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REFERENCE AND LOAN

Re A. M. Springer, 1857

~~Allen Varner, 1849~~

See matter,  
Platte River Road Hamlet  
entry # 1081

Dear Mr. Mattes:

Enclosed please find some new Gold Rush materials. The <sup>4 pages</sup> ~~letter~~ of 8-4-1851? <sup>are</sup> all we have. The first four pages are missing, probably the best four. The letter of Jan. 25, 1852, written in Neighbors' book, by the same man, includes a description of his trip from Oregon to California. The rest of the letter is a description of the gold diggings and I thought you would not be interested in it. The A. M. Springer letters were given us by Margaret Brayton, Westminister Village, Muncie, Indiana. The Springer family lived at the time in Orange County, Indiana.

The third item is a letter from Allen Varner at Independence, Mo. This is a copy of a Xerox copy



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I hope the Brayton and Varner letters  
are of some help to you

"

Sincerely

Marybel Burch



84785123

August 21<sup>th</sup>

A.M. Simpson 1851  
Indian Book Library  
New York Collection

I have already written 4 pages and have not yet made a commencement of my letter. But I cannot in this Epistle think of writing you one half that I would wish. But to commence where I left off I would just say that this disagreeable country of which I have spoken is on the Platt River. The Road on these hills were certainly the finest the world can produce, being there on a gradual ascent with the River, and from a smooth Indian plain so they were just as hard as a rock & quite entirely void of stone. There are neither hills or timber here to obstruct the view. Consequently the traveler can see objects many days travel in advance of him. Yet notwithstanding all this it is the most uninteresting portion of country through which the Oregon emigrant has to pass on crossing the plains. The atmosphere is rarely two hours at a time of the same temperature. The days were generally warm enough to be pleasant but the nights were generally cold & attended with the most chilling winds that I ever experienced. On the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup> of May while we were laying at the crossing of the South Platt River a storm arose about 2 o'clock and lasted until dawn up next morning. This I suppose was the hardest storm that the emigrant this season had to withstand, and had it not been for some Emigrants who were camped close by us, with waggon I do not know whether or not we would have survived the storm. The Rain & hail fell in perfect torrents, driven by a cold chilling wind from the north west & north that came with such violence that one could scarcely keep their feet when exposed to it. We had neither tent or any thing else to protect us as there was not a stick of timber in sight and the nearest timber or arid road was 15 miles distant. However we were offered a tent by a man with the waggon but when we attempted to fix it we found it took 3 men to keep it from being carried off by the wind. They then offered us one of their wagons in which we crept & and stayed though very uncomfortable for the



night I do not think that I was ever so chilled to death  
in all my life as I was during this night. A man with a team  
was camped just on the opposite side of the river from us. He was well  
killed down by the hail and severely beaten before he could get relief.  
The waggon covers were much cut to pieces. A man in camp  
some 5 miles from us lost 5 mules by the same storm.  
The mules eat what they can find. If I were going to  
cross the plain again I would want at least one wagon to every  
three persons and 3 good mules to each person also pack saddles  
and sacks so that the wagon could be thrown out after the  
first 6 or 8 hundred miles. From there on until the Oregon Strip  
the Willamette Valley the roads get worse. I would not haul a  
wagon over the Cascade Mountains which is a distance of 100 miles  
long. On these mountains there are many gray mules through which  
it is difficult for a wagon to pass aside from this the ascent  
and descent of the mountains are so near bordering on perpendicular  
that it is killing on stock to travel the way, but more par-  
ticularly with a wagon. After we left Fort Laramie we had  
no rain and the whole scenery was changed. The country now comes  
as rolling and affords considerable pine & coniferous timber. In  
the country through which we had just past, the scenery was every  
minute changing which was quite a relief to the traveler, & more espe-  
cially one who had been raised among the hills. I was much sur-  
prised to find the road across the Rocky mountains so good as they  
were. I do not believe that the world can produce another mountain  
road of the same length with so few obstructions to travel as the  
Oregon Road, from Saint Joseph to the Summit of the Rocky  
Mountains. The ascent is so gradual that one can scarcely  
conceive that they are ~~so~~ ascending at all. But the mountains  
on either side are heaps of stone rising to the height of some  
thousand feet above the level of the valleys.



