

LIFE IN THE PIKE'S PEAK REGION

LETTERS OF MATTHEW H. DALE

Edited by

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Life in the Pike's Peak¹ Region: The Letters of Matthew H. Dale

EDITED BY ROBERT G. ATHEARN*

In the early spring of 1859 a frail young Pennsylvanian named Matthew H. Dale set out for the fabled gold fields of Colorado, determined, as he later said, to find health and wealth. After more than two years, considerably more robust but enriched only by experience, he returned to his native state where he successfully engaged in business until his death at the age of sixty-seven.

Dale was born on October 22, 1837, at the little Pennsylvania town of Daleville, named after his grandfather David Dale, who had come over from Yorkshire, England, about 1816 to settle in Lackawanna County. After completing his public school education he attended Wyoming Seminary, in Kingston, Pennsylvania, but poor health obliged him to abandon his quest of higher education to seek a healthier climate in Colorado.

Upon his return to Pennsylvania he married Sarah Allis of Scranton, December 22, 1863, and settled down to a business career in partnership with a Mr. Keen. That arrangement lasted until 1869, when Dale joined his brother, Thomas, in a wholesale produce business under the firm name, Dale & Company. The new company was the first to handle western dressed beef in Scranton and it became a highly successful venture. In later years the Dale boys branched out into the manufacture of tile and bricks and then into contracting. With the money he made in these ventures, Matthew Dale invested heavily in coal, water and telephone companies. By the time of his death he was quite prominent in local financial circles.

¹ The present spelling, recommended by the National Geographic Board, does not use the apostrophe in Pikes Peak. In order, however, to conform to the spelling used when Matthew H. Dale visited this region and wrote his letters, we are retaining the apostrophe.—*The Editor*.

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On November 22, 1904, he died in a Buffalo, New York, hospital as the result of injuries suffered in a train accident. He and a friend, Victor Koch, had boarded an east-bound Lehigh Valley train, mistaking it for one that was to take them to the West. The porter, who confirmed their error, urged the men to jump off since the train had not yet gained appreciable momentum. Impeded by a heavy valise and an umbrella, Dale fell partially beneath the wheels in his attempted leap and his foot was mangled. Upon examining the injuries, doctors said the patient was not in a serious condition, but unaccountably he took a turn for the worse and died.²

Between April 27, 1859 and October 21, 1861, the following letters³ were written in the West to Dale's family back in Pennsylvania. The spelling in the letters has not been altered.

Leavenworth, K.T. April 27, 1859

My dear Father,

My propensity for seeing, only leaves me a few moments to drop you a line. After running the gauntlet of bogus ticket swindlers in Chicago, baggage smashers, sharpers, pick pockets, confidence men, and gamblers on the Missouri river, we have arrived safe, well and in good spirits in this famed city.

Travelling, and in fact every thing costs more than we expected. Very ordinary board is two dollars & two fifty per day here. We were two nights on the boat coming from St. Jo. Mo. to Leavenworth, a distance of 70 miles. Stuck on sand bars three or four times, and at last stove [stowed or stove in?] the Steamer quarter of mile above here, where we got off and walked into town.

We have been up to Fort Leavenworth to day a distance of three miles. Walked out and back—and intend starting for Lecompton in the morning. Its a little over 40 miles from here and fare per stage is \$4.00. We are nearly two weeks too early to start on the Plains successfully, without taking feed. Are getting used to Missouri river water but it is the toughest of any thing we have to take. The country what we have seen west of the Missouri is the finest [I] ever saw. Am quite in love with it. Apple trees are blossoming, the weather delightfully fine, and every thing looks spring like. This City has a population of over 12000. Much larger than I expected. I like the West. There is a dash of bold shrewed go-a-head style about every thing which is entirely unknown East. Every thing but river travelling is fast. I will write more extendedly soon. Walter⁴ sends respects to all. My love to all.

Affectionately, Your son,
M. H. Dale

P. S. Denver City is the first place we can get a letter from, and expect a host from there. Did not succeed in finding any of our Western friends. Mat.

²Information concerning Dale's life was obtained from Sarah Allis Dale Grant, Boulder, Colo.; the *Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania* (New York, 1919); and items from *The Scranton Republican* (Scranton, Pa.), November 23, 1904.

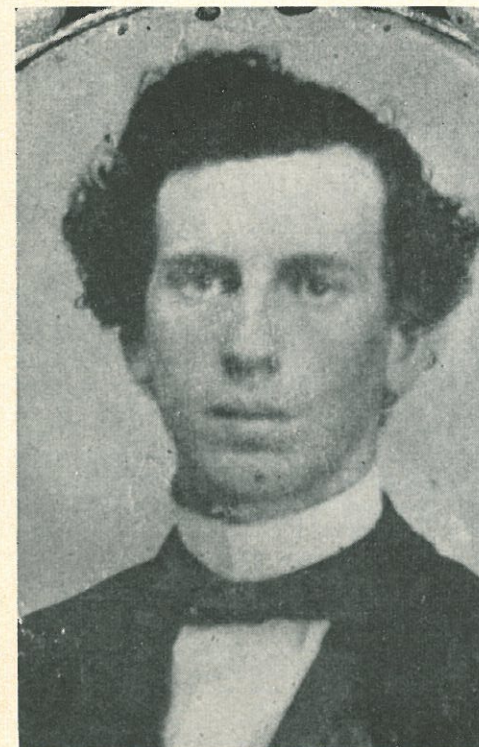
³Doctor Athearn wishes to thank Mrs. Sarah Allis Dale Grant of Boulder, Colorado, for the use of her father's letters and for the gracious assistance she lent in their preparation for publication. Acknowledgment is given Jane Titus of the Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh, and Leonore Rice of the Scranton Public Library, for their generous help.—A. W. S.

⁴Walter was engaged to one of Matthew Dale's sisters.

Council Grove, May 25, 1859⁵

My dear Dave,⁶

I thought [I] would have had time to write you all the particulars by this time of our start &c, but we have made such long drives 'twas so late [I] could never write after we stoped at night and we are off by daylight each morning. The team is now waiting for us & have only time to say we are quite well, getting along finely, have had good roads, and fine weather all



MATTHEW H. DALE

the way yet & are all in fine spirits although we hear very conflicting reports from the mines. The Santa Fe Mail this morning reports great numbers on the road returning while the Santa Fe papers give most favorable reports. The facts we can only ascer-

⁵Dale traveled at the height of the rush to Colorado. The *St. Louis Democrat* of May 18, 1859, reported that twenty thousand people were then en route to the mines. Quoted by Joseph L. Kingsbury, "The Pike's Peak Rush, 1859," *The Colorado Magazine*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (January, 1927), 1-6. Council Grove . . . Just south of Council Grove the government had established a reservation, agency and mission for the Kaw tribe of Indians.—Kansas State Historical Society's *Collections*, Vol. 8, p. 487.

⁶His brother, David W. Dale, who later served for many years as the Postmaster of Daleville, Pa.

mountains, but cannot work them, as they are depending on a ditch company for water. He has not made sufficient to winter him here, but is a good carpenter and can get work at his trade at very fair wages this winter in Denver. We have been prospecting for the last week for a coal vein. We get very good indications, and have taken some fine specimens of soft coal from a sort of dyke. If we should be so fortunate as to strike a vein thick enough to work it would be a fortune to us as the location is very desirable, being near good markets, where wood is quite scarce. He is very energetic & uses no profanity or liquor, a *very* remarkable feature in this country. The ditch here is almost abandoned, and there is scarcely a probability of its being finished this winter. We made a small ditch to the lower part of one of his claims, running the water nearly half a mile along the edge of the bank, but could not get water very near the solid dirt, as the bed rock is several feet above it. The loose dirt pays but very poorly, and we have made so little washing, it is hardly worth mentioning.



