

NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

The Diary of Joe F. Triplett

Some Notes From an Early Directory

Sarah Lyon Noteware's Letter



Winter Issue
January-March 1959

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THE DIARY OF JOE F. TRIPLET

Transcription

By EDNA B. PATTERSON

May 3d, 1862

Left Carson City at 12 o'clock Noon bound for the sink of the Carson River, for the Truckee and Humboldt rivers, and for such other portions of this ill-begotten, God-forsaken, sage-brush, alkali, sand, lice and mosquito country, that used to be set down on the map when I was a boy, as Unexplored regions. Our party consists of nine men, but we expect to join a dozen or more men at Ragtown. We are all well armed, and well mounted, and are supplied with provisions for a month's campaign. The object of the expedition is to collect a large band of cattle, and to recover, if possible a number of horses and cattle from the Pah-ute Indians, which were stolen by Mr. Lo and his dirty-faced braves during the past winter. The stock is owned by residents of Carson, Washoe, Eagle, and Lake Valley, and they were driven to the low countries in the fall of 1861 for winter pasturage. We traveled 30 miles this afternoon and encamped at the foot of Susan's Bluffs, a high cliff of rocks, named by myself in 1858, in honor of a young lady, a former resident of Clarksville, California. She once gave me a very amusing description of her trip across the plains, and mentioned particularly the falling of her horse at this precise locality; her horse may have fallen here, but it is my opinion that she "fell" along time before she reached this place. All except myself are asleep; I am sitting near the camp fire, writing notes that may never do me any good, for if Mr. Indian gets my scalp, he'll be sure to make gun wads or a bonfire of this book, but I am too much of a night owl to go to bed early. Here I am on my way into the heart of a country known to be inhabited by hostile Indians, and all for the paltry sum of ten dollars a day,—and why? Because I have the misfortune to be broke,—well, I reckon a broke man, might just as well have his scalp taken as not, and it matters but little to me whether mine is taken or left, so they don't leave life in worthless carcass, for I would not like to be sailing around bald headed for the want of a scalp. Fire is out and I'm off for bed.

May 4.

Left Susan's Bluffs at 8 A. M., passed Fort Churchill, had to halt and let the Blue Coats satisfy themselves that we were cow hunters instead of a band of Ribs going back to the States. If we had not had a well-known cattle owner in our crowd, I reckon Major McDermit would have stopped us,—because of my being in the crowd. Crossed the ten-mile desert and camped for dinner at the old Honey Lake Smith Station; it was at this station that the first massacre of the whites, by the Indians in 1860 occurred. All know the gloom that was cast over the whole community by the disastrous result of the expedition under Major Ormsby, who went out to chastise the Indians (or to steal their horses), for the simple reason that the Indians killed three or four white men at this place. Major Ormsby got killed, so also did sixty of his men, and the balance, 140 in number, were so badly frightened that they will never want any more Indians. Another party of 700 under Colonel Jack Hays went out,—myself among the number, (see notes of 1860), After noon drove 20 miles, camped at Cottonwood slough. No incident worthy of note during the drive.

May 5.

Drove 6 miles to Ragtown. In the early days of the immigration across the plains this was quite a noted place, had several hundred inhabitances—composed of thieves gamblers and traders, all assembled here to rob the poor immigrant. 'Tis here that the road leaves the desert so well known as the forty-mile desert, forty miles of sand ankle deep. From the sink of the Humboldt to Carson rivers clear waters and beautiful meadows. What a change in a few years! Then a perfect hurra town, now only one inhabitant—Asa Kenzon,—a regular Robinson Crusoe, as far as being monarch of all he surveys is concerned, and as ready to rob a pilgrim or 49'er as any of his predecessors were. Came up with the balance of our party; we now number 23.

May 6.

Remained in camp all day repairing saddles and getting ready for an early start tomorrow. Elected J. B. Winters Captain, he being the largest cattle owner present. All hands jubilant that they are going to have a good time, but they don't know the country,—hell is an ice house to some of the places they'll see before the week passes.

May 7.

Captain Winters may know what he is going to do, but d-nd if I believe he understands the cattle business, we will be off in 10 minutes.

May 8.

Accomplished nothing. —9. worse than yesterday. —10. a repetition of the 9th. 11. camped at Hot Springs between sink of Humboldt River and Truckee. —12. Only one horse left in camp—balance gone to hunt *cold* water. One man gone to hunt horses; boys beginning to find that the sun can shine hot. One small wagon for 22 men to crawl under to get in shade,—no tents, no willows—no sticks to stretch a blanket over, not even sage brush—hot, hotter, d—— hot, “Oh, Laz’rus, put your finger into the cup and let one drop of cold water fall upon my parched tongue,”—nar a drop; man returned with horses, reckon every man will sleep with rope in his hand.

