

Emigrant's last name: Harker Surveyed by: MJS 46 Mary Jo Sprague
first & middle names: George Mifflin Date surveyed: 06-28-93
Title: Morgan Street to Old Dry Diggings 1849

Year of journey: 1849 Year written (if different): _____ Page nos. surveyed: 45-63
Type of document: L (D - diary; J - journal; R - reminiscence; L - letter; N - newspaper article; G - guide; A - autobiography; O - other)
Items in document: I (use all applicable codes)
M - daily mileages D - emigrant drawings P - emigrant maps Q - maps by editor K - biographical sketch
I - Introduction B - bibliography N - index X - photos F - footnotes/commentaries

Published? (Y/N): Y Location of original document: _____

For PUBLISHED documents only:

Published in: Glimpses of the Past, Morgan Street to Old Dry Diggings 1849, Vol. VI
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first & middle names: Sella M.
Notes about publication history: Letters originally appeared in "St. Louis Weekly Reveille" newspaper
4-30-1849 to 3-25-1850.

For UNPUBLISHED documents only:

Notes about format of document: _____

Emigrant's occupation: Newspaper Reporter Origin: MO, St. Louis
Age: 22 M/F: M With family? (Y/N) N No. in family: _____

Departed from (code): J1 Arrived at (code): C7
Date of departure: 05/13/49 Date of arrival: 09/19/49 (use form mm/dd/yy)

Party: _____

Mode of travel: W (one code only: W - wagons; P - packing; L - passenger lines; H - handcart; X - other)

Number of wagons at departure: 50

Number of people at departure: _____ total 50 men _____ women _____ children

Draft animals at departure: _____ oxen X mules _____ horses _____ other (use X or a number)

Other animals: _____ (H - horses; C - cattle; S - sheep; P - pigs; F - fowl; D - dogs; X - other)

Guidebook used by emigrant (enter either a title, or an author and title, if given):

Routes: IB IE II IL IW _____ (use codes from the trail maps)

Notes on back? YES

Last name	First names	Age	M/F	Origin	Party	Page	Date (mm/dd)	CODES	
								1	2
Elstner	Milton Rains		M	KY, Crittenden		35	04/19		
Keyes	Theodore R.		M	KY, Crittenden		35	04/19		
Harker	Mifflin		M	PA, Williamsport	(father)	38			
Harker	Anna Woods		F		(mother)	38			
Pritchard	Joseph C.		M	MO, St. Louis		39			
Wallace	Jane		F	MO, St. Louis	(wife)	39			
Wallace	James W.		M	MO, St. Louis		39			
Wallace	Mary Ann Leighton		F	MO, St. Louis		39			
Harker	George Albert		M	MO, St. Louis		39			
Harker	Wallace		M	MO, St. Louis		39			
Williams	Carrie		F	MO, Pattonville		39			
Hutchins	Mr.		M			43			
Hutchins	Mrs.		F			43			
Jones			M	KY, Crittendon	Wagon-maker	44			
Newhall			M	MO, St. Louis	Newspaper Correspondent	45			B
Robinson	Jas. A.		M	OH, Columbus		48			J
Thorpe	D.W.		M		Kentucky	49			
White	Capt. Jas.		M	MO, St. Louis		50			
White	Dr. Thos. J.		M			50			
Twiggs	Gen. David E.		M		Army	50			

CODES for column 1:
 A - birth
 B - death, illness
 C - death, accident
 D - death, murder
 E - death, other/unknown
 F - name on grave
 G - marriage (*)
 H - registered name
 I - name on roster
 J - turned back
 K - traveling east

CODES for column 2:
 L - capt. of party
 M - guide of party
 N - military
 O - govt. surveyor/explorer
 P - trader
 Q - non-immigrant
 R - Black
 S - Indian
 T - Mexican/Spanish
 U - non-US citizen
 V - Mormon
 W - joined other party

Codes may not apply to all names. Use up to 2 codes in each column, if multiple codes apply.
 * For marriages, bracket the spouses' names and number the couples sequentially.

Last name	First names	Age	M/F	Origin	Party	Page	Date (mm/dd)	CODES	
								1	2
DeGuier	John		M	MO, St. Genevieve		51		BF	
McMillan	Sloan		M	KY, Louisville		51		BF	
Abbott	John		M	IA, New Albany		51		EF	
Grout	Jas. A.		M	VT, Essex County		51		BF	
Love	Maj. John A.		M	OH, Morgan county		51			L
Hanley	Maj. S.S.		M	MO, Independence	wagonmaster	51			M
Spreague	R.T.		M	OH, Morgan county	Secretary of train	51			
Ward	Robert		M	MO, Independence		52			
Bailey	P.D.		M	"		52			
Hanley	N.S.		M	"		52			
Birch	Wm.		M	"		52			
Thurman	John		M	"		52			
McKenzie	A.		M	"		52			
Burton	J.		M	"		52			
Cunes	B.		M	"		52			
Sheet	J.		M	"		52			
Wilson	John		M	IL		52			
Jones	Benj.		M	"		52			
Finley	Henry		M	"		52			
Walls	Geo.		M	IN		52			

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								1	2
Cattic	Joseph		M	IN		52			
Skein	J.		M	MI		52			
Rutherford	Wm. H.		M	MD, Franklin county		52			
Rutherford	Jas. F.		M	" " "		52			
Hawkins	A.		M	OH, Morgan county		52			
Palmer	Wm. C.		M	" " "		52			
Palmer	A. W.		M	" " "		52			
Burgoon	Peter		M	" " "		52			
Wright	G. B.		M	" " "		52			
Henry	S. B.		M	" " "		52			
Van Clief	P.		M	" " "		52			
Van Clief	D. D.		M	" " "		52			
Davis	F. A.		M	" " "		52			
Carhart	Wm.		M	OH, Coshocton county		52			
Carhart	Geo.		M	" " "		52			
Stibbs	Joseph		M	OH, Wooster		52			
Hurlburt	Wesley		M	OH, Washington county		52			
Keith	Wm.		M	OH, Logan county		52			
Bapst	Julius		M	OH, Cincinnati		52			
Hesse	Wm.		M	" " "		52			

