

JOHN M. BATTEE

LETTERS HOME

1853 - 1866

**John M. Battee
Letters Home**

P R E F A C E

In the Spring of 1853 John M. Battee traveled west to San Jose, California, to make his fortune. Between 1853 and 1866 he wrote numerous letter to his family in Alexandria, Licking County, Ohio. Eighteen of the letters, which were saved, were left to me by my dear friends, Doré and Carolyn Battee, who were anxious that the letters be preserved in some way for posterity. I can think of no more appropriate way to accomplish this than that these letters reside in the City the author so dearly loved, in care of the San Jose Historical Society.

Doré and Carolyn Battee, of San Francisco, were daughters of Albert J. and Elizabeth M. Battee, and hence, granddaughters of the author of these letters, John M. Battee. In memory of Doré and Carolyn and to honor their family heritage, I have transcribed these letters so that the words of John Battee can be read and enjoyed by those who share my fascination with California history; so that we can further appreciate the travails of the early pioneers who came to make their fortune and stayed to settle the golden west; and to minimize the handling of these fragile documents, the earliest of which is, as of this writing, one-hundred thirty-nine years old.

In my transcription I have tried, in so far as possible, to preserve the original capitalization, spelling and punctuation. To make it more readable I have sometimes {added words}, always in {braces} to clarify the meaning. Sometimes I have inserted letters in a word, *always in italics*, that appeared to be obvious omissions by the author or were needed to clarify the meaning. In a few rare instances it was difficult or impossible to decipher the writing. My [best guess] appears in [brackets] or it is blank [] if I was unable to come up with anything that made sense in the context of the sentence.

Because punctuation in the mid 19th century, or lack of it, is quite different from current standards, I have double spaced between phrases to separate different thoughts and facilitate reading. Line spaces are inserted in the text to indicate the change of a written page in the original letter. Frequently there were several letters, addressed to different members of the family, written on the same piece of paper. These were treated as a single letter.

The original letters were numbered in pencil, I know not by whom, apparently to put them in chronological order. These were numbered from 4 to 20. The whereabouts of letters 1 to 3 is unknown. The numbering, however, was not in strict chronological order. The numbers on the letters preceded by "No" are the original numbers. I have added a number in [brackets] if necessary to establish the actual chronological sequence according to the dates written in the letters.

Elliot G. Baum

Irvine, California
March 7, 1992

John M. Battee
Letters Home

No 4

Brother, Jackson

Yours of the 16th Appr was received per last mail, also one written by Mother, Rebecca, & Sophia, and as I have but little to say you may expect the answers together, if this can be called one, News is rather scarce here at present, subjects of the most interest are Nebraska and the European war the former of which seem to interest the greater portion, very many that have traveled over the territory the past years in buying Cattle for this market have sold out at low prices to return there in order to be near by when the time shall come for claiming and settling in what they call the best country in the world avering that they wouldnot take thousands for the chance of claiming a quarter section, They state that the country will be settled very quick after the whites shall obtain the right to go there, that one third of the men in the bordering states are ready and eager to start whenever the privilage is granted, would it not be well to learn what you can about it, I sometimes think that that country will hold me yet before a year if things should turn favorable, though not because I am growing dissatisfied here with any thing that I ever was satisfied with, because for immediate remuneration this is the place before all others, Blacksmiths here are getting one hundred dollars a month and other work is paid for in proportion, Mr, Beach says he would start for California if he was sure of his health he of course could not be sure of it but I would make a difference of seventy five percent in

favor of this place over that of Alexandria or its vicinity, Four [deaths] are all that I have heard of, and as for graves I have not seen a single one, but this is not the case in many of the other valleys especially the sacramento chills and ague are unknown here except when some one, as is often the case, comes here to cure themselves of it, as they do of may other diseases, there are serveral Spanish people near here over one hundred years old who still walk to meeting every sabbath there is one officer in Ohio who controlls the larger portion of the inhabitants but here the office is highly vacant his name is general debility I should be overjoyed to see some of my Friends or acquaintants from St, Alban but I have always been fearful of advising or asking such a move, not however because I would not come the same trip again, no not by any means, But because they might possibly meet with some mishap and I should always blame myself for it.

Brother Daniel has not writen to me for the last six or eight weeks which has been the longest yet without hearing from him the reasons probably are first that he has moved and the other that in his last letter he said the he did not know whether I was in the valley or not as he had not received my last letters, I received the account of your visit also the great coon, possum and skunk hunt and other matters from one and all too numerous to mention excepting Sisters Sophia's account of the curiosities and play things in their possession and Sister Rebecca's account of the Geography school and the

party in Liberty Dear sister I cannot come home now without there is some real necessity for it is no use in urging, however much I may wish to do what would please you and to a great satisfaction to me. John M. Battee

Dear Parents

You wish me to write often and it is my desire to do so but subjects to write about are few and those of a general nature are no doubt seen by you in the papers, and those of a local character I fear will not entertain you as they would me when coming from home, Times for this place are considered dull but harvest long and heavy is here and ahead of me and as all the time I have missed working for over one year except sundays has been one day only, which was on account of rain You may be pretty sure I have had but little time for recreation or study, but it does not appear tedious to me the weeks pass by as they have ever since I came here there have been several camp meetings here this summer which have been largely attended one is in progress one and a half miles from here now It would be a great pleasure for me to be at home a week or two but I never could be content to live in Ohio again, but probably by the time you would make up your minds to move to some of the western states I might meet you, at any rate I must content myself here for a year or more unless there should be some change or circumstance requiring a different course for me, and now will you oblige by expressing your minds freely on every subject You may think proper to Your
Obedient & affectionate Son

John, M, Battee

No 5

Dec 10th/53 San, Jose, Cal

Dear Father

Time passes quite agreeable and the rain has not fallen in quantities sufficient to swell the streams or cause much unpleasantness underfoot but only enough to change the whole face of the country from that of a dead, dry, dusty, plain and parched mountains to one of the most life like in the world, about ten days ago we had rain in moderation for three days in succession and showers two or three days since so that the dust is laid the ground looks more as though it produced those monster crops that you read about, and the hills and mountains are as green as wild oats will make them the greenest looking being those that the fire ran over when the old crop was ripe, but the frosts have been strong enough to bring the leaves from the trees in places, The potato crop has occupied the attention of the farmers generally for the last two months or more it however is nearly through with in this valley but elsewhere report says they will not be done for a month or more, They are very cheap now bringing only one and a half cts per pound which has caused such stacks of them to be reared as I never before beheld, the average size of which would be like our old cabin provided it was as long again as in days gone by, Some cover them with canvass while others leave them fully exposed to the rain, sun, and frosts until prices will justify their shipment, the crop has been very good except that the worm has greatly injured some fields on the clay ground, barley is worth 2 1/2 cts per pound,

beef by wholesale 20 cts, hogs live 16 to 30 cts per pound, cows average \$175, 1 yoke oxen \$225 average, horses from \$100 to \$500, sheep \$10, turkeys from 3 to \$18 apiece, chickens half grown \$1

Some of you wished to be informed about the schools of California but I need not tell you that that is one of the many things with which I am very little acquainted, but they tell me there is a thing so called, in the Cities there is likely very good ones, but the country is not very thickly peopled with Children the greatest half keep batcheldors hall and that part is of course non productive besides they live at considerable distances apart, and if it was quite safe for them to pass to and from school, there would still be difficulties owing to the parents not generally being acquainted nor permanantly settled school houses being scarce besides they are not generally of that class that school a great deal, However there are some schools in the country the only one in this valley that I knew of was about one mile and a half from here where they had a teacher who was studying law at the same time they only paid him fifty dollars a month for which they could not get one that could and would do his duty, but there are a great many individuals who hire a man to teach their own families besides the Catholics have schools in the cities of which I have learned no particulars, Institutions of the kind they say have greatly improved of late but they do not increase rapidly probably for the reason that most of families came here for the purpose of making money and not for school purposes, Some get quite a schooling here from experience which though good sometime costs too much this is the greatest place for trading that ever I saw those that have capital are always dealing until they loose all or make their pile they are very resky dealers generally and a great many as sharp as the sharpest who deal as for life and the inexperienced pay them dearly as teachers

A young man two miles from here who had been at a boarding house, unwell for two or three weeks in San Jose got rid of life with all his troubles by shooting himself in the mouth today, it is the first instance of the kind I have heard of here, And when told where I was, there being eight or ten present, the only reply solicited was in substance that some family would think this a horrible place on that account, The Spaniards have been very quiet lately thieving and murdering is quite rare but the race so revengeful is only kept back by not having opportunity suitable for their designs, and by being watched closely

