IN SEARCH OF GOLD
AS TOLD
THROUGH
RIELY LETTERS

By Marian Campbell
In researching the Riely ancestors of my mother, Mary Virginia Riely White (1894 - 1971), I came across an article entitled "Jefferson County's Forty-Niners" written by Julia Davis Healy, published in Volume XXXVIII (December 1972) of the magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society, telling of an organized group of men who left Charles Town, Virginia (now West Virginia) to take part in the California gold rush in March of 1849. This article indicated that information had been gathered from letters written home - some by Edwin A. Riely.

Edwin Adolphus Riely was a son of Alexander Riely - great, great grandfather of my mother. Edwin had married Jane C. Boley and she was about 27 when he left on this venture. He also left three young children: Harriett Clyma, Benjamin Franklin ('Frank'), and Mary Courtney Riely. (I have also learned that his son was killed at Lynchburg, Virginia during the Civil War.)

It was evident that the author of the above mentioned article had seen these letters written by Edwin A. Riely and I wondered if they might still exist somewhere. When I contacted William Wilson, curator of the Jefferson County Historical Society, he directed me to Mr. & Mrs. J. Blackwell Davis, of Charles Town, WV., who are related to the author. Upon visiting this charming couple the file of research for the article was located and copies of Riely letters were in this folder. They kindly allowed me to have copies made of these 23 pages (some legal size). Deciphering them was a difficult and time-consuming task that I hope was done with some degree of accuracy. I found them interesting enough to want to share them in their entirety. I plan to give copies of these pages to several locations where they may be preserved.

In these letters Edwin refers to his diary or journal. That also would make interesting reading, but where that may be is impossible to say. It is believed that he did not become rich from gold, but in fact lost his life when about 40 years of age since his will was recorded at the Jefferson County Courthouse in February of 1850.

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Donated to the Family History Library
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
Dear Jane,

Being just on the end of starting for St. Louis I have concluded to write a few lines that you may receive this before the remainder of the Company leaves. We remained in Cumberland until Wednesday morning being detained from rent of Coaches and finally had to take a different route through Penn. traveling all night and arriving here night before last to supper. It was the worst road I have ever traveled in a stage and all other passengers except a lady and myself had to walk for miles at a stretch through the mud. If the company does not send to Baltimore and get through tickets to Pittsburgh they may be detained at Cumberland for a week or pay 10 $ from here to St. Louis and will arrive there about Friday. This is only 3 $ more than from Cumberland to here. It is the finest Boat I have ever been on as I find a great improvement in them since I lived in the west. The room in which I am writing is about 150 feet long by 15 feet wide with ceiling and sides painted a cream colour. Windows 6 inches high entirely around the boat and beautifully carpeted. There are on each side of this room 40 others making 80 in all about 7 feet square called state rooms for sleeping in. There are two Bunks in each - one above the other about 3 feet wide, so that we can turn about in our room on a space 4 feet by 7. Nat and I occupy one state room - I sleeping 6 feet above the floor, but still a very comfortable Bed. We have been boarding without charge on the Boat since yesterday morning. I am getting well of the mumps but the fever from it has left my mouth and tongue as badly blistered as Harriett's was. I wish you to put my Black Coat in Johns Bag as my other clothes will be too heavy and common for San Francisco and I find all the others are carrying their Sundays. My Bag only weighs 34 lbs. Keeling says we will need summer clothing until we reach the south pass about harvest and also at times in California. If I had thought of that I should have brought some along. I expect to be at Courtneys this day week and wish you to direct communications there and let me know whether John will come on there and give me all the news. Tell him he must travel off his sickness as I have done. Poor Nat is also an invalid. He blistered his side to cure a pain to be in trim for travelling and has had a raw sore 6 inches square ever since. Instead of healing up it has been getting worse but he can now have leisure to cure it. The whole road is alive with Californians and Hundreds are leaving here by Boat every day. We purchased the wagons and gears here yesterday. Tell Harriett I didn't think she was such a baby as to cry so when I started. Tell her I have seen a great many pretty things to buy her since I started but have no way to send them, but will bring all her presents when I return. Kiss the children for me. It is now noon and I must close as the boat is ringing her Bell and letting off steam preparatory to starting.

Yours affectionately,

Edwin A. Riery

(Note: This letter is to Jane C. Boley Riery from her husband. The John referred to is his brother-in-law, John T. Boley. The Harriett referred to was his oldest daughter who was about 5 when her father left for California.)
Dear Jane,

I requested you in my Pittsburgh letter to write an answer immediately directed to Paris, where I would again write that you might have time to send me another letter to Independence upon which I would then write you my last letter until I landed in California. A well laid scheme by which I could hear from you twice and you three times before leaving the frontiers of the United States. By this plan I should have kept up the thread of my narrative and given you a full account of my Journey, a description of the Country and of all the events that have transpired since leaving home, but a few links in the chain have been broken and I shall be only able to give a few detached items, as they may occur to my mind. I have been sick, at times suffering intensive pain, at others believing my life itself was in critical jeopardy, but I never forgot to watch the mails and enquire for letters whether at Paris, Independence, or here, but always returned disappointed, gloomy, and dispirited for believe me, Jane, absence has rendered you dearer to me now than when we were only three months married. But I believe it is ever thus with inconsistent and perverse womankind - out of presence out of mind. Yes, without one particle of excuse I have been permitted to transverse the wide west far from wife and children and all I hold dear upon Earth. For their sakes have I braved Cholera, disease and the bursting boilers on the Missouri River and yet for six long weeks have not received one line from you who should have joyed in communicating all that transpired at home and endeavoured to cheer me up under the hardships yet to be encountered in the long and arduous Journey still before me. I have now abandoned all hope of hearing from you until I reach the termination of my Journey, but I now make you one pledge and you know I will keep it. It is this - write to me the day you receive this and regularly once a month thereafter. Direct to me of the Charlestown Va Mining Company, San Francisco, California or better, enquire of Seevers how to direct it. I will do the same by you, but fail once in this and you hear from me no more. Do not think me harsh in this unless you could appreciate my feelings. Lupton and Lock have been treated just as I have. They have cried about it and were once on the eve of starting home. They are now however quite reconciled to this trip and in fine spirits. Immediately after writing to John James I became unable to urinate in consequence of an inflamation in the neck of the bladder from the effects of Mumps. The only remedy was the insertion of a silver tube by a Doctor 3 times a day for a week. The remedy, though almost as bad as the disease, afforded instant relief for about half an hour - when I would again be drawn almost double with pain suffering tortures for 5 or 6 hours until visited again by the Doctor. Courtney and Glenn were very, very attentive as well as my Doctor who proved to be a brother Mason and instead of charging twenty Dollars let me off with two Dollars - the amount of medicines and ferriages. John found me still too unwell to travel so that we had but one day and night to spend with Fanny. She has broken more than you have and I was there more forcibly reminded of home than any place I have seen. Her Frank in features, complexion, manners and grave disposition is almost the counterpart of our boy. Neither of the others look enough alike to be brothers and sisters, but are all pretty and very interesting.

