seed he and Cousin John N R might find it very useful on their farms, the varieties were very fine write very soon, direct to Sacramento City.—Thy loan of fifty Cousin we cannot send in this letter as we have no notes in California, but when a good opportunity offers to Philadelphia—we will send thee a pure lump of gold as it comes from the mines, *over fifty*—that will be more valuable than coin, to keep. A line of steamers are to run between this

City and Panama An immense Bear was just brought into market they ask a dollar a pound for the meat. they will make near a thousand dollars

C.

LETTER from Rebecca Reeve (at this time Mrs. John D. Scott) to her cousin Mary Reeve (wife of Dr. Henry Paxton Ely), Medford, New Jersey, describing the fate of Rebecca's brother, Robert Reeve.

Santa Clara¹ 17th October 1862

Dear Cousin Mary

We were very happy to receive thy long looked for letter, we feared thee had given [up] writing to us again., and as it only came a few days since, I think I deserve some credit for answering it so soon; or the credit is rather due to Doctor,² for I wished to put it off only one week, but he said no: my letter must go with his. now it is no trouble for him, he can write on [and] on, and never get weary, his thoughts flow so fast, it would keep two hands busy to pen them down, and thee must look to him for all that is interesting, I will only give facts hoping thee may have great patience, as I [?] write a great deal and not again for a long time—

I am glad to hear thy health has so much improved. nothing like liveing in the open air for health. I was not sick even for one day on our journey across the plains, when a tent was my home and sometimes not even that. and hope thee will soon be well and hearty, Doctor thinks charcoal excellent for dispepsia, but he uses soda altogether, it is less troublesome, a half tea spoonful of soda or less, if you wish, in a little water, after meals, or at any time.—I was sorry to find thee did not recive our letters, we both wrote, but that wretched overland mail dissapointed a great many; fiv tons of letters and papers were left along the way last winter. Not that my letter was of any value; only that it carried my thanks for the roots you so kindly sent me. they are growing, but have not bloomd yet; they have not got over their journey, but expect they will do well next year. I was very sorry I gave you so much trouble, but expected you had an express office at Medford as we have in nearly all of our Cali-

¹ Santa Clara, California.

² Dr. John D. Scott, Rebecca's husband.

fornia towns.³ we have one at Santa Clara; also a telegraph office and receive the news from the Atlantic states every evening,⁴ and all about that horribly unholy war and its dreadful battles. Doctor is very much as [Friends?] used to think about wars. I am so sorry they have changed in that respect. it was mentioned frequently in our New York papers but reading that Abby Kelly (I think it was) or Lucretia Mott⁵ said at one of their meetings, "that the time would come when they would wave their opi[ni]ons with regard to wars," I told Doctor that I knew that they were Hixites, for the orthodox did not app[r]ove of war. Why could not they let the South go by themselves in peace, without all this dreadful butchery. we lived or I lived in the South long enough to like them very much so warm-hearted and kind. It is Doctor's native land; his father was a Missis[sippi] planter and had a large number of slaves, he was very kind to them and they were greatly attached to him, and also almost worshiped his mother. When his father died and his mother married again, his step father also owned more than a hundred,—they were always treated with the greatest kindness well fed, well clothed, well cared for when sick, there was a hospitable on the plantation, with a Motherly kind negro woman for the constant nurse, and Doctor attended upon them himself, and he laughs when he tells me how often they feigned sickness to lay up in the hospital at their ease. Then Doctor owned some himself and brought his waiting man to California with him and set him free, after remaining with him two years, Doctor gave him plenty of money and sent him home (in Virginia near the Manassus junction) to his wife and children, but he soon sent word to Doctor for God's sake to send him money to return to him. that he loved his wife and children, but loved Mass John much better, the money was sent and he returned, and remained with Doctor till he came down here, then Fred followed, and lived with us for two years till he married, and they live near us, and appear much attached to us.—Doctor feels a great attachment and sym-

³ Wells, Fargo and Company express offices were then located in nearly all California towns, including Santa Clara. Winther, *Express and Stagecoach Days in California*, 150.