GREGORY QUARTZ MILL, 1860

From a sketch made on the spot, expressly for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, by Col. D. H. Huyett.

We can just make "grub" by working hard when the weather is fine. Walter is about discouraged as to getting a living this winter as no kind of employment can be obtained, and talks seriously of returning to the states soon. I intend to remain long as I can if [I] have to sacrifice my gun, watch and every thing. Through the assistance & advice of Mr. Giddings I have partly purchased a lead claim, but it cannot be worked this winter. If I hold it must advance \$50. on it in three months. Great bargains could be made now, on claims opened, by those intending to return to the states this fall, to get a fit out in the spring, if only had a little money to pay down. I think the prospect of doing well next season is very flattering, but it requires a little money to start. I inclose my note for two hundred dollars, and if it is possible for you to borrow it,

or send it without very much embarrassment, I hope you will do so. I do not feel the least hesitation in assuring you if I have my health, I can pay it with interest before maturity. St. Louis currency is the only thing here good, except specie & dust. Specie is at a premium. A draft on St. Louis, payable to my order would be the only safe way you could send it. That sent in a letter in care of "Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Co."¹⁴ if put up good would be perfectly safe and come through very expeditiously. I expect you would have to go to the trouble of sending to New York for such a draft, but would be the only thing negotiable here at any thing near par. I expect next season to be able to pay you all back for this trip. Fortunes are made here, and I have a good show now if [I] can stick it out. Nothing but *good prospects* could induce me to stay for we have to forego all luxuries here, and undergo many hardships. As I shall wait expecting a remittance, untill [I] cannot get away without help, I hope you will not fail in assisting me immediately if you possibly can. I feel very confident in being able to refund everything next season, and believe I can make four times as much as any where in the states. I am sure [I] ought to. I feel my destiny for the next three or four years is in the Rocy Mountains. I have just got experience enough to realize partially the immense mineral wealth here. I shall make a bold stand, and hard pull for a fortune here & if [I] have my health (which [I] have every reason to believe [I] shall) have no misgivings about the results. I have received one paper—cost 10¢ letters 25¢ yet. Every thing put up good & directed in care of "Leavenworth & Pikes Peak Express Co." Denver comes through safely and expeditiously. I have received no letters since those here on my first arrival & think it a little strange. But suppose my letters are a long time going through as we usually to save money send them by persons going through, and not by regular express. Walter sends respects. Write immediately & if a remittance, send to Denver, as I have directed & write also advising me of the fact, to Arrapahoe, K.T. care of Leavenworth & P. P. Ex. Co. My love to you all. Am very anxious to hear from home, and if [I] dont get a letter in [the] course of a week or two [I] shall begin to get quite uneasy. Write in particular how business is prospering &c &c. We are an age behind all the news. Papers if we buy in Denver are 25¢ each, so we dont get the luxury of news. Hoping a reply early as possible

Your Affection Son

M. H. Dale

Have written this hurriedly, on my lap on a board and am sadly out of practice with pen.

Arrapahoe K.T. Aug. 20, 1859

My dear Parents

Have postponed writing a long time hoping [I] could give a favorable a/c of myself *but nothing turns up* & what is more, *we have succeeded in turning nothing up yet*, although keep trying faithfully. After runing over the mountains nearly a month, prospecting, (during which time it rained every day), we came to the conclusion we could do nothing as a company; so Walter and myself, split the company, left them in the mountains, and made our exit to this place. Here we obtained claims which prospected well enough to insure \$5 per day, but they could not be worked untill a ditch was completed costing about \$1500. After

¹⁴ This express service into Denver dates from May 7, 1859 when the first coaches arrived from Leavenworth, having taken nineteen days in transit. For a good description of the mail delivery system see: LeRoy Hafen, "Early Mail Service to Colorado, 1858-60," *The Colorado Magazine*, II, No. 1, 23-32. See also: Margaret Long, "The Route of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express," *The Colorado Magazine*, XII, No. 5, 186-194.

expending nearly \$1000 the whole concern blew up and now the ditch is in the hands of the creditors & its very uncertain whether it will go through or not this fall. *Every thing is uncertain.* What two weeks ago appeared a prospect too fair for clouds of doubt, is now wrecked by a whirlwind of uncertainty. We next turned our attention to a bar on the Creek where water was plenty, and after getting prospects we thought would pay us \$2 to \$3 per day bought a sluice and put it up, but the creek has become so high we cannot get fall enough on a/c of back water to work it, and so it goes. It requires a great deal of patience, and a philosophical mind to keep from getting discouraged. Walter is going to Denver tomorrow to see if anything offers there, while I am to wait here to learn what I can, concerning the prospects of the ditch, and wait for advices from a prospecting company to the Colorado, of which we bore half the expenses. The great rush is now for there, but we will not start until we get more reliable news from there if we go at all. Its very discouraging, but if I can [I] intend to remain in the vicinity during the winter, and court the fickle Lodes another season, for I am well *satisfied fortunes are to be and will be made here*, although I have done more *hard work* since here than during my previous life, and *not made a farthing yet*. The fact is the manner in which we came has crippled all our efforts. With \$50 more we could have purchased a team of our own, and that way, not only saved ourselves but been in a condition to get about after our arrival here, but as it was we had to sacrifice a \$100 for freight and be entirely unprepared to locomote when here. Having no money or team we could only be gone from our provisions so long, as what we could pack on our backs would last us, and if you could once see the amount one eats in the mountains & take into consideration the fact that to get from one Mountain Valley into another, we have to climb almost perpendicular mountains from 1 to 4 miles long, and at an elevation where the atmosphere is so rare its almost impossible to fill the lungs with air, you would conclude, it was a remarkably short time. To sum up we have no means to purchase paying claims, no facilities for finding them; while hundreds of others are in the same condition and worse, which makes it all the harder for us, as no employment can be obtained.¹⁵

So you see the prospects for the future are not particularly brilliant, however as nothing can be made by a retrograde movement now, we can only hope for the future, and stick to it long as possible. A few men are making fortunes rapidly, others amassing it slowly, but regularly, some merely making a living while by far the greater portion are like bees in a broken comb rushing about unsettled, flying wherever there is a stir of excitement, appearing not to know what the matter is, or where to settle.

My health has been much better as a general thing, than for a long time before I started. I am able to work at any thing. Our journey across the plains was a most tedious one. We had no adventures that began to pay for the toilsome tramp. We got all the discouraging, frightful, alarming rumors afloat, and fully believed all the Eastern accounts we had received were pure fabrications, as they mostly were, for everyone here concedes "Pike Peak" to have been a great humbug, and when they wish to represent a stupendous fraud, they merely say "there's Pikes Peak in it," so well is it understood here that is the strongest language they can use. All the paying diggings in the mountains being discovered after the spring emigration had started. My faith was so

¹⁵ In a letter, dated June 9, 1859, at Gregory's Diggings, eastern journalists, Horace Greeley, Albert D. Richardson and Henry Villard, warned the reading public that from October until spring there would be neither employment, food, nor shelter for the thousands who poured into the mining regions convinced that they had but to pick up the golden pebbles. *Hafen, Colorado Gold Rush, op. cit.*, 382.

strong that rich deposits would be found, I was resolved to come through, prospect and hunt part of the season, and then return to the states, go to California, or make a tour through New Mexico as circumstances might transpire, in fact any thing but turning back or joining filibustering expeditions, my antipathy being equally strong against either, as both insured a loss.