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								1	2
Lobenstein	Chas.		M	OH, Cincinnati		52			
Bietsch	Jacob		M	OH, Columbiana county		52			
Bietsch	Christopher		M	" " "		52			
Cornyn	Dr. F. M.		M	OH, Zanesville		52			
Cornyn	Chas.		M	" "		52			
Baldwin	Jas.		M	" "		52			
Gattrel	Wm. H.		M	" "		52			
Kingsley	John H.		M	" "		52			
Hewett	Samuel		M	" "		52			
Dillon	James		M	" "		52			
Montgomery	Jos.		M	" "		52			
Phelps	Thos. R.		M	" "		52			
Young	Chas. W.		M	" "		52			
Charles	Robert		M	" "		52			
Riches	Wm.		M	" "		52			
Welch	John		M	" "		52			
Eades	Thos.		M	KY, Lexington		52			
Pierce	Hiram		M	" "	(servant)	52			
Hampton	P. D.		M	LA, E. Baton Rouge		52			
Ingraham	Jasper		M	" " "		52			

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Taylor	Edward	M	LA, E. Baton Rouge	52	
Ruff	Maj. Charles F.	M		Ft. Kearny commander	55
Bonnerville	Col. Benjamin L. E.	M		Ft. Kearny commander	55
Hedspeth		M			57
Thompson	Lt.	M	KY, Louisville	U.S. Navy	59
Vancourt		M	MO, St. Louis	Vancourt's train	64
Haskell		M	WI	Haskell's train	64
Hay	J. M.	M			64
Earl	S.	M			64
Estill		M	MO, Lawrence county		64
Crawford	James	M	MO, Clay county		64
French	Henry	M	MI, Adrian, Lenawa cty.		64
Coral	Alfred	M			64
Porter	D.	M	IL, Pike county		64
Gardner	Henry	M			65
Byall,	Wm.	M	OH, Findly		65
Carroll	Charles	M	MO, Cooper county	(Drowned/Humboldt Riv.)	65
Bryson	E. A.	M	KY, Louisville	Bryant's company	65
Baldwin	A. C.	M			65
Haskill	A. S.	M			65

F
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BF
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BF
BF
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F
F

Harrington	Joshua	M	MA, Brighton	65	CF
Sutter	John A.	M		67	
Townsend	Judge James B.	M		67	
Parks	J.C.	M		67	
Finney	John	M		67	
Sleeper	M.	M	MO, St. Louis	67	
Robb	John S., Esq.	M		67	
Daley	William	M		70	
Doolittle	Mr.	M		73	
Sayles	Thos.	M	NY, Albany	76	

Location	Page	Date
Salt River Camp	46	05-15-49
Saline river	46	
Salt river	47	
Pawnee country	48	
Bellevue	48	
Ford of Little Blue River	48	05-26-49
Fort Kearny, originally Fort Childs	54	
Platte river bottom	54	
Fort Hall	55	
junction Salt Lake & Ft. Hall road	55	
Port Neuf	56	
Lewis' Fork	56	
Fall River	57	
American Falls of Lewis' Fork	57	
Raft river	57	
Raft River Valley	57	
Bear river	57	
Goose Creek	57	
Salt Lake road	57	
Hot Spring Valley	58	
Humboldt Mountains	58	
Humboldt river	58	
slough of the Humboldt	58	
sink of the Humboldt	58	

VOLUME VI

APRIL-JUNE

NUMBERS 4-6

MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GLIMPSES OF THE PAST

MORGAN STREET TO OLD DRY DIGGINGS

1849

ST. LOUIS

Jefferson Memorial

1939

MORGAN STREET TO OLD DRY DIGGINGS
1849

On March 15, 1848, a newspaper in San Francisco, California, made casual reference to the discovery of gold near Sacramento. The following month the *California Star*, in a long article on the virtues of California, mentioned briefly the finding of gold. Capt. John A. Sutter, on whose property, fifty miles from Sacramento, the first gold was found January 24, 1848, sought to keep it secret and minimized the importance of the find. He wanted to finish his sawmill—it was in the mill-race that the nugget was found by James W. Marshall, one of his employees, and Sutter feared demoralization of his laborers and an onrush of gold seekers. But gradually the value of the discovery became generally recognized, and the President of the United States called attention to its importance. James K. Polk, in a message to Congress on December 5, 1848, said that gold mines opened in California were probably more extensive and valuable than had been anticipated. On December 12, 1848, the director of the U. S. Mint in Philadelphia, reported that samples submitted were of pure gold of great fineness.

By the time the author of the letters here published faced the West in his long journey, more than eight thousand persons had left the Atlantic coast, and many more from intermediate points, to blaze the gold trail.

The first organized company left St. Louis January 20, 1849 by boat for New Orleans and the Isthmus of Panama, and another left the following day to travel overland. On April 19, 1849, George Mifflin Harker, a newspaper reporter formerly connected with the *St. Louis Daily Union*, and two companions, Milton Rains Elstner and Theodore R. Keyes, started out Morgan Street on the westward trek to the gold fields of California.

The routes developed by that time were through St. Louis overland across the plains and through the South Pass of the Rockies; along the Santa Fe Trail through Texas and the

one by the Salmon Trout Pass by about seventy-five miles, better supplied with grass, and the pass is no doubt much better, especially for vehicles. Such is the overland route to California.

"The Tribune acknowledges that this route is cheaper than the one around the Horn, or the route via the Isthmus of Panama, but maintains that it is 'slow, tedious, and dangerous.' Let us see the difference of cost, of time, and of danger.