Brother Daniel wrote to me this week he says he has gone to mining in Grass Valley and expects to make his pile at it he is well and hearty I rather expected he would come down here but he thinks he can do better where he is and I am sure I can not tell which would be the best, but for my own fare I would rather be here than where he is, The letter he sent me last was one that was written by several of you to him and me besides which I have not received one for 8 or 10 weeks from you I suppose the neighbors must all be very dull and lazy for you never tell me of their doing anything or of their being engaged in any enterprise either laughable or serious only that they are well, They never speak for themselves And the Boys are they dormant are they making no conquests at all doing nothing for their Country for themselves or for the Girls, Where is a Calvin, a Jacob, a Sephus, a Seth, a Wesley with the dozens of others who shone forth as Stars (or beaux) of the first magnitude who wished it was so

who commanded that stoutest hearts and they obeyed have they all all gone out of the way if so if they have forgotten their first love, have waxed cold then truly there is cause for complaint, but the Girls Dear Creatures they perhaps know of no one to complain to but there is 1 who careth for them and will listen to their every cry only envelop them and direct to

John M. Battee

San Jose []

California

And in due time it will be heard and answered to the satisfaction of every one of you and by and by when the good time arrives you shall see for your selves and not for another that you have not cried to me in vain, Farewell Girls for the present but remember at your Christmas and new years gatherings

your sincere Friend J,M,B

When you receive this put your heads together and see if you cannot think of something simple and commonplace enough to please me and

oblige your obedient Son

John, M, Battee

No 6

Dec. the 25th, /53, San,Jose,Cal

A merry Christmas to all my Friends and especialy to those who may wish me the same by letter, and although my Christmas is probably quite different from yours yet it is not a sad one to me, for such nice weather would hardly permit one to be otherwise than pleased, the days (expect a few cloudy ones) are as warm and pleasant as the first of may the nights are all cool and some of them cold and frosty, the rain has been light and the presumption is that we will not get much until march january and Febuary generally being tolerably dry there has been enough though to start grass and grain and also to render most lands fit for the plow, which is now the principal work they commence about this time to sow wheat, barley &c on dry ground the wet will not be sown for two or three months there has not rain enough falen yet to soften the ground in many places so as to permit fencing to be done to any great extent

Fences generally being built of stakes about seven feet long sharpened and drove into the ground from two to ten inches apart with a rail nailed on the top

Mr. Wm Knox Pardner of Mr. Aram's has gone to Sanfransisco where he will leave for the States in the next steamer he will probably be there about the middle of february he is Single and nearly of my size with light brown hair has plenty of money and expects to buy some good horses to bring across the plains next summer with his sheep he promised to call and see you and if an oportunity affords I should like for him to see the girls that inhabit that region for he might posibly bring one out with him.

Wednesday the 28th

The revolutionists are still gaining strength in Lower or (as it is here called) Old California, recruits are leaving Sanfransisco about one every week and the probability is they will soon be strong enough to oppose any force the Mexican government may send against them, unless it is done speedily, The leaders of the revolutionists are reported as having plenty of money, great influence &c

It is stated that but few of the inhabitants have joined them except a tribe of Indians called (as near as I can get it) the Pachas, they are cunning fierce and great warriors resembling very much the Camanches and are greatly feared by the Mexicans

The few Americans that were there have acted much the same as was done in Texas, but you no doubt have already had all the particulars and as you treat me to nothing of the kind I will desist for the present,

Trade is lively in stock of all kinds though at cheaper rates for some kinds, Cattle fit for work are nearly the same as before Cows are worth from \$15 to \$150 a head which is quite a decline Hogs live are 15^{cts} to 25^{cts} per pound, they sell by the carcass in San fransisco at 32^{cts} per pound and retail at from 35 to 50^{cts} per pound Beef American 25^{cts} Spanish 18@20^{cts}

Sheep are worth from 7 to \$12 a head live, by the carcass 35^{cts} per pound Flour is worth only \$11 per bbl, wheat 5cts per pound, Oats 4 1/2, Barley 2 1/2 Potatoes if good 2^{cts} per pound, many of them sell for hog feed at about three fourths of a cent per pound, good ones are not brought into market yet only by those who are obliged to sell

The house that I am writing in is situated some 100 yds from the one where I eat it is about 40 ft long 20 broad, divided in the middle by part[it]ion, my seat is a bag of bran, my desk an unplained board before me stands my bunk yet unmade for the night, it consists of canvass stretched on a frame on which is a calico tick filled with straw, over which is confusedly scattered sheets, quilts, blankets, &c, all of which are nothing but blankets, at the foot of the pile hangs 3 shirts 1 pair pants & carpet bag, directly over the head hangs my watch with a Jews harp, while on one side is another pair pants, 1 shirt & a hat, underneath is my boots, socks and the box that serves for keeping together my tobacco, pipe, pens, paper, ink, kneedles, thread, razor and strop knives, letters, &c &c but description fails me

Clothing is very cheap here considering the way most other things sell, in fine it is nearly if not quite as cheap here as with you a good, heavy, nice, neat, warm, cloth coat as any one need wish can be had for \$12 and last week I bought a pair of boots reaching to my knees of the best of leather with red fronts and an eagle stamped on them and gilt, and all the necessaries for lacing to the knee for \$5 Shirts can be had for 75cts to \$2 for good, red, brown, blue or black flanen,

Game is very plenty and has been for some time, ducks light in sight and in stones throw by thousands, geese and brant are not so numerous or tame they are seen more on the wing, dozens of hunters are in sight every day but I have only had the oportunity of shooting two or three times at them and that with a rifle what they are worth I do not know, venison is not worth so much as beef Elk and bear meat the same nearly

I have been wishing that I could have a paper sent from near home but the uncertainty of my abiding place and my ignorance with regard to what paper would be worth taking that is near there has deterred me from sending for one but I would suggest that when you (and when I write you I mean all of U) write a little small letter that you would put one of the most spicy columns of some newspaper or an old leaf of some book that I have read and that is now lying in your way or whether I have read it or not or whether it is old or new if it is rich very rich then let's have it either verse or prose not that I am entirely out of reading matter but because something from near home would relish better than any other, I have read some few histories some novels and have nearly averaged one newspaper a week, but the fourth of July nor Christmas have not averaged me a roast turkey nor frolic nor fun that is pure and New Years' day will in all probability pass the same as the rest of my sabbaths

Well my letter is closed for want of more to write about that would in any way entertain you and the only trouble is who shall I direct it to but no odds for that, you will all be under obligation equally to answer it for it is written to You all

So Farewell Father, Mother, Brothers, Sisters
Friends & Neighbors

John M. Battee

No 7

March 26th 1854, San, Jose

Dear Parents

If it is any satisfaction to you to hear from me I shall the more cheerfully undertake the task of informing you at this time that I am well, and although my spirits may not be so high as you by your letters would seem to indicate Yet I am willing to compare them with the generality of men's when separated by so great a distance from Friends and all the endearments of home and all the attendant comforts of being with those who will share your joy or sorrow but my success so far has been equal to my expectations therefore I have had little to make me low spirited and laying aside what I may make of money, I shall have gained a fund of experience that is worth all the rest, and which it would be almost impossible to have gained elsewhere in so short a period,

And Mother you say your spirits are much depressed and your mind confused, would it not be best to divest the mind of what confuses by spending some time in reading and by this means let the more distracting cares gradually slip onto the shoulders of others, and by so doing you will benefit yourself and prepare them better for the duties that they may some day be under the necessity of performing You must of necessity be content to do less hard work and substitute for it that which is a more diverting nature, not precisely diverting either but rather gentle smooth or easy temperate and steady or regular, as Samuel is not very rugged especially in the cold and wet season of the year would it not be best to dress him with plenty of flannel

Produce is quite low here yet, and flour is being reshiped to New York, but Cattle, horses, hogs and sheep are firm at good prices, and nearly every one is dealing more or less in stock because they consider it safe to handle the markets in every thing else being very fluctuating so much so that potatoes have been known to fall one half in a single day and it is not much less so with many other things at which times fortunes are made and lost in a few days,

Murders and roberries are as prevalent as ever, last week on the plain between San. Jose and and the Mountains where hundreds have squatted on Spanish grants there was a young married couple living he went to the city and a senoranian Indian who worked for one of the Spaniards claiming the land went to the cabin about two oclock in the afternnon and stabled the woman so that she died before her husband came home he has not been taken yet, [all] that I have heard speak of it say it is the first instance to their knowledge of a woman being molested,

the wheat and barley are sown some of each being a foot high while some is just coming up oats will not be sown before April, early potatoes are up but the late ones will not be planted until may, trees of all kinds unfolded their leaves about the first of this month

The roads are nearly impassible owing to the recent heavy rain and high water the last of which is probably overwith only light showers being expected later this season the latter part of the winter has been very reasonable

Tell Sophia that the circumstance she related in the few lines she sent did not surprise although it was very agreeable for the Girls of her age here do not only joke the men (or boys) but are actualy courted and married to them, but American and Spanish Ladies are fully developed here at least four years younger than in Ohio, but in her next will she give along with her own jokes those of others which are most interesting

Brother, Jacksons account was very satisfactory indeed as far as it went, he will run no risk of suiting me as long as he may continue such lively descriptions and interesting accounts of persons, places and things,

But will not Brothers, Phillip and Elisha let me hear from them once more for it has been a great while since they have written

I desire in particular to hear from them for they more than all the rest seemingly convey the true state of things to my understanding,

And Mother although it would probably be as great a satisfaction to me, to see you all, as to any of you, yet it is likely to be some time before we will enjoy that pleasure unless fortune should favor me more that at present for you must not think that every one can make fortunes in a day, and as I am content with moderate remuneration I have indefinitely postponed the day of my return because I'll loose nothing, I can make as much here as there in one fifth the time so while times remain as good here as at present, and you all are doing so well I shall but little excuse for leaving unless it would be be for the compnay of those I love and respect and wish to comfort.

