

## ACROSS THE PLAINS IN 1850.

*Journal and Letters of Jerome Dutton, Written During an Overland Journey from Scott County, Iowa, to Sacramento County, California, in the Year Named.<sup>1</sup>*

## INTRODUCTORY.

In the biographical section of "The History of Clinton County, Iowa," published in 1879 by the Western Historical Company of Chicago, appear brief sketches of Jerome Dutton, on page 792, and of Lorenzo D. Dutton and Josiah F. Hill, on page 810. In each of these sketches mention is made of a trip taken across the plains to California in the spring and summer of 1850. The three men named, with others, made this long journey in company, and one, at least, of the party, kept a journal of the expedition.

This journal follows, together with several supplementary letters by Jerome Dutton, the writer of the journal, during, or shortly after the conclusion of the journey. Both the journal and the letters appear herein essentially as they were written. To avoid repetition, portions of the letters have been omitted, and in the furtherance of a connected narrative occasional detail mentioned in the letters and omitted from the journal are herein included in the journal. These changes, however, are few; and otherwise no alterations have been made, except to eliminate some errors of punctuation and orthography, and to add an occasional note that may aid

<sup>1</sup>On Dec. 29, 1850, Jerome Dutton sent his journal by mail from Mormon Island, Cal., to Le Roy Dutton in Clinton County, Iowa. Before mailing it he inscribed the subjoined note on the fly leaf:

"You must let no one see my journal. There are so many mistakes in it and I have not had time to rectify them. But I will do it when I get home. This is just enough to keep it fresh in memory. Remember that a good part of it was written after dark with no other light than such as I could make out of buffalo chips.—Jerome."

in identifying some of the persons mentioned. Whenever reference is made to the "History of Clinton County" the volume described at the beginning is the book alluded to.

Before they started on this journey, the three men named entered into a contract with Rudolphus S. Dickinson whereby he was to provide them and their belongings with transportation to California, and with board during the trip. Whether others of the party went under the same terms is not known. For this service Mr. Dickinson was to receive, according to the evidences at hand, \$400 from each individual. He was, however, unable to fully perform his part of the contract. When the party reached the Missouri river it became evident that from thence forward the burdens of the horses and oxen must be lightened, and as the best means of reaching this end, the men in the party made the entire remainder of the journey from the Missouri river to their destination on foot. In the middle fifties when many of the party had returned to Iowa, Mr. Dickinson began suit, with Cook and Dodge, of Davenport, as his attorneys, against Hill and the two Dutton brothers for \$400 each under this contract, but as he had failed to provide them with transportation and as the defendants had performed many services for him, he obtained only a modified judgment.

It is, perhaps, not out of place to mention here that the town of Dixon in Scott county, takes its name, in an abbreviated form, from the leader of this party, who opened the first store in the community, when it was known as Little Walnut Grove. He was also one of the founders of the town of Calamus in Clinton county. On page 633 of the "History of Clinton County" appears the following: "Calamus . . . was platted in 1860 by R. S. Dickinson, who owned the land on the north side of the railroad. He and his son, A. L. Dickinson, built the first store of consequence and opened a large line of merchandise and engaged in grain buying."

Jerome Dutton, with his brother Lorenzo, left California in the early summer of 1854, returning by way of the Isthmus of Panama, thence to New York city and from there by rail to Davenport, Iowa. He was born March 2nd, 1826, in Afton

(then Bainbridge) Chenango county, N. Y., being the fifth son of Charles and Nancy (Pearsall) Dutton. His mother died in 1837, and in the fall of that year he, together with his father and four brothers, Le Roy, Lorenzo Dow, John, and Charles went to Potter county, Penn., where they lived with his mother's brother, Samuel Pearsall, until the following spring. They then went by raft to Madison, Ind., where they lived with another uncle, William Dutton, until December, 1838. The father and his sons, Le Roy, John, Charles and Jerome, then started for Iowa, proceeding down the Ohio and up the Mississippi, but at Alton, Ills., the river became frozen over and the party remained there until the spring of 1839. They then continued up the river to Comanche, where they left the boat and walked out to the home of another uncle, William Pearsall. Here, along the banks of the Wapsipinicon river in the south-east corner of Olive township, Clinton county, the father and his sons, Le Roy, John, Charles and, in 1842 Lorenzo, established what were to be the homes of four of them for the remainder of their lives. Here the brother John died in 1840, the father, Charles Sr., in 1859, Le Roy, Dec. 19th, 1894, Lorenzo D., March 13th, 1895. Charles, who survived all the others, died April 2nd, 1899, at Durant, Iowa, whence he had moved from his farm in Olive township only the year before.

Until his marriage, Jerome Dutton lived, for the most part, with his oldest brother, Le Roy. He was married November 16th, 1856, at Tipton, Cedar county, Iowa, by Judge W. H. Tuthill, to Celinda, a daughter of Francis and Rhoda (Chaplin) Parker. A few months later he took up his abode on his farm on the south bank of the Wapsipinicon in Allen's Grove township, Scott county.

In 1859 he bought the Buena Vista ferry that had, some years previously, been operated by Dr. Amos Witter, and the south landing of which was on the north-east corner of his farm. He operated this ferry until the fall of 1864 when the ferry at this point was discontinued, and he moved to the neighboring town of Dixon. From thence he moved to

Wheatland, in Clinton county, in the fall of 1865. Here, directly after his arrival, he opened an insurance, real estate, collecting and loan office, and also began a large business as an auctioneer. These were his business pursuits for the remainder of his life. He held many minor offices in his home community and was Justice of the Peace for many years. He was Postmaster at Wheatland at the time of his death, which occurred October 4th, 1893.

References to Charles Dutton, Sr., or his sons may be found on pages 352, 363, 364, 365, 392, 792, and 810 "History of Clinton County."

C. W. D.

*Journal.*

Started from home<sup>1</sup> for California March 31st, 1850, and from Allen's Grove [Scott Co.] April 3rd. Stopped over night with Mr. Owens and Bennett in Walnut Grove in company with Daniel Carlisle, Josiah Hill, L. D. Dutton, John Gochenour, Sam, Adam, and John White and the latter's wife. Mr. and Mrs. Powell, Solomon Gee and two Irish boys from Illinois by the name of John and Henry Hart. The second night we stayed at —— Akerman's, in Posten's Grove. Here we received a visit from Mr. Owen and Andrew and John Posten.<sup>2</sup>

April 5th we stayed in Tipton at the home of Abraham Lett, a very jovial old fellow. We had a "rake down" there that evening, Adam White presiding as fiddler. Left Tipton April 6th, and after ploughing through sloughs all day we stopped at the house of John Johnston, a distance of five miles from Tipton.

<sup>1</sup>The farm of LeRoy Dutton, in Sec. I, Olive township, Clinton county.

<sup>2</sup>The Mr. Powell mentioned died about a year after his arrival in California. His widow, Elizabeth Powell, married F. E. Rothstein, in March, 1852. Mr. Rothstein went to California by the overland route in 1849, and in the spring of 1857, he and his wife returned to Scott county. In 1861 he moved into Clinton county, and built and operated "Rothstein's Mill,"—a landmark for many years—on the north bank of the Wapsipicon river in Olive township. A sketch of Mr. Rothstein is given on page 813, "History of Clinton County." The "Mr. Owen" last mentioned was John Ervin Owen, whose wife, Diantha, was the eldest sister of Celinda Parker, whom Jerome Dutton subsequently married. Andrew and John Posten were sons of James Posten. James Posten was the earliest settler in the northwest corner of Scott county, and "Posten's Grove" took its name from him.

We left Johnston's Sunday morning April 7th, and crossed the Cedar at Washington's Ferry. We traveled two miles farther and tarried at the house of John Doland. . . .