⁴ The Atlantic-Pacific telegraph line was completed October, 1861. Dan E. Clark, *The West in American History* (New York, 1937), 513-14.

⁵ Abby Kelley and Lucretia Mott were, of course, both active in the women's rights movement during the mid-nineteenth century; also in temperance and abolitionist societies. Carl Russell Fish, *The Rise of the Common Man* (New York, 1927), 263.

pathy for his native land where his parents are buried and all his relations now live, and I would like him less if he did not. — —

We received a letter from Robert a few days since. he has nearly recovered from his illness, and now dear Cousin permit me to say that it is very easy to sit there in your quiet homes, you who have known no danger and blame us here, not knowing whether we are sick or well, dead or alive, but had you passed through the great hardships and narrow escapes from death that we both have, I imagine you would not have the heart to find fault with us so much. Is it surprising that we should like to take a little quiet comfort and happiness at last? Robert did not indulge in a portion of ease long however, he had enough here to live in comfort but not enough to support our dear and lamented brother and his family. so he started out again to the Washo mines⁶ to make a home for that brother. it was very expensive going into business there as every thing was to be taken, not only over the Sierra Nevada but other mountains. but after passing through endless hardships and exposure the two past winters, (for the winters there are very cold with very deep snows,) he at length got his water powers improved and works ready to start, and was going to sell them for some thousands all was rushed and made desolate in a moment, as it were, by a Mountain Avalanche and had he not been an early riser, like poor Clayton, and Whitall, and all the rest of our family, he too would have been in his grave. The floods over there were as destructive as any where, but he being near the mountain was not much injured, but one morning early hearing a tremendous roaring, he ran to the door, and saw the entire mountain side for a long distance sliding down rapidly toward his house. the entire soil had been loosened by the heavy rains and was approaching like an awful mountain torrent, bringing with it great boulder rocks, and huge trees, the growth of ages, hurled end for end, in their rapid descent. he could only give one glance and run to save his life, the slide spread out broad, so that it was with difficulty that he got beyond its reach., There was a house a short distance from his. it buried that and a sleeping man within, then buried Robert's quite out of sight, and then a third. then. a portion of

⁶ The Washoe mines were those in and around Virginia City, Nevada. Mining activities developed there in 1859 and after, following the discovery of the famous Comstock Lode. One of many references to this development is in Oscar Lewis, *Silver Kings* (New York, 1947), ch. 1.

it struck Roberts werks, makeing all a ureck [wreck] of ruins, and passed on distroying every thing in its way. so there he was in the cold storm, and every thing gone; he then boarded awhile with a kiid [kind] family. Still he had an other home. Then he was taken down very ill and would no doubt have died had it not been for the good nursing of that family. he is now trying to sell out his water powers, and all that the landslide left around them and will come home. *Now do yow feel like blaming him*, he left us more than two years since, and has not returned even on a visit, in all that time. all that can be done will be done for our brothers family, but thee says thee hopes he will have them here before winter, but yow will see that he could not start on such a journey in the spring when he was ill in his bed, Well, I know you can have no idea of such a journey as that,, yow who have only known pleasure trips or rides around in your safe country, I would hate to see Robert start on that hard journey which he could not take except in a train, or be murdered, like poor Cleyton, and suppose he attempts to bring the family by Overland Coach, yow think that would be all very nice, but yow can know nothing about it. a lady who came with her husband last year, (and no children) told me it was a dreadful journey, they travel day and night, and never stop, but to eat a hurried meal., it is to take a seat in a crowded coach, drawn by wild horses, when all are seated, the men who are holding them, let go, and away they start at a furious rate, to the next station where they change horses, and then on again and it is that way all the way through. . How would that suit *four children*.⁷ I think now when Hour land is in such commotion, *and we do not know what is yet to come*. that they had better remain Where they are, for a while at least. thik that the money any of us could have, instead of being spent in bringing them here, would do them more good where they now are. it would take fifteen hundred dollars to start from here and bring them out, now that, with more added, would do them more good where they are,—you think we hurd [had] no feeling for our brother or his family, that when your friends die, that your affliction is almost insuppirtible, but ours, oh! they are nothing, we have no feelling, why should, we have *poor*