Brother Daniel says he is in no way discouraged but that he expects to make what he wants in this country He says he is going into the mountains still farther that he can never be satisfied unless he does

I tried to persuade him to come down here but he thinks he can do better in the mines which may or may not be the case as luck may turn

He writes me that he receives very few letters from home and that he has received none for the last three months You will not fail to write as long as you know where he is, he was well when he last wrote, my own health has been very good for the last nine months, there are a great many yet coming to this country a greater proportion of which are women please let me know if any of my acquaintances male or female have started this spring, for to meet with one that I knew would be highly gratifying, but many are still coming only to turn round and go back some of them have to earn before they start what will bear their expences

Adieu fond Parents, Adieu

John M. Battee

No 8

Apr the 24th, 1854, in the Mountains
twenty miles ease of San,Jose

Dear, Friends

Having been here for several weeks I have not received your letters of Febuary the 27th & march the 15th until recently because I have not had an opportunity of going down to the post office before, but never was news more welcome than it was to me, when you tell of your exhibition it awakes me from by loneliness and places me in imagination in the throng of Boys and Girls that are usually met at those meetings, But your company, when I think how fond I used to be of visiting and visitors, and then of how seldom I visit or am visited here, and how little I care for company I can hardly persuade myself that I am the same person, Here alone most of the time except now and then a hunter passes by or some one packing provision still farther into the mountains or some who are looking after or taking care of stock, either Cattle Horses, hogs or sheep the same as myself, the mountains in this part have a number of small valleys situated sometimes within a mile and often 2 or 3 or even 5 miles apart, containing sometimes several hundred acres, nearly all of which are occupied by Americans herding stock, there are no wagon roads leading into the small valleys except those that lie close to the large valley of San Jose but they are approached by winding trails in which every thing has to move in single file in these valleys are two or three different kinds of clover of an excelent quality besides in some, and on the low hills of all, the wild oats grow luxuriant and are now nearly all headed

At present I am herding Cattle and hogs for Wm Aram & Co until lately I have kept them both in one valley but the wolves and bear used the hogs so ill that we have been obliged to move them into another {valley} about four miles off that is the reason I am so much alone because the most of the time now and for three weeks will be taken up with the hogs but there are two more {men} with the Cattle so that when I am in that valley I have their company and while here I board with one who keeps back just over the mountain a mile to the west but I have plenty of good horses to ride seldom walking through the course of the whole day over a hundred yards my only weapons or tools are the Reatta, a large knife a revolver and two mexican spurs that gingle so that the noise may be heard for several hundred yards Upon the whole I am very well pleased, the exercise just suits me the

scenery is romantic and beautifully wild, this house which I occupy alone, stands on the west side of the mountain before me and in sight is the City of San Jose (now again the Capital of the state, also about half the large valley and a good portion of the bay of Sanfransisco while to the north east is a range of mountain about three miles distant covered with pine and only the day before yesterday their tops were covered with snow while in the valley and here there was a fine rain the barley in the valley is generally headed the potatoes in some fields of early ones are a foot high, crops of all kinds look well but spring has been quite a backward one, flour has raised to \$12 per barrel, potatoes will hardly pay for shipping to Sanfransisco of which there are thousands in the Country

The bear have not been very numerous in this vicinity the past winter but within the last three or four weeks their depredations have proven that their numbers have greatly increased more also have been seen within that time than previous, they are all of the Grizzly species and they have about as much fear as the mountains they inhabit they can wipe out the lives of hogs, dogs and all such animals that come in their reach as easy and about as quick as Sophia, or Melissa could {wipe out} the pictures after they have drawn them on the slate

Their tracks when seen in the sand or dust in the trail is sufficient to scare a whole herd of Cattle and it is very seldom that a horse can be rode within gunshot, some few however can be made {to} approach so near to the small sized ones that they have been lassed but this is seldom the case

It is almost impossible to kill them sudden there has been numbers given men and horses hard chase after receiveing ten fifteen and twenty balls, their skull is so hard & sharp in front that the ball is sure to glance therefore to reach the brain they have to be shot from the side near the ear which is the only sure means of producing instant death for they will do execution after being shot through any part of the body they are not very apt to attack men unless wounded if they do not come very close upon them they come within twenty five steps of my cabin and killed several hogs each night carrying one away with him but after watching several nights we only got sight of him once and then we could get no shot the track is very much like a mans only about twice as broad that is the hind foot the forefoot being about half the length

I have just received a letter from Daniel he is well and intended to go farther up into the mountains as soon as he should receive my answer which I have sent and in it I tried to persuade him to come down into the valley but with little reason to expect that he will do so, he seems as well pleased with that part of the country as I am with this, I wrote to him that which Sarah Morgan sayed about her cousin which without doubt will cheer him for such news as that would surely make one feel cheerful,

I can make no enquiries for things that I know to enquire about are past and probably forgotten by you and that which is passing at present I know nothing about therefore send along whatever of news is passing that I may not be entirely behind the times

Give my respects to all enquireing Friends
And a good bye to you all for to night

John M. Battee

Dear Parents

I feel that it would be neglecting my duty if I should longer omit writing to you. my reason for not writing before was a desire to have something more to communicate than barely that I am well &c, but subjects to write about still continue scarce, not seeing any thing new as when I first came, besides I have hardly been off from M.cormick's reaper since the 10th of June, having helped cut between four and five hundred acres of grain and not done yet harvesting however is pretty well through with here they commence threshing nearly as soon as cutting and keep at both for about three months, The Spaniards cut their grain principally with a reap hook after it has lain two or three days some half dozen of them enter the fields with a truck and fill it with loose grain when they haul it to the corell, which is generally a square pen 50 feet and upwards on a side, when they have filled it to the depth of three or four feet they turn in a whole herd of horses if the corell should be large enough, all of which are wilder than the wildest horses are in Ohio, they are then run round until the threshing is completed, The Americans generally haul as they thresh, but when they stack it is thrown into an uncomely pile the main points being to keep the butts of the sheaves high the middle hollowing and get it as high as possible. Threshing is from 12 to 20 cts per bushel which is quite an item for those who have large crops often reaching up to the thousands. The crops are good, wheat of some kinds was injured with smut, grain of all kinds is quite low in price except oats.

It is not expected that produce will ever again bring the high prices that it has, in fact every thing within my knowledge is tending downward slowly but surely and no one can deal in any article without looseing unless he makes quick turns. Some things indeed are not coming down slow but have come down by the rum last year nearly every one that had a house and land were anxious to buy hogs for the purpose of breeding some laid out all they had in sows at thirty cts per pound and now any description of hogs can be bought for eight cts a pound sheep have fell about one third within a year American horses and cattle have also declined in nearly the same proportion and so on with everything more or less but there is one thing that holds its own that is money it will bring at any time 3 percent a month and 5 percent a month has been paid the [rest] of the time.

Fruit is as [plenty] as usual the principal being pears and for one bit, or 12 1/2 cts Ohio currency, one can have the privilage of going into the orchard, and eating what quantity of pears and figs he chooses but the figs are not very palatable. The most of my news is from the Dollar times of Cincinnati but there is some things that are not seen in that paper that might be news to you but the occurrences are so common that I pay but little attention to them and do not recollect more than half of the deuels murders &c &c that occur, once in a while there is seen the body of some mexican or indian dangling

from a limb of a tree by the roadside left there by the vigilance Committee, last week a Spanish woman and two children were killed by some Indians about two miles off there has been but one of them taken yet

Amusements have been quite plenty of late
Such circuses Panoramas &c and tomorrow there is to be a bull and bear fight at Santaclarra three miles from here, but the greatest sport for the boys in sanjose come off last thursday the Engine Company had just finished the new reservoir near the center of the town, got a new engine &c and for the first trial they commenced on the house of the Celestials, or China Women, not because the house was on fire,-----

and they kept the Engine to work on it until they completely routed the inmates, in all about 30 one third of them were probably Johns, all the China Men are called Johns

Last week I received a letter from Brother Daniel he is near the same place so that I still [send] his letters to Grass valley he was well, was min[ing] on the bear river, I had a letter too from Brother Philip a few lines from the girls and Jackson but it has been so long since that I could not tell the time within a month but I shall still go to the post office every time the States mail comes in and enquire for letters, for when I do get one it seems that I live enough easier to pay the trouble ten times over.