May 13.

Left Hot Springs—glad to leave; hell may be hotter than that camp but some of our boys can’t be made to believe it; camped at a cold spring high up on the side of the mountains—don’t know why we are up here, unless to keep out of the way of cattle; seven days out, horses getting tired, men discouraged and have not seen a cow’s track.

May 14.

Left camp at sunrise—discovered signs of cattle at about ten o’clock; came in sight of a herd of about fifty head about twelve; gave them a big race—or at least the captain and some of the men did, and did not get a hoof. I did not go into the race, as I was satisfied from the orders given that we had better save our horses, as we would have the run for nothing. I think I could have taken the men and secured every animal that we sighted to-day, but, as the captain gave me a big snub the first day out for offering a suggestion, I concluded to say nothing.

May 15.

Had a little better luck today. I caught a six-month calf belonging to our Captain and we killed it, and will eat it. Am doing a big business. Been out from Carson 13 days: 13 times ten make 130, making money for myself but it’s rough on my employers,—think they had better come down and discharge me.

May 16.

Started from the edge of white plains—traveled in an easterly direction, didn't seem like our leader is trying to find anything, think I'll desert and go back to Carson and report, tell my employers that they don't owe me a cent,—that the knowledge gained under the able leadership of Captain Winters will amply recompense me for the time I've put in.

May 17.

We are camped on Carson river four miles below Ragtown, have been on the move ten days,—and are back to within four miles of our starting point. Have not secured cattle enough to supply us with beef. All hands mad and some of them talk pretty plain; I have nothing to say as I expect to start to Carson to-morrow.

May 18.

I left camp alone this morning and moved up to Ragtown,—stopped to have a chat with the proprietor,—when up rode a messenger in haste, requesting me to wait for the company,—they had broke Captain Winters of his command, and wanted me to take charge of the expedition and make another effort, as all had cattle out and were anxious to get them. I concluded to wait and see what could be done. Ex-Captain Winters here apologized for snubbing me, said he knew nothing of the management of cattle, or of their habits, etc. I am boss now and to-morrow we start out to try our luck again. There has been a good deal of growling and grumbling among the men, and at my suggestion the company have elected Jim Benton as chief growler of the Company. No other man will be allowed to grumble at anything. No matter what his grievance may be, he is not to grumble about it, but must refer it to the chief, whose duty it shall be to do all the growling that may be needed.

May 19.

Left Ragtown at 8 A.M., traveled northwest through the sage brush,—across one corner of the forty-mile desert,—passed the grave of poor Bob Ridley who was killed by Indians in the Ormsby Massacre two years ago,—arrived at the Truckee River at 4 P.M. Are encamped on one edge of the battle ground where the volunteers under Hays gave the Indians the first whipping they ever got.

May 20.

Traveled down the Truckee and are encamped for the night on what is called "the orchard",—a beautiful valley, covered with a magnificent growth of cotton wood trees, which, viewed from the distance of ten miles or more, reminds one of an old-fashioned eastern apple orchard, hence its name. Cattle signs.

May 21.

Started at 8:30 A. M., traveled down the Truckee River to the foot of the "Tombs"—a lone mountain of rock without a sign of vegetation on it, which stands where the waters of the Truckee divide, the main branch running west, the other running in an easterly direction. In crossing the smaller branch, upset our wagon—wasted some grub, and broke my ink bottle. An Indian once told me that the mountain referred to had heap holes in it—caves I suppose—and that they put their dead Indians in the holes, so it is called the tombs. Followed the main branch of the river to where it empties into Pyramid Lake. The lake takes its name from the number of small light-colored islands in the lake—all, or nearly all being in the form of a pyramid. The lake is about twenty-four miles long by twelve to fifteen in width, water strongly alkali, though fed by streams of fresh water. Horses tethered on sage brush,—we cook tonight with sage,—have either a splendid light or are left in uncertain darkness. Sage brush out, fire ditto, boys in bed and I'll go too.

May 22.

Traveled North twenty miles. No signs. Turned east, crossed low range of granite hills to Mud Lake, the sink of the east branch of Truckee. Owing to the soft and miry nature of the ground could not get our horses to the lake, so we traveled north ten miles to Lost Springs. Plenty of grub, but the springs are only "holes-in-the-ground," not large enough to put a bucket in; improvised a pump by tying strings into the rim of an old wool hat (like boys string kites), then with a long pole pressed into the crown of the hat we soon raised water for ourselves and our half-famished horses. 50 head of cattle.

