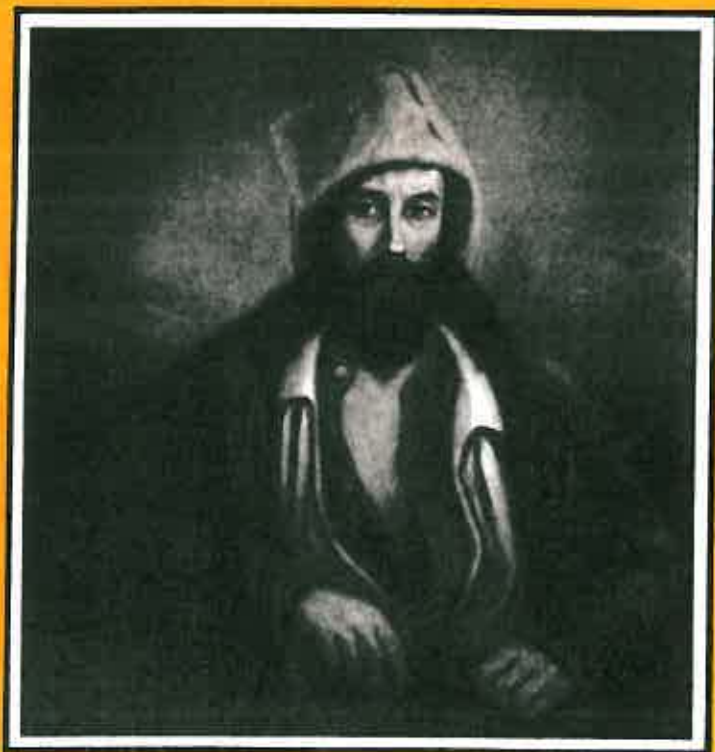


# Dear Lizzie

The Papers of John Marsh Smith  
1849-1857



*Dear  
Lizzie*

**The Papers of John Marsh Smith, 1849-1857**



**Transcribed and Annotated  
by  
The Historical Activities Committee  
of  
The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America  
in the State of Oregon  
Portland, Oregon**

**The Historical Activities Committee:**

**Nancy Horton Bragdon  
Ann Brewster Clarke  
Elizabeth Kelley Crookham  
Frances Novy Diack  
Elizabeth Griffin Hampson  
Ma'Carry Webster Hull  
Anne Maloon Kingery  
Katherine Reese Pamplin  
Elizabeth Minott Wessinger  
Helen Malarkey Thompson, *chairman***

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Portland, OR 97205-2483**



**John Marsh Smith**

Many years ago I was given this oil portrait of John Marsh Smith, my great-grandfather. He is shown therein as clothed in red flannels and a suit of buckskin and holding a rifle. For a family of Quaker background, this was most unusual. Even stranger was the fact that there were many holes in the canvas, made by arrowheads.

Later, I had the painting restored and the canvas mended, and also learned the explanation for its battlescars. It seems that a group of John Marsh Smith's grandsons were playing "Cowboys and Indians," and got so excited and let their imaginations so run away with them that they shot Great-Grandfather's portrait in a most un-Quakerish way.

I suppose many young Quaker men in 1848 dreamed of finding gold in the hills of the West instead of tending store in Baltimore or Philadelphia, but very few tried it. John Marsh Smith did. Did this spirit of adventure find a distant echo in his grandsons' bow-and-arrow assault on his portrait?

John L. Clark

# PREFACE

**I**N 1933, JANIE SMITH Taliaferro gave to The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the State of Oregon a collection of letters. Most of them were written by her father, John Marsh Smith, to her mother and other family members and friends in Baltimore, and recounted his experiences in the California gold fields and in Oregon between 1849 and 1851. Included were letters sent to him. These caught him up with family news, conveyed business requests, and later, when he had left the territory, kept him in touch with life out west as Oregon moved toward statehood.

For more than 50 years the collection has been in the custody of the Oregon Historical Society. In 1980 it was used for a course in historical materials taught by Dr. Allan Kittell at Lewis and Clark College. In 1984 the Historical Activities Chairman of the Colonial Dames in Oregon was asked to form a committee to study the letters with the possibility of publishing them. As research progressed, enthusiasm mounted and the book has indeed evolved.

We are indebted to Dr. Kittell; to Peter Cook, assistant director of writing and research; and to the members of the Lewis and Clark class for much of the information that supplements the letters in this book. Special thanks must go to committee member Ma'Carry Hull, who has followed each reference to its source, and, through

long hours of individual research, has interpreted for our understanding the period during which the letters were written.

To convey the flavor of the correspondence, we have endeavored to maintain the original spelling, punctuation and usage as much as possible, making alterations only in the interest of clarity. With the exception of some minor changes, the letters are here presented as written.

Some of the letters in the collection appear to be handwritten copies made by a family member—perhaps Harriet Tyson—to share with the rest of the family; some are typewritten copies, made at Mrs. Taliaferro's request, before she gave the collection to the Colonial Dames in Oregon. Omitted from this publication are miscellaneous invoices, bills of lading and notes of personal purchases by John Marsh Smith.

We are deeply grateful to Judge John L. Clark of Baltimore, great-grandson of John Marsh Smith, for his interest, support and cooperation in supplying us with pertinent details and family photographs.

We thank members of the staff of the Oregon Historical Society for their unfailing help: Thomas Vaughan, director; Bruce Hamilton, director of the society's press; and Edith Farrar, Margaret Haines, Priscilla Knuth, George Manning, and Charles Wellman.

We also thank the staff of the San Diego Historical Society; The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley; the Yuba County Library in Marysville, California; and the Multnomah County Library in Portland, Oregon.

Our committee member Elizabeth Crookham drew the small pictures that embellish the text; for these she receives our warmest thanks.

Financial assistance from The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America and from the S. S. Johnson Foundation has helped make possible the publication of these letters.

Finally, we wish to thank our professionals: Susan Applegate, Philippa Brunsman, John Tomlinson, and Melissa Wells. They have guided, supported, and sustained us.

The Historical Activities Committee of  
The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America  
in the State of Oregon

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*Dear Lizzie*



# INTRODUCTION

**ON JUNE 27 1849, John Marsh Smith, a 30-year-old Quaker from Baltimore, left home with his younger brother-in-law Frederick Tyson, to look for gold in California. The pair were representative of a large segment of 49ers who came from comfortably settled middle-class backgrounds, as opposed to the footloose adventurers generally considered typical of the period.**

**JMS left behind his wife, Elizabeth Brooke Tyson Smith, and two small sons, to whom he was deeply devoted. In his letters to "Dear Lizzie" and to other family members and friends during the next two years, he describes his journey to the gold fields, which he did not reach until February 1850. The trip from New York, down the East Coast by steamer to Chagres, across the Isthmus of Panama, and up the West Coast to San Francisco, took two months. In San Francisco, JMS became associated with Joseph Hobson of Cross, Hobson & Company, merchants, through his acquaintance with Hobson's brother William, a family friend. During this association, he travelled to Monterey and to Sacramento, where, for a short time, he ran a hotel, partially financed by William Hobson. The hotel failed, perhaps as much because JMS did not condone gambling, which seems to have been a requisite for success, as because the owners decided to sell.**

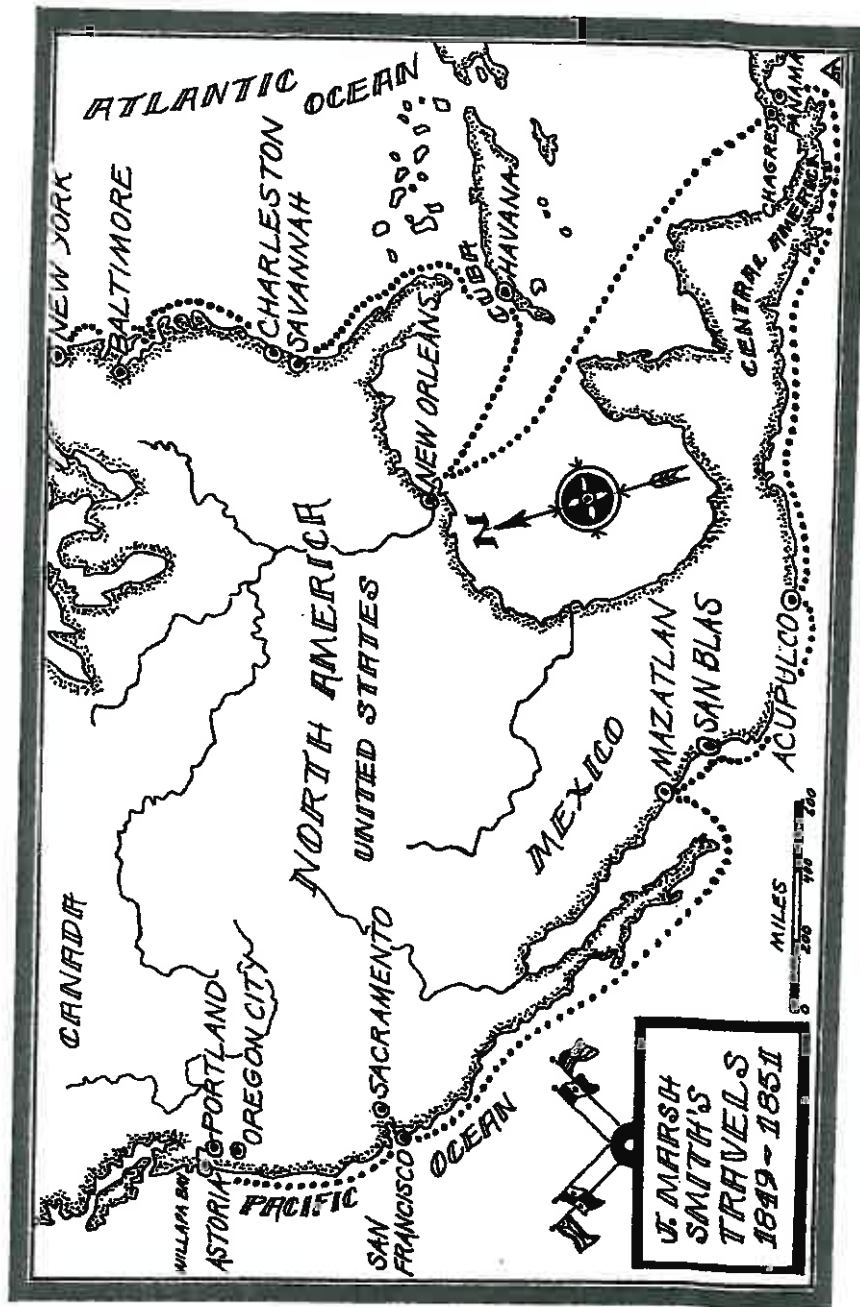
In January 1850, Sacramento was inundated by a disastrous flood. Meanwhile, Fred Tyson had gone to Mormon Island, near Sutter's Mill, one of the most populous gold-mining camps, where he was joined by JMS. Both men had had bouts of illness, and Fred was still in poor health when JMS, leaving him to recover, joined a group of "perfect gentlemen" to prospect in the hills near Georgetown. It was during this period that he began his diary, which is an intrinsic part of this record.

By mid-April, Fred was sufficiently restored to join the group, but almost immediately suffered so severe a relapse that JMS was obliged to expend what meager profits he had realized from his labors on securing Fred's recovery and sending him home.

After Fred's departure in June, JMS went briefly into business with James Suydam of New York. However, business was "dull," and Sacramento's climate proved to be unhealthy. His many friends urged JMS to try his luck in Oregon, and by late September he was on his way north. His journey was plagued by dangers that are characteristically understated in his subsequent letter to Lizzie.

During his months in Oregon, he made the acquaintance of Dr. John McLoughlin, the former Hudson's Bay Company factor at Fort Vancouver, and of Hugh Burns, an Irishman from Missouri, whose donation land claim lay along the Willamette River across from Oregon City. His letters home during the period contain a succinct analysis of trade in the Oregon Territory. In February 1851, he wrote Lizzie from Astoria to say that he would return home in the fall if he did not succeed in business or if he failed to be appointed marshal of the Oregon Territory, a position for which he had entertained ambition. But the death of his brother-in-law James Atkinson decided him. He was needed at home, and thence he repaired.

These letters to "Dear Lizzie" portray the writer as a man of keen sensibilities. His Quaker upbringing is evident in his moral rectitude, his concern for others, and his loving tenderness toward Lizzie and the "dear little boys." Throughout the letters there is a delightful thread of humor. One wishes that Lizzie's letters in response might be included in this book, but, alas, they have disappeared.



# CHAPTER ONE

## 1849



. . . . .

*Washington, June 22 1849*

To Col. James Corwin  
San Francisco, California  
DEAR COL.

This will introduce you to *my* friend & *my wife's* Cousin Js M. Smith of Balt[imore]. He comes to you & your far off Provençe, to look into the great El Dorado of the 19th Century.

He has been bred a Merchant, his Father & Mother are of the Quaker School. Smith is honest in the old fashioned sense of that much abused word.

I pray you give him such counsel as to his ability in California & his needs & as you alone can give. You will thus confer a favor on a deserving man & oblige your *old* but sincere friend.

Thos Corwin

. . . . .

*Washington D.C., June 1849*

To Gen'l Jno Wilson  
Superintendent of Indian Affairs  
San Francisco, California  
DEAR GEN'L.

This letter will be handed to you by my friend, John M. Smith of Baltimore, Md.

He visits your Colony on business. He can, I doubt not, be greatly benefitted by your kindly attentions & especially by suggestions your ample knowledge of the country may enable you to *make* to him as the object of his enterprise.

I feel a [illegible] interest in his success. He is a very worthy & perfectly trustworthy man. I know him well. Besides he is the cousin of my wife & a certain respect for the latter ables me to like her friends.

I have to ask as a favor to him & a personal one to myself, that you will give him the benefit of your regards while he remains in the territory.

TRULY YOUR FRIEND,  
Wm. Corwin

. . . . .

*Baltimore, June 25 1849*

To Capt. Gustav Van Tempsky  
San Francisco  
MY DEAR SIR

This letter will be handed you by Mr. J. Marsh Smith, who goes out, as you have done, to push his fortune in El Dorado, and whose acquaintance I have had the pleasure of making through the kindness of Mr. Pearce. I hope you will have an opportunity of cultivating Mr. Smith's acquaintance, and that you will derive pleasure from it, as I expect.

I remain, my dear sir,  
YOURS SINCERELY  
Jas. Stanislaw Bell

\* \* \* \* \*

*New York, June 27 1849*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

Without much to communicate but simply to advise thee of our safe arrival in this great Babel, without adventure of any character save the torturous solicitations of the professional Hackmen, who seem to think if they succeed in placing their card in your hand they then have a claim upon you that nought but an acceptance of the services will compromise, and then assume upon themselves the responsibility of throwing your baggage about as though trunks were invulnerable, valuables were made no more to break, and owners had no feelings. I am in hopes I may have as pressing invitations crossing the Isthmus for the same jobs.

I felt so fatigued on my arrival at Philadelphia that I kept myself quiet during my stay there and intend as much as possible to do so here. Fred seems remarkably well.<sup>1</sup> All I want is two or three days rest, then, "Richard will be himself again." I understood from Fred that all our friends in Philadelphia were out of town. George Martin, young Hallowell, and some of Fred's friends came down to the boat to see us off.<sup>2</sup>

I was much gratified on arriving at the water station to find Harry there with a letter from Anne reporting all well and dear little Gill first rate, amusing Hannah by blowing Soap Bubbles.<sup>3</sup> I expect to write again before we sail.

With love to all. Tell mother that in the hurry and confusion Lewis Cass lost his reasoning facultys and I fear I have lost the direction to the cousin Ivesy.<sup>4</sup> I want to see them and will look for there residence in directory.

THINE AFFECTIONATELY  
J.M. Smith

\* \* \* \* \*

New York Steamer *Falcon*,<sup>5</sup> June 28 1849

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith

DEAR LIZZIE

I recd thy favour this morning, am delighted to find thee bears my departure so well. I have been a little under the weather for the last two days but I am now right well. Fatigue and a bile in the old locality were the causes of my indisposition.<sup>6</sup> I wrote Mother this morning. Fred has gone out to make some purchases. Amongst others I remind him of the life preservers. My love to all. Adieu. The news from California's most flattering.

THY AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND

J. Marsh Smith

. . . . .

*Off Sandy Hook 20 miles, June 28, 1849*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith

DEAR LIZZIE

Things are quivering so on board of Steamer it is hard to write with a steady hand. We are just about putting pilot off. Prospect of fine weather. I feel first rate. The sight of the sea is as a charm. I am right well bar[r]ing the bile, for which I am prepared, having a lot of flax seed meal with me. Adieu. If we should stop at Charleston will try and mail thee another.

love to all

THY AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND

J. M. Smith

. . . . .

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith

DEAR LIZZIE

I commence by excusing myself for the careless manner in which I expect to pen this epistle. The ship is pitching, rendering it difficult to write. Probably I may succeed better than I anticipate in shaping my letters. The day is delightfull, the sea air most bracing. I feel as though I had gained a pound or two since I left New York.

The accounts we gather on board from persons who have been to California are of the most encouraging kind. I feel more ardent in the cause since I left home than before I started. I am perfectly easy about you all and have the consolation of finding most of our passengers are men who have left families behind, similar to myself, but none with better or more kind Friends. One of the lady passengers we have is on her return from N York to N Orleans, having accompanied her Husband as far as the former, from whence he sailed for a three years cruise, he being an officer in the Navy. She returns in chge of the Captain.

There is something remarkable in the increase of the mail to California. The first mail this ship carried out was taken over the Isthmus under a man's arm, the second some fifteen hundred letters, the third five thousand, fourth Ten thousand, and this the fifth with only the mail from N York is all ready Fifteen Thousand. We have yet to get mails from Charleston, Savannah, Havannah, N. Orleans, and Chagres.<sup>7</sup>

I cannot help thinking and feeling for you how you are suffering in Friends' meeting at this time with the heat, while I am enjoying the delightfull temperature and air of the Ocean. There is no scarcity of Smiths on this ship. Five I know of and one of the passengers that I have formed as favourable an opinion of as I ever did of a Stranger is a John Smith, a brother of an army officer who has been ordered out, a Major Smith. I am quite encouraged. A Captain Skenk of the Navy told me that Smith was a good name in California, that all he knew there had made a good deal of money, and he thought the luck would continue if all the Smiths that went there should be such as we have on board of this ship at this time. We have a genteel representation. Major Smith is a perfect Gentleman and



his brother John a young man of very much William Mastier's appearance and character. We have struck up quite an intimacy. He expects to go digging, and the Major, going out on different duty, goes unprepared for any such operation, but says if he finds treasure he shall depend on me for one of my picks as I have three.