Tell Mary she must never come to Missouri for she is bound to marry if she does and I really pity a wife in Missouri for owing to the low prices and scarcity of money the men think the pay too poor to work. This renders them idle and penniless though rich in lands. The consequence is their wives are slaves, cooks, and washe woman. This is almost a universal thing amongst the middle classes.
John and I left Paris last Tuesday week, that being as soon as I was able to travel. Our stage broke down and we were forced to travel 40 miles to Glasgow on the Missouri River so rapidly in a light waggon that I was almost brought to the state from which I had just recovered. We then took a boat for St. Joseph which in 10 miles burst her cylinder but fortunately nothing but two horses were crippled, but many were badly frightened. We then took passage on the Alexander Hamilton and arrived safe in Camp. I am still weak and on the sick list, but improving. My general health has been good. On each Boat one death had occurred from Cholera before we got on, but on the last Boat some 3 hours before landing here one of the deck passengers gave birth to a fine boy, which was immediately, by the parents, named after the Boat that gave him birth. We were pained to learn upon our arrival here of the death of one of our comrades after leaving St. Louis. - I mean Thomas Washington of Cholera produced by reckless imprudence. I have a comfortable tent in camp a quarter of a mile from town with more ease and comfort there than the crowded town can afford, and write this upon my sack in an easy reclining position. My mess and tent mates are Lupton, Lock, Tol, Hamilton Harrison, Allen & Showers - about the best mess in camp. I regret to say that most of the Sons of Temperance have violated their pledge. - Perhaps all except Burwell, Harris and myself. Smith Crane in the only one who has been intoxicated having just recovered from a three week frolic. I intend to offer a resolution in a day or two to prohibit drinking itself. I have the promised support of a good many, but am doubtful whether it can be carried, too many being wedded to their occasional drams. We will probably leave here in 3 or 4 days. I wish John to buy up and stop the Virginians the first time he goes to Winchester. Tol so far has realized my worst anticipations and I still firmly believe that he will be ruined by the trip as Albert and John would have been, but as I have traced his every secret and have lectured and threatened him, he may be kept right. The most careless and idle of the Company are the three boys who would each keep two men busy to replace what they misplace although busy enough in doing what should be done by others. These are things not to be spoken of to others.

Tell Harriett that Courtney made me a pretty red Reticule filled with notions which she says that I must give her when I return. I hope you are sending her to school.

Dan Cockerill has just returned from Lexington where he has had the Small Pox. He is not marked.

I now have the pleasing intelligence to write to you all, and particularly to your Mother, of having heard of Will Boley. Having seen at St. Louis the return of a portion of the Youcanan Regiment to New Orleans, I immediately wrote to Luckett for information and have just rec' his answer. The government inducement to them was to each man 300 acres of land, 8 $ per mo., and a suit of clothes every 3 mo. After many battles and hardships, living upon cats and dogs at times, finding they had been fooled by the faithless Government with the pitiful sum of 10 $ each, a majority returned - Will choosing to remain longer. But Luckett's letter of the 7th just states that Frank Eatys had that day conversed with his former Captain who told him that the climate had agreed with Will. He was looking well and in finer health than he had ever seen him when they left and that he heard the remainder of the regiment was daily expected at Orleans. John Wheeler had just written to him (enclosed to Bill Peyton who was married to Miss Rey on the 7th) advising his immediate return home, where he could procure the means to reach California with other inducements which I think will hurry him to Virginia.

Yours affectionately,
Edwin A. Riely
P.S. John must write to me and you monthly.
Kiss the children for me.

(Note: The relatives that Edwin and his brother-in-law, John T. Boley, visited in Paris, MO were George Glenn and his wife Elizabeth Courtney Boley Riely Glenn. She was a sister of Jane and was a widow of Edwin's brother John Peter Riely before she married George Glenn. Fanny and Courtney, the other relatives he spoke of visiting, are unknown to me.)
Dear John,

I last evening recd. your letter of the 20th of April and was greatly disappointed to find that it was not from a dearer person, who seems to have altogether forgotten that there was such a person as I in existence. But still I was glad to hear from you although it was only a page and a half and too hastily written to contain much that was interesting. Now, in the future I wish you to keep a memorandum of what should be written to me, both private news and matters of business, and take at least 4 hours to write me a letter. And as postage to California will be too high to pay for nothing, I would recommend you to write two full sheets as the postage will be no higher than for one. I have but little to write having only 3 or 4 days ago mailed a long letter to your Aunt Jane containing all the news I could think of.

Our Camp is all in commotion getting ready to make a first start by day after tomorrow for the land of promise. So, of course, my letter will be necessarily short and hurriedly written. I have suffered at times for the last month great pain and since I have been in Camp have been confined to my pallet in the tent under the care of the surgeon, but possessed of a fine appetite and my general health is good as ever. I am now free of pain, rapidly recovering and able to attend to light duties at my own pleasure, but I suppose it will be a month before I will be a man of all work and will start from here in our carriage or Spring Waggon. I have lost 19 lbs. of flesh since leaving home from the effects of medicine and panada, but my system is now so thoroughly renovated that I feel more able to undergo the march than when I left home.

