

Letter #8

Martinez Cal Aug 30th 1852

To All of you

Date:

8/30/1852

Place:

Martinez Cal

From:

Chitt

To:

All of you

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Your favor of 13th July was rec here this morning the first letter I have had from the States since leaving St. Joseph Mo. you acknowledge the receipt of my letter from Fort Laramie. I wrote after that from Soda Springs on Bear river which you have no doubt received ere this. I also wrote from Hangtown by last mail and left in Ann's hand to be accompanied by one from her and hope they have safely come to hand. We had I suppose as pleasant a trip across the Plains as a majority of emigrants and made better time, being 102 days from St. Joseph to Hangtown. (83 days traveling) after writing you from Ft. L. we traveled to head waters of Sweet Water river which was high. Stopped and built a raft and Ferried one week. (Made good California wages) Chg \$1⁵⁰ for crossing a wagon. Stream 3 rods wide but very swift had all we could do and during the time we stopped our teams had a good rest so we could pass all teams that left us at the river. dont know of but one company that passed us there that beat us in and they killed 1/2 or more of their cattle in keeping ahead. Feed on the plains was unusually good this year tho there is many places where there never is any. The fore part of the Emigration generally got along without much trouble. as almost always the case. and if you know of any of my friends who want to cross the plains tell them to start first and keep moving as fast as they can and keep their teams up. but the great danger is in traveling too fast in the start. let your teams be your guide as to that, keep their strength and flesh for the last 500 miles. They will need it there! When we left Mo. river there was not a spear of grass on the main Prairie but by hunting for it in ravines and swampy places we found plenty while many others who would not look for it ran their animals down on the first end of the road and consequently seen hard times before seeing California. The latter part of the Emigration have suffered much from Cholera Small pox &c. We passed considerable Small Pox on the first part of the road but saw no cholera. The disease is reported to be in San Francisco. but Doct Carothers and I just came from there and Physicians say it is severe form of Billious remittant fever. The health at Panama is now better than usual at this season of the year. I saw the remainder of the regiment of soldiers left at the Isthmus on account of Cholera. They arrived two or three days ago. the disease having entirely disappeared among them. We stopped in Hangtown 3 days at Mr Harker's. left Ann and the children there while Parker and I came down to Mr. Elam Brown's (12 miles from here). Sold our three cows on the way. Cost in the States 2 at \$15- & 1 at \$8-. Sold 3 for \$200-. 2 of them was near giving out or we could have got \$275- to \$300-. I sold my horse yesterday at \$150- cost \$80- by keeping him untill he was fat he would have brought at least \$300 but to buy grain & hay would eaten his head off in 6 weeks. We have on hand yet two yoke of oxen worth \$200- & 1 wagon \$200- which I am waiting here to sell. They are at Mr. Brown's where I will go tonight costing nothing to keep them. If you could

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see the miles of oats they are raising your eyes would stare. This is virtually their winter here and no doubt the time when the ground recovers its productive qualities yet Vegetables which has never saw adrop of rain look as green and thriving as ever they do in the States. Nature seems to have fitted this Country for the farmer. He puts in his crop in the spring as we do. (Plows in the fall as soon as the rain falls enough to make the ground wet enough) and then leaves it to do anything he pleases (no weeds to pester) untill harvest and then he need be in no hurry. no rain to spoil grain. do not cut any hay here. For anything we raise in Ohio this Country is far superior to that in point of quantity and quality except Corn and that would make a sorry show beside a Buckeye corn field. Just enough raised for roasting, Ears them they have from spring to fall. No fruit raised in this vicinity yet but young orchards are being planted and I have no doubt but they will do well as the finest Pears I ever tasted grow in abundance down the coast 30 or 40 miles from here. Dr. Carothers and myself have visited the Pairco bay and San Francisco all of the past week. His Boys have a fine Steam Saw Mill and the best trackt of timber in the lower Country which you no doubt are aware is very scarce and in great demand. I should think their chance to make a pile was very good, and they certainly deserve it. and have my best wishes for their success. Thad P- and Dr. Carothers talk of going to the States soon. I made many pleasant acquaintances in San Francisco. it is a great place and is improving rapidly tho just at this time business is quite dull, but is always the case at this season. in 2 or 3 weeks trade will revive. They are building rapidly and their structures going up lately are and have been of the most durable character, being generally of brick and fire proof so that the city which has been so frequently scourged by that most dangerous element is likely to stand for ages. The harbor you no doubt have read a description of from more worthy pens than mine. Yet had I time I would give you a description in full because one cannot help but look upon the Forest of Masts and myriads of Flags from all nations anchored in this beautiful Bay without feeling proud that there is a safe harbor on this generally rock bound coast, where all vessels may be in safety protected by Uncle Sam. This is their coldest and most disagreeable season of the year on the coast an overcoat feeling very comfortable nights and mornings to one just from the heat of the upper country. But soon the rains will commence and the vegetation starts and the weather will be warm and pleasant such as we have in April and as a general thing the rain about like our April showers. at Mr. Browns I think is the most agreeable climate I ever saw. There you get a pleasant breeze every day and never too cool as is sometimes the case down nearer the Ocean. They never have any snow here and it is never cold enough to freeze the ground. seldom see any ice, then not more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch in thickness. I am writing in great haste as you may perceive as the mail closes at Noon. letters may be in time tomorrow for the Steamer but should there be any delay, would not go. Yet should I not be in time for to days mail I will try tomorrow and hope they will be in time. I intend to write to Uncle Elias by next Steamer. Parker has

