

4-1-94

DEAR KATHY

SORRY TO TAKE SO LONG

REGARDING THE SYLVANIAS PEABODY

DOCUMENT. SO I'M SENDING

THE ONLY COPY THAT EXISTS

OUTSIDE THE FAMILY. THE LAST

TWO PAGES EXPLAIN THE LOCATION

OF THE ORIGINAL.

THANKS FOR THE GOOD WORK.

Ferwick HU

Copied: July 10, 1987

June 20 - 1906

To my Grand-daughter Miss Ethel
Reabody

I have been thinking over your request to have me relate some of the incidents of my journey to California in early days and have concluded to write it out so you can read it at your ~~leisure~~ ^{leisure}

Gold was discovered in California the fall of 1848 and the news quickly spread through out the surrounding country, Oregon, Mexico and the United States. There was great excitement at the time. Everybody wanted to go to California including myself among the number. At that time I lived in ^{Scottsville} ~~_____~~ in the state of ^{New York} ~~_____~~ and was 21 years old.

I had a friend living about a mile from our house named ~~_____~~ We talked the matter over and ^{Philip Reed} decided to go; there were four or five others that went early in the spring by boat. Some went by the Isthmus of Panama and some around Cape Horn.

Mr. Reed and I decided to go west and cross the plains and mountains to California, the fifth of April 1849. My father took me in the buggy to Mr. Reed's and his brother took us to the railroad station five miles away to Buffalo. We arrived there in the afternoon and went to the hotel and stayed over night. The harbor was filled with ice jammed full. There were several steamers waiting to get out on their trip up the lake, but none could get out.

In the afternoon of the next day, a steamer came down from Detroit but could not get in and so went down to Black Rock two or three miles below. Mr. Reed and I hired a conveyance to take our trunks and took passage for Detroit. We arrived in Detroit Sunday morning, having left home the Wednesday morning before.

I had a brother-in-law, Rev. D. Simonds living in Detroit at the time. I started out to find him. Found him preaching in the Methodist Church. After service made myself known to them.

They asked me to bring my partner and take dinner with them, which I did. They urged me to stay over Monday with them which I did. My partner taking the train Monday morning to Chicago. On Tuesday morning I took the Michigan Central train for Chicago. Arrived at Niles which was as far as the Michigan Central was completed at that time. We had to take an open carriage from there to Michigan City. Started out immediately and rode all night on the worst roads I ever saw and very cold besides. I had an India rubber overcoat and blanket with me, which was not too bad. We arrived at Michigan City the next day about ten o'clock. Found my partner there who was waiting for the boat to go to Chicago. The boat arrived that afternoon, and we took passage for Chicago. Arrived and went to a hotel.

Chicago at that time contained 1600 inhabitants. The streets were full of potholes and mud holes of uncertain depth. The next day we looked for a chance to

go to La Salle, the head of navigation of the Illinois River. Found a steamer which had come up with goods, was willing to take a limited number of passengers on return. We struck up a bargain with him to take us to La Salle. He had an emigrant wagon with a canvas cover. We started out that evening over very muddy roads. We were about three days, making the journey and arrived at La Salle Sunday night. Took a steamer the same night down the Illinois River for St. Louis. We were two days making the trip. Arrived at St. Louis, went to a hotel and commenced looking for a steamer to go up the Missouri River. We had to wait about three days before we found one. We engaged passage in the cabin up the river 700 miles to Council Bluff for \$14 each. We were two weeks making the passage. It was a crooked stream and treacherous river with quick sand bottom.

At first along, the country was thinly settled but farther up it grew thicker until the last 300 miles was all woods.

The steamer had to tie up nights and the deck hands had to chop wood to burn the next day. A great many snags and sawyers were in the bottom of the river. A sawyer is a tree or log in the river with the butt end or roots buried in the sand and the top end down the stream weaving up and down in the current below the surface. They were very dangerous to steamers and had one struck one, it would be apt to have a hole busted in the bow.

On going up, we passed one steamer by the side of the river that had been snagged and sunk a few days before. When we arrived at Council Bluff we found a Mormon settlement four miles back from the river by the name of _____, built entirely of log houses. We hired a Mormon to take our trunks down and got board in a private family by the name of Huntington. He had been sexton of the Mormon Church at Nauvoo and had helped to bury Joseph Smith after he had been murdered.