"The voyage by the Horn costs from \$100 to \$300. The time consumed is five or six months. The dangers encountered are those of storms at sea, and other accidents, together with the rounding of one of the most dangerous capes in the world.

"The voyage to Chagres costs \$65 in the steerage, and \$125 in the cabin. Transportation across the Isthmus from \$25 to \$40. Every day of detention at Panama \$3.

"From Panama to the Bay of Francisco, \$150 in the steerage, and \$300 in the cabin. Time consumed about forty days. The dangers are those of fire at sea, storms in the Mexican Gulf, notorious for hurricanes, and pestilence on the Isthmus.

"If the traveller goes overland from the western border, and purchases two mules, they will cost him \$150; provisions &c., \$50; total, \$200. Or, if he prefers going in a neat spring carriage, Messrs. Alexander and Hall will carry him in one for \$200, as per advertisement in this paper. Time from sixty to seventy days.

"Danger none; not even as much as every citizen of the country encounters in the pursuit of his daily avocations, for his health uniformly improves, and he is liable to fewer accidents.

"Such are the comparative advantages of the several routes to California. Is there a man of sound judgment in the community who can hesitate which to prefer?"

George Mifflin Harker, who signed his letters "Mifflin," son of Mifflin and Anna (Woods) Harker, was born February 1, 1827 in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. He came to St. Louis about 1847 and was employed as a reporter on the *St. Louis Union*.

Mr. Harker returned to St. Louis from California by way of the Isthmus of Panama, using mules to cross the Isthmus, in 1858. Soon thereafter he was employed as commercial reporter on the *Evening News*, and later in the same capacity on the *Democrat*. He and Joseph C. Pritchard bought control of the *St. Louis Price-Current*, a commercial publication, and later published the *Merchants' Exchange Daily Price-Current*. After the daily newspapers started publishing commercial reports there was no demand for specialization and this paper ceased publication. In 1861 Mr. Harker married Jane, daughter of James W. and Mary Ann (Leighton) Wallace, of St. Louis. Mr. Harker died in St. Louis February 12, 1906; his wife died in California in 1916. Two children were born of this marriage: George Albert, who became an artist and was the illustrator for the most prominent eastern magazines until his death in 1921; and Wallace Harker, who studied medicine but later went to California and entered the business field. He is now living in Berkeley, California.

I am indebted to Miss Carrie Williams, of Pattonville, Missouri, for assistance in the sketch of her uncle.

MORGAN STREET TO INDEPENDENCE¹

Rocheport, Mo., April 26th, 1849.

Dear Reveille:—I write you a few lines from this place, only half way to the starting point—Independence. Early on Thursday morning, the 19th inst., we left the *east* bank of the Mississippi at St. Louis, where we had been camping for several days, for the gold diggings. I believe I never started on a trip of any kind with a lighter heart, or more hearty good will, and such appeared to be the case with my comrades, although they had already come several hundred miles from home. After being detained in the city until two o'clock, P. M., procuring a few necessary articles, and arranging some goods that were to be sent up the river by boat, we started again, proceeding out Morgan street to Sixteenth, and then out Franklin Avenue. We were only three in company—two Kentuckians and myself—but we must have made quite a grotesque appearance, for we really created quite a sensation. Two of us led the way—each leading a mule, upon the back of which were fastened empty pack-saddles—the real old-fashioned American pack-saddles, and one was perched upon a spring seat in front of a large, dashing, red wagon, covered with India rubber cloth, holding in one hand the lines, in the other, a long whip, and driving four fiery little mules, with the dexterity and pride of a Yankee stage driver. The windows and doors of the dwellings on Morgan street and Franklin Avenue were crowded with old women, fair damsels and little children, all eager to catch a glimpse of the rare sight. In fact, we must have cut something of a figure to have attracted so much attention. Although I have resided far out on Morgan street for a long time, I do not recollect ever to have seen the same bright eyes and lovely faces before, which induces me to believe that it requires something more than common to transpire in the streets to so attract these fair ones. The boys in the street sang—

¹ These letters were published in the *St. Louis Weekly Reveille* of April 30; May 28; June 11; June 18; June 25; December 10, 1849; January 28 and March 25, 1850.

"I'm bound for California with my wash-bowl on my knee," and some little imps, more saucy than the rest, parodied an old darkey song after this manner:

"A jackass before and behind, old Joe," &c.,

alluding to your humble servant, and the long-eared gentleman at his heels. Thus we proceeded "on our winding way" to within a few miles of St. Charles, since when, one of us has ridden a mule and led the other, or both mules have been hitched to the after part of the wagon.

Thus far we have found the advantages of proceeding with our team by land very great. The roads have been most excellent, except in a few narrow strips of timber, where we have found some horrid ugly places. Grain is abundant and cheap, and by going a short distance each day, we are quite confident that our mules will be in much better plight when we arrive at Independence, than they would have been had they been kicked and cuffed around by inhuman deck hands, crowded together in a narrow compass, uncurried, half-fed, and nearly steamed to death, on board a steam boat. Hundreds have wisely pursued the same course that we have.

In coming this route we have passed through a most beautiful part of the country, and have seen much more that is really worth seeing than we could have seen going by river conveyance. We passed through a place today with which I actually fell in love. It is the prettiest village that I have seen in the State. I refer to Columbia, the county-seat of Boone county—where is situated the University of Missouri—one of the finest edifices of the kind in the State. The other towns along the road are small and unimportant.

You no doubt recollect publishing an account, last year, of a severe hurricane which passed through this part of the country. Yesterday I beheld some of its effects. We passed through several miles of timber, where the tops of the trees had been blown off entirely, and appeared as if they had been mown down by a huge scythe!