Last night was a general Jubilee for us occasioned by the distribution of 20 or 30 letters in Camp from home. Amongst the number was one for Jno. Lupton, a long one - the first one from his wife which put him in ecstasies. He could scarcely read it for tears of real joy. He had been daily at the office, but returning disappointed, sad, and gloomy to his Bible for consolation under this trying depreciation, and invariably when he returned without a letter so sure were his mess mates to get a lecture on levity, swearing, etc. But last night, being on guard, I could hear his melodious notes (as he went his rounds) swelling out in pious hymns.

Tol has just returned from herding the mules bringing in his first trophy of the Wilderness - a buckhorn which looks as though it had been bleaching in the sun for 20 years.

I learn that Mrs. Lupton had been with Jane who says she was very distressed with but one letter from Ed since he left home. Now, how could she expect a 2nd letter from me when I expressly stated in my first that I would not write again until I rec. her answer in Paris? But my last letter to her will explain all this. I have understood that Geo. Boley is again in one of his beastly frolics. If so, since John and I have left, he is a gone sucker and I wish Jane to tell him that unless he at once makes a fair and immediate settlement of the estate so as to relieve me of my securityship, that he will be forced to do so. You have authority, I presume, under the power of attorney to act and you and your Aunt Jane can consult with Frank Warner, Doct. Janney or someone else and hold him to other security as I shall certainly not trust him at this distance from him whilst he is drinking, for he will ruin himself and every one connected with him. Frank is interested as well as I. Elisha Lock wishes you to say to George that he depends entirely upon George to see that his family do not suffer or want. He requests him to call upon his wife at least once a week so that he may know her wants and supply them as he promised. Also, to write to him in California. He is ignorant of his drinking, for if he knew it, I believe he would return at all hazards. He and Lupton are both well although they were on the very eve of returning before I joined them. They are now however in good spirits but occasionally a little childish when I amuse
myself a little by talking to them of their children. This would be a dull life without a little effort for fun and I must have it whenever an opportunity offers. Nat, John & Tol are all well and lively.

I almost begin to consider myself a traveller being now where the sun rises and sets one hour (and will soon be 3 hours) later than with you. Have seen the graceful Buckhorns bouncing over the plains, the gray wolves prowling through the forests, last though not least - the sight which so forcibly struck Geo. Boley on this trip, I have seen Wild Geese and Brants (half Duck and half Goose) together with ___ and Pelicans by Hundreds on the Land Bars and Islands. We have tents that have turned the hardest rain. We lie upon our Gum Elastic and Saddle Blankets and cover with a pair of Mackinaw Blankets which renders us quite comfortable.

Write to me once a month and let me know how the wheat looks and I would like to know if Mrs. Boley has moved, if Janney has taken possession, what ___ has done about Ben's' place. There are also many other things that would interest me and you ought to know what they are. Give my love to Jane and the children and tell Mr. Throckmorton I will write to him from California.

Yours Affectionately,
Edwin A. Riely

(This letter was written to John James Riely, the 17-year-old nephew who Edwin left in charge of his farm. John James was a son of Edwin's deceased brother James William Riely.)
Dear Sister,

I have intended writing to you ever since Edwin and John left, but have put it off from time to time until the present. Edwin was with us about 3 weeks - John not quite a week. Edwin was quite unwell part of the time from the effects of the mumps. The Doctor attended him several days. As he was a brother mason it did not cost him anything. We received a letter from him since he arrived at St. Joseph. He said they found their Company well and in fine spirits and nothing had happened to mar their pleasure but the death of Thomas Washington who died of Cholera which I suppose you have heard of long since.

We enjoy good health. Mr. Miller's family was well when I heard from them. Edwin received a letter from Mr. Luckett in relation to William. Luckett stated that Frank Eaty told him he had talked with Will's former captain who said he left Will in good health and looking well. The company was daily expected in New Orleans. I suppose Edwin informed you of it in his letter. I hope you will keep in good spirits until his return and you and your children will be able to enjoy the fruits of his labours. Hugh has also gone in search of Gold. He was married about a month before he left. His wife will remain with us until he returns.

Brokenbrough McCormick called to see me last week on his way to visit his sister. He is now living near Hannibal. He told me he would call on his return and one of his sisters would be with him. We have had a great deal of rain and cool weather this spring. It is quite pleasant now and everything looks cheerful. I have a beautiful snowball in front of the door in full bloom. My white rose will soon be out. I have just finished making my rag carpet. I want to whitewash and put it down this week. I had two visitors yesterday. They came at 7 o'clock in the morning and spent the day. Our black woman has been confined several weeks with the inflammatory Rheumatism. I have a great many young chickens which is all I have in the poultry line. I think you and Mary have treated me quite shabbily in not writing. I have not received a letter from either of you for 8 months. I want you both to write and let me know how you are coming on. Tell Aunt Fanny I intend to write to her shortly. I expect to go to Mr. Millers soon to spend a few days. Tell Mother I made John a thread case and pin cushion attached and fixed his pins, needles, buttons and thread - and Edwin likewise one. Courtney is tolerable healthy but we are fearful the Cholera will reach here shortly. I must come to a close as I have nothing of importance to write. My love to Mother and all the family and all inquiring friends. Kiss the dear little ones for me. My love to John and accept the same yourself from your sister,

Elizabeth C. Glenn

P.S. Mr. Glenn has just come in and read the letter and said as I have not mentioned him, I may say he is well and sends his respects to you all and said to tell you there are very flattering accounts from California _______ still increasing.