I suppose you have gained as accurate a knowledge of the country from Walters letters as anything I could write. We brought no liquors of any kind with us and needed none. The only things we have to regret is that we did not come in a different company and more independently. Ten dollars per cwt was the regular price for freights and from some answers to inquiries I made in the place where he (Satouche) lived, concluded it would



NEVADA CITY, COLORADO

be better for us to come with him than with a stranger, but I am sorry to say he is as lazy and unprincipled as ever. We are free from them now. Denver is a regular gambling hole that being the principal business of the place. Scarcely any one making what they represent, and almost *every one* have claims to *sell*. There's as much "Pike Peak" in the country as ever that is "humbug" and its a settle[d] fact here, that Greeley's [*sic*] eyes were so completely filled up he must have carried the whole Peak in them.¹⁶ I suppose

¹⁶ The "Greeley Report" of June 9, 1859 (signed also by A. D. Richardson and Henry Villard), while it warned the enthusiastic and optimistic, nevertheless gave a glowing account of gold discoveries in Colorado. Henry Villard, of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, admitted that the document became "a source of slander and abuse to its authors" by those who hopefully went to Colorado and were disappointed. Henry Villard, *The Past and Present of the Pike's Peak Gold Regions* (Reprinted from the edition of 1860, with Introduction and Notes by LeRoy R. Hafen, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1932), 52.

you hear big reports of ditch companies & tunnelling companies furnishing any amount of employment to every one. These companies are formed by every one's taking stock who will, appointing officers, giving them orders to go on with the work, and when they require money to make an assessment not a farthing being paid in. Thus they get men to work a month, on their own means, and when pay day comes, these irresponsible stock holders fail to meet the first assessment, & a failure is the result in which none but the laborer loses. You can see the best part of the country is in the hands of the peniless speculators. Next season we expect the whole thing will be changed by the advent of capitalists, who will take these speculative schemes (most of which will pay) into their own hands. The arrival of . . . [Here the page ends. The remainder of the letter is missing. Ed.]

New Nevada E. S. R. M.¹⁷ [Eastern Slope,
Rocky Mountains] Nov. 27/59

My dear Father

Your remittance was recd a week ago but this is by the first express from the Mountains since, so the earliest opportunity of sending [a] reply. I have not yet had it exchanged. Find no difficulty in getting "dust" offered for the face of it, but am waiting in hopes of obtaining the premium from some one wanting to remit. I may not be compelled to use it as [I] have made a little, but did not feel very safe, especially in the long winter, with no dependence but the very fickle employment to be obtained here. Recd Mothers and sisters letters two weeks previous to your last, but one letter at a time must do you all. Fifty cts per letter makes writing a rather expensive luxury, and where finances are low to be indulged [in] only occasionally. In [the] future you may expect a letter at least once a month, providing we do not get cut off from communication by snow here in the Mountains.

We have abandoned the rented claim it proving a complete failure. Have since my last got a claim on the "Kansas leads" by running it through and measuring the claims more closely. This is a very prominent lead having a wide crevice & yielding very rich Quartz—though a very hard one to open. Claims on it sell before opening, from one to two thousand dollars. Mr. Giddings has two claims on the Burris Lead & we are now engaged in opening them so as to loose no time in the spring. There is now a very good prospect of having a very good crushing mill erected here this winter. In case it goes in operation soon can make something out of quartz this winter. There are nine tunnels in progress now in this district—from six to ten men constituting the "body incorporate" of each. They are worked exclusively by the members hence affording no employment. But two men can work in them at a time but they keep them going night and day. These will prove the leads for if they do not strike them big below the sulphoret leads will be almost valueless and that is the main dependence of mining on the eastern slope of the mountains though in all probability valuable bar & gulch diggings will still be discovered, but no very extensive ones, and the great drawback to such mines is the long season its impossible to work them.

¹⁷ North Clear Creek . . . is a roaring torrent when the snows are melting and running out . . . Its course is southeastward and it empties into South Clear Creek fourteen miles above Golden City, so that it and all that is connected with it, are well within the Foothills. About half way from its mouth to its source, Gregory Gulch comes down to it from the west, flanked at slight distance by Russell on the south and Chase on the north. We say comes down, for in the course of two miles it falls more than a thousand feet. At its head is the town of Nevada. O. J. Hollister, *op. cit.*, 141-142. Nevada, Mountain City and Central City later became one continuous town reaching to the border of Black Hawk, which appeared in 1860.

Heard from Walter yesterday. He is still at Arraphoe. Has thirty men on the ditch and will have water on the bank by Wednesday. By his letter I gather things are quite brisk there, claims being jumped & things looking quite prosperous. His salary \$3 per day he has to take in water. We own besides claims there each a share of ditch stock, costing with the assessments about \$50. & in addition nearly \$100 of water coming to us. The bank there is estimated by experienced miners who have prospected it, to yield by proper working in summer days (minimum \$5 per day to the hand). It takes there four men to work a sluice & men could be hired in abundance thus far at \$2 per day—on this estimate, totals of sluice \$20—less \$6 for labour & \$2 for water leaving the minimum net earnings per sluice & for your own time \$12 per day. If the basis taken from the assurance of experienced practical miners is correct, the above calculation is low & one man could superintend at least two sluices on one claim. This calculation makes the claims there quite valuable, and as we all have claims there Mr. Giddings will go to the valley this week to prove & hold them if worth what we anticipate. I shall remain here at least one month to open our claims and build a house to have every thing in readiness for working as early as spring will admit & if the Mill I spoke about is located here and put in operation as we now have reason to believe, will in all probability remain during the winter. We have about six inches of snow and very cold weather but there is no sickness to my knowledge in the mountains. I never enjoyed better health. The cold does [not?] seem to be the least injurious to my lungs. I am satisfied a trip on foot across the plains with proper precautions & variety for food, enough to keep the scurvy off, is a very healthful one. The specimen of dust I send you is from this gulch. Its fine and saved by amalgamating with quick Silver & then retored [retorted?], so you cannot tell much about the real appearance of it. They have found lumps (varying in size) from one to fifty six pwts [?], pure solid gold. I have two small but fine specimens of gold visible in quartz I took out myself. I inclose Eight grains worth 26 2/3 cts at \$16 oz. what we get for it.

I have received no papers except the *Ledger* commencing August 10th. I recd two of that no. & the rest up to the 29th of Oct. I do not recognize the writing but think they are not from home. Whoever sends them I hope will continue but I don't want more than one of each no. as the Express charges are 10 cts each. I am very sorry [I] did not receive the "*Record*" you sent. Would be glad to get it occasionally & especially the no. you wrote about in Mother's letter. We buy a weekly *Tribune* occasionally at 25 cts to keep posted on the news. Every thing is readable these long nights and would give a pension had I one to spare for my text books especially my Geology & Chymistry, & every scrap of music is sought after with the avidity of *gold hunting*—but I have promised myself a supply of all these when a U. S. Mail is established. There is not much regularity in the present express arrangements. But would like to have the *Weekly Tribune* sent regularly, for [I] can stand 10¢ per week for the news it contains & want Sister to send all new, good songs & music I would be apt to appreciate & some one write every two weeks. Every thing interests me. The business, the politics of the country, in fact *every thing*. I feel confident I could place the store at Moscow on a paying basis with the full control of it and my hopes now are to return in two or three years with money enough to buy Mr. Simpson out if he will sell. Direct as before to Denver City care of Ex. Co. Private express runs from there to all the principal mines, so, can get them from there to almost every point. Love to all. Will write to Mother & Sister soon.

