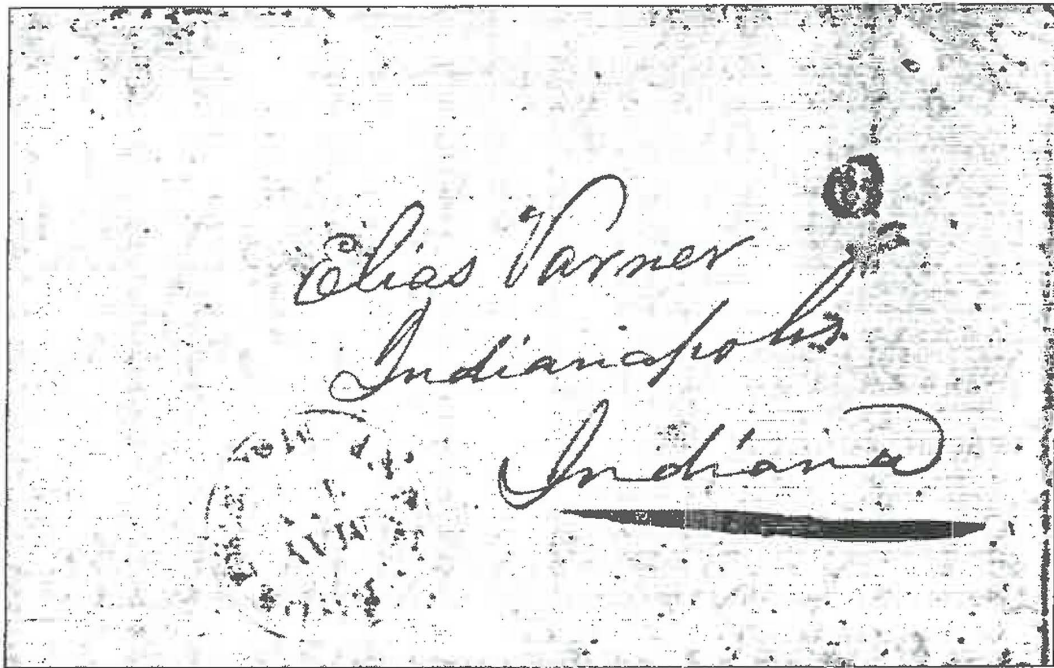


DRAFT

**A Letter**  
from  
**Allen Varner**



**to His Brother, Elias Varner**  
**and his sisters**

**Independence, Missouri**  
**April 29, 1849**

## A Letter from Allen Varner, from Independence, Missouri, 1849

Charles H. Dodd, editor

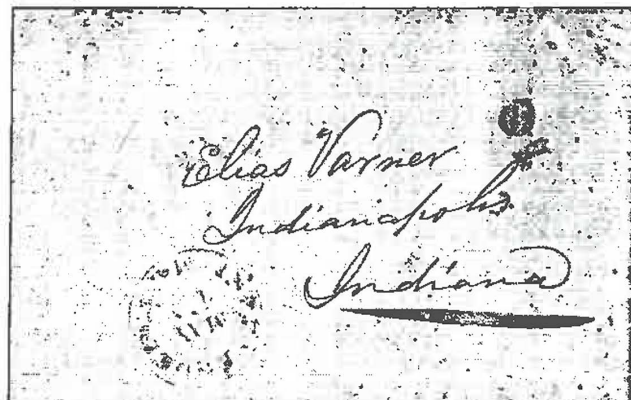
At the end of April, 1849, Allen Varner, from Indianapolis, Indiana, was encamped near Independence, Missouri, preparing to join the gold rush to California. Though busy with preparations for his journey, he took time to visit Independence, and recorded his impressions of that visit along with news of family friends he had visited, in a letter to his brother, Elias.

The letter is of no great importance to those who write histories of great and grand events such as the California gold rush and the overland movement of the thousands who crossed the plains from the Missouri River to California, Oregon, and the Salt Lake valley in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is, though, a good example of what those letters were like, and it includes some interesting and amusing comments on the overland migration of 1849, the cholera pandemic that struck the country at that time, and vices and virtues that were to be found in Independence.

### The Letter

The letter itself was written on a single sheet of paper approximately 16 inches wide by 12½ inches tall. It was folded once to make four pages, each sized 8 by 12½ inches. Allen wrote his letter on the first three sheets. Then, apparently, he added a report about his visiting Adam Reyburns and his family (Varner family friends), writing it across the full 16-inch width of the second and third sheets.

Allen then folded the letter to make its own envelope. Finally, if one can be allowed a little creative visualization for this process, Allen added a last-minute note to the top of the fourth page before sealing and addressing the "envelope" (folded letter). The letter bears an Independence postal stamp showing a date of May 1.

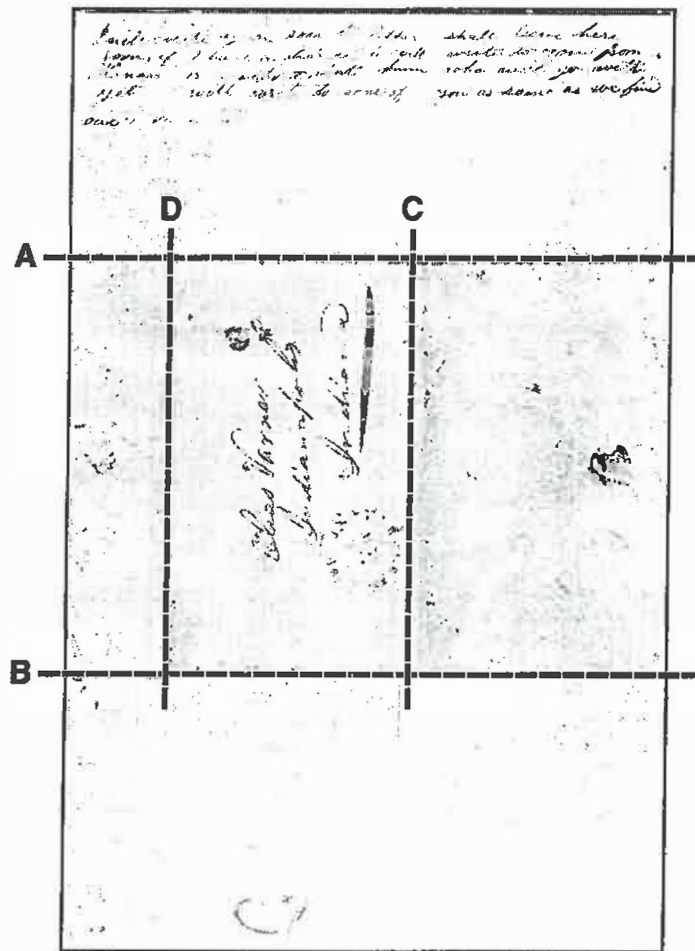




[illegible]

Allen wrote with the formality that was characteristic of his time, as indicated by the letter's greeting: "Respected Brother and sisters." His handwriting also shows the practiced artistry that few of us today take time to learn. Note the flourishes in his capital letters and the leftward swoop of the letter "d" when at the end of a word.

Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849  
Respected Brother and sisters  
This will inform you that I am well



Fold Lines

As was typical of his time, he frequently (but not always) used the ampersand instead of spelling out the word "and" but his ampersands were written in different ways.

*To Elias & Mersey. Patsy & the Boys*

His signature shows a particular flourish on the "V" of his last name that is so different than the "V" in the letter's address one wonders whether the address might not have been someone else.

*Allen Varner*

*Elias Varner*

Allen, again as was typical of the time, used little punctuation, and he used it inconsistently. He spelled better (more as we do today) than many of his contemporaries but he used "there" for "their" in places, and differed from what we think is right in others. His capitalization followed common usage of his day, which means he usually did not capitalize the first word of a sentence, and didn't always capitalize words we capitalize today ("methodist" rather than "Methodist"), and he capitalized words we today do not capitalize ("fresh Pork" rather than "fresh pork"). In

those days, the rules we follow when we write well today didn't exist, and many of the people were illiterate or barely literate. Allen did very good for those days.

### What the Letter Says

A transcription of the letter is provided below, followed by images of the letter at about 70% the size of the original.

The transcription is as close to the way Allen wrote the letter as possible, with a few exceptions. A couple of periods have been changed to commas. Extra spaces have been inserted to indicate the end of sentences. (Allen ran everything together and frequently used no punctuation to indicate when a sentence ended.) To make the transcription a bit more readable, some punctuation and a couple of words have been inserted. Square brackets have been used to identify the inserts; a question mark in a square bracket indicates that it was difficult to know, from Allen's handwriting, what a word was. Also, it seems clear that he wrote "josy" in one place, but the meaning of "josy" is not known to the people who worked on this letter.

### *Allen Varner's Letter of April 29, 1849:*

Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849. 1 oclock Pm

Respected Brother and sisters

This will inform you that I am well at present and entertain a sincere regard for your welfare you doubtless entertain some uneasiness with regard to me on account of the Cholera. & I think I should do your feelings more injustice to say nothing about it than to state the facts as they are. the Cholera is here, but not as had been represented to us before we reached here. we arrived within 6 miles of town Thursday. Friday moved to within 1 mile of town where we now are there is a company from Mississippi encamped on the opposite side of town of whom 2 were buried Friday. 6 more were then sick 1 of which was buried yesterday & another man from Chicago who had also come by way of St Louis. the man who had come with him told me yesterday that they put up at a boarding house here where they ate fresh Pork and that all the family were taken with Diarrhea, his friend was taken soon after supper and lived till the second morning 7 Oclock & he thought if medical aid had been called sooner would have recovered slight attacks were said to be very common in Lexington through which we passed a few days ago. & in which I found Adam Reyburn & family he told me that it was doubtless the Cholera but in a very mild form, there only having been 2 deaths in the place 1 a negro the other a boatsman it would be nothing curious if more were sick or dying than there are for of all places of dissipation I have never seen the equal of Independence I saw yesterday & to day men lying on the pavement perfectly lifeless to appearance, from intoxication there is at least a dozen bars which are all the time crowded with toppers. the[y] keep up a continual jingle of glasses you cant pass along the streets without hearing the clank of money in the upper rooms & the scrape of knuckles on the tables. & in passing along the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown out by the side of 1 coffee house as would pave a room 10 feet square I have been informed that numbers have lost all there money and are compelled to return home but from the ridiculous to the Sublime, I was at church this morning[,] the methodist, heard good music a feeling prayer & good Sermon the ladies present with few exceptions seemed to be votaries at the shrine of fashion for taste & elegance of fashion they are not to be surpassed if equaled by any I have ever seen. the rage of the present time is changeable silk the color of a



doves neck with 2 large flowers on the skirt a white silk bonnet trimmed with Ostrich feathers or red and blue artificials hung in clusters from the point ribbons are generally suspended. those who cannot afford this attire dress variously except that the josty (?) is invariably worn by the young in the absence of a new dress, generally white the men dress more for business than appearances but you will see several dandies with their kid gloves on. while singing at the commencement of service the audience were waited on by two splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains swinging at their sides[,] handsome withal[,] each carrying a small black velvet sack suspended upon a plain fine stick of sufficient length to reach the most distant in the pew. but to return, The most reasonable estimate of the number that are here is 4000 including those that have already gone some to rendezvous 12 or 15 miles above on the Kansas [River] and some still further some went 15 days ago on the Platte 50 miles above here they exhausted there feed and had to return with there stock another company of 18 that had encamped west of St Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to the orders of the agents had all their mules & horses stolen by the Indians [They] have returned to their homes [and] given up the gold and if it had not been for a late letter of exGovernor Boggs of this state who is now in the gold region near 2000 that are here would have returned. he writes to his son-in-law here to come by all means but not bring his family he says gold is plenty and easily obtained another man of Lafayette county which joins this by the name of McLelland advises his friends to come says there are no poor men in California Both he and Boggs are men of stern integrity as I have been told by men personally acquainted with both about 1/4 that are going here are mule teams the rest oxen about the same ratio from St. Jo. the number that will start have been variously estimated from 20 to 50 thousand But I believe 15,000 a fair estimate from there 2 honest men acquainted with the journey say the mules will beat the oxen 3 weeks so that if there is a scarcity of grass beyond the pass as we all anticipate I hope we shall be among the first a great many no doubt will return after starting a great many would sell out now if they could mules & cattle are low now. our lame mules have got well our others have recruited in flesh. Respects to friends and best wishes to Elias & Mercy, Patsy & the Boys