E. C. Glenn

(This letter was probably to Jane C. Boley Riely who, was the wife of Edwin Riely, from her sister Elizabeth Courtney Boley who had married his brother - John Peter Riely. After he died in 1842 she married George Glenn. Their brother, John T. Boley, also went west with Edwin. The Brokenbrough McCormick spoken of was a friend and former neighbor in Va before he moved to Hannibal, MO.)
Near Fort Laramie, June 13th, 1849

Dear Jane,

Having just understood that a mail will shortly leave the Fort for the U.S., I have concluded to drop you a few lines in haste, just as all other things here have to be done, although it is possible my first letter from San Francisco may reach home before this. It is now noon. We have hastily ungaered & picketed our mules, eaten a cold tack and as usual have but half an hour to rest before we again start. We are over 15 miles from the Fort (which is one third of our Journey from St. Joseph to the diggings) - the neighborhood of which we will encamp tonight, but as it is always night by the time we are through with the work and we have no candles or lights, my writing must be done now. I have forgotten what I wrote in my Fort Kearney letter, but you must expect indifferent letters until I reach California and get time. I have recovered from my slight Bilious attack and all other illness, but it is inconceivable how slowly I regain my strength and appetite. It is certainly the worst provided Company that ever started across the plains. Our usual and constant diet is thick griddle cake, coffee and fried middlings. Our flour is as good as Welch's best, but it is the only thing good on hand. The coffee bad and cheap for I have not had a good tin of it yet, and for the middling it is horribly fat, pure soft lard, such as our servants never ever saw. You may judge now how difficult it is to aquire an appetite or strength with a weak stomach. It is true we have beans and lambs quarter greens occasionally, but the men have become so ravenous that they never wait for them to cook and the consequence is they are sometimes sick from it. - Not one ham shoulder was purchased for fear of hauling - the bone in it being too leavy to haul. In consequence of buying young tender mules, most of the men are worried down and worn out with our walking, but when we cross the Rocky Mountains we can exchange for Indian Ponies and get on better. For my part, I am in clover being driver of the Carryall - can walk when I please for any walker will drive for me. At noon and night I unharness, water and picket out my 2 old white Mexican mules, and gear and hitch up whenever we start, keep harness and ___ in order and guard the vehicle. Any other spare time I have is occupied in bringing water, chips, cooking, eating, and sleeping. The Company are all so hearty that I have no regular passengers. We are getting on admirably, faster and better than we expected by far. It is all go ahead, no time to shoot Buffaloes or hunt. We have had one Buffalo Calf and one Antelope. Each made a a meal for every man.

I wish you to acknowledge the receipt of each letter that I may know whether you receive them all. I may possibly write again from Fort Hall and shall enquire for letters there as you all were to be informed through the papers that they might reach us in time. Johns' letters are very welcome and good for the purpose they are written, but they can never answer as substitutes for yours. How miserable the thought that it must be six months separation from you and the children without hearing anything except "all well".

We met 2 or 3 families of Mormans two days ago going to the States on business. An old man told us there was no exaggeration about the gold. - That his son alone who was along had acquired enough to enrich every member of the family almost beyond their wishes, frequently gathering 500 $ per day. He said California was of but little value except for its mineral wealth, but as regarded that, it was worth all the United States together.

Tell the children I can't send them pretty pebbles in a letter, but enclose them some flowers, as we pass through whole acres of every kind, hue and form. For a description of the Country you must wait for future letters or my diary. Suffice it to say, the whole Journey so far has been over open priarie or plains except for the first 250 miles. Every little stream had a few
trees on the banks. The Plateau has scarcely any timber, except occasionally on the Islands - Cottonwood and on the bluffs or sand ridge generally five miles from the River a few Cedar and Cypress, but we frequently travel for days without seeing a tree or rock. The first part of our Journey the travel ran over high and long hills providing a prospect farther than the eye could reach and the most luxuriant soil I have ever seen. (I have selected a location for my grand children, if they like it.) But along the Plateau the soil is comparatively stark, the road sinking deep in sand and level except where it diverges across the sand ridge. We yesterday had a view of the Wind River and perhaps some peaks of the Rocky Mountains 3 or 400 miles distant. The scenery for the last 3 or 4 days has been grand and imposing. I now sleep in the open air - rarely ever pitching a tent. This is said to be the coldest and wettest season ever known here and fortunate it is for the Ox drivers and Oxen - most of whom are at last behind. We have passed at least 1,200 waggons - mostly Ox trains. It was the calculation of government officers that this route would not support more than 10,000 head of stock in an ordinary season. I believe this season will subsist 5 times that number easy. There are about 1,800 waggons ahead of us. 1,200 we have passed and perhaps 2,000 left after us, making 5,000 trains, each averaging 3 men and 10 horses or mules will make 15,000 emigrants and 50,000 head of stock on this route.

I had scarcely begun my letter before we put off so I postponed my writing until evening and by rapid writing have made a long one. It is growing dusk and supper is coming on, so I must wind up. Tell me about Elizabeth, the children and Grubers Will. But I forget, tell nobody about our hardships occasioned by mismanagement or it will fly back like the wind and I wish no writing of mine to come to the knowledge of the Company. My crop is nearly ripe and I can know nothing about it for 2 or 3 months. God bless you all.

Yours Affectionately,
Edwin A. Riery

P.S. I think I have fallen off the fifty pounds I bargained for, and now begin to look like old times in size, but am burnt nearly as dark as Jack. Most of the Company have fallen off generally from fatigue. - I from sickness and a stomach too weak for my diet. We had two cases of Cholera on the trail - slight however. Numbers had Diarrhea the first two weeks as is customary. Then if they excape Bilious Complaints for most 2 weeks they are safe generally for the Journey. No time to read this over and correct errors.

E.A.R

(Note: Middling, as referred to as a part of their diet, is a salt pork or smoked side meat.)
Sweet Water River, June 27th, 1849

