

Charles Joseph, son of John Charles Shaffner, wrote this to his sisters while on his way to California with a wagon train of pioneers in 1852. (May 23) On June 4 he died near Fort Laramie. There is no written verification of his death or date. The small note with this was copied from part of a letter from a companion to someone in Pgh. and seems to contradict the date of his death. It was post marked June 6, two days after it is said he died, and states "Pittsburghers all well."

Sabbath morning.
9 miles W.W. of Fort Kearny, Nebr. May 23, 1852.

Dear sisters,

Sophia, Henrietta, & Caroline,

You will each please excuse

me for not addressing separately for many more reasons than I am at present privileged to advance for want of ~~time~~ ^{space} do you will attribute it to all the obstacles that inventive imagination can suggest and then you will come far short of the real facts. Suffice it to say we started from Camp Prominance (from which place you heard from me through Mammas as well as other letters which I mailed then) and encamped N.W. of Independence untill May 3rd when we set out on our long journey and up to the presents time have only made an advance of about 300 m. all of which was much marred, with warm, cold, frosty, rainy & all sorts of weather in connexion with hail travelling through every thing, mud and mire not excepted and over a country any thing but picturesque being in general too plane which it is most properly termed "The Plains" many little streams are to be passed and some only passable by Herculean power, in some instances - driven to the necessity of digging out a road, in others filling up holes too deep (for Mules or wagons with willows or whatever chance'd to turn up.) The Missouri line is N.W. of Independence about 20 m. when we entered the Shawnee Nation, crossing which follows the Potawattomie tribe and at Vermillion River (or creek) the Shawnee Indians have their Eastern boundary line, these are the most rascally and thieving fellows with whom we have to do and are necessary by required to keep a sharp look out.

The Plains are destitute of much interest (I doubt not) in consequence of the backwardness of the season continuing ~~therefore~~ of the heavy rains of nature few of which have as yet appeared, and excepting the large Emigration to California and Oregon all would be a monotony to truth, thousands upon thousands of acres of land almost level without a green shrub or tree are frequently laid out before the weary traveller and at present $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the swift rolling Platte no bush is to be seen, yet on the opposite bank and there alone skirted narrowly is waving a few trees and undergrowth down about and around only appears grass here and there interspersed with puddles of water which at times are welcome to the languishing traveller, yet we all keep up good cheer and courage.

Fort Kearny is any thing but one of those systematic precise & methodical constructions which the idea of a U.S. fortress would not really suggest. and nothing like as well protected as Allegheny^{Pa.} it is composed of some six tenements (two story) and about as many one story houses and shades composed or built of blocks of sod, parts of which are decaying and crumbling to the ground, no fence nor bounds of any kind, but here and there are thrown up the earth in places as rampart, about 100 men is stationed here the greater part of whom are now out in search of some Pioneer who have been depredating - The trains from St Joseph in many instances have suffered mortally from Cholera and along our own route many interments and former ones as early as 1849 are to be seen, this is really distressing, yet it is the way of all flesh and confidence in deity alone supports under the trying vicissitudes of life.

I often think of home and the most nearly I can approximate is to cast my eyes upon the bright silver moon and then meditate as thus a medium upon which we can all look at the same time and

here is an object upon which, though far apart we may hear or fancy the voices of dearest friends. I do not wish you to think I am wearied of my determination for I never should have been satisfied unless it had been gone through with and I trust it will eventually pay and that well.

WE have seen in course of Emigration Men, Women and children from hoary old age down to infancy and if they can go it I trust we will be enabled through Providence to get through and fulfill our earnest determination of seeing you all better situated in future.

Give my love to my dear Mother and Sisters and Brothers with all my Nieces & Neophews and friends and for yourselves believe me

Your Brother

P J Steffner

All's well and I will write you at the next earliest opportunity I am now in the worst possible plight to write, exposure to wet weather sun and almost constant toil which is constantly before us disqualifies in head and hand and our manner of living is being largely salt meat and rain water is just such as would unman any body therefore I must beg you to have patience until I get some place, and more settled — I had like to forgotten to state we had and still have all sorts of tins with mules and mule training which is composed of kicking, naring, jumping and tearing with throwing and notwithstanding I have been favoured with a very quiet mule in fact the most quiet one in the company (which have 53 mules & 3 ponies) I have been taken off head over heels 3 times yet never have suffered any serious injury — So we go at some future time I may say more fully all about things in general — good bye
Remember me to the Doctor particularly & tell him to express me —

J. M. Gilman

Wrote from York Jan^{uary} 5th
Same day June 6th Post Master
York Jan^{uary} June 6th

Pottersburgs all ~~are~~ ^{will} be
traveling at the rate of four
30 to 35 miles per day.

expect to be in Cate's forces
by 18th July

this is just two days after
his son Charles died and
being a member of his own company
of Army thing was the matter of
course he would tell it.

Pagosa 11th 1852

Mr. Shaffner

I have but a few moments to write before the mail closes I am under the painful duty of informing you of the death of your Son G. J. Shaffner member of my company on the route to California his health was good until we struck on north Platt River between San Blas & Chirley Park there he was taken with Cholera Morbus on Monday June 2nd the whole company encamped awaiting to wait till he would be able to go on his journey again. Mr. Little & myself attended him during his sickness, we advertised madrasas to him but without the success you send for a Physician and he told us he could do no more for him than we had done, he died on Tuesday June 3rd 36 minutes past 12 o'clock A.M. he was unable to stand his speech till he fell in a slumber, he requested me to write to his master and settle his business. he said he was near to die he died in the full of his endeavor. We collected up his baggage or part as I have been able and have sent you a draft off 256¹² Pagoda with the bill of exchange written to Mrs. Shaffner she will pay you of the amount I have sent. I would have sent the draft to you, but as I did not know your given name the office of Adams & Co Express would not be made responsible for the draft, I wish you would make do with me in returning the above amount.

Yours Ould Servt

M

Charles was Buried between San Blas & Chirley park near the Groff's Ranch
immigrant route about 5 miles West of Chirley and 7 miles East of San Blas
we set a head stone post board to his grave with the inscription just the initials of the writer to which he belongs G. J. Shaffner of Pittsburgh Pa died June 3rd 1852.