Allen Varner

[On the address side of the paper, folded to the inside:]

I will write again soon to Father shall leave here soon, if I have a chance i will write to you from Kansas or westport. dont know who we'l go with yet will write to some of you as soon as we find out, in a hurry

[Across the top of the inside of the paper:]

I was at Adam Reyburns he was standing in the store of his oldest son a very intelligent good looking man a good store John was there preparing for California. has been in the cavalry [?] service in Mexico some taller than me but not so heavy was invited to dinner by Remp [?] but had not time Ann is married Mary a very pretty girl. Bill & Jo in Boonville. the old lady looks better and talks as lively as ever comfortably situated very neat house of 3 rooms well furnished remembers her best respects to all and mother in particular

Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1847. 1 O'clock P.m.  
 Respected Brother and sisters

This will inform you that I am well at present and entertain a sincere regard for your welfare. you doubtless entertain some uneasiness with regards to me on account of the Cholera. & I think I should do you some feelings more injustice to say nothing about it than to state the facts as they are. The Cholera is here, but not as had been represented to us before we reached here. we arrived within 6 miles of town Thursday. Friday moved to within 1 mile of town where we now are there is a company from Mississippi encamped on the opposite side of town of whom 2 were buried Friday. 6 more were then sick 1 of which was buried yesterday & another man from Chicago who had also come by way of St Louis the man who had come with him told me yesterday that they put up at a boarding house here where they ate fresh Pork and that all the family were taken with a Diarrhea his friend was taken soon after supper and lived till the next morning & O'clock. If he thought if medical aid had been called sooner would have recovered slight attacks were said to be very common in Lexington through which we passed a few days ago. I am which I found Adam Rayburn & family he told me that it was doubtless the Cholera but in a very mild form there only having been 2 deaths in the place 1 a negro the other a bootman it would be nothing serious if more were sick or dying than there are for of all places of dissipation I have never seen the equal of Independence I saw yesterday & to day men lying on the pavement perfectly lifeless to appearances from intoxication there is at least a dozen bars which are all the time crowded with toppers. the keep up a continual jingle of glasses you cant pass along the streets without



I was at Adam Seyburns he was standing in the shop  
 + some good store below was there preparing for sale  
 taller than me but not so young was promised to marry a  
 pretty girl. But in the morning he old lady looks better than  
 hearing the clink of money in the upper rooms &  
 the scrape of shuffles on the table. In passing along  
 the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown  
 out by the side of a coffee house as would pave a  
 room 10 feet square I have been informed that  
 numbers have lost all their money and are compelled  
 to return home but from the ridiculous ~~start~~  
 sublime, I was at church this morning the meth-  
 dist. heard good music a fervent prayer & good sermon  
 the ladies present with fine receptions seemed to  
 be votaries at the shrine of fashion for taste  
 & elegance <sup>of person</sup> they are not to be surpassed if equalled  
 by any I have ever seen. The rage of the present  
 time is changeable such the color of a dove neck  
 with a large flower on the skirt & white silk  
 bonnet trimmed with ostrich feathers or red and  
 blue artificials hung in clusters from the painted  
 ribbons are generally suspended. Those who  
 cannot afford this attire dress variously except  
 that the frock is invariably worn by the young  
 in the absence of a new dress. generally white  
 the men dress more for business than appearance  
 but you will see several dandies with their  
 kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement  
 of service the audience were waited on by two  
 splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains  
 swinging at their sides handsome withal  
 each carrying a small black velvet sack  
 suspended upon a plain pine stick of suffi-  
 cient length to reach the most distant in  
 the pew. but to return, the most reasonable  
 estimate of the number that are here is 4000  
 including those that have already gone some  
 to rendezvous 12 or 15 miles above on the <sup>banks</sup> of the river  
 and some still further some went 15 days ago

The store of his oldest son a very intelligent good looking  
 & California, has been in the country since in October some  
 of the army but have not time to say more. Mary a very  
 kind & kind so kind as to be a very good mother & a very  
 in the (Platte 50 miles from here they are exhausted  
 their feed and had to return to the store  
 another company of 15 that had encamped west  
 of St. Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to  
 the orders of the agent had all their mules  
 & horses stolen by the Indians have returned  
 to their homes given up the gold and if  
 it had not been for a late letter of ex-Gov  
 Governor Boggs of this state who is now in the  
 gold region near 2000 that are here would  
 have returned, he writes to his son-in-law  
 here to come by all means but not bring  
 his family he says gold is plenty and  
 easily obtained another man of Lafayette  
 country which goes by the name of  
 McLelland advises his friends to come  
 to says there are no poor men in Calif. &  
 Both he and Boggs are men of stern integ-  
 rity as I have been told by men personally  
 acquainted with both about 1/2 that are going  
 from here are mule teams the rest oxcen  
 about the same ratio from St. Jo. the number  
 that will start have been variously estimat-  
 ed from 20 to 50 thousand But I believe  
 15,000 a fair estimate from these 2 parties  
 men acquainted with the journey say the  
 mules will beat the oxcen & we go so that  
 if there is a scarcity of grass beyond the  
 pass as we all anticipate I hope we shall be  
 among the first & great many no doubt will  
 return after starting a great many would sell  
 out now if they could mules & cattle are low  
 now. our lone mules have got well our others have  
 been recruited on flesh. Respects to friends and best wishes  
 to Elias & Mary. Peter & the boys Allen Varner

I will write again soon to Father shall leave here  
 soon if I have a chance I will write to you from  
 Kansas or report, sent down who will go with  
 you will write to some of you as soon as we find  
 out.

Chas Varner  
 Indianapolis  
 Indiana

## VARNER, ALLEN

Allen Varner's observant eye gives us excellent descriptions of life in Independence in 1849 as he gets ready for his trip to California.

He was successful in his gold mining on Rector's Bar in the middle of the Sacramento River. His brother, Elias, followed him in 1850 but died in 1851. Allen apparently remained in California.

## BLUE MILLS (OWENS) LANDING

Blue Mills Landing on the Missouri River about 7 miles east of Independence was the Independence LOWER landing. This view of the track leading from the landing is facing south from the river.



I will write again soon to John. shall leave here  
soon, if I have a chance. I will write to you from  
Kansas or myself. don't know who will go with.  
yet will write to some of you as soon as we find  
out.

Chas Varner  
Indianapolis

Indiana



Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849. 1 O'clock P.m.  
Respected Brother and sisters

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[illegible]



the store of his oldest son a very intelligent, good looking  
California, has been in the cavalry service in all these years  
by himself but has not time for his married Mary a very  
kind talks as lively as ever <sup>by situation very neat house</sup> <sup>her best respects to</sup> <sup>and Mother in law</sup>  
on the Platte 50 miles above here they are harvesting  
their feed and had to return with their stock  
another company of 18 that had encamped west  
of St. Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to  
the orders of the agents had all their mules  
& horses stolen by the Indians have returned  
to their homes given up the gold and if  
it had not been for a late letter of ex-Gov  
Lemmon Boggs of this state who is now in the  
gold region near 2,000 that are here would  
have returned, he writes to his son-in-law  
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men acquainted with the journey say the  
mules will beat the oxen & we go so that  
if there is a scarcity of grass beyond the  
pass as we all anticipate I hope we shall be  
among the first a great many no doubt will  
return after starting a great many would sell  
out now if they could mules & cattle are low  
now, our lone mules have got well our others have  
recruited in flesh. Respects to friends and best wishes  
to Elias & Meroy. Patsy & the Boys Allen Varner

Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849. 1 O'clock Pm

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a white silk bonnet trimmed with Ostrich feathers or red and blue artificials hung in clusters from the paint ribbons are generally suspended. those who cannot afford this attire dress variously except that the joser is invariably worn by the young in the absence of a new dress. generally white the men dress more for business than appearances but you will see several dandies with their kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement of service the audience were waited on by two splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains swinging at their sides handsome withal. each carrying a small black velvet sack suspended upon a plain pine stick of sufficient length to reach the most distant in the pew, but to return, The most reasonable estimate of the number that are here is 4000 including those that have already gone some to rendezvous 12 or 15 miles above the Kansas and some still further some went 15 days ago on the Platte 50 miles above here they exhausted there [sic] feed and had to return with there stock another company of 18 that had encamped west of St. Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to the orders of the agent had all their mules & horses stolen by the Indians have returned to their homes given up the gold and if it had not been for a late letter of ex Governor Boggs of this state who is now in the gold region near 2000 that are here would have returned. he says gold is plenty and easily obtained another man of Lafayette County which joins this by the name of McLelland advises his friends to come says there are no poor men in Califor. Both he and Boggs are men of stern integrity as I have been told by men personally acquainted with both about 1/2 that are going from here are mule teams [sic] the rest seen [sic] about the same [sic] ratio from st. Jo. for the number that will start have been variously estimated from 20 to 50 thousand But I believe 15,000 a fair estimate from these 2 points men acquainted with the journey say the mules will beat the oxen 3 weeks so that if there is a scarcity of grass beyond the pass, as we all anticipate I hope we shall be among the first a great many no doubt will return after starting a great many would sell out now if they could mules & cattle are low now. Our lame mules have got well our others have recruited in flesh. Respects to friends and best wishes to Elias & Mercy. Patsy & the Boys

Allen Varner



[Written across two of this three page letter and squeezed between the body of the letter and the top of the page is written the following comment]

I was at Adam Reyburns he was standing in the store of his oldest son a very intelligent good looking man a good store John was there preparing for California. has been in the cavalry service in Mexico some taller than me but not so heavy was invited to dinner by Kemp but had not time Ann is married Mary a very pretty girl. Bill & Jo in Boonville. the old lady looks better and talks as lively as ever comfortably situated very neat house of 3 rooms well-furnished remembers her best respects to all and Mother in particular.

(Written on the back of the last page are further comments.)

I will write again soon to Father shall leave here soon. if I have a chance i will write to you from Kansas or Westport. dont know who weel [sic] go with yet will write to some of you as soon as we find out. in a hurry.

The envelope is addressed to:

Elias Varner  
Indianapolis  
Indiana

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Transcribed by Pauline S. Fowler  
3122 Santa Fe Road  
Independence, Mo. 64055  
10 March 1989

Original in the Jackson County Historical Society Library & Archives  
Courthouse on the Square  
Independence, Mo. 64050

CREDIT MUST BE GIVEN TO THE ARCHIVES & LIBRARY

Independence Mo May 5<sup>th</sup> 1849

Dearest Mary,

I wrote you last Tuesday merely a few lines to tell you of my arrival here and that I was well, I will give you now more particulars.