We have passed sixteen wagons since leaving St. Charles—thirteen ox and three mule teams. Some entire families are going. We passed two yesterday. The second day out we over-

heads to have a May party, and followed off a parcel of horses—a white one among which wore a bell. They gave us a chase of better than a mile, after which we hitched them and the other three to the wagon, and our driver proposed that we should see if we could not have a spree on May-day, as well as our fair friends at home. He took the six check lines in his left hand, cracked his whip, and away we went with flying colors; and we have been working all six ever since, without the least trouble in the world. Our driver is proud of his team, and I am proud of our driver. He may well be proud of his team; it is the best one that I have yet seen; and when I tell you that he himself, having been brought up from childhood in a counting room—for the past two years, head book-keeper in an extensive commercial house in New Orleans—still quite young, and consequently inexperienced in the matter of training horses, took these mules a few months since, then perfectly green and unbroken, and without any assistance, broke them, and can now drive them with the same ease that I can a gentle old horse in a buggy, you will not be astonished that I am proud of him as a driver, and am glad that such a self-confident, persevering man, is the moving spirit of our little band.

On Saturday last we had the misfortune of breaking one of our wagon hounds, in coming through a very bad place in a low, marshy prairie, fifteen miles from this place. It was raining a torrent at the time, and we were unable to move an inch until the wagon had been unloaded, when we hauled it to the edge of a hazel thicket, and then packed our goods to it on the mules. This was a most aggravating accident, and Jones, wagon maker at Crittenden, Ky., had any thing but our good wishes for his future welfare. Luckily a first rate wagon maker and an excellent blacksmith lived close by, who repaired our wagon in short order, and we arrived in this place on Monday morning.

We passed some fifty California teams between Rocheport and this place, and heard of several companies that were about starting from the counties through which we passed, which will number nearly two hundred persons in all. They mostly go with ox teams.

On our arrival here we found every thing in a state of confusion. The cholera was prevailing to an alarming extent; many persons had become dissatisfied, and were returning home; many had gambled away all their money, and were obliged to take the back track; there seemed to be no system or order about any thing, and it was, and now is, almost impossible to obtain reliable information about any thing. The "almighty dollar" seems to have engrossed the whole attention of the business men of this place, and they think and care of nothing else. An emigrant who falls sick, unless he has some personal friends, receives scarcely any attention. If he chances to have any friends among the citizens, and is staying in a private family, he is treated with the utmost kindness; otherwise, he is left to die, gazing on vacancy, after having swallowed a quart or so of medicine, received from the hands of some negro servant, who hastily throws down the cup and spoon, and rushes away, paying little or no heed to the feeble demands of the sick man.

The deaths from cholera for the past few days in this place and immediate vicinity have ranged in number from five to eleven. Two or three citizens have died, and the rest have been strangers, most of them emigrants. I thought of procuring the names of the emigrants who had died, for the information of their friends and relatives, but was compelled to give it up in despair.

A gentleman by the name of Newhall, who stated that he was a correspondent for some St. Louis paper (which one I could not ascertain), and late of Iowa, died from an attack of the cholera, at the Independence House, on Monday last. It is currently reported that there have been cases of cholera among the emigrants on the road, and several have died.

You can form scarcely any conception of the difficulty of obtaining information of an authentic nature with regard to any news that may be here. Nobody seems to be posted. One man tells the story one way, and another a different way; and there being no places, like you have in your city, where registers and the like are kept, it is a tedious as well as thankless

less traveling for the benefit of their health, the overland route is not very desirable to emigrants. Thus far, it has agreed so well with my health, and has improved it so much, that I very willingly submit to its hardships.

Up to this point it was hard work every day, and uncomfortable sleeping at nights; however, it may improve very much in a few days. We are informed that after passing the old Pawnee village on the Platte, the road is unexceptionable, and even then it is hard work. Unharnessing the mules, watering them, picketing them out, collecting fuel, doing your own cooking and washing, and standing guard half the night to keep off the natives—all these, after the journey of the day, require some little resolution, and make the trip anything but a pleasure one. To-night our guard will be more vigilant than usual; though in the Pawnee country, until this evening no Indians have made their appearance, and then at a distance. They are encamped not very far below us, being on their way to Bellevue⁴ to receive their annuity. Their old village is abandoned, and a new point has been selected forty miles from this, and six miles from the road to Fort Chiles; they are said to be in great distress for the want of food, and are very much harassed by the Sioux.

Yours,
M.

SCENES ON THE PLAINS

A PREDICAMENT—THE PRAIRIE ALIVE—GEN. TWIGGS—ST. LOUIS EMIGRANTS—MILITARY SPECTACLE—DEATHS

Ford of Little Blue River, May 26, 1849.

Dear Reville:—A gentleman by the name of Jas. A. Robinson, of Columbus, Ohio, who has been compelled, very much against his will, to return to the States, starts this morning,

⁴ Fort Bellevue was for many years an important trading post. In 1823 the United States Government established an Indian Agency at this place, and it was then referred to in Government records as "Council Bluffs Indian Agency at Bellevue." The site was on the west bank of the Missouri River, and about six miles north of the Platte, and is in present Sarpy County, Nebraska.

and has kindly consented to wait a few moments for me to write you a few lines. I am lying on the ground, under the tent, scratching away on the top of an old tobacco box, with fingers cold and benumbed.

We have experienced all sorts of luck since I last wrote you from the Kansas. A week ago to-day I started ahead of our company on a pony, designing to overtake, if possible, the Kentucky train with which we had intended to travel, and rode at full speed all day, making inquiries of all the Indians and emigrants that I came across, but could learn nothing definite. At night I overtook Mr. [D. W.] Thorpe, the Secretary of one of the Kentucky companies, who has been detained by sickness at Independence, and whose horse had died there. He was proceeding on foot in company with four gentlemen, who were journeying with pack mules. It had rained all day, and he had taken a violent cold, which had settled in his limbs, and he was unable to proceed further. One of the gentleman had volunteered to go on with all possible speed, and try to overtake the train, and as Mr. Thorpe could not walk further, I sent him back on the pony to my friends, and I remained with the pack mules—any thing but an enviable situation, I can assure you. I jogged on about forty-five miles, leading a pack mule, and was just giving out from fatigue, when we were overtaken by Elstner. We have as yet heard nothing from our folks ahead, but will persevere on until we reach the Platte, and if we do not overhaul them there, we shall join in some other mule train.

