

San Francisco.
February 10. 1847.

Sir,

You are hereby directed to take the affidavits of the people of California: who have complaints against Capt C. M. Weber. & transmit them to the Commandant of this District for reference to the proper authorities.

Very Respectfully
Yours Obedt Servt.

V. B. Hull

Comd. & P. District
of California

To
Mr John Burton,
Alcalde,
Pueblo de San Jose.

I have not the opportunity to say more than I do. They have clouded a bright Campaign. Having very friendly feelings for those of the parties at least, the discussion of the ties that formerly joined two of them caused me great pain. I said at the beginning that if it could have been avoided. So far as I am personally concerned, I would have been willing to have again landed at Black Bay, & gone through all the labors that brought us here. It now cannot be helped. The mischief is done & we must take the consequences. It is a contest in which neither party has anything to gain & the Army much to lose. The affair I suppose will soon be before the Court. There we must leave it, but I expect it will be found, that if one party has been guilty of harshness, or oppression as you term it, the other has been guilty of insubordination. Mr. Clay & others of his party seem to be making a great question as to the origin of the war. It seems to me too late now to consider it. It may have been produced by the acts of one party or ~~another~~ ^{the} other, or brought on by the force of circumstances. What is the difference now? It looks like diplomatic pretentiousness to decide. It is certain we are the conquerors in a regular war & have whipped our opponents in all parts of their Country, & under every circumstance, in a manner that women might be ashamed of. The laws of war entitle us to dictate the terms of peace & to insist upon such indemnity, as will compensate us for losses sustained through their foolish obstinacy & ignorance. Rather than yield this right I would agree to fight them 10 years. In settling the indemnity I am willing to be generous, & would even wish to be magnanimous to a certain degree. But the principle of exercising the right I would never relinquish. If it should be determined to withdraw behind a line, which seems to be a favorite plan with some, the best that we can take, as far as I can judge from my limited knowledge of the Country, would be the Panama to its source in the Sierra Madre, then the range of the Sierra Madre to the Pacific. This gives us a good Port, a grass & corn country for our support, only paper to hold in the Eastern portion, & along the Western the population is so scattered, that it would be difficult to organize any formidable attack.

Can regret them more than I do. They have clouded a bright Campaign. Having very friendly feelings for those of the parties at least, the discussion of the ties that formerly joined two of them caused me great pain. I said at the beginning that if it could have been avoided. So far as I am personally concerned, I would have been willing to have again landed at Black Bay, & gone through all the labors that brought us here. It now cannot be helped. The mischief is done & we must take the consequences. It is a contest in which neither party has anything to gain & the Army much to lose. The affair I suppose will soon be before the Court. There we must leave it, but I expect it will be found, that if one party has been guilty of harshness, or oppression as you term it, the other has been guilty of insubordination. Mr. Clay & others of his party seem to be making a great question as to the origin of the war. It seems to me too late now to consider it. It may have been produced by the acts of one party or ~~another~~ ^{the} other, or brought on by the force of circumstances. What is the difference now? It looks like diplomatic pretentiousness to decide. It is certain we are the conquerors in a regular war & have whipped our opponents in all parts of their Country, & under every circumstance, in a manner that women might be ashamed of. The laws of war entitle us to dictate the terms of peace & to insist upon such indemnity, as will compensate us for losses sustained through their foolish obstinacy & ignorance. Rather than yield this right I would agree to fight them 10 years. In settling the indemnity I am willing to be generous, & would even wish to be magnanimous to a certain degree. But the principle of exercising the right I would never relinquish. If it should be determined to withdraw behind a line, which seems to be a favorite plan with some, the best that we can take, as far as I can judge from my limited knowledge of the Country, would be the Panama to its source in the Sierra Madre, then the range of the Sierra Madre to the Pacific. This gives us a good Port, a grass & corn country for our support, only paper to hold in the Eastern portion, & along the Western the population is so scattered, that it would be difficult to organize any formidable attack.

W. H. C.

CAPTAIN ROBERT E. LEE 1848.

Lee writes a long letter to John Sanders, on the state of affairs in Mexico, following the American victories in the Valley of Mexico. In detail he speculates on the armistice and peace negotiations in progress. Of special interest is his opinion on the U.S. "possessing" and holding northern Mexico, on a line from Tampico, west to the Sierra Madres, thence to the Pacific and the Gulf and Peninsula of California. SEE Stephen Austin letter for a similar letter, that Texas take Mexico from Tampico to the Bay of California, in this collection! Also of interest is his remark that he would "be generous & . . . to be magnanimous to a crushed foe." It would be 17 years and 37 days to the moment that U.S. Grant would offer such terms of surrender to Robert E. Lee. A most historical and remarkable letter!