May 23.

Left camp at seven o'clock—course north to Smoke Creek Canyon—met a delegation of the family of Lo who requested us to "heap go back." Did not like the looks of things, so accepted

Mr. Indian's invitation—returned to and camped at Lost Springs. Found 25 more cattle.

May 24.

Left Lost Spring, traveled southeast to an old road, used by immigrants in early days—, who entered California by the northern or Beckwith route. Found good water at the Blackrock mountains, camped early, found 71 head of cattle—wilder than deer.

May 25 & 26.

Have put in two days "cleaning up" Blackrock section. Are now camped on the western edge of the "Desert" at a warm sulphur spring, —a villainous place one of the boys expressed his appreciation of the place by declaiming that he could smell hell. 98 head more.

May 27.

Returned to Ragtown for grub, all tired, had a hard day,—but men satisfied—have now 244 head cattle.

May 28.

Left three men to herd the cattle at Ragtown, started to crop what was the "terror" to the early pilgrim, i.e. the forty-mile desert. Each side of the road is white with the bones of cattle and horses that perished on the desert in crossing to California. Tons and tons of wagon-irons and chains could be gathered along the road, the immigrant having lost so much of his stock as to be unable to haul his wagons through. With a spirit of pure cussedness, to be found in no one else on earth except a man "Crossing" the plains, he would burn all of the wood of his wagons and then scatter the irons. For the first time, some of our party today beheld the beautiful and wierd effects of the Mirage: small rocks, not larger than a water bucket two miles away, looked larger than a two-story house, while mounted men at the same distance appeared to be more than one hundred feet high. Suddenly the scene changed, and the whole country ahead of us appeared to be a vast lake of clear water, very enticing to a thirsty man, but aggravating to an extreme degree when pushing a head for an hour or more, the effects of the mirage passed away and he found nothing but the burning desert sands which would cook an egg in five minutes. Reached the Humboldt slough at four o'clock, tired and thirsty. Plenty of water of poor quality, no grass. Station keeper says there is grass five miles distant, hired him to drive our horses thither,—no wood visible, yet in

the thousand sand hills adjacent, I know we will find all the fuel we require. These sand hills are of all sizes, from two feet to one hundred feet in diameter, and by digging into them a short distance we uncover a tangled mass of roots from one-half inch to two inches through which we find to be perfectly dry, and make excellent fuel, that is if a fellow hurries his cakes. There is no sign of vegetation on or around these sand hills, yet they are full of roots. I suppose the changeable winds cover the shoots with sand as fast as they appear above the surface.

May 29.

Station keeper brought in the horses—reckon from their looks that they had to dig into the sand hills for all they got to eat. Crossed slough nearly one mile wide. Ferried men, saddles and wagon; had to swim horses. Traveled thirty-four miles up the river and encamped at old Bannoek Station. The emigrants used to tell me about seeing the elephant as they were coming down the Humboldt: I wonder if we will see any thing of the animal as we go up. Hope he won't be in the shape of a dirty-faced Piute. Found today 51 head of cattle.

May 30.

Still on the move upward. A dreary looking country: some grass along the sink of the river. Indian signal fires on the top of every mountain, don't apprehend any immediate trouble, as I can read the signals as well as Mr. Lo. They telegraph our number and the direction we are traveling. Whenever they signal each other to gather in, "I'll call the turn" and it shall be: turn back. The wagon road has been badly washed by storms and cloudbursts, had some difficulty getting wagon along. Kept men scattered in hills, found 26 head of cattle.

May 31.

Rolled out early—working hard all day, wagons made 35 mile drive, found 32 head of cattle early in the day. No sign of cattle in afternoon. Met old mountaineer, who told me, "No cattle above." I believe he told me the truth, will go tomorrow and prove or disprove his words.

June 1.

Left wagon in camp also three herders. Made a tremendous circle, found the old mountaineer to be entitled to credit for veracity. Saw one dilapidated, superannuated savage, he might

have been a warrior sixty years ago but at present he is but an imbecile heap of breech cloth and filth.

June 2.

Turned back without being warned to do so, made late arrival, have to hold cattle under guard.

June 3.

Drove to Humboldt Slough, crossed cattle and horses, drove five miles up slough where Station keeper herded our horses on up-trip. Nothing but white sage for horses.

June 4.