Affectionately, M. H. Dale

Nevada Eastern Slope R. M. Jan. 1860

My Dear Brother

Presume ere this you are in receipt of my anser to your former epistle, and now write to inform you of the safe arrival of the second batch of stamps and books. As you have been so kind in supplying me so bountifully, will not trouble you again soon, in that line.

Have nothing of interest to write you. We jog along quietly and monotonously, seldom having any thing to stir us from a uniform, dull routine. The few things that serve to arouse us, to any thing like excitement, is the weekly arrival of mails from the east, the weekly meeting of our lyceum, and the numerous political confabs, and buncombe orations of aspirants.

Politics in this country are much like the whiskey, plenty, and most villainously mixed. The first general election was to known if the people were in favour of state or territorial organization, and carried overwhelmingly for territorial, notwithstanding some thousand "Kickapoo" votes (from a little place on the Arkansas, called Fountain City of about a hundred inhabitants),¹⁸ all in favour of state. Then came the contest for Congressional representative. There were about a dozen candidates in the field, as I could find nothing but democrats running, would not vote. Dr. [George M.] Willing a Missouri slave holder got the certificate, by majorities from diggings never heard of untill then.¹⁹ [Beverly D.] Williams a Kentuckian, and the Express Agent at Denver was next on the list. He has gone on to Washington as contestant, and stands considerable show, as he will be backed by the funds of a heavy Ex. Co., who of course want an agent there, to see after the mail contract &c so soon as the Post route is established.²⁰

The political demagogues in Denver and the other valley cities, who got up the State government movement, not satisfied by its defeat, and the unceremonious shaking off the public teat it gave them, which loomed before them with such inviting fat yielding prospect, now clubbed in caucus to euchre the people out of what they could not get honestly and openly. Lets see how they managed it. They first concocted a "Provisional Government" scheme, which being in fact nothing more nor less than a state government such as was defeated a few weeks previous by an overwhelming majority, of course they dare not submit it squarely to the people or it would share the same fate. But their scheming brains, fertile for rascality and political chicanery, were not long in surmounting the little difficulty of inducing the people to indorse in form what in reality they detested. Lets examine the modus operandi. In their secret conclave, they got up a Provisional Government ticket of such persons as they wished elected, and also an opposition ticket of such politicians as the people *had before repudiated*. Every thing ready now, the trap was sprung, and this peice of political skuldugery, hurried to consumation before opposition could be thought of. They sent insinuating declaimers

¹⁸ The vote from Fountain City was 1089 to 1 in favor of statehood. Smiley calls the figure "an error or a gross misrepresentation" and hazards the guess that 89 was the correct figure. The total vote from Denver and Auraria was only 1130.

¹⁹ Smiley confirms this, admitting that the election was recklessly conducted with ballot-box stuffing taking a prominent part in the proceedings. Over 2,000 false votes were thrown out. Jerome Smiley, *History of Colorado*, I, 343. Dr. George M. Willing of St. Louis, wrote a diary of his trip out to the mines which he published. See: Dr. George M. Willing, "Diary of a Journey to the Pike's Peak Gold Mines in 1859," (ed. by Ralph P. Bieber), *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, 360-378.

²⁰ Williams became the delegate and served during the two sessions of the Thirty-sixth Congress. Although he represented merely the provisional Territory of Jefferson he was admitted to the floor of the House and was given an audience by the Committee on Territories. Jerome Smiley, *History of Colorado*, (2 Vols., Chicago, 1913), I, 299.

first, to cajole the mountain men into the belief, 'twas all done for their benefit, that the sole object was for harmonizing the laws of all the mining districts, and thus presenting in the spring a *united* front, to the aggressions, which they *supposed* the emigrants would then inaugurate. This was followed by the bold assertion, that our only choice was for candidates, it making no difference in regard to the government which ticket was chosen, or that choose which ticket we pleased it was all for the "Provisional Government." All who were opposed to it and saw through the thing, ignored its validity by staying away from the election, the only thing they could do. The mining districts thus forced into the measure, sent men to the legislature to oppose the organization of the government and also taxation. Presented in this form of course the Provisional Government was successful. The legislature met. The men sent from the mountains to oppose it had by this time acquired a taste for the sweets of office, and united with the men in the valley to force the thing down our throats. They voted themselves salaries to double that of Territories and levied a poll tax to cover its expenses. Too eager to wait for the collection of tax, they issued provisional script and paid themselves off in manner. I saw twenty five dollars of this script offered for a glass of whiskey, which is equally as bad, but refused to take it, so you can judge how it is valued in the mountains. In addition they passed a bill forming counties, located the county seats, and appointed a day for the election of county officers. This, except the granting a few charters for roads etc. on account private speculation, is sum total of their action. A few in the mountains at the county seat favour the government, and intend opening the polls. I have been thus explicit in describing the true state of things, as [I] apprehend the scenes of Eastern Kansas somewhat modified are to be reenacted. Each mining district are resolved to resist the tax, and already an organization is [in] existance, to forcibly if need be, take the polls on election day, and resist in every manner the organization of the county. What the result will be is hard to foretell. Each party have their compliment of desperate men. The tax collector has already been hung in effigy. If force is resorted to, it will probably be resorted to in reality. They dont think twice before hanging a man, in this country.²¹

Mining prospects are brightening with each new discovery. Our lyceum meets every Wednesday evening. The debates are pleasant and instructive, besides they serve to while away the long evenings—We only have about five hours sunshine here in the valleys—These few slanting rays, that straggle over the top of the hill, are pleasant and cheering to see, but are not felt much—

The evenings are beautiful here. The clear, cold rare atmosphere seems to act like a telescope in vivifying scenes, and the sky, with this magnifying influence, seems doubled in brightness. I think the radiance of the mountains, glistening with snow is counteracted by the deep-dark green of the pines dotting their sides and summit.

It seems Dave your predilection for female society is strengthening, rather than waning. So long as you choose good, its right enough, if not look out for trouble—Think of that short sentence before going too far. Well as this is the time for sleighrides with nestling proximity to furs, picture you in the full enjoyment, of boyhoods elastic spirits—Enjoy yourself while you can Dave.

²¹ Those who opposed the formation of the State of Jefferson held that the population was too small to support a State government and preferred to retain Territorial status for which the cost of maintenance would be furnished by the Federal government. An election was held September 5, 1859, and in very light balloting, the "State of Jefferson" was rejected.

Its queer but true; in youth, the future contains all joy, as age approaches, no pleasure is seen, but in the past.

Dave I want to tax your generosity again. Soon as a mail route is established here (you will know it before we can) send me my Geology and some comprehensive work on Mineralogy. It will fill up time to good advantage, and could learn much that would be profitable to me, add to my pleasure and keep me out of mischief—No sleigh bells or other belles would come "bobbin in between" by my head and books here—Walter has sent me up a lot of county papers, one containing the green room scene, so you need send me none—You might send an *Atlantic Monthly* occasionally if you please. I recognize more characters in the green room than father mentioned—Dont he remember Jenkins who declaimed so violently against the sale of the State Works in the House? Write often, Remember me to friends.

Your Affectionate Brother, Mat. H. Dale

P.S. I wish Dave you would send me soon as you can after you receive this, The compendium of *Helpers Impending Crisis*²² is creating such a furor in Congress I want to see it. You will see them advertised in the Tribune.

Yours.

Mat.

Nevada Dist. E. S. R. M. Jan 22, 1860

My dear Parents

Have an oppotunity to send letters by a gentleman going through by Ex. so [I] write, although have nothing of interest to say.²³ I think it quite strange some of you have not written. Its been over a month since [I] heard a word from home and there has been abundant time to have received answers to some of my letters. Write at least once a month, for [I] assure you my interest in home matters can never be abated, let the distance between us be ever so great.