Give my best respects to enquiring Friends

Farewell Dear Parrents

Good bye Brothers and Sisters

John M. Battee

No 10

Brother, Phillip

Your letter of May 17th I received and am glad to know that you are all well. all able and wiling to help you plant corn &c, No doubt you with the rest of my Brothers and Sisters too, have grown a great deal since I see you so you are more able to do and know better how to do than formerly, by all means let your understanding, patience, perseverance, attention, manliness, and kindness at home keep pace with your years. For what would be looked over as of no material consequence in the child or boy would be despised in the man or woman, It would be hard to tell what would be more propper to say or do on every occasion, but where judgement with reflection is exercised one need not appear rediculous, Perhaps the best way to improve your knowledge of what is duty, right, and propper would be to asociate with those who do their duty, know the right and act properly, for you the choice of friends, the cultivation of your new manners, and the way you spend your time now, depend your future success and consequently your hapiness

Do not think because I have urged improvement that I have judged that you make none, but because too much is very seldom made by persons of your age, And besides your own improvement, seek that of your younger Brothers & Sisters, For if you feel as deep an interest in their welfare as I do for all of you you will let no opportunity pass of forwarding their interests or promoting their happiness

Last week I received a letter from Brother Daniel he is mining on bar [Bear] river about thirty miles east of grass valley, there is no post office there so it is but seldom he has a chance of sending a letter and when he does it is only at a cost of a dollar or two, he is well, lives sober and honest, works hard, and clears from two to eight dollars per day, around him are plenty of bears deer and large trees one he has seen is twelve feet in diameter, he appears in very good spirits

As for myself I am yet in the valley and expect to be until the first of december, when unless times should change for the better I will leave the state, go to the mines or unexpectedly get into something that will pay better than anything I now see here, Men of all description may be seen traveling round seeking employment some with and some without capital, hundreds are talking of returning to the states

some are going to lower California those only who have plenty of land and cattle, or some particularly good situation are the only ones that seem contented, many that have been farming for several years have lost every year until they are obliged to dry it up, some have made fortunes one year only to have it go over the left the next. American woll is worth 10cts per pound, Spanish 15 cts per fleece, beef hides one dollar each, mustard seed from 2 to 8 cts per pound, Trade is all the go, money is very scarce, produce very low, every thing or nearly every thing is on the decline, Emigrants the rich and poor are arriving continually all of them dirty, greasy and sunburnt, with teams tired out and quite lean

Since harvest I have been drawing grain, threshing, sowing sacks and last week I was helping to bore an artisean well, the first day and a half we got down about 50 feet when the auger fastened and the shaft broke off leaving the auger at the bottom, since that our endeavors to raise it have been unavailing though we have not yet given it up entirely, those wells are becoming very common in this valley. some bore to the depth of one hundred and fifty feet while others strike the vein at 50 or 60 feet there was one bored week before last near here 56 feet deep the stream that flows from it is four feet wide and six inches deep

some of them will force the water ten or fifteen feet above the top of the ground by means of the pipe which is forced into the well through which the water rises, the first wells that were bored of this kind here in the valley cost seven dollars a foot now the charge is only one dollar a foot

some of them do not force out a stream thicker than my arm and many of them barely run out at the top of the pipe when it is only two feet above the ground

The Know nothings carried the Elections this fall in several places in this state as well as in the older ones

Answer when you receive this as I may not be here longer than to receive an answer to this at this post office will you all let me know where you are how you do and what you think of things in jeneral and particular will not brother Samuel write something, and Sister Sophia, Melissa and Rebecca write some more letters as they used to do give my respects to all enquiring Friends, Adieu dear Friends all, John M. Battee

Dear Parrents

With You, I in a measure deplore the sad inroads that death has made of late in the circle of your acquaintances, and although here in California I feel like weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those that rejoice; my sympathies are principally in the land that I left for the reason that my early, and strongest attachments are there, but this country has many, very many advantages over any other I have ever lived in, first it is very healthy there is mention of more deaths and sickness in your last letter than has come to me knowledge in one year and a half within five miles every way of San Jose which is a larger place than Granville, in the next place there is no need of hay in the country, there is plenty of good grass all the year for Cattle, Sheep and Horses, nearly all vegetables can be raised in the greatest profusion costing little or nothing more than the planting, Fruit also of many kinds abounds of a better quality than in the older states, there are a considerable number who have apple and peach trees but they are not old enough yet to bear any very considerable quantity but the quality is good the figs and grapes are of the first quality, allowing me to judge, which I claim, because for the last two or three months I have had all I wished of one or the other, pears are very plenty but I have not had them so often as the others, strawberries are easy raised and of very great size, there are several nutmeg groves, north of here - one or two hundred miles, of very considerable size, the trees are ever greens and quite beautiful

Times are slightly improving, produce is generally on the rise and farmers are beginning to hope that they will yet save something after paying the expenses of harvesting, threshing, which is this season from ten to eighteen cts per bushel, and getting to market, live stock is also coming up except hogs they are down to six cts per pound, butter is worth one dollar, cheese one half per lb labor is becoming very cheap, which is generally the case here in the fall and winter, it is causing very many to leave for the mines the news from which is about as encouraging as usual and seldom fails to induce those just arriving with little money to make a short stay here in the valley, and old as California now is, many are yet coming only to be disappointed in their expectations because their expectations are too great and unreasonable Society in my opinion is improving rapidly, the sabbath is better kept, grog shops are less patronised, murders are not so frequent and society is more settled, uniformity of habits, dress, speech, &c are fast taking the place of varieties extraordinary.

While schools are becoming more numerous and flourishing Temperance men are up and doing the Sons are moving in every direction increasing in number and influence and many other good societies have a strong hold on the affections of the Californians one of which is the society of Women but as yet my connection with it has been very limited and it is not likely that I shall be fairly initiated until my return, if I should ever be so fortunate but although for the present I am deprived of an intimate connection with this society yet I am as well pleased as ever in hearing of the marriage of my old acquaintances, my only wish for them is prosperity

Only a few days since I received a letter from Bro. Daniel it stated that he was well, and that he expected to stay in the mines so long as he should remain in this country.

One month ago, I expected ere this to be with him but as there is an opportunity offered me of doing tolerably well here, I shall remain a month or two, may be for a year in my next {letter} I can probably be more certain, please answer this and if I should not be here your answer will be remailed to me,

If Bro Jackson's time is wholly taken up with the ladies he certainly is excuseable but as such a state of things cannot last always I shall after that be extremely obliged to hear from him but until then cannot some other of the young Folks at home put into each letter something if, as you tell me, it should be nothing more than that they are well but you can all have something new to say if not say that which is old and let it come free not as a drudge or set task there are times that I do not hear from some of you for six months and some of your names I have not seen for near a year and now some of your names sound odd as I speak them over Your forms and feature are also becoming considerably dimmed for want of communication and also by time which has parted us but I look homeward with the same fondness that ever I did, Adieu my dear friends all

John M. Battee

[12] No 13

San, Jose, Cal, June 13th /55

Dear Parrents

I take this opportunity to let You know how I am and how much I think of all of You from whom I have been so long separated, It does seem that thinking of home and friends and the pleasure it would afford me to be with you, gradually destroys my inclination to write, for the nearer the time approaches that I used to think I should be ready to start for home, the more difficult it is for me to commit my thoughts to writing, Probably the reason is because that time is deferred and put off every time it has rolled round, until I have come to the conclusion to set no time unless it is when I can be of some service to You, by doing so, or when Brother Daniel comes down here and says, now Marion I am ready to go home, or else when I shall have enough of the oro to justify me in traveling for pleasure, which is not very likely to be, and why should I be in haste to return, I could not be contented to live long in a part of the country that compares with this and many of the other states about the same as Greenland does to that, I received a letter quite recently from Bro Daniel he was very well and thinks the mountains where he is is the healthiest place that he knows any thing of, he says nothing yet to me of going home or of leaving the part of the country he is now in, I tried to have him come down here but he says the mines will hold him while he stays in the state

The news is of the ordinary kind for this country nothing strange to one who is familiar with customs here, has taken place unless it is that here has been an unusual amount of murders, thefts, Briberies, Forgeries &c, together with not a little lynching, and whipping them or making some dance on

nothing. Other items of news are only such as are common also with You such as Know Nothingism, war in Europe, and the present Pierce maladministration, Nebraska riots &c

There is however one or two items I had nearly forgotten one is the law prohibiting gambling, horse racing and all games of chance or betting with heavy penalties for violating, so much so that no one now hears the voice of the dealer as he walks the street crying All down, make your game, round she goes, red wins and black looses and the music too that was so bold and wildlike and by spells almost frantic is no longer there to entice both old and young

The houses still stand but they have been robbed of all their decorations and splendor any one that left here two years ago would not know the principal Cities if brought into them unaware, for this reason alone, they were a relic of old and better times but they have passed away like two ounces a day. The other law stops all all noisy and barberous amusements on the sabbath, such as bear and bull fights fandangoes circuses &c.