An old savage came to camp to beg bread; he says there is water in the mountain opposite our camp and heap cow, heap bungo (horse). Wallowed through mud and water across the slough, found 48 head of big fat lazy cattle and six pretty wild horses. Distance from slough to spring estimated fifteen miles, think the cattle and horses were driven into mountain by the station-keeper so that he could get away with them. Returned to camp—double guard tonight from those who laid off today. Caught and tied up three of the horses, found they proved perfectly gentle as soon as caught. Out of bread.

June 5.

Started in a southerly direction across the forty-mile desert, as near as we can tell about parralell with the emigrant road,—15 miles out fresh sign of cattle. Followed about five miles, found a number of pools of water in the middle of the desert, a good many cattle grazing in sight. The pools of water are at no point more than ten miles from the emigrant road; could the weary pilgrims of early days have known of the presence of water so near, many thousands of dollars' worth of property might have been saved. No guard tonight, turned loose 157 head of cattle found since leaving Ragtown.

June 6.

Scattered men to the east and west for a regular Rodeo, rounded in the camp about 2 o'clock P. M., counted cattle, have 320 head to guard tonight 163 head more than we had yesterday.

June 7.

Guarded all night with full force, today followed as near as we could the direction of the pools, found 70 head more.

June 8.

Five men to drive cattle—balance scattered out towards upper sink of Carson River, camped five miles below Ragtown, 102 head found today.

June 9.

Sent to Ragtown and had the other herd brought down. Have no bread, but everybody jubilant, as we have 736 head of cattle under guard.

June 10.

Lay in camp all day, horses and men need rest.

June 11.

Left eight men to hold cattle, took old Simpson road eastward, traveled 35 miles to lower Sink of Carson, splendid meadows,—cattle and horses in sight.

June 12.

Made a drive of everything except a few of Winnemucco's braves, whom we encountered. Got 60 head cattle, 7 horses. One bronco cow hooked my horse, and I shot her, didn't hurt the horse much, but finished the cow, "we cooked her calf."

June 13.

Crossed cattle and horses over the sink to the meadows on the east side. Got 39 head of cattle and drove to old Station on stage road.

June 14.

Took to the mountains with eleven men to search the country around Sand Springs and after a hard day's work reached camp on the east side of upper sink with 172 head more cattle. No bread—no sugar—beef and coffee strait. Can scoop up all the salt we want from the ground,—ten days without bread, getting ravenous, hard tack would taste to us like ginger cake to a school boy,—bound to get all the cattle in the country, bread or no bread.

June 15.

Sent four men with cattle back to herd, took balance and went south to lone mountain, camped on a dry camp, no cattle.

June 16.

Returned to old camp on upper sink, four men returned.

June 17.

Called for one man to go with me to Chalk mountain valley, the home of the notorious Buffalo Jim, a renegade Piute, well known for his antipathy to the whites and for his cleverness as an appropriator of stock belonging to the emigrants. Old Jake Wilson volunteered to accompany me. All remonstrated with me for attempting the trip,—traveled all day without water, camped dry.

June 18.

Were aroused this morning by the most terrible yells I ever heard, jumped up, found the yells to come from the throats of Buffalo Jim and about one hundred of his followers. Concluded I'd struck a bad streak, told Old Jake to keep close to me and put a bold face on, let his heart flutter as it might, knew that nothing but impudence could get us out of the scrape, so took out my pipe, filled and lit it, walked up to Mr. B. Jim, offered him my hand, took from my pocket an old mining deed and told Jim that I had brought him a paper-talk (letter) from Gov. Nye. Read the deed to him word-for-word and in explanation, put such interpretation on it as I deemed the exigencies of the case required. Told the savages that that Gov. Nye wanted all the Indians to come to sink of Carson in ten days for shirts, flour, blankets, etc. Gave myself plenty of time, to get away,—asked for water, was shown it, ate a little dried beef and lit out, followed the mountains to the southward, camped at Mills Gate Springs, a place where two mountains come close together, leaving a pass wide enough for two wagons to run abreast.

June 19.

Found forty head of big cattle in charge of two Indians who claimed them as the property of Buffalo Jim. Again had recourse to my deed, gave the Indians six half-dollars, some tobacco, and my red silk handkerchief. Started immediately on the trail for camp, drove all day. Camped at about five o'clock to let cattle and horses have some thing to eat. Eat a little dried beef and at dark started and drove all night, rested at daylight and for a couple of hours on the 20th. Drove till noon and found a spring, stopped two hours,—thought we were near enough to camp to make a run for it if the Indians should follow, made camp at dark. Would give a steer for a loaf of bread. Old Jake is now eating his rations of beef and coffee, and as he eats, he recounts our adventure in Chalk Valley. He says his "har jest riz" when I walked up to the chief of the renegades. Well, to tell the truth,

mine "riz" too, but don't say a word about it. I'm captain now and if the captain don't *show* courage he'll lose the respect of his men.—But I'd like to know how Jake Wilson har riz, when his head is as bare as a billiard ball.