⁷ In 1862 regular Wells, Fargo and Company stagecoach service existed between Virginia City, Nevada, and California points. Oscar Osburn Winther, *Via Western Express and Stagecoach* (Stanford University, 1945), 142. Stagecoach travel was rugged, but most passengers managed to survive even the trips over the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

things, tossed and buffeted about the world as we have been! I am sure we feel grateful *most humbly* grateful for all that you have done for them. will our dear Father's race ever be done being objects of pity? what great sin my poor father ever com[mitted] that he and the rest of us should have so mutch trouble is more than I can tell, he went to fast in buisness, I know, and was *whirled out of the church, but not out of heaven*, and quit his native land for ever, but few men could be found who lived so blamless a life as he. I was in hopes that the tide had turned with us and that we had-had our portion of troubles, But perhaps I am only wearying thee, but have patience with me, I may not write again for a long time, yet it would be best to proceed to something more cheerful. and tell thee what we are about. It is a sabbath afternoon, and one of our warmest days. our parlour opens into: a portico by a [. . . .]⁸

[Postscripts on top of page 1.]

There are runors [rumors] of peace,
but who[?] recall the murdered hosts

What has become of the
Wide Awakes, but perhaps
they have been all killed
in the war

D.

LETTER from Dr. John D. Scott, husband of Rebecca Reeve, in which are told the circumstances surrounding the death and burial in Nevada of Robert Reeve.

Santa Clara Jan. 4th /63.

Dear Sister

It becomes my painful duty to announce to you the death of the best friend of yourself and children on earth. Robert Reeve is no more. He died at Steam Boat Springs¹ on the 4th day of December last. His Special object in Nevada Territory was to make money, if possible, for you and your children; and, although he failed in his

⁸ The remaining portion of this letter is missing.

¹ Steam Boat Springs are well described in [Thompson & West], *History of Nevada* (Oakland, 1881), 19. These are hot springs and their general area is covered with a cloud of steam which in gushing forth from the rocks makes the sound of steam locomotives. They are located eleven miles south of Reno in Washoe County on a road connecting Reno with Virginia City.

objects, nevertheless the motive was the Same, and he Sacrificed his life in the endeavour. As Soon as possible after receiving the Sad intelligence I started over the mountains to ascertain the particulars of his death and burial and to investigate and Settle his worldly affairs. I have just returned home after a painful & perilous trip over one of the loftiest and coldest ranges of mountains,² in the winter Season, on our continent. I Suffered Severely from the cold and reached home quite ill. I have been confined to the house Since my return. I am now getting better and therefore write to you. Robert had a Severe attack of pneumonia, (inflammation of the lungs) last winter. I wrote him that he would be very apt to take the Same disease again this winter; and both I and Rebecca urged him to come home, before the winter Set in. He was making preparations to comply with our request to Spend the winter with us in our mild climate, but alas! those preparations were begun too late. The messenger of death tapped at his door and beckoned his Spirit to take a different journey. He died Surrounded with friends and careful attendants who, as long as life lasted, cared for him tenderly and filled his Slightest wish. As I had anticipated and wrote him, he died with a renewal of his last winter's inflammation of the lungs. Could he have been a few days more in advance in his preparations for joining us for the winter, he would have been Safe. But an over-ruling and all-wise Providence ordered otherwise and we must humbly Submit to His behests. His grave was dug out of the Solid granite of the Sierra Nevada—a Sarcophagus fit for a King. He Sleeps at the foot of that lofty range—his Monument—whose leaping Streams and Snow clad peaks he loved So well in life. In Such a vault his ashes will rest Secure until his Maker reanimates them And clothes them with his unspeakable glory. Although he died poor in this world's goods, yet he has left a name behind him for high moral worth And Sterling integrity that will long flourish green and blooming in the memories of men. In Washoe, as well as in California, he has left hosts of friends who will long mourn his Sudden death. In regard to his worldly affairs, I Knew not their true condition, until after his death, when duty compelled me to investigate them. I found his estate almost if not quite in an insolvent condition. He had built a mill; but an avalanche carried it away. He rented one of his water-