On the 8th we arrived at our Capitol and camped close by the College. Iowa City is not a very pretty place, the houses are scattering and generally very small. There are several small churches, however, among which are the Congregational, Baptist, Universalist and several others. The State House is a rather good looking building built of unhewn stone. We were advised at Iowa City to take the southern route on account of the scarcity of feed on the northern, but I now believe it would have been better to have taken the northern route, for the hay and corn began to grow very scarce as soon as we left the city, and the northern is a much nearer route.

On the 9th we crossed the Iowa river at the middle ferry, drove 12 miles and stopped at the house of William Fry. Here feed began to grow scarce, and we started in the morning of the 10th before feeding hay simply because we could not get it. We drove four miles and put up at the house of an old bachelor by the name of Lambert. He was a smart looking man and had everything about him much nicer than any other man on the road. In this he is the equal of old man Dickerman. We got corn of him for 40 cents per bushel, and went about five miles off the road and got a ton of hay delivered for \$6.50. We laid up here the 11th, 12th and 13th.

On the 14th we left Lambert's and crossed English river (on a bridge) at Warrensville, and after traveling over a rough and sloughy country a distance of 20 miles stopped at the house of John Houston. William and the Parkers stayed at the same house last spring.<sup>1</sup> We got no feed here except what we hauled with us 20 miles.

All day the 14th the country is about the same; the land high, wet and cold. We stopped near Sigourney, Keokuk Co.

<sup>1</sup>William R. Pearsall, Francis Parker, and the latter's son, Francis Jackson Parker. The three, in company had followed this route to California in the spring of 1849. William R. Pearsall was a son of the William Pearsall mentioned in the introduction hereto, and thus a cousin of Jerome Dutton. His wife, Rhoda, was a daughter of Francis Parker, and thus a sister of Jerome Dutton's future wife.

The country begins to look better this morning, the 16th. We drove 11 miles today and laid up at Louis Gregory's, the best man we have met with yet, and lives in the prettiest country we have passed through. He sold us the hay off his stable roof, and it was the cheapest hay we have bought at that. We got corn from a man that lives four miles off the road for 55 cents, delivered.

We laid by again the 17th, 18th and 19th, and to pass away the time Daniel Carlisle bought three chickens and put them up at a distance of 15 rods to be shot at with the rifle held at arms length. I killed one the first shot I made. He also got two turkeys and put them up at 25 rods. Ten shots brought them both down. We have some first-rate marksmen in our crowd.

On the 20th we again set out and after going two miles forded the north branch of Skunk river—a beautiful mill stream. About eight miles from there we ferried the south fork. Here we met five very pretty girls on their way to meeting and they created quite a sensation throughout the company. The country from this fork back a distance of 20 miles is as beautiful a country as ever I saw, and is in Keokuk Co. After crossing the south fork it was quite different, being very hilly and sloughy. We camped that night near Oskaloosa the county seat of Mahaska Co.

On the 21st we drove into Oskaloosa and there heard that a Californian named Hudson had died and been buried there the day before, and the citizens mistrusted that his remains had been dug up. We went one mile beyond town and put up at the house of E. Hale. After we had fed our teams we went back to town to find out the truth of the matter. The citizens opened the grave and found the body missing. Two doctors, E. W. Pierson and G. Singer, with —— Sampsel as accessory, had hired two men by the names of James Moore and —— Wallace to dig up the body and bring it to their buggy. The body was found while we were in town. I never in my life felt so much like putting mob law in force as I did when I saw the body. It caused considerable excitement among the Californians as well as the citizens and there

was a crowd around all day. The two men who dug up the body made their escape, but Dr. Pierson and Singer were taken at night with a warrant, but were released under bonds of \$1,000. The suit was just called as we left there on the 22nd.

We ferried the Des Moines at Tuley's [Tool's] ferry (or ford) and stayed all night at Belle Fountain, a little town on the south side. Here we got corn for 75 cents per bushel. The 23rd we stayed at Wolf's Run. The night of the 24th we stayed five miles from any house in a pretty place and killed a large wild turkey. On the 25th we arrived at Chariton Point where we got hay for \$1.00 per hundred and corn for \$1.50 per bushel. This place is 40 miles from the Des Moines.

Here we struck the old Mormon trail and from this on had a first rate road with the exception that it was more crooked than the Wapsipinicon. The 28th we passed through Mount Pisgah, a settlement of Mormons that stopped here in 1846 because they were so poor they could not get any farther. There are about 60 families. All that are able are going on to Salt Lake this season. This settlement is about 60 miles from any other. They have seen hard times here. They have a mill on Grand river which runs through the town, but they are selling out as fast as they can and leaving for the Land of Promise. This place is 125 miles from Council Bluffs. We bought corn here for 25 cents per bushel. This corn the Mormons had brought from the Missouri, a three days' journey, expressly to sell to the Californians.

On the 29th we started for the Nishnabotna, 75 miles from Mount Pisgah, with (we are told) only one settler in the distance. [We find] the Mormons settled along the road all the way where there is timber; but this is scarce. The road is very crooked in consequence of proceeding through a rough part of the country and keeping on the dividing ridge all the way.

We arrived on the Nishnabotna May 3rd. It is a small but very pretty stream and is about 50 miles from St. Francis. There are speckled trout in this stream, and the prairies are

very large all through here. This is on the North Fork, the South Fork being 20 miles distant. There is an old Indian town here of the same name but there is no one here now but about nine families of Mormons. It is a very pretty country and, I think, a healthy one.

May 6th. Today we got within 5 miles of Trader's Point (or St. Francis) and camped in the timber. We stayed in this vicinity until the 16th.

*Letter No. 1.*

St. Francis, Iowa, May 7th, A. D. 1850.

Dear Brother:—

We started from Allen's Grove April 3rd. (Here follow extracts from his journal already given.) I have mentioned all names so that from time to time as I write you may know who I mean when I say that we are all well, &c. I shall number each letter so that you will know if any miscarry. I should have written before, but after we had got far enough to make it interesting there was no post-office.

We camped today within 5 miles of Trader's Point, and here I am sitting on the wagon tongue writing to you. There is no town nor post-office here by the name of Council Bluffs, but that name is applied to a large tract of country here. The only post-office near here is the Mormon town, Kanesville. I forgot to tell you that in Tipton I traded my new thick boots to Henry Hart for a pair that he got a shoemaker in Illinois to make for him. He had worn them only a few days. They were too large for him so he gave me an even trade, and a good trade it was for me. I also traded my rifle for a U. S. piece that carries a ball of almost half an ounce weight. It is a new rifle at that.

I will now wait until I find out when we start.

May 16th.

Dickinson arrived the 9th and we have joined a company and expect to cross the river tomorrow. On this date we organized a company to be called the "Fear Not." William Clapp is our Captain, R. S. Dickinson, Lieut., Thomas W.



Hinchman, Clerk. I have not room for the By-Laws. The Captain was through last spring and is now taking his family through. We have a good many families in our company. I think it will be very doubtful about L. D. D. writing to Charles. I have spoken to him a dozen times, but we have such a poor chance that it is hard to get at it. I have got me a good revolver in my belt and I feel perfectly safe, although some difficulty with the Indians is apprehended. We have seen along the road nine dead horses and one dead ox. I have neither seen nor heard anything of Scott or James.<sup>1</sup> If they are not short of money I lose my guess. Flour has been \$7 per hundred here until lately. It is now \$5. If you want to know how I feel I can tell you that I would hate awfully to be back there working for \$15 per month. I have been well ever since I started and weigh 179 pounds. I was exposed to, but did not take the measles. Smallpox is prevalent here but the vaccination in my arm worked very well. I have vaccinated several. The grass is just high enough to start on and that is all. It is very dry and dusty and the grass can grow only in the sloughs.

I found my rifle was more bother than profit so I traded it for a patent lever watch, pronounced by good judges to be worth \$25. Kanesville is a small place but the business done here would astonish you. Just at this time five or six auctioneers are holding sales, and property sells well. A great many have come here to buy their outfits. Some sell out and hire their passage through, and some back out because of funds running out. Love to all. I would write more if I had room.

