



12-10-1853

## Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker and children, 1853 Dec. 10

John W. H. Baker

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Letter 10

Mokelumne Hill, Dec. 10, 1853

My Dear Wife & Children

I have ~~this~~<sup>this</sup> evening been made happy once more in the receipt of another letter from you and I feel to thank the Giver of all things that you have been thus far blessed with health and that I have been so kindly cared for and sustained in the midst of dangers seen and unseen. I join with you in the hope that He will enable me to resist the temptations which surround me in this land of intemperance, dachauchery and whoredom. One is shocked at the constant and common use of profane language used in this place, and I am told that the same practice prevails in almost all mining-camps in the country. My ears are at this time almost deafened with oaths and imprecations arising from the crowd at the gaming-houses which are near me, Within a few minutes there has been three or four attempts of drunken men to fight with one another, and have only been restrained from battering each other by some of the more sober ones of the crowd taking the combatants away from the place by force. I feel every day more and more strengthened in my opinion that my wife and children are much better situated in the quiet of Old Meriden than they could be in the midst of the immorality and wickedness at present existing in the larger camps and towns of California. California may and no doubt will become revolutionized in many of the worst and most baneful characteristics, but I should much fear for the character of my children should they be thrown into the mass now populating the state, and so much do I fear that I cannot now feel that my family is to be a pioneer family in the attempt to revolutionize the present state of society at Mokelumne Hill. I am still in the very best of health and in good spirits, although I am occasionally feeling a little lonely and then almost wish I could be at my old home in Meriden. Your letter causes many reflections of the happiness and enjoyment we have experienced

in the old home of our first making. the pleasant apartments we then had for the accommodation of ourselves and our little family the conveniences which surrounded us on all sides, and moreover the kind neighbors and many friends that we had to sustain and comfort us. I say when I think of all these things it seems to me to be a sad thing to be this long! long! distance from those very cherished apartments, conveniences and friends and more than everything else to be seperated from my dear wife and much beloved children. Again I am consoled when I look at the other side of the picture and think that that home of ours was not my own. it belonged to others and we were liable should adverse corcumstances approach us to be turned from that home. When I think of the severe labor I was obliged to undergo from week to week and month to month and in the end the meagre pittance I received, that only sufficient to sustain us together in time of prosperity, and scarcely to be relied upon in times of adversity, I can only feel consoled and that abundantly so, when in connection with such thoughts I look at my present prospect of providing a home which will be paid for, and an ability to take my children along the path of knowledge with means which will not require us to deprive ourselves of a respectable competency. You know as well as I do that a man who is worth a small fortune or who is supposed to have such is looked upon with much more respect and consideration in general society than one who is only able to live and do business upon borrowed capital. Thus you can see there are many sustaining reasons and likewise many depressing reasons to be considered when I am musing upon my lonely life in California. But blessed be the Higher Powers that the sustaining reasons prevail at the present time. With these few lines as an introduction to my letter I must retire for the night as it is now near eleven o'clock.

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I shall endeavor to finish my letter tomorrow and I may write to some of my Meriden friends this mail.

Sunday morning, Dec. 11th, 1853

I am enjoying one of the most beautiful mornings that could be imagined by one who does not have the privilege of enjoying the same. Yesterday was a rainy and gloomy, muddy and filthy day and today opens with a cloudless sky, cool and invigorating atmosphere. We had the first frost of the season last night and the day is in many respects much like a New England Indian Summer. The weather is certainly beyond any thing I ever thought of for the month of December. Most men have predicted a mild winter with very little rain. I went out upon a hill near our village one day the past week and at a distance of not more than 20 miles the snow-capped Sierras were to be seen, giving me the idea of the green mountains of Vermont when they are first covered with snow. It seemed quite like home when I beheld them with their summits rising high in the heavens and shining with the fleecy white snow. I think at this time you must be enjoying the comfort of winter weather and an abundance of snow, probably Fred is much engaged in sliding down hill. If he has no sled you must get Arthur to make him one and pay him for it. he must have it painted and lettered on the runners with the name of his craft, perhaps "California" would answer for a name. I will send a gold dollar for the purchase of the sled. if it is not enough you must add enough from your means. You speak of getting a tailor to make his clothes and that the making will cost you \$1.50 each garment. that is right. I want you to get such things as you need and for yourself and the children and when you purchase a thing get a good article or none for a good dress or garment costs as much for trimming and making as a poor one and when made is worth double the latter. If you