² Sierra Nevada Mountains.

powers to certain parties who never paid him for the use of it. He sold one of his mill-Sites for the purpose of getting money to go for you and your children and bring you to this country. But the parties failed to pay him. He Sued them; and thus became entangled in an expensive and profitless law Suit. His claims are now worth a little over two thousand dollars. His debts about the Same. I placed the Whole business in the Probate Court. The claims may rise in value. If So, they will bring more than his debts, and I will donate to you any overplus. In conclusion, do not permit yourself or family to Suffer for the necessaries or comforts of life. Purchase them, within the bounds of reason, and write me from time to time the amounts you need to cancel your obligations and I will cheerfully Send you drafts for the amounts. Love from Rebecca. Your affectionate bro.

Jno. D. Scott.

[Postscript top of page 1.]

Kiss all the children for us and teach them to call our names. Write us [?*ly], freely, and confidentially, as becomes a Sister.

J.D.S.

E.

LETTER by *Rebecca Reeve (Mrs. John D. Scott)* on the subject of *spiritualism*.

San Francisco Aug 19th 70

Dear Cousin—

I do not write this in reply to your acceptable letter written months ago. Not to say how sorry I was to hear of Susan's death. Or to say how interesting her Memorial was. Or to thank you for your Photograph. You know all that as well as if I told you. After a while I will write a long letter, relating to our removal to San Francisco. I write now to speak of some thing singular not to say wonderful. We have rooms here in a private Boarding House. A Clairvoyant also has a room here, and a great many call upon her to know about their absent friends. We know so little about you, that we have never heard whether the history of our Cousin's death, D^r Reeve, has ever been cleared up. Now we are no Spiritualists, but to day I said to Miss

* Word blotted out.

Janesen, the Clairvoyant, I wish you would tell me of an absent Cousin. She replied, "Come to my room, and I will tell you". She appointed the hour and I went. After looking at me for a moment, she passed into a Clairvoyant Sleep and Said. "I See a hot Country and it is wild there, and the natives are dark. I see them taking him down a river in a canoe and throw him in the river." And then She appeared to wander back to his Sickness, and Said. "They have fevers there and your Cousins had the fever but got better, and had no thought of dying. But it was dark, and a glass of Something was given him to drink and he became unconscious. I see him in the Spirit Land." She then imitated his position. He bent backwards, with his arms thrown up rigidly, and, in the extremity of his agony, She Said he continually cried out, "N^o I never did that unjust thing, to leave my property to others than my relations." And She Said "he would always be in agony until the unjust thing was cleared up." She also Said, that "his Sister Ann's arms were ever thrown about his neck endeavouring to comfort him, but without effect." She also Said that, "the mystery was about being cleared up and would be before the year was out. The will was a forged will and that his Signature to that forgery should be compared with his other writings" I told Miss Janeson that I would write you and tell you what she had said. She replied, "Do So; and tell you that what I Say is true. "Never, no, never," She added with emphasis "did he make Such an unjust will as that."

Now She knew nothing of me or my relations, yet she asked "who is Ann?—who is Elizabeth"—they are in the Spirit Land" She added, He had two other Sisters on earth and three brothers, naming William. Now you among you can do what you think best. Miss Janeson Says She is ready whenever called on to make further revelations.

Now all this Seems very Strange to me. Miss Janesen never Saw or knew us until a few weeks ago. She knew absolutely nothing of our lost cousin, not even his name, nor his attempt to reach California nor the route he took. Why did She not place his death on the Plains by the indians? Why commence with "a hot country," full of fevers? Why Speak of dusky natives—of the midnight Scene on the river—that horrid Splash—the poisoned bowl—the forged will? Do

Spirits really communicate with us to bring the guilty to justice or why Such wonderful revelations?—

D^r Sends his regards to all. He copies it for me because my head aches.

Your Cousin R. F. S.

F.