We have been running great risks, in traveling as we do now, of having our mules stolen by the Indians, as we camp alone nearly every night. We, however, keep up a good watch during the night, two of us being on guard at a time, relieved every three hours. This standing guard comes very tough, much worse than waiting till a late hour on the levee of St. Louis for the arrival of a fast steamer from New Orleans, with "late and important" news from Mexico; but I am getting accustomed to it.

Since leaving the Kansas, we have passed at least one thousand teams, and we are still behind more than two thousand

Messrs. Robert Ward, P. D. Bailey, N. S. Hanley, Wm. Birch, John Thurman, A. McKenzie, J. Burton, B. Cunes, and J. Sheet, of Independence, Mo.; John Wilson, Benj. Jones, and Henry Finley (col'd), of Illinois; Geo. Walls and Joseph Cattie, of Indiana; J. Skein, of Michigan; Wm. H. & Jas. F. Rutherford, of Franklin county, Mo.; A. Hawkins, Wm. C. Palmer, A. W. Palmer, Peter Burgoon, G. B. Wright, S. B. Henry, P. Van Clief, D. D. Van Clief, and F. A. Davis, of Morgan county, Ohio; Wm. & Geo. Carhart, of Coshocton county, Ohio; Joseph Stibbs, of Wooster, Ohio; Wesley Hurlburt, of Washington county, Ohio; Wm. Keith, of Logan county, Ohio; Julius Bapst, Wm. Hesse, and Chas. Lobenstein, of Cincinnati, O.; Jacob and Christopher Bietsch, of Columbiana county, Ohio; Dr. F. M. Cornyn, Chas. Cornyn, Jas. Baldwin, Wm. H. Gattrel, John H. Kingsley, Samuel Hewett, James Dillon, Jas. Montgomery, Thos. R. Phelps, Chas. W. Young, Robert Charles, Wm. Riches, and John Welch, of Zanesville, Ohio; Thos. Eades and his servant Hiram Pierce, of Lexington, Kentucky; P. D. Hampton, Jasper Ingraham, and Edward Taylor, of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Milton Rains Elstner and Theo. R. Keyes, of Crittenden, Kentucky; and George Mifflin Harker, of St. Louis, Mo.

Since I wrote my last letter, we have been travelling on by slow stages over very good roads, most of the time in company with the Government train, which has been swelled to over three hundred wagons by overtaking another division. The animals in this train seem to be in poor order, especially the mules. I conversed with several wagon masters and one or two officers, and am led to believe that only a very small portion of this train will reach Oregon. The soldiers and teamsters will desert on or before their arrival at the South Pass; and strike for the gold diggings of California; and most of the officers will no doubt throw up their commissions, and follow suit. Indeed, the spirit of desertion prevails to such an extent that the private soldiers openly declare their intention of leaving the army at the Pass. I overheard one of the sergeants remark to a teamster that there were seventy in his company, and that they were all going together, and he would be the last man to

go after them, to bring them back. Such talk as this surely indicates that the gold fever has not ceased raging, at least, on the plains. A goodly number of the soldiers have been enlisted but a short time, and it has been their intention from the first, to accompany the army only as far as it suited them, and then desert, taking with them their horses, &c. It has also been the design with most of the teamsters to obtain only a conveyance to the vicinity of the diggings: they have not hired for the sake of wages.

What I have written here in relation to the Government train are not merely surmises.—It is the general opinion among all, that only a very small remnant of the train that left Fort Leavenworth will arrive in Oregon.

If I recollect rightly, in a letter written from Independence, I gave it as my opinion that a less number of persons would start for California from the different starting points on the Missouri river than was at first anticipated; but since then I have seen and heard enough to warrant me in saying that not less than eight thousand wagons, and twenty-five thousand persons have left those points. Already have four thousand wagons passed Fort Kearny according to a memorandum kept by the Quartermaster, and most of the ox trains are still behind, so that my estimate cannot be far from the mark.

A great many have started with too heavy loads, and have been obliged to lighten. Several trains have discharged a portion of their loads at Fort Kearny. Their flour and bacon were purchased by persons at the Fort at prices ranging from 3.4 to 2 cents per pound.—Many have found their wagons too heavy, and have been compelled to exchange at the fort for smaller and lighter ones. Others have either sold their wagons for a small sum, say from \$20 to \$50, or thrown them away, and packed their mules. This morning we passed a camping ground where boxes, trunks, axles, and a thousand other articles were scattered about in sad confusion. One box contained six or eight bushels of beans, another seventy-five or a hundred pounds of salt, and there were three or four heaps of bacon sides, probably in all a thousand pounds. It is to be feared that some of those who have lightened their loads so as to be

"diggings." I did not converse with a single individual who said he desired to ever again make a trip over land from the States to California. They had all expected to see harder times in some respects than they had, but not so hard in others. They had looked for intense suffering for limited periods. This had not been the case, and they were disappointed. A steady drag all the way from day to day was too much for them; and they had become sick, actually sick, of *this way* of lining their pockets with the *yellow boys*. Most of them had come to the conclusion that, however easy fortunes were said to be dug up and washed out of the sand of California, he who went through with a land trip dearly earned his share of the yellow dust. The lady emigrants seemed to have got along better than the men. This, I think, was owing to the fact that, as a general thing, they suffered less than the men. Most of the emigrants kept up the American system of kind treatment to the daughters of Eve—a system which has long been proverbial—and used every means to prevent their being overcome with fatigue.

I will now proceed briefly to state what kind of a time we have had, and what kind of a country we have passed through, since I last wrote to you.