Our Boat the St. Angelo was, as you may be aware of, crowded with passengers bound for California, of course a great mixture of people from different parts of the U.S. and I believe as usual much drinking of liquors, often to disturbing extent, you may be sure I kept myself aloof, and was sometimes lonesome. I rejoiced however that my room mate was a Captain Kirker a real gentleman and sensible man, an old mountaineer and guide who had been roving in the far wild west for the last twenty eight years, and was also guide to and interpreter to Colonel Denig's army through Mexico to N. Orleans. He is well acquainted with our family in St. Louis and Watkin's Le Plume in East N. M., you may be sure his conversations were very interesting to and instructive to me. In Independence I was lucky to meet what is considered here with very good accommodations, a room and part of a bed, a table what is good enough for me at 75 cents per day board, the last two nights, in order to accommodate some of my room mate's friends, we have been sleeping 6 persons in a small room with two beds, comfort of course was out of the question, and I took the precaution to have the window hoisted, when

one is travelling he must forget the comforts of home and put up with the best he can get.

The town is much up and full of people. I believe from every State of the Union, all dressed in the different equipments for California, indeed it looks more, what I have imagined, like a Mexican town, many are old hardy mountaineers that go as guides or teamsters to the different companies. Besides the hotels being very crowded the daily influx of people from their different incampments around the city, which extend for miles, is very great, mostly I believe to complete their outfit or purchase what has been forgotten. Coffee houses and groceries are crowded, and the many intemperances I meet with is really distressing to a great extent. This place must reap a great harvest from the long delay all have been subjected to, on account the weather having been long and very cold, and the grass not sufficiently grown to justify any to start before the 10<sup>th</sup> of May. Whether there are not many here who will ever or at least with great difficulty reach California, on account of much inexperience I hear much talked about. As to the Pioneer Line my mind is at ease and I am well satisfied I shall reach California safe and speedily, the owners and their teamsters are experienced with the country and its hardships, their principal guide especially is one of the best that leaves here, his name is Harris, apparently half Indian, he has been an old



I commenced this letter on Saturday, in the evening of that day old Harris one of our guides was apparently well, next morning early he was taken with the Cholera and in a couple of hours a corpse. This is a bad loss to the Pioneer Line, it will however not detain us, they have good guides besides. Several deaths by Cholera have occurred in some camps, and I understand news from Fort Leavenworth is in town that there forty deaths amongst the troops have taken place from that fatal disease.

Monday Morning —

Yesterday about dinnertime one of our passengers a Mr. McKee from Belleville Ill. a minister who was with his brother a doctor on his way to California, was suddenly taken with the Cholera and in a few hours a corpse. Last night Mr. Newhall, who is a reporter here for some newspaper in St. Louis, a mild gentlemanly man, went to bed in good health, and this morning was in the agonies of the Cholera and is not expected to recover. <sup>I heard this moment</sup> I hear this moment a Mr. Johnson a typesetter had this morning a sudden and violent attack and is dying.

The people here are considerably frightened, as to myself I am not frightened, am however very careful in my mode of living; as I promised you, yesterday I put a flannel shirt on, ~~on~~ tomorrow or day after I shall go out to camp which is nine miles from here; and where

a good many have gone this morning.  
Since yesterday afternoon we had here beautiful  
clear weather and will no doubt decrease the cholera.  
The two books "Monte Christo" will be left by Mr Rogers  
from St Louis, who roomed with me here, at Mr Menken's store.  
I wish you will take care of the green Pocket book I  
left there, amongst the papers is one, the list of my  
debts. I live East; I mention this because I might  
some day want to refer to it. —

Tuesday May 8<sup>th</sup> 1849

The weather keeps delightful, and I hear of no  
new cases of cholera. Our passengers are nearly  
all gone out to the Camp and I think I shall  
go out to day but may not be to morrow. I believe  
I have nothing further to communicate. Give my  
love to all, tell the children to recollect me often  
in their prayers and kiss them and especially mother  
when I do for me. I wish you now a farewell  
at least for a while, let us trust in god, and  
he will protect us all.

Yours affectionate husband  
And Putnam

I shall take every opportunity to let you hear  
from me, we might meet perhaps persons  
coming in to the States, and on such an occasion  
I shall write a few lines.



Independence Mo May 5/6<sup>th</sup> 1849

Dearest Mary

I wrote you last Tuesday merely a few lines to tell you of my arrival here and that I was well. I will give you now more particulars.

Our Boat the St. Ange, was, as you may be aware of, crowded with passengers bound for California, of course a great mixture of people from different parts of the U. S. and I believe as usual much drinking of liquors, often to distressing extent, you may be sure I kept myself aloof, and was sometimes lonesome. I rejoiced however that my room mate was a Captain Kirker a real gentelman [sic] and sensible man, an old mounteneer [sic] and guide who had been roving in the far wild west for the last twenty eight years, and was also guide and interpreter to Colonel Doniphan's army through Mexico to New Orleans. He is well acquainted with our family in St. Louis and Watkins LeRous in Taos N. M., you may be sure his conversations were very interesting and instructive to me. In Independence I was lucky to meet what is considered here with very good accommodations, a room and part of a bed, a table what is good enough for me at 75 cents pr day board, the last two nights, in order to accommodate some of my room mate's friends, we have been sleeping 6 persons in a small room with two beds, comfort [sic] of course was out of the question, and I took the precaution to have the window hoisted, when one is traveling he must forget the comforts of home and put up with the best he can get.

The town is mixed up and full of peopel [sic] I believe from every state of the Union, all dressed in the different equipments for California, indeed it looks more what I have imagined, like a Mexican town, many are old hardy mounteneers [sic] that go as guides or teamsters to the different companies. Besides the hotels being very crowded the daily influx of peopel [sic] from their different incampments [sic] around the city which extend for miles, is very great, mostly I believe to complete their outfit or purchase what has been forgotten. Coffee houses and groceries are crowded, and the many intoxications I meet with is realy [sic] distressing to a great extent. This place must reap a great harvest from the long delay all have been subjected to, on account the weather having been long and very cold, and the grass not sufficiently grown to justify any to start before the 10<sup>th</sup> of May. Whether there are not many

here who will ever or at least with great difficulty reach California, on account of much inexperience I hear much talked about. As to the "Pioneer Line" my mind is at ease and I am well satisfied I shall reach California save [sic] and speedily, the owners and their teamsters are experienced with the country and its hardships, their principal guide especialy [sic] is one of the best that leaves here, his name is Harris, apparently half Indian, he has been an old mounteneer[sic] for about the last 30 years, he is a fine old man and well known in St. Louis. A sudden death took place here, night before last. M<sup>r</sup> Ch. D. Gillespie, who I believe is partly connected with the "Pione er Line", at least he was going out with them, died suddenly after less than two days sickness, at times I believe rather too much addic ted to liquor, he got on Wednesday night into a spree and got so drunk that he was taken to bed with "delirium Trimens." [sic] and ended his earthly career in that state. You must reccollect him for he used to live in St. Louis and I believe was subsequently Captain in our Army in New Mexico.

--Oh! liquor, how distressing are the consequences in thy indulgence.

It was raining here all Friday and nearly Saturday, the streets. of course are horribly muddy, the at<sup>m</sup>sphere is warm, and with almost constant change from the hot sun, damp ground and a drissling rain has brought an increase of Cholera.

I have said nothing of our passengers, they number One Hundred & Twenty, and no more will be taken, with scarcely any exceptions they are a gentlemanly lot but very few from St. Louis. As more passengers than One Hundred have been taken I have made particular inquiries whether all can be well accommodated, and I am well assured that wagons and very thing else has been increased in proportion, and no ground for complaint shall exist. I have chosen my Mess with care.

I commenced this letter on Saturday, in the evening of that day old Harris one of our guides was apparently well, next morning early he was taken with the Cholera and in a couple of hours a corps (sic). This is a bad loss to the Pioneer Line, it will however not detain us, they have good guides besides. Several death by Cholera have occurred in some camps, and I understand news from Fort Leavenworth is in town that there fourty death amongs the troops have taken place from that fatal desease.

Monday Morning

Yesterday about dinnertime one of our passengers a Mr. Moheen from Belleville Ill a minister who was with his brother a doctor on

his way to California, was suddenly taken with the Cholera and in a few hours a corps. [sic] Last night Mr. Newhall, who is a reporter here for some Newspaper in St. Louis, a mild gentlemanly man, went to bed in good health, and this morning was in the agonies of the Cholera and is not expected to recover. <sup>"died this morning"</sup> I hear this moment a Mr. Johnson had this morning a sudden and violent attack and is dying. The people here are considerably frightened, as to myself I am not frightened, am however careful in my mode of living, as I promised you. Yesterday I put a flannel shirt on, tomorrow or day after I shall go out to camp which is nine miles from here, and where a good many have gone this morning. Since yesterday afternoon we had here beautiful weather and will no doubt increase the Cholera. The two books "Monte Christo" will be left by Mr. Rogers from St. Louis who roomed with me here at Mr. Menkens house. I wish you will take care of the green Pocket book I left there, amongst the papers is one, the list of my debts. I owe East, I mention this because I might some day want to refer to it.--

Tuesday May 8<sup>th</sup> 1849

The weather Keeps delightfull,[sic] and I hear of no new cases of Cholera. Our passengers are nearly all gone out to the Camp and I think I shall go out to day but may not till to morrow. I believe I have nothing further to communicate. Give my love to all, tell the children to recollect me often in their prayers and kiss them and especially our dear little Ida for me. I wish you now a farewell at least for a while, let us trust in god, and he will protect us all.

Your affectionate husband

And<sup>w</sup> Duhring

I shall take every opportunity to let you hear from me, we might meet perhaps persons coming in to the States, and on such an occasion I shall write a few lines.

The envelope is addressed to Mrs. A. Duhring  
care of Mr. A. H. Menkens  
St. Louis  
Mo.

Credit the JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Courthouse on the Square  
Independence, Mo. 64050

Transcribed by Pauline S. Fowler, 10 March 1989



Independence Mo May 5<sup>th</sup> 1849

Dearest Mary,

I wrote you last Tuesday merely a few lines to tell you of my arrival here and that I was well, I will give you now more particulars

Our Boat the St. Angelo was, as you may be aware of, crowded with passengers bound for California, of course a great mixture of people from different parts of the U.S. and I believe as usual much drinking of liquors, often to distressing extent, you may be sure I kept myself aloof, and was sometimes lonesome. I rejoined however that my room mate was a Captain Kirker a real gentleman and sensible man, an old mountaineer and guide who had been roving in the far wild west for the last twenty eight years, and was also guide to and interpreter to Colonel Denig's army through Mexico to N. Orleans. He is well acquainted with our family in St Louis and Watkin Le Proux in Texas N. M., you may be sure his conversations were very interesting to and instructive to me. In Independence I was lucky to meet what is considered here with very good accommodations, a room and part of a bed, a table what is good enough for me at 75 cents per day board, the last two nights, in order to accommodate some of my room mate's friends, we have been sleeping 6 persons in a small room with two beds, comfort of course was out of the question, and I took the precaution to have the window raised, when

one is travelling he must forget the comforts of home and put up with the best he can get.