LETTER from *Rebecca Reeve (Mrs. John D. Scott)* to her cousins *Mary and Maria* describing *Eldorado County, San Francisco, and the Bay area*; also commenting on the *Modoc War*.

South Vallejo, May 12th 1873
Solano Co. Cal.

Dear Cousins Mary and Maria

Forgive me dear cousins for so long neglecting your kind and welcome letters, and seeming to forget, when I thought of you hundreds of times, and never meant to be so dreadfully neglectful.

Your most welcome letter, dear Cousin Mary, (I am quite ashamed to say, written two years since,) after wandering about, at last found us in Eldorado County, in the heart of the old mining grounds. Since then I have thought of you as well and happy, not dreaming of your great loss, and though surrounded by dear friends, you must have felt, and still must feel, very desolate.—But I will not revive your great sorrow now but pass on and try to write something to interest you both.—Your welcome letter, dear Cousin Maria, was received just as we were packing up to leave San Francisco. I could not answer it then, and knowing my bad habit, will now include you both in one letter.

But to begin at the beginning. The climate of San Francisco with its cold summer fogs and winds made us both sick, myself in particular causing Bronchitis with a violent cough making me weak and w[r]etched So Doctor took me to Eldorado in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada.—Doctor rented a house near the town of Eldorado with orchard and vineyard. It stood at the foot of a mountain upon the slope, with the old mining grounds in the ravines around where hundreds of miners used to work in years past, there is very little gold in those ravines now, as they have been washed over three times, yet there was gold in all the soil we step't upon, but not enough;

or it was to scattering to pay hands to wash it out.—In a months time we were both getting well, and I could climb the mountains with Doctor. and down ravines where beautiful wild flowers grew in a great variety, and pick the gold out of the rocks with my knife.—There were quarts gold mines around also, one very rich, three hundred feet deep with long passages. Doctor used to own a share in this. We spent more than a year there, then I beg'd so hard for San Francisco, and thought I would soon become acclimated. I liked the city very much and was very sorry to leave it again. The winters are delightfully mild, never haveing cold to kill the flowers, They grow and bloom in the yards all winter. The city is built upon the hills and it is up hill & down dale with beautiful homes all along the way, and lovely yards of sh[r]ubbery and flowers, with Fuscias climbing up the porticoes like honeysucles, and geraniums all around and over the fences, Growing and blooming on and on in all their glory. South Park is a beautiful part of the City, this is a continuation of the streets upon a hill, and covered with lovely homes, many of those palace homes are on the hills with sloping yards down to the streets, with terraces and beautiful trees and flowers. Far below runs an other street cut through the solid rock, with a high bridge over it, with winding stairs to the upper streets of South park.—I have seen much interesting scenery but nothing so beautiful as the view of the Ocean from the Cliff house,¹ a fine drive out of the City;—The hotel stands upon the cliff, with balcony and verandah overlooking the ocean with its great waves dashing below us, and seal rock, just in front covered with seals of all sizes, sleeping or climbing up and plunging into the white foam, with the Ocean stretching far far away, of pleasant days, looking so peaceful, but of dark windy days, so gloomy and fearful.—This is a great place of resort for citysens. and one often sees a hundred or more carages and crowds of people,—But will bid adieu to San Francisco, as I told yow Cousin Maria we were just packing up when your kind letter came.—But first I must say that San Francisco is growing rapidly.² Hundreds of houses are

¹ Hotel restaurant and bar on the beach near Golden Gate Park. In the early days it was a popular pastime to drive out to the Cliff House for a meal. Oscar Lewis and Carroll D. Hall, *Bonanza Inn* (New York, 1939), 9, 243.

² In 1873 San Francisco was still enjoying its leadership among California cities. It was in this year to be affected by the national financial panic, but even so, developments continued. The year 1873 saw cable car service introduced on Clay Street—the first of its kind. Bancroft, *California*, VII, 684n.

going up, and the City is full to overflowing with people,—and now must speak of Oakland. This is a beautiful City, opposite San Francisco across the bay. The bay is from five to ten miles wide. A large steamer is constantly running to meet the cars at the depot, a long wharf out in the bay near Goat Island.³ The Overland passengers, come here, and passengers from other trains, and from Oakland and the surrounding country.