Please write immediately on receipt of this and direct to New Orleans. I will call and enquire at the Saint Charles Hotel where thee had better direct "J. Marsh Smith passenger on *Falcon* to be called for at St. Charles Hotel." We will stop in Orleans a day or so to coal. Thee need not give Thyself any uneasiness about my health there. I will take good care of myself as regards exposure and diet. We have had no sickness on board excepting sea sickness since I came on board. We have as temperate and moral a set of passengers fore and aft as was ever on a sea steamers deck. We number about seventy.

With love to all and a kiss for the little boys I close for the present. I expect to write from Orleans where we will be about Monday or Tuesday of next week (not this week).

THY AFFECTIONATE  
J. Marsh Smith

To Catherine Marsh Smith<sup>e</sup>

dear Mother if thee was on board of this ship thee would enjoy it exceedingly. I will write thee soon. It consumes all the genius I am possessed of at present to manufacture a letter for Lizzie.

THY SON  
JMS

• • • • •

*Havanna, July 5 1849*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

At half past five this afternoon we passed under the celebrated Moro Castle, which is without doubt one of the most stupendous works of the kind it has ever been my lot to gaze upon. It is built on the sea side upon solid rock with a front of, some say at a guess, three hundred feet, and on the side fronting the town an extent of half a mile, with as I understand subterraneous passages to the extent of Seven Miles.

We are denied the pleasure of exploring what I should judge to be a magnificent city, owing to the circumstance of cholera in New York, the city we cleared from. It is amusing to see with what horror they approach us, fear depicted not only in their countenances but in their manners. The doctor did not board us—the nearest anyone has been to us is boat hook length. They have a pair of tongs at the end of a long pole in which I saw placed the customs house papers. Before they were opened they were sprinkled with what I understood was vinegar, and to clap the climax a couple of instruments were passed on board in these remarkable tongs, for puncturing the letters intended for Havanna. They are to be rubbed before delivered in chloride of Lime. They stick them to let the cholera air out. Is it not remarkable?

FRIDAY NIGHT, JULY 6. This day at one o'clock we bid adieu to Havanna. From the poor opportunity I had of judging, I conceive it to be a magnificent city with a population, as I understand, of, near one hundred and eighty thousand and probably one of the most compact but beautiful Harbours in the world. It looks more to me like a wash basin with the bottom covered with water than anything else I can compare it to, its sides dotted with the beautiful residences of its wealthy citizens, all around is covered with the richest verdure. There is not one barren or unproductive spot for the eye to rest upon. All is magnificently rich. I understand from some Spanish passengers we are carrying to Orleans that they would like to be governed by some power more liberal than Old Spain.

It is now 10 o'clock, night and I feel like retiring. We are making most beautiful progress at the time with a glorious breeze off the

quarter—Steam on and all sail set going at the rate of 12 knots an hour. Trusting you are all well and happy, I bid adieu for the night to retire with the anticipation of a delightful nights repose.

SATURDAY NIGHT, 10 OCLOCK. Before I retire I will write a few words. As I anticipated last night, I slept delightfully. We have had the weather exceedingly pleasant since we left the sultry harbor of Havanna. I really think from the way that I feel that I must have gained several pounds since I left home, and as for Fred he is so fat that every thing appears tight for him, and if he continues to grow in the same ratio for a week or two, he will soon be too big for his blanket. Goodnight.

SUNDAY NIGHT, 1/2 PAST 9 OCLOCK. Dear Lizzie, Fred and myself are both enjoying good health. We are feeling our way up the “giraffe of waters” [Mississippi River]. I find amongst our passengers the young man who wrote the travels of a tour through Germany on foot, Bayard Taylor.<sup>10</sup> He goes out on an expedition of a similar kind to California. He is, I believe, a correspondent for the [New York] *Tribune*, and I think a weekly *Tribune* may give you a better account of our adventures than I can. By my side is a John Smith penning a few lines to his mother. He is a perfect Gentleman and an honour to the name.

Goodnight Lizzie, with prayers that you may all be protected. Kiss the little boys but do not talk of my absence to them.

MONDAY NIGHT. Dear Lizzie, I am very comfortably moored on shore. We had quite a delightful sail up the Mississippi and as there was some sickness on board the steamer, and leaving New Orleans was perfectly clear of cholera and yellow fever, it was considered advisable by us nearly all fore and aft to spend a few days on shore.

There is about fifty of us comfortably quartered at the great St. Charles. Do not feel any uneasiness about us. I have met several of my old acquaintances here and they assure me New Orleans was never known to be more healthy. We were so unfortunate as to loose two men on our passage out: one a fireman, the other a cook. The place where they worked, the thermometer stood at one hundred and thirty degrees, [and they were] drinking ice water profusely. Do not feel any uneasiness about me. I do consider myself cautious. Some few of the passengers have been attacked with cholera symptoms, but it has yielded readily to simple remedies.

Things happen strange. Thee recollects a couple of Gentlemen by the name of Smith from near Chester? They were with us a day or so at Osceola.<sup>11</sup> Well, a Major Hays of the Army who tells me he will leave in the morning has given me a letter of introduction to the largest one.<sup>12</sup> Thee recollects he was quite a robust, fine looking young fellow. [He] says I will find him a perfect Gentleman and desirable acquaintance. He also gives me a letter to the Commisary at Saint Francis[co] which says he will be of service to me. I have been treated kindly by everybody—no one has asked me to lend them money, and need not. I feel as though my motto was “go ahead.” Good night.

TUESDAY MORNING, JULY 10. I am happy to report a delightful night's rest. A refreshing bath and first rate breakfast causes an individual to feel a little saucy, am proud to say that I have not been bitten by a single mosquito, while some of my companions have been compelled to use ammonia most lavishly. I made up my mind to sleep on board of ship to night but Captain Codman, an old traveler, advises by all means not to give up the Comfortable quarters I am occupying as the change on shore, with a moderate use of its comforts, will be worth more to us all than it is probable it will cost.

I have just been introduced to a gentleman that arrived in a steamer last night from Chagres. He says there was not a single person waiting at Panama, that there were four steamers expected, that the steamer *Oris* was running up to Cruces, that there were canoes and mules enough to carry 500 passengers over.<sup>13</sup> There was no sickness on the Isthmus excepting Ague at Chagres, where we would not be detained.<sup>14</sup> The Gentleman I spoke of brought a lady over the Isthmus with him. She is a sister of William Hobson's wife.<sup>15</sup> William and his wife are in San Francisco. He gives me great encouragement.

Love to all. I will write Mother before I leave. Remember me to my kind friends, and [I] hardly know how to express my thanks to Thos. M., Uncle Thomas, J. Curlitt, Talbott, Robert and James, Mother, Father and all.<sup>16</sup> I hope I will prove myself worthy of their kindness. Be happy. Kiss the little boys. Remember me to them all at home, Jericho, and regards for all that may ask after me.<sup>17</sup> Fred is well and wrote yesterday.

Excuse many defects. I am aware of many and think it will be

advisable to read this letter, [rather] than to have it read. I find a good many like myself that say they cannot write.

THY AFFECTIONATE  
John Marsh Smith

*New Orleans, July 10 1849*

I expect I should receive a letter from home before we leave N. Orleans, as The Captain has informed me we'll not sail before Friday. The passengers are all growling at the manner we have been treated by the agents of the steamer. I tell them I shall not complain until I find how the thing ends. Our detention may be for the best.

JMS

. . . . .

*New Orleans, July 13 1849*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

I yesterday handed Jonathan Janny a letter for Mother with one or two little trifles which will probably be received before thee gets this, as I intend forwarding this by mail, and mails are not as regular in this country as they ought to be.

I went down to the ship yesterday and the passengers who had remained on board presented such a terrific appearance, from innumerable wounds rec'd from some Individuals from amongst the Myriads of blood sucking Musquitois. Having spent a comfortable and pleasant time here, I thought it would be wrong to mar its pleasures, so I verily quickly made up my mind to return and spend the night in comfortable quarters. I have not been disappointed. After a delightfull night's rest, I report at 6 oclock, myself up and penning to thee. Our stay in New Orleans, I think, has been of great service to me.

This N Orleans is a remarkable place. Dissipation seems to occupy the leisure moments of the great Mass here. The Magnificances

and Immence size of its drinking saloons and the momentum of business in that line is astounding. I cant think that any man can like N Orleans that does not like dissipation. They have churches here, but I fear Christianity is kept behind the curtain. As Jimmy Kernan says, "I [Aye], it is looked upon as a mere superstition."

With love to all. Good by, be happy.

THINE

J Marsh Smith

Fred is well. I have not rec'd any letter since I have been here.

\* \* \* \* \*

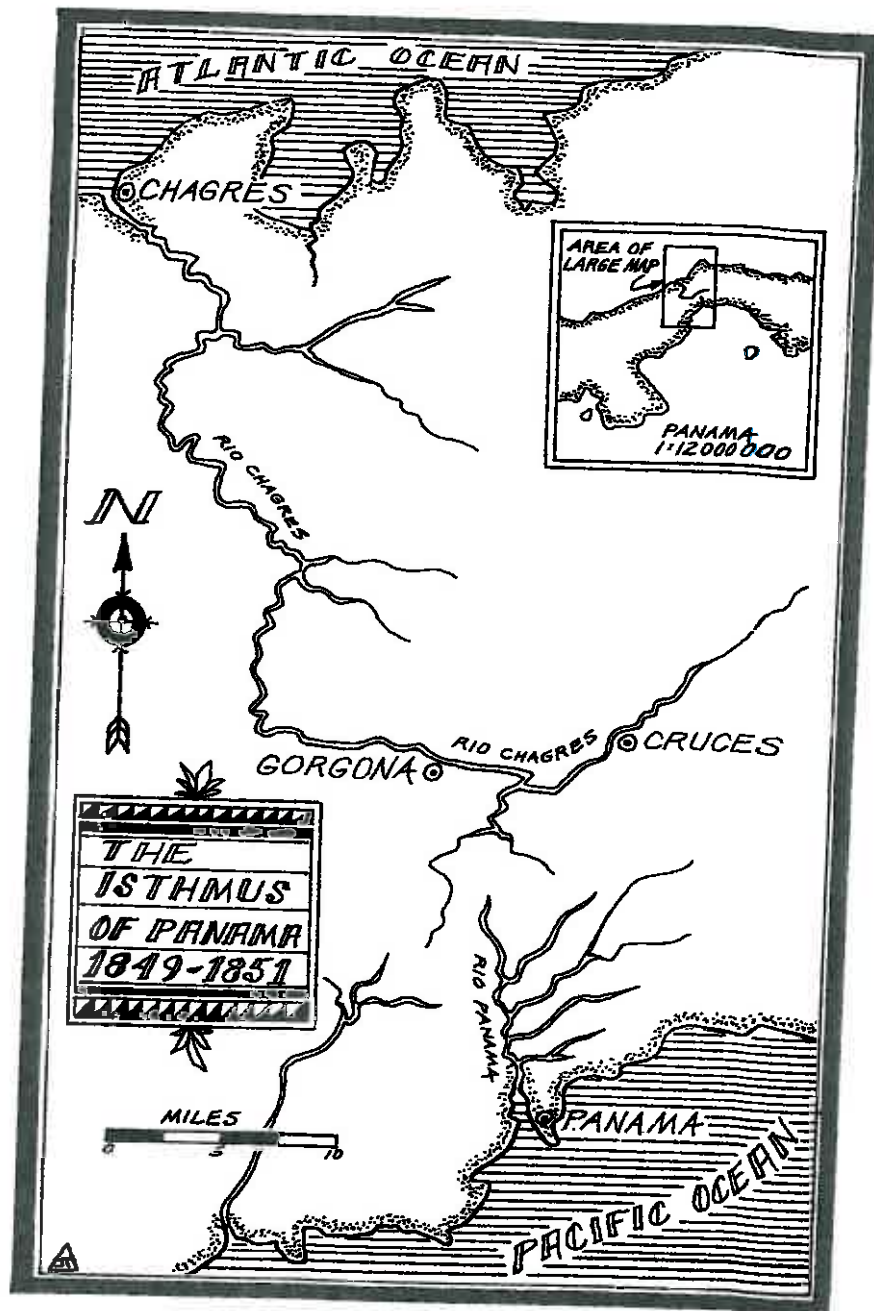
*Panama, July 28 1849*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
Bayles and Tyson  
Baltimore, Maryland, U States  
[Forwarded to] Care of Nathan Tyson  
Jerusalem Mills  
Harford Co., Md.  
DEAR LIZZIE

All here is confusion, I write in great haste simply stating that Fred and myself have got along this far as well as any of the *Falcon* passengers. The *Crescent City* passengers have nearly all left or are comfortably provided for.<sup>18</sup> We pay them 30¢ to pay for our room and get our meals for 20¢ each. As regards the health of the place, it is good.

It is as much as one person can do here to look out for themselves. I purchased a steerage ticket here this morning for 300 dollars and leave in the morning for San Francisco. Fred probably will leave in the steamer if he can succeed in purchasing a ticket. A gentleman from Maryland, an acquaintance of mine, promises to forward our Bagg[age] none of which has arrived.

Send word to Henry Warfield if he should conclude to cross the Isthmus by no means to bring more baggage than he can carry on his arm.<sup>19</sup> Tell him I have been so engaged I have not had time to write him.



I leave Fred, if he is compelled to stop here, in charge of Doct McMullen of the Army, an acquaintance of mine I made in N Orleans, said to be one of the most distinguished Doctors in the Army, [a] "perfect gentleman," for should Fred get sick which I do not anticipate he will receive every care. I make arrangement for Fred to room with him.

Give my love and Kiss the little boys. May God Bless you all. I am bound to California and expect to meet with difficulty but would not turn back for less than 25 thousand till I give California a trial. I am as happy as one can be who has left all he loves behind. Give love to all at home, at Jericho, every where. Fred will finish this. I have a letter written already to enclude but it is with my baggage which I trust may come to hand.

THINE  
J M Smith

[The following is on the same sheet.]

*Panama*, July 28 1849

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
MY DEAR SISTER

John has written the above in great haste having just procured a ticket on board the *Panama* for California, which vessel will sail early tomorrow morning.<sup>20</sup> Our baggage has not yet come on. I cannot succeed in getting a ticket for the *Panama*. They have been asking one hundred to one hundred and fifty percent advance on the original fee of the ticket and are none to be had at present for any price. John has enough clothes with him to make himself comfortable and besides has many staunch friends who have been passengers from N York with us who will not let him want for anything.

We would not have separated but for the Impossibility of going on together as all our baggage is behind, and if tickets were even to be had, it would be best for one to stay behind and take care of it. I anticipate no difficulty in getting on as the *Oregon* Steamer is here and will sail in two or three weeks. There are also two sailing vessels left that will take off a great number of passengers, and the steamer *Unicorn* is daily expected.



We had rather a rough time in crossing the Isthmus. If I had the rout to go over again I should bring no more baggage than could be conveniently carried in a pair of Saddle bags.

Love to all. The opportunity by which I send this will not allow me to write more.

AFFECTIONATELY, MY DEAR SISTER  
Thy brother Fred Tyson

[Accompanying note]

Dear Sister I have taken the liberty of opening this, seeing Fred's writing. Harriette was well when I heard last and I hope to have her home on 7th day.<sup>21</sup>

With much love I remain  
THY AFFECTIONATE BROTHER  
James E. Tyson

[Accompanying cover note, in unidentified writing. Correspondence was shared between the Smith and Tyson families.]

When you write to Lizzie enclose this half who will *please return* my affectionate love to her and Richards, who asked to see the letters from JM

. . . . .

On board Steamer *Panama*  
Tuesday, August 1 1849

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

I wrote Thee from Panama the day before I left for San Francisco. I regret Fred did not leave with me, but as tickets are hard to procure here it was considered prudent for me to take advantage of the present chance and leave the other to provide and take care of the baggage, all of which I have left expecting Fred to bring it up on the *Oris* which we left at Panama and which we are told will sail about the 20th August.

It was a great trial to leave Fred and all my clothes that ~~thee~~ took so much trouble to prepair. I left Fred in charge of Doct. McMillan, a perfect Gentleman and said to be one of the most distinguished surgeons in the Army. He is a native of South Carolina but calls New Orleans his home. Fred and he room together. I have no fear of Fred's being unwell. He has stood the trip astonishingly and has grown very fat and has not been unwell since he left home. Most of the *Falcon's* passengers are left at Panama and nearly all on board have either left all or a portion behind.

I am getting along bravely and intend doing something in Sant Francisco till Fred comes up, then Ho for the diggings. The accounts from there still flattering.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT. After a hard day labour, for our boatmen having spent their time mostly poling instead of paddling with no great distance overcome, we arrived about 7 o'clock at a ranch filthy in the extreme, where I was refreshed with a cup of coffee and retired to my cuddy hole in the canoe where I rested fine.

THURSDAY. By 10 o'clock we made Gorgona,<sup>22</sup> where we were induced by the misrepresentations of Interested Individuals to take that route for Panama instead of continuing on up to Cruces. Those of our passengers who crossed from Cruces found the road much Better than the Gorgona route. The distance is said to be 21 miles from Gorgona to Panama. We travelled seventeen hours and spent one night on the road. Five miles out I lost my mule. The work was too much for him so Fred and myself took turns till unfortunately for us Fred's dobbin gave up about 7 miles from Panama, where two Individuals was to be seen nearly as good for nothing as their lost Horses, plodding on their way bound for California, a land they do not expect to reach without encountering some difficulty and deprivations. My feelings were almost inexpressible when nearly broken down and hungry, for we ate nothing from the time we left Gorgona expect a little green corn in an uncooked state. We were told we could get provisions on the road but we found it false. Coffee was all the natives would furnish us.

It was truly refreshing to a tired pair when about 4 o'clock on the evening of Friday the broad blue Pacific burst suddenly upon our vision. It was our first sight of it and under our feet at the distance of about a mile lay Panama, with nothing inviting to the weary travel-



Detail from *Incident on the Chagres River*, oil painting by Charles Christian Nahl. Courtesy The Bancroft Library.

ler save the prospect of a few days rest. It has its ruins which are of interest but as my lot seems to be to see the Elephant,<sup>25</sup> I leave to Historians to describe and comment on the ancient greatness of this now dilapidated spot.