He was a very devout Mormon. Mr. Reed and I then commenced looking around for supplies for crossing the plains. We bought some wheat of a farmer and had it taken to a mill about two miles back on a stream.

I have forgotten the name of the mill. It was built by the government to grind corn for the Indians. There was but one stone. We got our ^{wheat} ~~wheat~~ ground, then carried it to another building near by where the mill was, for separating the bran from the flour. Mr. Reed fed the grist in the mill from above, and I turned the mill by hand. We had a very nice lot of flour, nearly 200 lbs. for each of us. Got it hauled back to Harmerville. There was a teamster come in soon after with a load of bacon to sell, Mr. Reed and I bought each of us a 100 lbs. for \$10 per 100 lbs.

Mr. Reed's brother from Beeton, Wisconsin, with his partner, ~~Mr. Pond~~ ^{Mr. Pond}, were there and they thought they would

not have room for me, so I got a chance
with another team a man and his wife
named [redacted] ^{Carter?} and a partner named [redacted] ^{Bennett?}
I was to pay \$50.00 and furnished my
own provisions and do my share of the
work.

Mr. Reed and his company went down
the river to the Fort Leavenworth about 20
miles below to cross and go on the south
side of the Platte River.

My company went up the river to the
Mormon Crossing, a place called Winter Quarters,
a deserted town of log houses where the
Mormons had wintered a year or two before
and had nearly starved to death. There
was a scow boat there that would
hold one wagon. One was run on the
boat. It was then towed up the river
fifteen or twenty rods, and then shoved
out in the stream with men at each
oar at each side of the boat. The
boat would float down with the
current, but by fast rowing would
arrive at the landing on the other
side. Men were ready to catch the

ropes and drew the boat up. A yoke of oxen were ready to hitch on the tongue and drew the wagon ashore and up the bank. There were about fifty wagons in the company and it took about two days to get them across. The men and horses were then driven into the river and made to swim across.

The company then elected officers and drew up rules for the government of the company. While on the journey of 2,000 miles over hills and mountains and across rivers unknown.

We pulled out from camp May 22nd in single file. There were 100 men and women in the company. After we had been out about ten days, was taken sick about noon and died that night about nine o'clock. We buried her the next morning. Some thought it was cholera and it was. Two or three days later, Mr. Bennett complained of not feeling well. About noon I tried to have him take some medicine, but he said he would wait until I

was driving the team. Mr. Carter was
on ahead with some of the company and
Bennett was riding in my wagon the last
one in the train. I had to stop real
often and let him get out which brought
me considerably behind the company.
At last he got out and fell over on the
ground. I called loudly to those in
advance and three or four men came
back and we picked him up and put in
the wagon. I drove on to camp and we
put him in. Three or four of us took
care of him through the night. He was in
great distress and died about sunrise
the next morning.

The company now were thoroughly
alarmed. No one doubted it had
been cholera. Early the next morning,
 $\frac{2}{3}$ of the company pulled out with-
out waiting for the others. About 15
wagons stayed back with us to help
bury our dead. This made us late.
The others had gotten out of sight.
We camped in two different places
and never got together again.

There was continual alarm about the Indians, but they did not trouble us. We arrived at the Loup Fork, a branch of the Platte River, about 60 rods wide with quicksand bottom. The river was from 12 to 16 inches deep. We had to double up teams in crossing as it was important that the wagons be kept moving. A wagon delayed in any way would sink down out of sight in a short time.

The Platte River was a full mile wide all the way from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Laramie with a quick sand bottom which was always changing and was not navigable for boats of the smallest type. It was about 500 miles from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Laramie and we were a month making the journey. We passed through the Black Hills to the open crossing of the Platte about 200 miles. Here Mr. Carter was taken with a fit of despondency; he must go back, he had lost his wife and his partner and had nothing to go on for. So I got a

choice with another outfit, six men with two wagons. I turned in a yoke of oxen Carter let me have in settlement and his provisions and agreed to do my share of the work. Mr. Carter took the back track and I never saw him again.

I met the two Mr Reeds at this point who had come on from below. We crossed the river at this place. A raft of dugouts, something like a canoe (Indian) - were placed side by side and pinned together with pieces of timber at each end, which made it very solid. A rope was stretched across the river and guy ropes from the raft to the mainland. A wagon was run on the raft and pulled across with ropes to the other side. The cattle and horses were driven into the water and made to swim across.