"City of Mexico 3 March 1848

"My dear Sanders The train that arrived from Vera Cruz on the 1st Inst: brought your letter of the 2d of Jany. I am very glad to hear that you are fixed to your liking in Phila, & in charge of Fort Delaware*. Though separated from one portion of your friends, you are brought close to another, & the advantages that Phila. offers for educating your children will compensate for many of the pleasures of the Valley of the Ohio. I even think that Mrs. Sanders might be reconciled to the loss of the Soot of Pittsburgh, by the promenade of Chestnut Street with little Anne by her side, & that Chestnut Street might be glad to gain what Pittsburg has lost. I hope some day to get back to my friends myself, & as often as I anticipate the time. I became anxious for its arrival. I have no doubt our Col. is reserving some good berth for me, but when I have not yet discovered. You are no doubt aware before this, of the prospect of terminating the war upon the basis of the treaty submitted by the Mexican Govt: The details of the treaty or rather project, I am ignorant of, but from what I have gathered of its main features, I hope it may prove acceptable to our country & Govt: At the time of its transmission I had strong hopes of its being ratified by the American Congress, but I fear now that the course taken by some of our leading politicians, the resolutions & speeches in Cong; & c, will tend to confuse the public mind here, as to our future policy in regard to the war, that they may be encouraged to delay & procrastinate, in the hope that the plan of "withdrawing the Army", "No indemnification" & c may be adopted. I believe if Congress had granted the means asked by the President for vigorously prosecuting the war, that it would have been terminated, by their ratification of the treaty. There are many causes operating in the country to produce this result. The power of the Military is pretty much crushed. Santa Anna at their head, knows that as long as we hold the country, there will be no chance of his resuming power. He therefore boasts loudly of fighting to the last & dying for his country, but will be very glad of others making peace, & when we have evacuated the country, will make capital of his resistance, to upset the Govt; & assume his lost position which is so sweet to him. The Clergy too are becoming alarmed for the permanency of their institutions. In addition to our example & opinions, the cry for reform, freedom of religious opinion. worship & c is being heard from many quarters, they are trembling for their property as well as power; & I do not know which the holy fathers prefer, except that the latter gives them the former. The politicians fear the dissolution of their Republic, if not the destruction of their Nationality. They also see the fruitlessness of further struggle. They feel that we have the whole country, & it is forbearance & not the want of power, that prevents our holding out. The longer we continue our grasp the greater is the danger of its becoming permanent, & indeed they have not the means of continuing the war, though they now may lack the power of making peace. The present administration as far as I can judge, really appear earnest in their desire for peace, & honest in their efforts, if honest can be applied to anything in the country. We shall see what will be the result. I have lately however seen a change in the public papers. The sentiments of some of the Governors, judging from their letters, also appear less favourable to

peace than formerly, & in a late letter from Peña y Peña* , he seems to draw a distinction between the time he signed the treaty & now. Whether this has been produced by our discussions at home or dissensions in Camp I do not know. All no doubt have there effect. many of the Citizens here say that the recall of Genl Scott has produced an unfavourable effect & those disposed for peace regret it on that account. I hope all will work well in the end provided we shew a strong front here & undivided heart at home, things will soon work back again. You allude to our dissensions in the Army. No one can regret them more than I do. They have clouded a bright campaign. Having very friendly feelings for three of the parties at least, the discussion of the lies that formerly joined two of them caused me great pain. I said at the beginning that if it could have been avoided, So far as I am personally convinced, I would have been willing to have landed at Vera Cruz, & gone through all the labour that brought us here. It now cannot be helped. The mischief is done & we must take the consequences. It is a contest in which neither party, has anything to gain & the willing to have landed at Vera Cruz, & gone through all the labour that brought us here. It now cannot be helped The mischief is done & we must take the consequences. It is a contest in which neither party has anything to gain & the Army much to lose. The affair I suppose will Soon be before the court. There we must leave it, but I expect it will be proved, that if one party has been guilty of harshness, or oppression as you term it, the other has been guilty of insubordination.* Mr Clay & others of his party Seem to be making a great question as to the origin of the war. It Seems to me too late now to consider it. It may have been produced by the acts of one party or the other, or brought on by the force of circumstances. What is the difference now? It looks like diplomatic pedantry to decide. It is certain we are the conquerors in a regular war & have whipped our opponents in all parts of their country, & under every circumstances. in a manner that women might be ashamed of. The laws of war entitle us to dictate the terms of peace & to insist upon such indemnity, as will compensate us for losses sustained through their foolish obstinacy & ignorance. Rather than yield this right I could agree to fight them 10 years. In rating the indemnity I am willing to be generous, & would even wish to be magnanimous to a crushed foe. But the privilege of exercising the right I would never relinquish. If it should be determined to withdraw behind a line, which Seems to be a favourite plan with some, the best permanent line that we can take as far as I can judge from my limited knowledge of the country, would be the Panuco* to its source in the Sierra Madre, then the range of the Sierra Madre to the Pacific. This gives us a good Port, a grass & corn country for our support, Only passes to hold in the Eastern portion, & along the Western the population is so scattered, that it would be difficult to organize any formidable attack upon our posts. Besides any movement against the Western portion, where we would be probably weaker, would be exposed in flank to the Eastern portion. This would also place between us & the enemy, a desert country, difficult to be traversed by an Army. It any rate appears to me preferable to the Rio Grande. But the Salient position that we now hold in the country, if extended through Quintero, San Luis Potosi & to connect with Tampico, appears to me the best line we can take in this country. We can exercise a greater control over the country, at a less cost, with less men than any other. We hold the rich mining country, the wealth, population & principal commercial centres. We have a country [U.S.] for support & can raise revenue. It would be impossible to operate against the Section of country, we wish to possess even if they could organize a force, without driving us into the sea, which would be difficult, & then each extremity of our line rests on a fortified port whence we would communicate with our country [U.S.] . If a line is to be held, that is the line for me. The mail that carries this, will carry the news of the Armistice. It will no doubt carry you letters from your friends here, so I shall content myself with telling you that they are all well. Genl Worth [William J.] moves out to Taculya where his Division is quartered. The papers will also tell you of Genl Lanes [Joseph] Scout from which he has just returned, & in which he surprised a party of Guerillews [as] , said to be Jarautas, killing some hundred & taking some fifty prisoners. Jarauta [Padre Cenobio] *

himself escaped ,but the Second in command was killed.They were caught asleep in some Mission or Quartels. I believe we had one man wounded.Col;Hays[Jack] & Major Polk[William H.] were of the party.As I had no military news to tell you, I have occupied my paper in **speculation**.They may serve to recall some of your former thoughts to your mind.I have been writing against time,as I am told the mail is to start at three A.M. tomorrow,So I must get my letter in to night. I hope it may not be so long reaching you as the former,though if its delay should exclude me from a Snarl,as the other did I shall not regret it.And now let me tell you . I never write for any eye,save that to whom it is directed,& if any [one] publishes a letter of mine,it is the last he will ever get.Dreadful punishment. I do not know where,my former letter lingered.I despatched it I think at its last date by a German Genl.going to the U.S. via Tampico.Present me very kindly to Mrs.Sanders Little Annie & Mrs.*Campbell & all friends.I hope from what you say Mason has recoverd.* I am glad I never saw those complimentary notices you mention,or my vanity & conceit might have made me act as [arduously] as my letter. I sometimes rejoice at my own insignificance,in the hope that any infermities may pass unnoticed.I mentioned to Major Smith [John L., senior officer to Lee] upon the reception of your first letter about your instruments.I hope he had arranged it.Kearny [Capt.Philip,lost an arm at battle of Churubusco,remained in the service only to lose his life at Second Bull Run in the Civil War] has your telescope.He reciepd.for it to Stevens [Maj.Isaac I.],who first had it.I cannot find that any one here has your other things. I will ask Smith & McClelland [Lt.George B.].I forgot them to day.If they have not them,the officers who have gone home carried them with them.Vey truly/
R.E.Lee".