Respects of,

LeRoy Dutton.

Jerome Dutton.

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<sup>1</sup>William Scott, and James B. and Abner Alger had preceded them along this route but a week or two. William Scott's wife, Harriet M. Pearsall, was a daughter of the Samuel Pearsall mentioned in the Introduction. At this writing (December, 1909) Mr. Scott is living, at an advanced age, in Calamus, Iowa, and of all those mentioned herein, as having made the journey to California, it is believed he is the only survivor. A sketch of Mr. Scott appears on page 813, "History of Clinton County." James B. and Abner Alger were sons of Oliver Alger, who is mentioned in the sketch of Rev. Dewitt C. Curtis on page 809, "History of Clinton County," as being one of the first settlers in Olive township. Abner Alger enlisted in Company A, of the Eighth Iowa Infantry, Aug. 12, 1861. He was captured at the battle of Shiloh and died in St. Louis during the war.

*Journal.*

We drove (May 16th) within four miles of the ferry and laid over until the 18th. We number 22 wagons, 57 men, 6 women, 9 children, 10 horses and 157 head of cattle. This is rather a larger company than common. We crossed the Missouri at the old Mormon ferry, which is distant 12 miles from Kanessville. Therefore we did not cross until the 18th.

There was a willow shade on the bank at the ferry beneath which a seller of "hot stuff" had set up shop. As this was the last chance, some of our boys soon felt finely. Several companies were on the bank waiting for their turn to cross, and as the last load (I was on board) of our company shoved off from shore some one on the bank proposed three cheers for the departing company, and there went up three deafening "Hurrahs."

There are a few log houses here at the river where the Mormons wintered one season in the Nebraska or Indian Territory and it goes by the name of "Winter Quarters." I mention this for the reason that the distances on this road are all measured from that point. The Mormons measured the distance from there to the Salt Lake by means of a "Roadometre" and therefore all the crooks and turns in the road are measured and this is one reason why it is so far. We drove 6 miles from Winter Quarters and stopped until morning.

On Sunday, the 19th, we drove to the Elkhorn and ferried and corraled around the Liberty Pole put up by the Mormons some years ago. We make a corral in this way: At night we form our wagons in a circle and put the tongue of each wagon up on the hind end of the wagon in front of it. A chain is run from the hind end board of one to the fore end of the next wagon. We leave a place large enough to drive in the cattle and in this way we yard them. Then we stretch a rope across the entrance, and the corral is finished. In this way we often get along with only three watchmen. It is necessary to keep guard all the time, and when we herd the cattle it generally takes five men.

We turn the cattle out at half past 3 in the morning and keep with them night and day. We passed a company that had lost 55 head of cattle by leaving them just before daylight. We passed them in the evening, and although they had been looking for their cattle all day they had not found them. The cattle had taken fright at something and ran away all in one direction and got such a start that their owners could not overtake them.

The country from here on is as level as any land I ever saw. This is the Platte bottoms; very low but the road was good.

We followed up the Platte without any trouble until we came to Looking Glass creek, a stream that enters into the Loup fork. But on the night of the 19th and again the evening of the 22nd we had very heavy thunder showers and consequently when we arrived at the creek on the 23rd we found it very much swollen and the bridge gone. We therefore had to stop and corral at 12 o'clock and proceed to build a bridge 52 feet long. We had it ready to cross on the next morning, having plenty of help from other companies in the same fix. There were many Pawnees along the road from the Elkhorn to this stream, and great beggars they are, too.

After crossing this stream we went about 8 miles and formed a corral on the bank of Beaver river. Here we were again water bound, and built, not a wire but a brush suspension bridge. There was some flood trash collected in the middle of the stream and using this for a pier we felled some willows onto it from each shore. We then cut brush and laid across the willows thick enough so that we could haul our wagons over by hand. Our cattle we swam over to the west bank where we remained over night. There were six other companies corraled there, also, and in all there were 304 men, 24 women, 21 children, 920 head of cattle, 73 horses and 154 wagons.

Sunday, the 25th, we traveled about 6 miles and forded the Loup fork of the Platte at a point 133 3/4 miles from Winter Quarters. We had to raise our wagon boxes 8 inches to clear the water and had to drive very crooked and keep moving

to prevent our wagons from sinking in the quick sand. Several wagons belonging to other companies were stalled and nearly upset in consequence of the sand washing out from under one side faster than the other. But the wagons were quickly got out; otherwise they would have soon been under the water. Their drivers did not follow the road that Capt. Clapp had staked out. They thought their road the best, but they found out their mistake. We have a first rate captain. The Mormons claim him, but I guess he is not much of a Mormon. William Davison crossed right after us and passed us here.

Wild onions were plenty from the Elkhorn here, growing in some places as thick as they could stand. The country from Winter Quarters here is almost destitute of timber. There are some willows and cottonwoods (although but few) along the creeks and the Platte. Such of these trees as there are along the Platte, or Loup fork are mostly on the islands. It is a very flat country, but pretty prairie.

We came past some old Pawnee villages that were destroyed by the Sioux in the fall of 1846. Their main town covered about 20 acres and was walled in with a turf wall. But the Sioux had taken them by surprise in the night and burned their town and massacred a great many of its inhabitants. Their bones lay about in every direction, and there were also a great many buffalo skulls that look as if the buffaloes were killed about the same time as the Indians. I suppose the Pawnees had trespassed upon the Sioux hunting grounds, and that is what the fuss originated from.

The Chief of the Pawnees came out to the road to see us. He was the best looking Indian of his tribe. He had on a silver medal on one side of which was inscribed "Peace & Friendship" showing also a tomahawk and pipe and two hands firmly clasped.

On the other side was a head of James Madison with an inscription reading "A. D. 1803." He was a young man and this medal has doubtless been handed down from chief to chief.

Close by their town that was destroyed was a large piece of breaking that I suppose was done for them by the Government when they were moved there. I saw an old Peacock plough near. But their ground is now deserted and they now live farther down the river and on the opposite side.

May 28th: This day we saw the first prairie dog city. They are much smaller than I expected, being about the size of a large grey prairie ground squirrel. In color they are between a gopher and a prairie grey squirrel. They resemble a dog but very little. They keep up an awful barking as you approach them but never bark until they are right over their holes ready to dive in. When barking their motion is something like a small dog, but their bark does not in the least resemble the bark of a dog. I have seen a tract as large as 200 acres quite thickly covered with their houses, which are, in fact, nothing but a small heap of dirt with a hole in the top. There are in Texas, I am told, a much larger kind which much more resemble the dog.

May 30th: This day a gentleman was kind enough to offer me the use of his horse so that I might go hunting. His offer was most thankfully accepted. I started in the morning and was gone until noon. I saw plenty of antelope, an animal smaller than a deer. They make a noise similar to a young cow, and are generally quite tame. Their meat is excellent. I caught one young antelope. After petting it awhile and wishing that it was at my home back in Iowa I went on and left it. I saw many gray wolves, but no buffalo except dead ones. They were plenty. Whether they died from starvation or were killed by the Indians I do not know, but a great many of them had never been skinned.

Saw plenty of prickly pear for the first time. They resemble a large leaf on the ground. They are covered with stickers about half an inch long. There [are] some that look like a pineapple.

May 31st: This day we drove 28 miles and passed several other companies under way. At night we made use of buffalo

chips for the first time to cook our supper with. I was agreeably disappointed when we got the fire started and found that they burned so much better than I expected. It is not a hard matter to find them, for they are plentiful.

June 1st. This day our company killed its first buffalo, a large cow. She was chased in from the bluffs toward our train and several of us started out with our rifles to meet her, but she was killed by her pursuers before I had a chance to give her a shot.