We passed on to the Rocky Mountains, traveled a long distance along the Sweet Water River to the south pass, a valley extending through the Wind River range of mountains to the Pacific Springs where

the water runs to the west and enters into the Gulf of California. There were two routes from here, one by the way of Fort Bridger, the other and most direct route by Green River. The one by Ft. Bridger was the route to Salt Lake City. We took the Green River route. When we got to the river. There was a Mormon ferry. The river was not very wide and emptied into the Colorado River. We had no difficulty in crossing and so passed on until we came to the head waters of the Humboldt or Mary's River. Traveling down it about 300 miles to near the place where it sinks in the sand. There was a notice put up of a cut-off. We stopped here, mowed grass and made hay and filled our wagons full. We had to cross a desert which had to be done in the night. We took the cut-off. We traveled about 12 miles to a spring where we laid in a supply of water, waited until after sun down and then pulled out. Traveled all night until along in the forenoon the next day we came to a spring at the foot

of a large black hill with a roaring, rumbling sound in the side. The spring was hot water which sunk into the sand a few feet away. We had to cool it by burying our cows in the sand. In crossing the desert many thousands of oxen had died. They lay thick on both sides of the track. Two of our oxen gave out. We had to leave them and go back after them the next day. The water of the spring was poisonous for stock. We pulled out that night to get to grass for our teams to feed. In the night our team began to give out so we had to leave one wagon. I and a man named ~~_____~~ stayed with the wagon. The others went on. We took a keg of water inside the wagon and went to sleep. In the morning got up and got our breakfast and waited to hear from the other wagon. During the day people would come by, ask for water. We would tell them they could not have any. Toward evening the team come back after the wagon. They said they had found grass and water two or three miles ahead.

We stopped there for two days, but the grass was alkali and made our cattle worse. We started on but made slow progress. After several days we had to leave one wagon and throw out all the goods we could spare. I left my trunk there and put my clothes in a grain sack.

Our progress from here was very slow. The roads were rough and hilly until we reached the Sierra Nevada Mountains. We could see the crossing a long way before we got there. Before we got to the top, it looked way up in the clouds. The rise was gradual until we reached the final peak where we found a spring. We camped there overnight, started out in the morning to cross the ridge which was $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. We worked hard all day and got on top at night where we camped. I took a pail and went down to the spring where we camped the night before, and got water for our supper. This place was about the dividing line between California and Oregon. The next day we started down the mountain, chained the hind

wheels and slid down among the pines and underbrush until we came to level ground where we camped and got our breakfast, and let the oxen eat. The feed was better on that side of the mountain and our oxen revived up. It was slow traveling. The road was rough and hilly. We soon struck the head of a river which was a branch of the Sacramento River. We traveled down it many days. It was a terrible, crooked and rough road. After we left the river we traveled many days through solid pine and redwood timber. There was a man in our company, a ~~man~~ Mr. Balb. He had a son, Henry.

The company was ~~from Jacksonville, Ill.~~ from Jacksonville, Ill.
When Henry was bound to go to California, his mother persuaded his father to go along to take care of him. One night when we were camped in the woods, we all slept on the ground except the old man, who slept in the wagon. In the night he was taken sick. He called his son. Henry ran to the wagon, called the boys. When we got there he was dead. He was about sixty years old. I and one of

the men dug a grave and buried him in the woods.

We pressed our oxen further every day over rough roads and poor feed. There were many dead oxen along the road. When we got to within thirty miles of Sacramento Valley, the team gave out. We joined with another team and left the wagon. The next day I took my blankets and some provisions and started on. Arrived at the Sacramento Valley that night and camped. Arrived at Lawson's ranch the next morning. The others did not get there for three or four days. I got in about Nov. 1st after being on the road for seven months. Lawson's Ranch was a small building made of dried brick with a small building on the side of it for our eating house. The boarders had to furnish their own bedding and slept where they could. I got my meals there and slept in an empty wagon near ^{the} house. I spent my time looking around the country and resting up there. There were slips of paper fastened on the side of the building with wooden pins by people who had passed there,

giving notice to their friends back in the mountains, where they would find them. I found one from Mr. Reed, stating they had arrived and I would find them at Long's Bar on the Feather River. When our company got in from the mountains, I started on foot for Feather River. I got there the next day. At night I found Mr. Reed who got in a few days before and was trying to mine with poor success. William Reed and I started on a prospecting trip up the river leaving Phillip with the wagon.