*Captain John Sanders,to whom the letter is addressed,was with Lee in Mexico and had been returned home,probably for wounds suffered in battle. He had graduated,second in the class of 1830,from West Point.Sanders was made a Bvt. Major,September 23,1846,for meritorious conduct in the several conflicts at Monterey,Mexico.He died July 29,1858.John Sanders was a brother of George N.Sanders who was a Confederate agent operating out of Canada during the Civil War. George was named in the Specification Charges,against the conspirators in the assassination trial of Abraham Lincoln,but was never tried.

*Manuel de la Peña y Peña was Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations and acting president,as well as peace negotiator for Mexico.

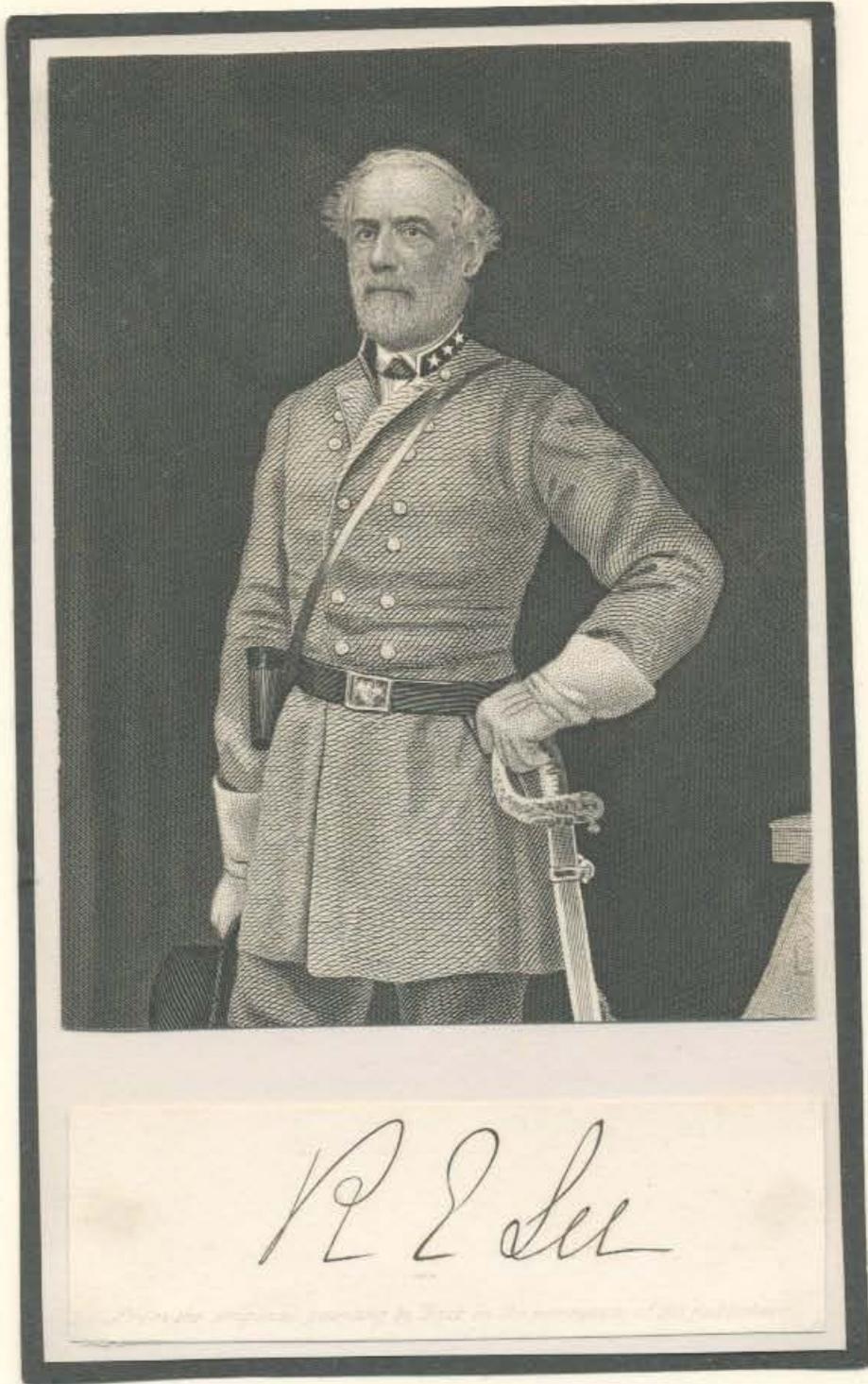
*U.S.Senator and friend of Genl.Winfield Scott. His son and namesake,Lt.Col. Henry Clay,was killed at the battle of Buena Vista.SEE Capt.T.W.Gibson letters in this collection.

*Panuco River runs easterly from the Sierra Madre range to its mouth near Tampico on the gulf of Mexico.

*Cenobio Jarauta,was known as that "renegade" Spanish priest by the Americans.

*Probably the wife of Col.Wm.B.Campbell,1st Tenn.Infantry.Later a Brig.Genl. in the Civil War and politician.Died August 19,1867.

*Captain James L.Mason was wounded at the battle of Molino del Rey.He died Sept. 5,1853.