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have not money to last you and make you abundantly comfortable  
I have written to father to supply you untill I can send a remittance .  
I shall probably send a draft on Adams & Co. for \$500, within a  
few months which I wish you to use for your comfort and support.  
My cash receipts over and above my expenses have already amounted to  
over \$600 and my share of book accounts will now amount to more  
than as much more, most of which will no doubt be collected. thus  
you can see that I shall soon be able to pay up my indebtedness in  
this country and soon after will have gathered enough to send you  
the above named sum. I shall send the draft by mail if I have no  
other opportunity. Dr. Holbrook will probably leave for the States  
sometime in January or the first of February for the purpose of  
bringing his family to this place. he says he shall go to Vt.  
to see Albert if he is living. But thinks it is uncertain whether  
he will be living as he was quite low when he last heard from him.  
If the Dr. goes to Vt. he will stop at Windsor and see father and  
get him to carry him to Meriden to make you a call. If he comes  
you will have the pleasure of a direct communication from one who  
knows my affairs and is equally interested in the progress of my  
business with myself. from him you will get many ideas you could  
not obtain from any other person in relation to California. Mr.  
Badgley Esq, the partner of Wm. Dudley Esq. has started for N.Y.  
to get his wife and child and will visit the Dudley family at  
Chesterfield sometime in Jany. or Feby. Perhaps our relatives may  
have the pleasure of seeing him. He is a young man of high talents  
and a gentleman. He was recently elected county judge with a  
salary of \$4000 a year. He has the office for four years. he  
is only 23 or 24 years of age a native of Hudson, N.Y. I wish  
you could see him. I know you would be very interested in him.



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We think him one of the best young men that any state can produce. It is now about 11 o'clock on Sunday A.M. and within some 4 rods from me is a noisy auctioneer making the most boisterous clamor selling blankets, Paints, Beans, cheese, Boots, Shirts &c and telling all kinds of ludicrous Stories to the crowd and saying that he shall make as much noise as he is a mind to. between the noise of the auctioneer I hear the hammer of a Shoemaker driving pegs. in the Gambling House just opposite are men seated about the room drinking Hot Punches, and the Clothing stores are trading in their usual merchandise. Oh! what corruption, what wickedness there is in this place. If such scenes were exhibited in New England we would surely think that the curses of a Sodom or Gomoroh would befall the place and I should not think strange if this region should be visited by the Wrath of an offended God in a pestilence or famine or some equally destructive warning. Oliver was here yesterday and was as well as usual. He has been building an addition to his store. the addition is a wooden one and I suppose they have a comfortable place now although I have not been there since he has finished the building. I think that if my success in business continues as at the previous rate I shall be satisfied with a residence in California of not more than three years. But I suppose you will think that a long time and I know I shall think so. Still if by that means I can return to you and my children with the means of a comfortable living without the dependence upon our daily for our daily food I then I shall be paid for my absence. In the mean time do every thing you can to comfort yourself and the children. do not be too economical of your means. Purchase such necessaries as you require and I want you should feel as well contented as possible in the absence of your husband.

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I rejoice to think that Dr. Lane is so well satisfied with his business and that it has proved to him as good an opportunity as I predicted it might. No one could be more confident than myself of the opportunity that place offered for a good business. and if I had have remained in N. England, I do not think I could easily have been persuaded to leave my practice there. I was well aware that I had many warm friends and when I left them my courage almost failed me. My anxieties of mind wore me thin in flesh and I think would have eventually caused a sickness to me if I had have remained much longer in a state of preparation for my journey to this country. As to my medicines you need not sell them as I shall want them perhaps on my return. Pack them away carefully and tell uncle Spaulding I will pay him for storage if the rate is not too high. I suppose your garden was a source of profit to you even when you sell beets at 1/ per bushel. I would like to know how your other crops have done and how the crops of other people came in at harvest. As to Henry Morey's Acct. I supposed the sawing of the wood nearly ballanced my old account against him and that the last charges on the book were disc. I thought that several of the men who were owing me would have paid me ere this. There was Daniel Brocklebanks Note which should be paid and some others that I do not now think of. If Ransom can collect any of the debts have him do so by all means and he may have such amt. of the proceeds as he sees proper to take. I would like to have him collect the Charles Pickernell Note and an account against Wayman Alexander. and the ballance due on Leonard Williams Acct. likewise an account against Wid. Blood and in fine any others that you find which he thinks he can obtain anything from. By the way, tell Ransom that California beats the World on stageing and teaming and he might have made a fortune in either of those lines of business had he come