Dear Jane,

Having just understood that we would meet in the course of an hour or two, a party of Traders and Trappers on their return to the States, I have concluded to drop you a hasty line, not for the purpose of giving you news, or an account of our Journey, but merely that you may know where we are and how we are. We are in 40 miles of the Summit of the South Pass - which we will attain day after tomorrow, for we have now in full view the snow capped summit of the Wind River Mountain (or part of the Rocky range). We have crossed the Sweet Water 7 times - fording 3 times last night after dark. The last time my old whines refused to climb the slippery and deep muddy bank, so I was forced to unharness and leave the vehicle between the bank and the waters edge until morning. This stream is not much wider than the Opequon, but so deep at its best fords (owing to the melting snows on the Rocky Mountains) that we are forced to raise the wagggon beds 8 or 10 inches to avoid wetting our provisions. We passed two days ago over the most remarkable gaps in the mountain I have beheld. Is is well known on this route as the "Devils Gate" and is caused by the Sweet Water forcing its way through a short but high mountain of naked solid granite. The fissure or passage is 100 feet wide, 400 feet from the water to the top of the Rock, which is perpendicular on each side, and 900 feet through the ridge. In this region we have found grass short and good spots hard to find, but far better than we expected as this passage was the great bugaboo which kept us alarmed. We expect to be in valley of the Sacramento in 35 days from this time as our loads are rapidly and daily becoming lighter under the affects of the almost wolfish appetites of the Company. My own appetite is quite moderate except when chance to get Buffalo, Antelope, Suckers, or Perch, but fat middling I have no relish for. I am now strong and hearty not withstanding my loss of at least (I think) 50 lbs. of flesh. I am now pretty much such a looking fellow as Jack Cross, but not more so in size than in colour. The sun here is not as hot as at home, but we are more exposed to its rays as we no longer use our tents and a shade tree is not seen sometimes for Hundreds of miles. But we always have a cool and delightful breeze for there is no purer atmosphere on earth than here and instead of feeling weak and debilitated of mornings as at home, we arise refreshed and invigorated. My bed consists of a Saddle Blanket spread on the sand or grass on which I lie with a pair of Mackinaw Blankets and my Gum Blanket for covering and my overcoat for a pillow. This is my Couch under the naked Canopy of Heaven to which I nightly retire after carefully doffing my shoes as that is the only part of my apparel I take off. Not even excepting the Hat as I invariably keep that on to keep off the night air or dew which rarely ever falls here. Our Company are all in the enjoyment of excellent health. I had John Lupton for a passenger a few days since for 4 or 5 days from gorging on Buffalo Meat when threatened with the Diarrhea. He was not much indisposed, but badly mopped as you may know. This is likely the last letter I write before I hear from you, as I wrote from both Fort Kearney & Fort Laramie which doubtless you will receive before this reaches you. I hope you have written me all the news of the neighborhood and business in which I may feel an interest. How I should like to know the amt. of the crop now being cut and how our things are getting on. The order has just been given to hitch up as it is noon and starting time, so this must come to a close like every thing else. Remember me to my friends and kiss the dear children.

Yours Affectionately,

Edwin A. Riely
Dear Jane,

We are now upon the above River having reached here night before last after crossing a totally barren and desolate Desert 40 or 50 miles without wood, drinkable water or grass in that distance, having hauled grass and water for the entire stretch through for our animals. Of course, they as well as ourselves were on short allowance with water for want of vessels to haul a sufficiency and again in our most thirsty state, being fully able to appreciate Capt. Rifeys suffering in the great Desert of Sahara, although I believe we have crossed deserts fully equal to that. You can judge of our feelings (after crossing this Desert waste of sage and black frowning rocks burnt to cinders by volcanic fire) when we arrived in sight of a long winding line of Willow bushes and tall trees that has not greeted our eyes for the last 5 or 600 miles) indicating the course of the River where we were to find good pure water and an abundance of grass for our exhausted animals. The drooping spirits of all were exhilarated as you may well suppose. We are now in 180 miles of the termination of our Journey which we expect to make in 9 days and having decided on sending on a committee from here this morning to procure supplies and a location against our arrival, I have concluded to write until they are ready to start, promising to write more fully as soon as I reach the diggings and receive my letters from home. I wrote you from Fort Kearney and also Fort Laramie, but I consider it doubtful whether you received either of them owing to the uncertainty of getting them to the States. I was sick nearly the whole trip suffering more from loss of appetite and extreme debility than any thing else and having lost I presume about 50 lbs. of useless flesh. A second bilious attack beyond Fort Hall I have just recovered from and am now able to eat my allowance and am rapidly recovering my strength. Sometimes as many as 20 of the Company were sick at one time, but a change of climate and water have restored nearly all to then-usual health.

I announced in my Fort Kearney letter the death of J. C. Young of Maryland of Cholera - of which there was 5 or 6 cases in the Company soon after leaving St. Joseph. It now becomes by painful duty to announce the death of two others of the Company, but this time death has chosen a victim nearer home. The first is poor Taliferro Milton who has unfortunately found a watery grave on the 9th of July. He and 3 others concluded to walk (as our route would be somewhat circuitous) across and make a cut-off to our noon camp, but soon found themselves hemmed in by a deep swamp on one side and Thomack Fork of Bear River on the other. To return would cause them to walk rather further than the wagons would travel. Two of them decided on going around the swamp, but Tol and Bender (the latter a good swimmer) thought of swimming the River. Bender succeeded with his clothes on, but with great difficulty (although the stream was only 30 feet wide and about 10 feet deep) owing to the stillness of the water making it laborious swimming and the water fresh from the mountain snows making it chilling and exhausting. He at once used every effort to dissuade Tol from the attempt, but without success - only succeeding in getting him to consent to strip off his clothes and wait until he could get a fishing rod to assist him out with if necessary. Before Bender returned with the rod only a few yards off, Tol was 6 or 8 feet from shore and sinking. He ran in up to his neck and reached him with the pole when he lost his footing from the slippery bank and was drawn under. He caught the pole the second time and was again drawn under and very nearly being drowned himself and so exhausted as scarcely able to reach the shore himself as the poor fellow sank for the last time. We were quietly crossing at the ford about two miles below where the water was not more than two feet deep when the news of his death reached us. It cast a chilling gloom on every countenance. We soon succeeding in recovering the body which we conveyed on 8 miles to Bear River. The next morning his remains were lowered
to their last resting place in a grave prepared on a high Bluff after the reading of the burial service, his blankets for his winding sheet and the cold earth his coffin with a few poles laid across to keep the loose earth from his remains. A board at his head tells his name and residence, age and untimely end. It will be a hard blow to his Parents and this may be the first intelligence they will receive of his death. The other death was a youth from Frederick County - James Davidson, who accidentally shot himself this day week in drawing his gun towards him over a bunch of bushes. He lived only 10 hours and was in great agony. Thus hard, we lost 4 of our number in as many months - all under 21 years of age and all through their imprudence. Even Young could have been saved with timely aid, but he chose to use quick medicines for Diarrhea when he actually had the Cholera.