The town is mixed up and full of people I believe from every State of the Union, all dressed in the different equipments for California, indeed it looks more, what I have imagined, like a Mexican town, many are old hardy mountaineers that go as guides or teamsters to the different companies. Besides the hotels being very crowded the daily influx of people from their different encampments around the city, which extend for miles, is very great, mostly I believe to complete their outfit or purchase what has been forgotten. Coffee houses and groceries are crowded, and the many intemperances I meet with is really distressing to a great extent. This place must reap a great harvest from the long delay all have been subjected to, on account the weather having been long and very cold, and the grass not sufficiently grown to justify any to start before the 10<sup>th</sup> of May. Whether there are not many here who will ever or at least with great difficulty reach California, on account of much inexperience I hear much talked about. As to the "Pioneer Line" my mind is at ease and I am well satisfied I shall reach California safe and speedily, the owners and their teamsters are experienced with the country and its hardships, their principal guide especially is one of the best that leaves here, his name is Harris, apparently half Indian, he has been and old



numbered for about the last 30 years, he is  
a fine old man and well known in St Louis.

A sudden death took place here, tonight before last,  
Mr Chas. D. Gillespie, who I believe is partly connected  
with the "Pioneer Line", at least he was going out with  
them, died suddenly after less than two days sickness, at  
times I believe rather too much addicted to liquor, he  
got on Wednesday night into a spree and got so drunk  
that he was taken to bed with "delirious tremors" and  
ended his earthly career in that state. You must  
recall him for he used to live in St Louis, and I believe  
was subsequently Captain in our Army in New Mexico.  
— Oh! liquor! how distressing are the consequences  
in thy indulgence. —

It was raining here all Friday and nearly  
Saturday, the streets of course are horribly muddy,  
the atmosphere is warm, and with almost constant  
change from the hot sun, damp ground, and a  
drifting rain has brought an increase of Cholera.

I have said nothing of our passengers, they  
number One Hundred or Twenty, and no more  
will be taken; with scarcely any exception they are  
a gentlemanly set, but very few from St Louis. As  
more passengers than One Hundred have been taken  
I have made particular inquiries whether all can be  
well accommodated, and I am well assured that  
wagons and every thing else has been increased  
in proportion, and no ground for complaint  
shall exist. I have shown my Map with care.



I commenced this letter on Saturday, in the evening of that day old Harris one of our guides was apparently well, about morning early he was taken with the Cholera and in a couple of hours a corpse. This is a bad loss to the Pioneer Line, it will however not detain us, they have good guides besides. Several deaths by Cholera have occurred in some camps, and I understand news from Fort Leavenworth is in town that there forty deaths amongst the troops have taken place from that fatal disease.

Monday Morning —

Yesterday about dinnertime one of our passengers a Mr Moheen from Belleville Ill a minister who was with his brother a doctor on his way to California, was evidently taken with the Cholera and in a few hours a corpse. Last night Mr Newhall, who is a reporter here for some newspaper in St Louis, a mild gentlemanly man, went to bed in good health, and this morning was in the agonies of the Cholera and is not expected to <sup>live this morning</sup> recover. (I hear this moment a Mr Johnson a Leguistypist had this morning a sudden and violent attack and is dying.

The people here are considerably frightened, as to myself I am not frightened, am however very careful in my mode of living; as I promised you, yesterday I put a flannel shirt on, ~~on~~ to morrow or day after I shall go out to camp which is nine miles from here, and where

a good many have gone this morning.  
Since yesterday afternoon we had here beautiful  
clear weather and will no doubt decrease the cholera.  
The two books "Monte Christo" will be left by Mr Rogers  
in St Louis, who roomed with me here, at Mr Menken's store.  
I wish you will take care of the green Pocket book I  
left there, amongst the papers is one, the list of my  
letters. I give EAST, I mention this because I might  
some day want to refer to it. —

Tuesday May 8<sup>th</sup> 1849

The weather keeps delightful, and I hear of no  
new cases of cholera. Our passengers are nearly  
all gone out to the Camp and I think I have  
no out to day but may not see to morrow. I believe  
I have nothing further to communicate. Give my  
love to all, tell the children to recollect me often  
in their prayers and kiss them and especially my dear  
little Ida for me. I wish you now a farewell  
at least for a while, let us trust in god, and  
he will protect us all.

Yours affectionate husband  
And Putnam

I shall take every opportunity to let you hear  
from me, we might meet perhaps persons  
coming in to the States, and on such an occasion  
I shall write a few lines.



108 yrs  
old  
1957

Independence May 1<sup>st</sup> 1849

I arrived here last night in good health and spirits and find that our train will not leave here till next Sunday or Monday, the weather being cold windy and frosty, indeed extremely disagreeable. The place is very crowded, and accommodations bad, I have been however lucky in getting a good bed, and under all circumstances am satisfied. On the boat we had two cases of Cholera and one died, on the Algonquin who left a day before us, and which we understand have died, here I understand few cases have occurred, and a great deal is talked about it.

You must excuse me if I write but a few lines to day, there is a crowd about me it is impossible to write.

Kiss our dear children for me and remember me to all. Take my love for yourself be in good spirits and believe me truly

Yours affectionate husband  
And Dickinson



[Transcriber's comment: Someone in whose charge this letter was at some time or other did everything one should NOT do to an original:

They kept the letter folded;  
They showed it often thus increasing the pressure on the folds;  
They then mended the torn - or about to be torn - folds with an  
improper tape which discolored;  
And finally, someone wrote in ink on the original letter "108 yrs old 1957."

Independence May 1<sup>st</sup> 1849

Dearest Mary

I arrived here last night in good health and spirits and find that our train will not leave here till next Sunday or Monday. the weather being cold windy and Dusty, indeed extremely disagreeable. [sic] This place is very crowded, and accommodations bad. I have been however lucky in getting a good bed, and under all circumstances am satisfied. On the Boat we had two cases of Chrlow [sic] and one died, on the Algoma who left a day before us, and which we passed, I understand four have died, here I understand few cases have occurred, and a great deal is talked about it.

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Kiss our dear children for me and remember me to all. Take my love for yourself be in good spirits and believe me truly

Your affectionate husband

And/<sup>w</sup> Duhring

Envelope addressed to Mrs. A. Duhring  
care of W. A. H. Menkens  
St. Louis  
Mo.

\*\*\*\*\*

Credit to JACKSON COUNTY (MO.) HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY & ARCHIVES  
Courthouse on the Square  
Independence, Mo. 64050

Transcribed from the original letter by  
Pauline S. Fowler  
3122 Santa Fe Road  
Independence, Mo. 64055  
10 March 1989

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Independence May 1<sup>st</sup> 1849

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Your affectionate husband

And/<sup>w</sup> Duhring

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10 March 1989

One page only

Acc: 74-164  
Loc: ~~257~~ A178/IF19  
ALS

Varner, Allen  
Independence, Mo.  
to  
Varner, Silas  
Indianapolis, Ind.

April 29, 1849

This will inform you that I am well at present and entertain a sincere regard for your welfare you doubtless entertain some uneasiness with regard to me on account of the Cholera. & I think I should do your feelings more injustice to say nothing about it than to state the facts as they are. The cholera is here, but not as bad been represented to us before we reached here. we arrived within 6 miles of town Thursday. Friday moved to within 1 mile of town where we now are there is a company from Mississippi encamped on the opposite side of town of whom 2 were buried yesterday & another man from Chicago who had also come by way of St. Louis the man who had come with him told me yesterday that they put up at a boarding house here where they ate fresh Pork and that all the family were taken with Diarrhea his friend was taken soon after supper and lived till the second morning 7 o'clock & he thought if medical aid had been called sooner would have recovered slight attacks were said to be very ~~wild~~ common in Lexington through which we passed a few days ago. & in which I found Adam Reyburn & family he told me that it was doubtless the Cholera but in a very mild form there only having been 2 deaths in the place 1 a negro the other a boatsman it would be nothing curious if more were sick or dying than there are for of all places of dissipation I have never seen the equal of Independence. I saw yesterday & today men lying on the pavement perfectly lifeless to appearances from intoxication there is at least a dozen bars which are all the time crowded with toppers. they keep up a continual jingle of glasses you cant pass along the streets without hearing the clank of money in the upper rooms & the wrap of knuckles on the tables. & in passing along the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown out by the side of 1 coffee house as would pave a room 10 feet square I have been informed that numbers have lost all their money and are compelled to return home but from the ridiculous to the Sublime. I was at church this morning the methodist, heard good music a feeling prayer & good sermon the ladies present with few exceptions seemed to be votaries at the shrine of fashion for taste & elegance of fashion they are not to be surpassed if equaled by any I have ever seen. the rage of the present time is changeable silk the color of a dove's neck with a large flowers on the skirt a white silk bonnet trimmed with Ostrich feathers or red and blue artificials hung in clusters from the paint ribbons are generally suspended. those who cannot afford this attire dress variously except that the jossy is invariably worn by the young in the absence of a new dress. generally white the men dress more for business than appearances but you will see several dandies with their kid gloves on while singing at the commencement of service the audience were waited on by two splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains swinging at their sides handsom withal, each carrying a small black velvet sack suspended upon a plain fine stick of sufficient length to reach the most distant in the pew.



NOTE: According to a letter of historian Merrill Mattes, March 24, 1982, the original of the May 2 Varner letter is in the Huntington Library. They have a facimilie of the April 29th letter which is credited to the Jackson County Historical Society. It is not known if the Huntington has either the originals or copies of the remaining letters.

Credit should be given to the Huntington Library when citing the May 2nd letter. Permission to cite must be given by the Huntington Library.

Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849. 1 O'clock P.m.  
Respected Brother and sisters

This will inform you that I am well at present and entertain a sincere regard for your welfare you doubtless entertain some uneasiness with regard to me on account of the Cholera. & I think I should do you feelings more injustice to say nothing about it than to state the facts as they are. The Cholera is here, but not as had been represented to us before we reached here. we arrived within 6 miles of town Thursday. Friday moved to within 1 mile of town where we now are there is a company from Mississippi encamped on the opposite side of town of whom 2 were buried Friday, 6 more were then sick 1 of which was buried yesterday & another man from Chicago who had also come by way of St Louis. the man who had come with him told me yesterday that they put up at a boarding house here where they ate fresh Pork and that all the family were taken with Diarrhea his friend was taken soon after supper and lived till the second morning & O'clock. & he thought if medical aid had been called sooner would have recovered slight attacks were said to be very common in Lexington through which we passed a few days ago. & in which I found Adam Ryburn & family he told me that it was doubtless the Cholera but in a very mild form there only having been 2 deaths in the place 1 a negro the other a boatman it would be nothing curious if more were sick or dying than there are for of all places of dissipation we never seen the equal of Independence I saw yesterday & to day men lying on the pavement perfectly lifeless to appearance, from intoxication there is at least a dozen bars which are all the time crowded with toppers. the keep up a continual jingle of glasses you can't pass along the streets without

I was at Adam Stephens he was standing in the store  
taller than me but not so <sup>any</sup> was there preparing for Calif.  
pretty girl, Bill & go on Bonville. The old lady looks better, I heard  
hearing the clank of money in the upper rooms &  
the wrap of bundles on the table. On passing along  
the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown  
out by the side of a coffee house as would pave a  
room 10 feet square I have been informed that  
numbers have lost all their money and are compelled  
to return home but from the ridiculous ~~startle~~  
sublime, I was at church this morning the meth.  
- dist. heard good music a ~~falling~~ <sup>falling</sup> ~~finger~~ <sup>finger</sup> & good sermon.  
The ladies present with few exceptions seemed to  
be votaries at the shrine of fashion for taste  
elegance, <sup>of fashion</sup> they are not to be surpassed if equaled  
by any I have ever seen. The sage of the present  
time is changeable silk the color of a doves neck  
with a large flounce on the skirt & white silk  
bonnet trimmed with ostrich feathers or red and  
blue artificials hung in clusters from the point  
ribbons are generally suspended. Those who  
cannot afford this attire dress variously except  
that the frock is invariably worn by the young  
in the absence of a new dress. generally white  
the men dress more for business than appearance  
but you will see several dandies with their  
kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement  
of service the audience were waited on by two  
splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains  
swinging at their sides handsome withal.  
each carrying a small black velvet sack  
with a cord upon a plain pine stick of suffi-  
cient length to reach the most distant in  
the pew. but to return, The most reasonable  
estimate of the number that are here is 4000  
including those that have already gone some  
torendynous 12 or 15 miles above on the Kansas  
and some still further some went 15 days ago to Ed.