The crops will not be near so good as formerly on account of having so little rain for the last two winters there are many fields of wheat that will not be harvested at all and many are making hay of their barley and oats

Prices of all the staples are very low wheat is only 1 1/2 cts per pound six months ago it was four and every thing in the grain line, is in nearly the same proportion the merchants have been shipping grain to N.Y. and Australia in considerable quantities but prices have still kept on the decline, Harvest is here again some commenced a week or more since

Sister Rebecca I received a letter from you last winter You must with Sophia and Melissa make out another good long one and I will promise to find no fault if you do write about the Girls and Boys too and Sophia and Melissa will not displease me if they tell all the jokes and tricks that have been played on the young folks for a year at school or out of it

And now Brothers Jackson, Elisha, Phillip, and Samuel

You can give me a letter and maybe tell something about the young women that I think so much about and should like to read about besides you must have taken some grand hunts and have been at some of the old fashioned gatherings that make one live again just to think of them. I say you must know something of these that you have not told me if so I will take it as a great favor to hear about them and the weddings are always welcome at any rate when they cannot be helped no more at present but remember that a few lines from any of you is very acceptable and always looked for give my respects to all mutual Friends.

Yours affectionately

J. M. Battee

San, Jose August 27th /55

Dear Parrents

I am now on the eve of starting for the mines where I shall probably spend the winter with Brother Daniel who I have desired so much to be with and have only been prevented by the prospect of gain, in enjoying a more wholesome climate,

As the prospect for making money here in the Valley is rather in the ascendant, over the left, for the past while and pecuniary advantages abundant. (in a horn) I have concluded it was high time for me to make a strike for other digings, and the only thing that will prevent my leaving here in a few days will be the discovery of something better than I have seen for the last few weeks, which is possible though not very probably, I do not know at present where I shall stop nor precisely where to find Daniel but I am expecting a letter from him which will inform me more particularly, one week ago I had strong thoughts of leaving this country altogether and would probably have done so if it had not been for the reason that I did not care to leave while Brother Daniel stayes if he should be willing and I should be ready and a multitude of other things should take place just so & so You may look for us in one year, more or less, as the case may be, but our return depending as it does on so many circumstances is quite uncertain although so very desirable on my part

Aug—28th

Politics are at their highth and the country is full of the stumpers of both political parties which are the Dem's & K.N.'s both parties made their nominations a few weeks ago in convention at Sacramento, the nominees of both parties are very good except for judges of the supreme court both parties nominating for that office drunken sots with which the people are very much dissatisfied. The Know Nothing candidate for Governor was formerly a whig. J.N. Johnson, the Democratic nominee is the present incumbent John Bigler

The issues between the parties are but trifling one week after tomorrow is Election we will vote prohibitory Liquor Law pro & con, There has been of late considerable difficulty with the Indians in the northern part of the state Great difficulty is experienced also with the Spanish population in some sections recently, it was cause by the spaniards shooting a Sherif who was trying to arrest a horse thief, this so exasperated the whites that they raised en mass shot and hung all suspicious charaters and drove every thing from the neighborhood and County that had afforded a harbor or that would be likely to assist them in any way, And at a meeting they passed resolutions that whoever hired or harbored a Spaniard should be holden for his acts, it is stated that in the commencement there were twenty hung in one tree, the result of all this is that the principal part of the worst characters have left the northern counties and this part of the state is surcharged with horse thieves robbers &c

August 29th

Yesterday I attended a wedding at Joseph Arams his oldest daughter to a Mr. Cool the methodist preacher of this place, the wedding was attended by a considerable company of their Firends and relation among them were his Bros, W^m, and John with their Families, all in good health and fine spirits, the entertainment was very rich, W^m and John are living three or four miles from this city at present but I understand that John contemplates going to the mines as a trader and that W^m expects shortly to move on to the mountains fifteen miles from here to attend to his flock of sheep which is twelve or fifteen hundred. Many fields of wheat and barley were not worth harvesting this season the crop is not considered over one third of what it was last year, oats were very good fruit is quite plenty except figs the first crop were killed by the frost and if the second matures it will be very late, Grapes have been shiped here from the southern part of the state for over a month, in this Valley they are just begining to ripen, mellons are here of all kinds in quantities to suit all, It appears, Mother, from Your letter of June 11th that your are separated there considerable and it never ocured to me so forceably how much we are scattered, before, but now I think we will begin to gather again for tomorrow I expect to start for Brother Daniels neighborhood and then in six months or a year if I have no bad luck I shall want to pay you a visit, when I suppose you will all be ready to go some where, where we may all have a home close by, for although this {is} one of the

best of countries in many respects yet it is not enough to compensate one like me for the loss I sustain by the absence of friends and the privations one necessarily suffers in consequence of it so keep up your spirits as you encourage me to do, and until the wished for time shall come let me hear from you all as often as convenient

Give my respects to all Friends
Good bye Dear Parrents, Brothers, and Sisters

John M. Battee

Good bye

To Mr Elisha Battee
Alexandria
Licking County
Ohio

No 14

John, Town, Nov. 29th/55

Dear Parrents

I received Your letter dated july the 4th only a short time since for the reason that I left the valley before it arrived, At that time I intended to go direct for Omega where I supposed Brother Daniel to be, but not knowing to a certainty that he was there and meeting with a very good propect in this place, I concluded to stop until I could learn precisely where he might be, and now although he is still at Omega, as his letter of october, informs me as yet I have made no other start for him, But it will be somethng extraordinary that will prevent my seeing him within a month or

two, But as circumstances will most probably oblige me to be in the Valley again in three or four months You may continue to direct {your letters} as heretofore to San,Jose, California for if I should not be there I can have letters remailed for any part I may be in with little delay.

I left the Valley about the last of August took the Steam Boat for San,Francisco and from there to Sacramento I seen nothing worthy of note on the passage unless it was the wonderful improvement made in these two cities since I passed through them in the spring of /53, The principle improvement which I had time to notice were in the handsomer and more substantial buildings, in the street and in the very much extended limits to the Cities themselves from Sacramento I traveled a course somewhat north of east to Placerville, first known by the name of Hangtown, which is about 50 miles the first part of the way is quite even with a clump of oaks occasionally, reminding one continually of some old orchard. The middle part is more barren and uneven with a reddish or burnt appearance and in the last part of this section there is some mining done when there is water

The last part would be called mountainous by all except the mountaineers of this state, after we got fairly into the hills small pine of the different varieties began to appear a little farther on mining again was to be seen and when I arrived in sight of Placerville I see the hills and tall pines in all their beauty, and the ground tore up with mining in all its horrors, heard again for the first time in two years, and over, the incessant jar and crushing sound of the quartz mills, which have been greatly improved every year. I stayed here nearly a week prospecting, running from one hill or ravine to another, But did not see any thing that I care to mention except it was some naked Indians drying or curing grass hoppers on a large scale, and some others who were howling, yelling, tearing their hair out and pawing the ground up, like a herd of wild cattle around the burning pile of one of their number deceased From Placerville I come to this place, the country presents very much of a sameness there is plenty of tall pine on the hills and the ravines, creeks & well tore up with miners the whole way I have made some money here, some of the time I have made two or three dollars out of pocket in a day some of the time it was even and part of the time eight or ten dollars in my favor, Most of the miners are now waiting for the rain which has threatened us for several days On the 26th of last month I visited Old Calloma near the mill where gold was first discovered, it is about the size of Alexandria, and it is the County seat of this, El,Dorado, County, and four and a half miles South of here on the south fork of the American river, The occasion of my visit was the public execution of two wilful murderers one of them a notorious robber made light of it and danced a few on the trap

Amusements are here like they are all over the state many kinds of as many varieties, although public gambling is prohibited by law there are many private resorts and in some places even public places where it is allowed and is carried on in connection with its kindred vices But there are also Balls, parties of different kinds, meetings, Singing Schools Debating clubs, Shooting matches and all the known jokes and tricks belonging to every class of the human species and not the least exciting scene in these parts is the running down once a month of Chinamen by the tax collector I intend to send you the Geology of this state this mail if it reaches you please see that it is used careful as I might want to peruse it if I am ever so fortunate as to get home

again, Bro Daniel was well when last heard from and wanted me to come up there which I may do shortly however I do not expect to stay there a great while if I should You will receive directions for sending {mail} to me then
Your affectionate Son John M. Battee

