



2-11-1854

Letter from John W. H. Baker to Julia Ann Baker and children, 1854 and Feb. 11

John W. H. Baker

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I do not promise positively but if convenient I shall do so. I will write you and if the draught is not sent then letter will explain the reason why. Edward Fifield is in the place and I have the fact before me daily of my being a good prophet as I said in my last he would probably see the time before he reached this country that he would wish himself back to old N. H. he has seen some hard times since he came as he has been sick and unable to labor much he is trying to do a little work now and if he is not too unwell he will obtain a little more than his board. He came here the first of this month and up to the time he saw me had seen no one that he had ever seen before since he left home

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Mokelumne Hill Feby. 11th 1854

My Dear Wife & Children

I once more commence my semi-monthly communication and although I regret to hear you are so disappointed in not receiving my letters regularly I cannot account for thier failure unless it may be the one sent by the Winfield Scott, which should have arrived in N. York the 5th of Jany, that letter I more than half supposed would be lost, but any other I can think of no reason why you should not recieve as regular as the Steamers arrive in N. Y. I acknowledge the reciept of you letters in due season. the one dated Jany. 1st coming to hand day before yesterday, I am glad that you write every mail whether you recieve my letters or not. I assure you that I have done and shall continue to do the same. Although news may be scarce yet the fact of hearing from your good health is a matter of great satisfaction to me. I am interested you know by the small matters that I can learn from Meriden and any change or contemplated change in affairs there can be written and I shall be quite happy to hear of them. All news from

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the relatives is a thing I am quite anxious to hear. I must acknowledge negligence in writing to Brother Silas. I ought to have written him some time since, but I have not felt quite like doing so, and that is all the reason I have not (a foolish reason to). I shall endeavor to get up some kind of a letter for him soon. It is a very poor time of the year to write very interesting letters, but I am in hope that there will be a time within a month or two that my inclination to composition will increase. I can hardly tell you what I am to find/^{even}for this letter to my own family, and much more would you expect matter for others to be scarce. I have now been alone here for two weeks and I can say I have a lonesome time of it. I am very much confined to my office having hardly time to exercise enough to keep my digestion in good repair. But I could get along with my close quarters if business was only brisk, but it is so dull I have too much time for lounging. My health is very good. I may say never better in 5 years--The weather here is somewhat irregular now a days, having rain for a day or two and then very clear and the sun shines brilliantly. The atmosphere is clear and the temperature just right to enjoy ones self. the middle of the day is quite warm like spring. Some of the trees are in blossom and the hills in the vicinity of town are getting quite green. (I was obliged at this point of my composition to stop and pull off my boot and remove a pesky flea from my stocking.) Sarah wished to know "how much of the "old king" (winter) we have here. I wrote you in a letter some month since of having some $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches of snow. ~~this snow~~ this snow was to be seen in some spots for about one week and the ground was slightly frozen for about the same space of time. that is the amount of severity with which the "old king" of N. H. extended his rod over us. during that time, with a

little more thrown in for convalescence I enjoy the companionship of my old friend and fellow-un-comforter the Rheumatism. But since that cold snap, as we Yankees call it, my companion has left me and my rations disappear as usual. I find I shall be obliged to divide my letters into some form and write under especial heads by and bye, as I believe it will be necessary for a department for the announcement of arrivals of friends and acquaintances, as likewise one for local news, and a department for things in general. I have to announce the arrival in this place of Edward Fifield. he came here on the 1st of this month. I found I was a very good prophet as in my last letter I prophecied that he would wish himself in N. H. before he arrived in the country. it was even so and many is the time since he has been in the country that he has wished himself in old Meriden. he has been sick most of the time since his arrival and when he came here he looked bad and seemed somewhat discouraged. I gave him the chance board and lodge with me a few days, untill he obtained work. he is now chopping wood for Hosea Couch, but makes slow work of it on account of his not being sufficiently recovered to have his full strength. he will however pay his board no doubt and if he continues to gain may be able to lay by something to return with. I pity such men who come to California, for there is no chance for them to do much here at the present time. A. P. Dudley Esq. & R. Thompson were among the arrivals by the last steamer. they are both in town in good health and ready for business. A.P.D. will do business as a matter of course for all Lawyers of taked are the men who are making money in the country at the present time, and Thompson will get business as he has influential friends to intercede for him. But young men dependent on themselves for introduction to business in the country are in what would be termed here a "poor show". The rains will in my