The store of his oldest son a very intelligent good looking  
California, has been in the service in Alaska some  
by himself but has not time to say more. Mary a very  
and talks as lively as ever <sup>other best respects to all and Mother in person</sup>  
on the Platte 50 miles above here they exhausted  
their feed and had to return with their stock  
another company of 18 that had encamped west  
of St Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to  
the orders of the agent had all their mules  
& horses stolen by the Indians have returned  
to their homes given up the gold and if  
it had not been for a late letter of ex Gov  
Leamon Boggs of this state who is now in the  
gold region near 2000 that are here would  
have returned, he writes to his son in law  
here to come by all means but not bring  
his family he says gold is plenty and  
easily obtained another man of Lofayette  
country which joins this by the name of  
McLelland advises his friends to come  
to says there are no poor men in Calif. &  
Both he and Boggs are men of stern integ-  
-rity as I have been told by men personally  
acquainted with both about 1/4 that are going  
from here are mule teams the rest oxcen  
about the same ratio from St Jo. the number  
that will start have been variously estimat-  
ed from 20 to 50 thousand But I believe  
15,000 a fair estimate from these reports  
men acquainted with the journey say the  
mules will beat the oxcen & we go so that  
if there is a scarcity of grass beyond the  
pass as we all anticipate I hope we shall be  
among the first a great many no doubt will  
return after starting a great many would sell  
out now if they could mules & cattle are low  
our own mules have got well our others have  
recruited in flesh. Respects to friends and best wishes  
to Elias & Meray. Patsy & the Boys Allen Varner

I will write again soon to Father shall leave here  
soon, if I have a chance. I will write to you from  
Kansas or New York, don't know who will go with  
you. I will write to some of you as soon as we find  
out on a list.

Elias Varner  
Indianapolis  
Indiana





Independence Mo. May 2nd 1849

Respected Parents

This will inform you that I am well except my eyes are very sore and have been for the last 2 days caused by the wind and dust I hope you are well. we reached here Friday I wrote to Elias Sunday we had good roads since I wrote. crossed the Missouri river a Glasgow on my birth day. had squalls of snow on the two preceding days. since then dry weather but quite cool. corn is generally 1 inch high. The best country between Glasgow and here is a distance of 90 miles I ever saw. stopped at Ottumwa City living in Leavenworth all well and very comfortably situated send their best respects to all, and Mrs R to Mother in particular. Leavenworth is quite a business place but Independence takes the lead the square not quite so large as your court house square has horses and mules hitched around it as thick as they can stand the streets are jammed and the sidewalks crowded like Indianapolis on the 4th days 4 or 5000 persons will leave this point a great many are returning. and had it not been for the letters of ex-governor Boggs and Mc. Callow 2000 more would have followed their example, I wish they had.

For the probability is that there will be a scarcity of grain through the south pass and some distance beyond. But as we go with mules and shall be among the first about one fourth have mules. mules are generally

low here now, our smallest or scarcely worth so much here as we paid for them. but we were yesterday offered \$350.00 for our 3 best; wagons are low we could have fitted out cheapest here Brown 50 cts



Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 1849.

Pictors Bar, north branch of the middle  
fork of the Sacramento good health  
good luck & fair prospects & my first  
night on a floor for 8 months

Respected Brother & friends I have  
not yet heard from you. But I  
shall continue to write so you will  
hear from me unless there is a miserable  
state of affairs in the P. & G. department  
6 weeks ago I came here, have worked  
24 days at an ounce a day & board 12 days  
ago it commenced raining and has reined  
three fourths of the time since the stream  
is high river operations suspended of course  
so another man & myself commenced in  
a bank & between showers we have been  
quite lucky the first half day we took  
out thirteen dollars apiece the next day  
we got 6 each, the next worked an hour at noon  
and got 27 the next day we got 64 each  
two other days we made 40 apiece each  
day and to day while my partner was  
building a fire place to our cabin I went  
alone and dug and washed out \$108.00  
coarse gold before noon. But I worked  
all afternoon and got but 4 and I must  
say that we worked hard one day and  
had but twenty dollars to divide at night  
But I turn you another leaf



If you had been here for a week you might have seen us lying in our tent or cooking our grub in the rain which by the by cost us four dollars a day. To the man we have dried fruit which is worth \$1.50 cts per pound flour \$1.10 Pork 1.25 Beans 90 Sugar from \$1.00 to 1.25 Potatoes and Onions are \$2.00 per pound. There are no bushels here so if a man eats he must work or else live on his money and not the interest of his money. Industrious persons average about twelve dollars a day clear of their board on this stream which is better than they do in most places where provisions are cheaper. What makes them so enormously high here now is the difficult transportation across the rugged hills or rather mountains between here and Coloma or Sutter's Mill which lies 35 miles southwest from here. If any of my friends should come to California they will find me here next season if nothing happens as the gold is in larger pieces or plainer here than any place I know. I will send enclosed an average sized piece I have taken out a considerable number of pieces weighing from two to six dollars each. There is scarcely any fine Gold here such as I sent in a former letter. Now any person that can afford to come here work hard live rough [for there is no aristocracy to contend with here] for 10 or 12 dollars a day let him come for he can generally make that and sometimes much more.



But after meset season it will be less  
The mines are on the decrease tolerably rapid  
But will not be exhausted in a century  
are

A great many leaving in disgust.

Sorry they ever came very few coming in

But the reason so many get tired and leave

is because they have not energy enough  
or because they have a few days good luck

and after that will not work for common

I have about \$800.00 for which I could get a  
check to send it home But I would only get 16  
dollars per ounce <sup>in</sup> that way & the gold I have will  
be worth 20 or 21 at the New Orleans mint or any  
other in the states so I shall try to bring some  
to the states; & if I have health I think I shall  
not be disappointed

We have had no snow  
yet here but there is snow on the mountains not  
4 miles distant grizzly bears are there but I am  
in a Bar fight that suits me better, than & the pack  
mule drivers for it they have an earliest occasion

ally we have a tolerable comfortable hut &  
the wolves will steal no more meat from us but  
they got 8 pounds last night

This letter will be mailed perhaps at San Francisco  
for which point a friend starts in the morning  
I will direct a letter to me at that place one  
to Sacramento city, another to Colusa as soon  
as you receive this Postage will be nothing compa-  
red with the satisfaction it would give me

Give my best respects to my friends

My thanks to my Enemies if I have any  
tell them I am as stout & hearty as I ever was  
and have not seen a sick man, nor a woman  
sick or well in 6 weeks with due respect yours  
Allen Varner



San Francisco Aug 29<sup>th</sup> 1851

Respected Sister I now write to you under different feelings from what I ever have, it is now nearly a month since we have lost all that has made life in California agreeable to me you have no doubt already heard the sad news of Eli's death. The particulars of his sickness I have written in two letters, O Patsy you know what I feel, the manner in which he bore his sad fate was his from the time he was taken worse (which was between 3 & 4 weeks before he died) he seemed to think his recovery doubtful, yet he said he was anxious to live to see his friends, he still continued to have hopes until 6 hours before he breathed his last, people that saw him two weeks before thought he could not live but a few days I never gave up hope until 4 days before I had tried to appear cheerful until then; He then asked me my opinion, I had noticed him look enquiringly at me before, I then told him I had but little hopes —

The Dr had directed that he should take  
Ceyenne pepper every two hours as  
a stimulus. He was averse to taking it  
I had found great difficulty in getting  
him to take as much as the Dr directed  
the Dr then told me that unless I  
gave him more he could not live 24  
hours, I told him so, He then said  
he would take every thing I wished  
But it would not all do, he asked  
me hourly how his pulse was  
I said it all depended on me.  
He said he knew I was doing all I  
could & what I thought best,  
& would do almost everything I wished  
I told him that he could not live  
& that God alone could save him  
He seemed to know it often called  
on his Lord & Maker said he was  
sorry he had been a sinner said  
he wished to meet his friends in  
Heaven he seemed to be as calm  
as a person could be that suffered  
as much pain he was perfectly  
rational to the last we laid him  
his legs & feet were covered with  
rocks & gravel & nothing when I  
found his feet getting cold I would  
begin to rub them he would say



Hurry Hurry it all depends on you  
I had never left him scarcely an  
hour in two weeks & for 10 days  
had hardly slept that many hours  
yet I felt as though I could stand  
any thing until the night before he  
died when I saw him going so fast  
I could not help giving way to my  
feelings. He said, don't Allen it's no  
use to do so, hearing him speak so  
calm & rational I tried to nerve myself  
& kept turning him almost continually  
until he knew as well as I that his last  
hour was come he took my hand  
in his & held it till his heart was  
still in death his last <sup>conscious</sup> look was at me  
he looked like he was asleep when  
his eyes were closed. But from the  
time when he breathed his last it  
seemed to me I could not stay I soon  
came back but it seemed like he was  
gone, his countenance looked natural  
but it did not seem like him  
he was buried at Nappa in a decent  
casket lined with white & covered with  
black cloth I am going to get a marble  
tombstone but all this is no satisfaction  
to me



Pectors Bar, North branch of the  
middle fork of the Sacramento  
Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 1849.