Five months have nearly elapsed since I left home and you can judge of my deep anxiety to hear from you. I do hope you have been punctual and that I may be able to receive some letters on my arrival. All your acquaintances of the Company are well and in good spirits. John Lupton says he would not again undergo the fatigues, privations, hardships and danger of the trip for all the gold in California. I have no time to read and correct this as we are just to start. I enclose the children a few flowers. Little Mary can talk and run all about eating Fruit which I am debarred from. Oh, if I could only hear that all were well, how happy I should feel.

P.S. The yellow flowers are tulip or lily shaped when growing and a most lovely flower. I suppose I may certainly look for letters from John on my arrival if not from you.

(Note: The little Mary he refers to in his last paragraph is his youngest daughter who was only about one when he left home.)
Dear Jane,

After an absence from home of 6 months this very day, from all I hold dear upon Earth, and having accomplished a long and tedious march of 4000 miles through various climates and exposed to all kinds of weather, whilst prostrated by disease and deprived of every comfort which such a situation required, even deprived of congenial society, and the sagacity of friends, if you can imagine all this you may then be able to form some idea of my feelings at arriving at the above place in cheerful spirits, blessed with health and proudly treading the golden sands of California, with the knowledge that its mineral wealth is far greater than I ever dreamed of at home - besides being more rapidly acquired. There is also another great satisfaction derived in getting safe here. It is that I have reached a point from whence I can return home by various other routes and by some in one third of the time consumed in coming, for I have firmly decided on not returning by the one I came if I have to still further follow the course of the setting sun and return through Asia.

But as every Rose has its thorns, so likewise is there an alloy mixed with all my pleasure. My first thought upon reaching here was of letters, but judge of my grief and annoyance upon learning that there is no earthly chance of procuring letters out of the San Francisco Office until next Spring, if then. For owing to the neglect of Congress last Winter to increase the Postmasters Salary, they refuse to attend to the duties of their offices out here or employ clerks until all is confusion and will be until the next Congress increases their salaries in some proportion to the abundance of money as $2,000 is all that can be allowed. In future I want all letters sent to Sacramento City and get John James to order Beller immediately to change the direction of my paper to the same place instead of San Francisco.

But as I am deprived the pleasure of receiving a letter and expecting to remain idle here for a few days until our men all get together, I shall continue this from time to time and perhaps bore you with a long letter. I will first endeavor to give you some account of the Country through which we have passed, together with a few of our grievances and sufferings on the route. This I have intentionally deferred doing until the trip was accomplished so as to prevent any uneasiness or alarm, although I fear other letter writers may have been less prudent.

Our first great error was in having the Company to number more than 30 or 40 (and 20 would have been better still) and they known to each other, instead of 80 - most of whom met together for the first time. The second mistake was in the selections of Directors. You will recollect I approved of but two of them. They have given general satisfaction, but the others have proved themselves more boys in business without energy or judgment until the men were thoroughly disgusted with them and willing to make any sacrifice or run any risk rather than submit any longer to their authority. Another and the third great error was committed by the Jack Ass Committee who were sent to the West for the purchase of mules. They bought a whole drove of mules (instead of selecting 2 or 3 here and there) numbering 80 or 90 for which they paid about 90 $ each. Many of them being only 2 or 3 years old and being an incumbrance rather than of use to us, whilst the few we purchased at St. Joseph at 40 to 50 $ were hardy Mexican mules with the advantage of age, able to undergo anything, living on dry sticks and which we found impossible to kill by thirst, hunger or labour. Thus did we lose Thousands of Dollars by this foolish purchase, whilst the men who paid in the large sum of 300 $ each, a part of which was expressly to furnish each one with a horse or mule to ride, found themselves started on foot with a bare sufficiency of mules to haul the waggons on a Journey of two Thousand miles. And even to raise this number of mules it was found necessary to raise a loan of $1600 from the individual members of the Company - many loaning their last dollar to supply the deficiency caused by the abominable
mismanagement of the Directors. Their extravagance and waste of money having used up near $24,000. Another inconvenience arising from this waste of money was having to overload our wagons as we had nothing left to buy more mules or wagons with. Consequently we were compelled to start with 30 hundred on each wagon instead of 15 or 18 as the experience of all who had spoken or written on the subject had recommended as the highest load that could be hauled by grass-fed mules over such a journey. But the fact is, we should have started with only such things as were absolutely necessary on the route and shipped all else around Cape Horn, as we had neither pampered, corn-fed Horses or Turnpike to haul on, as our Directors seemed to think.

But after all this fault-finding and censuring for their false moves, I must give them all due credit for the only good one made by them which likely proved our salvation as I believe their false ones without this would have caused our destruction. They were induced at St. Louis to employ a guide familiar with the route whose duty would be to ride ahead, and off the trail, and select our Camps with a view to safety from Indian attacks, and to find us the indispensable articles of Water, Fuel and Grass. They accordingly procured the services of Francis S. Smith for $100 for the trip - a young man of about 27 years of age, who has spent the last 10 or 12 years amongst the Trappers and Traders of the Rocky Mountains, has 4 times made the trip to Oregon and California and several times rounded Cape Horn. Besides this, he was on board the Brig Lomus at the time young Spencer was hung. (If you have forgotten the circumstance, ask Mr. Throckmorton.) Such is a short history of our guide who urged upon the Directors at St. Joseph the necessity of selling off a portion of the plunder where they could get its value or else it would have to be thrown away on the plains or break down the mules. This advise they heeded not until both predictions were verified, for at Fort Kearney our mules were broken down and we were forced to lighten up 7000 lbs. in the aggregate by selling off provisions and other property for 150 $ what had cost us ten times as much in the States. This, although done in opposition to the wishes of the Directors, I am convinced is the only thing that could have prevented us from being now 500 miles back - and perhaps starving at that.