June 2nd: We had traveled 16 miles today—which was altogether the hottest day we have had up to this time—when the Captain rode along the train and told us to halt and get a drink of water at a good spring that rose a few rods from the road. We stopped, and nearly all of us had gathered at the spring, when a pack horse came running past. He frightened and started the hindmost team and they turned out to pass the next team ahead. At this they, too, took a start and so on until every team in the train was off in a perfect stampede. This made a scattering at the spring, every man running for his team. John White was run over by another team in attempting to stop his own, but came out unhurt. Powell was run over and seriously scared, but not much hurt. Mrs. Dickinson was also run over by four yoke of cattle, and somewhat bruised. I presume the wheels did not strike her, although Dickinson thinks that one passed over her ankle. In consequence of the bruises she is not able to walk. She got out of the wagon with her little boy, but in falling she fell over him and he escaped unhurt. The stampede was a grand as well as an awful sight. It lacked 15 minutes of 4 o'clock when it commenced. The cattle were very tired and warm, and so were we. This was the first good water we had since crossing the Missouri, a distance of 289 miles. We had frequent thunder showers and every creek was black with the mud washed in from a large scope of country. Many a drink of water did I take that I would not have washed in at home. All these circumstances together render the Cold Springs a spot that will long be remembered by the most of us.

June 3rd: This was a day of hard work. We laid over to wash and bake in preparation for crossing a 200 mile strip of country barren, with the exception of one lone tree, of a single stick of timber. We took some wood with us to start the fires, but buffalo chips are the principal part of our fuel, and they are plentiful. There [are] places where they may be gathered, I believe, at the rate of ten bushels to the acre.

While I was walking around here I came across a buffalo skull, and I measured it between the inside corners of the eyes. The distance was 13 1-2 inches. The animal had been killed but a short time. Here also was the grave of a man named Gordon, from Dubuque county, Iowa. He died the first day of May.

June 4th: We left with the intention of going to Fort Laramie before laying up. Nothing of importance transpired until Sunday, the 9th. When Lieut. Dickinson was called on watch this morning he refused to serve, in consequence of his wife being unable to help herself. Some of the company found fault with him and the matter was brought before the company at 12 o'clock. The decision was in Dickinson's favor. Some other difficulties arose, one being that the Captain drove too fast to suit Dickinson and his associates, and they asked the privilege of withdrawing from the company. On the morning of the 10th this privilege was granted by a vote of the company.<sup>1</sup> We arrived at Fort Laramie at 12 o'clock June 13th and laid over until the 15th to recruit our teams and lighten up.

*Letter No. 2.*

Fort Laramie, June 13th, 1850.

Dear Brother:—

Our company had not got together when I wrote my last. [Here follow extracts from the journal]. We have now arrived at Fort Laramie and I hasten to finish this letter to you, if you can call it by that name. We (that is, Dickinson and his wagons and men) left the Fear Not company three

<sup>1</sup>Those who here separated from the "Fear Not" company were R. S. Dickinson, wife and child, Josiah Hill, Daniel Carlisle, L. D. Dutton, Jerome Dutton, and one other who cannot be identified.

days before getting here on account of their hard driving as well as some other bad management. We have kept close to them so far by getting started earlier and driving later than they. If that company keeps on the way they have driven so far one half of their cattle will give out before they get to Salt Lake. The feed has been scarce for several days and heavy, sandy roads and hot weather make it hard on the cattle and no mistake. These companies seldom keep together but a very short time. Our two wagons are alone at present, but we can join a company any time we wish. But for my part I prefer going by ourselves. We can get along much better and there is no danger of Indians for we are close to some company every night. I would think by the number of teams on the south side of the river that when we all get together we cannot be alone any of the way.

We had intended to cross the Platte here, but it could not be forded and the ferry boat was sunk the other day by some Californians who were on a spree. The river here is 108 yards wide, runs very swift and is now high. There have been seven men drowned here, I understand, while ferrying themselves across in wagon boxes, etc.

Today I came across the grave of a man from Van Buren County, Iowa, who was killed by his brother-in-law. There were four of them playing cards and drinking and they got into a quarrel which resulted in the death of one. The man who killed him is at the Fort and is not expected to live. He received a dangerous wound from the man that he killed. The balance of them are in the Fort and in irons and will be taken back. This I do not know to be a fact, but presume it is.

Since I left Winter Quarters I have seen seven dead horses and one left behind because it had accidentally been shot through the fore leg, cutting all the sinews and rendering the leg useless. Also one dead ox and three that were left because they were unable to go any farther. There are plenty of others that will not go much farther. Lorenzo and I drive the Widow Knight cattle, a yoke that Alc Dunn got of Snyder.<sup>1</sup> They stand it well, but I see plainly that we have got

<sup>1</sup>Simon Snyder, of Allen Grove township, Scott county.



to drive slower. If we get through with one half of our cattle it will be as well as I expect. The old wagon is better than when we started, but I think it quite likely that we shall leave it before long and put the teams all on one wagon. There are plenty of good wagons burned up between here and Winter Quarters, and good wagons that men offer to give away. But when wood is scarce, they generally burn them. We have passed first rate log chains laying beside the road and half worn clothing, bed clothing, saws and a great many things that would be useful any place but this.

We came here from Winter Quarters in 26 days. We laid up just about two days, which leaves 24 days that we drove to get to Fort Laramie. The distance is 522 miles, and I think that is stiff driving for an ox team. Lorenzo has just come up from the ferry and tells me that he saw Davison, so, you see, we have kept up with the horse teams.

The distance from here to Salt Lake is 509 miles, so, you see, we are more than half way there. I will now tell you the reason that letter writers so seldom mention particulars. It is this: They are so busy that they have no time to write anything that can possibly be dispensed with and write at all, and any man that writes a letter on this road deprives himself of rest of which he is much in need. We generally get up about 2 o'clock in the morning and seldom get to bed before 9 o'clock in the evening, and when we are not eating or yoking cattle every step counts one for California. The country from the Missouri here is almost destitute of timber and what we would call brush in our country is timber here, and nothing but cottonwood and willow at that. So, if you hear anybody talking about a railroad to the Pacific, tell them for me that they are crazy. All of our boys are well except "old Mr. Hill." He has been grievously afflicted, has had the ague, the earache, has been sick at the stomach and at present has sore eyes. He wants me to write to Joseph Alger for him, but you may tell Joe that it is not Cy's fault that he don't get a letter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A characteristic story of Josiah Hill, in connection with the lynching of Bennet Warren (an event of much celebrity in western Clinton county in 1857), is given on page 442 "History of Clinton County."

I have heard nothing of William Scott and James B. Alger. I want you should write immediately after receiving this. I want to know how you and Doc Witter get along.<sup>1</sup> If he or Dawson had heard themselves cursed as much as I have for sending people over that new road they would feel very much like fighting. I want that you should take out all the letters that come for me, read them, answer them and put them in my box so that I can see them when I get home. You may think that is a great ways ahead, but I feel as though it must not be such a great while. What goes the hardest with me is the total loss of the company of young ladies. I believe if we had a few along I should be at home.

We came through a Sioux village. They are good looking Indians, and there was one young woman, a chief's daughter, that was really good looking. She had her cheeks painted red and wore, in addition to a red blanket, a buckskin dress flowered off with beads. The Sioux are a wealthy tribe and have many ponies.

This will doubtless be the last letter you will get until I get through. There is no opportunity to send letters, as the mail leaves Salt Lake only twice a year, and therefore it will be better for me to wait until I get there before I write. I presume Lorenzo will not write. Give my love to all and tell Father and Charles I would like to write to them but have not time. Tell Cyrus<sup>2</sup> he must write me at Sacramento City and let me know all about the young folks in Iowa. Tell Rhoda that I hope to meet her husband<sup>3</sup> about the first of September and remember me to Aunt and George.<sup>4</sup> Lorenzo says to tell you that he is well and doing the best he can to get to California, and that when he arrives there he will write.