R. E. Lee

THE WESTERN MAILS

we were in the battle - On the night of the 23rd we were ordered out to assist in the fight next day - but next day when we looked for Mexicans, Lo! they were not there - but we did not know this for some time. Our position being such that we could not see the Mexican camp - so that when Genl Wool ordered us to advance we all thought we were going into action immediately - and the General thought so too - but in a few minutes the Adjutant General came up & said that they were "gone" - gone to the whole of them - Then there arose a mighty shout - such a one as only American Soldiers can give - and there was the battle of "San Juan de Bonavista" known to be won - and that too, by troops who were thought to be of so little use - because they were nothing but volunteers - Genl Taylor says that it is the greatest victory that ever was won by Americans - and equal to any in the world - And now the Mexican army is entirely dispersed with the exception of the cavalry. We have taken a great many prisoners - more, then we want - and such a miserable set of men you never even heard of - For many weeks they have been at the point of starvation & the hope of taking our

fighting for life as well as honor. We will know
quarters & who would not rather sell his life dearly than
be captured. But to
stand firm to death
thing, & table
corn, & that most
of the
Americans
retreat
Satellite
March 4th 1847
Dear Sir,
I have had a great battle near this place - & perhaps
you may feel a little anxious to hear from some of us who were
engaged in it. I am glad that in my last letter I men-
tioned the report that Santa Ana was near us - but that I
did not believe it - Now did I see enough - in a few days
I returned he did more - I came with an army which the size
of which made him confident of success. Our army, was had any
man in it was fit for duty - did not exceed 5000 - 5000 at least,
of whom were all true & brave - while Santa Ana's own report of his
strength made it 30,000 - while many of the Mexican prisoners called
it 20,000. Our army, under Genl Taylor & Wool, occupied a position
some 200 miles from here - which - though as strong as - would not
have enabled him to keep off an American army for three hours.
The battle commenced in the afternoon of the 21st of Feb. Santa
Ana - before the commencement of the battle - had sent a letter to
Taylor, asking him to surrender & that if he did not his men should
be well treated. Taylor's answer was that if the Spaniards

THE WESTERN MAILS

provisions was their great incentive to fight - and they did fight - & that bravely for a long time - as the appearance of the battle field covered with their dead & wounded the next day testified - But what could men fighting for bread do in a conflict with men who were fighting for life as well as honor - We well knew that they gave no quarters - & who would not rather sell his life dearly than to surrender & be butchered like a sheep? But to return to my subject - Our prisoners were nearly starved to death - it was absolutely impossible to get them past any thing eatable they would even grab up hands full of raw corn & eat it most eagerly - & Santa Anna's loss in killed & wounded is estimated at seven thousand - while that of the Americans is scarcely as many hundred - Santa Anna's retreat was so precipitate that he left many of his wounded on the field of battle & most of his stores & ammunition at his camp - We have many wounded Mexicans in this city in the hospital - Not only were the wounded left on the field - but at Incarnation - a little place some 40 or 50 miles from here he left all the rest of his wounded in the most deplorable situation - without food or medical attendance - Genl Taylor sent them some provisions - & is, I believe - making preparations for furnishing them with medicines &c - Some of the Mexican soldiers say that they don't care for regulars - but they hate these men (Volunteers) who "fight for fun" - They think that we fight for fun because at every charge or succesful fire we always cheer as though it was mere amusement - But now I tell you - those who were engaged in it called it anything but fun - I heard some of the bravest of them say that if the Mexicans were willing to quit that they were perfectly willing to do so too - The only "Pike boy" [Pike county] who was in the battle was [William] Henry St John [Pvt. Co. "E" 1st reg. Ill. Vol.] - The rest of us were stationed in town - as we are members of the company which was here - You know Henry - they say fought very bravely - he took two prisoners with his own hands - His conduct attracked the attention & admeration of many of the officers - When I asked Henry what A.O. Huseh was doing during the fight (you know Heuith belongs to the band as does Henry) He answered "There is his bed - that is all that I can say" - you may draw your own inferences from this - & I presume that they will not be very flattering to Mr Heuetts[?]* vanity - The best thing that I have heard lately is the report that Santa Anna gave us an excuse for being whipped by 4500 volunteers - that he was forced into the fight by the Mexican Congress - That they would not furnish him with money nor provisions - But told him to go to Saltillo and take them from the Americans - Most people call this the decisive battle of the war - If it should prove so I shall see you again soon dearest Alma for I very much fear now that Col Hardin is killed - there is no one of sufficent standing in the army who will interest themselves in procuring a sistuation for me....." The last two pages of the letter are personal - mostly his love for Alma and when and if he will come home or stay in Mexico, when he is discharged. He also composes some poetry to her and signs it "Rivers". However his problem is finacial: "however - bad as I want to go home - I dont want to go without money - for a man without money is generally without credit & without freinds - Truly - there is a great deal of hard sense in the old saying that - "**Poverty is no disgrace but extremely inconvenient**". He ends the letter with his initials W.R.S..

The only soldier in Col. Hardin's 1st Regiment, with the initials W.R.S., was Private William R. Sellon, Co. "A". His brother, Charles J. Sellon, was also in Co. "A" and is mentioned in the last part of the letter.

*Hardin, Yell, Clay and Col. Wm. R. McKee, 2nd Kentucky Vol. Infantry, were all killed by the charge of the Mexican lancers on the 23rd.

See the Thomas Ware Gibson correspondence in this collection, for his dramatic description of the battle. The very best this editor has seen from the war with Mexico.

THE WESTERN MAILS



JEFFERSON BARRACKS MO AUG 12
1847

Laura Sperry writes to her son Anson Sperry from Jefferson Barracks on August 9th. This letter and the following two are historically informative on the exciting times of the Mexican War and American expansion to California and Oregon. Three years of Manifest Destiny 1847 1848 1849. The following excerpts are from the letter below.