June 20.

Saw dust on the road some miles distant, went out and found a party of Californians bound for the Boise Basin Mines. Got 72 sacks flour and a loaf of bread—the best bread I ever tasted,—staid in camp balance of day.

June 21.

Drove up south side of sink of the old "Adobe," an abandoned station not used since the Indian war of 1860, found 81 head cattle.

June 22.

Started up the lake for Carson river, saw a few cattle on an island in the lake supposed to be about one mile from the mainland, proposed to swim to the island and get them. A Cherokee joined me,—tied undershirts around our heads and plunged in: the longest mile I ever traveled was to that island. Found six gentle work oxen, got them onto a narrow point and forced them into the water. By swimming back and forth soon got them started to mainland. We each then mounted an ox and road ashore,—good thing we took our shirts, or we'd been badly blistered. During our absence Mr. Benton was thrown from his horse and had his arm broken—simple fracture—which I set, by measuring the well arm and using willow for splints.

June 23.

Moved up opposite Ragtown and crossed the main herd over to our camp, tried to buy flour; couldn't get any, bought 5# of rice as a substitute. 'Tis now cooking and is watched by a number of eager eyes,—found 22 head of cattle.

June 24.

Moved up and encamped opposite old Honey Lake Smith Station, Swam the river and bought 5# beans and small piece of bacon; will feast high as soon as beans cook. 29 head cattle found.

June 25.

Drove up and encamped opposite Fort Churchill, found 123 head today, bought sack flour, ate half for supper—Every man

itches in to the bread-baking. Frying-pan, oven, flat rocks, sticks and all are brought into requisition for bread baking.

June 26.

Crossed the river at Bucklands, drove to Millers 8 miles below Dayton, wind blowing a gale.

June 27.

Moved out bright and early, made the biggest drive on record, considering the number of cattle, as we now have over 1300 head of cattle not counting calves.

June 28.

All claimants of cattle having been notified,—commenced early to assort and part out. Had a busy day, as I had to preserve order and assist in the work of parting out cattle. One man who lost a cow two years since on the summit of the Sierra Nevada thought he ought to be first to inspect this herd; I tried to persuade him that the ones that were paying for having it done should have the first say, but no, he would hear to nothing and rushed in on foot, frightening the cattle as he went. I lassoed him and led him outside the gate, for which act of courtesy he threatened to use the law on me. Got through the day, settled with the owners who had jointly employed me to make the trip, received high praise for the success of the expedition and no one was more profuse in his compliments than the gentleman who snubbed me.

SOME NOTES FROM AN EARLY DIRECTORY¹

Transcription and Notes

By CHARLES ROGER HICKS

OVERLAND MAIL COMPANY. The Overland Mail Company, the Overland Stage Company and the Pioneer Stage Company, are the three companies organized for the carrying of the United States Daily Mail from Atchison, on the Missouri river, to Folsom, California. Of these companies the Overland Stage Company carry the mail from the eastern terminus of the route to Salt Lake City, the Overland Mail Company carrying it thence to Virginia City, Nevada, and the Pioneer carrying it the remainder of the distance. For this service the Government pays \$875,000, of which the Overland Mail Company receives \$350,000, and the Pioneer \$25,000. The Overland Mail was first established on the southern route, from Memphis and St. Louis, via San Antonio, Texas; Tucson, Arizona; Fort Yuma and Los Angeles, to San Francisco. In 1861, in consequence of the war of the rebellion, the line was transferred to the present route, and on the first day of July of that year commenced running. It has been maintained with great success and regularity with the exception of a few weeks' interruption during the past summer by hostile Indians on the great plains.