I [illegible] the miserable conduct—rather, fate—of our broke down mules. I have written before and told why Fred stopped and I pushed ahead. I wrote thee from Chagres, from Panama, from Acapulco, from Mazitsland, also two letters for Mother.<sup>24</sup> We did not land at Acapulco, merely stopping in to leave a mail. It was night when we entered the Harbour which by moon light is certainly a picture for a painter. We were 2½ days from Acapulco to San Blas, a once magnificent place beyond doubt, judging from its extensive ruins. It is now an insignificant mud village. From the large number of Quicksilver Flasks piled up, I should suppose it is to be a depot for the shipment of this article.<sup>25</sup>

The most remarkable incident occurring here in which I was interested was a purchase of what we thought was claret wine—two Boxes. We took it on the ship and next day opened it for a division when, lo, it turned out to be olive oil. I was fortunate enough to dispose of my portion at a profit sufficient to defray all the expense I had incurred on ship, being in demand amongst the passengers for dressing onions, which were the principal article of provision laid in at the above port. We spent some 5 hours and left about 6 in the afternoon for Mazitland, which we made next morning about 10 o'clock, being August 10/49. We were not permitted to land. While laying there the *California* came in, in 8 days from St. Francisco. Some of her passengers boarded us and gave us great encouragement. We left here the same day. From this point, I scribbled Mother and Lizzie a line which was sent per *California*.

I formed a favorable opinion of Mazitsland. It appears to be a place of some display of neatness. The houses appear of stone and covered with tile. The country around barren and dreary—from there to Cape St. Lucas like all we have seen—mountainous—broken—barren—dry.

AUGUST 11. The day after leaving Mazitsland we made this point—the extreme point of lower California where to our surprise we spoke the *Grey Eagle*, a ship you are familiar with. She was from St.

Francisco with 200 Mexicans bound home to Mazitsland from the diggings.

[The above incomplete letter-journal was written by JMS on the back of the following letter from an unidentified correspondent. Several lines are missing, possibly torn out by JMS to retain the sender's name and address.]

To Mr. J.M. Smith

DEAR SIR

Will you be kind enough on arrival at Chagres or Panama—as opportunity may deem, to drop me a line and give me your information as to transportation of frt. [freight] across the Isthmus—the cost, what kind or size of packages would be best, the rate of frt. from Panama to San F—etc. You can either write from Chagres or Panama, as the information you desire may enable you. I should be pleas'd to have an acct. of yr trip across the Isthmus, the difficulties to be guarded against in rainy weather and aught else that you think would prove of service to me. [portion missing] P.S. Please direct yr letter to this point and per first steamer.

. . . . .

Steamship *Panama*, August 6 1849

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith

DEAR LIZZIE

Owing to the kindness of Capt. Codman I am furnished with a place and implements for Penning a few lines. I am in hopes ere this Thee has rec'd a letter pencilled by Fred and myself from Panama. It is a source of great regret to me that Fred was left behind but he seemed to think it would be as well for him to wait and bring up the Baggage in the next steamer. I am in hopes ere this the *Unicorn* has arrived. She was looked for daily. Fred was in first rate health. I divided my money with him till he assured me he had enough, and left him with a Gentleman, Doct. McMilan, who assured me he would take care of Fred. I have no fear of Fred's getting sick. He has more prudence than you all give him credit for.

I cannot give at present an account of our trip over the Isthmus. My object now is more to relieve thy mind of any anxiety. I assure thee I am perfectly well, and if I had Fred and my Baggage would be as happy as a man can be who loves his home and those he has left behind him. As regards the prospects in California, I consider them cheering. I shall wait in St. Francisco till Fred comes up there. I think I shall strike for the diggings.

Lizzie, I think it will be as well for thee to subscribe to the *New York Tribune* as B. Taylor is with us and his letters will be published by Greeley.<sup>20</sup> He has promised to have one *Tribune* sent to thee. Thee would be amused to see what a life on the way to California is. I am in the steerage, but I can assure thee that as regards respectability, we can boast of as many fore as there are aft. We have Gentlemen with us who have ships out in St. Francisco, marching double file to the cook with their tin cup for coffee, and are feeding out of one Tub. Our fair [fare] is that of the sailors, but I take it for granted that all are, like myself, expected to encounter things a little rough, so I am favored with health. It is all I ask. Though provisions are coarse and rough, I have an appetite.

Kiss the little Boys. Remember me to all. Say I would write more, but I have not the Implements. I have not the place. This letter will be enclosed in one of Capt. Codmans and forwarded from Acapulco.

Dear Lizzie, Thee must excuse the rough manner in which my letters are and have been penned. But give me quiet and I am but a poor scribe but here, where all's hustle and confusions, I find the undertaking really arduous. People are talking and moving all round me and confuse me. I sent Mother a letter from Chagres which I take for granted she has rec'd. Do not let my absence trouble thee. I honestly believe it is for the best. I expect to be the owner of a first rate Farm near Jericho in less than two years. Adieu.

FROM THINE AFFECTIONATELY  
John Marsh Smith

• • • • •

Steamer *Panama* off Magistland  
August 10 1849

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

We have just discovered what we suppose to be the *California* bound down to Panama, by which opportunity I write. I am rejoiced to report myself well, strong and encouraged to go ahead. I am satisfied from all I can gather that California is the spot. I wrote thee from Panama and from Acapulco, in both of which letters I stated Fred has stopped behind for the baggage. I apprehend no sickness. The place is healthy, and Fred is in good hands. It was James advice to drive ahead, one or both. I shall look round and find something for Fred to do. He will be up nearly as soon as myself.

We left the *Oregon* at Panama when we left yesterday. We spent some 3 or 4 hours ashore at San Blas, a once magnificent old Spanish town now all delapidated, nought but ruins left, and in its stead mud huts covered with leaves, with a population of not more than 3 or 4 hundred.

Excuse the brevity. My object is to let thee know I am well. The order is just issued to stand by the gun. We are now going into the harbour of Magistland. It is about 10 in the morning of Friday August 10th.

Kiss the little boys. Give my love to all.

THINE  
J M Smith

[Catherine Marsh Smith wrote the following on the previous letter from JMS.]

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
Care [?] Matthew Smith  
Baltimore, Md.  
DEAR ELIZABETH

Thy letter was not sealed. I took the liberty to read it. I know thee will excuse a Mother's feelings. Hannah Ann is not improving as we could wish. She has never been able to be up to have her bed made,

and Nurse was not able to Change her at all until the day before yesterday. She has constant head ache, some fever and a very sick stomach. Doctor Radle now thinks it is a gastric affection. She is able to sleep the fore part of the night and is quite relieved of her former disease. She fears much that her milk will leave her, but we are using all endeavors to prevent that. The Babe thrives with feeding and is very good. Hannah still keep her spirits. Were it not for that I should despair. I am in the midst of house cleaning. Painting, papering parlours, etc.

A letter from Cousins last evening says they will leave Nathans next fifth day, and calculated on being with us this day week.<sup>27</sup> We are trying, my dear E., to procure a dependable woman for thee, as Nurse for the dear Children. We thought we had one, and thy Father has just returned with a final refusal to go to the Country. She was highly recommended, and Father offered every inducement, said he would take her and her friend up, and if she did not like the appearance of things, would bring her immediately back. All to no effect, E. Anne has returned home. Thomas has gone to Boston on business.

Uncle T wants this for the cases.

THY MOTHER

CMS

[Catherine Marsh Smith]

\* . . . \*

*San Francisco, September 21 1849*

To John Marsh Smith

DEAR JOHN

I leave here in the morning too early to see you before I go, and I therefore leave this to say that when you leave Mormon Island to return to this place, you had better place in the hands of someone there a letter informing me of what you had done, to be delivered to me on my arrival there, should I go that route on my way back from Monterey, and advise me at sometime when you would return to Mormon Island in case you pursue the project of the Gold machine,

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in order that I may meet you there, and should an opportunity offer, write to me at Monterey.<sup>28</sup>

If the gold washing machine succeeds as Mr. Brinswade[?] describes it, William will join us with another one—and I recommend you to be on the look out for any speculation that promises great profit in any other way, and if I can I will join you in it.

Use every dispatch in your movements and get the work as quick as possible, and we may extend our operations together. I am confident there is a great field for profit in the interior of this country for an observant and intelligent young man and I know you will succeed in some other way if the machine fails. I have confidence however in Mr. Brinswade, and likewise his statements will be verified by your own when you return.

With Best wishes for your success  
YOURS TRULY  
Jos. Hobson

Mr. Brinswade will give you a letter to his friends—ask him for it—and get William to give you one from Mr. Priest to his house at Sacramento City.

. . . . .

*San Francisco, September 22 1849*

To Messrs McNulty & Stambaugh  
Sacramento City  
GENTLEMEN:

Allow us to introduce to your acquaintance Mr. J. Marsh Smith who leaves today for your part of the country.

Any attention to Mr. Smith will be considered a favor to us and will be gladly reciprocated at any time when in our power.

In haste,  
YOURS VERY TRULY,  
R.H. Taylor & Co.

Regards to Mr. Hedrick

. . . . .

San Francisco, September 16 1849  
[completed October 17, see below]

To William Talbott  
DEAR WILLIAM

Owing to the unfortunate circumstance of not getting our baggage through from Gorgona to Panama in time for the steamer, it was deemed prudent on reflection by Fred and myself that I should drive on and make the Paradise, so discribed by the lively imagination and Golden Pen of a Freemont, an Emory, and a Bryant.<sup>29</sup>

Considering clothing as a matter not worth consideration, [and] Induced to believe that the clear canopy of our newly discovered *Italy* afforded all the covering requisite for the comfort and healthy protection to the Pilgrim on his expedition in search of the Golden Sands, my experience is soon given, for if I had not of borrowed an overcoat and blanket from a friend I would have frozen the first night. As regards the temperature of the climate, it is impossible to keep the run of it, the Thermometer flies up and down so fast, and when least expected, and its fogs, which prevail the greater part of the day, are so dense that you might hide behind them the inequities of the Administration of the now departed Jas. K. Polk....

Owing to many circumstances, the penning of the above was postponed. Tis now the 17 Oct, and I have returned from a tour of observation to Mormon Island where I went at the request of Jos. Hobson to see the working of a gold washing machine. Of some celebrity in these parts, he proposing to furnish capital to work it if I should report favourably. I am now waiting his return from Monterey, where he now is a member of the convention to form a state constitution.<sup>30</sup> I will send you a paper with proceedings up to this date.

I was quite pleased with the process of gold washing, but found without much observation that labour is the true capitel of this great and growing country, and such as can be procured at the place I was is of rather a worthless character, such as the floods of dissepation are scattering through the land to damn all water that is not half grog. When Joseph H returns I will give him a statement, and if he thinks well of the enterprise I will encamp for the winter amongst the mountains of California, and if a Bountiful Providence

sees fit to favour me with health, I expect by the time the waters subside after the melting of the snows to come out *Jay Bird*. I am not afeard. There are other things in this country equally profitable and more civilized which I would prefer, but still, as my friend Joe furnishes the capital I will be influenced by his judgement.

You can say to Harry Warfield that I should like to see him, but to give up all idea of coming out. He could not be happy here. There are no comforts, and but few people who are not anxious to exchange their chances here of health for their homes and friends, whose voices are more cheering at the winter fireside than the crack of the rifle and the yelps of the wounded wolf with which the country abounds. I have not yet seen any other *varments*, and aint *anxious*.

There are an immense number of persons in San Francisco at this time, and there are not any but would like to be home. Gambling is the occupation of the masses. Tis disgustingly popular. This is an astonishing country. When a man buys a piece of property here he gets no guarantee deed, simply a receipt, and the way titles will be disputed here after a while will not be slow.

There are other places of importance besides San Francisco. Sacramento is a great place, about one hundred and fifty miles up the Sacramento river. Six months ago there was but one building. Now there are five or six hundred frames covered with canvass, and filled with men, women and children, familys of the immigrants from over the mountains, and I counted laying along the banks of the rivers at this town thirty sail of vessels, most of a large class: Ships, Barques, Brigs, Schooners, and Steam Boats. The shore is bold and large vessels lay so near its banks you can step on shore. The only Hotel is of frame, not as large as the tavern at Lavender Mill. It rents for Fifty thousand dollars a year. Grass grows in the low lands near this town in great abundance, but still it sells for six dollars per hundred pounds, and corn at this time four dollars per bushel. Still, teaming and carting is very profitable. Lawyers, Preachers, Doctors, Merchants are frequently found driving wag-gons and carts, and one man driving an ox team was pointed out to me as one of the Professors from Yale college.

You are aware Thos. Butler King of Georgia has been out here some time.<sup>31</sup> He resigned his seat in Congress and is selected as the

candidate for Senator from this state. Of course, he goes opposed to slavery as this is unanimously a free state. Sailors and Negroes have never before seen such a country as this California. Big Oaks from little acorns grow. You know Steinberger was small after his troubles with the Western bank, but Phoenix-like he has risen from his ashes, and has become in this country a perfect Giraff, builds Hotels, buys lots, land, and has acquired for himself the title of the Baron. He entertains frequently and most extravagantly. He knows the ropes, and I predict time will a tale unfold.

I received a letter from Mother yesterday. Tell her I thank her for it. Was delighted to learn all well. I would write often, but it is difficult to find a quiet place. I have no quiet chamber to retreat to, to write. I am now stopping at Cross and Hobsons store on a table, consider it remarkably fine quarters. Have not slept on a bed since I left the steamer at Chagres.

*Adieu.* Remember me to all.  
YOUR SINCERE FRIEND  
J. Marsh Smith

P.S. When I make money enough to live comfortable, and buy a little farm, I am away [from] here.

\* . \* . \*

*San Francisco, October 18 1849*

To John Marsh Smith  
Miner's Hotel  
Puebla de San Jose  
DEAR SIR

We have just received your favor of 17 instant and regret to learn that you did not meet with our Mr. J. Hobson.

If Mr. McDuffie should not be in San Jose on your receipt of this we request that you will proceed without delay to Monterey and carry out our instructions already given to you.

Mr. McDuffie offered to our Mr. Jos. Hobson in Monterey property there which the latter owned, and in case he proposes to give you the same at a valuation on which you can immediately realize half

its price we wish you to take it—but not if you can by any means do better, as we believe he is able to pay the full amounts.

YOURS TRULY  
Cross Hobson & Co

. . . . .

*Sacramento City, October 22 1849*

To John Marsh Smith  
DEAR JOHN

I recd yours on Saturday 20th and send Fred's letter this morning by an acquaintance of mine whom I can depend upon to deliver, and have also written myself. I have not heard from him since you left but if I do, will let you know, or rather will write to you and put in the post office. And this I believe is the last of letters in this country as far as Post Office is concerned. I hope you may select this place for business.

RESP YOUR OBT SERV'T  
James Lea<sup>sr</sup>

. . . . .

*Mormon Island, October 23 [1849]*

To John Marsh Smith  
San Francisco, California  
DEAR BRO

I have just recd your letter with our friend Jim Lea. I was sick for ten days after you left, but have never at any time been in want of funds and since my recovery have bought a first rate rocker and am more than paying expenses. Digging here pays about as well as when you left—from \$5 to \$20 per day on an average. I think you did well to let the large machine alone as the small companies who have purchased them are getting very tired of their bargains.

The gentleman who takes this letter down for me is about to leave.

AFFECTIONATELY YOUR BROTHER  
Frederick Tyson

[Note on edge of envelope on the address side, apparently by JMS]

May 30 from JSH-10\$ May 30th Loaned Fred dust 23.00  
cash 10.00  
33.00

. . . . .

*San Francisco, October 30 1849*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
care of Smith & Curlett  
Baltimore, Md.  
DEAR LIZZIE

Express to Mother my thanks for her kindness. Her favour up to August 14th I received. Thee was out of town. I trust Gilly's indisposition was not of a serious character. Dear little fellow. Do not recall to his memory the playfull moments I [used] to have with him. My absence I know does not torment little Tom,<sup>35</sup> and Lizzie, be happy. I came here but for one object, and I feel confident I will accomplish it, trusting I may be preserved in health and strength. I have not accomplished much yet, but I have had a good excuse to offer. The dysentarry has prevailed to a great extent since my arrival. I have been one of the afflicted. I would think myself well and go to work, but would render myself unfit for service the day after. I have been for three weeks in comfortable quarters and good service, and do feel thankful to report myself well. I weigh one hundred and forty nine pounds, being ten pounds more than I weighed when I left home.

I started with Fred on an expedition to Mormon Island proposed by Joseph Hobson. Was convinced the project he contemplated

would prove unprofitable, and after recovering from a slight indisposition left Mormon Island to report as ordered by Joseph. Fred sent me word from there three days ago by no means to embark in the speculation, as the quicksilver machine was loosing cast amongst the miners.

On my return, I was embarked in a collection expedition to Monterey for Cross-Hobson, but met my man about six miles before I reached Monterey. He was on his way to St. Francisco so I was saved a ride on a mule that I was glad to dispense with. The roads through the country are magnificent, all as level as a floor though the country is very mountainous. I spent three days at St. Hosa the capital of the state of California.<sup>34</sup> (I shall not winter in the mines. I am to be engaged in a speculation that pays better and secures me a comfortable home.)

I shall use my efforts to keep Fred out of the mountains this winter. I could have secured for him two good situations had he been within reach: one 150 per month, one 240 pound [unexplained] per month. I have been engaged for some time as warehouse keeper for Cross-Hobson, and in a few days I expect to leave for Sacramento, Calif. on business. I will send for Fred and try and get him a situation. James Matthews slept with Fred a few nights since, reports him well. He has not yet averaged more than six dollars per day, but is quite sanguine of success.

When last in Sacramento, I stopped at a Hotel kept by James Lea, and the manner in which his house was kept reflected credit on him. Everything good, remarkably neat. Tom King has gone to the Southern Mines. He was well.

I have some gold of my digging in my tent at *Mormon Island* which I will get Fred to bring down. I came away and forgot it, so the amount is not large, but it is some.

Dear Lizzie, give my love to all at Jericho, all at home who enquire. Kiss the dear little boys and do not feel distressed about me. All is for the best. Excuse this confused mess as all is noise and bustle. There is no private places in California where a man can retire to write. Give my love to Han. I hope she is well, and the youngster. Tell Tony by no means to come out here at this time.<sup>35</sup> If I see anything I will send him word. He can come out and return home with Fred and myself when we return with our fortunes. Tell

Tony he would have to pay three dollars for a bath here. All are remarkably kind to me here. Captain, William and Joseph all requested to be remembered to you all.<sup>56</sup> Tell Thos. Marsh that Adamantine candles are worth here one dollar and fifty cents a pound, and scarce.<sup>57</sup> They sell the same here as Sperm. Soap here in abundance, about 3 to 4 cents per lb. Tell Robert and James drugs (dull).<sup>58</sup>

Tell James Tyson that in the last 10 days flour has gone from ten dollars to 22\$. Such sales made today. Our supplies are principally from Chili. It does not do well to ship from the states.