One word of a portion of the Directors and I am done with them. After idling away days and weeks at St. Joseph drinking and carousing, showing an ignorance of what to do or how to start, they finally got upon the plains and went to concocting laws for our government. I will only mention one of their ordinances for all were equally as obnoxious. It was that they, the Directors, should each select a Horse and with a revolver constitute a scouting party leaving the privates to wade through the mud and tug at the stalled wagons. This was their last act for in general meeting we suspended the Constitution and the Directors and appointed Frank Smith our Captain with sole and entire control over us until we arrived in California.

As to the peculiar hardships of this Journey, one was in having to work with over 100 mules, most of them unbroken and geared for the first time the morning we left St. Joseph and this we had for weeks before they became gentle. Another was in the first part of the trip we had almost unceasing rains, wading through mud, fording, on foot, creeks and rivers and arriving in Camp frequently after dark, having eaten nothing since Breakfast, then having their supper to cook, and perhaps stand guard for the night and this happened not unseldom for generally one fourth of the men were ill in the common diseases of the plains viz. Diarrhea, Dysentery, Bilious Attacks and some Cholera. This made the labour on men who were well much harder, as they had to do almost double duty.

But this is not all that we had to endure - nor is it half. Besides the nature of our diet which I have mentioned in previous letters, it would say something of the men composing the
Company. After first perceiving that 80 brothers could not make this trip in harmony, I would say that the very manner of our organization would be itself a sufficient guarantee that we would have a discordant company. First, all were gladly taken that chose to apply and then to balance these, being too many gentlemen unused to labour, ____ were accepted but the hard ____ fellows without regard to refinement, previous acquaintance, character or even honesty itself and the result has shown that another such party never was thrown together before. We had every shade and variety of mankind from the lowest bred and most vulgar and even thieves, up to men who at home were warm hearted and refined gentlemen, but even most of them has lost these good qualities on the plains partly from association but mostly from having to suffer privations and undergo sufferings to which they were unaccustomed. You can imagine our feelings when coming into Camp sometimes with the feelings I have mentioned. Nor will it seem surprising that men under such circumstances would endeavor to make all others feel as unpleasant as themselves. Now, I should like to be spared the presence of even a hungry man, but Lord forever deliver me from the presence and companionship of a low, vulgar, selfish man when suffering from most all these causes combined.

In a day or two when we all get together, some decisive steps will be taken as to our future movements, but at this time all is confusion. - Some for a dissolution of the Company and a sale of all the property and others for a continuance of it until Spring when our mules will bring three times as much as they will now and we could then see justice done to those who have sent substitutes and to deceased members. But for these considerations I would favor a dissolution, but as a matter of principle I shall oppose it. But enough of them for the present, as I wish you to know something of how I got on myself.

I was appointed driver of the sick Waggon upon leaving St. Joseph, which I resigned in two or three days, and walked the next 200 miles. I was then thrown up by a Bilious attack as I wrote you. Upon my recovery at the urgent solicitation of the Doctor, I again became driver of the carriage until within 50 miles of Fort Hall when a sun stroke succeeded by another Bilious attack, rendered me unable longer to drive or even sit up. In fact, I became utterly prostrated by weakness and loss of appetite until dwindled to a mummy, and here for the first my sanguine temperament and buoyant spirits which had enabled me to laugh at every privation and scorn all dangers, at length forsook me. And I verily believed that my career of usefulness or folly was doomed to a speedy and final close, for traveling as we were mostly in the night to avoid the intense heat of the Sun. - Fatigued and exhausted by constant traveling, living on Tea alone, and rapidly becoming weaker until scarce able to stand. How could I expect to recruit again? - Why only in trusting to an Iron Constitution which did as it has heretofore done. - - Withstood every abuse and even overcome disease itself. But you will understand my situation upon learning that I weighed 202 lbs. on leaving home and find myself here weighting 132 lbs. after being 3 weeks recovered and for that time having fully gratified an enormous appetite and probably gained 15 or 20 lbs of this same 132 lbs. from when we first struck Salmon Trout River. I rode a mule as far as Johnsons, 42 miles above this, and from there to this place I walked, coming into Camp the last day with head erect and light step after a march of 25 miles made between sunrise and 2 o'clock. I now never cough and am able to undergo labour that at home would have killed me. Salmon Trout River, which we forded 27 times (in a current as swift as an arrow and 3 - 4 feet deep at the fords with the bottoms covered with round rocks as large as millstones) gave me another narrow escape. After once being buried with my mule in the water I attempted at the worst ford to walk across, but owing to the swiftness of the current and my extreme weakness found that one step more either to retreat or advance, I would be swept off and here I was forced to stand and wait for
assistance. The united efforts of three men could scarce take me out in safety. Since the 29th of May when we voted tents, on a forced march, to be a nuisance and packed them away in the bottoms of the wagons I have slept, sick or well, with no other covering but the canopy of heaven and before falling to sleep my last thoughts were of home and my last look upon the stars. It is true many have slept in and under the wagons, but I sought no such luxurious ease, although we have had heavy dews, rains, hard frosts and even snows. On some parts of the route dews are unknown. On others it never rains but in winter and near the Sierra Nevada frosts are every night and snow every month in the year.

I, at first, thought of giving you a description of our route, but must refer you to my Journal when I return (It was intended as a mere memorandum book at the start, but has now swollen to a considerable volume.) and content myself with giving you little more than a table of distances. My computations makes from St. Joseph to Fort Kearny 269 miles, Fort Laramie 322, South Pass 264, Fort Hall 259, Head of Humboldt 190, to sink of same 331 miles, to Salmon Trout 45, along same to summit of Sierra Nevada 71, to Johnsons 82, Sacramento City 42, Total 1,875 miles. It is 200 from this to San Francisco.

