



10-10-1853

## Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker, 1853 Oct. 10

John W. H. Baker

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Mokelumne Hill, Oct. 10th, 1853

My dear Wife

I once more commence a letter for you and in an improved condition as to steady nerves when I compare the condition of them at my last letter. in fact, at that time I had not recovered from the weakened condition that I was in at the termination of my voyage. But I am now on the gaining hand, improving in flesh rapidly and only prevented from reporting a perfect sound body and mind from the fact that I had the misfortune to step upon a nail some three days since which passed through the bottom of my shoe and stocking and nearly through my foot causing some pretty bad pain and making me somewhat lame at present, but I am much better today and can walk about with more ease. At the rate my health improves I shall be quite portly in a few months. I have been expecting a letter from you by the Mail which has been due here some days, but as we have not heard of the arrival of the Mail Steamer we are beginning to think that some accident has befallen her. I can but think of the dangers that attend the Steamers in such voyages when a delay of this kind occurs and I am more surprised when I think of them that there are no more vessels and human beings destroyed during the Storms & Fogs and other casualties to which they are constantly exposed. I have written you five letters since I left home and am now thinking I shall feel quite happy to hear from some of those five due me from you. I want very much to hear how you and the children get along, and I should like to hear how all the people are. Have you a Physician? How is he liked? Is he doing a good business? How does Blanchard perform? How are Cousin O. B. Strobbridge & family? I know of many other questions I might ask but taking it for granted you will write all the state of affairs

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great and small I will cease questions and try something else. I am now in business with Dr. Holbrook having bought out Dr. Teall. Holbrook & I have purchased the Lot and Buildings (office & 1 cloth house, the latter used as a Hospital) for which we paid \$2400. I then bought Dr. Teall's half of the msde and furniture for which I paid him \$300, making my share of the purchase amount to \$1500. So you can see that I am in debt again, but with a prospect of working it out in a few months. I obtained the money by the assistance of Oliver, for the use of which I am to pay 3 per cent a month which is considered a very reasonable rate of interest here. Holbrook thinks I shall be able to clear it all out in 4 months and the prospect of business I think confirms me in that opinion. You will therefore be obliged to get along for the next 4 or 5 months with the means I left you, or if you come short, I want you to get father to assist you in obtaining money or such things as you need. After I have paid my debt I will send drafts of money in such amounts from time to time as you may need. Oliver was here to-day, had started for Stockton to purchase goods. Was quite well. He feels somewhat unsettled to think Sophia did not conclude to come. He says he does not know what more he should have written for her to come when he wrote that he had bought a house for her use and that he would make her as comfortable as possible here. He undoubtedly would have done well by her and in every thing except the surrounding Society would have made her quite comfortable and she might have had the same power over the female portion of that camp that Oliver has over the mail part, that is a kind of kingly power. Oliver thinks he may go to N. H. when John Storrs returns but I think he will conclude to wait untill Spring. I received a letter from Mary a week since, giving me a very strong invitation to visit Sacramento, but from my business and unexcusable neglect I have suffered her invita-

tion to remain unanswered. She was enjoying herself very much and wrote in excellent spirits. I can see no probability of my visiting them untill I can clear myself of the debt I have assumed. I may write them that if they will obtain me business in my line sufficient to defray expenses I will come almost anytime. I suppose you entertain the idea that you would like to live in California and undoubtedly there are some parts which would render living here quite tolerable but a residence in this town of one or two days would quite satisfy you that you would prefer to live in Old Meriden rather than endure the noise and confusion of drunken men and women and the unseemly sights of all kinds which occur in our streets constantly. The only thing a man of decency could be induced to forego such things for is the making of money, and with prudence & economy I have no doubt that I can make money here. We are obliged to do most of our business on Sunday as that is the day when the miners come for prescriptions & medicines and we must of course do our business on that day. I did about \$40 worth of Dentistry yesterday and it was a very good day for our office business aside from that, I filled three cavities for a man yesterday for which I received \$18. The man went out 3 times and drank a glass of Brandy each time and by the time he was through he was quite drunk. But such men are not uncommon. We have \$3.00 for extracting teeth and I have already made quite a start on my old reputation for pulling teeth. We have rec'd. \$11 to-day for tooth-pulling. So you see we are bound to make money. Almost every house in the place is furnished with a bar and a full supply of Liquors and such places are well patronized on the Sabbath and tolerably well supplied with customers on other days of the week. Liquors of all kinds are sold at 25 cts. per glass. All things in the shape of fruit are sold here at enormous rates. Pears at 25 cts. each. Apples