—Oakland is a beautiful City, and takes its name from the number of live Oaks around. We see stately homes, with large yards of shrubbery and flowers, We were there last, in February, yet the Accasias were covered with blooms, the most beautiful variety I have seen, and so fragrant, the streets were perfumed with them.⁴ We had a pleasant trip down,—the distance from San Francisco is twenty four miles, on a large steamer. We passed up Sanfrancisco bay, then up San Pablo bay, leaving Benecia to the right. this town is also built upon the hills. Passed the straits of Carquenas, and into Vallejo bay. The J is sounded as H in Spanish, so you call it Vallaho—We left at four and arrived here at six so that we can leave here at seven in the morning spend nearly the day in San. F and return in the evening.—Vallajo is quite a large city built upon the hills, it is called north and South Vallajo and is upon the bay, with green rolling hills all around.—though all one City, south Vallajo is built of late years. and is where the steamer comes to meet the cars from Sacramento, Nappa city, Calistoga. &c—This part of the city is built upon the hill sides, the streets are sloping, and this one we live upon is sloping down to the bay a short distance below. Doctor has a drug store and is practicing.

— I forgot to say why we again left San F, the climate made me sick again, and Doctor said he would have to take me to Lone Mountain Cemetery: if we remained much longer. This climate though the distance is so short from San F, is a great improvement on that, and has nearly cured me up already.

— We have about two hundred climates in California, and you pass through three climates in one days ride on the cars between this and Calistoga,⁵—Mare island is on the opposite side of the bay where

³ Yerba Buena Island.

⁴ Oakland was at this time making a strong bid to compete with San Francisco, especially in view of its favorable position as a transportation center. *Ibid.*, VII, 685-87.

⁵ Calistoga Hot Springs in Napa County.

the government works are, and a great many men are employed.—The largest sized ships come here to load with wheet. they will load a hundred this season they say.

—The Gysers⁶ are about a days journey from Nappa City, and are counted one of the greatest curiosities upon the globe. It is a volcano of boiling springs; Instead of throwing up hot ashes and stones, they throw up boiling water, with a great deal of noise, the waters are of various colours—yellow, green, some nearly black. there is also cold water, so that invalids can have warm and cold baths. as they wish. We hear they are in great agitation this spring.—Doctor likes Valajo very much, the ladies have been very kind to me. They are very fond of flowers. I called upon one a few days since and found her parlor a pifrect green house.—But I am sure I am wearying you. — — — I hope to hear from you soon dear cousins,—how Locust shade looks, where your home is situated in Medford, Cousin Mary and everything relating to yourselves. As we never expect to see you, I would be much pleased to recieve your Photographs. Should be pleased to see your darlings, Cousin Maria, but perhaps will never have that pleasure. Remember me to all my Cousins who remember me. I am very sorry to hear that Cousin J is not in good hea[1]th and be assured that every kindness I ever recieved from yow is as fresh with me as when then received. Doctor wishes to be remembered to you, If yow could know him yow would think there was no one like him you would like him so well,

Then with Doctor's, and my kind regards, will bid yow dear cousins an

Affectionate adieu. R. F. Scott

South Vallejo

Solano Co.

Cal.

I send you some of our California Sea Weed (over)
Cousin Mary if you have some of those gay Butterfly poppy seed, which I used to admire so mutch, please be so kind as to send me a few and other beautiful seeds.