I am waiting anxiously for the steamer with letters from thee. I cannot wait further as the mail closes tomorrow. Excuse all defects.

FROM THINE AFFECTIONATELY  
John Marsh Smith

If on any occasion thee should not receive a letter from me by regular mail do not feel uneasy as there is great irregularity in the mails through this country. Remember me to *Curlett and Wm Talbot*.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Sacramento City, November 20 1849*

To Henry Tyson  
Care of Tyson & Dungan  
Baltimore, Md.  
(favour of Mr. I. Lindsay of Boston)  
DEAR HARRY

Enclosed you will find the *Placer Times* with nothing of importance save the ordinance laws & some election returns. Politics here are by the masses neglected and owing to that cause I fear, the transport of old Tamany will rule the roost in these parts, in other words the Politicians of this country appear to be New York *Locofocos*.<sup>59</sup>

I am quartered for the present at this place, Sac City, with a fair prospect of being able to realize some little dust this winter. I trust I may not be disappointed. Cheer Lizzie up. My consolation here is that I see thousands of men around me who have left all that was



dear behind them for the present except in thought. I received Lizzy's letter with a lock of Gillie's and Tommy's hair. I hope Hannah Ann ere this is quite well. As Gillie and myself were such cronies, I some times fear my absence may distress him and if so tell them to mention my name in his presence as seldom as possible. I hope it will not be many months before I hail him at Jericho.

I regret to say, Fred is not well. The Doctor says he is by no means in a bad way. I shall take care of him if it takes every grain of dust I make. I have one of the best houses in the town, built of frame with a stove in the room and a cot for him to sleep on with plenty of Blankets. He has the fever of the country. I trust I have got through with my sickness. I had a long heat of it off and on. Now I feel well and weigh one hundred and fifty five pounds.

Say to Lizzie if she should not receive dates regularly from me not to be uneasy, as there is no mail from here to San Francisco than can be relyed on, sometimes not one in two weeks. Direct my letters as usual to Cross Hobson & Co, San Francisco. I have not yet rec'd any bill of lading of Fred and my things. Our little invoice will pay well.

If we had our house here at this time we could get over one thousand dollars for it. Such houses are renting here now for from three to four hundred dollars per month. Our cotton duck we could sell for 100 to 125¢ per yard. I will have to buy some myself and the least I can purchase for is one dollar per yard the bolt. Cornmeal is worth with us twenty dollars per [bushel] and we have two boxes Adamantines in our lot of Goods. We could sell every pound if we had them for two dollars per lb. Tell John Curlitt to look and weep, but such is a fact, that two hundred boxes of Adamantines would bring this day dust to the amt of ten thousand dollars. Flour has been high, what is called a Black Eye sold a few days ago at 50 dollars per bbl can now be bought for forty. A loaf of bread such as we buy at home for 6¼¢ I pay 62¢ for and at retail 62 a pound for good butter crackers. A few weeks ago things were different. It has not been 30 days since you could buy flour from 7 to 10 per list bbl. Beef is now selling for 50¢ per lb, such is the present state of affairs and there is not at this time one month's provision in the mines. Communication by team or pack generally cut off. Miners will have to foot it down if they want good grub. Some of them have lain in large lots of acorns,

which are quite nutritious. For evidence of that fact, I refer you to Porkology or the fattening of swine.

Harry, I did once think myself romantic. I now have a chance of testing it, for I look from my window on the Sierra Nevada covered with snow and this its valley knee deep in mud. I don't like either. I would like home and hope to fetch it before many months.

Tell Lizzy I would not that she should be here for all the Gold of the Mines. I can tell her some funny things when I get home. Tis strange to see all men and no woman. I think Jim Lea is going to make some money here. I saw on the street today Stillinger, Jimmy Keman's friend. Poor fellow looks bad. Say to Toney don't come to California. When I get home I will tell him all about it. The last great achievement is the navigating the Sacramento with steamers. The steamship *McKim* runs between San Francisco [and] this place, also the *Senator*, making three trips each week, with freight from San Francisco here 60¢ per foot on hundred pounds. There are some thirty large vessels lying along our River Bank, amongst them the *Baltimore*, *The Lady Adams* & *Sch. Ferdinand*, the one a brig the other a schooner. Mr. Dungan is going in business in this place, often has made some money.<sup>40</sup>

Not having ink that I can conveniently reach I write thee with pencil. Remember me to all.

YOUR BROTHER AFFECTIONATELY  
J. Marsh Smith

Tell my Mother when I receive a pile I will write her. That is all I am waiting for. Tell Toney to write me another letter. He gives me all the items.

A gentleman bound to the states promises to carry this so I enclose the paper. I know you don't mind expense.

\* . . . .

*Sacramento City, November 29 1849*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
care of Matthew Smith  
Sharp St. opposite Baptist Church  
or Smith-Curlett  
corner of Pleasant & Holliday Sts.  
DEAR LIZZIE

Having an opportunity of sending by private hands, I take advantage of the chance. I have been very much engaged and even am so at this time. On my return to this place from San Francisco, I found Fred rather the worse of hard work and exposure, but luck has provided me with a comfortable house, where with my nursing and a good comfortable room I am happy to report Fred once more convalescent. He rode out today on horseback, has a good appetite but is careful to restrain it.

I am ashamed when I think of the time I have been in this country and not yet a single remittance. Like Fred, all I have made has gone for Doctor's fees, but I am once more and truly thankful myself, and am not afraid but ere long the fruits of my labour may be presented to thy view.

I rec'd thy letter with a lock of our dear little boys hair. May a kind providence protect them. I hope I may realize enough to make them comfortable, for I never want them to feel as though California was their only chance. This is a wonderful country. Just to think, a community of men. I have not seen a half dozen or heard the voice of a single female, for the last five weeks. Those that are in the country have no comforts.

While I think of it, the letter thee wrote to me at N. Orleans I rec'd. It was forwarded from there by the proprietors of the St. Charles Hotel. I have not yet rec'd a Bill of Lading [for] our goods, yet shipped by Brother James.

A man told me he would give me for our house, delivered here, One Thousand dollars, but not having anything to show for it, we could not trade. Fred and myself expect to get even more than that amount for it. If I had here in this place one hundred boxes Smith & Curletts adamantines, I could sell them all for three dollars per pound. The price of washing is still six dollars per dozen. For beef I

pay 50¢ per lb., 60¢ for 1 lb. loaf of Bread, Thirty-five cents a pound for white sugar, butter one dollar and fifty cents per lb., molasses 2 dollars to 2.50 per gallon.

I cannot advise Tony coming. It is merely on acct. of sickness, but if he is determined to come, let him cross the Isthmus and come direct to Sacramento from San Francisco. My home here is as comfortable as the nature of circumstance will allow. I have one of the best houses in town, but no private rooms. In one room I can sleep about seventy five, in the garret thirty, and on the office floor as many as consider it comfortable. If any one that thee may be acquainted with should be bringing a coloured servant, they must get a pass for him or her showing they are not runaways. If I had Mr. Thomas Williams here, I would be willing to pay him one hundred and fifty dollars per month.<sup>41</sup> I have two large oak trees back of my house, have made an offer of eight dollars per cord for cutting them into cord wood, but can't find anyone who is willing to work so cheap.

Tell Tony to send me newspapers direct to Cross Hobson & Co. We have no mail to this place though we have some thousand inhabitants. Remember me to my friends with love to all,

FROM THY AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND  
J. Marsh Smith  
Proprietor of the  
North Fork & Yuba Hotel  
*for the present*

P.S. Joseph Todhunter is with me.<sup>42</sup> I am very much pleased at his conduct and I do think he will continue firm in a pledge he made me before I took him. Fred is not employed at this time. It is advisable he should keep himself inside the house as much as possible during the bad weather. He seems to think when the spring opens he will make some money and I know he will. Tell Father and Mother to be easy about me. I trust providence may protect me and place me safe amongst you ere long.

THINE  
JMS

This will be handed thee by a fellow traveller of mine and one that has been my friend, Chas. Ellis of N. York—excuse the rough condition of what I have penned. Kiss the little boys for me but do not speak of me to them. I am afraid it will set Gill to thinking which is not good for one of his build.

\* \* \* \* \*

*San Francisco, December 1849*

To James B Bond<sup>43</sup>  
Care of Brickhead-Pearce  
Baltimore, Md.  
DEAR JIM

Owing to the irregularity of the mails, your favour has not before reached me.

Yours being an important document, I write on its reception. I will forward this by private opportunity, will write you by mail. If you have 4 or 5 thousand dollars I say come by all means. With your knowledge of business, success is *sure*. Bring your money, *not* goods. I will not enter into particulars here for I have not time as I leave for Sacramento today, and I have no doubt but a letter by the regular mail will reach you as soon as this. Should this come to hand at an early date, say to Thomas that I am well. Have read Robt's letter but too late to operate, as the goods have been sold. The communications with the mines are cut off, and I do not think there is sufficient provision in the mines to last one month. There will be extreme suffering. California is no bubble—all, all, is reality. More in my next.

YOUR FRIEND  
J. Marsh Smith

\* \* \* \* \*

Sacramento City, December 26 1849

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith

DEAR LIZZIE

I rec'd per last steamer which arrived last month day of Oct 16th together with some back letters. I appreciate Roberts kindness but, like Captain Tobins Chicken that his literary friend swallowed, he spoke too late. I called for the goods he gave me an order for, but Winter & Latimer had bolted them. I should have been gratified beyond measure could I but have got them. I could have connected myself with a factor who had about an equal amt in cash, a man I know as a Gentleman, but such is life. Better luck next time.

In my last I told thee of a project Wm. Hobson & J. Wethered had in contemplation of getting up a Hotel in Sacramento. They did not finish getting it up ere they made up their minds to dispose of the property, of which I am acting as sole monarch, but to no profit save the improvement of my health which thee sometimes says is worth more than money. I don't want thee to feel for me for I am going to make money and that honestly.

Everything is now in a state of *Status Quo*, Mud almost to a mule's back being one of the predominant features of the present state of the country. All communication with the mines is over for the present. Fred has entirely recovered from his illness, he bought a pair of Mules and waggon though there is nothing doing now. He makes Eight or Ten dollars per day clear after paying Three dollars per day for Horse feed. It is most wonderfull, with nothing but, [illegible] those that took the trouble to save hay which they got for the cutting and now are selling it at fifteen and sixteen cents per pound. Flour is now worth thirty five dollars per bbl., fresh beef fifty cents per pound, *sweet potatoes* sixty two cents per lb., Irish potatoes thirty cents per lb. *wholesale*. I have not yet rec'd a bill of lading for our House etc.

I have heard great news from the mines today, the high water has driven people to the hills where they never thought of digging and their success is great. When I think I can stand the Mountains, I may be tempted to give them a fair trial. A great deal of the land around and in town is now inundated. The general impression is that the water will not reach my ranch.

Tell Tony not to come out here. It would be impossible to draw a picture of its deprivations. Just think, a community of *Sea Critters* living in a land of mud and water. Tell Thos W. I wrote James Bond immediately on receipt of his. I advise him to come and bring his money. There are now at this place laying some fifty Sail of large vessels and a population of about five thousand where twelve months ago there was not a Mark of Civilization. The Indians are scarce. Game plenty.

Dear Lizzie, I have made a good many friends but not much money. Don't fear. James Lea is well and doing a large business. He is proprietor of the Missouri Hotel. Joe Todhunter is staying with James Lea. He tells me he is to get 200 per month and his board. Fred tells me he is going down to San Francisco tomorrow, he says is financessing.

Dear Lizzie, give my love to all, Kiss the little boys for me. Hoping to see you all again. Happy, trusting I may be led in the right path. If owing to any circumstance thee should not hear from me don't feel uneasy, for if one gets into the country here he is where he hears nothing or can send nothing. Though Sacramento is so important a place we have no regular mail to San Francisco. Direct my letters as heretofore care of Cross Hobson. William Hobson is very kind to me and when in the United States I hope now he will have every attention from you all from

THY AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND  
John Marsh Smith

p.s. "The [Thy] Husband" alone so eligible was a sort of simultaneous lust of Eloquence as far as taste is concerned. I like "the [thy] affectionate," leaving out the "husband," as that is understood. I will leave it to the girls to decide.

JMS

Tell Father I rec his kind letter and will write him. I rec the Sum by Adams Exp.

JMS

The packages by the express are distributed near a bank before papers by the regular mail.

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## Notes to Chapter One

1. Frederick Tyson, who accompanied JMS, was one of Lizzie's younger brothers, born April 17 1828.
2. JMS was educated in Alexandria, Virginia, by Benjamin Hallowell, a leading Quaker, possibly the father of "young Hallowell."
3. Henry Tyson, another of Lizzie's brothers, born November 18 1820; Anne Tyson, a sister of Lizzie, born February 6 1825; Gilbert Tyson Smith, elder son of Lizzie and JMS, born April 30 1846; Hannah Smith Atkinson, a sister of JMS, born April 26 1821. Her husband, James, was in business in Baltimore with her brother, Thomas Marsh Smith.
4. A member of President Jackson's cabinet, in 1848 Cass had been the Democratic nominee for the U.S. Presidency, but was defeated by Zachary Taylor. Cass had supported the cause of "squatter sovereignty," the right of people in separate territories to determine the question of slavery for themselves.
5. A wooden side-wheel steamer of the United States Mail Steamship Company.
6. A "bile," or boil, was treated with a poultice of flaxseed, which JMS mentions in his next letter.
7. Chagres, a town on the river of the same name, was the Isthmus terminal of the United States Mail Steamship Company's New York run.
8. Built in 1837 at a cost of \$800,000, the St. Charles Hotel was a New Orleans landmark, where planters going to the city to do business and engage in a little revelry usually stayed.
9. Catherine Marsh Smith, JMS's mother (1790-1870).
10. After publishing a highly successful account of his travels in Germany, in 1849 the *New York Tribune* commissioned Bayard Taylor (1825-1878) to record his impressions of the California gold rush. These were eventually compiled in Taylor's book *Eldorado*, excerpts from which are in the Appendix.
11. The Tyson family farm, about 25 miles from Baltimore.
12. Famous for his exploits in the Mexican war, Major John C. Hays was elected as San Francisco's first sheriff in 1849 and later became the U.S. surveyor general in California.
13. The *Orus*, a 250-ton steamer, was in commission in January 1849 from the mouth of the Chagres River to Cruces, a village where boatmen were usually paid and travelers transferred to land transport.
14. Among the health hazards of crossing the Isthmus were yellow fever, cholera, and ague, a malarial fever.

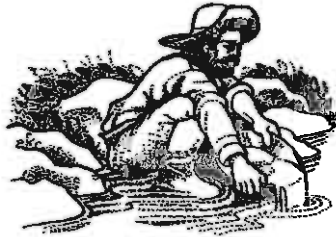


15. The Hobsons were social and business friends of the Tyson and Smith families. While the firm of Cross, Hobson was headed by Joseph Hobson, William was clearly the silent partner. In 1848 Joseph Hobson went to San Francisco on behalf of the firm with Alexander Cross; in 1849 he was elected as a delegate to the convention in San Jose to draw up a state constitution for California.
16. Thomas Marsh Smith (n.d.), a brother of JMS (see note 3 above); Thomas Marsh, JMS's maternal uncle; John Curlett, a partner of JMS's father, Matthew Smith; William Talbott, a close friend of JMS; Robert Tyson, Lizzie's youngest brother, born March 25 1830; James Tyson, Lizzie's oldest brother, born August 21 1816.
17. Situated south of Baltimore, between the branches of Lyons Creek and Herring Creek Bay, Jericho was evidently a property belonging to Lizzie's family.
18. The *Crescent City* was a side-wheel steamer on the New York-Panama run.
19. Harry Warfield was probably a Baltimore merchant who also served in Maryland's House of Representatives.
20. A sister ship of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's *California* and *Oregon*.
21. Harriet S. Tyson was James Tyson's wife, and thus Lizzie's sister-in-law.
22. On the Isthmus.
23. To "see the Elephant" was an expression used to describe the California experience.
24. JMS spelled Mazatlan in several different ways.
25. Quicksilver, or mercury, was used in extracting gold and silver from mined ore.
26. Horace Greeley (1811-1872), a prominent abolitionist, founded the *New York Tribune* in 1841 and edited it until his death. The paper had a high moral and intellectual tone, and was dedicated to social reform and economic progress.
27. Lizzie's father, Nathan Tyson (1787-1867), was a leading member of Baltimore's Quaker community. He headed the firm of Tyson & Dungan, flour merchants, and served as first president of the Baltimore Corn and Flour Exchange.
28. Discovered by Mormons in 1848, Mormon Island was a low-lying, frequently flooded area of some seven acres on the South Fork of the American River. It was near Coloma and Sutter's Mill, where gold was found the same year. The area is now partially submerged by Lake Folsom.

29. John Charles Frémont (1813-1890), an explorer, mapmaker, soldier, and politician influential in California's early history; William Hemsley Emory (1811-1887), a soldier who, as a member of the Topographical Engineers Corps, was involved in setting the United States' western boundaries between Canada and Mexico; William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), editor of the *New York Evening Post* for 50 years, and poet.
30. California's State Legislature met in San Jose in 1849.
31. A former U.S. congressman, in 1849 Thomas Butler King was President Taylor's adviser on California statehood. Although he was too ill to attend the San Jose convention, he reported the proceedings in detail to the secretary of state. In 1851 he was appointed collector of the Port of San Francisco.
32. James Lea was proprietor of the Missouri Hotel in Sacramento. JMS does not tell Lizzie that the hotel, on J Street between 2nd and 3rd, was also one of Sacramento's outstanding gambling halls.
33. Thomas Marsh Smith, JMS's younger son, born January 28 1848.
34. San Jose, California's first city, founded in 1777.
35. Anthony M. Smith, a younger brother of JMS, born May 29 1826.
36. Captain James Hobson of the *Iona* was a brother of William and Joseph Hobson.
37. Adamantine candles: The trade name for long-burning candles made from six pounds of tallow, two ounces of camphor, four ounces of beeswax, and two ounces of alum.
38. "Drugs" refers to linseed and tung oils, candles and related hardware, items sold by the firms of Smith & Curlett and Smith & Atkinson.
39. A radical faction of the Democratic party in New York, organized in 1835 in opposition to banking interests and monopolies.
40. Most likely a relative of Nathan Tyson's partner.
41. Thomas Williams was probably a family employee. According to Judge Clark, there is a family legend that Matthew Smith, father of JMS, settled in Baltimore rather than farther south because his bride, Catherine Marsh, said she "could never marry a slave owner."
42. Joseph Todhunter was eventually employed by James Lea at the Missouri Hotel.
43. J.B. Bond, a friend of JMS, of Brickhead-Pearce, Baltimore.
44. J. (Jas.) Wethered appears to have been an older relative of the John Wethered who figures in Anthony Smith's letter of April 30 1850, and in JMS's letters of June 28 1850 ff.