Jefferson Barracks, Missouri August 9, 1847: "...Last Friday news was received that Genl Scott had entered the City of Mexico on the 17th ult. (Scott entered Mexico City September 14th)...We are waiting with great impatience to hear the truth....Mrs Kearney has brought her family to the barracks on account of her infants being sick (son Henry Stephen) - She has gone on a trip to Quincy with Dr Wharton who has to examine some recruits there. Mrs Kearney expects her husband early in in Sept. (Kearny arrived back from California on August 22nd - twelve days after this letter was written. (SEE Overland Via Kearny Expedition in this exhibit). I suppose you have seen the difficulty he has had with Com(modore) Stockton (Robert F.) & Col Fremont. The last news is that the latter is on his way home under arrest (Fremont was placed under arrest on his arrival at Fort Leavenworth August 22nd). Col Benton Benton (Senator Thomas H. was father-in-law to Fremont) in great rage it is said left here for Washington not long ago. Col K- it is well known went with powers to establish civil & military government (in California - that the two above named had assumed the reins & refused to submit.

Laura does not mention her husband, in this and the other two letters, or his connection with the army although she was in the society of the officers and wives. He may have been a noncommissioned officer or a civilian attached to the army. It could also be that she was married a second time but used her name Sperry in writing to her son.

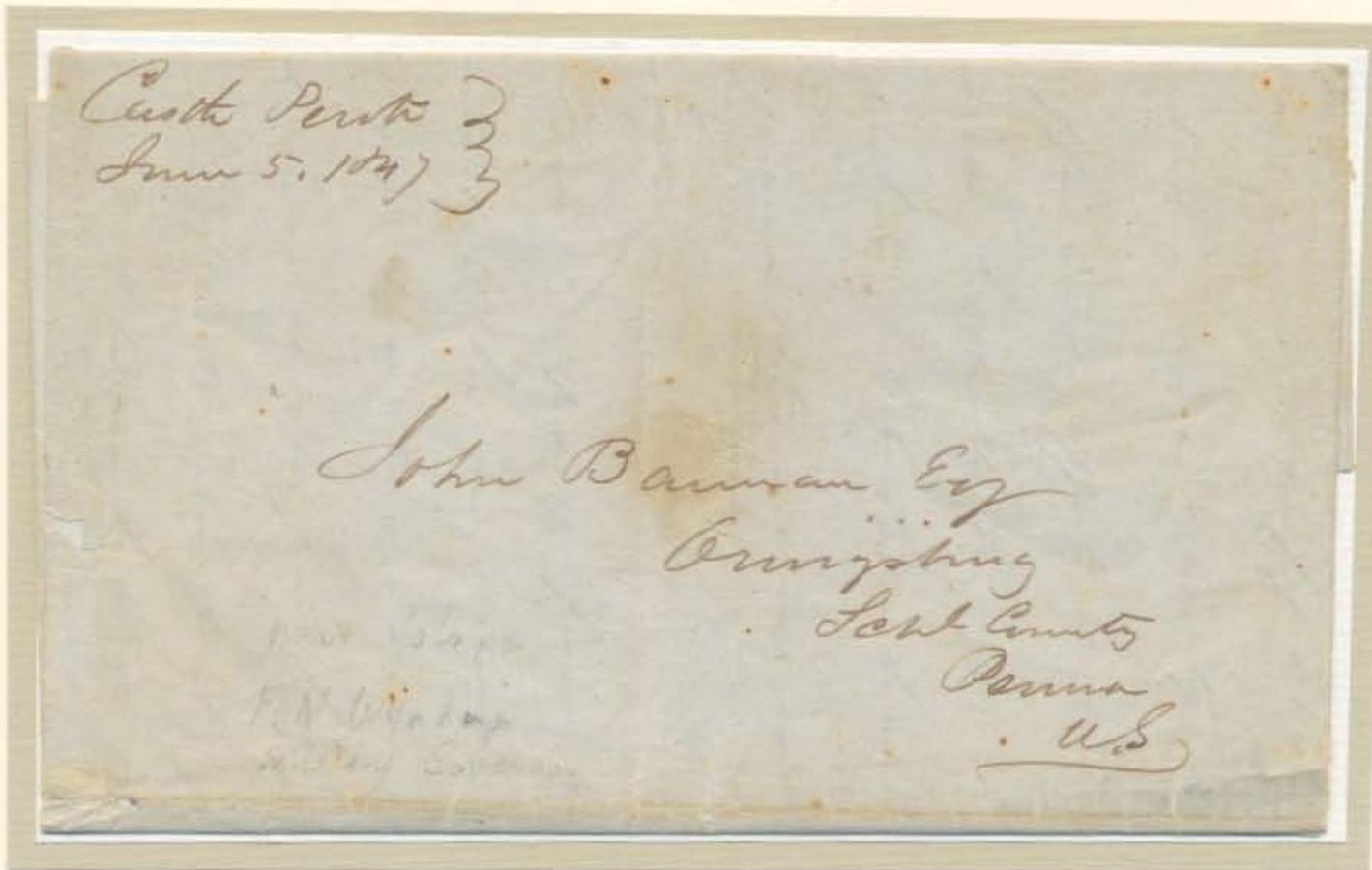
THE WESTERN MAILS



FORT LEAVENWORTH SEPT 30th 1848

Laura Sperry writes to Anson from Fort Leavenworth under date of September 30, 1848:...."Col H. (Ethan Allen Hitchcock) had been here & staid 2 or 3 weeks, & was ordered down to Independence to muster out troops coming in from the south & west (Mexican war). I suppose it is possible for M R (Captain Benjamin S. Roberts) to tell now what he can do for Pierpont here. When we first arrived he supposed he should be obliged to go immediately to Oregon, & he lamented that P- was not here that he could employ him at a pay of 50 dollars per mo. as forage master - He can do that in the spring when we go if he go on an independant command but that now is a matter of uncertainty. He was ordered up here to be in readiness with his company to escort Gov Lane (Joseph) & the officers of the Territory (of Oregon), but no one tho't they would be here till spring. Gov L. however arrived here the next day after we did & insisted upon going on, as it was desirable that the government should be established as soon as possible. M R tho't he should excied his instructions to go with him alone, & would wait for further instructions from Gen Kearney. So the Gov. finally concluded to take the second Leut. (Hawkins)* & 25 men & have the rest to come on when the other officials should arrive, which he tho't would not be till spring. It was already so late that he was obliged to go by St Fee (Santa Fe), & from there to St Deigo thence by sea to Astoria (Oregon); a long & tedious march. We hear from them oucsionlly by the troops coming in, as getting on well. Gov Lane expects his family out with us in the spring & other families will go along...."