P.S. I can not close this letter without asking my Brothers and Sisters if they will not send a few words in each of mothers letters if for no other purpose to help her fill up the letter and of giveing me the pleasure of hearing from some that I have barely heard from in a year and of letting me know that You have not entirely forgotten me, some or all of You may have wrote but your letter do not reach me if you have written for a long time

Give my respects to all friends and accept
the regards of Your affectionate Brother

J,M,B

No 15

1856

San, Jose, March 30th

"After" three long "roving years
how sweet it is to come
To the dwelling place of early youth"
In thought to travel home

Yes Dear Kindred there is pleasure in thinking of home and friends, if there was not I should not write so often, when I so seldom receive a letter, but I know it is not because you do not write oftener I know you would not neglect to write, (oftener than once in six or eight months) if you receive all the letters I send you, and I shall keep on writing for it is no great task to write a few lines every month or so but it would be some what pleasanter to have a letter to answer and to know that you receive them which are sent as it is I know not where to commence, I have been here in the valley making something part of the time over the left ever since I quit the mines, but I do not see that I am much nearer getting ready to start for home or any where else than I thought I was six months or more ago Business is about as usual but money is very scarce, that is hard to be drawn out a great many men, supposed wealthy, have failed for large amounts within the year past Politics of the state and nation are the principal topics of conversation mixed pretty well with the calculations of a war with England Indian war. Filbustering &c I should like to hear how Sam, and Sambo made it in old Licking last fall, but before all the other let me hear from home its self what you have all been doing for eight months past and the expectations for the future

About four months ago I sent the state Geology and since them I have sent one or two papers let me know if you have received them my desire to return this season is just as strong as ever and as soon as things can be managed to suit me I shall do so if it is in two or three months but if it should be a year longer it will not seem very long if I can hear from you all once in every mail or two.

Adieu Dear Friends

J. M. Battee

P.S. How delighted I am I have just received a letter signed E. W. Battee it was a long time before I settled in my mind who could be the author, But as you were all named except Brother Elisha I thought it must be him, It was just such a letter as pleases me at all times telling how the little Ones have grown and improved, how Old and yonng had enjoyed themselves But there are some things in it that are past my understanding one is the receiving a letter from Bro-Jackson, how can it be unless he is {away} from home, The next is the building of a house, of what use will the house be without he has a woman to keep it, his whereabouts his Condition whether Single or married, and with who he has fused, if there was fusion, are all matters of conjecture with me

I should have been pleased to have shared in the sleigh riding you have had, I have not set foot on a flake of snow since I left New, York to my recollection although I have been within sight of immense quantities, I am expecting a letter from Bro Daniel soon at present I have no news to send from him, Yours ever faithfuly J.M.B

No 16

San, Jose, Junethe3^d/56

Dear Sister

But while I am saying Dear, Sister not you alone do I seem to see But all the rest from Father and Mother down to Brother Samuel appear to be standing before me, with welcome and enquiry in every look, But although you are so plain to view, no sound, not a word escapes from your half parted lips to break the spell So you must not think {it} strange that I can write to no particular one, but I would speak to You all.

I received a letter from You some time since but have delayed answering it until now, hoping that something would transpire worth communicating, but affairs move on in very much the same channel as heretofore.

I have not yet settled up so that I could leave the Valley in fact the time seems about as distant as it did five or six months ago, but it will come one of these days, which I look forward to with so much expectation, and then I think the time will be but short until I shall leave this sunny land of my acquaintances for home where no doubt I shall be a Stranger among Strangers for changes that you have and have not noticed will no doubt loom up before me at every step and turn, but for all that it will be a very welcome time to me and I shall be paid a thousand times at the first sight of home if I am ever so fortunate as to get there.

Crops are very light and produce is on the rise this last dry winter added to the two former ones has caused the grain to fail on two thirds of the lands and the squirles are so numerous that a great quantity of that which otherwise would be good will be destroyed by them, Wheat is worth from four to five cts per pound, Potatoes five cts, and Strawberries one dollar per pound, and while I think of it I will say that I have an interest in a small patch, my Companaro is just washing the grit from about two quarts of them many of which we have measured and find that they are from three to four

and a half inches in circumference they are horrid looking fellows but cream and sugar act like magic and if they are ever sold the scene will be tragic, all gone in

Two or three weeks ago I received a letter from Brother Daniel he was doing very well at the time he had had a spell of sickness through the winter but he is well and very fleshy at present, water, he says is plenty and times quite flourishing

There is great excitement all over the state and especially in Sanfransisco about the murder of James King, by one Casey and the Vigilance Committee about three thousand strong have hung Casey, and are carrying on the work of purifying the city of rubbish in general, but I will try and send You a paper containing the particulars

The Country is agitated by very many topics at present among which are the late accidents on the isthmus, war in oregon, filibustering in, central America, Pacific, Railroad, Politics Republicanism, Black, &c &c. There has also been some new discoveries of gold in quartz about twenty five miles south of here and one mill is in operation and doing a good business while others are in course of construction, I think You wrote about a picnic in your last letter and of a party at Hiram Hammonds, of schools and snow at least there is some such words as these running in a confused manner through my memory but I cannot call to mind where the sleighs slid to, nor who all was in the company, nor whether any one made him or herself appear absolutely ridiculous which of course is always the case. Neither do I recollect what plays were all the go at the party and for the life of me I could not tell who acted as a dog on the occasion, in fact You have failed to chronicle whether that old time honored, the prettiest and most lovely of all plays was not left out entirely, You did not tell who strolled through the grove at the picnic, with the liveliest, smartest, best natured kindest, and prettiest of the Females on his arm, and now You must see, that although your letter was well written and highly prized by me, that it would be greatly improved if you would write more free and easy and not under restraint as though I was a Stranger I hope You will all write soon especially You have have not written for so long No more at present But Ever remain the affectionate Son & Brother

John M Battee

No 17

San, Jose January the 17th 1857

Dear Father

Too long I have delayed writing to You, because I have in part failed to accomplish that which I most wished to communicate which was that I had settled up my living here in the Valley, had gone to where Daniel is and would soon be on the road for home. But if I cannot write that, I feel in duty bound to write something, and to write that {I am on the road for home} as soon as it may be consistent with truth Which however does not appear to be so very distant, I have all ready been separated from You longer than I ever intended, not that there has been any pressing necessity further than the gratification of my hearts desire, my love of home, And when I think or speak or write of home, or of those who are inseperably connected with it, my

heart swells as it does not at any other sound And if I am ever so fortunate as to get there again, a shower of happiness is mine, my soul shall over flow with pleasure, Imagination sometimes carries me so near that I can see the top of the house, then I press forward untill the door can be seen and while making all haste to reach it, some well known form comes round in view when there is a throbbing, fluttering sensation at the heart that dispells the illusion. Times have been quite dull here and money very scarce, which is the reason why I cannot settle up as I have wanted, the winter so far has not been very wet, prices are fair for grain Broderick the vilest of blacklegs has just been elected U.S. Senator by the Democrats contrary to the wishes of a large majority of that party, no more at [] but remain your dutiful Son
John,M,Battee

Dear, Mother

It is not because I expect this letter to be parceled out that it is written under different heads, for what is written to one is written to all, But to show You (if need be) that You are not neglected or forgotten. I am well rewarded for every letter I write to you, in the belief that it gives you pleasure to receive a letter from me, as it gives me very great pleasure to receive one from you, And I find the greatest source of happiness is to make those happy with whom we come in contact or with whom we are connected, that it is in giving pleasure we receive it with interest. if all would go upon that principle how many bitter words, heart burnings and estrangements would never have been known, sorrow would be banished from many a heart that is now burning and marking its progress on the careworn and furrowed countenance of its possesor, happiness is also a great promoter of health, therefor it is highly necessary to consider its sources and teach them, as well as to practice, especially to the Young should it be taught that for every reasonable sacrifice they make, and every benefit they confer only adds to their own enjoyment, We had a shock of an Earthquake here the other day that made many sick at the stomach and dizzy headed, it lasted for about three minutes the ground rocked so much that horses and men staggered considerably, and the water in a box where it did not reach the top edge by three inches when still, was agitated so much that it over ran and the tops of tall trees moved with such velocity that they whistled quite sharply, some Artesian wells were stopped entirely and others were made to run twice the usual amount of water

You have not informed me yet whether You receive the papers regular or not I have sent You from two to five papers every mail for about six months (more or less) and of course feel anxious to know whether You receive them or not I should be glad if you would preserve them I received a letter from Daniel about three weeks ago, but it has been mailed four weeks before I received it so that I suppose You have probably heard from Him as lately as myself however he was well, and from the tone of his letter, enjoying himself as well as ever,
Sister, Rebecca