The country was very rough and grew worse. As we passed up between high gorges of mountains; we had to cross the river frequently to get along. At night we came out of the gorge near an Indian camp, a score or more of them entirely naked. They were called Digger Indians because they lived on roots, acorns, toads and lizards, low specimens of humanity. A short farther up we came to a camp of miners, where we stayed all night. When we turned back,

it began to rain. We got back to the place where we stayed before, built a fire, stretched one of our blankets over head to shed the rain. Sat on a log all night. It rained hard and the wind was blowing "great guns.")

The next morning we started for our camp. Got there around noon. Shortly afterwards, we started down the valley with our wagon. The rain had made the roads in a bad condition and we made slow progress. Arrived at Vernon, the junction of the Feather and Sacramento Rivers. We crossed over on a ferry boat to Freemont on the other side. Mr. Reed got a job putting a floor in a small building. We cut down oak trees, cut them the right length, split them into slabs, had a carpenter hew them, dress them down and fit them in the building. It was rented to Stephen Field, one of the Judges of the United States Supreme Court. He was a merchant at that time and I got some acquainted with him. Wm. Reed

got a job with a surveying company.
Phillip and I took the team and went
to Sacramento City. Bought a load of
goods, took them back to the miners
to sell. Came back to Marysville, a
town at the mouth of the Yuba River.
Bought another load, took that to Nevada
City. Took the team back, turned them to
grass and went back to the mines.

We worked in the mines, but soon William
got tired of it and said he would go home.
He and Phillip disposed of their team and
he went home by the Isthmus route. Phillip
came back and we worked with poor success.
The water gave out. Then we went over
to the middle fork of the Yuba river
and worked until Fall. We then went
down the river and worked with a ~~man~~ ^{Mr}
~~_____~~ He was
^{Lauderdale of Genesee, N.Y.}
acquainted with my brother-in-law Mr.
Hill of N.Y. We worked for some time
and then started for home.

I went down to Sacramento before
we started working in the mines and
went in a building called "The Plain."

It was a gambling house with large paintings on the walls, four or five feet square representing scenes on the route across the plains which was very familiar to me. One in particular was called "Devil's Gate" which was a cliff in Montana where the Sweet Water River passed through a solid wall of rock 900 feet high and almost perpendicular on both sides, just room enough for the river to pass. The cliff was straight and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile long with comparatively level ground above the cliff. It looked as if it was made on purpose to let the river pass through. Some of us went up through the cliff by crossing the river several times.

The artist who did the picture was in our train. I saw him when he was making the sketch, sitting on a rock at the entrance of the Gorge. This picture was exhibited in cities of the country. I saw it in Rochester, N. Y. Crowds came to see it.

I went around through Sacramento City in the evening. All business had ceased except the gambling houses which were numerous. They were in full

WHO PAINTED THE

blast with tables all around. The room loaded with gold and silver and crowds gambling with a band playing and a bar on one side of the room to supply the thirsty at 25¢ a drink.

We left the mines in October, got part way down that day and stayed over night.

The next day we went on and got to Marysville that night. I found a letter from home from my sister stating that

~~Mr. Simonds~~ had been appointed a missionary to California and was on his way

there accompanied with his wife ~~Eliza~~

We heard they were having an awful time with cholera at Sacramento, but

we went on and got there the next day. We stayed all night. During the evening we could see coffins passing along the streets in every direction. They buried in the night. In the evening of the

next day, we took a boat for San Francisco and arrived the next morning.

I found Mr. Simonds. They were located in the parsonage not far from the Bay. Mr. Simonds was sick with the

Panama fever, but was better. They were very glad to see me. Mr. Reed and I had dinner with them. The next day we commenced looking around for a boat to go to the Panama. Found a large sailing vessel that would leave the next morning. Three of us took passage. I do not remember what the fare was. There were a great many passengers. There was a table in the mid-ship, 20 feet long and there were passengers enough to fill it, twice.

The next morning while we were eating breakfast, one of the passengers fell over backwards with the cholera. Some of the passengers left the table but I stayed on and finished my breakfast. The man was carried ashore dead that evening. The next morning the ship pulled out of the harbor for Panama.

We were about two months making the voyage with pretty poor food before we got there. A long way out as we got further south, the ship would be becalmed two to three days at a time, hardly moving at all.