...my own property of good ...  
There are many curiosities to be seen in crossing the plains which will  
rightly reward me if not quite pay me the wages for his time &  
Recompenses him for the trouble & difficulty through which he has  
to pass. The first grand curiosity is the South Pass or New  
gate. This is where sweet water rivers run through a mountain  
it looks as if the mountain had been cut into after it was  
formed in purpose to let the river pass. The mountain rises  
perpendicular by its own 4000 feet in height above the water  
and presents a sublime view to the eye of the spectator or observer  
who has any love for natural scenery. The Soda Springs come  
next upon the catalogue of curiosities I would like to give you  
a full description of these springs and speak of them at some length  
but I have already indulged in detail too much. But suffice  
for the present to say that there are quite a number of them boiling  
out of the earth affording an abundance of soda water of various  
degrees from very cold to that of warmer than blood heat.  
The colder ones make an excellent drink, and if I had them in  
the States Jersey and Michigan I could make  
the Mass money. There are many other curiosities which I  
have seen, but I fear I have already wearied your patience.  
I have as yet travelled but little in the settlements of Oregon  
one day last week I went from Oregon city down to Portland on board  
of what they call in this country a steam boat. When I first  
saw it I really thought it was a floating battery and that the fire  
place and boiler was the cook stove. For riding on this a dis-  
tance of 12 miles and back they charge \$6,00. Portland is a very fine  
town and is rapidly improving. The Willamette River is navigable  
for ships up to this point, at all seasons of the year. There are quite  
a number laying there at present waiting for freight. It is rather  
dull times here at present, as it is harvesting times with the farmers.  
The whole of the interior of this country far exceeds any I have ever



Seen in the states oats also is raised in abundance with but little trouble  
there is an abundance of wheat raised here the price as a consequence  
of which the price is quite low being only from \$1.00 to \$1.25 per bushel  
Oats 10¢ per Bu potatoes from \$1.00 to \$1.25 per Bu which is very  
low for them. Barley in the towns is from 10¢ to 15¢ per bushel  
and very common at that. I have been stopping in Oregon city since  
I came into the valley but I think I shall go up the valley tomorrow  
to look at the valley. I have no notion however of laying a claim  
as the law requires that one shall reside on and cultivate the land  
for three consecutive years before being set a title to it. This year the  
bushels no claim at all for I would not like to go to live in a  
little spot of earth and keep back for four years for all the land  
in Oregon. I have not gone into business yet neither have I  
sold my stock all kinds of stock here now is near as low as it  
is in the States. But I think it will rise again in the fall when  
the fresh is made for the Indians. I was out the first over the plain  
to see the Boreas death with questions respecting the Emigration.  
In my next letter I will be able to tell you something about Oregon  
and you may know I like it. I have a law now of my old acqu  
aintances here with Ed Coffin & all the boys that came with  
him to Oregon have gone to the mines. Many of the gold mines  
near Oregon are yet considered rich. The common labourer here  
gets from 2 to 3 dollars per day & board. Mechanics wages  
are much lower than they have been ranging from 5¢ to 10¢  
per day. I had like to have forgotten to tell you about my health  
I was most generally in good health and was able to ride on horse  
back every day. The worst enemy I had on the plains was my ap  
petite which many times could not be satisfied. My health  
at present is very good. I stood the trip much better  
than I thought was possible for me when I left the States.  
I have had a hard time getting this letter wrote, having to write in the  
Tavern bar room and be asked some question about the emigration  
every five minutes. Hence the miserable penmanship and broken  
sentences of which this letter is composed. Tell Father Stewart that  
he can't raise potatoes that we Oregon men would buy. My respects to  
all relatives & friends I shall expect to hear from you at earliest  
convenience. I am with much respect Your son A. M. Dorr



I send you and father some specimens of  
 gold I should like to send some larger specimens  
 but cannot conveniently enclose it in a letter  
 Previous to leaving the states I promised to write  
 to many persons, but it would be out of the  
 question for me to write to each one separately  
 so be it understood that when I write to one  
 I write to all and should be happy at any and  
 at all times to hear from relatives and friends  
 please write soon direct A. M. Springer  
 if I can get my letters from Oregon City by City D.S.