I was the cook all the way to Council Bluffs, and since Mrs. Dickinson was hurt I have done nearly all the cooking for seven adults and a boy about 3 years old. There is any amount of quarreling on this road, and a great many are dividing their

<sup>1</sup>This refers to Dr. Amos Witter, subsequently a member of the Fifth General Assembly from Scott county.

<sup>2</sup>Cyrus A. Pearsall, brother of William R. Pearsall.

<sup>3</sup>William R. Pearsall.

<sup>4</sup>Phoebe Pearsall, mother of W. R. and C. A. Pearsall. George was her youngest son. He enlisted and was killed in service during the rebellion.

teams, and many a person have I seen and heard say that if he was back and knew what he knew then he would never start for California. Among this latter class is Dickinson and lady. That, though, is what no one has heard me say.

But I am getting tired sitting here in the wagon with a board on my lap. Yet I can scarcely stop. I see several words badly spelled, but will not bother myself to rectify the errors. So, no more at present.

Respects of your brother,  
LeRoy Dutton, Esq. Jerome Dutton.

*Journal.*

June 15th: We left Fort Laramie this morning and followed up the north side of the river to cross the Black Hills. This road has been traveled but very little until now, but as the ferry boat was gone we either had to go up on this side or ferry ourselves on a float, and no timber to build it of. We therefore concluded to keep up the north side, and as there have been but few trains up on this side the feed was good until we got up to where the teams from the other side commenced crossing. The upper Platte ferry is 126 miles from Fort Laramie. The game, antelope and mountain sheep, was plenty.

About 15 miles from Fort Laramie we came to a pretty spring that emerged at the foot of a bluff, and after flowing about eight feet, lost itself in the sand. This was a romantic looking place. There were numerous dry creeks, some of them as much as 20 rods wide, and they looked as though they were large rivers in the spring of the year. I think there must be very heavy rains here by the appearance of the bluffs and dry creeks.

June 23rd: This day we got to Independence Rock on the Sweetwater, and laid by one and a half days. We drove our cattle 1 to 2 miles from the road and found just feed enough to keep them alive. This Rock is 698 1/4 miles from Winter Quarters, and is something of a curiosity. It is 600 yards long and 120 wide, and is composed of hard granite. By dint

of good management I got time to ascend this rock and look at the surrounding country. Back east in the direction we came from can be seen the Atlantic spring, its edges white with saleratus, and to the south-west can be seen mountains with here and there a patch of snow: The beautiful Sweetwater can be seen here to advantage, winding its serpentine course in a south-easterly direction to the Platte, into which it empties. How appropriate, after traveling 700 miles up the Platte (the waters of which resemble the Missouri) and then coming on to this beautiful mountain stream, how appropriate, I say, that it should be called "Sweetwater." At the west could be seen the Devil's Gate, 5 miles distant (but it did not look to be a mile). This is a place where the Sweetwater passes through rocks 400 feet high, and as you stand at the edge of the stream on the south side you can see the rock at the top projecting over your head, and it looks as though you could almost jump across from one side to the other. I attempted to go through from the lower side of the gate to the upper, but found I could not get through the Devil's Gate as easily as I expected, as the only chance to pass through was to wade, or perhaps swim, and I decided to back out and not go through his gate until some future period. What is remarkable about these rocks is that they are placed in solid heaps and the country around them is sandy and without a stone.

We traveled up the Sweetwater 100 miles and crossed it five times. The 28th we crossed it twice in order to avoid clambering over the rocks where they came up close to the river. At the lower ford the water was so deep that it rose into the wagon boxes. So we had to carry some of our things up over the rocks to the second crossing to prevent them from getting wet. The balance we put on deck, and in this way we got across with little trouble.

July 1st: This day we passed Pacific Spring (the first water that runs into the Pacific) and crossed a desert 19 miles without water. The first was the Little Sandy, about 4 miles west of the junction of the Salt Lake road with the Oregon

Trail (which is generally called Subblett's Cut-Off). Here we camped one night.

July 2nd: We traveled forward 12 miles to the Big Sandy and laid over until 5 o'clock on the 3rd. We then started and drove all night and until 4 o'clock of the 4th to cross a desert 50 miles wide, which brought us to the ferry on Green river. Here there was a great many teams on either side. We got across at 6 o'clock by swimming our cattle and paying \$7 for ferrying our wagon. We left our cart here. There were several flags flying and a great many guns were fired in honor of the day. I heard some good fiddling and thought several times of sweet home and the merry ones that, no doubt, at that time were "patting it down" to some old favorite air. Here we began to see a great many sick, and there was one death that night. The thermometer in the morning was 4 degrees below freezing, and at 12 o'clock it was up to 95 in the shade. While we were here Daniel Solis, John Turner and Ainsworth came up and went on, and that is the last we have seen or heard of them. They were well. We laid over here the 5th.

We left on the 6th, drove 12 miles and camped on a small branch of Green river. A man had been buried there that day, and there were two other graves that had been made but a short time.

July 7th: We traveled 15 miles today over a sandy and dusty road. We stopped at noon and took our dinner on top of a hill where there was nothing but wild sage, and dust three inches deep. We accidentally spilled some vinegar on the dust, and it foamed up like so much saleratus. And this is what is blowing into your face day after day (and some nights) as regular as the day comes. At night we camped in a very pretty place. Plenty of snow close by us. A funeral ceremony was just concluded as we arrived there.

July 8th: This day we traveled over some very steep mountains and camped over night at Hams Fork. Here the forage began to be more plenty and we came upon the first good grass we had found from a point 25 miles below the upper

Platte ferry without leaving the road from 1 to 5 miles. There were some half-breed Indians here with some very fine horses. We tried to buy one, but their lowest price was \$100 for a horse that had been broken to ride.

July 9th: We arrived at the foot of a mountain and in sight of Bear river after traveling a rough and rocky road over some very steep hills.

July 10th: Today we overtook a company from Missouri, under Captain John E. Develby, with which we had traveled several days in Iowa. I had formed an attachment for some of them, and when we came up they were yet gathered around the grave of a companion whom they had just buried. He was sick but six hours with what is supposed to be the cholera. Directly after leaving them we came to four rushing creeks that all ran down between the points of two mountains that were not more than a quarter of a mile apart. The creeks were all deep and difficult to cross. After crossing the last we had to turn and go down it close to the foot of the mountain, and over large, rough rocks that would jar a wagon to pieces unless it was well put together. There are plenty of dead cattle around, and the smell is strong enough to almost take your breath away. We also passed four new made graves today, and at night camped beside a beautiful little spring creek that ran down from the mountains over riffles close by our tent and made sweet music for us to sleep by.

The 10th, 11th and 12th we continued to keep down the Bear river with very good roads, as a general thing, and grass enough for the whole emigration.

July 13th: Today we came to the Soda, or Copperas springs. The first two were on the bank of a creek close to the river. The water gurgles up with a snapping noise and the first taste resembles soda, but the after taste is more like iron and very disagreeable. A little lower down and directly on the bank of the river is what is called the Steamboat spring. Through a hole in the rock about 18 inches in circumference it gushes up to a height, sometimes, of two feet. It makes

considerable noise and foams something like soda. Like the other springs, it is of very unpleasant taste and smell.

We arrived today at a point where the road forks. One fork, the Oregon road, goes past Fort Hall; the other, Hedgepeth's Cut-Off, is the road we took.

We left Bear river about 2 o'clock, and as we had to go about 15 miles with no water along the road we took in enough to last us until 9 o'clock the next day. We drove about 8 miles and stopped over night. Although there was plenty of good grass there was nothing to make a fire with. Therefore we had to eat a cold lunch for supper and go on in the morning before breakfast, which made it 11 o'clock when we ate. It being Sunday (July 14th) we laid over the balance of the day. There were some half-breed Indians here who had established themselves to trade with the emigrants and buy up broken down cattle at small prices.