# CHAPTER TWO

## 1850



\* \* \* \* \*

*San Fran[cis]co, January 7 1850*

To John Marsh Smith

DEAR JOHN

It may be agreeable to you to hear from one who has lately seen your family—on the 6th of Nov'r they were all well and had received acc of you shortly before.

We are here almost up to our knees in mud, and business very dull, all however are looking for better times in a couple of months. So you refused to make money by encouraging gambling! I can't tell you how glad I was to hear it—to know that there was one at least of our old friends who had the courage to hold on to moral principle in spite of pecuniary disadvantage. I think just as you do on the subject—let us both persevere as *you* have commenced, & if we do not make as much money as others we shall feel that the blessing of God is upon what we may gain & can, when we return home, enjoy our means with Clear Consciences & without being ashamed to look our old friends in the face.

I have not "set up my Shingle" yet, but shall do so before long in the "common Line." Let me hear from you.

YR. FRIEND

JB Bond<sup>1</sup>

Is there a chance to make money [in] Sacram[ento] by "lots" now— or is it over done? Write to me if you see a bargain—& also generally in business matters when you have time.

. . . . .

*Sacramento City, January 20 1850*

To Nathan Tyson

DEAR FATHER<sup>2</sup>

This is the first time I have addressed Thee. I assure Thee it was not for want of inclination nor was Thee forgotten. That is impossible. Home and dear Friends are ever present to my thoughts. I have been delaying, trusting Fortune might favour me and I be able to give some good account of myself.

Ere this through Lizzie Thee has probably learned that fate led and disease compelled me to resort for a subsistence and wholesome shelter to an occupation not in accordance with Thy, my Fathers, or my own views or inclinations. On my arrival in this country I had much to contend against, having left Fred in Panama, the grave land of the Isthmus emigration. I felt anxious for his safe arrival and without a change of clothing, I felt restrained from appearing amongst those who might have favoured me. I did not remain idle. I applied myself and that hard. I will not tell you at what, it will do to laugh over if a kind Providence sees fit to restore me in your midst.

My Friends left for the mines, with them my spirits went and sickness soon followed. When Fred arrived I had grown better, and had a proposition made me by Joseph Hobson to enter into a mining operation, which would have been attended with considerable expense if undertaken and which would, as I reported after making my observations, have proved a failure as it has with all that have

undertaken it. I feel in this instance satisfied with my judgement and rejoiced at my escape for those who enjoyed a like enterprise have been unsuccessful.

In the meantime, William H. and Jas. [torn segment] Wethered purchased a property in this city and proposed that they should fit up the house and give it to me on mutual acct. Nothing else offering and a prospect of a long and wet winter, and not able to stand the exposure of the mountain snows in the condition I was at the time, I thought it better to take hold. I did so. In the meantime, they, Wm H [and] J W, relinquished the Idea of carrying out Their contemplated plan and have appointed me their agent to dispose of the property for which they want Fifteen Thousand dollars cash. It may seem singular to Thee, but for this property they ask as a rent one Thousand dollars per month—have been offered over seven hundred per month. The business has not paid me but tis more than a compromise. I have regained my health and honestly believe that the good comfortable quarters it afforded Fred in as severe a spell of illness as has ever been his lot, is now the cause of his restoration to health and strength.

Fred left here some two weeks hence for San Francisco. I have not heard from him, have learned of the arrival of our little Invoice and take it for granted Fred is giving it his attention as he promised to do so. He is quite fortunate in being out of this miserable place at this time, for ten days past all is one vast Ocean and I feel as though I were at sea, the snow cap Sierra Nevada the only land visible from my second story window. Water in front of my house when at its height was *SIX FEET* and four feet on first floor. Hundreds are ruined but none complain. *The cry is Ho for the mines.*

I saw today a man that drives a Team for Fred and was rejoiced to learn from him that Fred's mules had been saved. The loss in stock has been great and the prospect is it will be very high in the spring. The mountains are now covered with snow and when the spring thaws come we *expect a flood*. We live on Salt Pork and drink the water of the streets. The anticipation of another flood has completely unsettled our community and many who have amassed means now feel their distress and poverty, talk cheerfully of drawing on the Mountain Banks for help and many are preparing to

leave for the mines. It is the general impression nothing will be done here for a couple of months.

The idea of remaining inactive for so long and the proposition from many to join them and recollecting Thy encouraging advice to give the mines a fair trial has induced me to think seriously of it. I intend going down to San Francisco in a few days if I can raise the means I want. I can do well Teaming freights to some of the nearest mines where you can with oxen make a load a week. Rate of freight is fifty cents per pound or fifty dollars per hundred.

I have not received any letters by the last Two steamers but take it for granted there are some for me in San Francisco. I was engaged writing to Lizzie when I was informed of the rise in the river. In the hustle that ensued it was lost but will try and write to forward by the same conveyance that takes this. I wish Thee and dear Lizzie and all interested so deeply in my welfare may be of good cheer. I feel great confidence in my ultimate success. I can acquire money. All I ask is health which I trust a kind Providence may see fit to bless me with. I feel as happy as most Californians who have as much to endear them to those so dear but absent. My ideas are, should I start for the mines, to remain there till the sickley months approach. The account from the mines are encouraging.

Jas Lee has suffered severely from flood. None have escaped loss. Flour we pay for a single barrel at this place forty dollars per barrel. I understand it can be bought in San Francisco for fifteen dollars. Barley I saw sell at auction the day before the flood at Fifteen cents per pound, Ten Bags, with the priviledge of One Hundred. They are retailing it at the Fort Sutters, the nearest dry land to us, at thirty cents per pound used entirely for feeding horses, mules.<sup>5</sup>

I am really delighted to learn from Lizzie's letters that Thee and Gillie are such devoted friends. I anticipate a great deal of pleasure from the company of the Little Boys should we all be spared to meet. Lizzie gives me most glowing accounts of Tommy's progress. Say to her I shall leave this country with all possible dispatch when I can show myself amongst you as a man. With love to you all and affectionately to Lizzie and the litle Boys' Grand Mother Ellicott and my Father and Mother Smith and all the rest.<sup>4</sup>

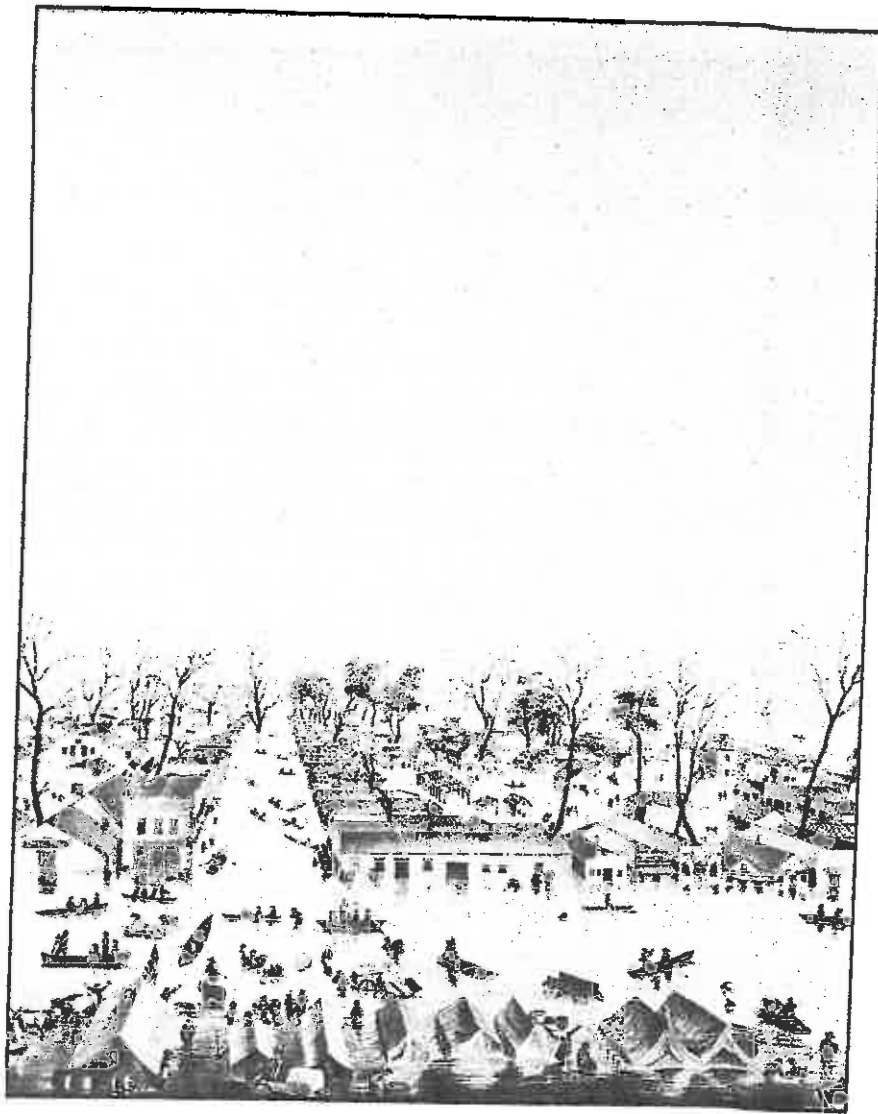
P.S. do not feel uneasy about me. Every body treats me kindly and I have made many friends but I know the way to retain them is not to use them so I rely entirely on my own application.

THY AFFECTIONATE SON  
J. Marsh Smith

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IN ITS ISSUE of January 5 1850, the Sacramento *Placer Times* notes the lovely weather and the receding water from the melting snows. Then, on January 15, an "extra" reported the onslaught of extremely high south, southeasterly winds and driving rain. Within five days waters from the rising river and rains were filling the slough on I Street between 1st and 3rd, rising to 2nd and 3rd streets by nightfall. By Thursday, January 18, according to the newspaper, the entire city of Sacramento "within a mile of the Embarcadero was under water with the exception of a few high points on the bank and on 10th Street. Almost all houses had water on their first floors, many swept away. . . . There is a great loss of provisions and goods. Many have lost 40 to 50 yoke of cattle, great numbers of horses and mules." Miraculously, only one person was drowned (swept from the deck of a boat). One end of a new two-story brick building collapsed. Sutter's Fort, on high land, accommodated patients evacuated from the hospital. A mile inland from the Embarcadero, where the land rose 10 to 20 feet, a tent city sprang up as shelter for refugees.

It was the worst flood since at least 30 years previously, when Sacramento had been little more than a small settlement at the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers. Within a week the waters had receded to below the Embarcadero. The City Council, in almost continuous session, had raised funds for the Hospital and was considering plans for a river embankment. The *Placer Times* expressed hope that another week would find things "back to normal." Meanwhile, enterprising citizens panned the waters for gold with some success, and hopes rose that the floods had uncovered more lucrative areas in the hills.



Detail from the print *View of Sacramento City* as it appeared during the great inundation in January 1850. Courtesy The Bancroft Library.



On January 26, the newspaper reported that "walking is a little soft," and there was another brief but intense storm with a "howling southeasterly" and rains. The post office reopened. Since it was a fairly sturdy building, "people [were] able to get their letters without standing knee deep in mud."

\* \* \* \* \*

*Sacramento City, January 22 1850*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith

DEAR LIZZIE

I have written a few lines to Father Tyson and will envelope this in the same package. I shall not at present give Thee a lengthy epistle. In the letter to Father, I gave an acc't of the flood. It is now subsiding but no one anticipates business for a couple of months. People of our city, the *Amphibian City*, a great many are leaving for the mines. The news from high up on the Yuba is great so that many who have engaged in business here are preparing to leave to dig. I expect to leave for the Yuba [River] about the first to middle of February. I expect to have plenty of Company. Will write Thee before leaving and rejoiced to learn of your all being well and do not give yourself any uneasiness about Fred and my-self.

I want thee dear Lizzie to write me regular and direct as usual to Cross Hobson & Co and do not feel uneasy at not hearing from me if such should be the case. I expect to remain in the mountains till June if I keep well, which I have no doubt I will be able to do. There is no prospect of starvation in this country, plenty of provision every where. I write this in a hurry, will write in a few days. Dear Lizzie keep your spirits up, I am not a *feared*. Kiss the little boys. Thine affectionate.

J M Smith

Say to *Toney* that he would not like this country and do not come out, you must not believe one half of what you hear from him through the Public Prints.

\* \* \* \* \*

CONGRESS AUTHORIZED mail service to the Pacific Coast in March 1847, and mail contracts the following year provided subsidies to the United States Mail and the Pacific Mail steamship lines. However, with the discovery of gold and the enormous profit to be made in the passenger business, both companies seem to have developed a certain ambivalence. Carrying passengers was given precedence over delivering mail, as R.T.P. Allen, special agent for California and Oregon, observed in May 1849. In a letter from Panama to the U.S. postmaster, he wrote: "I observe a tendency on the Atlantic side to make the mail service a secondary matter, and to *run for passengers*. This needs correction..." [Frickstad]. In February 1850, George Swain, prospecting for gold in California, wrote: "...no mail; that must come by the *Falcon* [The United States Mail's flagship], which the Government with admirable ingenuity, contrives to have always arriving behind private enterprise.... Our big men in Washington don't know or care much about mail, if office and pay can be secured, apparently..." [Holliday].

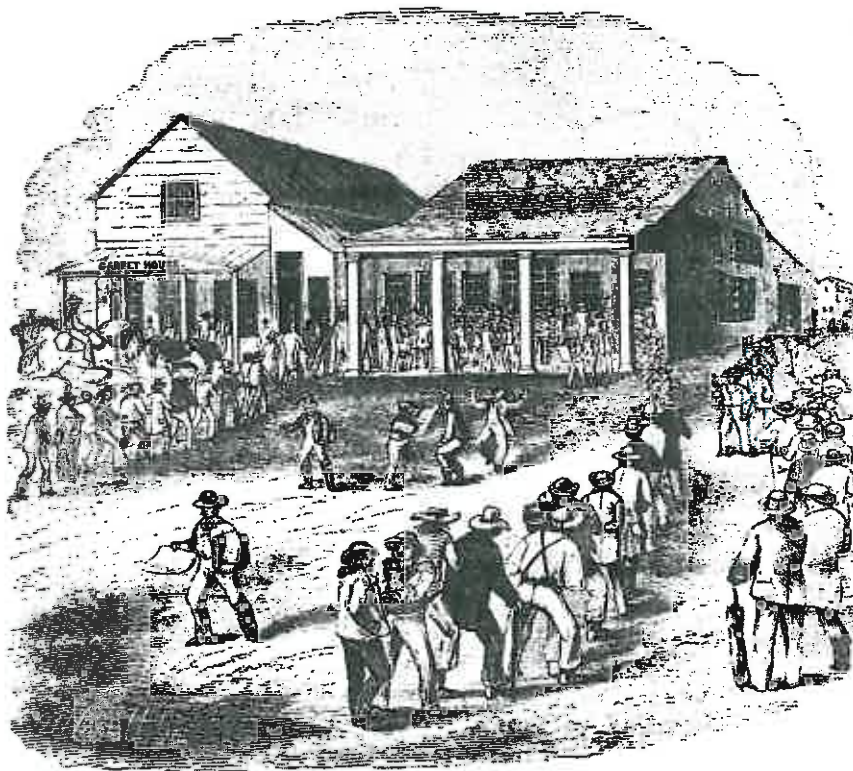
The regular run from New York to Chagres took from nine to eleven days, but the fleet was inadequate for the increasing amount of mail, and transport across the Isthmus was haphazard, relying as it did on local portage by dugout canoe and mule. It is not surprising that JMS repeatedly asked for his correspondence to be directed to Cross, Hobson in San Francisco, and that he and others out west seized every opportunity to send letters home with friends and acquaintances returning east.

On January 19 1850, the Sacramento *Placer Times* commented: "The Post Office: This interesting concern has been closed nearly two weeks, government having made no provision for paying clerks, and the Postmaster being in a quandry [*sic*] whether to go to work on his own hook or not. The post office as conducted heretofore is wholly [*sic*] inadequate to the wants of the community, and it may as well be closed as kept open. Private enterprise has rendered that shabby affair quite unnecessary."

In light of the situation, it is remarkable that the gold dust JMS enclosed in a letter of 1850 was safely delivered to Lizzie, and that by

as early as 1851 letters to people in Oregon City were listed in the local newspaper for collection at the post office. The letters may have taken at least two months to get there, but get there they generally did.

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Post Office, corner of Pine and Clay streets, San Francisco, illustration from *Annals of San Francisco*, 1855. Courtesy The Bancroft Library.

. . . . .

Sacramento City, February 16 1850

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

I recv'd a few days ago thy favour of Dec 8th also one from Mother & one from John Curletts, all I assure thee truly acceptable. Yesterday I recvd a letter from James containing Bills of Lading dated some time in August, also a very pleasant one from Harriet. Say to Harriet Had I recvd it in time I should have written her. I will write her from the mines. Is it not a miserable state of affair that we should be so neglected by the general government, letters written and posted in August just coming to hand in February.

The goods shipped have been recvd.

Fred is in San Francisco in charge of them. He has put the House up and rented the lower room at one hundred and fifty dollars per month. Several of my friends from San Francisco just arrived report Fred as being very well and very stout.

Day after tomorrow I anticipate starting for the Georgetown ore diggings.<sup>5</sup> My partner for the mines is an Ohio man, a merry fine stout, decent fellow, his name is High.<sup>6</sup> We are to be joined in a week by one or two Oregon men. I am accompanied by my friends from San Francisco. We have two doctors in the party, one a South Carolina man who came out in the *Falcon* with me. The other an Englishman and gentleman. The others are a Mister Jakes from South Carolina, one a Yankee by the name of Porter, a young man by the name of Scott from Richmond,<sup>7</sup> he a brother of Geo. T. [illegible] and two young men, one from Baltimore named Williams, a son of a Mr. Williams, Bookeeper for Harry Carson & Cox, The other of the same name a cousin of the former, a pleasant and very agreeable company. We pay only five cents per pound freight and allow ourselves about fifty pounds each. The reports from the mines is good. George Town is on a stream that emptys into the middle fork of the American between the Middle of the North and Middle and about seventy five miles from Sacramento City. It was our intention to strike direct for the North but there are such numbers going there that we have considered it prudent to go where we will be more

secluded. The snow at the Yuba mines is very heavy and at George Town it has nearly disappeared.