My health has been remarkably good. I know you would be surprised to see the physical benefit I have derived from pure air, exposure, and vigorous exercise. The question of my being able to endure the hardships of mining life is a question no longer unanswered, and you must dismiss every fear for the result.

Dec. was a cold blustering month but with little snow. So far this month it is much pleasanter than any weather ever experienced in Penna. during the corresponding season. All the snow on the south side of the mountains has disappeared, and but for the remaining snow on the north side where the sun hardly strikes this month so far would be pleasanter in the mountains than Sept. or October. We anticipate a big storm in March, and altogether a nasty time with it. We are doing quite well mining now though of course nothing can be washed during the winter. The Arrapahoe bar like most of the bars in this country is now pretty evidently a total failure. Californians have been the heaviest loosers in river and bar mining—Prospects that would insure a fortune there are worthless here—Many theories are advanced to show why this is the case but the sum and total of them all is that there is not more gold in the rivers of California than here, but that it is not so generally and regularly diffused, hence not

²² H. R. Helper, *The Impending Crisis* was an anti-slave volume that created considerable excitement, particularly in the South, during the 1850's.

²³ He might have told his parents something about the operation and function of a Miners' meeting. On January 21, the day before this letter was written, Dale was the Secretary at a meeting held "for the purpose of adopting laws for their future government, and electing officers to fill all offices created, for the ensuing year" in the New Nevada District. See: Thomas Maitland Marshall, *Early Records of Gilpin County, Colorado, 1859-1861*. University of Colorado Historical Collections, Vol. II (Boulder, 1920), 122.

mixed with so much dirt—Mr. Giddings is still at Arrapahoe, not yet being satisfied of the nonfeasibility of making wages there—Walter is here in the mountains with me and expect Giddings up soon—Since Walter came up we have been working on Mr. Giddings claim, and have struck dirt averaging 40¢ per pan which is very good—His claims are on the "Burroughs Lead".²⁴ We are taking out dirt and quartz and if it does not run out will do *very well*. We will have quite a fortune . . . by the time it can be washed if it still continues so good—From fifty to seventy dollars per day can be washed a day from such dirt by two men and one sluice or tom²⁵—There are very exciting reports of big discoveries on the Colorado branches, and every appearance of a large emigration there in the spring. There is a very general impression among the miners who have been here and prospected a season that the R. M. discoveries will prove the most extensive and best paying mines in the world—still I advise no one to come here. To any one however who had made up their minds to try the venture and were resolved to succeed by hard work, I should not discourage, and could [give] some valuable information to such in regard to outfitting, crossing the plains, mining etc. It takes about one season to learn how to mine to advantage. But as [I] wish to write several other letters will have to stop—We have quite lively times here—Debates in our club are animated and instructive—If we only had a good library of books to draw from we could pass the winter quite pleasantly—The inventor of chess too has received my benediction for making many a long winters night pass interestingly—Excuse this horrible paper—Its the best [I] could get, and even such as this is 50¢ per quire—My love to all my friends,

Your Affectionate Son

M. H. Dale

Nevada R. M. March 18, 1860

My dear Bro.

Within the last two weeks have received a grist of letters, for which [I] am very thankful. Among them are two from you, the last coming to hand on Friday night, and the former no less welcome by your not dignifying it by the title of a letter.

The express charges on mail matter, by a late arrangement, are reduced one half, so that letters cost but twenty five cts. and papers, pamphlets etc. but ten cts. This reduction is in consequence of the establishment of U. S. mail between the Mountains and Denver. The probable commencement of a through U. S. mail within two months is received most gratefully here. Our Post Master told me, the contract was to be let by 1st of May. One point of our present difficulty will then be obviated, viz. the great ir-

²⁴ O. J. Hollister, *op. cit.*, 165-174, discusses the "Burroughs Lode" as it was being worked in the early 1860s. He summarized as follows: "We have now traced the Burroughs vein for about 3,000 feet. It is the king lode of Nevada, and perhaps second to none in the country but the Gregory for strength, length, and value. It is a shame that but a very small portion of it is at present productive."

²⁵ The tom had been employed for years in the placers of Georgia . . . It was, however, the ditch that gave opportunities for the general introduction of the tom and sluice, and in most districts they were unheard of until late in 1850 and 1851. The tom is a trough about twelve feet long, eight inches deep, fifteen inches wide at the head and thirty at the foot.

A riddle of sheet iron punched with holes half an inch in diameter forms the bottom of the tom at the lower end, so placed that all the water and the mud shall fall down through the holes of the riddle and none pass over the sides or end. The water falls from the riddle into a flat box with transverse cleets [sic] or riffles, and these are to catch the gold . . . The tom was a great improvement on the rocker, but it was soon superseded by a still greater, the sluice, which is a board trough, from a hundred to a thousand feet long, with transverse cleets at the lower end to catch the gold.—J. Ross Browne and James W. Taylor, *Reports Upon the Mineral Resources of the United States* (Washington, G.P.O. 1867), 18-19.

regularity of our present mail receipts, caused by carelessness of express companies.

Occasionally the mail goes through to Salt Lake as was the case three weeks ago, and one or two mails have been stolen by, or lost and found by the Indians, but these are isolated cases, and every thing considered, we may congratulate ourselves on the comparative certainty we already enjoy in having our communications safely carried.

The *Tribune* much to my gratification comes regularly as the mails, and at a cost of only 10c per week. In the manner it was put up [I] judged it came direct from the office of publication. I am glad its going to continue for without the news it affords we would be entirely out of date. I knew not who to credit it too untill your last, but surmised a Mothers thoughtful kindness was at the heart of it.

Helpers Compend. received last Friday. It is very much sought after here—I have known so high as fifty and seventy five cts offered for the perusal of it for one week. The *Tribune Almanack* has not yet come but presume it will next week. I must again thank you all for these little kindnesses, great ones to us here. The difficulty of getting reading matter of public interest is much greater than you imagine.

We are having most delightful weather and have had all winter. On the south side of [the] hills in this vicinity there is not enough snow left to make a ball, and its nearly all gone from the north sides. With the exception of one or two cold weeks I never witnessed a milder or more uniform winter. This month has been incomparably fine. All who had the temerity to remain in the mountains during the entire winter are very much surprised that it should be so. We all expected a very severe time, but if this winter is a criterion of all—the winter months are the best for work (excepting sluicing) of the whole year. We never think of wearing coats, and in the day time almost every cabin door is ajar. The nights are cold, and indeed, even in the hottest time of summer, they are deliciously cool.

With the exception of two or three cases of scurvy, there has been no fatal cases of any disease in the mountains, which considering exposure, food, etc. is a very bright picture of healthfulness. There are duels, shooting affrays, hanging by mob law etc. most every week, which keeps up a morbid excitement through the mines and towns. No one who follows a legitimate business, tends only to his own affairs, or has any moral proclivities is in danger of these self constituted vigilance committies or mob juries.