Respected Parents

I am glad to tell you that I am  
well & doing well; 3 days ago I received  
your letter mailed August 17<sup>th</sup> it being  
the first time I have heard from you since  
I left; glad to hear from you all well  
Although your crops were blighted  
I am now where one pound of flour will sell  
for as much money as 100 of yours yet I am  
in no danger nor fear of starving  
I have got one thousand dollars in gold dust  
and three hundred lbs of provisions which are worth  
five hundred dollars here; I live in a comfortable  
cabin with two messmates one of whom I work  
with. he has been in the mines since early  
last spring is a stout industrious clever fellow  
I have not seen or heard from any of the  
Danville boys for 3 months P. K. Downard  
& Henry Coe were then somewhat unwell  
I have not seen a sick man since I left them  
this portion of the country is remarkably <sup>healthy</sup>  
I am told the scurvy is quite prevalent in  
some parts of the mines; but one of my  
messmates being quite a hunter we have

my last days  
work I have  
made to day  
it lacks 5 dollars  
of a pound boy



have had plenty of fresh venison and are  
as healthy as need be I sleep on a bedstead  
the cords of which are boards The bedding  
a buffalo robe & blankets we have goat  
flour Pork venison beans rice sugar coffee  
tea & dried fruit; Provisions are high now  
~~on account of extra demand for winter stock~~  
but large quantities are arriving from Oregon  
Chili & the states more men are leaving than  
coming; wages are gradually on the decrease  
throughout the mines though there are  
still some lucky fellows though let me  
say I have made more for the time than  
the most of them there is money to be  
made here but I would not advise any  
one who is fond of comfort to barter it  
for what he can make here it will cost a man  
\$600.00<sup>ts</sup> to come & return by the isthmus and that  
is more than some would make here without they  
were compelled to let no friend of mine come  
by any other route unless they come in a party  
of 8 or 10 ship to Vera Cruz there buy a horse  
each take one change of light clothing by way  
of Mexico city Guatlaharro to San Blas  
or Mazatlan there reshup for Francisco  
this is a good route in the winter if the company  
have an Interpreter horses & traveling  
expenses are cheap but the time saved  
by the isthmus outweighs the expense



Mother you reproached me for not writing  
at Ft Laramie. I did write & post pay the  
letter for without I could not send it thanks  
to you for Post paying the one you sent me  
you must not do so any more postage is no object  
with me I don't pay for those I write it is enough  
for those Recd & not those lost it appears you had  
written one to me before which I have not recd  
I write to you once a month besides to others  
the mails are so irregular you may not receive  
them if you don't do not be uneasy for my  
mess mates know your address and will  
write to you if any accident should occur  
Now give your sad fancies to the wind  
and spend the time in writing to me that  
you would spend in gloomy reflections about  
my welfare direct your letters to Coloma the  
corner Sacramento city I am 35 miles Northeast  
of Coloma & shall remain here till next fall  
and if I have as good luck as I expect shall  
start home late in the fall or first of Dec.  
so that I hope to be home in two years from  
the time I left one half of which will have elapsed  
by the time you receive this For lack of room  
I must subscribe myself

with due respect your son  
Allen Garner  
To his parents

My best respects to friends; glad to hear of  
your having my eternal friend to teach school  
continue to keep them at school if possible



The story of his oldest son, a very intelligent good looking  
California, has been in the cavalry service in Mexico some  
years. He is married Mary a very  
pleasant but has not time to write very often. Her  
talks as lively as ever. Her room is very comfortable  
on the Platte 50 miles above here they exhausted  
their feed and had to return with their stock  
another company of 18 that had encamped west  
of St Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to  
the orders of the agents had all their mules  
& horses stolen by the Indians have returned  
to their homes given up the gold and if  
it had not been for a late letter of some  
man Boggs of this state who is now in the  
gold region near 2000 that are here would  
have returned, he writes to his son-in-law  
here to come by all means but not bring  
his family he says gold is plenty and  
easily obtained another man of Lafayette  
county which joins this by the name of  
McLelland advises his friends to come  
he says there are no poor men in California  
Both he and Boggs are men of stern integ-  
rity as I have been told by men personally  
acquainted with both about 1/2 that are going  
from here are mule teams the rest on  
about the same ratio from St Jo. The number  
that will start have been variously estimated  
from 20 to 50 thousand But I believe  
15,000 a fair estimate from these reports  
men acquainted with the journey say the  
mules will beat the ocean & we go so that  
if there is a scarcity of grass beyond the  
pass as we all anticipate I hope we shall be  
among the first a great many no doubt will  
return after starting a great many would sell  
out now if they could mules & cattle are low  
now. our lame mules have got well our others have  
recruited in flesh. Respects to friends and best wishes  
to Elias & Merrey. Patsey & the Boys Allen Varne



house of Adam Heyburns he was standing in the  
name of good flore fohing was there preparing for a  
table than me but not so heavy was invited to dinner by  
pretty girl. Bill & go in Bonville. the old lady looks better  
hearing the clank of money in the upper rooms &  
the scrap of knuckles on the tables. I'm passing along  
the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown  
out by the side of a coffee house as would pave a  
room 10 feet square I have been informed that  
numbers have lost all their money and are compelled  
to return home but from the ridiculous ~~to the~~  
sublime, I was at church this morning the metho-  
dist, heard good music a feeling prayer & good sermon  
the ladies present with few exceptions seemed to  
be votaries at the shrine of fashion for taste  
& elegance, <sup>of fashion</sup> they are not to be surpassed if equaled  
by any I have ever seen. the rage of the present  
time is changeable silk the color of a doves neck  
with a large flourie on the skirt a white silk  
bonnet trimmed with ostrich feathers or red and  
blue artificials hung in clusters from the point  
ribbons are generally suspended, those who  
cannot afford this attire dress variously except  
that the gossamer is invariably worn by the young  
in the absence of a new dress. generally white  
the men dress more for business than appearance  
but you will see several dandies with their  
kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement  
of service the audience were waited on by two  
splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains  
swinging at their sides handsome withal.  
each carrying a small black velvet sack  
with a cord upon a plain pine stick of suf-  
ficient length to reach the most distant in  
the pews. but to return, The most reasonable  
estimate of the number that are here is 4000  
including those that have already gone some  
to sundry towns 12 or 15 miles above on the River  
and some still further some went 15 days ago



I would advise any  
one to come by the  
mine and take the  
loggers' money  
with them first

Things are quite tranquil at present  
The miners needn't beat the and  
gentlemanly in their deportment  
towards each other. Pistols and Bowie  
knives are laid aside. You will see  
the passer by armed with a pick shovel  
and a face

Mr. Elias Sawyer  
Indianapolis  
Indiana

person coming  
is known as the  
sawed and all right  
but any man fool  
to cross the plains  
early with three

fat mountain pack mules and one change of clothes  
I have not seen or heard from  
any of the Danville boys since I left  
them 7 weeks ago at the Big Bar  
12 miles below this place  
They were then making little



Received your letter Thursday morning under  
rather serious circumstances I had sent in a man  
to Francisco for provisions & letters he was bringing  
provisions for himself & others had hired two  
men with 8 mules to pack for him they camped  
at the top of the mountain fastened their mules  
built a fire and lay down & slept about 11 o'clock  
they were attacked by a party of Digger Indians  
their first alarm was from an arrow striking one  
of them on the breast bone

David Warner  
Indianapolis  
Indiana

as he raised another arrow struck him in the  
side on the opposite man spring up he was  
annoyed arriving in the shelter while the  
man who had left before the first shot  
only a slight wound in the ankle the Indians  
fell taking with them two mules which they  
would eat and which stimulated them to  
the act should envelop the rest

I will write again soon to Father shall leave here  
soon, if I have a chance, I will write to you from  
Kansas or westport, dont know who will go with  
spot will write to some of you as soon as we find  
out, in a mess

Charles Varner  
Indianapolis  
Indiana





Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 1849.

Pictors Bar, north branch of the middle  
fork of the Sacramento good health  
good luck & fair prospects & my first  
night on a floor for 8 months

Respected Brother & friends I have  
not yet heard from you. But I  
shall continue to write so you will  
hear from me unless there is a miserable  
state of affairs in the T. & C. department  
6 weeks ago I came here, have worked  
24 days at an ounce a day & board 12 days  
ago it commenced raining and has rained  
three fourths of the time since the stream  
is high river operations suspended of course  
so another man & myself commenced in  
a bark & between showers we have been  
quite lucky the first half day we took  
out thirteen dollars apiece the next day  
26 each, the next worked an hour at noon  
and got 27 the next day we got 64 each  
two other days we made 40 apiece each  
day and to day while my partner was  
building a fire place to our cabin I went  
alone and dug and washed out \$108.00  
coarse gold before noon. But I worked  
all afternoon and got but 4 and I must  
say that we worked hard one day and  
had but twenty dollars to divide at night  
But I turn you another leaf



If you had been here for a week you might have seen us lying in our tent or cooking our grub in the rain which by the by cost us four dollars a day to the man we have dried fruit which is worth \$1.50cts per pound flour \$1.10 Pork 1.25 Beans 90 Sugar from \$1.00 to 1.25 Potatoes and Onions are \$2.00 per pound There are no bushels here so if a man eats he must work or else live on his money and not the interest. Industrious persons average about twelve dollars a day clear of their board on this stream which is better than they do in most places where provisions are cheaper. What makes them so enormously high here now is the difficult transportation across the rugged hills or rather mountains between here and Coloma or Sutter's Mill which lies 35 miles southwest from here. If any of my friends should come to California they will find me here next season if nothing happens as the gold is in larger pieces & platter here than any place I know. I will send enclosed an average sized piece I have taken out a considerable number of pieces weighing from from two to six dollars each there is scarcely any fine Gold here such as I sent in a former letter. Now any person that can afford to come here work hard live rough [For there is no aristocracy to contend with here] for 10 or 12 dollars a day let him come for he can generally make that and sometimes much more.



But after meset season it will be less  
the mines are on the decrease tolerably rapid.  
But will not be exhausted in a century

are  
A great many leaving in disgust.

Sorry they ever came very few coming in

But the reason so many get tired and leave  
is because they have not energy enough  
or because they have a few days good luck  
and after that will not work for common

I have about \$800.00 for which I could get a  
check & send it home But I would only get 16  
dollars per ounce that way & the gold I have will  
be worth 20 or 21 at the New Orleans mint or any  
other in the states so I shall try to bring some  
to the states; & if I have health I think I shall  
not be disappointed

We have had no snow  
yet here but there is snow on the mountains not  
4 miles distant grizzly bears are there but I am  
in a Bar fight that suits me better, than & the pack  
& mule drivers for it they have an occasional

ally we have a tolerable comfortable hut &  
the wolves will steal no more meat from us but  
they got 8 pounds last night

This letter will be mailed perhaps at San Francisco  
for which point a friend starts in the morning

Write & direct a letter to me at that place one  
to Sacramento city, another to Coloma as soon  
as you receive this Postage will be nothing compa-  
red with the satisfaction it would give me.

Give my best respects to my friends

My thanks to my Enemies if I have any  
tell them I am as stout & hearty as ever was  
and have not seen a sick man, nor a woman  
sick or well in 6 weeks with due respect yours  
H. W. Turner

should not rise any  
higher to come by the  
mine and to make  
the work more  
easy to do

Things are quite tranquil at present  
The miners need healthy and  
gentleness in their deportment  
towards each other Pistols and Bowie  
knives are laid aside and will see  
the passer by armed with a pick shovel  
and spade



Mr. Elias Farmer  
Indianapolis  
Indiana



person coming  
to them as the  
sawed and the  
but any man that  
to cross the plains  
early with three

fat mountain pack mules and one change of clothes  
I have not seen or heard from  
any of the Danville boys since I left  
them 7 weeks ago at the Big Bar  
12 miles below this place  
They were then making little



Rector's Bar, North branch of the  
middle fork of the Sacramento  
Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 1849.