I don't want thee to feel any uneasiness about me. I get along first rate and am not without hope of success. Say to Mother if I do not write her in the morning she and Father should have a letter from the diggings. Say to Mother that. Say to Mother the only varmits here that trouble us are fleas of an enormous size, if they don't bite a fellow over at night they make him roll. My love to all. Kiss the dear little boys and tell them all to be good and mind what Thee tells them. I wrote Father Tyson by last steamer.

FROM THINE AFFECTIONATE  
J Marsh Smith

DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER

I owe both of you a letter each and hope shortly to be able to give you one from some rich diggings. I leave in the morning God willing and no preventations. There are nine of us in the company, all pleasant orderly men, and am in great good spirits at having fallen in with them as I thought a few days since my party would have been composed of but one or two. We have two good doctors in the Company. I hope Providence may favour us [with] health. I want Mother to believe but little she hears of this Country. It is a peaceable country. San Francisco is a noisy place. I have not seen a Poisonous Snake since I have been in this country. Fleas bother as our greatest terror in this wilderness. You must not despair of my success, I have not. I will take first opportunity to appear amongst you when I can come right. I have got accustomed to do without comfort and there is no chance of starving. Give my love to all and remember me to Wm. Talbott. If cousin Marshes are in town say I have not forgotten them.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE SON  
J. Marsh Smith

\* \* \* \* \*

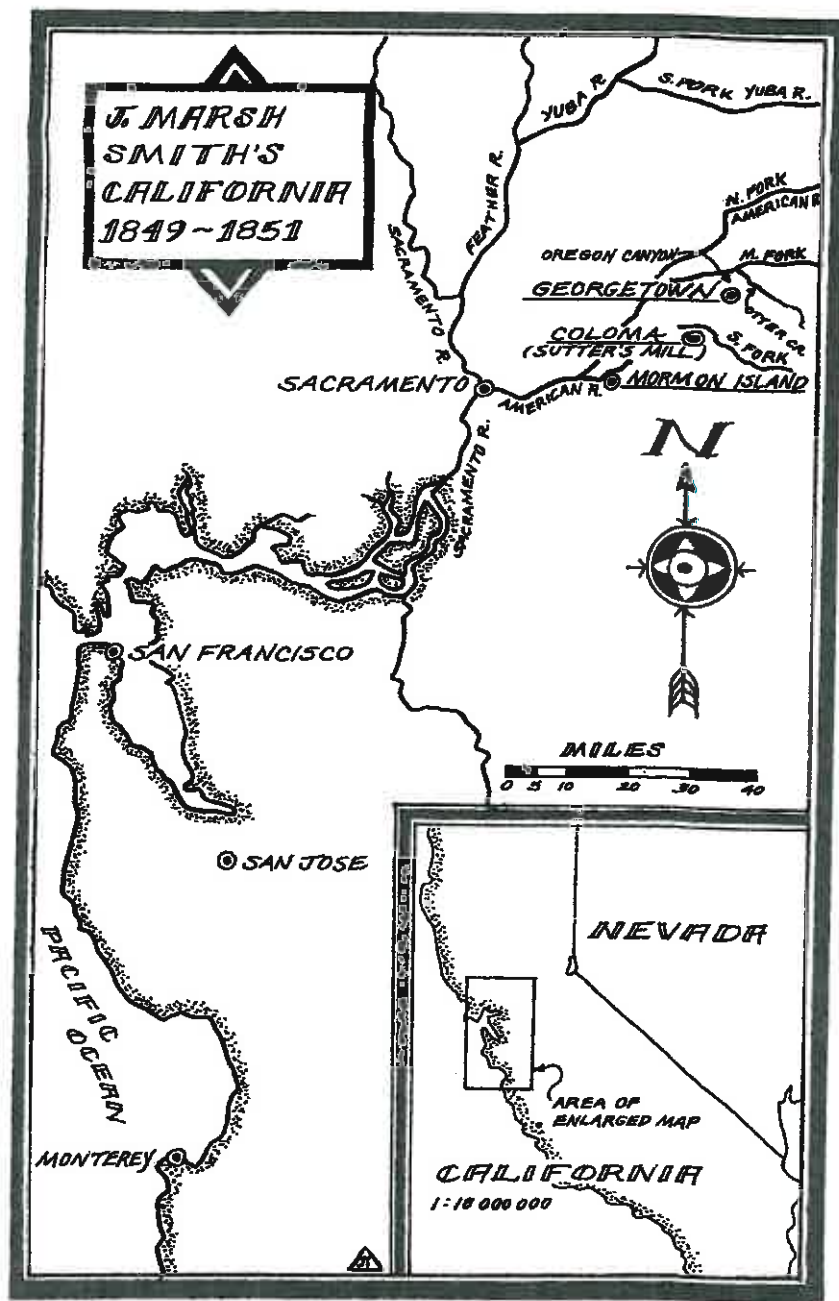
*Some Where in the Mountains, February 28 1850*  
[Seal of] Sacramento March 18 1850

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
Care of Smith & Curlett  
Baltimore, Maryland  
DEAR LIZZIE

Hearing of an opportunity to forward a letter to Sacramento City, and not knowing when another may occur, I take advantage of the present. Am truly thankful Happy and rejoiced to report myself in first rate Health and Spirits. The happiness I anticipate should a kind providence see fit once more to restore me to Thee, our little ones, and dear friends and home is of a character beyond expression. I am happy and comparatively light hearted here in this Wilderness. I hope through a spirit of true thankfulness that I am well and every day feel stronger and more able to contend with the inconveniences and might say deprivations which the life I am leading necessarily incurs.

I am now encamped with a party of twelve including myself about eighty miles above Sacramento City, where the face of white man was unknown til last summer, and feel as free from harm as though I were at Osceola. Don't let tales of California life torment Thee. Most are mere fabrications. In the midst of [a] newly discovered Gold Region we are compelled to remain inactive for the present during the heavy snows that have fallen since our arrival. Our time is mostly spent at this time in attending to our comforts such as rolling logs and keeping most magnificent camp fires burning, Such as Thy Father, mine, and Uncle Thomas would delight to sit by. We have our tents pinned as close down as possible so that no air can get under them and then our magnificent fires as close as is safe. Though the nights are cold we lay huddled up close together with a plenty of Blankets and our feet to the fire sleep soundly and undisturbed.

Dear Lizzie, I never retire without thinking of Thee and the little Boys and the happy hour when I may be restored to you which I trust is not far distant. May it so please a kind providence to grant so great a favour. As soon as the weather gets so we can operate I





intend applying myself with all my energys. Success in mining is not always certain, it is very much of a lottery, but if it is a losing game it is by no means a disreputable one. Some men realize large amounts, thousands suffer, but why should my chance not be amongst the successful. I am not going to believe anything else til I am convinced by actual experience. Our party expects to operate in the Oregon Canyon where we are now encamped.<sup>8</sup>

Dear Lizzie, I am now amongst the tall pines Freemont speaks so glowingly of. They are truly gigantic trees. We have one of rather an ordinary size against which our fire is built, which is four feet in diameter. I would willingly exchange it for a well, puny but well stocked Peach or Apple tree. Thee must feel perfectly easy about I have plenty to eat, plenty of warm Bed clothing, and no scarcity of fire wood and a pleasant set of companions and the consolation of having in our party two married men who have wives and little ones. It is an old saying, misery loves company.

I have not seen Fred for some weeks. I enclose a letter received since I left Sacramento City. I will try and raise ink so as to direct my letters. Write me and direct as usual to Cross, Hobson & Co. We will send down in a couple of months for letters so keep me posted. Write by all the steamers. I recd a letter written by Harriet last August. Tell her to write me and tell me all the news. Tell Tony to write and give me the items. I want to write Thomas Marsh & Father. I am saving myself till I get to making the big pulls. Give my love to Rebecca & Robert, Fathers and Mothers, Sisters, Brothers, Friends and Kiss the little boys.

FROM THY AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND  
J. Marsh Smith

When an opportunity offers I will write Thee. Do not feel uneasy at any delay for it is hard to get letters taken from here to the post offices.

THINE  
JMS

• • • • •



*Sacramento City, February 20 [1850]*

To John Marsh Smith  
Georgetown diggins  
DEAR BRO

I arrived this morning. Charlie Todhunter and myself are going into teaming business in this place. My house in San Francisco is finished and the lower floor rented for 150 per month. I have just seen High who is going up in few minutes and I must conclude, no news stirring. Steamer not yet arrived. Hoping, my dear Brother you will succeed well in your mining operations.

AFFECTIONATELY YOURS  
Frederic Tyson

My best respects to the Messrs Williams. Please write and let me know how you are getting on.

. . . . .

*Otter Creek, 6 days above Sacramento  
near the Middle Fork of the American  
April 2 1850*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

It is with extreme delight I take advantage of an opportunity which, although it deprives me of two companions I regret to part with, offers a Medium by Means of which I can forward to thee a few lines which I know will be ever so acceptable. I look forward with the fondest hope to the day of My return, but feel no uneasiness about Me. I am carefull of My health and person and trust to God to guide me.

I left Sacramento as thee will see by the Diary\* if it so may be called. Thee will see by refering that owing to great number of

\* JMS's diary follows. JMS enclosed the portion up to, and including, March 28 in his letter to Lizzie of April 2.

Snowy & Rainy days we have had but little labour in comparison to what would have been done Weather permitting. I intend to remain in the mines till the last of June if My health continues so good as it is now.

My last dates from home are one from Thee of Dec 2nd and the 10th from Mother. I anticipate a pile of acceptable letters and papers when I get to San Francisco. I regret I did not see Fred before I left Sacramento. He returned there a day or two after I left. I make two packages of my letters to Thee. In this I enclose 15 small pieces of gold dug by Myself on Otter Creek weighing about 1/2 ounce and about 1/2 ounce of fine Gold dug by Fred and myself at Mormon Island last fall. I would send more but its an experiment sending by mail.

Dear Lizzie, Kiss the Dear little boys for Me. Remember me to All, all most kindly. I will write Thee by every opportunity that offers. Feel no uneasiness. I intend writing to Mother and Father. Excuse my brevity, but I have done a hard days labour and want to write as many letters as I can as opportunity to forward them dont often offer.

FROM THY AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND  
J. Marsh Smith

I regret I have not ink to marke the little Bag of Gold I send thee. I know it would be safest for if this letter opened the [letterfold] it is in [letterfold] 1 inch wide [illegible]

[Enclosed in letter to Lizzie]

*Otter Creek, 6 days above Sacramento  
near the Middle Fork of the American  
[April 2 1850]*

To Matthew Smith and Catherine Marsh Smith  
DEAR MOTHER & FATHER

Five of our party having become rather discouraged made up their minds today to leave for more Civilized parts, giving a chance to write and forward by them to San Francisco. The last dates from home is Mothers of the 16th December. You must excuse non recpt

from me as this is the first chance to forward I have had since being in the mines.

Mother states the Horrible accounts she heard of Bears, reptiles, Indians, etc, all of which are *Fabricating*. I turn into my blankets after the labours of the day and sleep as soundly and enjoy my repose as unconcerned as any one who has nothing to fear, trusting that the same God who has watched over me this far may see fit to deliver me safe amongst you again.

I have written dear Lizzie and sent her a kind of diary. I have been working hard today and feel weary. On looking up I find my candle is fast dwindling. I enclosed Lizzie a specimen of my diggings. It was my intention to write John Curlett, Thos. M, Robert & James, William Talbot, Uncle Thomas and send each a specimen of the like kind but I am too tired. The candle I am writing by is a mould tallow. They cost near four dollars per pound.

Mother was anxious to know what we feed on at the mines. Enclosed she will find our bill of fare. There are four in our mess. Pork & flour is the song. We get fat on it.

The waters at present are too High for profitable mining. The Snows melting on the mountains that surround us in the valley here, all is delightful. I would like to send you some of the magnificent Flowers which we trample under foot. Excuse the brevity of this, it is more to show you are remembered by

YOUR AFFECTIONATE SON  
J. Marsh Smith

Some day if I can raise ink I will write you a letter. Give my love to all.

It was my intention to have stopped work early this afternoon, but having felled a large Pine Tree for the purpose of building a dam to drain the main stream it took a notion to fall just where we did not want it, and laboured late to get it in its place, so I left writing too late to accomplish what my inclinations would stimulate me to do, but being now in the way of my friends who wish to retire I am necessarily compelled to knock off.

YOUR SON AFFECTIONATELY  
JMS

I am going to give the mines a fair trial and if by the last of June I have a capital I shall go to San Francisco and by trading a man here with money cant well help rapidly increasing it. I am doing as well I think as any of the miners about these diggings. You must not feel uneasy or troubled about me. I shall leave California with all dispatch when I get my pile.

JMS

\* \* \* \* \*

[Pencilled across right-hand corner]

April 2nd 1850 Enclose in a letter of date of April 2nd Lizzie 1 ounce

FEBRUARY 17 1850. This day at 2 o'clock left Sacramento City in small company with Doc't Wright of England, Tom Williams of Baltimore, Bill Williams of Arkansas and [missing] Scott of Richmond, Va. Old Jim Foley of Missouri, teamster. Our freight consisted of Blanketts, Gold washers, Picks, Pans, Spades, pickles, Beans, Tea and Coffee, destination Georgetown. Made at 6 o'clock of same day what is known in these parts as the nine mile house.<sup>9</sup> This house is about the outscurts of Civilization. No California settlements beyond this. All is wilderness save where the Yankee has stuck along the trail his log cabin trading post. The nine mile house being crowded so that after a California supper for which we paid one dollar and fifty cents and warming our heels, we spread our blanketts on the ground in a tent we found unoccupied and slept till we were aroused to breakfast on the morning of the 18th. It rained quite hard during the night but did not inconvenience us.

FEBRUARY 18. We are all well, day delightful, road good. This afternoon arrived at Morman Island, the first or nearest digging yet discovered to Sacramento City. This is a beautiful place and reminds me of the scenery around Ellicotts Mills.<sup>10</sup> My ill success here last fall, my sickness, Fred's illness, and a prominent and well stocked graveyard rendered it rather odious to me. This place, I came to it last fall a miner and left it Minus. Such cases are not rare in this great and growing country. I found considerable improvement here and the diggers doing as well as they did in the fall. After

supper we made inquiry to know if we could lodge in the house on the dirt floor. Being accommodating, they allowed us the privilege on consideration on our paying fifty cents each. The Landlord, his wife and children took the bed. My place was by the side of it on the floor. Old Jim Foley at the Bottom, and the rest circling around with our feet to a first rate fire. Slept first rate.

Aroused in the morning to the Cook walking over us. We soon breakfasted and at 8 o'clock on the morning of Wednesday 19th, passed through a beautiful country valley and mountains, timber oak. Our wagon mired and we were compelled to pack on our backs about two hundred yards through a swamp and work out the empty wagon. All in good spirits and well. Made the day about fifteen miles and stopped at night at a tavern on Beaver Creek where the landlord done all in his power to make us comfortable. He was evidently a gentleman at home and used to a different life from the one he was leading. As a mark of my high esteem I presented him with a Brass Breast pin which cost me at home 12½ cents. In return he gave me a Brass Ring set with something like diamonds and Valued at about the same price. It was a custom with him to give a cigar instead of desert after meals, being short of one and having plenty of the other. It rained from four o'clock on the 19th and continued a greater part of the night and there are diggings at Beaver Creek. The gold is 22 Carats fine.

FEBRUARY 20. Laid up till about 12 o'clock in hopes it would clear but, despairing, started in the rain and made about ten miles making this day Coloma or the Mill. This is the place where gold was first discovered about 18 months since. It is a beautiful spot in a Valley of the mountains. This mill was located here on acc't of the Timber being pines of most noble dimensions. Here we had comfortable accomodations and walked down to take a look at the celebrated race.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22. We left Coloma early in the morning with a tedious march up an abrupt mountain said to be 3 miles to the summit, which we reached at 2 o'clock. There was to be a Ball here at night, admission one ounce. We made this day about 10 miles and encamped at night in our tents on the snow and distant about 6 miles from Geo. Town. We are all well.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23. Made Geo Town about 12 o'clock.

Cleared the snow, built large camp fires to dry the ground, and pitched our tents under some of the most magnificent pines this world can produce. The country beyond this being so broken, we make this our camping ground till we prospect and find good diggings. Snow about 6 inches deep.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24. Was spent as a day of rest, watching the camp fires and preparing our meals.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25. Started out with a party of some six and tried prospecting. Sunk several holes to the depth of six feet, but the water run in on us, so we could accomplish nothing. At five o'clock commenced snowing, raining, and hailing, blowing in, which lasted all night. Prepared our coffee and hard bed and turned in for the night. We kept dry and I slept most delightfully.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26. Snowed till 11 o'clock, cleared up, and was pleasant. Stayed in camp during the day, the snow being too deep to accomplish anything.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27. Moved all day. Two of our party went out hunting, returned unsuccessful, the heavy snow having driven the Game down on the lowlands and in the Valleys. They heard a report of some Indians having attacked a camp some five miles from us and wounding one or two. The Indians were pursued, the result I did not learn. Poor fellows seldom escape after an adventure of a hostile character. This day being so very bad and uncomfortable, found it difficult to keep up fires. Three of us concluded to go and spend part of the day at a tavern for the sake of a good stove and tolerable dinner, for which we paid 2\$ each. At night returned to camp and slept comfortably.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28. Clear. Went out prospecting and took a hole intending to work it next day. All well.

FRIDAY, MARCH 1. Commenced operation in the Oregon Canyon and laboured till evening, clearing the surface and intending to operate with our rockers on the next day, paying for the privilege 3 oz. This day operations 12 of us took out 12\$ We have no confidence in the location, but being the only location we can get do it as the best.

SATURDAY, MARCH 2. Snowed. Kept employed in keeping camp fires burning. Stormed all night.

SUNDAY, MARCH 3. Fine day spent in reading and laying in Camp. We are favoured with good health.

MONDAY, MARCH 4. Stormy, Snowing. Employed in making ourselves comfortable.

TUESDAY, MARCH 5. Worked our hole in the Canyon out. Made this day but 4\$, making after hard labour in snow & mud & water 15\$ for what we paid 3 oz. Have made up our minds to start a party prospecting on the next day.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6. Our contemplated plans all frustrated. Snow our doom. About 11 o'clock turned to rain, which fell in torrents, blowing a hurricane and storming all night. Our camp fires are quenched by the torrents of rain. Two of our party left camp for better and more comfortable accomodations.

THURSDAY, MARCH 7. Rained and snowed all day. Layed in camp.