The Overland Mail Company, occupying the middle division, from Salt Lake to Virginia, a distance of six hundred and two miles, has continued its trips without interruption or accident, and with surprising regularity, always arriving and departing within a few minutes of the appointed time. For its great length, it must be considered one of the best conducted lines in the world. The country traversed has received the name of the Great Desert, from its general barrenness and unfriendly aspect. Its early explorers, or those compelled to pass [over] it, sought only forage for animals, and feasible egress from [it], and even Horace Greely, one of the first passengers of the Overland stage, and a most observing traveler, wished that the country from the Rocky mountains to the Sierra Nevada might be folded up, bringing the mountains together, thus obliterating the country now forming Utah and Nevada, which promise to be the richest of the American States. Along this route over a barren and despised country are numerous prosperous settlements, with the city of Austin in the center, and the road is thronged with

coaches, carriages and huge freight wagons, laden with passengers, treasure, merchandise and machinery, evincing the civilization and progress making in the midst of the desert. The Overland Mail Company is under the immediate management of H. S. Rumfield, General Agent, who has his headquarters at Salt Lake City. G. H. W. Crockett is resident agent at Austin. The line is divided into three divisions, each under the charge of a road division agent. The first division extending from Salt Lake City to Schell Creek, Robert McComb, agent; 2d, from Schell Creek to Austin, Leonard Wines, agent; 3d, from Austin to Virginia, G. W. Wilson, agent. Between Salt Lake and Austin are thirty-four stations where changes of horses are kept, and between Austin and Virginia are thirteen, making forty-seven in all. There are at each station a cook and hostler. At thirty-eight of these stations eight horses at each are kept; and at nine, twelve horses. On the route are twenty-six drivers. The pay of drivers is \$60 per month, and of station keepers \$40 per month. The forage required for each set of eight horses per annum is 50,000 pounds of barley and forty tons of hay. The schedule time from Salt Lake to Folsom, Cal., is five days and twenty-one hours, and from Salt Lake to Atchison, Kansas, ten days and three hours. From Austin to Virginia the usual time is forty hours. The fare from Austin to Virginia is \$40, and to Sacramento, Cal., \$65; to San Francisco, \$70.

WELLS, FARGO & CO'S EXPRESS. The great express establishment of Wells, Fargo & Co. extend their business along the Overland road, and have an office at Austin, and also one at Salt Lake.² The immense business done by this company may be estimated from the fact that upwards of six million dollars of treasure have passed through the office in this city during the past year. The office at Austin is in charge of G. H. W. Crockett, agent, and William Pridham, clerk.

ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC TELEGRAPH. The Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph line passes through Austin and has an office here. This telegraph gives facilities for instantaneous communication with all sections of the Union. The business done at the office in this city is immense.

UNITED STATES TELEGRAPH. A rival line is in course of construction by the United States Telegraph Company, and is expected to be in operation across the continent in June, 1866.

NOTES

¹Angel, Myron, editor, *Directory of the City of Austin, Nevada*, 1866. The *Directory* is the property of the Hon. A. J. Maestretti.

²A bullet hole obliterates several words.

SARAH LYON NOTEWARE'S LETTER¹

Commentary, Notes and Transcription

By PEGGY TREGO

In the fall of 1854, at the thriving town of Diamond Springs, three miles south of Placerville, California, a rather wan young matron sat down one evening to sketch in words what life was like in the gold fields. She was Sarah Lyon Noteware, a bride of seven months and convalescent from the ever-prevalent typhoid fever of that era. The letter was long and written thoughtfully; before it was finished her fond husband had intervened at least once, worrying that she would jeopardize her still-delicate health with a task lasting to such a late hour.

When Sarah Noteware began her careful pages of fine script² to Eliza [Logan]³, Sarah was only 20, but her life had already passed the half-way mark. Hers had been an eventful youth: Sarah had said farewell to her invalid mother in Illinois, and had set out with her father and the other six Lyon children for the strange new land called California. She was a veteran of the Overland Trail at 16, and had seen one of her brothers die on that long trip West.⁴ The Lyons settled in Diamond Springs in 1850.

Diamond Springs, although it boasted several fine stone buildings and rivalled Placerville itself for the honor of becoming the county seat, could not in the early 1850's have been much like the places where Sarah had first lived, but the girl found it delightful. In spite of typhoid, she pronounced the town "quite healthy." She described the climate as "much pleasanter than in Ill.," and California in general as "a much better place to make money." In fact, Sarah urged her cousin to put a little pressure on the family to come West, thus antedating a large number of other Golden Staters.

More than a century has gone by since Sarah Noteware wrote to Eliza, but her words give a general idea of what sort of person she was. From the one letter it can be deduced that Sarah was a practical soul with a keen faculty for observation, a sense of humor, and a bright interest in the world at large. She could advise Eliza as to fashions, prices, wages, education, and the general mode of living in California as it differed from that of Illinois. She was an active rather than a passive person; she

observed, but she also took part in the life of Diamond Springs, even to panning gold. Most significant of Sarah Noteware's own nature is the total absence of any carping or complaining in the letter, although California of 1854 no doubt offered considerable opportunity for a young lady to find fault. Sarah was a happy creature at heart.