We resumed our journey on the 15th and passed four graves all made this month. Above one of them was a headboard with the man's name on it, below which was written a message requesting that if his friends saw it they would please inform his family, as his company had gone on and left him there while yet alive. His name was Dennis, and he was from St. Louis. Another was the grave of a man named W. H. Williams. He had been shot by another member of his company by the name of Hunter, and died a few hours later.

July 16th: We traveled until noon today and then laid by in consequence of sickness. Josiah Hill and Mrs. Dickinson were taken sick. Hill got better and was able to go on, but Mrs. D. was too sick for us to proceed.

July 18th: Today we resumed our journey and traveled most of the day through deep ravines, a little ascending until about 6 o'clock. Then we came to where we descended into a valley. The descent was lengthy, steep and dangerous. Here we had a strip of country 15 miles without water. We had to leave the road three-quarters of a mile to the left. This [road?] was discovered this year and formerly it was 20 miles [to water.] The last water was a big spring, and there were

two tracks, one leading to the right, and the other crossing the creek a half mile below the spring. After crossing the road bore southwest down the creek at a short distance from it. (This is what is generally called Hedgepeth's Cut-Off.)

July 19th: This day we traveled until 10 o'clock through ravines down a creek until we came to where the stream sank in the sand. From here it was 12 miles to water. After climbing a steep bluff (close to the creek) we had a good road, which descended gradually until we arrived at water, three creeks close together.

July 22d: We crossed Raft river near its head where it was quite a small creek. After crossing, the Fort Hall road came into ours. In the forenoon we could see the dust arising from the Salt Lake road.

July 23d: We came to the Salt Lake road, distant between 20 and 25 miles from Raft river.

July 24th: We passed over some rough road and stopped on Goose creek, where we heard that Captain Clapp's Fear Not company were 5 miles behind us. They went past Salt Lake, and had three days the start of us.

July 25th: This morning we resumed our journey up Goose creek, and before leaving it followed it 18 miles from where we first came to it. Here we came to a deep ravine, with a rough and somewhat crooked road for a quarter of a mile at the entrance. After leaving the head of the creek it is 12 miles to water, and very little grass. We camped four miles from the last mentioned water.

July 26th: At about 10 o'clock this morning we came to the Thousand Spring Valley. No grass. For a few miles after entering this valley we followed down it, seeing numerous springs, or wells along the road. They are from three to seven feet deep, some of them cold and good, others warm and laden with alkali. We camped at the lower end of the valley.

July 27th: Though the road was good the grass was poorer than we had along back. We left two big springs today at 5 o'clock, and had to cross a barren district of 9 miles without



water. The Fear Not company caught up with us today and at night we camped close together.

July 28th: We drove about 12 miles and found the road good, with the exception that it was very dusty and included some short, steep pitches that we had to go down. We came to several of the natural wells, some of which contain fish. They are dangerous in consequence of careless horses and cattle falling into them. The country here is rolling, the ravines wide, and grass good in the valleys. Fuel is scarce. Some sage and grease weed.

29th: Arrived at Mary's or Humbolt river. Grass and road good. July 30th, 31st: Kept down Mary's river, with good grass but bad and unclean water. Road good, with the exception of the dust which is from one to four inches deep. Sloughs are plentiful along the river and so mirey that in some places it bothers us to get our cattle on the best grass. We laid up this afternoon.

August 1st: Forded the river 4 times in that number of miles. First three deep; had to raise our wagon boxes 4 to 8 inches to keep our provisions dry. The fords were good; keep well down the middle of the stream in all of them. There was a road that kept down the river on the west side, but it was over mountains and we preferred keeping on the bottom, as the grass was good and road much better than on the west side. We passed two little creeks today and camped on the mountains. No grass nor water. From these creeks it is 8 miles to water and this, I think, not safe to depend on. It was springs, and they ran but a short distance before they sank in the sand. It was 15 miles from the creeks to the river and over rough road, and dusty.

2d: Crossed the river again and came down on the east side. Along here there is a road on both sides. The most of the emigration came the east side. Very dusty either side; barren saleratus land; nothing but greaseweed and wild sage. Good grass close to the river, but very sloughy and bad getting to it. Water bad and getting worse.

3d and 4th: About the same all day. Left an ox today. He swam the river where there was no ford and we left him there.

5th: Today we drove until 12 o'clock, and then joined the Wapello company, Capt. McDaniel [or McDaniels]. Nine wagons in the company when we joined. They were from Iowa, and we had seen them all along the road from the Platte. They went by Salt Lake, and we came in ahead of them. The reason we joined them was this: The Indians were troublesome and we concluded it was not safe to leave our cattle unguarded, and it was too hard for so few of us to guard them. We laid by until 4 o'clock and then drove until 10 o'clock at night over a very rough and rocky road; some places rocks square up and down from 2 to 3 feet.

6th, 7th, 8th and 9th: Still continue down Mary's river, on the south-east side, until the 9th. We then crossed over by ferrying in our wagon boxes and swimming the cattle. Grass hard to be got at because of the many sloughs. We had to build bridges of willow brush to get our cattle across them onto the grass.

10th, 11th and 12th: Travel down Mary's river with grass very scarce, or, in fact, what you may call none, over a complete desert with this exception: We occasionally touched the river for water. We traveled considerably nights. Dusty road, and many dry ruts. We swam our cattle across the river often and some of us swim over after them, and find nothing but willows for them to browse on at that. Great numbers of dead cattle and horses line the road from the crossing place to the Sink.

August 13th: We arrived at the place for making hay this morning. Had to wade in the water and mud (from ankle deep to 2 feet), cut our hay, bind it up some, and "back" it out. Others draw it out with light cattle and wagons, with great difficulty. Grass good, but the ground is so mirey that it is a miserable place to recruit cattle. There was a trading establishment here, kept up by the Mormons.

They sell beef at from 15 to 20 cents per pound, and kill cattle that the emigrants leave. Flour is \$1.50 per pound, sugar \$1.00 per pound, whiskey 50 cents for a little less than a gill. They would not let you drink what you wanted for that. Water bad here. By wading half a mile you can get as good as there is in the river. The wells are brackish.

14th: Laid up to cure our hay until the morning of the 15th. We then moved on down past the Sink and camped on the south-east of the slough. Plenty of stock water here, but none fit for other use.

16th: We started at three o'clock this morning to cross the desert, 40 miles without wood, water or grass. The road was good for the first 25 miles. Here the road commenced being very heavy and sandy. There was plenty of water to be had at the commencement of the sandy road for \$1.00 per gallon. This water they haul 15 miles from Carson river; this is the first water after crossing the desert. There were sights to be seen in crossing this desert. After the first 5 miles you could not get out of sight of dead cattle or horses. Any number of wagons. At one spot I could stand and count 25 in sight. Two-thirds of the emigrants had to leave their wagons and plunder on the last part of this desert and drive their cattle on and grass them and then go back for their wagons. One-half of our company had this to do; the other got through at daylight the morning of the 17th. We were among the forward teams.

There was a large Rag Town on the river where we first came to it and several victualing tents. Their prices were high, viz., 10 cents per pint for coffee, if with sugar, 15 cents; 25 cents per pint for rice soup, 50 cents for a sour pie about the size of your hand, 25 cents for a small biscuit, 50 cents a dram for whiskey, 75 cents ditto for brandy, beef, good for 50 cents per pound, flour \$1.25 per pound. There was no grass nearer than 6 miles from here, but you could get hay for 25 cents per bundle that could be spanned with both hands. It would take a dozen of them to make a feed for a yoke of cattle. We drove 6 miles up Carson's river today and laid by on the 18th.

The 19th we again set out up the river, the road sandy and in many places rough and rocky. Grass tolerably good.