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gone back to Hangtown and I expect to go up in a few days. we talk of Stopping there a while and go into an operation which I will explain in my next. Harris says if I think it advisable for any move to come to write. I have just fairly got here and if you were here and take a Birds eye view you would think every thing was over done and that there was no chance to make a living and many very many who come by water and by land would go home could they raise the means. but many are without anything and have to stay. others who have enough have seen the "Elephant" are satisfied to go home with an empty purse. For my part I have enough to keep me here a while and then to get home but I shall not give it up so shall spend what I have and more too before giving up California. I have friends enough here and have encouragement to hang on. Have not tried to do any thing yet. want to see the country first. As I have just been to Dinner I will tell you what we had. Roast Beef, Fresh Found Salmon, Potatoes, Squash, Tomatoes, Cheese, Beets the finest I ever saw, Onions, Soup, & Pie &c which for California is some Pumpkins. I expect to see some rare sport. There is a lot of 100 head spanish Cattle standing before the door waiting for the Ferry to cross the Bay to Benicia. They stampeded just now and gave the six Spaniards that had charge of them all they could do to stop them. One in particular ran and lead the rest and it was with difficulty the swiftest horse could head it. at last one came up Lasso in hand as they always ride. You see it whisling in the air. The Bullock was caught by the Spaniards unerring aim. his horse knows all about it and as soon as the Lasso is thrown he stops suddenly & braces himself and the animal turns as fine a Summersalt as you could wish to see. He threw this one 4 times in as many minutes and then it was considerably sobered. I want to write to Uncle Sam today and I must close. I will write you again soon and will try each time to give you something in regard to this every where acknowledged Wonderful Country where some are making money fast or loosing. Expenses are high and if a man is not making something he is loosing. Pratt is in the northern mines. Morrow and Green both left us on the other side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Don't know where they are and care less. Considerable trouble here in regard to land Claims in this vicinity. Squatters are causing trouble and before the question is settled there will be trouble enough. The Squatters are a desperate gang and I am afraid in some parts we shall have anti-rent wars. in fact on the coast of the Bay opposite San Francisco, they burnt a squatters house by order of a vigilance committee. Do write to me often and give me all the news. I am very thankfull for one sheet filled by all a letter comprised of a sheet from each one would have been a much greater treat. do not fail to write, give all the news. Please give my love to all friends who inquire for me and love to all
Very truly yours, N. C. Fasset

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I shall mail your letter to Ann. Send your letters to this place untill I write you to change. Write so your letters will reach New York by 1st & 15th each when the regular Mail closes for California. When I first came down here 10 days

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*ago I expected to get lots of letters, but the P. M. answered No. Oh dear if you could only imagine the disappointment you would pity me. I know. went away and came in late last night and this morning and got your letter of 13th inst. and that is the only letter I have received since leaving St. Joseph, Mo
Chitt*

[This letter is unusual in that the writing starts horizontally and when the entire sheet (15 3/16 by 9 11/16 inches folded in the middle to make four pages) is covered, Chitt turned the page to continue writing over the first page vertically. Thus he managed to cover the equivalent of nearly eight pages with text. See a photocopy of the first (also fifth) page at <http://physics.clarku.edu/~rkohin/008s.pdf>]