

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 Larimie. 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 'Pittsburgers all well.'

Sabbath morning.
2 miles N.W. of Fort Kearney 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 ^{space} ~~time~~. 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 Prominence (from which place you heard from me through ~~William~~ as well as other letters which I mailed then) and encamped N.W. of Independence until May 3rd. when we set out on our long journey and up to the present time have only made an advance of about 300 miles all of which was much mixed, with warm, cold, frosty, rainy & all sorts of weather in connexion with trail travelling through every thing, mud and mire not excepted and over a country any thing but picturesque being in general too plain which it is more properly termed "The Plains" many little streams are to be passed and some only passable by Herculean power, in some instances shown to the necessity of digging out a road, in others filling up holes too deep (for Mules or wagons with willows or whatever chanced to turn up). The Missouri line is N.W. of Independence about 20 miles when we entered the Shawnee Nation, crossing which follows the Pottawattomie tribe and at Vermillion River (or creek) the Shawnee Indians have their Eastern boundary line, these are the worst rascals and thieving fellows with whom we have to do and are necessarily 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 thus ~~here~~ of the many beauties of nature few of which have as yet appeared, and excepting the large Emigrations 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 skirting 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 Kearney is any thing but one of those systematic, precise & methodical constructions which the idea of a U.S. fortress would naturally suggest, and nothing like as well protected as Allegheny ~~is~~ it is composed of some six tenements (two story) and about as many one story houses and shades composed or built of blocks of solid parts of which are decaying and crumbling to the ground, no fence or rounds of any kind, but here and there are thrown up the earth in places as ramparts, about 200 men is stationed here the greater parts of whom are now out in search of some Pawnee who have been depredate - The trains from St. Joseph in many instances have suffered mortality from Cholera and along our own route many interments and former ones as early as 1849 are to be seen, this is rather 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 route nearly I can approximate is to cast my eyes upon the bright blue moon and then meditate as being 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 in fancy
the converse of dearest friends. I do not wish you to think I am
weary 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 Brother with all
my Nieces & Nephews and friends and for yourselves believe me
Your Brother

Ed. Peffer?

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 meats and rain
water is just such as would unman any body therefore I must beg
you to have patience until I get someplace, and more settled -
I had like to forget to state we had and still have all sorts of
trials with mules and mule training which is composed of kicking,
rearing, 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 examine me -

Genl M. Sullivan

Writes from Fort Sarnia
Saturday June 6th ^{should be 5th} Post Marked
Fort Sarnia June 6th

Pottoburgues all Well
travelling at the rate of from
30 to 35 miles per day.

expect to be in California
by 15th July

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