Govenor Joseph Lane left Fort Leavenworth on September 11, 1848 as above. He decided on the southern route instead of the northern via South Pass and Fort Hall because of the latness of the season. His escort was under command of Lt. George Washington Hawkins of Co. C Mounted Rifles.



"Castle Perote / June 1, 1847

"Whilst examining some papers of the Castle to day I discovered several with Santa Anna's signature attached - The thought that you would perhaps consider it a curiosity determined me to enclose you one [not present!]. We have news from the Capitol [Mexico City] which says that he is elected President and that Lombardini [General, wounded at Buena Vista] is fortifying against us 15 miles this side of the City of Mexico - We shall then have another fight soon and after that Mexico is ours - The inhabitants of the city are much alarmed and are evacuating it rapidly - Poor devils they seem to know collectively that defeat is certain and always provide for it beforehand. The war is beginning to assume a quere aspect. The people are waking up - Guerilla fighting is becoming in vogue and a general battle here after will be a rare occurrence - They have commenced this game in my Department here. They make a rapid decent from the mountains, rob and kill and before I get the news are back again in their fortresses - I took Capt Walker [Samuel H., killed at Huamantla Oct. 9, 1847] (of Texas entierly) out with me yesterday and nearly killed his his horses in an inefective effort to catch the scoundrels. Tomorrow I shall be after them again. They fight awhile but their horses are more accustomed to the ground than ours and in that way they avoid us. The company [1st Penn. Infantry] from home is in good health comparatively - In our various fights it has escaped astonishingly - Has always done its duty and has suffered none except from fatigue and climate.....F.M.Wynkoop
My actual command at present is 7 companies of my own Regiment - 2 companies of Regular artilery and Capt Walkers mounted Rifles [Texas Rangers] - The three remaining companies of my Regiment proper are at Jalapa under the Major. My position is that of Brig Genl Comd. Department - is as it is termed here Military Governor."

Francis M. Wynkoop was the Colonel of the 1st Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. Following the defeat of Santa Anna at Cerro Gordo, the Mexicans abandoned the Castle of Perote. On the occupation of the castle by the Americans, Wynkoop was made the Military Governor of Castle Perote.

When the war broke out the inhabitants of Mexico City were very little concerned, even after the defeat of Santa Anna at Buena Vista. But when they learned of the landing of Scott's army of invasion and the fall of Vera Cruz, they became very much alarmed. Then with the defeat of Santa Anna at Cerro Gordo, which threw open the road to the Valley of Mexico, they began to leave Mexico City.

The folded letter bears no rate or postmarks - only "Castle Perot/June 5, 1847" .

THE WESTERN MAILS

JAMES W. DENVER IN THE VALLEY OF MEXICO

"MIXCOAC (Misquaca) near/the City of Mexico, Sept. 1st 1847...

"My Dear Sisters Since leaving Vera Cruz we have been continually surrounded by the enemy. Guerrilla parties have been constantly harrsing around us, infesting the roads, and popping away at us every opportunity. My company and that of Capt. Wood [Allen, 12th Inft] of Arkansas were put on the scouting service, which is very properly considered the hardest duty connected with an army on a march through a mountainous country occupied by an enemy. Our duty was to keep some distance from the road on either side and rather in advance of the main body of the army, to reconnoise and give the allarm in case of appearance of danger. In the performance of this duty we were often compelled to scale mountains thousands of feet above the level of the sea, and above the road the Army travelled, whence we could see the clouds far beneath us, and where we were frequently enveloped in their dense vapors. Again we would descend into valleys and dells so deep and dark as to force upon the mind the idea that the foot of man had never before pressed the virgin soil. Here we found many tropical fruits, particularly limes - a species of lemon - in great abundance, and which we found very useful to squeeze the juice into the water we drank, which was the ordinary creek water, very warm and unpalatable. We have had no better water since. After traversing a very wild, mountainous country for several days - having left Vera Cruz on the 13th July - we arrived at Puente Nacional (National Bridge) on the 21st of the same month. This is considered one of the strongest positions on the road [National Highway] on the road to the city of Mexico. Capt. Wood and myself were as usual out scouting and were ordered to proceed to a high hill or mountain, which commanded the approaches to the bridge, there to reconnoise and remain for further orders. Arrived at the position indicated we soon discovered the enemy in possession of the opposite heights, having placed obstructions on the bridge to prevent our troops crossing. One company and a detachment of our Regiment (the 12th Infantry) was in advance of the Army and moved on quietly and steadily until they neared the obstruction on the bridge, when suddenly the whole heights burst up in one cloud of smoke followed by the sharp, rattling report of small arms. In an instant the fire was returned by our troops, when with a shout they burst over every barrier, scaled the heights and carried every thing before them with ease, - for the reason that the Mexicans had all run away before our men got to the top of the mountain. Strange to say in this fight where our men were crowded on a narrow bridge in point blank shot, and the enemy poured their fire upon them like hail not a man was killed and but five or six wounded. During all the time of this conflict we were securely posted at our position on the hill and were not permitted to leave it until the whole army had crossed the Bridge, - we went forward as the advance guard and crossed to our encampment as the rear guard. Although we had the mortification of seeing the rest of the troops engaged without being able to take any part in it yet we had a fair view of the battle and could see the effect of the enemy's fire on the different corps of our army.* After this we had nothing like what could be called a fight, although we were fired on frequently and every man who fell behind the rear guard was sure to be murdered by the Guerrillas. One day our army lost four men in this way. Another day Dr. Clark of Va. was shot through the thigh, having wandered a few hundred yards from our camp. On our march we passed through Jalapa (Halapa) and Perote, where we remained a day or two at the celebrated Castle of Perote, so notorious as the place where ninety of the Mier prisoners were shot*. Here we saw Capt. Walker [Samuel H., killed at the town of Huamatla Oct. 9th] of the mounted rifles, the same who, when one of the Mier prisoners, was compelled to draw the bean three times for his life, and drew a white one every time. Now he is second in command of the same prison. Such is

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Mixcoac (Misquaca) near
the City of Mexico, Sept. 1st 1847.