The last duel²⁶ which occurred about a week ago, receives some notice from the position held by the principals, as well as the political nature of the difficulty. It was between our Representative, Mr. [J. S.] Stone and Secretary [L. W.] Bliss. Bliss is a sporting flash, a splendid shot on the wing etc. while Stone is unacquainted with weapons. Stone has strongly opposed the "Provisional Government" and successfully, hence he must be got

²⁶ According to J. E. Wharton in *History of the City of Denver From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, (Byers & Dailey Printers, Denver, 1866), p. 65: "On the 5th of March 1860 at a public dinner given by Mr. Conklin at the Broadwell House, a difficulty occurred between L. W. Bliss, Secretary and at the time Acting Governor of the Territory, and Dr. J. S. Stone, member of the Legislative Assembly and Judge of the Miners' Court at what was then called the Mountain City District. The affair grew out of some personal language used by the former against the latter in presenting a toast. Dr. Stone challenged Governor Bliss to meet him in a duel. The challenge was accepted and the affair came off at 3 o'clock p.m., on the 7th on the opposite side of the Platte from Denver. The weapons were shotguns loaded with ball, and the distance, thirty paces. Dr. Stone fell at the first fire, mortally wounded. He lingered, however, in great agony and suffering for some five months ere death supervened."

rid off. Bliss for this purpose insults him, receives a challenge, accepts it, chooses fowling pieces to be loaded with ounce balls, and deliberately shoots him, Stone in the thigh, breaking it, and rendering his ultimate recovery very doubtful. Its the most barbarous, inhuman, cowardly code conceivable, and is likely to be followed up here with the same infernal results as in California.

We are still mining quartz, and doing very well. With the advent of Quartz Mills and proper tools we can make more than at the east. I shall give the mines a thorough trial before I abandon them. I am not so sanguine as Stevens, and yet have made more and learned more about mining than he has. He has been very anxious for his Bro. to come out, and yet he has not made enough to keep himself. But for me, he would have had to chop cord wood, or something [some?] like employment to keep him this winter.

If any one comes out from the Beech, I would like sent out three or four Welsh flannel shirts open in front, large pearl buttons, and pockets in them. Woolen socks, a pair of fustain pants, and what few articles [you] could send in [the] clothing line—Don't want to buy more here than [I] can help. Every thing is so high—Boots from 8 to \$10 for common ones. To any one coming from there alone [I] would advise [him] to come to St. Joe by R. R. and hire passage or work [his] passage out—with as much money and few other things as possible—To a company of three or four [I] would say, start from Leavenworth or St. Joe, buy a team, bring all you can in necessarys etc. Will write to Sis and Cousin Sarah soon and will then give more elaborate instructions—Love to all—

Yours hastily, and affectionately

Mat. H. Dale

Direct in future to Mountain City

Arrapahoe Co.

Kansas Territory

Nevada Gulch R. M. August 31, 1860

My dear Parents

One cause of my not writing oftener home is the provoking irregularity of express and mail carriers. You cannot imagine this reckless uncertainty. The mode of transmission from the River to Denver is changed nearly every month, and with each change a corresponding change of directions is required. The lines of transmission into the mountains being merely branches or feeders of the main one from Denver to the states of course it takes much longer to get them all regulated—and in these minor changes, besides the time consumed, many letters are unavoidably "dead letter" classified, and so lost.

Since writing last, a partial change has been made by the arrival of three or four loads of mail matter under Government conveyance—and we are now again in the midst of our usual most glorious uncertainty in regard to it—not knowing whether to look for letters at the P. O. or at the express offices—How long it will continue we cannot learn. The nearest office of the U. S. to us is at the mouth of the gulch about 3/4 of a mile from our cabin. You may direct in future simply Nevada Gulch Arrapahoe Co. K. T. so it will be likely to come through by some conveyance at all events, and leave off all Express companies—I have an opportunity of sending this through by the President of the District [Ira H. Morton] so it will most likely reach you safely. He is returning by Express for his family and has kindly volunteered to take any letters through I may wish to send.

The second cause of my tardiness is the peculiar dullness and sameness of mining life. After one general description of our

mode of living etc. nothing more of the descriptive can be made interesting without much more vivid imaginative powers than its my fortune to possess. Then there is nothing left to write about but myself, and although I will know you all deeply sympathize in every hope, in every success and each failure, yet mining is so peculiar its impossible to give the impulses from week to week without creating a very confused and imperfect impression of every thing. Every week and almost each day has its peculiar hopes of success, and in most instances its disappointments. In this uncertainty I choose to wait for the full developments, rather than as most miners do—give this week a glowing account of every thing, pictures of bright anticipations about to be realized, and the next drawing a cloud over the brilliant sunshine they had just created—and giving a gloomy picture of big failures where miners of good perception, large experience, and undoubted honest[y], and sound judgement, are most egregiously deceived. In some instances we have been successful, and in many more have failed entirely. The principal mining here has been in quartz, and in that branch of mining has been the greatest failure. From the assays and prospects, it was supposed none of the quartz would yield less than one hundred dollars per cord, yet the best as an average make no more in the mills now here, and many do not pay for working. In fact I never saw the mines so dull as at present—and do not expect much of a revival until some of the tunnels are driven so as to tap the Lodes at least a hundred feet below the surface. Then I anticipate great excitement and speculation again. The Tunnel property is changing owners rapidly and are being vigorously prospected by capitalists in many instances.

We could have sold out this spring for three thousand dollars, but now I think all we have would not bring in cash more than one thousand. I intend remaining here another season. Walter wants to go back this fall if he can sell out. He is now over to Fall River about twelve miles from here. Expect him back Monday night. A friend of ours struck a silver Lode there and they have gone over to stake it off, and record it. It may be worth a fortune in less than a year and may be worthless. If he can manage it he will get us two or three claims on it. There is considerable excitement about silver mines at present, several very rich silver veins and cinnabar Lodes having been discovered quite lately. I have not the least doubt of this countrys ultimately being a great and profitable mining region, but time and money are both required to properly prospect it. I intend to remain until its proven one way or other. Whether I shall mine or not this winter [I] cannot say. If I thought the winter would be pleasant as last was would make arrangements to mine all winter, but am most afraid to trust it.

You ask about how we spend our Sundays etc. in the last letter received from Mother about a week ago. Sunday is very generally observed by the miners. No work is done, except patching up, tinkering around the cabin, doing their trading, retorting quick Silver etc. The saloons, groceries, gambling halls, etc. are always in full blast on Sundays and there is generally more gambling, drinking and fighting then than any other day.²⁷

We have a lecture nearly every Sunday in this district, usually by some miner, and in Central, Mountain and Missouri Cities,

²⁷ The regulation of morals seems to have been difficult in the mining camp despite the much talked of effectiveness of Miners' Law. On April 28 the miners of New Nevada District adopted a resolution that "there shall be no Bawdy Houses, Grog Shops or Gambling Saloons within the Limits of this District." Violators were to be fined fifty dollars and warned; persistent violators were to be fined the same amount and given five days to leave the District. The Sheriff of the District was to collect half the fine, the remainder being deposited with the District President. In this letter, at the end of August, Dale does not indicate a successful enforcement. Marshall, *Early Records*, op. cit., 125.

preaching is held regularly and usuly in the Theatres, but sometimes as here in a Miners Cabin.

Of course under this state of things there is no regularly organized church, and no distinction of denominations recognized.

As [I] have got to end my paper and want to write several more letters will close this. Write often as possible and you shall hear from me if I change my place or any thing unusual occurs. Send me some papers or any thing to read. Now the U. S. mail is partially established papers come through. My *Tribune* has stoped entirely. Direct [to] Nevada Gulch, Arrappahoe Co. K. T. Love to all

Your Affectionate Son

M. H. Dale

Nevada City C. T.²⁸ March 12th 1861

Dear Brother

Intend writing to sister to day, and as you express some intention of coming out here in your last letter dated Nov. 5th I will sum up my impressions of this mining region, and let you advise yourself. Of course there are some things to be gained by striking out manfully and battling disappointments, that cannot be sumed up mathematically. You cannot gain that self reliance, and independence under all circumstances a few years here would impart, by remaining any where in the east. This abstract you must give the consideration you think it demands, and now more specifically in reference to prospects pecuniary. Of course the trifling inconveniences, generally termed hardships are nothing, and not to be considered.