20th, 21st, 22d and until 2 o'clock the 23d we traveled up Carson river. Trading posts plenty for the last 60 miles. They all ask about the same prices as the one where we first touched the river. Passed Warm Springs on the 23d; the water so warm that you could hold your hand in it but for a short time. We arrived at the foot of the Kanyon at 2 o'clock the 24th and laid by until morning. The 25th we drove through the Kanyon,<sup>1</sup> a distance of 6 miles over as rough and rocky a road as a wagon could pass over. We, however, got along very well. Upset only once, and that did no particular damage. A branch of the Carson river ran through the Canyon. There were mountains on either side, the tops of which nearly touched the clouds. There was some good (pine) timber here, the first we saw that you could call timber after leaving Winter Quarters.

26th: We left the head of the canyon this morning, and crossed the first of the Sierra Nevada mountains. At the foot of this mountain was an iron safe that some emigrant had started with, but when he got here and looked up this mountain I expect he came to the conclusion that he had hauled it far enough, and I think it a wise conclusion. The ascent was steep, rocky and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile in length. There were four dead horses in this distance, and we traveled only 6 miles this day.

27th: We crossed the second mountain, or summit of the Sierra Nevada. The road was such as would be considered impassable by anybody but a Californian—rough, rocky and steep, and in addition to this there was snow that we had to go over for half a mile. The snow just at the right of the road was from 10 to 20 feet deep. It was two miles from the foot of the mountain to the summit; very steep in places. When we were on the summit we could look down and see plenty of snow 100 feet below us. There was plenty of the best water I ever drank.

<sup>1</sup>An asterisk here refers to a note written on a fly leaf of the Journal. This note reads: "Cánon, This is a Spanish word, pronounced Kanyon."

28th, 29th & 30th: Traveled these days over rough road and on a dividing ridge. Water scarce and grass more so, and dust ankle deep. Trading posts are plenty.

31st: No feed today. We had to cut down oak trees for our cattle to browse on.

September 1st: Today we arrived at Weaver, the first town that we came to in California. Here we stopped and bought tools and went to mining on Methenis creek, 4 miles south of Weaver. (Here we came across James and Abner Alger.) Our tools cost us \$35. We mined here but a few days. Lorenzo started off to look for a better place and went to the Mormon Island, and here he found William R. Pearsall, mining. He stayed part of a day with him and then came back to the creek and we sold everything except what we could carry and moved to the Island where we arrived on the 11th at 12 o'clock.

[End of the Journal.]

*Letter No. 3 is missing. Letter No. 4 follows:*

Mormon Island, California, Sept. the 27th, A. D. 1850.

[This letter opens with extracts from the journal from the entry for July 1st to July 14th.]

Dear Brother:—

I find out that my journal will occupy too much space to admit of my writing it in this letter. I will therefore find out what the postage will cost me and if not too much I will write my next in the back part of it and send it to you. We arrived at Weaver, a little town close by the first diggings, on the first day of September. Here Dickinson considered his part of the contract fulfilled. We therefore stopped here, and as a man cannot live idle in California we bought us a full set of mining tools—that is, a pick, shovel, pan, blower, dipper and rocker, for which we paid \$35, and as Hill and Daniel Carlisle were out of funds and wanted to go in with us, we all started together for Methenis creek, 4 miles south of Weaver. Judge of our surprise and joy when, walking down the creek and passing the miners, we came to a hole

and found James Alger sitting on the bank and Abner in the hole—the first we had seen or heard of them after leaving home. They told us that Scott came in with them, but started back on the road the next day with another man. Whether he was going to prospecting or not they did not know. I have left a letter for him at Weaver, but have not heard from him yet. I guess that he and the boys did not agree very well. James and Abner wanted a partner, so we got rid of Uncle Hill. Carlisle and I stayed and dug and Lorenzo went off on a scout to look for better diggings. He went to Mormon Island, and there he found William. He was interested in a dam across the south fork of the American river. He told Lorenzo if we would come down he would buy us a share in the dam. Lorenzo told him we would do so, and came back to where Daniel and I were at work. We sold all of our duds except what we could carry and came down here.

We arrived here on the 11th. William had bought the share for \$700, and let us have it at the same. There are 10 shares in the dam. It therefore takes one of us to work the share and the other works for the company at \$5 per day and boards himself. In this way we have been at work up to this time. We paid \$30 for our share when we came and we have taken out enough, with our work included, to pay for one-half of our share. If the water did not bother so much we could have had the debt paid and money to spare now, but the water has been so high that we have not been able to work in the bed of the river but a few days. We have had several rains since we arrived here. Some think the rainy season has already commenced, and some think it will stay off until the middle of November. If it has commenced we cannot do anything more this year. If it stays off a month or so we shall do well, I think, without a doubt. William owns 1 3-4 shares in the dam. He thinks we will have a month or two of good weather yet, and from appearances it bids fair at present. Daniel Carlisle came down here and worked by the day for the company until the river raised. They did not want him longer, and he started this morning for Deep Creek dry diggings, 65 miles from here. If you get an opportunity let his

wife know that he is well. He is a fine boy and I wish that he was at home, and I guess if he had the money he would go. William will come home this fall or winter. If the weather continues good for a month or two I am in hopes that I will be able to send you a little by him. The gold on Methenis Creek is coarse; that that is taken out of the river here is fine. But you have doubtless seen some of this, as William sent 40 ounces to his wife some time ago. I found a piece on Methenis creek that was worth a dollar.

While we were there we made a little more than enough to pay our way. James, Abner and Josiah have gone to Dry Creek, about 30 miles south of here. Where Dickinson will stop I do not know. His family was in Weaver when we left, and he was out on a trip to find a place where something could be made without work. He is as lazy a man as is now living. There was not a person that came through with him but that hates him now above ground. Along on Hedgepeth's Cut-Off he got an opportunity to sell some flour for 50 cents per pound. That looked so large to him that he sold 50 pounds and thought he would have enough to last through. But it gave out by the time we got to Carson river, and flour was \$1.50 per pound here (and was sold) by Californians that had come out here and started a trading post. It almost killed him to pay that, and he would have been glad to have kept us on half rations if we would have submitted. But we told him he could have his choice; buy us food or we would leave him and buy for ourselves. He concluded to buy, and soon run out of money and had to pawn his watch for the last we got at Leek Springs.<sup>1</sup>

I traded my watch for a pony on the road and in a few days sold the pony for \$30 in cash, so Lorenzo and I had about \$5 when we got here. Everything is high here. Flour is worth 16 cents per pound, onions \$1 per pound, potatoes 20 cents per pound, pork 25, beef from 25 to 40 cents, green corn 12 1-2 per ear. You can get most anything you want here if you have plenty of money. We have had a jar of preserves for

<sup>1</sup>The ill feeling evinced here and in other places between various members of the party was only temporary. After their return to Iowa friendly relations were soon re-established.

which we paid \$3—2 quarts, and put up in China—a bottle of pickles, 1 quart, \$1.25, put up in Philadelphia and composed of cucumbers, cabbage, onions, muskmelon and small ears of corn, etc.

You want to know what I think of California, no doubt. I am not sorry I came, but at the same time I would not come again in the same way for a clean five thousand. There is something indescribable about the journey here—that, I am well satisfied is, of all journeys, the most tiresome—and I would say to you all: Stay at home if you know when you are well off. A great many are leaving here and going home without trying their luck. (Kirtley is at Sacramento City, and is going in a short time.<sup>1</sup>) Mining here is a perfect lottery. Some do well, but many work hard and get hardly enough to live on, and the miners here are like the farmers in Iowa; by far the poorest class there is here. The man that has money to start with can do better at anything else than mining. A tavern does well, and there are plenty of them. A grocery and gambling house makes money, and the Justice of the Peace in this town sits at his table with a pile of money before him and deals Monte for the bystanders to bet on. The cattle buyers are another class that makes money. Fat cattle sell from \$120 to \$200 per yoke, and from \$50 to \$75 is all that an emigrant can get for them when he first comes in. If he puts them on a ranch it will cost \$4 per month and run his own risk of having them stolen, and that is something of a risk in this country.