The country from Fort Hall to the head of the north branch of the Humboldt river is, with the exception of a very few patches, a barren waste. The streams of water, some of which are large, bold rivers, flow through a country which apparently received far more than its share of the curse attending the sin of our forefathers. Vast stretches of table land lying between the mountains and rivers are nothing but sand, producing only artemisia bushes. On the low bottom lands, which are very narrow, a little grass and thin strips of willows grow, affording a scanty support to the emigration. Occasionally a few bunches of shrub cedar make their appearance. The Port Neuf and Lewis' Fork are very fine streams; but we were glad to get away from them, the mosquitoes being terribly annoying. Some evenings we were driven to bed before sundown. Our animals stamped with rage, and moved about till midnight in great agony, when the little imps began to disappear. For a night or so we tried to drive them away by building large fires,

but we found it to be useless; and our only resort was to cover ourselves, head and foot, with blankets. The prettiest scenery was along Lewis' Fork, where we found several large cold boiling springs, and numerous swift brooks rushing over their rocky beds from their fountain heads in the mountains. Of these mountain streams Fall River is the most beautiful.

The American Falls of Lewis' Fork is a striking feature in the scenery of the country. The river here, confined to very narrow banks, has a fall of fifty feet over rough rocks, making a roar that can be heard for six or eight miles. Several persons were fishing there when we passed, some of whom had fine strings of salmon trout. For miles below the scenery is very romantic. Here we passed by the palisades, which very much resemble the palisades of the Hudson river. We were very much disappointed when we arrived at Raft river, to find a narrow, dirty-looking creek, which flows over a black, muddy bottom, and is full of decayed vegetation, with no timber of any kind on its banks. Here we found good grass, and laid by one day to rest. At the head of Raft River Valley we found a new road, which comes over the mountains from where we left Bear river, being a cut-off from the Fort Hall route of thirty or forty miles. This road was made by Hedspeth [James Hudspeth] and three or four hundred others, and they were in sight when we left the valley. We learned from several who came by that route, that the road was a fair one, and that plenty of water and grass were found. The Indians on this route had plenty of horses, and they freely traded with the emigrants for trifling articles, so that all persons who travelled this road were well supplied with ponies. Just before arriving at Goose Creek we came to the Salt Lake road, and from all that we could learn, those who came that way travelled over worse roads than we did, and had much harder times. Numerous pack trains passed us each day after this, and in almost every instance they stated that they had packed from the Mormon City. This city is said to be rapidly improving, and contains about eight thousand inhabitants, who reside in houses constructed of sun-burnt brick.

In a few days after leaving Raft River Valley we came to

and the cover torn off. He left the wagon, and the ladies from that point became equestrians. Our road through the mountains along the Carson river, and through a valley forty miles in length, after leaving the river, was, with the exception of a very few miles, most excellent, and we had plenty of choice grass and water, and were provided with an abundance of good fuel. The large valley through which we passed was the most lovely I ever saw, lying between two ranges of mountains from one to two miles in height, the eastern a ragged, rocky affair, the western covered with tall pines, with numerous brooks tumbling down the ravines, forming beautiful cascades, and then gliding gently into the larger streams of the valley. The soil in this valley is good, and the fine tall grass gives it the appearance of a vast cultivated meadow. At the foot of a mountain around which the road ran we found large hot springs, and a large pool or lake of boiling water. For the two nights that we were in this valley the western range of mountains was in a perfect blaze, hundreds of fires having been built by the Indians, probably as a warning that strangers were in the land; and around some of the largest fires we could distinctly see the dark figures of red men stalking largely.

Leaving this valley, we entered a large canone [canyon], the pass through the great Sierra Nevada. A large stream here forces its passage over mighty rocks of solid granite, with a roar almost equal to that of the Niagara Falls. The road surpasses description. The canyon is five miles long, three of which would be pronounced impassable by anybody but a California emigrant; and we never would have thought of driving mules or hauling wagons over rocks, down precipices, and up steep, where a pedestrian could scarce find a footing, still less keep one, had we not seen that others had passed before us. We had to work our passage, I assure you. After proceeding a mile and a half over the bad road, we halted for the night. My comrades took the mules through the canyon to grass, and I remained with the wagons. But I was not alone—two Cincinnati wagons, one of which had a broken axletree, being near by. I built a large fire by the side of a huge pine log, steeped a cup of tea, broiled a couple of slices of

nice ham, and, seated on a camp stool, was in a fit mood to appreciate the romance of my situation. The wind murmured 'mid the boughs of the tall pines; the creek roared lustily; the rocks, which rose threateningly one above the other thousands of feet perpendicularly, cast their deep shadows over this narrow prison-place, only dimly lighted now and then by the ray of the pale guardian of the night, as she passed around the peaks of the highest mountains. Fatigued and sleepy, I retired to the wagon, and was soon comfortably ensconced beneath a pile of blankets. But I did not sleep soundly. My situation was a strange, wild one; and the raging of the elements often wakened me during the night.

About ten o'clock on the following day the boys returned with the mules, and we proceeded on our rugged way, foot at a time. Our mules hauled our load all the way through, excepting for a few yards, where the road was so winding and rocky that only two mules could pull at a time. Half the time our mules would be falling down, being unable to keep their footing on the rocks; and when we crossed the creek one poor fellow fell down, and was unable to get up of himself, being in a very dangerous situation, either of being tramped to death by the other leader, or drowned. We soon got him loose from his harness, and on his feet again. We had nearly lost another mule early in the morning, as he was returning from pasture—his hind feet getting fast in a crevice between two large rocks. He fell down the hill, and every struggle he made he got in a more precarious position. How he got loose without breaking a limb, the Lord only knows, for his escape was surely miraculous.