We have been sending you the San Francisco papers to Keep you

⁶ Hot springs in Sonoma County. Both Calistoga and the Geysers were favorite watering places at this time.

posted on the Modoc War.⁷ A handful of Modocs have out diplomatized (to coin a new word) and out generaled us. We must give them credit for being brave and Skillful warriors though I owe them no good will as they are the very tribes who murdered my poor brother Clayton. I hope they will be exterminated but it does not look much like it now as they have escaped to forests that I passed through in /49 that are grand and almost unlimited in extent and in which they can easily find Secure retreats. But the troops are maddened with rage at the loss of their comrades and ashamed of their ill success and will make Superhuman efforts to retrieve their honor.⁸ Genl Crook⁹ conquered the Apaches in Sonora in a very few months but he held no long peace pow wows with them as Gen Canby and D^r Thomas did with the treacherous Modocs and got Killed. If Gen Canby had gone after them in hunters' style as Gen C[r]ook did, the Modocs only 35 in number would have been exterminated long ago and Canby & Thomas both living today. If any thing interesting occurs we will Still Send the papers to Cou. Mary & Maria— —

R.F.S.

G.

LETTER *from Rebecca Reeve (Mrs. John D. Scott) to her Cousin Mary Reeve (Mrs. Henry P. Ely), in which she comments on San Jose, California.*

San Jose, Sept. 5th 1878

Dear Cousin Mary

Yow are very kind to write to me. I did not disirve the last letter but was mutch pleased when Doctor brought it in. I am glad you wrote to him for he does deserve them. Every thing you can tell me interests me and also your many weddings. How I would like to see you all. I wonder if I ever shall. Where are you located is it oposite those brick buildings occupied by D^r Hain's & Co—How does my Fathers old home look? poor father he did not know the graves

⁷ In this war of 1873, Captain Jack, the Modoc leader, carried out a successful plot to kill unarmed American peace commissioners, General E. R. S. Canby and the Reverend E. Thomas. Caughey, *California*, 384-86; Charles H. Carey, *A General History of Oregon* (Portland, 1936), II, 644-45.

⁸ After three months of bloody fighting Captain Jack was captured and hanged; the Modocs placed on a reservation. Caughey, *California*, 386.

⁹ Major-General George Crook.

of his family were to be so scattered. I wonder where mine will be. You do not believe in the spirits of the departed returning to earth do you? I did not till two months after brother Claytons death he stood suddenly before me. not as he was burried in a suit of cloths, but in a long white robe drawn around the neck and falling to his feet. I was cold with terror, he stood a moment looking at at me, smiled and was gone.—The graves of my Father and sisters in Tennessee, was one mass of Roses and Honeysucclle I used to go every spring to plant something new.

It must be quite healthy around you as you speak of no sickness, here it is quite different. San Jose has the reputation of being a healthy City. but the many funerals we see passing tells an o[t]her story. We live of[f] First st where they all pass in going to two of the semitaries and there is often one two and three passing every day. then there are other cemeteries in other directions this is called Oak Hill and is beautiful with great oaks and other trees, flowers and climbing vines.—A carragelike vehicle marked in large white letters Oak Hill cemetery, runs to and from every day to carry pirsons wishing to visit it and plant flowers upon the graves. . —

— In your quiet village, the ways of San Jose would appear strange to you, for instance Sunday or the sabbath day, is no sabbath at all. It is a day made for plasurs and they dash along, some going to the country, some coming into town, and it is one continued roll of carages and other vehicles from morning till away in the night, and all must have fast and handsome horses, till sometimes one fancies it a race track: And other streets are the same way. Then they have picniks, and march through the streets with band playing, and if they come from San Francisco sometimes thousands come along, and they have a gay time Church goers must dress fashionably so that if a lady goes plainly dressed she may take a back seat.—all is for show, and one often meets with a great deal of shoddy.¹

— You will think I intend you shall know San Jose pretty well but then one must write something.—You expect this is a pirfect Itily as to climate but it is not so we have not had more than three mornings this sumner when fire would not have been pleasant. by nine

¹ San Jose was then known as the "Garden City" of California; also, traditionally, it was a gay city, famous in Spanish days for its Sunday rodeos and bull fights. Winther, *The Story of San Jose*, 46.

oclock it is warm and you throw open doors and windows, when the sun sinks behind the mountains you begin to close up again,—to sleep at night you have a comfort and two blankets but like San Fransisco in September the wind dies away, and this is our warmist month and pleasant often till in December and when the rains commence Mountain and valley are soon clothed in green.