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here. I never saw finer coaches and horses than those in this country. We have five Stages into this village daily. On two of the lines they drive Six Splendid horses and Beautiful Troy Coaches. and on the other lines from four to six horses as occasion requires. Our teaming is done with mules and oxen. and no team that I ever saw will begin to compare with some of our Mule teams, a team with ten mules attached as big as almost any horse and having a nice new harness to each one is something worth seeing or as Oliver says "that is some pumpkins". Our Ox teams are not to be laughed at by any means, for were you to see some of the big Wagons with from seven yoke of oxen (a common thing) to thirteen yoke of oxen (which numbe I have seen on one load) driving into town you would think you were present at a N.H. moving of a 40 foot Barn. Such teams as the above are constantly drawing freight between this place and Stockton and beside them many smaller teams. The roads from here to Stockton and likewise to Sacramento are very good roads most of the way. It requires a capital fro a man to engage in such business as staging or teaming, as a principal owner of such lines. but as a driver one can get from \$75 to \$150 per month, if a chance offers, but there is usually men who are ready at every offer to jump at the chance. I am glad to hear that Mother remains as well as usual and that father took the trouble to ride over and see you. (spoons) when you see Mother you may tell her that her mementoes / remain in my carpet bag and are not required for use. Remember me to Sister Julia and tell her that I know how to sympathize with her in her affliction. It is my opinion that the place where they reside has a tendency to produce the disease from which they suffer annually. I should like to know whether they hear from Dr. Warner and in what part of the country he is. Mr. William Shattuck is about 20 miles from me Mr. Emory Whitehead's son is some 15 miles



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from this place and you can tell Mrs. Whitaker that I have seen men who know him and have seen him in this village frequently. I think he has not been to town since I came here. Hosea Couch and a young man by the name of Atwood from Cornish I see daily. Mr. F. J. Stevens is married as you say, and I am glad of it. Stevens is a young man who will wear well and being married will serve to give him more character in the community than any other one thing that could happen to him. Give my kind regards to Mr. & Mrs. Baldwin tell them I rejoice with them at the birth of their daughter, and hope that she may recover her health without any serious difficulty. I shall always remember the sickneww which it was my lot to see her through and moreover never wish to have any other such scenes to remember. I shall be happy to receive a letter from Mr. Baldwin if he is disposed to write me and I will endeavor to answer any communication he may write me. I am happy to know that Mr. Penniman holds me in his kind remembrance. The old gentleman I shall always remember as one of my strongest friends, and I hope that it may be my lot to see him once more at his home in N.H. before he shall have been called to his Father by that grim destroyer of mankind, Death! I hear by the way of the Dudleys that old Chesterfield is at its old tricks again, trouble in the Church matters. I think the town will never clear itself from feuds and quarrels in church and state, and if I was an inhabitant of the town I should never expect to live or die in peace without removing from a place which seems so truly fated to be in wickedness and crime unsurpassed by any other place in the State of N.H. Tell Sam and Hannah that they need not trouble themselves about my sending for my family so long as they are willing to have the inconvenience of their company or do not turn them out of doors.

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Tell them that if they will bear with them a while longer I will try and get enough money to return to Meriden and if I can buy out Dr. Lane or get some one to assist me in raising funds to purchase my old stand I may possibly stop and practice medicine there. Ask Oliver if he will sign as security for me in the purchase of said stand if I come back. Tell sissy that I have to look at her mini ture occasionally and that of her "London Doll". There is but few such little girls of her age in this place. I suppose she has heard you read about the little Indian babies which I see around the town every day. Kiss thet babe for me and learn him to say pa. I should like to see him and all of you, but with the comfort of a regular correspondence I will endeavor to feel satisfied. Give my Respects to all my friends and accept the tender sympathies and affections of your Husband,

John W. H. Baker

Mrs. Julia Ann Baker, Meriden N.H.