By dint of hard labor we arrived at the outset of the canyon about one o'clock, pretty well worn out, and the legs of our mules dripping with blood, from the many thumps and scratches against the rocks. We passed on six miles further, through two or three small valleys with snow-capped mountains on either side, and camped for the night on a fine patch of grass, surrounded by bushes, through which glided a purling streamlet. The night was cold, and we did not sleep very comfortably. The next day we started about ten o'clock,

and several dozen tents, strung along a ravine, through which a creek is said to run in winter.

From what I can learn, only about five hundred wagons arrived in the diggings before us. We saw upwards of a thousand wagons that had been left when we came along, and a good share of those behind must be left. It cannot be avoided. Thousands of animals will die of starvation and fatigue, and the suffering among the emigration will be greater than you in the States can form any conception of. I have myself seen two or three hundred dead mules on the latter part of the trip, and as many thousand oxen strung along the road from Fort Laramie on, of the foremost emigration, which had all the advantage of the best grass and water; and how can those behind possibly get along without intense suffering?

I heard that Dr. White and family, of St. Louis, had arrived safely at Fort Hall, and were coming on slowly. I was also told that the Pioneer Line¹⁰ had not failed, as reported, but had got to Fort Laramie, and was coming ahead. [Alexander] Vancourt's train, mostly St. Louis boys, arrived in the diggings one day before us; Haskell's train, from St. Louis and Wisconsin, one day behind us. The quickest trip was made by an Ohio mule train, which was on the road from St. Joseph eighty-five days, of which the travelling days were sixty-three.

The desertions from the army have been great, and probably more will desert before the several trains reach their places of destination.

The health of emigrants, on the latter end of the trip, has been very good—as good as among the same number of persons almost anywhere in the world. I here give you the list of the names of all persons whose graves I was able to see from Fort Laramie to Weaverville: J. M. Hay and S. Earl, children, residence and disease unknown; James Estill, Lawrence county, Missouri, disease unknown; James Crawford, Clay county, Missouri; Henry French, Adrian, Lenawa county Michigan, diarrhea; Alfred Coral, disease and residence unknown; D. Porter, Pike county, Illinois, aged sixty-nine years,

¹⁰ Pioneer Line was operated by Turner and Allen of St. Louis. It was to have been a public means of conveyance from the Missouri to the Pacific, at a cost of \$200 per passenger.

apoplexy; Henry Gardner, residence unknown; Wm. Byall, Findly, Ohio, pulmonary consumption; Charles Carroll, Cooper county, Missouri, drowned in the Humboldt river; E. A. Bryson, Bryant's company, Louisville, Kentucky; A. C. Baldwin, residence and disease unknown; A. S. Haskill, aged fifty-three years, buried in the mountains.

A melancholy accident took place at Weaverville, on the morning of the day of our arrival there. A gentleman by the name of Joshua Harrington, of Brighton, Massachusetts, accidentally shot himself. He leaves a wife and two children in the States to mourn the death of a kind husband and father.

We have pitched tent at the Old Dry Diggings village, three miles from Weaverville, uncertain how long we shall remain here. Elstner has gone to Sacramento city with the team, and in his absence Keyes and myself have taken up the "shovel and the hoe," and struck a lick or so for hidden treasures. A good deal of the ground in the ravines near here has been dug up and, consequently, these are rather "dry diggings" for the *verdant*. These parts take their name from the scarcity of water.

As near as I can tell you, I will give you all the information I can as to what are the proceeds of mining here. An ounce per day to the man is considered wages. Some make more, some less. Those who do not understand selecting good places are not able to make wages; but any young man who has been here over a week, and uses proper exertion, can make his ounce per day. You can, however, form no idea of the great labor of mining. What days I have worked, since I have been here, I have done as much labor as any canal digger or deck hand. In the first place, we have to dig holes in the bed of the creek, from three to fifteen feet deep, take up the layer of dirt immediately above the bed rock, scrape out the crevices, and then put the dirt into a wash-pan, or machine, and wash out the sand and gravel; and the gold remains. Some miners take from their holes from fifty to five-hundred dollars; and I know of a man who took one thousand dollars from his hole in one day, since we came here. Other days they do but little. A great many have not cleared their board (\$21) for the last week. Some young fellows become discouraged, and hire out

facilities are so very bad here that they do us scarcely any good. I have not been able to get a single letter from San Francisco, although I have sent by different persons.

There is no telling when you will receive this, but I sent it in time for the first mail.

I hope your loss was not great from the recent fire, an account of which I have not yet seen with my own eyes.

Yours truly,

MIFFLIN.

OUR CALIFORNIA CORRESPONDENCE

Dry Diggings City, Upper California, Oct. 25, 1849.

Dear Reville:—Since my last, this place, from a village of cabins and tents, has grown to quite a city, and is, withal, a town of considerable notoriety known by a score of different names throughout the country, among which are Hangtown, Gallows Hollow, Stringtown, Middletown, Mormontown, Oregontown, Old Dry Diggings Village, and Dry Diggings City.¹² The latter seems the most appropriate, and it is consequently the most popular, and I therefore make use of it.

Could you be here but a short time, you would learn that mining is far from being the only occupation of the citizens. We have merchants, big and little—provision, grocery, dry goods, and fancy—some in tents, some in cabins, others in the *open air*; we have mechanics of different kinds; but I believe that sawyers, carpenters, and blacksmiths are the only ones constantly employed. Our sawmills consist of pits, and the only power employed is two-men power, which propels whip-saws. We have several of this kind, one of which is sawing lumber for us, with which we are about erecting winter quarters. The bill of lumber for our establishment amounts to nearly one thousand dollars! In St. Louis it would amount to only *fifty dollars* at the outside. Elstner, Keyes, and myself form one little family with mutual interests, and we intend putting up a nice little buckskin sack full of the *dust* this winter.

¹² The legislature of California in 1850 changed the name of this town to Placerville, and made it the county seat of El Dorado County.