Respected Parents

I am glad to tell you, that I am  
well & doing well; 3 days ago I received  
your letter mailed August 17<sup>th</sup> it being  
the first time I have heard from you since  
I left; glad to hear from you all well  
Although your crops were blighted  
I am now where one pound of flour will sell  
for as much money as 100 of yours yet I am  
in no danger nor fear of starving  
I have got one thousand dollars in gold dust  
and three hundred lbs of provisions which are worth  
five hundred dollars here; I live in a comfortable  
cabin with two messmates one of whom I work  
with. he has been in the mines since early  
last spring is a stout industrious clever fellow  
I have not seen or heard from any of the  
Danville boys for 3 months J. K. Downard  
& Henry Coot were then somewhat unwell  
I have not seen a sick man since I left them  
this portion of the country is remarkably <sup>healthy</sup>  
I am told the scurvy is quite prevalent in  
some parts of the mines; but one of my  
messmates being quite a hunter we have

work. I have  
it lacks 50 lbs  
of a pound in  
my best days  
made to day

have just plenty of fresh venison and are  
as healthy as need be I sleep on a bedstead  
the cords of which are boards The bedding  
a buffalo robe & blankets we have goat  
flour Pork venison beans rice sugar coffee  
tea & dried fruit; Provisions are high now  
on account of extra demand for winter stock  
but large quantities are arriving from Oregon  
Chile & the states more men are leaving than  
coming; wages are gradually on the decrease  
throughout the mines though there are  
still some lucky fellows though let me  
say I have made more for the time than  
the most of them there is money to be  
made here but I would not advise any  
one who is fond of comfort to barter it  
for what he can make here it will cost him  
\$600.00<sup>cts</sup> to come & return by the isthmus and that  
is more than some would make here without they  
were compelled to let no friend of mine come  
by any other route unless they come in a party  
of 8 or 10 ship to Vera Cruz there buy a horse  
each take one change of light clothing by way  
of Mexico city Guatlaharro to San Blas  
or Mazatlan there reshup for Francisco  
this is a good route in the winter if the company  
have an Interpreter horses & traveling  
expenses are cheap but the time saved  
by the isthmus outweighs the expense



Mother you reproached me for not writing  
at Ft. Laramie, I did write & post pay the  
letter for without I could not send it thanks  
to you for Post paying the one you sent me  
you need not do so any more postage is no object  
with me I don't pay for those I write, it is enough  
for those Read & not those lost it appears you have  
written one to me before which I have not recd  
I write to you once a month besides to others

the mails are so irregular you may not receive  
them if you don't do not be uneasy for my  
messmates know your address and will  
write to you if any accident should occur

Now give your sad fancies to the wind  
and spend the time in writing to me that  
you would spend in gloomy reflections about  
my welfare direct your letters to Coloma the  
route to Sacramento city I am 35 miles Northward  
of Coloma & shall remain here till next fall  
and if I have as good luck as I expect shall  
start home late in the fall or first of Dec.  
so that I hope to be home in two years from  
the time I left one half of which will have elapsed  
by the time you receive this For lack of room  
I must subscribe myself

with due respect your son  
Allen Garner  
To his parents

My best respects to friends, glad to hear of  
your having my eternal friend to teach school  
continue to keep them at school if possible

up & called to his companions and  
 as he raised another arrow struck him in the  
 side as the opposite man sprang up he was  
 wounded severely in the shoulder while the  
 man who had slept between the two had  
 only a slight wound in the ankle the Indians  
 fled taking with them two mules which they  
 would eat and which stimulated them to  
 the act. I will enclose the rest

David Warner  
 Indianapolis  
 Indiana

I received your letter Sunday morning and  
 rather anxious to see you - I had sent my answer  
 to you for some time but I was busy  
 preparing for myself & others had had that  
 much with 8 miles to back for this they camped  
 at the top of the mountain for two days  
 but a few and lay down at a little distance  
 they were attacked by a party of Big game  
 this party was from an arrow striking me  
 of them on the back - I am



Free City Dec 12<sup>th</sup> 1850

Respected friends yours of the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nov.  
have just come to hand: I am truly  
glad to hear from you all in one  
But shall have to inform you  
I have come here for medicine, for  
he has almost every symptom of the  
jaundice But does not keep his  
The cause was cold which he took  
while gone to happier valley. Some friends  
of John Hugh are with us & well. I am  
somewhat impatient about letters & have  
now not read any I was here a  
few days ago got a plough & some that I  
stopped it & they are ploughing now  
and have had but little rain so far  
we have October weather I have not  
read a letter from Elias from some time  
which says he intends to start home in  
January if so and then get on  
well & shall return with James  
I intended to start the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month  
But shall not as long as Elias continues  
unwell he has interests here which  
he considers demands that he should  
stay till next fall they have a contest  
between him & can get some comfort now

[NOTE: This letter was only partially copied. We do not have the rest.]

San Francisco Aug 29<sup>th</sup> 1851

Respected Sister I now write to you  
under different feelings from which  
I ever have, it is now nearly a  
month since we have lost all that  
was made life in California sweet  
to me you have no doubt already  
heard the sad news of Eli's death  
The particulars of his sickness I have  
written in two letters, O Patsy you  
know what I feel, the manner in  
which he bore his sad fate was true  
from the time he was taken worse  
(which was between 3 or 4 weeks before he  
died) he seemed to think his recovery  
doubtful, yet he said he was anxious  
to live to see his friends, he still  
continued to have hopes until a hour  
before he breathed his last,  
people who saw him two weeks  
before thought he could not live  
but a few days I never gave up hopes  
until 4 days before I had tried to appear  
cheerful until then, He then asked me  
my opinion, I had noticed him look  
anxiously at me before, I then told  
him I had but little hopes—



The Dr had directed that he should take  
Ceyenne pepper every two hours as  
a stimulus He was aware of taking it  
I had found great difficulty in getting  
him to take as much as the Dr directed  
The Dr then told me that unless I  
gave him more he could not live 24  
hours, I told him so, He then said  
he would take every thing I wished  
But it would not all do, he asked  
me hourly how his pulse was  
It said it all depended on me.  
He said he knew I was doing all I  
could & what I thought best,  
& would do almost everything I wished  
I told him that he could not live  
& that God alone could save him  
He seemed to know it & indeed  
one his Lord & Maker said he was  
sorry he had been a sinner said  
he wished to meet his friends in  
Heaven & he wanted to see them  
as a person could say that without  
any wish to die he was perfectly  
satisfied with the state of his mind  
at the time & that he was perfectly  
glad to go to Heaven & that he was  
gladly ready to leave his body at any  
time & that he was willing to give up  
his goods & possessions at any time  
begin to work them he commenced

Hurry Thury it all depends on you  
I had never left him scarcely an  
hour in two weeks & for 10 days  
had hardly slept that many hours  
yet I felt as though I could stand  
any thing until the night before he  
died when I saw him going so fast.  
I could not help giving way to my  
feelings. He said, don't Allen it's no  
use to do so, hearing him speak so  
calm & rational I tried to nerve myself  
& kept turning him almost continually  
until he knew as well as I that his last  
hour was come he took my hand  
in his & held it till his heart was  
still in death his last <sup>conscious</sup> look was at me  
he looked like he was asleep when  
his eyes were closed, But from the  
time when he breathed his last it  
seemed to me I could not stay. I soon  
came back. But it seemed like he was  
gone, his countenance looked natural  
but it did not seem like him  
He was buried at Nappa in a decent  
cotton lined with white & covered with  
black cloth. I am going to get a marble  
tombstone but all this is no satisfaction  
to me



Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849. 1 O'clock P.m.  
Respected Brother and sisters

This will inform you that I am well at present and entertain a sincere regard for your welfare. You doubtless entertain some uneasiness with regard to me on account of the Cholera, & I think I should do you feelings more injustice to say nothing about it than to state the facts as they are. The Cholera is here, but not as had been represented to us before we reached here. We arrived within 6 miles of town Thursday. Friday moved to within 1 mile of town where we now are. There is a company from Mississippi encamped on the opposite side of town of whom 2 were buried Friday. 6 more were then sick of which was buried yesterday & another man from Chicago who had also come by way of St Louis. The man who had come with him told me yesterday that they put up at a boarding house here where they ate fresh Pork and that all the family were taken with Diarrhea, his friend was taken soon after supper and lived till the second morning 7 O'clock & he thought if medical aid had been called sooner would have recovered. Slight attacks were said to be very common in Lexington through which we passed a few days ago. In which I found Adam Reiburn & family he told me that it was doubtless the Cholera but in a very mild form there only having been 2 deaths in the place 1 a negro the other a boatman it would be nothing unusual if more were sick or dying than there are for of all places of dissipation we never seen the equal of Independence. I saw yesterday & today men lying on the pavement perfectly lifeless to appearance, from intoxication. There is at least a dozen bars which are all the town crowded with toppers. The keep up a continual gong of glasses you can't pass along the streets without

Varner, Allen Letters to his family 1849-51.

[A175/1F19]

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This material may be  
protected by copyright  
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).



I was at Adam Beyburns he was standing in the st  
man a good store taking was there preparing for Cal  
taller than me but not so heavy was invited to dinner by  
pretty girl, Bill & Jo in Bonville. the old lady looks better than  
hearing the clank of money in the upper rooms &  
the wrap of knuckles on the tables. In passing along  
the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown  
out by the side of a coffee house as would pave a  
room 10 feet square I have been informed that  
numbers have lost all their money and are compelled  
to return home but from the ridiculous ~~to the~~  
sublime, I was at church this morning the metho-  
-dist, heard good music a fitting prayer & good sermon  
the ladies present with few exceptions seemed to  
be votaries at the shrine of fashion for taste  
& elegance <sup>of fashion</sup> they are not to be surpassed if equalled  
by any I have ever seen. The rage of the present  
time is changeable silk the color of a doves neck  
with a large flourie on the skirt a white silk  
bonnet trimmed with ostrich feathers or red and  
blue artificials hung in clusters from the point  
ribbons are generally suspended, those who  
cannot afford this attire dress variously except  
that the fesy is invariably worn by the young  
in the absence of a new dress. generally white  
the men dress more for business than appearance  
but you will see several dandies with their  
kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement  
of service the audience were waited on by two  
splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains  
swinging at their sides handsome withal  
each carrying a small black velvet sack  
with a cord upon a plain pine stick of suf-  
ficient length to reach the most distant in  
the pews. but to return, The most reasonable  
estimate of the number that are here is 4000  
including those that have already gone some  
to rendezvous 12 or 15 miles above on the Kansas  
and some still further some went 15 days ago



store of his oldest son, a very intelligent good looking  
California, has been in the cavalry service in Mexico some  
by Kemp but has not time Ann is married Mary a very  
And talks as lively as ever of her room well furnished  
on the Platte 50 miles above here they exhausted

their feed and had to return with their stock  
another company of 18 that had encamped west  
of St Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to  
the orders of the agent had all their mules  
& horses stolen by the Indians have returned  
to their homes given up the gold and if  
it had not been for a late letter of ex-Senator  
Boggs of this state who is now in the  
gold region near 2000 that are here would  
have returned, he writes to his son-in-law  
here to come by all means but not bring  
his family he says gold is plenty and  
easily obtained another man of Lafayette  
county which joins this by the name of  
McLelland advises his friends to come  
says there are no poor men in California  
Both he and Boggs are men of stern integ-  
-rity as I have been told by men personally  
acquainted with both about 1/2 that are going  
from here are mule teams the rest oxcen  
about the same ratio from St Jo. the number  
that will start have been variously estimated  
ed from 20 to 50 thousand but I believe  
15,000 a fair estimate from these 2 parties  
men acquainted with the journey say the  
mules will beat the oxcen 3 weeks so that  
if there is a scarcity of grass beyond the  
pass as we all anticipate I hope we shall be  
among the first a great many no doubt will  
return after starting a great many would sell  
out now if they could mules & cattle are low  
now our lame mules have got well our others have  
recruited in flesh. Respects to friends and best wishes  
to Elias & Meroy. Patsy & the Boys Allen Varner