— I must tell you of Henry Ward Becher he delivered one of his lectures in San Jose. it is strang after preaching and lectureing all these years he did not do better any San Jose school boy could have done better That bad hypocrite as if he had not done enough of harm already in this world he is yet trying to do more

I do not think you will wish me to write soon again. I am glad Cousins Josiah & Maria are as well as they are, yet the dispepsia is a suffering complaint. give my love to them and greatful remembrance of kindness always recieved from them. does Cousin Maria take soda a half tea spoonful to a glass of water and then pour hot water Sasafras and drink it cold.

Give my love to all my cousins, and cousin Martha & Sally Reeve, Letitia, & Prissilla, and do you ever see Aunt Lucy Whitall, I often think of her unvarying kindness to us three sisters and brother Casper when we used to be months and months at Redbank[?], I am sure we must have been troublesome yet we never recieved anything but smiles and kind words from her, my love to them if you ever see them, cousin Mary I mean. And now my dear cousin in remembrance of your kindness and recolecteons of Doctor & self—Will not weary you more. Doctor will write also. his health is good now. I hope it may continue so. We spent last year in the country but I do not like the country and was glad to return,—I send some Santa Cruse sea Moss—write soon to your affectionate cousin R. F. Scott

Do you remember I used to have plenty of pride? it is with me yet and always kept me straight in all my wanderings, It is a good thing to have pride, now I never would stoop and would have remained as I was always rather than married a Mechanic—Doctor is a descendant of Sir Walter scott

I am sorry your friends of Menlo park have lost property, it is not pleasant, we also have lost money but somehow could not help it—we have not been to San Francisco for a long time—the climate there gave me Tonsilitis.

H.

LETTER from Dr. John D. Scott to his niece Roxie describing the death of his wife Rebecca.

San Jose May 20th 1881

My Dear Niece Roxie

It is too true, Rebecca is gone. She died on the 19th of last month. She knew she was going to die and a short time before, she asked me whether her end was approaching, and I had to answer "yes". The last time I lifted her into bed, she remarked that that was the last time I would have to perform that service. She had abundant time to prepare for the change, and if any one is at rest, at peace, and happy in the next world, it is Rebecca. She wished me to remember her to Cousin Mary and all her friends and kindred East, and it is for that purpose I write this letter. I know of no watches that Rebecca and her brothers brought to California. I bought one for Rebecca, but she not liking it, I sold it. She had a ring and a few Spoons, which together with those I inherited from my mother, we placed in a Safe in town for Safe Keeping. I do not know what other things you refer to. She did not have them when we were married. You may perhaps recollect or know that she lost one brother by the Indians before reaching California, and that her and her other brother Robert were Snowed in in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, lost their cattle, wagons and every thing they had, except the mug and few Spoons. The people of California purchased pervisions, and mules and Sent them up in the mountains and brought them and hundreds of others, who were perishing with hunger and cold, into California. If they started with the "relics" you mention, they left them with their oxen, wagons and tents in the snows in the mountains and barely escaped with their lives. I have no picture of Clayton, or Robert, nor of Rebecca that I can spare. I have none of Rebecca's hair. I was too deeply grieved to think of it and the ladies who prepared her for the tomb, neglected to cut any from her head. I have some of her clothing, but I do not think it would pay Express charges to send them. I must say, I never saw as pure a woman as Rebecca, She knew nothing of the wickedness of the world. Always cheerful, though suffering torture, she was the same gintle and loving wife, all the time. It is a consolation now to me to reflect upon her many virtues. I suppose

that every man thinks his own wife perfection; but I must Say, I never Saw anything in Rebecca, but to admire and love. I am sure I will never look upon her like again. May my last end be like hers. She died like an infant going to Sleep—not a moan not a Struggle. A few minutes before She died, She fixed her eyes on me, and when gone, the eyes closed themselves. Except the under jaw falling away a little from the upper jaws, She looked like one in a deep sleep. She had Consumption for 26 years and I nursed and kept her alive for that length of time, and would like to have doubled and thribbled the time. Love to all.

Your Uncle,
Jno. D. Scott M.D.