FRIDAY, MARCH 8. A party of us consisting of 8 in number started out prospecting on the *Middle Fork*. Reached the River at 6 o'clock same day. Encamped after a tired march on the banks of the Middle Fork of the American at the foot of the Steepest Mountains I have ever seen, down which we had difficulty getting, as we were all over packed, having on our backs 50 lbs each.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9. In our explorations this day found the mouth of a beautiful creek up which we concluded to prospect. Returned to camp, ditermining to try our fortunes on this Creek which we have learned is called Otter Creek, on which we found no one at work and under the impression it never has been. We picked from between the Crevices of the Slate 25\$ in scales, some of them weighing one dollar Each. We gathered this amount, 4 of us, in 3 hours.

SUNDAY, MARCH 10. Six of us started for the old camp in Oregon Canyan for implement, balance of party detirmining to encamp at Otter Creek, left at 8 o'clock in the morning and returned same evening heavily packed. We all rested poorly having over exerted ourselves.

MONDAY, MARCH 11. Movcd our camp up Otter Creek having selected a beautiful spot. All around us is perfectly wild. We know of no white man near us.

TUESDAY, MARCH 12. Rained from Monday evening till 11 o'clock



this day. Started out, and eight of us took out this day 4 oz, which we generally found in the crevices of the slate rock. The gold here is Coarse. Commenced raining at 5 o'clock.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13. Rained and hailed hard all night and all this day stayed in camp. Our camp fires are out.

THURSDAY, MARCH 14. Rain & hail.

FRIDAY, MARCH 15. Rain & hail. One of our party, G. Cochran from Ohio, he's sick. Four of our party left for our old encampment saying they would not be back till weather became settled, determining to remain there and consume their provisions before moving again.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16. This has been a clear and fine day. We flatter ourselves the weather has changed for the better. It is very acceptable as our Blanketts have become very wet and we have no opportunity of changing them. Six of us all that are left in camp save Cockran who is still in his Blanketts but seems better. We started out to work and laboured hard but with poor success having made 1½ oz this day. At the price of provisions here we are not making expenses, having paid 48\$ for 50 pounds of Flour and 15 pounds of Pork. Our diet is almost solely Pork, Flour, Tea, & Coffee. Our flour is mostly made into Flap Jacks which with Flummox, when we have the ingredients, is great living. Flummox is made by mixing everything in camp up in one dish and Stewing it. This day Doct Wright, an Englishman, came over from an old Camp. Reported snow there one foot deep. It is an ill wind that blows no one good. Some traders were driving some cattle down the mountains today when one took a start and rolled over a steep precipice till he was dead. Not having money to buy a quarter which they are packing to the river, we have laid our plans for what is left of the carcass.

SUNDAY, MARCH 17. This morning I started out to see what had been left of the unfortunate steer. I found a head and tail which I shouldered. The tongue had been taken out but we had a fine breakfast of Brains and are now preparing a pot of soup for dinner. Tomorrow we expect to dine on Ox tail Soup. We have neither salt nor pepper. We season with Pork. After breakfast I with the rest, partook of our Sunday feast, a clean shirt, good wash etc. and feel first rate. Would like to be at Meeting today with Lizzie, the Boys, and all my friends but such is life and can't be helped. We are busy



today reading our Bibles, airing and drying our Bed Clothes, smoking our pipes, in general terms Luxuriating on Air.

MONDAY, MARCH 18. Started early and made about Three Dollars to the man. Corkan [Cochran] up and at work.

TUESDAY, MARCH 19. The [illegible] showers today made at 2\$ to the man.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20. Laboured hard all day made about 4\$ to the man. Gold is mostly coarse and found near the surface but the labour is hard. We have to turn over large rocks.

THURSDAY, MARCH 21. Broke my watch crystal this day—we are from this day without time. Concluded this day to open a deep hole in the bank—worked hard all day. Made about 4\$ to the man.

FRIDAY, MARCH 22. Continued digging in our hole but our prospects are all blasted, having struck the bare rock without Accomplishing Anything more—the gold all having been on the surface. Our hole is about 15 feet square and 5 deep, having removed rocks that the combined force of three could barely move with levers and all plans that our philosophy could bring to bear.

SATURDAY, MARCH 23. Having become disgusted disheartened, we sought another spot and made by hard labour about one dollar and 50¢ each by 10 o'clock, having started to move as usual by sun up, rising by daylight to prepare our breakfast. We average pretty much with the rest of our party. We are convinced that we are in a rich gold region but as it has never been explored we must needs meet with difficulty. An old miner I met a few days since on the river told me that the stream I was on must be rich but his objection to exploring it was that Grizzly Bear tracks were too thick. We have put a good deal of time in exploring but have not met the monster and as for myself I have no curiosity to see his honour the lords of the valley and mountains of this country.

Having laboured hard this day and our third partner, Cockran being unwell, my partner William High proposed we should work out thirty pans of dirt and appropriate the proceeds to buying molasses, which was readily agreed to by me. The amount we ran through in about an hour and 1/2 amounted to one dollar and ninety cents. We proceeded to the store some two or three miles distant with our bottle. Told the storekeeper to weigh our dust and give us

the amount in mollasses. Not being enough to pay for a quart, he insisted that I should have it charged to me, price \$2.50 per quart, which was done. Credit in the mines is Cheap. Store keepers trust anybody that asks it. On our way to the store we noticed a piece of gold about the size of a grain of wheat on the surface—stooped down and with our Knives got out in an hour 10\$ lumps, anything from two to three dollars. Growing dark and bound to have our molasses, we gave up the hunt intending to make further exploration on Sunday morning, a day we try to keep sacred, but our curiosity is excited and we often think of home and make every turn to get there.

SUNDAY, MARCH 24. Being our day, High and myself, to cook. We rise before sun up. Got breakfast which always consists of Flap Jacks, Pork & Coffee or tea, and our other partner being sick we started to explore the discovery made the day before, with the understanding all we made was to belong to the two. We arrived at the Contemplated spot and with jack Knives and spoons and shovels panned out in four hours, 4 ounces of the glittering Metal, having infringed on the Holy Day till we were satisfied that the hole was worth working in. Retired to camp. Told our friends of our success—described the spot—they started out to examine into the merits of the case. I prepared my meal Flap jacks, Coffee, & Pork, and the luxury Beans. Went down and plunged in the Creek—rubbed well with a rough towel—put on a change of clothing—read a few chapters in the Bible, smoked a segar and felt happy, fancied myself shortly bound for home. Our friends have returned and offered us 200\$ for our claim. Told them I would not sell for twice that, nor would not give so much for such a plan till twas more fairly tested. Recommended them to take Claim near us, which they concluded to do. The deposits here are of such a singular character that I hardly dare flatter myself that we have struck the spot. The only thing is we will work it out and then try somewhere else. Two of our party left today for the old camp at Georgetown to bring over some provisions left there by us. We weighed our gold, the produce of this morning, and found it to be 4 oz. & 12 dollars—near 5 oz. Our party returned this evening heavily loaded and much exhausted.

MONDAY, MARCH 25. Commenced operations today in our new hole. In about one hour took out about 12 dollars, when it com-

menced raining, which lasted all day. With the commencement of rain ended our days operation so we lay in camp inactive.

TUESDAY, MARCH 26. Commenced operations, the weather being clear. Each of us being three in number, took out one ounce each.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27. Each one ounce.

THURSDAY, MARCH 28. Cockran sick and in his blanket. High and Myself took out thirty four dollars, charging Cochran four dollars each for our services and giving him an equal portion, making one ounce each for High and myself.

FRIDAY, MARCH 29. Cockran is still lain up, High and myself dug this day Thirty Two dollars divided amongst the three making each 10.65 each, adding Four dollars each to High and my proportion makes for the day Fourteen sixty five cents.

SATURDAY, MARCH 30. High and myself worked part of the day. Made Ten dollars having laboured Hard, concluded to devote the balance of the day to going to the store, washing ourselves and clothes so as to have Sunday as a day of rest. The stream we bathe in is such as you read of, the melted snows of the mountains and clear as a diamond and cold as ice, most delightfull for absolution and most palitable to the taste. Cockran is getting better. Our friends are all discouraged, having done but poorly this week. We are in good spirits about our hole. It seems to run well. There is no knowing when it may give out. May not last a week. My last [illegible] and if we can average as well as we are doing now we are doing as well as the best of Minors at this season, the waters being so high that they cannot get at the rich deposits which generally lay near and in the centre of the streams. We have selected a spot on Otter Creek which we intend damming when the waters fall. It is attended with a great deal of labour but if blessed with health all the rest is easy.

I sometimes wonder at the immense stone or rather rocks we succeed to move with our forlorn implements, depending generally on Main strength and stupidity which is a wonderfull Machine in the mines. Good diggings are mostly found where labour is the hardest.

I am at this time a more happy man that I have been since I landed in this country. The march of civilisation is onward. Some minors have encamped near us. We once reigned sole heirs to the creek. The Red man has even left our vicinity and his trail is being

marked with the fresh grass and beautiful flowers which flourish where ever they can find space, to us an acceptable change giving us beauty [insert crossed out] for ferocity.

SUNDAY, MARCH 31. This has truly been a day of rest. The Bible has generally had its turn from each in camp. All is quiet and pleasant sounds as the day is fine. The regular, the only cloud around us as Paul used to say about his Hirdy Girdy and Flagolet that they was always regulars with him, so I say of pipes and Tobacco, they are our regulars here, the only luxury of Civilized life we indulge in that I am aware of.

MONDAY, APRIL 1. This day Cockran being able to work we all three turned to. Our days labour though arduous was not as profitable as sometimes. This day we took out but one ounce and one dollar in all.

TUESDAY, APRIL 2. This morning a proposition being made to commence operations for building a dam, High and myself concluded to operate with the ballance of our company, Cockran declining. He operates for himself at our old spot which we intend returning to as soon as the Dam and race are finished, which by the progress we have made to day will not take more than a week to know what our luck will be. I have no great faith in such operations. In many cases they have large sums of Gold taken by turning streams and in May it is labour lost. . . . Wrote Lizzie and Mother & Father, enclosed one ounce as specimen.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3. Having worked at our hole yesterday already and been moderately successful, and during the evening a proposition having been started to commence damming the creek, concluded to join in with the party in the operation. I have no great faith in its success, but thinking it best to move with the crowd and thinking how I should regret not having entered into it should my friends be successful, I think it best to be with them. Let the result be as it may. This day, two of our party having become discouraged, leave us in the morning. They say intending to go to the southern mines, Wm & Thos Williams. We regret to part with them. There are nine of us left. Succeeded in building part of our race this day.

THURSDAY, APRIL 4. Progressed quite rapidly with our race this day and succeeded in placing our timbers for the Dam. Our only tools are an axe and pickaxes and shovels.

FRIDAY, APRIL 5. This day it was concluded We should work our holes to make expenses for our Living. High, Cockran, Myself made this day about 28 dollars.

SATURDAY, APRIL 6. It rained hard all night previous and in the morning being extremely wet and disagreeable, pouring rain. Laid in our blanketts till eleven o'clock when it cleared off sufficiently to get breakfast. About 12 it cleared off. We all went to work in our holes and worked till about 4 o'clock. Our party made 10 dollars. We knocked off to go after provisions for the week—there are 4 in our mess. Our bill for the week we paid off, it was 29\$—pork and Flour our food.

SUNDAY, APRIL 7. Unfortunately for us this is a wet and disagreeable day so we cannot air our blanketts, which is Very essential as it dries them. Our wardrobe being the tops of bushes, as a matter of course our clothing is all wet—we are denied the luxury of a change.

MONDAY, APRIL 8. Rain until about 4 o'clock this afternoon—the clouds breaking give every promise of a fair day tomorrow. We discovered a drove of Deer immediately over our tent and near the summit of the mountain. High started out with my rifle in pursuit. In about an hour and a half we noticed him rise from behind a peak just above his game. Next visible to our sight was smoke and almost simultaneously came rol[ling] pell mell as we thought [a] mortally wounded deer. He was so satisfied that it was a death shot that he reloaded and succeeded in getting a second shot at the retreating herd. Not seeing one fall he took it for granted that he has missed his game. He returned to take charge of the first shot when, lo, he was not there. It growing dark, could not hunt for the lost deer—returned to camp and in the morning (Tuesday 9th) an expedition started out to find our game but returned about one o'clock unsuccessful. Worked from 2 tonight at mining with poor success.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10. High, Cockran and Myself made this day after hard labour about eight ounces each. Two of the camp started out to look for a pair of boots which one had lost on the mountain when to our surprise they returned with the Boots, and, most important to the camp, the Deer that had been shot by High two days before upon which we are now luxuriating.

THURSDAY, APRIL 11. Having just heard of some very rich Diggings

which have just been discovered in a Canyon between the North & Middle Fork of the American and about 22 miles distant at what is called Birds store, the company in camp appointed a young man from Virginia by the name of Scott and another, Gilbert Hogan from New Orleans and myself to go over and secure a claim. We started about 1 o'clock, each packing a pair of blanketts and provision sufficient to last four days. We had some high mountains to cross. Were astonished to meet so many persons on their return, which induced us to enquire of the various partys we met. Their accounts all agreed with each others statements, which were to the effect that some person had taken large amounts out of the canyon last fall, that the waters were so high it could not be worked before the first of June. The number of people who had collected were from two to three thousand—all idle, waiting for the fall of the water, *Gambling* the sole occupation. There had been a few persons shot there a few days ago. Summing all up, considering it probable the society would be bad and success not certain, After reaching within about 10 miles of the point, we concluded to return to our camp on Otter Creek and report, which Move proved acceptable to our Camp.

I was much surprised on returning to camp, it being night, to see seated round our fire Fred, Ned Iddings and Ned Pierce.<sup>11</sup> They brought me of all things most prized a letter. It was from Lizzie and was encouraging, also one from Joseph Hobson of San Francisco giving me an account of 2400\$ to collect in Vernon, he thinking I was still in Sacramento.<sup>12\*</sup> This has given me some uneasiness, as I deposited some money in Sacramento for a Friend and knowing he would mention if he received a letter, I wrote, just before leaving, the fact to J. Hobson who has always been kind to me. My three friends had [been] driven from Sacramento, the "Amphibious," by two important causes—a Threatening Flood and a desire to breathe the mountain air, on which I assured them they can flourish and fatten.

FRIDAY, APRIL 12. We operated today digging—our success but poor, averaging about 6\$ each. Fred and his party, I advised to lay down and gain strength before operating.

\*Hobson's letter and account follow JMS's diary.

SATURDAY, APRIL 13. We made from work to-day averaged about 5\$ each. Had to scold Fred today about eating Flap Jacks and wound up by telling him I would rather see him take Arsenic in small doses than Flap Jacks when he was labouring under an attack of dysentary, but Fred knows best that I will always give him my advice.

SUNDAY, APRIL 14. Today spent as a day of rest as [illegible] always ready for the mines.

MONDAY, APRIL 15. All Hands at work on the Dam and race. Fred, Iddings & Pierce anxious to go to work. Busy exercising my oratory to persuade them to get fully recruited, not disposed to take advice. I mention here with rejoicing that two letters Fred lost of mine, I received on Sunday by offering and paying Ten Dollars. On opening the package there turned out three, which was great satisfaction—one from Father Tyson & two from Lizzie. Accounts from home all satisfactory.

TUESDAY, APRIL 16. Fred and part of days labour broken down. I was glad to see Fred as a Brother but when I think of his imprudence coming where there are no comforts—no nothing and so hemmed in with ... [Diary ends here].

. . . . .

*San Francisco, February 21 1850*

To John Marsh Smith

We have written to Mssrs Booker & Brand herewith instructing them to pay you the *Amt* of acct on presentation.

DEAR JOHN

Herewith I send you a letter from the house with an acct for collection in Vernon. The parties we know very little about but were introduced to us from a respectable quarter. We have heard nothing from them and therefore wish you to stir them up and if you find any certain mode of compelling them to pay make them do so. I doubt their integrity because they have let the time when the amt was due from nearly a month without any explanation to us.



I enclose a letter to you from home. When do you go to the dig-  
gings? The steamer not in from Panama but expected momentarily.

YOURS TRULY  
Joseph Hobson

. . . . .

*San Francisco, February 21 1850*

To John Marsh Smith  
Sacramento City  
DEAR SIR

Enclosed we have you an Acct. against a firm in Vernon amount-  
ing to Twenty four hundred and Seventy dollars due agreeable to  
terms of sale 30th of last month.

If convenient we will thank you to go to Vernon and present the  
acct. for payment and use such means to recover the amount or to  
secure it as your judgment may point out, advising us of the result.  
We will allow you 5 pct. on amount recovered and your expenses.

YOURS TRULY  
Cross Hobson & Co.

. . . . .

*San Francisco, February 21 1850*

To Messrs Booker & Brand  
Vernon

Presented by Mr. John M Smith  
Messrs Booker & Brand  
Vernon  
DEAR SIRS

We have sent herewith to Mr. John Marsh Smith of Sacramento  
for collection, an Acct. against you for purchase mdse [merchan-  
dise] of us on the 30th Nov. last the amount of Twenty four hundred  
& Seventy dollars.



The mdse was sold to you on a credit of two months, and the amount was therefore due on the 30th of January last. We deviated from an established rule when we gave you a credit, believing that you would pay promptly at maturity.

Should Mr. Smith present the account you will please pay him.

YOURS RESPECTFULLY  
Cross Hobson & Co.

Messrs. Booker & Brand  
Vernon

(2 mos credit) To Cross Hobson & Co San Francisco

1849		
Nov 30	To 49 Bags Beans @\$10 .....	\$ 370.00
"	To 75 Bags Flour ea 175 lbs—65 5/8 Bags @ \$32 ...	<u>2,100.00</u>
		2,470.00

Pay the above amount to Mr. John Marsh Smith, San Francisco  
February 21 1850.

Cross Hobson & Co.

. . . . .

*Otter Creek*, 6 days above Sacramento  
April 7 1850

To Harriet S. Tyson

Your kind and very acceptable letter written in September last did not reach me until some time in February. Say to brother Jim, I have no occasion for a horse and buggy to hunt up a trout stream—within twenty feet of our tent flows Otter Creek, a mountain creek such as you *read of*, its water deep, clear as an emerald and rapid as the imagination can depict a stream flowing through a mountainous region, leaping from abyss to abyss at every bound and filled with Fish of the most delicate order. The mountains on this side of the stream are grand, almost perpendicular and towering to the skies, frequently of soil bare of heavy timber but rich in quantity and beauty of its flowers.