In my opinion, mining here thus far has proven an entire failure, taking the brilliant expectations formed the first year as a basis. The "placer diggings" by which term all mines that can be operated with pick and shovel are embraced, such as gulch, bar and dry diggings are so limited, not one tenth part of the miners now here can find employment in them, hence the future prosperity of this entire mining region depends upon further discoveries of "Placer" or in quartz mines already known.

As the country has been pretty thoroughly prospected it brings our attention more particularly to the prospects of success in quartz mining, which up to this time has resulted unfavorably. A yield of seventy five dollars per cord of quartz would pay a large dividend upon the expense of mining and crushing, could that much be saved, by the mode of crushing and washing now in use.

By a careful and extended analysis it is ascertained no quartz in this gold belt contains less than \$100 per cord, and ranging from that to a maximum of several thousands. It is estimated, with the best machines now in use, and best ways and means of saving the gold, an average of not more than one fiftieth is now obtained, hence the failure.

The cause of this great loss is owing in part to the fineness of the gold and to so much of it being coated with rust or oxidized. Its being in such fine particles precludes the possibility of crushing the quartz fine enough, by the present stamp mill, to free a close approximation of all the gold held by it. Much that is freed floats off in water its specific gravity (like gold bronz) being insufficient to bring it in contact with the mercury; as used in the present mode of sluicing.

A large proportion of the gold too is found to be oxidized so that it is impossible for the quicksilver to act upon it, before it is brightened by some process. In assaying acids of different kinds

²⁸ The Territory of Colorado was created by an act of Congress, which became a law on February 28, 1861.

are used to remedy this evil, but the expense would be too great to apply this principle extensively. Another difficulty arises from the impurities contained in the quartz and sulphurite. In the sulphurite especially much cobalt, arsenic, lead and other minerals are combined. These coming in contact with mercury, spreads over its surface in the form of a film or scum, and of such tenacity and strength as to interpose a great mechanical obstruction to its successful efforts to catch the gold, for which it has such an affinity.

I have enumerated some of the main causes to and difficulties in successful quartz mining. Until these difficulties are in a measure surmounted, I regard this entire mining region an entire failure. Our hopes are centred in the tests and experiments now in progress. If they prove only partially successful, results may arise putting an entirely different complexion on the mines. Hope ever buoyant leads us to anticipate great changes in the future. At this time the whole country seems to be bankrupt. The mills have been unable to run during the winter, and what little money was taken out last fall was long since consumed. Very little business is doing and that little upon credit. There has been no actual suffering nor is there danger of any. Plenty of provisions to meet the wants of all now here, for the next six months, is in market. Of mining upon which every thing hinges you have a pretty good and correct impression by this time, and now other matters.

Wages are never very high here. Miners during the summer can generally get from \$1.50 to \$2 per day and board, while common and general labourers get \$1 and board. I think by hiring for a whole year \$1 per day could be obtained for wood chopping and all general work, with board. My faith in the inventive faculties of the Yankee is still undiminished, and [I] have a firm belief that these mines will ultimately pay largely. To come here with the expectation of realizing a fortune in a few years and then returning I very much disapprove. But I candidly think no better country for eventually realizing a competence can be found for any enterprising young man, who will come with the expectation of *making this his future home*. He can realize this by any branch of industry he may undertake and *stick* too, but most emphatically by farming. During the last two weeks I have been in a quandary what to do. I sometimes think of returning home, but the present state of affairs offers no inducement, while the idea is too repugnant to my pride. At other times [I] think of returning to New Mexico,²⁹ and in fact every day brings new intentions. What my ultimate action will be is impossible to state. I shall however have to remain here for the next two months. Let me hear from you soon. Love to all.

Yours Affectionately

Mat. H. Dale

Nevada City C. T. April 28th 1861

Dear Brother

It seems very strange no letters came for me this week. I have not heard a word yet from home in answer to letters wrote from here, but several from others, which were in answer to those written at the same time. Nearly two weeks ago [I] received some, but none from home. I am very anxious to hear from you. I have

²⁹ On March 2, Dale wrote to his parents saying he had just returned from an unsuccessful "prospecting and exploring trip to the Sierra San Juan in New Mexico and some six hundred miles south of this gold belt." He was absent from Colorado for three months. His entire letter dealt with the details surrounding the sudden illness and death of his friend, Walter, who was buried four days before Dale's return.

been writing every week since my return, and will still do so, but its one sided business, for [I] cannot expect to interest you, but if you feel as I do, the mere fact of your being well is a great satisfaction.

There is nothing of importance new transpiring in the mountains. We have had several union meetings lately, in which compromise or secession principles had no show. We are getting the news by telegraph to Kearny [Fort Kearny, Nebraska] and from there by pony express. Yesterday morning we received news up to the 22d. This will give you some impression of Western enterprise. Only just think of it for a moment.

Receiving news thousands of miles and for six hundred miles and over, an almost barren and uninhabited (except by the Indians) region—having them printed and distributed all through the mountains in five days! That is doing things up with a rush, as every thing is done in the west. The news of course create[d] considerable excitement among such a feverish nervous temperament as makes a gold hunting community, but judging from the Telegrams nothing near so intense as throughout the states. Persons are leaving here every day almost to join in the melee. Its an awful state of affairs, and if I was at home and needed I could not hesitate a moment to fight under the stars and strips. I would never wait to be drafted but would rather volunteer a hundred times than be drafted once. It has come to war and no time for waiting and compromise now. Unconditional surrender to the Government is the only terms of settlement honorable to its dignity, and that dignity *must* be upheld at all hazards.

At a Union meeting in Denver last week the following address or resolution was passed unanimously, indicating the sentiment of the people here. "To the President"—"The eyes of the world are upon you—the hearts of the American people are with you—and may the God of Battles be with the Stars and Stripes."

There are a great many southern men here, but I have heard of but one "Rattlesnake" flag being unfurled.³⁰ We are ten to one for the government.

We deprecate the necessity of war. It will materially affect our prospects here which were dark enough before. I should not be surprised to hear of a company organizing here to take the field.³¹

The last news from the east mentions the difficulties in Missouri and we have a rumor that eastern mails are interrupted. This may be the cause of my not hearing from you. The most expeditious and direct route of our mail is through Missouri. It will be a sad event for us when that source of communication is cut off, but the enterprise of the men here will soon establish a line through Iowa by Pony Express or some other expeditious means.

We have just had quite a storm, but its now cleared off fine again. My health is very good, but my hands are so stiff [I] can hardly write. I am helping Giddings get his mill started and shall stay three or four weeks with him. I take charge of the mill one watch, tend the sluices etc. Its the most particular part about a mill, as the amount saved is the great desideration. I was up till

³⁰ On April 24 a Confederate flag was hoisted over the store of Wallingford and Murphy on Larimer Street. Samuel M. Logan, soon to be a captain in the Colorado Volunteers, went up on the roof and pulled it down. William C. Whitford, *Colorado Volunteers in The Civil War*, (Denver, 1906), p. 39.

³¹ In 1860 two companies, the "Jefferson Rangers" and the "Denver Guards" had been organized but were disbanded at the end of the winter. Samuel Cook of the Idaho mining district is credited with raising the first Colorado troops for the war. In July, 1861, he began recruiting men to serve in a Kansas regiment of cavalry but Colorado Territory's new governor, William Gilpin, persuaded Cook and his men to remain and join the First Regiment of Colorado Volunteers.

twelve o'clock last night and every night last week. The business requires you to have your hands in the water most all the time, and my hands are chafed and swollen very much. Have received rather discouraging news from New Mexico, and the probability now is that I shall not return there. Nothing more of interest. Write often as possible. My love to all.