Speaking of occupations, there are a number of chaps here, most of whom served an apprenticeship in Mexico, who are pretty sharp at turning up "jack." There are a half a dozen gambling shops in the place, and several more in contemplation. They are thronged every night, and are pretty full during the day. The miners, as a general thing, "let loose out of their hands," and thus the dust is kept flying from one corner of the table to another; but finally it settles in the pocket of the dark-legged gentleman, whence it seldom issues except when called forth by the sharpness of a keener blade of the same stripe.

A number of persons who came across the plains have already obtained their *piles*, and are returning by this steamer. They have mostly made from two to five thousand dollars each; and I know of some who have made ten and twelve thousand. These men have been quite fortunate. There are thousands who have but little more money than they had when they came here. Although there is a great plenty for all, few know how to get it; and some who do get it, and any quantity of it, too, do not understand how to keep it—their purse strings are too loose.

As to the topography of this country, your readers are as well informed as we are, and probably better, having read column upon column in the "Reveille," written from different quarters. For my part I have stuck pretty close to this nook in the mountains, and all the information that I have obtained from other sections has been from miners, who are travelling through the country "prospecting." In this section there is nothing desirable but the gold. The country produces nothing but pine, oak, and a few bushes, and there is no chance of cultivating the land; and I have been told by many that the southern is the only desirable portion of the country to reside in. We continue to have an Italian sky—cloudless, and of an azure hue. The only rain for months was during a couple of nights week before last. The wind set in from the south, and we were soon enveloped in a dense fog, chilly and oppressive, and we thought winter had surely come; yet it cleared off, and has remained clear ever since. A fortnight ago, Keyes and

Another accident, which, I fear, will prove fatal, happened last Sunday. A young man by the name of Nash, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, formerly from Canada, accidentally shot himself with a rifle through the bowels. He is lingering in excruciating agony, and his case is almost hopeless. This was a very striking instance of carelessness in the use of fire arms.

I am amused very much every day at the maiden efforts of the green 'uns, who came across the Isthmus and around the Horn, at gold hunting. They puff and blow like young whales; their hands soon blister; they bespatter themselves with yellow mire; occasionally they slip up, and souse their seats of honor into a cold bath—at all of which they make all sorts of comical wry faces. Now, the overland chaps go at things philosophically, and nobody knows but that they are old miners. A little mud does not frighten them; their hands are as tough as boards, and mining is fun to them, compared to wading whole days knee deep in sand, or up rocky steeps, lines or ox whip in hand, without “a drop of water to cool their parched tongues,” or a spear of grass to feed their weary, half-famished cattle.

Some of your readers may think the first two names which I gave at the beginning of this hodge-podge mess, as those by which this place is called by many, disgraceful. For fear this may be the case, I will briefly tell them how these names came to be applied to the place. As I have already said, the people here are very honest, and crime is punished in a summary manner. Last spring two Spaniards and a Frenchman committed larceny, to what extent I know not, for which the people hung them to a limb of a large oak, which stands in the most public spot in the town, by the neck, until they were dead, then they were all buried in one grave near the road leading to Sutter's mill, as a warning to all future offenders of good and wholesome laws, which are not to be trifled with.

A report was circulating last evening that a miner had attempted to murder his partner, in a neighboring valley, for the paltry sum of twenty-two ounces. The weapon used was a very dull axe, and it left a horrible gash in the head of the wounded man. The villain was an Irishman, his partner a

New Yorker. He left his victim, supposing him dead, and eloped with the gold. A party of men are about starting after him.

Our mail arrangements, or rather derangements, have not altered for the better since my last. We are still without any direct news from St. Louis. Greeley's *New York Tribune* is the only paper from the States that finds its way up to these diggings. The last date was August 16th. In it I found one or two items of St. Louis news.

I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing Mr. John S. Robb, and do not know in what region of country he is.

Yours, as ever,

MIFFLIN.

CALIFORNIA

LATEST INTELLIGENCE

Dry Diggings City, Feb. 2, 1850.

Dear Reveille:— A few days ago I sent you a few lines by Mr. Doolittle, and now having a favorable opportunity of forwarding a letter to the States, I embrace it.

In my last I wrote very little news; I have little to write now. As an apology for not possessing more information than I do, and occasionally giving you information which is incorrect, (as I am afraid I did in my last) I must say, that we miners are entirely shut out from the world, and are in a state of ignorance as to what is transpiring in the world outside of the mountains which surround us. We have no way of receiving correct news from other places in this country, other than that of verbal sources, upon which we can place but little reliance. As an instance of this: In my last, I stated that Dr. [Thomas J.] White and Mr. [John F.] Williams had not been elected to the Assembly of California, since writing which, I am assured that they have both been elected, and that the former is Speaker of the House. We learn more concerning California from New York and New Orleans papers than any other way. You must not look for any news from us ignorant miners, farther than what concerns digging gold in the immediate vicinity in which we live.

June, July and August, if not those sent in September, October and November, have been either sent to the dead letter office or destroyed—the latter most probable. If such be the case, and I have not the least doubt of it, how many epistles from a kind father, a fond mother, an affectionate brother or sister, or a loving sweetheart, have been lost!

For my own part I have given up hopes of ever receiving any letters. I have not seen a "Reveille" since I came to the country. But there is no use making any ado about the matter. We were fools enough to come to this poorest and meanest land of God's creation, and we should abide the consequences without murmur.

Adieu, dear "Reveille." Your readers will, no doubt, glance hastily over this letter, and throw it aside with disgust, saying, "Can't Field¹³ find something else to put in his paper besides such trash as this?" What better can they look for from a country which yields nothing but gold?

This letter I send by Mr. Thos. Sayles, a citizen of Albany, N. Y.

Yours, truly,
MIFFLIN.

¹³ Joseph M. Field was one of the owners and senior editor of the *Reveille*.

ISAAC H. LIONBERGER
President Emeritus

STELLA M. DRUMM
Editor