My Dear Sisters

It has been a long time since I have written to you but I can assure you it has been no fault of mine. Since leaving Vera Cruz we have been continually surrounded by the enemy. Guerrilla parties have been constantly hanging around us, infesting the roads, and popping away at us every opportunity. My Company and that of Capt. Wood of Arkansas were put on the scouting service, which is very properly considered the hardest duty connected with an army on a march through a mountainous country occupied by an enemy.

Our duty was to keep some distance from the road on either side and rather in advance of the main body of the army, to reconnoise and give the alarm in case of appearance of danger. In the performance of this duty we were often compelled to scale mountains thousands of feet above the level of the sea, and above the road the Army travelled, whence we could see the clouds far beneath us, and where we were frequently enveloped in their dense vapors. Again we would descend into valleys and dells so deep and dark as

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which stopped the farther progress of our Army. They acknowledged themselves beaten and that we could enter their city if we chose to do so. They said they were willing to make peace on any terms, and begged that we would not enter the city. Our leaders complied with their request and the Commissioners on both sides are now busily engaged in concluding terms of peace; while our Army is quartered in the villages near the city in such positions that if necessary we can knock it to pieces in a few hours.

I am sorry to say that our loss in the late battles has been severe, - about one thousand and sixty, in killed wounded and missing. Among the prisoners taken from the Mexicans were a number of deserters from our army; the principal of whom is O'Kiley who was a sergeant of Artillery and deserted on the Rio Grande. It was these men who caused our heaviest losses. Fighting with banners around their necks they acted with the desperation of desperate men. O'Kiley said "he had worn out his sword on the Mexicans trying to keep them from running, and if they had only stood their ground, he, with his artillery, (he was a Colonel of Artillery in the Mexican service) would have destroyed our whole army." The rascal has run his race.

I could give you many incidents and anecdotes of the battles, but I must defer it to some other time, or until I see you, which if no accident happens will be in five or six months.

My love to all the family, and best respects to all friends in and about your region.

I remain most
Affectionately
Your Brother
J. W. Slusser.

M. C. Denver

P.S. When you write direct your letters to me at Vera Cruz as I formerly directed you to do, J. W. S.

the fate of man .One day he is all powerful - the next he is a cringing, begging supplicant. Santa Anna and the Mexicans who in the levity of their power, heartlessly massacred the brave men who had the hardihood to stand up and resist the acts of tyrants a few years ago, are now begging for peace on any terms from the comrades of these very men, those who have overrun the country with a handful of troops, taking city after city and fortress after fortress, until there is scarcely a stronghold left to the Mexicans in the whole country. But I am running ahead of my story. On the 6th of August we arrived at Pu-eb-la and found Gen. Scott ready and just on the eve of marching for the city of Mexico. On the next day, the 7th, Gen. Worth [Wm. J.] started with his division, on the 8th he was followed by Gen. Twiggs [David E.], on the 9th Gen. Quitman [John A.] followed with the Volunteers and Marines, and on the 10th our division under command of Gen. Pillow [Gideon J.] followed bringing up the rear*. The whole army mustered something less than ten thousand effective men. In four days we marched [to] the valley of Mexico, having marched in that time eighty four miles. Here we found Gen. Scott busily engaged [in] reconnoitering. This detained us four or five days. The Mexicans were discovered strongly fortified and in great force at a place called El Penon which it was believed commanded all the approaches to the City. The result of the General's reconnoissance was that the whole army was suddenly ordered to strike tents and move around to the left of the valley. This movement entirely unexpected by the Mexicans. The road was deemed impracticable for wagons or artillery, and was known even to the Mexicans as a mule path only*. Notwithstanding this our whole army and baggage train, together with a circus company, passed along this road, and arrived on the 18th and 19th at the town of San Augustine having passed all the principal fortifications without the firing of a gun. On the 18th Gen. Worth, who led the van of the Army, halted in front of the Mexican Army entrenched at the town of Churubusco. On the 19th the divisions of Gens. Twiggs and Pillow were ordered forward on a road to the left of Worth's position about three or four miles. On the 18th I had a severe attack of Fever and Ague, so that from that time I was not with the army in any of the operations that followed. Mortifying as this was to my feelings I was compelled to submit to it, and the day before yesterday was the first I was able to get out. My health is now much better and I am so far recovered as to be able to do duty.

After firing a few guns at one another Gen. Twiggs halted under the guns of a battery of twenty four heavy pieces of artillery planted by the Mexicans at a place called San Bartolo or Contrerias [battle of Contreras or Padierna 19th and 20th of August]. Gen. Pillow's division advanced to support Twiggs, and it is said that some of the regiments were uselessly and foolishly pushed forward through a cornfield which was completely swept by the guns from the enemy's fort. In order to find a place of even comparative safety our men were compelled to run through this cornfield, exposed to a murderous fire of balls, shells, grape and canister, (which sent many a brave fellow to his long home) until they reached a ravine about 250 or 300 yards from the enemy's works and that without being able to fire a single gun in return, having nothing but Infantry [only rifles]. In this ravine were posted from 600 to 800 men opposed to more than as many thousand of the enemy. Darkness interrupted the further progress of our army and they rested for the night amid rain, and mud and water knee deep - and without blankets. Between daylight and sun rise on the morning of the 20th Gen. Twiggs having during the night succeeded in getting to the rear of the enemy, was seen approaching in order of battle. They rushed on to the charge before the enemy were fully prepared to receive them, and in less than fifteen minutes the battery was carried, a great number of prisoners taken and the Mexicans in full retreat. In retreating the enemy had to pass near the place occupied by our men in the ravine who paid them up well for the treatment they gave us the day before. The slaughter at this time is said to have been immense, our troops having buried upwards of seven hundred and fifty at and near the fortification alone, while our loss did not exceed fifty killed outright. It is said to have been the intention of Gen. Scott to have fought the principal battle a few days later, but our troops in