Your Affectionate Brother

M. H. Dale

P.S. Direct in care of the C. O. C & P. P. Ex. Co.³²—St. Joseph Mo. If the Government mail is stopped they will form some plan of getting their Express matter through.

Yours Mat.

Nevada Colorado Territory R. M. May 5, 1861
Sunday Afternoon

My dear Mother

I have nothing to write that can interest you I am sure, but drop you a line to let you know how well I am, and because you will expect something. I had a letter from Bob Dunkir [Dunker?] this week in which he states that on his last visit in Daleville you mentioned having written to me. I have not yet received that letter, nor any other in answer to letters written since my return. There is a U. S. mail due tomorrow night which will be distributed on Tuesday morning. If it does not bring me a letter I shall almost give up all hopes of every getting that one. The letters I have received thus far have all been by the "Express Company." That I think makes the delay as I do not remember advising you to direct in care of Express. Until I direct you otherwise my address will be Nevada City, Colorado Territory R. M. Care of C. O. C. & P. P. Express Co. St. Joseph Mo.

We are in hopes the central overland will run through Denver, in which case we will have the benefit of a regular daily U. S. mail. I believe the service commences on that route about the 1st of July. We are making strenuous efforts to secure the mail line through the mines. It would result in almost incalculable benefit to this region. I most devoutly hope we will get it as the telegraph will surely follow in its wake.

The severest storm we have had this winter set in last night. The snow wears out nearly as fast as it falls, but the wind sweeps off the snowy range with terrific force. It still rages unabated and we all shiver to think of the fatal results it will prove to prospecting parties and the stock on the plains. After this storm we will be likely to have settled weather until the rainy season commences in July—when we will have a shower every day in the mountains for about a month.

I received a letter last night by express from the only friend I correspond with in Buffalo—Walter S. Stephens. He was in college the same time with me and showed much kindness in making my stay there agreeable. I think very highly of him—and the name bears an inexpressible charm to me now. His letter was inclosed in a Union envelope, a star spangled banner printed on the outside—and his letter breathed sentiments most loyal to the government. From his letter I gather that most extensive operations are going on there for war. Much as I dread civil war with its desolating concomitants, my whole heart is with [the] government in this struggle, and I do hope it will not have to be bullied into a degrading compromise—for any compromise with traitors is most degrading, and an insult to the dignity of our country. The south I think will find the north fully aroused by the time they have

effectually exploded, and that although slow to anger their wrath will be exceeding great.

The political troubles in America have resulted in great pecuniary disaster here. There was inflated a tremendous speculative balloon. The bayonets of coercion and secession have pierced it most effectually and a very sudden collapse is the result. Many stock companies with imaginary capital and fortunes of like character have suddenly melted—while a great depreciation in securities throughout the mines is the immediate result of secession thus far. We do not look upon the affair at Baltimore³³ as a true index of the sentiment of the state. It is notorious for rows, and the reckless portion of the city are always "spoiling for a fight". But I have written enough for you to tell my feelings and sentiments as to the struggle.

I attended divine service this morning in a log cabin. There was a very small attendance in consequence of the storm. A most impressive Union prayer was delivered.

I cannot extend this letter dear Mother for there is no material to draw from. I expect the troubles in the east will have a very prostrating effect on business of all kinds. I am very anxious to hear all the particulars and its real influence on business.

Hoping to get a letter soon, and with much love to you all

Very affectionately

M. H. Dale

Nevada City C. Territory
Sunday Afternoon June 30, 61

My dear Father and Mother

Received your letter early last week, and one from Dave towards the last of the week. This is the first opportunity I have had to answer it. I am very sorry to learn so much sickness is prevalent there and that you have had such a cold disagreeable spring. It has been entirely the reverse here. The spring opened earlier than usual and we have had delightful weather for the last month—while I believe the country was never healthier. The rainy season is just commencing and for the next month the scorching heat of the sun will be counteracted by a heavy thunder shower each day, often accompanied by a heavy fall of hail. You can form no true conception of a thunderstorm in the mountains—its awfull grandeur. We never hear those sharp, short crashing claps that startle so vividly on the plains, but a full, deep sonorous tone, that seems to fill the entire space. The beholder is filled with awe and wonder, without experiencing any fear and as "The live thunder, leaps from crag to crag" you almost seem to be going with it. I have been on the mountain top, while a misty cloud was half way down the slope, and could see the grandness of Nature's illuminations, playing in fantastic brilliancy almost at my feet, and could almost fancy a mount Sinai, but I did not intend wandering off in this labyrinth when [I] commenced writing so [I] will change the train of my thoughts.

Mr. Giddings whom I have been working for this spring failed, gave up every thing to his creditors, mill, claims and all, and after staying here and working hard nearly three years, now leaves worse off than we he came here.

I got a situation through his agency, in a mill that is doing quite well. My salary is one hundred dollars a month and found. I superintend in the mill. One of the partners has gone home for a couple of months, and if the mill continues to pay well as at present I am promised fifty dollars per month advance after the first

³² Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company sometimes called the "Clear Out of Cash and Poor Pay" by Coloradans.

³³ He refers to the difficulty Union troops had in getting through that city on their way to Washington to answer Lincoln's call for men.

month. This is a very large salery for this country, but I have learned all the new gold saving improvements, and you know *brains* will always command more than mere automaton in any business, and what I do I always study. My prospecting and mining for myself has proven so disastrous I believe I shall try it no more this season, but stick to the sure thing. Its hard work, and unpleasant but I did not come here for ease and pleasure.

Most of the claims I have sold will come back to me in November, for I can plainly see the payments will not be met. If times liven up any this fall I will dispose of all I can for cash. I hardly look for it now however. There would have to be a great reaction, for at present not over one third of the quartz mills are running, and there are not more than a dozen mill men who have confidence either in the leads, the mills or in themselves. Dave says in his letter "Mat, you know I write more than all the rest together." Of course he does, but just tell him to remember I write him oftener than to all the rest. I shall answer his letter very soon. I have no more time to write to day. Oh yes I must tell you our calculations for the fourth. The mill boys will celebrate it by raising a flag, the stars and stripe over the mill. We have a pole already dressed over a hundred feet long, and are having a flag made 14 x 21 feet, thirty four stars, and one in the centre for Colorado. This will be the largest flag in the Territory but our patriotism is immense. Do write oftener dear parents. I love to hear from you above all others. My love to you all.

Your affectionate son

Mat. H. Dale

Nevada City C. T. Oct 21st 1861

My dear Parents

I received the last letters from home about two weeks ago, from Dave and Mother. I expected to be on my way home by this time but now the chances of my staying here a month longer seems very good. I have trouble in collecting the money due for my labor this summer but will I think get it in the course of a month. The whole country is nearer bankrupt than ever. It is almost impossible to collect money after it is earned. The claims I sold this summer all came back on my hands, the parties purchasing being unable to meet their obligations. I can make no disposition of them for money at present so will have to leave them. I do not expect to cross the plains by express so will be about three weeks in reaching the river after I start. I will drop you a line at the time of starting and you may expect me about the 1st of December. My health is very good at present. We are in the midst of a snow storm, the severest known at this season of the year. If I do not get into something that will pay me, my stay in the east will be very short, for I cannot afford to be inactive. My love to you all

Very affectionately

Your Son

Mat. H. Dale