



9-20-1853

Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker, 1853 Sept. 20

John W. H. Baker

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Jesus Maria, Sept. 20th, 1853

Dear Wife

I arrived at this place which is the encampment of Oliver yesterday, a little passed noon. This place is situated about 4 miles from Mokelumne Hill and is a Spanish place and is named in Spanish style. The pronunciation of the name is very different from the spelling. The people call the place Suus Marie, or as near like that as possible. I suppose you will be anxious to hear of my progress from Panama.

I started from that place on Sunday morning at 3 o'clock Sept. 4th on board the Winfield Scott. We were taken on board the Steamer by some of the natives in boats rowed by two men. The Steamer was lying off from the city some two miles and we paid \$1.00 each to be taken on board. We went on board at 2 o'clock on Saturday expecting to start immediately but did not get under way until 3 A. M. next day. I never suffered more from heat than I did on the passage from that place to within 4 days sail of San Francisco. We made three stops in our passage. The first was at Acapulco in Mexico which is the hottest place in the world I should think. We arrived there about 8 o'clock P. M., Sept. 11th and left the next day about 11 o'clock. We took in coal and a mail from that place. Our second stop was at San Diego, a town about 13 miles distant from the line dividing the United States from Mexico. We saw a White Marble Monument marking the line near the Shore and as we passed up the coast. The people here were the first specimens of Yankeedom that we had seen since leaving New York or at least those who manifested in their appearance the healthy and active life which the Yankee is accustomed to do in our section of country. If we found a man from the States on the

Isthmus (where there were many) they had the appearance of sickness and debility about them, but at San Diego they seemed to be healthy. We had a rough Sea from San Diego to San Francisco. Our next stop was at Monterey. We were very much pleased with the appearance of this place. It is quite like a New England village. There was a saw-mill there which looked like N. Hampshire certain. We made a stop here of only time sufficient to pass off the mails and started again. Monterey is some 90 miles from San Francisco. We started from Monterey about 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ A. M. on Sept. 18th and should have arrived in San Francisco about 8 o'clock had it not have been for being detained by a regular California Fog. I have heard of such fogs but never experienced any thing of the kind before.

About 6 o'clock we ran into the fog and continued our course some 15 or 20 minutes when we found we were in the region of the breakers and cast anchor. We were detained there untill the next day between 2 and 3 o'clock, when the fog disappeared and we found ourselves only a few rods from a rocky point about 15 miles from port. We soon after weighed anchor and came into port about 5 o'clock P. M. I was very happy to meet Oliver there as I expected that he might have expected me by the other line and have been down and returned in the mean time but the certainty of my coming was sure he waited for me. He had been there some 5 days waiting for me, which was something of an expense to him as the accommodations at the Hotel there was about \$4 per day. Oliver was getting somewhat in haste and we concluded to leave the next Steamer, which was to leave at 4 o'clock P. M. Tuesday. I sent Mary up on the Steamer to Sacramento by some of the passengers that were

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going up there who came on the vessel with us. She was some disappointed to think I was not going up to her brothers with her, but as Brother Oliver was in such haste to return to his business I had a very strong excuse for not going with her. Mary was quite smart for her considering the long journey and the variety of climate and ~~xxx~~ temperature that she had passed through. I think after a few days she will feel as well as ever. The weather is very warm here in the middle of the day but in the morning and evening we have an atmosphere which is most beautiful. We came from San Francisco to Stockton by Steamer and arrived there on Wednesday morning about 6 o'clock. We took breakfast at a restaurant and started on horseback together from Stockton about 11 o'clock A. M. Oliver came down with his horse and sent word for his men to send a horse for me by his Mexican Muleteers when they came down with his train of mules. One of his muleteers came in about 9 o'clock with a horse for me and after doing some trading we started as I have said and after riding out some 4 miles we found the mule train and muleteers by the side of the road. They had stop and were to remain there untill they were ready to load when they went to go into the town and load and start for this place. They were to load and leave the next morning. They will probably arrive here tomorrow. We rode about 32 miles the day I left Stockton and stoped for the night. The houses along the road during the first day from Stockton were mostly wood houses but during the last part of our ride we were finding them changing rapidly to a mere frame of wood covered with cloth and the roof made of canvass (that is very

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thick sail cloth) We stoped at one of these houses for the night. I found that I was rather sore and lame upon arising the next morning but I thought I would feel better after a short ride on my way, therefore I started with good courage. We arrived at Oliver's trading post about 12 o'clock and I assure you I was pleased to find a stopping place.