THE WESTERN MAILS

their eagerness to pursue the flying enemy were drawn in among the batteries that stopped the advance of Worth. Here the Mexicans had concentrated their whole force. Santa Anna commanded in person. His army at first consisted of about 35,000 men. Of this number near 3,000 were killed, wounded or taken prisoners in the morning at Contrarias [Contreras], and Gen. Valentia [Gabriel Valencia] who commanded at that place run off with about as many more, leaving his force about 28,000 or 29,000 strong. Gen. Worth hearing the firing in the enemy's rear set his column in motion, carried the advanced works of the enemy in his front and attacked their main works. Here was fought the most desperate and sanguinary battle [Churubusco] ever fought in America. The Mexican army outnumbered ours at least three to one, had selected their own ground, were well supplied with artillery and had mostly fresh men; while our men were without artillery, and a large portion of them were scarcely able to walk, from the fatigue of their previous marching and fighting. **But Americans were not to be beaten by Mexicans.** *

The battle raged with unabated fury for nearly four hours, and I have heard old veterans say that it was the longest, sharpest and best contested battle of musketry they ever saw or ever heard of. Cerro Gordo is said, by those engaged in both battles, to have been mere child's play to this. After maintaining the contest with the desperation of a people fighting for every thing they held dear in the world, they were forced to retire with terrible loss (according to their own account six thousand) and were pursued to the gates of the City about five or six miles. Some of the dragoons even entered the gates in the melee and killed some of the Mexicans within the City. Our troops halted for the night from the fatigues and horrors of the day, and the next morning the enemy sent out a flag of truce which stopped the farther progress of our Army. They acknowledged themselves beaten and that we could enter their city if we chose to do so. They said they were willing to make peace on any terms, and begged that we would not enter the City. Our leaders complied with their request and the commissioners on both sides are now busily engaged in concluding terms of peace; while our Army is quartered in the villages near the city in such positions that if necessary we can knock it to pieces in a few hours.* I am sorry to say that our loss in the late battles has been severe, - about one thousand and sixty in killed wounded and missing. Among the prisoners taken from the Mexicans were a number of deserters from the army; the principal of whom is O'Riley who was a sergeant of Artillery and deserted on the Rio Grande. It was these men who caused our heaviest losses. Fighting with halters around their necks they acted with the desperation of desperate men. O'Riley* said "he had worn out his sword on the Mexicans trying to keep them from running, and if they had only stood their ground, he, with his artillery, (he was a Colonel of Artillery in the Mexican service) would have destroyed our whole army." The rascal has run his race.

I could give you many incidents and anecdotes of the battles, but I must defer it to some other time, or until I see you, which if no accident happens will be in five or six months. Your Brother/J.W. Denver."

*The so called battle of the National Bridge was more of an engagement than a battle.

*On Dec. 22, 1842 a force of 700 Texans captured the Mexican town of Mier on the Rio Grande River and killed 600 Mexicans with the loss of only 12 men. However, they ran out of ammunition and were forced to surrender. Enroute to Mexico City they seized their guards, but were recaptured a week later. For this, Santa Anna ordered every 10th man executed. The prisoners had to draw lots from a jar containing 176 beans - 159 white and 17 black - for death.

* Scott's "Army of Invasion" consisted of four divisions under the following Generals: 1st. Wm. J. Worth, 2nd David E. Twiggs, 3rd Gideon J. Pillow, 4th John A. Quitman.

THE WESTERN MAILS

THE LAST BATTLE
SANTA CRUZ de ROSALIA
MARCH 16, 1848

General Sterling Price, on receiving intelligence that the Mexicans were moving on El Paso, left Santa Fe with a small force of dragoons, artillery and the Santa Fe battalion under Major Walker. On arrival at El Paso, Price learned that the Mexicans, under Governor Angel Trias with a force of 1500 men was at the town of Santa Cruz de Rosales sixty miles south of Chihuahua. Price then proceeded to Santa Cruz where he confronted Trias and demanded that they surrender. Trias requested Price to hold off until the rumor that a peace treaty had been concluded, could be verified. Price agreed and after waiting several days, without any confirmation, he commenced the action that ended in the surrender of the Mexicans. Trias, the officers and men were marched back to Chihuahua as prisoners of war. Shortly, thereafter, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was confirmed and the prisoners released and the city of Chihuahua was turned over to the Mexican authorities. The Mexicans lost 300 killed and wounded and the Americans 5 killed and 20 wounded.

The writer of the letter, William S. Fleming, was a sargent in Co. E, 1st regiment Illinois Volunteers.

General Manuel Armijo, governor of New Mexico, was not at the battle of Santa Cruz de Rosalia.

Francois Xavier Aubry was a trader operating wagon trains on the Santa Fe trail. His main claim to frontier fame was a horseback ride from the Missouri River to Santa Fe, New Mexico. He rode a relay of horses 780 miles in 5 days and 16 hours and in this record time he broke at least 6 horse. Aubry was strapped to the saddle in case he fell asleep. On August 18, 1854, at Santa Fe, Aubry was killed in an argument with Major Richard H. Weightman. In a jury trial Weightman was found "not guilty" by reason of self-defense. It has been claimed that Aubry's famous ride was the inspiration of the famed PONY EXPRESS.



Folded letter carried by military express to the Missouri River where it was placed onboard a steamboat bound for St. Louis. The St. Louis post office stamped the letter "STEAM: and rated it "20" cents collect.



ENTRANCE OF GENERAL SCOTT INTO THE CITY OF MEXICO.