Your very nice letter I received only a few days since, I call it nice because there certainly is a decided improvement over all the others that you have written to me, I hope You are making other improvements that are

as much to your advantage, especially such as relate to Your happiness, manners and the Character and the last by all means for when that is gone every thing else is gone that is at all desirable I call it nice too because You wrote about home, School, marriages, neighbors, Friends, and acquaintances in such a frank and easy style, and although I was not there at merry christmas I promise that if I continue to be blessed with life and health that You shall not always be disappointed, on christmas day I worked all day and dined on roast goose on newyears day {a} for change I did not work but just enough to supply our table (which by the way is a bachelors) with eatables such as pumpkin pies, duff (which is a boiled plum or rasen pudding) bread &c &c

You told me in one of Your letters not long since, when Sister Sophia, and Brother Samuel each wrote a few lines, that the reason why Sister Melissa did not write something was that she was helping Father clean some wheat but that She would write the next time, It was a great pleasure to receive such a letter where several of you had joined and I would be delighted to receive them every mail, but Melissa has not written yet and I am still waiting with patience for the promised letter, Could You not all join and write at any rate whenever You receive a letter, for the oftener You write the more You will find to write about and the easier it will be And will not Brother Phillip join with You or write one by himself as it has been so long since I have heard from him,

Brother, Phillip, I think You will not refuse me the pleasure of hearing from You occasionally along with the others or by Yourself, You must not think that I do not write to you because I do not direct the letter to you for my intentions are to write to one as much as another, I hardly know where you are but if you get this please give me a general history of what You have done and seen, and of what You are, and expect to be doing.

I hope in my next to be able to write something more encourageing until then good bye

San, Jose January the 17th 1857

John, M, Battee

No 18

San, Jose, April 1st, 1857

Dear, Parrents

It has been six weeks or more since I have not been able to write, or You should not have gone so long without a letter, and now it is very difficult writing on account of the stiffness and soreness of my right hand, for several weeks I could neither eat nor dress myself with it, and it will in all probability be a month yet before I can work at anything very hard, the cause was a deep bruise on the palm near the middle finger, I was making four or five dollars a day at the time boring Artesian wells, but I have made a dollar or two a day since by hiring a hand to keep the tools running, they are now at work in sight of me on a well 280 off ft deep with the prospect of soon getting a stream sufficient to irrigate fifty or one hundred acres, We (that is me and my partner) bore the first 250 ft for \$150,

when we are furnished with pipe and boarded, the pipe is 7 inches in diameter made of sheet iron and costs one dollar per foot, wells are got all the way from 50 to 350 ft in the valley, after we get 250 ft we charge 8 dollars per day, two of us work the machine, which costs \$300. we dug or bored one well last winter 268 ft deep in eleven days, we went through clay, gravel, sand, and cement, the stratas varying in thickness from 3 to 60 ft, the water of this well flows about five inches over the top of the pipe all round, the pipe top is about four feet above the level of the ground, so you may judge it is quite a stream but not near so large as some of them some throw the water five feet above the top of the pipe while many of them run a stream not larger than a man's wrist, such is the one at Stockton, 600 ft deep, (the only one in this state outside this valley) and they are still at work going deeper

But enough of the wells for the present, as I expect to remain in the Business untill I get what little is coming to me for I have not collected more than one third of what was owing to me a year ago But the prospect is very fair for as much more, in two or three weeks, and possibly the whole in a month or two, at any rate I think it is well secured and it is bringing two and a half per cent a month, so I shall loose nothing by not collecting it now, except that I am deprived of that pleasure I so ardently desired, that of being once more at home with kindred and kind Friends for no percent or gains will compensate for the anxiety and incessant exertion that is necessary to maintain an existance where every one is for himself, and in the majority of cases, the tyful for them, where to belong to a church is strong proof of being a swindle where nine tenths of the frauds are committed by persons professing religion, who watch for plunder and pray to be discharged from their liabilities, Politically and Religiously this, otherwise fair Country, has gone in, to use a vulgar, though very significant phrase, and it will remain so, so long as the law is made to serve so well their hypocritical design Thanks to my guiding star I have so far evaded imposition but the victims are counted by thousands and are now wandering and destitute, neither home nor friends, energy or life, and the probability is that they will remain so, having once had their all legally purloined by some saintly cormorant They have not the courage to make another trial Not a few seem to be tired of life and would cease to exist were it not for an occasional kind letter, from distant Friends, cheering them on, assuring them they are still remembered, and still have something to live for

This Spring has been quite an early one Peach trees &c were in blossom six or eight weeks ago, In places the mustard and barley are waist high and a luxuriant green carpet has for months, been spread from the summit of one mountain range to the other, as far as the eye can reach one sees nothing (comparatively) but a bright green for a floor and walls, and the skies deep blue is the roof or dome There was a considerable fall of rain early in Febuary since then there has been only a few light showers From all accounts there has been very heavy snows for up in the mountains Brother, Daniel wrote to me about the time my hand was first hurt, and I could not answer him until a few days ago, so that I have not heard from him since, he was well as usual, he had just received a letter from You and he sent it down to me along with his, The miners have plenty of water and gold is being taken out in great quantities, Four or five Companies have left, and

others are about to leave, for the Gadsden purchase, or for the State of Sonora in Mexico, they are well armed and pretend to be on an exploring expedition or prospecting tour for gold and silver. But they will probably create a name similar to Walker's band in Nicaragua. They are looked upon here as little better than an organized band of robbers, it is only the most discontented and reckless who are joining them. I intended to send the California Farmer to you as long as I should remain but it is not published any longer and I have tried to supply its place with the Wide West, and the Golden Era. I shall continue to write whenever I have any thing of interest until I start for home, let the time be long or short. So Farewell Dear Father, and Mother but do not forget to write all about home Your joys troubles as you will ever find me your sympathising, affectionate Son J.M. Battee

Brother, E. W. Battee, I received a letter from You three or four weeks since, I have to own that I have been puzzled very much to know who you are, especially when the last letter was received for I think there was another before signed in the same way when I received it, I wrote for an explanation to Sister Rebecca, I believe, but have had none as yet. Sometimes I thought that it might be that my Brother Elisha, had a W. or a middle name and that I had forgotten it, the first letter I concluded was written by a woman and I knew not but that some of my Brothers had fused with some creature with an E and a W[] remaining after the old name was partly destroyed. You will oblige me by making known who you are in Your next letter, You ask for a long letter from me, if You are either a Brother or Sister You will find all I thought worth writing on the three first pages of this sheet please accept it the same as though it had been directed to Yourself, and Brothers, Jackson, Elisha, Philip and Samuel were all thought of while writing, one as much as another, for whenever I sit down to write, hundreds of the most pleasureable incidents (connected intimately with one or another of you) crowd through memories hall where they are distilled on the heart, then also there is a sudden swelling of the chest, the blood starts off at a gallop, and before I am aware my countenance has assumed a settled smile of Joy, Sadness, and hope strangely blended. Your affectionate Brother J.M. Battee
Dear Sisters Rebecca, Sophia, and Melissa the space remaining for You is short but you will share the other with Father and Mother, and Brothers, Discard all selfishness, Be kind and true, Do nothing that your better judgement tells you is wrong, Make others happy that You may share it with them Give my respects to all enquiring Friends and oblige by writing to your affectionate Brother John, M. Battee

[19] No 20

{December 1857}

Dear Mother, and Father

I received Your favor of Oct 25th about two weeks ago, I think, But as I sent it to Brother Daniel last week I cannot be positive about dates, But I am positive that there was something said about threshing, driving to Newark, gathering apples, and all having a merry time, All of which brought to mind something of yore. It appeared to me like another one strand of the chord which binds me to home and Friends

Dear Mother the above was written in December last since which, until recently, I have hardly been able to write, having injured my writing hand, and especially the middle finger so much so that I still dispense with it in holding the pen and on this account you will expect to receive, and excuse me for sending, this small quantity {of a letter} and {of} so poor quality, I have nothing to complain of except that I am still obliged to remain away from home a while longer, I work very hard but the pay is in proportion, and if I had nothing to live for but to make money I certainly would not leave Californias bountiful Shore for any other that I now know of, There has not been a very great quantity of rain yet here in the Valley but enough to make plenty of feed on the hills and to start every thing to growing rapidly

There is still about the usual amount of Stealing, Gambling, Cheating and Lying &c &c, Live Stock is quite high, wheat is worth, for the last month five and six cts per pound, Flour about eighteen dollars per barrel, Apples & Peach trees are worth about one dollar apiece, two year old, Grape vines (native) five cts (foreign) fifty cts, Vineyards of from one to thirty thousand are set out in hundreds of places Small orchards of five or six hundred and large ones of five or twenty thousand trees are scattered all over the state, About three months since I sent to have the water cure Journal, and Life illustrated sent to you at Alexandria, let me know if You receive them, I am in hopes to be there to read them before the year is up