I think my writing very complimentary  
 and as you are in Oregon  
 circumstances over which I have  
 no control as the cause of  
 the long delay I hope you  
 will be so kind as to write  
 me as soon as you have had  
 a chance to do so I have by  
 your name on file a few ex-  
 pected to remain in the States  
 for at least a few years and  
 then pay. So I promise to pay  
 what on my return from  
 But my mind will be free  
 to report to the country  
 in my mind and feel that I had done



at down as pass  
the hills. The surrounding  
all our ~~sight~~ in crossing the  
low and forested ~~slopes~~  
blowing. I was in fact  
Oregon. The state has the  
healthier country on the  
mostly portion of Oregon  
open. There are many por-  
tionally fine for farms  
the country has the in-  
formation on the lands of  
the small river. There is  
the country Oregon  
of the western states  
impound of beauty and  
has had elaborate design  
coming to California  
portion of it that I have

the I remember an Oregon born  
self and much, for we were  
the plains. During this time  
about the country with  
the mouth of the river.  
the reputation of being the  
state. It is true there are  
that is quite healthy. But  
tion of it. These people can  
eye and in the I have  
many of the ~~the~~  
of any portion of the  
is a beautiful and  
but there are portions  
that are full of beauty  
of their fertility of soil. I  
in this territory  
and the landscape  
is the River valley



We went to the <sup>west</sup> end, and <sup>made</sup> ~~some~~ <sup>to the</sup> portion of the territory  
 and there are no settlements of considerable size in it.  
 The valley is a narrow one, however, the largest valley  
 in Oregon, which is 3500 ft. in length and from 15 to 20  
 miles wide. Much of the upper portion of this valley is  
 level prairie land and is covered with water since  
 the winter is springing the water is <sup>flowing</sup> <sup>from</sup> the snow  
 that falls during the winter and is impassable. It is <sup>not</sup> <sup>so</sup>  
 difficult to travel all seasons of the year  
 by passing to and from. The <sup>water</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>not</sup> <sup>impassable</sup>  
 the roads were quite good when I <sup>was</sup> <sup>out</sup> <sup>with</sup>  
 the expedition of 12 miles when the road <sup>is</sup>  
 through a range of mountains and in a canyon. This is  
 usually the way of those of road that my eyes <sup>are</sup>  
 held. In making the oil stave of 10 miles in this  
 canyon you cross one stream about 150 times  
 and some portions of it is very dangerous. I was <sup>not</sup>  
 killed in one canyon by mud or snow which <sup>is</sup>  
 passes on the river and the <sup>day</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>very</sup> <sup>rough</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>water</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>very</sup> <sup>rough</sup>



Believe me a precious letter I gave you a history of  
my trip across the prairie and also a few <sup>of the</sup> scenic views  
near Oregon, and in our former days my narrative  
of the beauties of this fair land (which had been  
exceedingly true) in order to give you an accurate  
local conception of what I think of Oregon  
the land of promise -  
The social aspect of the  
that I consider is the greatest beauty of the day  
Western civilization and  
excepted but owing to  
the magnificent views I left Oregon bound for Bal-  
conia and from that time up to the present I  
have enjoyed myself in the most health, in a  
standing manner near that time, I was  
much exposed to them, but having nothing to  
protect me from the heavy dew of summer  
nights, which are invariably cool except my  
blankets, which, owing to the commencement of



company present and never per-  
sisted in the general, which  
I believe they formed my bag  
admirably for a pillow,  
the top of the bag & could  
multiply through I were sitting  
on the walls of a palace,  
comfortable as in with  
erect, upon a small  
about six miles distant,  
I have been running, and  
I have been very successful  
to some degree, few that  
credit have taken out from  
and in a very short time, I  
the Atlantic states, leaving  
full fellows, still laboring  
much to be feared that

refuse. One thousand pro-  
posed generally, there and I  
my best and wisest men  
upon this, after the pa-  
litanis and other had  
ing upon a bed of adiron, with  
I am more sleeping in a  
two very agreeable com-  
I room called himingore  
from Wharfa City, unless  
since I came to Baltimore,  
I stop, and have very few  
leading one is on the  
to some degree, few that  
credit have taken out from  
and in a very short time, I  
the Atlantic states, leaving  
full fellows, still laboring  
much to be feared that



For it is a fact which time has proven that it is not  
very true that comes to California that I see to  
with a fortune more of a few dollars a fact that  
those who believe in their horses advised off as when  
they left, are strong in the minority. I know  
Many persons now in my way on this coast who have  
been coming in California for over thirty years  
and knowing that I have had but little over a hundred  
experience of some of the many very feet and horses  
with the above way, I am doing nothing at all. I have seen  
but a few of the things which are now working around, both  
outward and inward dollars in one day and I do not  
know what can be done in the following night.  
But I believe that my present remarks are more  
conclusive moving fact in these times as they are at present  
how long they will continue good I cannot say. They are  
one from 50 to 60 per day. According to from 15 to  
30 per month. But no farmer generally keeps back  
and buys their provisions by the quantity, by doing



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