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opinion increase the mining operations throughout the country and the times will no doubt be better within a month or two, but if no improvement takes place in 2 or 3 months at most I think all business will be as unprofitable as it is in the Atlantic States. there are men here now who would be glad to work for \$2 per day and board, and when wages are thus low you can but think a prediction that times will change in a few months materially can be only a true prediction. Dr. Holbrook will probably have been in N.H. two weeks when you receive this letter. Perhaps he will have made you a visit. if so you will of course have very direct news from me. Business since he left has been less than ever, but I have the consolation to think that I am doing more than the men who were in the establishment one year since--and that to when I am alone in doing the business. I will have adjourn my letter untill after dinner as it is nearly noon. Saturday evening-- I left as you perceive above for the purpose of eating dinner. that being done I returned and have been entertained with company most of the afternoon. some on business and some loungers. The district court are in session at this place. they have been trying a man for murder to-day. the jury are now out but it is generally thought that they will not agree, and therefore he will not be convicted. there is no doubt but the prisoner shot the man but as no one saw the ball pass from the pistol and enter the man's brain, he will probably be cleared. There is another trial going forward this evening for a similar crime and will no doubt terminate in a similar way. in fact if a man has influential friends or plenty of money he is very likely to get clear of punishment if he were to commit almost any crime. I have at this moment as an accompaniment to my writing "music by the band." and as an explanation of that term, I may say that we are having theatrical

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performances next door to our lot every night in the week not even excluding Sunday and the music has become tiresome to me. The Theatre is a very large building upon the lot adjoining ours and is finished in good style for California, the probable cost of which must have been from \$8000 to \$10,000, but such a thing can never be supported in this place as bad as it is. For almost every one thought while the man was building the same that he would run through, and to-day I hear that he has left. his creditors having put an attachment upon all of his property. I understand that the sum of \$9000.00 or more has already been put upon his property. The man (Mr. Clarke) is among the missing having shamefully abused his wife and left her. Mr. Pomeroy, a man well thought of here and of very good standing here, left suddenly about the time that Dr. Holbrook did. he left dues here to the amount of about \$5,000. So we have it. If you see Dr. Holbrook after you receive this letter I want you should tell him of these defaulters. I think Pomeroy went to the States on the same boat with Holbrook. I would like to have you send me my botany by the Dr. You ask me if we have no good men here? and if we have ministers? I think we have some very good men here and a few good families. We likewise have a Methodist Church & Minister and a Congregational Church and Minister with preaching every Sabbath. Mr. Henry, the Congregational Minister has just gone out of my office having just called in to chat with me. He is a very good man and I suppose doing all that he is able to for the good of Society here. We have very frequent calls likewise from the Methodist Minister who frequently comes in and spends a social hour. his name is Fish he has his wife here and they seem to enjoy themselves very much. they have no children. We have likewise a Catholic Church and I occasion-

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ally hear the bell ring and the catholic portion of our community hastening to make confession or say mass. So you perceive we have all kinds. And I am of the opinion that my example goes as far as possible to sustain or bring about a better state of things than at present prevails. We have contributed liberally for the support of the Ministers, at least I think so having paid some \$20 cash beside about \$30 Or \$40 in business already for their support. Such a sum as that would be considered quite a contribution in the State of N.H. but here they may possibly consider it small, but I feel it is as well as I can do at present. A man can spend a princely income by contributing to little subscription lists or assisting some unfortunate individual who wishes to return to the States or for political purposes or some village improvement which is considered a public benefit, and \$5 for each would consume a great sum of money. therefore all such things which we can honorably escape we endeavor to do the "shy thing to."

There then Mr. Flea I have caught you and killed you, and I would like to kill all such while they are so mean as to bite me! this last sentence is to a flea which I caught in my neck getting his supper and with this I believe I will adjourn to to-morrow for the last page of my letter. so good night.

Sunday morning -- Well! we have another young winter this morning a N. H. sugar snow with rain and an abundance of mud, but no freezing weather as yet for this storm and I think we shall not have much snow--I tell them that N. Hampshire would not be ashamed to own such a day as this sometime in April. There can be nothing better than such to put forward vegetation. I am feeling now quite comfortable as to my prospects as I have finished the payment of my borrowed money and therefore cut of my interest money due from me. and if my business is small it seems now as though I was working

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for something that would show. In 4 months I have paid \$1200 with interest at 3 per cent per month over and above my own expenses and one-half the expenses of our bills of Medicines which we are constantly receiving from San Francisco, beside this I have due on book account several hundred dollars some of which is good and available. I shall probably send you a draft of \$50 the first of March which you will be likely to receive some time in April. Write me whether you have made any collections from the Notes which I left. I thought that you would be able to obtain some \$40 or \$50 from them ere this time. Tell Fredy that I am very happy to receive his letter, and I think he has improved very much since he wrote me before. Tell Maria that I have received her curl and the Little lock of Bubby's hair. If Freddy studies Geography he must explain to Sis my situation on the World. He can do it with an apple by a little assistance. Give my respects to Mr. Stobridge & family and to all enquiring friends.

From your Husband

Mrs. Julia Ann Baker

John W. H. Baker