The world's happiness was to be Sarah's only 13 more years, but in these were to be the pleasures of three promising children: Warren, Dorsey, and Mary;⁵ the excitement of living in new settlements: Genoa and Carson City, Nevada; and the pride of seeing her husband advance from agent for Wells Fargo in Diamond Springs to probate judge of Douglas County, Nevada, to Lincoln's appointee as Nevada's first receiver and disbursing agent for the United States Land Office and—in 1864—Nevada's first secretary of state.⁶

Sarah Lyon Noteware was buried at Carson City, Nevada, in September of 1867, but something of the strong, joyous, eager person she was survives, and will continue to survive, as long as her charming letter finds readers.

THE LETTER

Diamond Springs Oct 9th /54

Dear Eliza

I am just recovering from a long and very severe attack of the tifoid feaver, I was taken sick the first of September and was not expected to live for two weeks Since then I have been slowley, but shurely recovering.

I receiveed yours of July 31st yesturday, and while reading it I could allmost imagine myself back in Illinnois and it seamed to me I could see just how you are situated, and how you looked when you wrote that letter.

Eliza, I should like to have a good ould fashioned talk with you; I have so many questions to ask and a great deal to tell you, but I supose I must wait till I return, for I fear I shall never see you in this state.—I will now tell you a little piece of newes, Miss Eliza Lyon is no more.

She bid farewell to Single blessedness last August and is now called Mrs. Dorsey.⁷ She was married at my house in the morning and in company with their attendance Mr Noteware and myself started for Sacramento, The next eavening we attended a party at Dr. Clarks. (who is a friend of Mr. Dorseys) where I had the pleashure of meeting some of the Bonton of Sate City.

and I think I never seene so much finery crowded to gether, [word crossed out] Heavy brocades and the ritchest kind of satins seemed to be all that was worn, and some of the ladies were literly loaded with jewelry. The eaveings are quite Chilley in the valley, which accounts for the ladies wearing such thick dresses. We spent sevrel days in Sacramento wery pleasant; while there Mr. Dorsey and Eliza bought their furniture, and are now keeping house a fewer roads from we, Mr. Dorsey is a good cind man and I feel proud to call him brother.

We had a light Shour last night which makes it just cool enought to be pleasant to-day. I have not suffered eny with the heat this summer, I think the climate here is much pleasanter than in Ill.—It has been quite healthy in this part of the country this Season. I believe Eliza and I are the onley ones that have been sick, I have not hurd of eney caces of Colra in the State. You wish to know what is the State of Morals here. That question I can hardly answer, But I think take the mass they are better educated, more intelligent, and truely honorable than in the States. In the mines you dont know the Gentleman or lady by their dress. You can see young men working from morning till night, wearing their red flannel shirts, and cooking their own wittels, who have been Educated in the best Collages, and whoes Parents are some of the most aristocratic famlies in the Southern, and Eastern, States. It would no dout seem strange to you if you could pass through our town on Sunday morning and See the Stores, banking houses, and other place of business open, there is more business done here on Sunday than on eny other day, We have one good Church in the place, but I am sory to say it is but poorely attended—There is a great maney more males than feamales here, but there is no scarcety of women. There is about three hundred women and Children in our village, they are more plenty[ful] and the further you go down in the valley, Sacramento and Sanfrancisco apears to be over run with them. But they still comand a hight price for their labor. Girls get from fifty, to seventy five Dollars, per month. for doing house work. A young lady has been teaching the public school in this place this summer for one hundred Dolars per month. Teachers get higher wages in Sacramento than here; a lady of my acquaintance has been teaching select school there this summer; she has from thirty to thirty five scholars and gets from four to five Dollars a scollar per mont, milluners get from eight to ten Dollars for makeing a plain silk or delain dress, when they

ruffle or flownce they charge more. The advantages for education here, are not as good as they are in the oalder States but they are now comenceing to Organize public Schools all over the state, and I think in a few years California will boast as good Schools as eny other State—