One passenger died on the voyage. He was sewed up in a canvas sack with stones or iron in the bottom to make it sink.

The sailors brought him up on deck on one of the hatches. Bells were tolled to call the sailors and passengers together. The sailors picked up the hatch, placing one end on the side railholding, the other side about on a level. The chaplain then got up on the rail and read the funeral service. The sailors commenced tolling the bells softly, but louder and louder until the body was lowered into the sea.

We arrived at the island of Tobago, about two miles from Parama. The ship anchored and had to pay a little steamer that ran from Tobago to Parama \$2 a piece to take us over. The tide was out and we had to walk to the city. We landed a long way out. I picked up some beautiful sea shells on our way and thought I would come back and get some more after awhile. We went

to the hotel and put up. The ship we came on brought down a load of returned Californians and then went on to Valparaiso for a load of flour to take back.

I went down to the shore in the evening to get some more sea shells. The water was clear up to the walls of the City. The tide rises twenty feet here.

We left the next forenoon for Georgica which is the head of navigation for small boats on the Chagres River, 28 miles distance from Panama. We did not get through that night but camped by the side of the road at a small house. Mr. Lauderdale and I hired a black man to carry baggage. They are called "hombre" which means "fellow" in Spanish. We arrived at Georgica the next day. Had to sleep anywhere we could. There was a good eating house. Mr. Reed & I went in swimming in the river in the afternoon. We left the next morning in a row boat for Chagres. The boat was rowed by a black fellow. It was a serpentine

course of about forty miles, half the distance in a straight line.

When we got nearly down, we stopped at a Negro town where a dance was going on. It was called the fandango in that country. A negro was drumming on an empty barrel in a monotonous tune, accompanied by a sing song ditty by the company. The boys and girls formed a ring, leaving an open space for the dancers. The boy would snap his fingers at a girl and she would come out and they would dance a jig. Three or four couples were dancing. There was a company of military officers crossing the Isthmus. They stopped there and took part in the fandango, sometimes three or four officers dancing with the black girls at once. We got back to the hotel late at night. The principle business in that town was gambling.

We had to wait there five days for a steamer for New York. The steamer could not get within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the ~~of~~ shore. We hired a small boat.

to row us out. We sailed across the Caribbean sea and through the windward passage channel to Havana. We had to pay for a permit to enter the city. It was Sunday. We roved the city to the different cathedrals. There was one in particular, a large building with a paved floor with small tomb stones of noted persons who had died many years ago. One was the grave of Christopher Columbus. When the Spanish government surrendered to the United States at the close of the Cuban war, they took the bones of Columbus with them.

We pulled out of Havana Monday morning. There were several invalids on board ship, out of money and health broken down. The steamship company had given them passage in the steerage. It was warm crossing the Gulf of Mexico but when we arrived off Cape Hatteras, a cold wave struck from the north. It was in January. Three of the invalids died one night. They were sewed up in casks and taken on deck back of the wheel house. I was

on deck at the time. The sailors raised the hatch and slid them off into the sea without burial services.

We got into New York that night. The steamer did not want any dead persons when they got there. The doctor at quarantine station would have ordered the ship into quarantine. As it was, we had a clean bill of health.

We went ashore that night and went to a hotel. The next day we went down to Wall Street and sold our gold. We did not have a very large amount of gold. We did have an amount of experiences.

We took the train next morning on the Jersey side, Sufferns, where it joined the Erie Road. Then took the train to Watkins and went as far as the Erie was completed. Got there sometime in the night. Took a little steamer on Seneca Lake for Genesee. Then took the train to Rochester. Got there about daylight and arrived home in Scottsville, a town twelve miles south of

Rochester.

My partner's father gave his two youngest sons a deed of the farm on which he resided. They were to support him during his life. When California excitement commenced, they made it up that Philip would go. Henry would stay at home and work the farm and they would divide equally what they make. Philip stayed there a few years on the farm. He then sold out, went to Iowa and bought a farm there. He stayed there a few years, then went back to Scottsville. He died some twenty years after.

Written by Sylvanus Peabody
Probably about 1900.

Copied by Jase E. Peabody (his wife)
1906

Copied by Mable Peabody Hinkle
Jan 1962

Copied by Jase Hinkle Peterson 1987,
a great-grandchild of Sylvanus

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