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at 25 cts. to 50 cts. each. Watermellons from 25cts to \$1.00 each. Such apples would be dear eating to Cousin O. B. Strobbridge. Tell him to eat one or two good apples for me if he is not too full already. I am obliged to forego the indulgence in such things and live on the substantials at the tune of \$10.00 per week for a seat at the table. I am boarding at the Eagle Hotel which is next door to our office. Report says it is the best boarding place in town. and from my experience I think it cannot be outdone for variety and abundance of food by any Hotel in the States, and beside the above considerations the food is very well cooked which is an uncommon thing in this fast country. Dr. Teall left this place on Thursday last for home with some \$6000 to \$10,000, which he has made here in the last 3 years. I sometimes think it would (be) quite a treat to you to see the different costumes of the people here. the Chinese especially. we have hundreds of them in the town, and a more inferior looking and acting race I have not seen in California with the single exception of the native Indians, who are the most comely looking objects on earth. The Indians go by the name of Walla Walla for every one, and we call the Chinamen all Johns, to which name they each answer. The Wallas are frequently accompanied by their children which they carry upon their backs almost naked. it would no doubt please Fred & Laura Maria to see the little copper-colored creatures hanging upon the back of the Indian Women. And what would please them more would be the China men in their native costumes which are accompanied with the most enormous size and ridiculous shaped thing for a hat that you can imagine. I think they make the hat of such material as baskets are manufactured from in the States. The only thing I can compare the hat to is the cover to a basket with a small cupola at the top-- The Indians go bareheaded mostly and are con-

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stantly picking up the fragments of food which are thrown into the streets. We were amused this morn by a young man who came into our office and went into our sleeping room and taking a couple of bottles which were there with string around the neck of them he tried a long time to put them on his feet thinking they were boots. He was finally accommodated with a boot which he put on the wrong foot and an old shoe for the other foot and Vamosed as the saying is here. He was crazy from having had fits, but one could not help laughing to see him pull after having put his toe into the mouth of the bottle. Tell

Fred not to wear bottles for boots! I should like to have you all here if I could for the scenes you would enjoy. but on the other hand I would rather you would remain there for many other important reasons, and expecially on account of the immorality that is constantly before the eyes of the young. I do not feel satisfied with the miniature of Fred and Laura Maria and when you have an opportunity I want you to get them taken at Windsor and send them to me. I have written a long letter to father which I shall send at the same time that I do this, and if you want for any thing I think he will see that you are supplied. Tell Cousin Oliver to write me and I will answer him. Give my respects to Cousin Justin and tell him that I should be interested by a letter from him. finally remember me to all my friends and relatives. And while it seems best on some accounts that we should be deprived of the enjoyment of each other's company for the present I hope you will derive some consolation in the fact that I am so well satisfied to remain here contented for your and I may say our seeming future benefit. at the same time I shall endeavor to keep my communications up and hope you will do the same. Write me at every mail--

I am

Your husband

John W. H. Baker

Mrs. Julia Ann Baker, Meriden, N.H.



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*Written crossways at end of 7<sup>th</sup> page -*

P. S. Tell Fred to write me a letter and send it to me in yours.

Kiss the babe for me and learn him to call papa. I suppose he will be quite a boy when I see him again. Tell Hannah to be a good girl and if she wants a husband she can obtain one out here with the gold to boot the bargain -- Tell Oliver that for my family's benefit I wish him to remain where he is. But if he was here he could accumulate a property in a short time. Tell him to write me a letter.