Eliza, I do wish you would move here, I think if you would purswaid Mr. Logan, an the rest of your folks to come, you would like the Country wery much It sertanly is a much better place to make money than where you are, and people can enjoy life just as well here as there—The ring I mentioned in my last letter I send with this, the gold it is made of I panned out myself; Mr. Noteware has just came in and scoulded me for setting up so long, so I must close. Tell Charles⁸ when he takes that new partner [word scratched out] he must lett me know. Mary Ann,⁸ when you get to be one of the partners of the Signal you must send me a paper. Louisa,⁸ "Robert⁹ says he is going home this fall, and the first place he is going to stop at will be Joliet" Eliza, please answer this soon and excuse all mistakes, Eliza and Robert send their love and Mr. Noteware his respects, remember me to Mr. Logan and the rest of [word crossed out] my friends, and now Dear Eliza good bye till I here from you, Sarah Noteware

NOTES

¹The letter is on file in the Nevada Historical Society Library. Liberties have been taken with punctuation and spelling. Much of the information which aids in setting forth the letter was obtained from Mrs. John M. Patterson of Lamoille, Nevada, to whom much credit for research is due.

²Sarah's elegant script and somewhat quaint (in the cold, hard light of current public education) English are those of an educated person, but information on her actual schooling is lacking. In the 1850's, education for young girls was considerably more rare than it was usual—especially in large families of limited means.

³The "Eliza" to whom the letter was written seems to have been Eliza Logan, a cousin, of Joliet, Illinois.

⁴The daughter of Robert and Mary Lyon, natives of Scotland, Sarah was one of seven children. The family lived in this country first in Michigan, then at South Bend, Indiana, and Joliet, Illinois, before Mr. Lyon and the children joined the Wilmington Wagon Train from Illinois west in 1850. Mrs. Lyon remained in Illinois with relatives, and there is nothing to indicate Sarah ever saw her mother again. One of the Lyon children, a boy, died en route west, a victim either of cholera or of an Indian attack.

⁵All three of Sarah Noteware's children settled in Nevada, and were prominent in various phases of the state's development. Warren took an active part in the land development company that advanced

the Lovelock district. Dorsey was connected with the State Library, and was apparently state librarian at one time. Mary Noteware married D. R. Sessions, first president of the University of Nevada when that institution was located in Elko.

⁶Chauncey Norman Noteware, native of New York, left Knox College at Galesburg, Illinois, in his sophomore year to join the 1850 gold rush to California. He followed mining with varied success before becoming Wells Fargo agent at Diamond Springs on January 1, 1853. Four years later he came to Nevada, then Utah Territory, settling at Mormon Station, now Genoa. In 1861, on formation of Nevada Territory, he was appointed probate judge for Douglas County, and in the following year received the appointment to the Land Office. He served as a member of the constitutional convention in 1863 and was chosen secretary of state on Nevada's joining the Union in 1864. In 1872, he was appointed coiner of the United States mint at Carson City, receiving the appointment from President Grant, and in 1876 was elected state senator from Ormsby County. Mr. Noteware died October 22, 1910, and is believed to be buried at Carson City.

The paragraph describing the Gold Canyon area near Dayton, Nevada, in Thompson and West's *History of Nevada*, p. 30, was written by Mr. Noteware, who reached this point on his trip west about fifteen days before the Lyon family did.

⁷Eliza Lyon, Sarah's sister, married John McComas Dorsey, who came west from Maryland in 1852. The Dorseys lived successively at Placerville, California, Mason Valley and Austin, Nevada, where Dorsey served as an early-day assemblyman. From Austin, the family moved to Elko County, there engaging in ranching in the Lamoille and Fort Halleck Districts where descendants still live.

⁸Charles, Mary Ann, and Louisa must remain unknown.

⁹Robert was Sarah's brother. It was he, as Captain Lyon, who gave Thompson and West an eyewitness account of the campaign against the Indians at Pyramid Lake in 1860.

CONTRIBUTORS

EDNA B. PATTERSON (Mrs. John M.), who contributed the *Triplett Diary*, is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Quarterly*. Highly interested in the history of Nevada, Mrs. Patterson is heading a movement to preserve materials in the Elko area.

CHARLES ROGER HICKS—Professor of History at the University of Nevada for many years and former head of the Department of History and Political Science—dug into his copious files for the facts he presents in *Some Notes*. He is a personal friend of the Hon. A. J. Maestretti, hence his access to the *Directory*.

PEGGY TREGO—formerly of the *Nevada State Journal* but now of Unionville, Nevada—and Mr. Robert H., also formerly of the *Journal*, can be reached *via*: Unionville Star Route, Imlay, Nevada. Sounds complicated, but it brought us the *Noteware Letter*. Mrs. Trego was a contributor to Volume 1, Number 1; it is fitting that her name appears in Volume 2, Number 1. She promises us the *Diary* of one John McQuig who recounts events and conditions he encountered in Nevada in 1869.

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