We got through with four yoke of cattle, but he (Dickinson) bought one on Mary's river. The black steers that Snyder used to own stood the trip well. The Widow Knight's cattle did well until we got about half way through Hedgepeth's Cut-Off. Here the near one took sick, and we had to leave him. This I hated to do, for I thought more of him than any ox in the team. The off ox was very near worn out, so we drove him loose until we came to Mary's river. He was very dry and jumped down the bank and swam across, and

<sup>1</sup>J. W. Kirby, the man referred to, is mentioned on page 540, "History of Clinton County," as one of the earliest settlers of DeWitt township, having settled there in 1836.



we went on and left him there. The near ox that he got of Bennett gave out, and he sold him for \$8 to a trader on Bear river, and this was all the cattle (oxen) he lost. But his cow gave out on Green river. Cattle can stand more hardship than I thought, for there were several days that I did not expect anything else but that we would have to throw our duds away and foot it through. But as good luck would have it we got through with all our clothes, and well.

I lost, from the time I left Kaneshville until I got here, 20 pounds. William is well and is decidedly fat and weighs 165 pounds. The company that left Allen's Grove with us stayed in Clapp's company and went past Salt Lake. At the junction of the Salt Lake road they had three days the start of us, but we were about seven miles ahead of them when the Salt Lake road came into ours, and they all got through about the same time that we did, and are somewhere about Hangtown.

A newspaper sells for one dollar here, so you may judge it is very little reading I do. Hay sells for 15 cents per pound; 40 cents per pound for horse feed. There is a good chance for cutting hay here in the spring, but everything is dead and dry now.

Now, remember this: I have been very punctual in writing to you but I have sent to the city for letters but cannot hear anything from you—and you at home and nothing to do but write Sunday. Be sure and write direct to Sacramento City. The reason I have not written before is this: I wanted to get stationery, and after I got here there was no use, for the mail only leaves San Francisco the 1st and 15th of the month, and I was not here in time to send this month. Tell Charles and Father that I don't know as Lorenzo will ever write to them. I have been trying to get him to ever since we came, but cannot. Give my respects to all and a kiss to Wilmet.<sup>1</sup>

LeRoy Dutton.

Jerome Dutton.

N. B. Tell C. A. Pearsall to write to me.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>His nephew, eldest son of Charles.

<sup>2</sup>As indicated in this letter, he forwarded his journal by mail to his brother Le Roy Dec. 29th, 1850. The journal had taken up about a third only of the little volume in which it was written, and on some of its unused pages he wrote Letter No. 5. The gold dollar mentioned below is now in the possession of his nephew, H. G. Dutton, a son of Charles Dutton.

*Letter No. 5.<sup>1</sup>*

Natoma, Dec. 28th, 1850.

Dear Brother:—

Sitting by your fireside these long winter evenings with nothing to busy yourself one would think you would write (to your far distant brother) often. Ever since I have been here I have sent to the city every opportunity for letters, but have been disappointed, until last Monday I went to the city and received your No. 1. Many a night have I laid down on the ground with my head to the fire to try to write something that would interest you, but, after all, have received but one letter yet, and I had almost come to the conclusion to write no more.

But the fact of it is I do not have time to write. While we were mining I worked every day, except Sunday, until the 20th of November. We had some rain about this time and the river rose and we had to suspend operations for this year. Lorenzo and the writer had, after working all this time and earning about \$50 by working nights for the company, about \$2.40 between us. That is what we had left after paying for our share in the company. We still own our share and I expect we will work it another year.

If William had gone home I should have sent you \$100, but he concluded to stay, and we all went in together and bought a trading house here and keep a provision and grocery store. We bought two teams. William and myself drive the teams and Lorenzo tends the store. We are 27 miles from the city. We have 5 cents per pound for hauling here. The difficulty is that we cannot get as much hauling as we can do, and when we have to lay idle the teams are a great expense. You may judge for yourself: We pay 8 cents per pound for barley at the city and from 6 to 20 cents per pound for hay. We get it for 6 cents in the city, but at Hangtown, a distance of 50 miles, we have to pay 20 and for hauling to Hangtown

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<sup>1</sup>Written on a fly leaf of the Journal: "Natoma (this is the Spanish for Mormon Island). I have sealed a gold dollar in the fore part of this book. I want you to give that to father. It is the first I ever saw.—Jerome."

we get from 8 to 10 cents per pound. Business of all kinds is over done here. There are too many stores, too many teams, too many taverns for any of them to make their pile right quick, but I am in hopes that business will be more brisk in the spring. At any rate I think we will do very well. We gave \$600 apiece for our teams, that is, \$1,200 for eight mules and harness and two wagons.

Lorenzo is well; William is also well. I have been well ever since we quit mining. Before that time I was in the water more or less every day, and was quite unwell. Was troubled with the rheumatism so that I could not rest nights, but since we have commenced business I have had good health, and have got fat once more and weigh 182 1-2.

I will now say a few words in relation to the country. We have very pretty weather at present, clear, sunshiny days, cool, frosty nights. The winter is very light so far. Last year at this time the roads were almost impassable in consequence of the heavy rains converting the soil into an ocean of mud.

The country from here to the city is a very pretty country. It is tolerably level, and is nearly all what we would call oak openings, being thinly covered with short, scrubby oaks. The soil I think but little of, being red gravel, and sandy in places. Among the birds of this country is the magpie, a most beautiful bird—and in walking through the timber you frequently see the much famed mistletoe bough growing out of a tree of oak without being grafted; different boughs and different leaves and always green. Among the animals here is the Kiota, a small prairie wolf, the Tarantula, of the spider species, as large as your hand, covered with short hairs and said to be very poisonous. The next, a scorpion, is built similar to a crawfish. They have a stinger in their tail; they grasp their prey in their claws and then throw their tail forward and sting, and are very poisonous.

There are several tavern keepers here who are sowing barley on the road, and a good many are going into it quite ex-

tensively, but I have my doubts about their raising much of a crop without irrigating the ground.

Now, one word in relation to emigrating here. Say to all of my friends: Stay at home. Tell my enemies to come. I would not want a worse punishment inflicted on any person on earth than to have to come here across the plains, and it is the worst place to spoil a young man in the world. In Sacramento City there are no less than four long gambling houses that have four musicians hired to play every night. In one they have four singers, two women and two men that sing at intervals every night. In addition to this you can sit down to a gaming table beside a lady and do your betting, and you know this is a temptation hard to resist. I have seen women take their seat at a Monte table and bet their ounce on a single card as cool as I would pay two bits for a card of ginger bread.

Tell friend George Atherton by all means to stay where he is, but if he will come, come by water. If I had time I would write how a man should rig himself to come, as I am confident that if I had it to do over I could come more comfortably.

R. S. Dickinson is in the city keeping tavern. Scott I have not seen nor heard from. I wish you would let me know where he is, if he has written home. James, Abner and Josiah are still on Methenis creek. We got a letter from James. They were well. Josiah had killed two black tailed deer.

Stewart, poor fellow, was unfortunate. If you see him give him my respects. Tell him he must write to me. I wrote to him at the Bluffs, but have received no answer. I was glad to hear that Cyrus and Richard are coming out and I wish them good luck in their undertakings.

But I am so confused that I can scarcely write, writing in our store on the head of a barrel. Some are talking about coming around the Horn, some are playing cards, and one has just "hollered," "High, Jack, Game," and all this on Sunday! This is the busiest day of the week. Let me know how you manage my affairs, that note of Rogers, for instance.

Lorenzo says he will write before long. He did not like William Wicks manouvering very well. Let me know if there were any letters came for me, and who lives on the Wicks place. If you could make a good trade—my farm for the Buena Vista place (Buena Vista Ferry) do so. There was a man offered me \$500 for my place and he had never seen it, but had been through the country and knows what it is. But I think more of my place than when I was there.

But I will draw to a close, and will try to write oftener. Then I shall not have to write so long.

Give my respects to all.

LEROY DUTTON.

JEROME DUTTON.

*End.*

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