Sept. 26th

I have been interrupted by a variety of circumstances since I was writing the previous portion of my letter, but I thought I would finish up my writing for the Steamer this week this morning and be in season for my letter to leave. William Dudley Esq. & Dr. C. B. Holbrook came over to see me the next day after I arrived. I was feeling quite smart for the short time that had expired since my arrival and they were in good health and spirits. Holbrook is doing well at the Hill as they call it, and intends to leave for home in two or three months for the purpose of bringing his family to Cal. He will probably go to Vermont to see Albert and if so I shall try to have him call and see you, I went to the Hill on Saturday and stoped about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour to get some of my effect from my trunk and carried over some Gold dust for exchange. I can say that I am very well pleased with the appearance of the Hill for a place of business. I think you perhaps would think different of the place as a residence, but every body here lives to make their "piles" as they call it, and for that reason they live just as they choose whether in tents or cloth houses, or wooden houses. But a wooden house when will finished is not so good as my barn was at our house in Meriden if it was only papered or lined with cloth, that is to say most of the wooden house s

are such. The place where Oliver trades is what is termed an encampment and is the largest one in the town aside from the Hill. I should think there were some 50 cloth and Wood houses and a few small tents. They present to me the appearance of an encampment at our old N. H. muster field when^{ne} the tents of the Soldiers were arranged in a long row as near each other as possible with the exception that here we have two rows with a narrow street passing between them. The population of the place consists of Chilians, Mexicans, Americans, Peruvians, Dutchmen, Italians and Indians, and they present to me a mixed mass, I can assure you. The principal language is Spanish and not being very much accustomed to such I must say it looks as if I should be a poor hand to manage business at present, but I shall try to acquire a sufficiency of the language to enable me to converse with the inhabitants readily, which I think I can do very soon. I have done one days work at dentistry which gave me \$48, at a cost to me of only \$3 or \$4, making my labor about \$43 or \$44. I have some more work engaged here and shall probably do it during the present week. I get \$5 per cavity & \$5 for cleaning. Holbrook says I can obtain a good quantity of work of that kind at the Hill. I am going to the Hill today and shall probably make some arrangements with Holbrook for our business hereafter. From what I can learn I am of the opinion that we can do all the business of consequence to be done. I have a better library of Medicine than all other Physicians at the Hill and probably a better experience than any of them with the exception of Dr. Holbrook. In fact from the representation the Doctors there are mere quacks. I see no reason why I cannot do well here and if

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business turns up as good as is represented I shall be able to send you all the funds you will want within a few months. All I can say of Oliver is that he is doing a very good business and from appearance is making money pretty fast. Holbrooks copartnership closes with Dr. Teal on the 2 day of October. I shall write you again the next mail and want you to write me every mail without fail. Write me all the news. I saw Mr. Wingate at San Francisco. I never saw him when he looked so well. He was perfectly healthy and is very pleasantly situated. San Francisco is a very fine place and may be considered the wonder of the world. It is truly astonishing to see what a city has grown up there in the space of so few years with the adversity which it has had to contend with in the shape of fire. The business there in the way of improvements far surpasses N. York. I went about the city but very little as I was in no condition to encounter fatigue, but I saw enough to know that men are making fortunes sometimes in a day while others are loosing them in as short a time. A large portion of the people are engaged in eating, drinking & gaming. It is so here as well as at the city. I saw Daniel Bryant. found him well but just at that time was in search of a situation. Business for such places as he was in search of were in demand more than men for the situations. I think if Daniel had a small capital with which he could form a copartnership he would make money very fast. I think his friends would not do better than to send him some \$500 and let him use it in business he would soon be able to pay them and form a good business for himself. I never say Daniel look better in the world and he says he enjoys good health now. I like-

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wise saw Dustin Shattuck who is in business there doing pretty well. I must close this letter and will endeavor to write another to father before the mail closes. I leave many circumstances untold that I will put in in future with the sincere regard of your husband

John W. H. Baker