I will write again soon to Father  
soon, if I have a chance i will  
Kansas or westport, dont know  
yet will write to some of  
out, in a hurry

shall leave here  
write to you from  
who we'll go with  
you as soon as we find

Eliza Warner  
Indianapolis  
Indiana

REPRODUCTION OF THIS  
DOCUMENT IS PROHIBITED



4-29-1849

Original

Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849. 1 O'clock Pm  
Respected Brother and sisters

This will inform you that I am well at present and entertain a sincere regard for your welfare. you doubtless entertain some uneasiness with regard to me on account of the Cholera. & I think I should do your feelings more injustice to say nothing about it than to state the facts as they are. the Cholera is here, but not as had been represented to us before we reached here. we arrived within 6 miles of town Thursday. Friday moved to within 1 mile of town where we now are there is a company from Mississippi encamped on the opposite side of town of whom 2 were buried Friday. 6 more were then sick 1 of which was buried yesterday & another man from Chicago who had also come by way of St Louis. the man who had come with him told me yesterday that they put up at a boarding house here where they ate fresh Pork and that all the family were taken with Diarrhea his friend was taken soon after supper and lived till the second morning 7 O'clock & he thought if medical aid had been called sooner would have recovered slight attacks were said to be very common in Lexington through which we passed a few days ago. & in which I found Adam Reyburn & family he told me that it was doubtless the Cholera but in a very mild form there only having been 2 deaths in the place 1 a negro the other a boatman it would be nothing curious if more were sick or dying than there are for of all places of dissipation I have never seen the equal of Independence I saw yesterday & to day men lying on the pavement perfectly lifeless to appearance, from intoxication there is at least a dozen bars which are all the time crowded with toppers the keep up a continual jingle of glasses you cant pass along the streets without

Allen Verner, 1849

Mutter Collection

See entry 663, PRAWS

received for Indiana State Library

Original in Huntington Lib.

Copy also at Jackson Ct. & S. M.



soon, if I have a chance, I will write to you from  
Kansas or westport, don't know who will go with  
yet will write to some of you as soon as we find  
out, in a hurry

Elias Varner  
Indianapolis, Ind.  
Indiana





fore of his oldest son a very intelligent good looking  
lifer. has been in the cavalry service in Africa some  
years but has not time Ann is married Mary a very  
kind and lively as ever of her best respects to all and Mother in  
law on the Platte 50 miles above here they exhausted  
their feed and had to return with their stock  
another company of 18 that had encamped west  
of St Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to  
the orders of the agents had all their mules  
& horses stolen by the Indians.

Jack-County (mo.) Hist. Soc.  
See Mammie Mathe Platte River  
Entry 663 / Rock Narratives

JCHS

to David Varner

Independence Mo. May 2nd 1899

Respected Parents

This will inform you that I am well except  
my eyes are very sore and have been for the last  
2 days caused by the wind and dust I hope you are  
well. we reached here Friday I wrote to Elias Sunday  
we had good roads since I wrote. crossed the Missouri  
river at Glasgow on my birth day. had squalls of  
snow on the two preceding days. since then dry  
weather but quite cool. Corn is generally 1 inch high  
the best country between Glasgow and here is  
of 90 miles I ever saw. stopped at Ottumwa Mo. in  
Lexington all well and very comfortably situated  
send their best respects to all. and Mrs B to Mother in  
law. Lexington is quite a business place but Independence  
takes the lead the square not quite so large as your court  
house square has horses and mules hitched around it  
so thick as they can stand the streets are jammed and  
the sidewalks crowded like Indianapolis on Franklin  
days 4 or 5000 persons will leave this point a great  
many are returning. and had it not been for the letters  
of ex-governor Boggs and McMillan 2000 more would  
have followed their example. I wish they had.

It is probable that the wife of the man who  
went through the south pass and some distance  
out as we go with mules and shall be among the  
first one fourth have mules. mules are scarce  
here now, our smallest are scarcely over 2000  
dollars as one paid for them. but some more are  
expected \$550.00 for one & best. wagons are low  
could have fitted out cheapest here for 5000



I was at Adam Byrnes he was standing in the  
room a good store of money was there preparing for a  
faller than me. put not so heavy was given to dinner by  
pretty girl. Bill & Jo in Bonville. the old lady looks better  
hearing the clank of money in the upper rooms &  
the wrap of knuckles on the table. In passing along  
the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown  
out by the side of a coffee house as would pave a  
room 10 feet square I have been informed that  
numbers have lost all their money and are compelled  
to return home but from the ridiculous ~~startle~~  
sublime, I was at church this morning the metho-  
dist, heard good music a feeling prayer & good sermon  
the ladies present with few exceptions seemed to  
be votaries at the shrine of fashion for taste  
& elegance, <sup>if forgotten</sup> they are not to be surpassed if equalled  
by any I have ever seen. The rage of the present  
time is changeable silk the color of a doves neck  
with a large flower on the skirt a white silk  
bonnet trimmed with ostrich feathers or red and  
blue artificials hung in clusters from the point  
ribbons are generally suspended. Those who  
cannot afford this attire dress variously except  
that the gossamer is invariably worn by the young  
in the absence of a new dress. generally white  
the men dress more for business than appearance  
but you will see several dandies with their  
kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement  
of service the audience were waited on by two  
splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains  
swinging at their sides handsome withal  
each carrying a small black velvet sack  
supported upon a plain pine stick of suf-  
ficient length to reach the most distant in  
the pew. but to return, The most reasonable  
estimate of the number that are here is 4000  
including those that have already gone some  
to rendezvous 12 or 15 miles above on the River  
and some still further some went 15 days ago



Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849. A. C. Cook. Rev.  
Respected Brother and sisters

This will inform you that I am well at present and entertain a sincere regard for your welfare. You doubtless entertain some uneasiness with regard to on account of the Cholera & I think I should deem it feelings more unjust to say nothing about it than to state the facts as they are. The Cholera is here, but not as had been represented to us before we reached here. We arrived within 6 miles of town Thursday. Friday moved to within 1 mile of town where we now are. There is a company from Mississippi encamped on the opposite side of town of whom 2 were buried Friday. 6 more were then sick of which was buried yesterday & another man from Chicago who had also come by way of St. Louis. The man who had come with him told me yesterday that they put up at a boarding house here where they ate fresh Pork and that all the family were taken with diarrhea his friend was taken soon after supper and lived till the second morning & 6 o'clock. He thought if medical aid had been called sooner would have recovered. Slight attacks were said to be very common in Lexington through which we passed a few days ago. Tom which found Adam Reynburn & family he told me that it was doubtless the Cholera but in a very mild form there only having been 2 deaths in the place. One negro the other a hatterman. It would be nothing at all if more were sick or dying than there are for of all places of dissipation we never seem the equal of Independence. I saw yesterday 5 or 6 day men lying on the pavement perfectly lifeless to appearance, from intemperance. There is at least a dozen bars which are all the town crowded with topers. They keep up a continual jangle of glasses. You can't pass along the streets without



I was at Adam ~~Byburns~~ <sup>Byburns</sup> he was standing in the store of his old  
man a good store taking was there preparing for California. Now he  
taller than me but not so heavy you invited to dinner by Camp but has  
pretty girl. Self in some other. He old lady looks better and states as living  
hearing the clank of moves in the upper rooms &  
the sort of knuckles on the table. In passing along  
the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown  
out by the side of a coffee house as would pave a  
room 10 feet square I have been informed that  
numbers have lost all their money and are compelled  
to return home but from the ridiculous ~~part~~  
sublime, I was at church this morning the metho-  
dist, heard good music a fitting prayer & good sermon  
the ladies present with few exceptions seemed to  
be votaries at the shrine of fashion for taste  
& elegance, <sup>of fashion</sup> they are not to be surpassed if equaled  
by any I have ever seen. The rage of the present  
time is changeable silk the color of a dove neck  
with a large flourishes on the skirt & white silk  
bonnet trimmed with ostrich feathers or red and  
blue artificials hung in clusters from the point  
ribbons are generally suspended. Those who  
cannot afford this attire dress variously except  
that the fesy is invariably worn by the young  
in the absence of a new dress. generally white  
the men dress more for business than appearance  
but you will see several dandies with their  
kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement  
of service the audience were waited on by two  
splendidly dressed men with golden watch chain  
swinging at their sides handsome withal.  
each carrying a small black velvet sack  
with a corded upon a plain pine stick of suf-  
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estimate of the number that are here is 4000  
including those that have already gone some  
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and some still further some were 15 days ago to Elias & Mary

on the Platte  
their feed &  
another camp  
of St Joseph  
the orders  
& horses stole  
to their  
it had no  
more Boggs  
gold region  
have return  
here to con-  
his family  
east of the  
country with  
McLelland  
says there  
Both - he is  
- rity as I  
acquainted  
from here  
about the  
that will  
- ed from 20  
15,000 a few  
men & equal  
mules with  
if there is  
pass as one  
among the  
return - after  
out now if  
now our line  
recruited on  
to Elias & Mary



I was at Adam Seyburns he was standing in the store of his old man a good store fohing was there preparing for California. has he taller than me but not so heavy was <sup>ready</sup> to dinner <sup>but</sup> has pretty girl. Still a go on Bonville. the old lady looks better <sup>and</sup> talks as lively on the Platte. hearing the clank of money in the upper rooms & the scarp of knuckles on the table. & in passing along the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown out by the side of a coffee house as would pave a room 10 feet square I have been informed that numbers have lost all their money and are anxious to return home but from the ridiculous ~~state~~ <sup>sublimity</sup> I was at church this morning the mth. dist. heard good music a fitting prayer & good sermon. The ladies present with few exceptions seemed to be veterans at the shrine of fashion for taste & elegance, they are not to be surpassed if equalled by any I have ever seen. The rage of the present time is changeable silk the color of a doves neck with a large flourieis on the skirt a white silk bonnet trimmed with ostrich feathers or red and blue artificials hung in clusters from the painted ribbons are generally suspended. Those who cannot afford this attire dress variously except that the frock is invariably worn by the young in the absence of a new dress. generally white the men dress more for business than appearance but you will see several dandies with their kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement of service the audience were waited on by two splendidly dressed men with golden watch chains swinging at their sides handsome withal. each carrying a small black velvet sack with a corded upon a plain pine stick of sufficient length to reach the most distant in the puv. but to return, The most reasonable estimate of the number that are here is 4000 including those that have already gone some to rendezvous 12 or 15 miles above on the Platte and some still further some went 15 days ago

there feed a another company of St Joseph the orders & horses stole to their it had not more. Boggs gold region have returned here to con his family easily obt. country wh McAllard says there Both he as city as I h acquainted from here about the that will ed from 20 15000 a for men a equal number will if there is poss some among the return of the but now if man on the present in this morning



in the store of his oldest son - a very intelligent good looking  
young man for California. has been in the cavalry service in Mexico and  
has been in the army since 1847. He is married Mary a very  
pleasant woman and talks as lively as ever. Her best respects to all and Mother on  
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Allen Garner



I will write again soon to Father shall leave here  
soon if I have a chance i will write to you from  
Kansas or westport, dont know who we'll go with  
yet will write to some of you as soon as we find  
out, in a hurry

John Turner  
Indianapolis  
Indiana