It is useless for me to say how my thoughts dwell upon home, Lizzie, our dear little boys and dear friends. The labor attending gold-digging is nothing when crowned with success. Our diet is hardly calculated for a laborer, but all I ask is health and I will work hard and give digging a fair test. I have not been particularly successful but feel encouraged to dig on, I would rather make my money by digging than by merchandising but expect to give the latter a trial about July next, and as soon as I make my pile I will be with you. I want you to cheer Lizzie up as much as you can. She must feel no uneasiness about me, and as for Fred he has grown to be a perfect worker. He is very hardy and strong and I think will make money, he is quite a *financier*. He sent me word he intended to go teaming, he owned when I left Sacramento a pair of mules and waggon worth six hundred dollars.

SUNDAY, APRIL 14. This is one day of rest, and having the time I take advantage of it to continue this epistle. The past week has been attended with such favorable results as my heart desires but "hope on hope ever," such is life. We have had some rainy days during the week. We spent one day in hunting which resulted in killing a deer, upon which we are now feasting. Today we have a roaring pot of soup on, I have just put in the seasoning, mustard, nutmeg, salt and pickles so as to make it *vegetable*. We could get a deer very frequently, as we often see them feeding on the mountains that overhang our camp, but cannot spare the time, so confine ourselves to hog and flour generally, flapjacks and pork today for breakfast dinner and supper and tomorrow pork and flapjacks for breakfast dinner and supper and that is not all. It goes first rate always.

On Thursday last I started with three others for some rich diggings, known to but few, distant about 22 miles and over mountains that truly made me feel our own insignificances. In these mountains a man in reality becomes half horse or half mule, for no one thinks of an expedition without packing himself with blankets and provisions and so becomes a *beast* of burden. Of the former we each started with one pair, and of the latter, enough for four days. We had proceeded but part of a day when we struck a fresh trail and were astonished to find it so well defined, but when the wind blew you might *almost* by the cloud of dust raised and the first reflection

satisfied me that the silent rumor was a perfect tell-tale and though it whispers, how fast travels the news of the new Eldorado as I understand tis called. The news of it had been sounded aloud some two weeks e'er we heard it in our solitude, and immense numbers were now seen crowding on in hot haste to lay claim to their 20 ft.

We met numbers on their return to old haunts with a quistical smile on their countenances which I readily translated into "humbug" and we concluded to make inquiry. All told the same story, that some promising indications had manifested themselves by the success of the labors of a few, some one or two had struck good leads and taken out large amounts. The common would, if deeded off from one end to the other, give 20ft each to a thousand men, and that already between two and three times that number were now quartered at the point, waiting the falling of the waters which will not be low enough to work before June so with a prospect of two months idleness and after that a fight for a claim we were satisfied 'twas better to make back tracks, which opinion being unanimous before eight o'clock the same evening we reached our camp on Otter Creek, where our return was hailed and our report proved satisfactory.

I was utterly astonished on looking around to find in camp Fred, Ned Iddings, and Ned Peirce. They brought me a letter from Lizzie dated in October which was very satisfactory and pleasant. The above mentioned gentlemen vamoused from Sacramento to escape the flood, which now promises evil to that amphibious city, and to lead their lungs to better pasture and exchange the putrid smell of a stock of filth for the pure air and crystal ice cold water such as we are blessed with on this ranch. They have come to rusticate.

I sent written instructions to Fred by no means to send my letters from home into the mountains to me, but unfortunately he having met with a good opportunity sent three, which he believes one was from Lizzie, another he thinks from my brother, and the other he knows not whom. I gave him a blowing up about it and told him the next time he did so I would give him a dose of *Castor oil*. There ain't no use of crying about spilt milk. The author that referred to them wise words must have meant the milk of cows and untamed asses, but letters is the milk of Human Kindness and the loss of them is

worth weeping for in this vast wilderness by us who repose in solitary grandeur under tall cedars on the mountain tops or in the valleys, who burrow in the ground and cradle all day and pan out at eve their spoils, returns to camp with appetite keen as the winter winds, spreads our repast on a portion of this universe, for the native earth is our table and the seat of our well-worn breeches the only arm chair we set in. When them goes we lays back in our shirt tails and holds on by our teeth, after devouring our prey which we generally does whole, it being mostly spoon victuals. We smokes and retires smoking and very shortly retires in the arms of an omnibus.

YOUR BROTHER AFFECTIONATELY,  
J. Marsh Smith

*At Georgetown, April 23 1850*

Postscript

Fred's trip to the mountains I am sorry to say been of no advantage to him. I am now at this place for a doctor. I left camp yesterday. I considered Fred better, he suffers from great debility, the mountains by which we are walled in are so steep that a mule cannot pack a man off. As soon as I can get him well enough I shall take him to San Francisco and insist on his going home as soon as I can find some friend or companion for him. My time and money shall be devoted to his comfort. He is not confined to his bed but requires a good deal of waiting on. Remember, to dear Lizzie and all. I am well, would write Lizzie but have not time. I brought this epistle over with me, not expecting a chance of sending it. If Freds sickness continues my plans for the summer will be knocked into pie but such is life. Our dam and race are nearly completed. I have not been compelled to lay up for one day with sickness since I have been in the mountains and trust to God I may be favored. I enclose a specimen.

Remember me to Jim. I will by first opportunity to Lizzie

[On outside of letter] Don't drop the small package of Gold inside

. . . . .

*Camp on Otter Creek*  
6 days above Sacramento  
Sunday, April 28 1850  
Sacramento P.O. May 30

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

Two of our camp becoming discouraged, one Dr. Wright an Englishman and a very pleasant Gentleman and one of the Proprietors of a Hospital in Sacramento, the other Equally agreeable by the name of Hogan from New Orleans, I part with them with regret. They leave to morrow Monday for Sacramento-the-Amphibious, tired of their poor success and hard work. They leave just as the mining season commences.

I cannot brag on my great success this far but this much I can say, that High and myself have done better than any other two of our camp and better than any that we have heard of in our receipts. Tis true there are but few here but we have had a good deal to contend with. Cockran who we took in with us as a partner has not been able to do a full days work since he has been in the mines and has had an equal share of the proceeds of our labour, and has now left us, sick, bound for the Hospital at Georgetown. Our partnership is dissolved. High and myself now. Cockran left some debts unpaid which High and myself have to pay for him.

I have had a good deal to discourage me since I arrived in this Country *but hope on hope ever is my motto*, and still feel as if success must be mine. I was in hopes ere this I would have been enabled to remit my kind Brothers and Friends the amount they so generously loaned me. Tell them all that if the Health which I am now so favoured with continues it will be forth coming.

I wrote Harriett, and on Tuesday last at Fred's request after a hard days labour from sun up till 3'oclock left Georgetown to bring over a Dr. Cauly, an acquaintance of Fred's and also of mine. Tis true we had a good Dr. in camp whose services were liberally offered me gratis, but Fred don't like anything thats cheap. So I to gratify him done as he ordered, he don't often request. Thee knows well he orders when he is sick.

I am astonished at myself to find how I have improved in climbing mountains. It was four o'clock before I commenced to ascend the mountain that over hangs our camp. I sat down to rest but once and made the summit in one hour and before night was eating a good supper in Georgetown, intending to leave the same night for camp, but when I became over heated I found I was a little tired so concluded to wait til morning. I slept with Dr. Cauly in his hospital, representing Freds case. Left early in the morning for camp, the Doctor promising to come over after dinner or as soon as he could procure a *mule*. I always travel on foot. I took it more leisurely, found I could make but half day, and got into camp at 12 o'clock and was away for work and succeeded in making half day on the dam. The Doctor visited Fred and prescribed. Gave him pills to take, some kind of Solution and Dover's powders to give should the Medicine have too forceful an effect,<sup>15</sup> and mixed some Tartar and Grease to rub on his breast to make it sore, which effect it has had and Fred is now certainly better and gaining in strength. I do not like the Doctor ordering him brandy to drink.<sup>16</sup> He has promised me that if he can procure any good wine in Georgetown to send me over some to administer instead. I can say Lizzie ours is truly a temperate camp, the only ardent spirits that has ever been in it I have purchased by the advice of the Doctor solely for Fred. I pay four dollars per bottle for it.

I must confess Fred is not strong enough for this country. Last fall when he was ill I tried to get him in the notion of going home but without avail, but now it is pretty well understood that the first Six Hundred dollars made by either of us goes to paying his expenses to that end, as my expenses are so greatly increased by Freds sickness. I have made up my mind to relinquish my interest in the dam for the present and strike as I have been advised into some of the Caniens [canyons] about 20 miles higher up on Otter Creek. My advisor represents them as very rich and but little worked. My partner High goes with me and I think Ned Pearce will accompany us. We pack on our backs implements, a pair of blankets each and as much provision as we can carry. There are plenty of deer in the mountains and an abundance of fish in the stream.

I must tell Thee a compliment Dr. Cauly paid me when we came into Camp. It was his remark that I was the most healthy looking man in the camp. I try to take good care of myself, finding Grease and flap Jacks not to agree with me sometimes. Since I altered my mode of Grit and now live on Dry ship bread—tea—and mush I do not think I eat as much Fat in a week as anyone here in camp does for one day. I am just about the colour of a piece of Sole Leather.

When at Georgetown I sent enclosed a trifling amount of Gold of my own digging to thee and Harriet and addressed thee a post script. Ned Iddings has promised to pay every attention to Fred during my absence as it is impossible to get him out of the mountains till he gets stronger as they are too steep to pack up. Shanks mare is the only horse a man can ride up hill here. I want thee to write me by every mail. I always write to thee when an opportunity affords. It will be a great treat to get a big pile of letters from home when I go down. I have sent instructions down by no means to send my letters into the mountains, as they are most always sure to be lost. I sent the same Word to Fred but he did not heed it and sent in an envelope by some good opportunity, and for a long time they were lost and never would have heard of them had not Fred come up. A reward of 10\$ brought them in a few days, their dates Christmas night, January 9 from Father Jan 10 1850 from Thee and a pleasant letter, all truly acceptable.

Dear Lizzie I want to write a dozen letters. Sunday is our only day of rest and tis now 12 o'clock and this is all I have accomplished, how shall I get through. I must enclose thee a few little specimens of my labour. I enclose thee an ounce some time since, which ere this thee will have received, Love to all and say to them at home they must excuse my neglect in writing them. When one swings pick or shovel all day he is apt to seek for rest on his back when every opportunity affords. I never have received a copy of the *Tribune* since I have been in the Country. If letters and papers are not directed to care of Cross Hobson & Co. I never get them.

FROM THY AFFECTIONATE  
J. Marsh Smith

[On outside of letter] I intended enclosing some specimens but only meeting with an opportunity to Sacramento think it best not to risk it as the letter may be lost.

JMS

[The following was enclosed.]

*Otter Creek, 6 days above Sacramento*  
Sunday, April 28 1850

To Gilbert Tyson Smith and  
Thomas Marsh Smith  
DEAR LITTLE GILLIE & TOMMY

This letter Father writes to you he want you to be good boys. You must love one another and be kind to all the little Boys you play with and when those that love you, particularly your good Mother and Grand Mothers and Grand Fathers, Uncles and Auntys, tell you when you are naughty you must tell them you are sorry and will try and be good Boys. You must not pull Grand Mother's Flowers without consent and dont eat any Green Fruit in the summer. Uncle Fred sends his love to you.

FROM  
*Father*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Otter Creek near Fords Bar*  
*Middle Fork, May 14 1850*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

I have taken advantage of every opportunity that has afforded since I left Sacramento to write thee. After the labour of weeks we have succeeded in turning the water sufficiently to work in the bed of the stream. Engaged in this employment have we all been for the last two days like *mud turtles* floundering in the mud in slush, and



after striking several well formed pockets which we worked out without any success, has satisfied us that the deposits here will not pay, for the gold in the bottom of the creek being mostly very fine, and that on the surface coarser, satisfies me the coarse deposit is of recent date and wont pay. I want to get where it has been accumulating for ages. On the strength of our disappointment, Ned Pierce left this morning for Sacramento without any intention of ever testing the mines again. My partners High and Ned Iddings leave this afternoon for the same destination with no intention of returning, and by them I forward these lines.

Fred is fast gaining strength, and so soon as he gets able to ascend the mountain that he shall do so and take up his quarters at George Town with Doct. Cauly, a Gentleman who came out with us and who attended him while sick in camp. Fred thinks it hard I should sometimes scold him for eating too much.

It is my intention now I am pretty much deserted by my old companions to remove and take up my quarters on the Middle Fork, and satisfy myself with making expenses till the waters fall. I am sure I have given Otter Creek a fair trial, and am encouraged to content myself with small gains on the river till the snows melt and the waters fall. I would much rather make my money mining than by any other process and the society of the mines is probably better than that of the cities. The people of the mines are generally temperate and we are no loss for society of the most refined Gentleman. From what I can gather, the health of the Country or part rather I am now in is considered good. I have enjoyed most excellent health since I have been here and have laboured every day save two and the acceptable Sundays, weather permitting. The highest I have known the thermometer here was 92. I have suffered none from heat, and sleep soundly at night.

Dear Lizzie, give thyself no uneasiness about me. I care about no comforts here while blessed as I am with health, trusting the day is not far distant when I may be permitted to return to Thee, our little ones and friends, in the character of a lucky miner. I assure Thee, Dear Lizzie I will be satisfied with this beat and when I get home I dont want to leave it no more. I think I would be satisfied just to play about in the yard with the boys. Tell my kind creditors that I think of

them often when I sling my *pick and shovel*. I am on desire, nothing preventing, to give mining a fair test this season and if I meet with no success then I will try something else. Love to all.

THINE AFFECTIONATELY

J. Marsh Smith

(Fred has promised me to write home)

(I hear no news therefore I can communicate none)

Dear Gillie

Thee must try to learn and write me a letter. Be good to little brother Tommy and mind what dear Mother tells thee.

Father

\* \* \*

*Sacramento City, May 30 1850*

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith

DEAR LIZZIE

I arrived in this city day before yesterday with Fred, anticipating starting him home in the first steamer then returning myself to the mines. Fred feels so much better that all the persuasion and argument I can use to get him home is of no avail. I consider his case requires such comforts and care as are not to be found in this country.

I write now in haste, will by next steamer write thee a letter. I rec'd quite a lot of letters on my arrival here for Fred and myself, about *Twenty*. Have rec'd from Smith & Atkinson Two Invoices and Bills of Lading Ref Goods Shipped per *Catherine*.<sup>15</sup> She has not yet arrived. Also accounts of shipments made by Tony. Kind letters from Thomas M. and Father Tyson. The steamer leaves in a few minutes. I have not time to say much. I am enjoying first rate health. Love to all, will give the business entrusted to my charge my best care and attention. Feel much obliged. If I feel justifiable by any

good opportunity that may offer for trade I may take advantage of  
Thy Father and my Brother Thomas offer. I will write them all,  
Father, brother Thomas, Robert, Tony by next steamer. Love to all,

FROM THY AFFECTIONATE  
J. Marsh Smith

I met George Evans in this [place]<sup>18</sup>

\* . . . \*

*Baltimore, April 30 1850*

To John Marsh Smith or Frederick Tyson  
Care of Cross Hobson & Co  
San Francisco  
DEAR JOHN

I wrote to you in February enclosing BLI & Invoice of Adamantine & Tallow candles on board ship *Catherine* & Schooner *Laura Bevan*. If you have received them and have not sold them, and there appears to be a tendency downward please close them out if you can get enough to pay invoice price and expenses, as the quantity going forward may cause the price to go very low. However use your own discretion in the matter. They are an article that are always wanted and the large population of California will require a great many. It is estimated that 100,000 people will have left the west for California this year.

George Hobson and three of his daughters are here, William & wife have been here intended going on to Philadelphia today. I heard John Wethered was to start for California today, William Norris going on the 15th of this month. Lizzie will write by him, all well at home. James Atkinson has been quite unwell but is better. He looks badly, has had a very bad cough. All well at Nathan Tysons. Bill Handy started for California about six or seven months ago. They have not heard of his arrival yet, went in the ship *Silas Baldwin* from Philadelphia. Gill was at our house to dinner today, went after dinner with Father to get a top, I sent you a newspaper last week and will also send one today. Richard Brown has got

home. He told me he saw you in California. Thomas wrote to Cross Hobson & Co on 13th March with Invoices and Bills Lading of my candles enclosed, as it seemed doubtful whether you would get those forwarded to you.

YOURS AFFECTIONATELY  
AM Smith

The candles on the Ship *Catherine* are Tallow, those on the *Laura Bevan*, adamantine Branded Belmont Sperm. I will direct this to you or Fred as you may be out of the way of getting it for some time.

DEAR FRED

If John has appointed any one to take charge of my lots candles please call on the party or parties and tell them not to hold on to them if they can get enough to bring me out square, as the quantity of Candles gone to California may cause the price to go low. All well at your home. Ned Ferris through town the other day on his way west on business.

Fred write to me; have you seen anything of John Shore. I gave him a letter of introduction to you. Bill George has been taking Polka lessons, you ought to see him dancing around Bacon Hogshhead. Bob Tyson will perhaps take lessons next winter, what a perfect swell he will be. Samuel Steel is home, has been very sick since he got home. Fred, when you and John are ready to come home do come when the Isthmus is healthy. One of George Hobsons daughters took the Chagres fever though I suppose had it slightly. If my shipment dont turn out good I will have to stop the shipping business. Good bye.

YOURS  
AM Smith

Bob has just come into the counting room, says he has not received that box of gold yet.

. . . . .

Baltimore, February 4 1850

To John Marsh Smith  
DEAR SIR

This will be handed you by my friend Mr. Charles Moore who visits the land of Ophir on business. Any attention and information that you can afford him will be esteemed a personal favor to myself, and I know that you will take pleasure in assisting him to the extent of your ability for the sake of your old friend.

John Curlett, Jr.

Mr. Moore has had the great kindness to take charge of a package for you from my wife\*

\* . . . . \*

Sacramento City, June 14 1850

To Elizabeth Brooke Smith  
DEAR LIZZIE

I wrote thy Father and Tony some three or four days since. In the letter to Father I gave particular reference to Freds *Sailing*. I have had nothing from the Bay and take it for granted Fred is now making good way toward home. He surely would soon have been taken sick if he had detirmined to remain here. The climate does not suit him by any means.

I have been enjoying most excellent health, but am now unfortunately a sufferer to some extent. The Doctor says I am suffering from poison so common in this country that it may be considered one of the prevailing diseases here. It is confined to my body and affects my sistem something as a tooth ache does and renders me too uneasy to write.

I fancy I can see light ahead and am only waiting to get well to take advantage of it. I do not wish to say any more on this till I find I

\*The contents are mentioned in JMS's postscript to Lizzie, June 14 1850.