Adieu one and all adieu

San Jose March 1st 1858

J,M,Battee

[20] No 19

{San,Jose April 3^d/59}

Dear Parents

It has been a long time since I heard from you, I hope you have not forgotten to write me a few words once in a while, Nothing gives me more pleasure than to see your well known hand and hear through the distance, all is well, to hear of your joys your hopes and fears, I love to hear it all for no one lives without them, I did expect to be there to share them with you before this but circumstances have prevented it for the present. I have been forced to buy a flock of sheep to save some money and now I am very busy taking care of them if I should succeed in collecting all I have standing out I think I would sell the sheep and return home, but do not look for me for it is impossible to tell when I will return I sometimes think I will make you a visit of a month or two at all events, but I am tyed here as closely as you are there, Brother Daniel says he will come down here some time this summer if he does it would not be at all strange if I should make a visit to old Licking {County} within a year, but for the present I must be content to live six miles in the mountains with eight hundred sheep and sleep in a tent etc I can assure you that the life I am leading now is rough enough to suit the roughest, but I may change places after a while and get rid of some of the roughness for it is not so very palatable to me There has been considerable rain this winter mostly in february it is very cold and windy at present peaches and many of the earlier kinds of fruit have been killed by the frost

Several who were depending on the peach crop to bring them out of debt, of my acquaintances will surely go up the flume, I do not know whether they are killed all over the state so badly as here About the middle of last week two men were killed in San Jose, one by the name of Crosby who assisted in the murder of a man a month or two ago and was let out of jail a few days since by the grand Jury failing to find a bill against him nine of the grand Jury were burnt in effigy the district court was in session, the other was removed to another county for trial, there was a great many present, friends of the murdered man, and they would not suffer Crosby to live at his former residence, without any provocation he fired at the main witness against his accomplice, and in less than one half minute there was eleven balls shot through him, he missed the man at whom he aimed but killed a stranger who was sitting inside the court house, he emptied a six shooter and derringer before he fell there was about fifty shots fired in all a great many had their legs or feet cut a little by the balls nothing very serious.

I learn that W^m Aram's wife's folks are going to start for California in may next

I received a letter from brother Elisha written at hard scrabble, two or three weeks ago but have not found time to answer it but you may all write when you receive this if you will and whether they come from hard scrabble or Soft Sc— they are very acceptable give my respects to all the Neighbors

Your Affectionate Son

San,Jose April 3^d/59

John, M,Battee

[21] No 16

{Feb 21st/66}

Dear Mother and Father

I received your letter of Jan 8th a few days since, it was full of news to me for I do not think that I had received one for a whole year and had almost given up hearing from you again but the long looked for letter came at last with my little six year old Brother's picture it it I can not understand or realise that Samuel is any thing but the little boy I left thirteen years ago although I see in the picture many and striking resemblances of what he was then, if he would write to me every month I should see more of his growth

Dear Mother there is so much that might be written that I hardly know which to write first. I am living alone but not in the same place that I was when Bro Daniel was here I sold out the farm last october and have bought a lot of eight acres close to San Jose on the same side the farm was, I took the lot in part payment and value it at thirty two hundred dollars with the improvements and I still hold a mortgage on the place of twenty six hundred. I raised 1220 bushels of wheat on 30 acres last year and cut over a hundred tons of hay have just been selling the hay and am very tired I sold 51300 pounds of wheat at 1 95/100 per hundred lbs

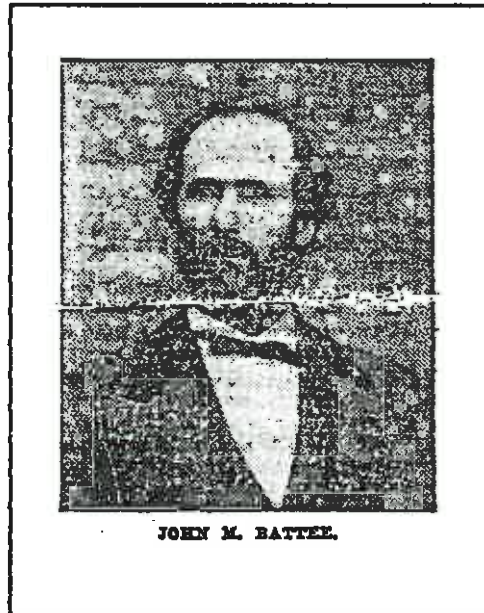
Now Brother Daniel, You used to laugh whenever I boasted of my cows I have sold them all the best for one hundred next 75 next 60 and three for fifty dollars apiece in gold after they had been milked six months, what do you think of that, The best one last spring gave 65 and 70 lbs of milk a day for

three months and had to be milked three times a day when you milk a better one let me know, if she was fresh now she would bring 150 dollars very quick the calf I raised the summer you left I still keep and would not take 50 dollars for her, There has been another brick block three stories high built on the corner west of the Ausarais block since you left

another opisite the morgan house and the ballance of the block from the Ausarias to first Street has been filled with a two story very fine and called the best building in town You can get board in the Ausarias Hotel for three dollars per day Three prisoners killed the Jailor and escaped yesterday one has since been shot in recapturing him, Tomorrow is the 22nd but I have so much to do that I shall not be able to keep it there is to be a grand ball in San Jose and all manner of doings in Santa Clara, I must close it is so late and I am so tired Please write to me oftener than you have done My Love to You all J. M. Battee
San Jose Feb 21st/66

San Jose Mercury Herald
Wednesday Morning
November [3, 1926]

**Supervisor of '70
Buried by Garden
City Odd Fellows**



JOHN M. BATTEE

Staunch supporter of the Lick road built in 1877, who died at the age of 93,—Photo by Wright's Art and Portrait Gallery.

Little known to many San Joseans of the present-day but a prominent figure in county circles and the community life of half a century ago and a man beloved by those early pioneers—many now passed away—who were his business (partners and friends.) John M. Battee was laid to rest at Oak Hill yesterday. One of the oldest members of Garden City Lodge, I.O.O.F. which had charge of the funeral. Mr. Battee died October 30, at the age of 93 years after a life of usefulness and energy, which left its mark in many ways upon the Santa Clara valley, running well over the allotted three score years and ten.

Passages from H. S. Foote's book edited in 1888, "Pen Pictures From the Garden of the World," and carefully penned reports—now slightly faded by age—of the county supervisors' meetings of 1870 and later, record events of that period in which Mr. Battee figured.

Supervisor 1870 to '78

He took office as a county supervisor on March 7, 1870, and continued as a member and chairman of the board until March 4, 1878. This was a period when San Jose was growing steadily and beginning to assume proportions other than a town, other than the center of an agricultural district.

It was on June 2, 1874, that James Lick executed his first trust deed whereby his estate was given to charitable and educational work, among the provisions of that document being those giving \$25,000 for the purpose of establishing an orphan asylum here and appropriating \$700,000 for establishing an observatory on land belonging to him near Lake Tahoe, Placer county. Gratitude for the former gift, in resolutions prepared by Judge Bleden, was so deeply acknowledged that Mr. Lick changed the location for the observatory and in August 1875, with Hon. B. D. Murphy, then mayor of San Jose, visited Mount Hamilton. The board of supervisors was then addressed, the offer to locate the observatory being made if the county would construct a road to the summit.

Chairman Road Committee

In the aforementioned book, the work of Mr. Battee in promoting this road is taken up in a chapter devoted to roads and highways:

"January 9, 1877, the Lick board of trustees and supervisors made an official inspection * * * observed as a general holiday throughout the county. Probably the most earnest and untiring friend of the road was Supervisor J. M. Battee, chairman of the road committee. To his devotion to the cause is due, more than to any other man, the successfully termination of the great work that has attracted the attention of the scientific world to the summit of Mount Hamilton."

To the few pioneers remaining who knew Mr. Battee, he is remembered as a man who was modest, plain in appearance and speech, determined, honest in all his dealings and one of the most far-sighted and efficient county officials of the closing quarter of the past century.

Many obstacles faced the supervisors in building the road. Mr. Battee stood staunchly through them all. The valuation of the county then was about 40 millions. To build a road costing approximately \$135,000 was considered quite a bite from the tax levy. Under Battee's guidance, the road was built without a bond issue, excepting for a small portion totaling about \$12,000 at the mountain end.

For years, the Battees resided at their home on Sunol street. In recent years Mr. Battee lived with a son at Los Gatos. He is survived by two daughters, three sons and a brother: Mrs. Terry McKean, 80 Ashbury street; Mrs. L. E. Wood, Naglee Park; Albert J. Battee of Berkeley; Fred Battee, of Los Gatos; Phillip S. Battee of Lodi, and Samuel Battee, of Portland. Mr. Battee was a native of Maryland.