The travel to Fort Kearney, although over a country utterly destitute of timber (except a few trees on the banks of streams), was certainly the most lovely country I have ever seen. The rich black soil was 3 or 4 feet deep and was covered with the finest and tallest grass of every variety over which the eye could roam until lost in interminable space. The road was deep and muddy with numerous abrupt and deep chucks. Along the Platte to Fort Laramie the soil was only second rate being lighter & sandy but a good road. We forded the Platte below the Forks 2 miles wide with the aid of 20 men to a wagon, pulling by ropes before the mules. Owing to the light sandy banks it is very shallow, say two to 3 feet deep, but it is one of those remarkable streams that the higher you go up it, the deeper it becomes, as from Laramie to its head it is hemmed in by mountains varying little from 200 yds. in width with from 6 to almost any depth. From Fort Laramie we crossed the Blk. Hills 120 miles to the Platte again, over a rough mountainous country destitute of timber and grass, presenting a frightful scene of desolation and nothing green but a few stunted cedars and the poverty looking wild sage. We have ferried the Platte and crossed a similar country of 50 miles to Sweet Water. Along the stream we traveled about 100 miles to S. Pass over a good level road and fine grass. The valley is narrow breaking off into sand hills which are bounded by high mountains on each side about from 10 to 20 miles apart, stretching out from the Rocky Mountains, like long arms to receive us into the South Pass. My surprise was great in entering the Pass over apparently a perfectly level road through a pass 20 miles wide from the abrupt termination of the mountain on either hand, at beholding the lofty peaks covered with snow but destitute of timber and free of rocks - instead of the rugged mountain I expected to see and with difficulty to climb with its sides all jagged with towering rocks and gloomy from its gigantic timber. From this to Big Sandy is 25 miles, where we entered ______ cut off being 47 miles to Green River without wood, water or grass. We made it at our rushing drive mostly in the night from Green to Bear River 60 miles rough & hilly. Along Bear 87 miles with the finest grass and best soil since leaving Fort Kearney, 30 to Fort Hall from here to Salmon Trout River. It is over vast desert, the whole country excepting the narrow valleys along the Rivers, presenting one vast field of ______ and desolation. The only growth being the everlasting wild sage whilst the few loose stones are burnt to cinders and the earth resembles dry ashes through which the wheels sink to the hubs. The remainder of the road across the Sierra Nevada and to the Sacramento Valley is the worst upon Earth. Many days by hard driving from sun to sun we were only able to make 5 miles, having to let our Waggon down hills, a mile in length and almost perpendicular, by ropes would
around trees and they falling over rocks as large as the waggon itself. Whilst traveling thus slowly our mules were living on Aspen twigs and we ourselves being on allowance eating bread without saleratus, grease or salt and coffee without sugar. Of meat, we had none nor anything else. We arrived at the 1st diggings on the 29th August where we left half our wagons and contents with a portion of the Company and hurried on through 30 miles to Johnsons with all the mules in order to recruit them sufficiently to bring up the other Wagons. We lost 25 or 30 mules in the trip. We lost one more member since my last letter - Newton Tavenner of Frederick. He died of consumption (taken about the time we started) and from reckless exposure. For an account of the scenery and natural curiosity you must await my return.

The City of Sacramento is one of the most remarkable places I have ever seen. Scarce months have elapsed since the first house was erected here and now it covers 15 or 20 acres. The houses not far apart and scattering, but jammed and crammed showing the value of land. Lots 30 by 80 feet selling from 2 to $8,000. It is true 3/4 of the houses are mere tents at present, being mere frames ready for weather boarding and roofing, but for want of materials are now covered with tent cloth. It is situated on the Sacramento just below the mouth of the American River and in one mile of Sutters Fort. For its size it is a place of the most immense business I have ever seen resembling our largest cities in their confusion and bustle. The tide runs above this and its dock is crowded with vessels and whilst the wharf and pavements are crowded with valuable goods and the tents besides being filled with costly goods, contain large sums of Gold. Robberies and theft are here unknown, such as I predicted would be the case - the affect of the abundance of money and the fear of Lynch Law.

Prices are somewhat in proportion to the abundance of money, although but little uniformity, merchants asking what they please and getting what they ask. Credit can be obtained to almost any extend needed as there is no inducement to be dishonest. It is impossible to say what is an average days earnings in the mines. It is generally considered an ounce per day, but sometimes fortunes are found in a day and some scarcely pay their expenses for weeks until they light on a good lead. Miners can live on 1/2 $ per day or nearly as cheap as at home. Gaming is carried on in the City to an alarming extent and in the most public manner. Thousands being lost and won on the turn of a card without, I am told, exciting surprise in beholders or regret in the loser. And in business Thousands are talked of and paid as we would a few hundreds. It is really more like enchantment or the tales we read of in the Arabian Nights than reality. Sandy McIntire from Leesburg whom you have heard Hagarty speak of, has a store or rather a near the diggings where I passed. A few of his sales were as follows: Pickled Pork 1 $ per lb., cheese 1 1/2 $, Flour 40 cts/lb., Sheet Iron 2 1/2 $ per lb., Whiskey 50 cts. a drink, Fresh Beef 40 cts., Sugar & Coffee 35 cts., Salt 50 cts. per lb., Mackerel 50 cts each, and Brandy 3 $ per Bottle, equal to 16 $ per ___. In the city prices are lower. Mess Pork 40 $ per Bbl of 200 lbs., Flour 16 $ per Bbl, Sugar 18 cts, Coffee same, Whiskey 2 1/2 $, Molasses 1 $, Vinegar same, Salt 5 $ per Bushel, Cheese 1 $, Onions 1 $ per lb., Potatoes 40 cts. Clerks are paid 3 to 400 $ per month, Ox Drivers the same and labourers 8 to 10 $ per day, Mechanics 10 to 20 $, but nearly all prefer the diggings. A Beef of 5 or 600 lbs. costs us 40 $, a Tavern dinner 1 1/2 $. Val Peyton I learn is merchandising in the city. I will call on him when I get time. A meeting has been held in the city for the purpose of sending relief to suffering emigrants scattered from here to the South Pass. Ample provision has been made to bring them on, carry their provisions or get them to the Salt Lake or Fort Hall for winter quarters. The loss of human life in crossing the plains by disease, starvation and other causes by this wild gold crusade will perhaps exceed 5000 with sufferings to others unheard of for there are hundreds of ____ ___. There will be no grass to sustain the lives
of the animals of half the emigration. The loss of property, oxen, wagons, provisions and costly machinery thrown away will be immense, perhaps exceeding millions of Dollars.

I enclose you some seeds of a Raspberry gathered on the Sierra Nevada which I wish you to plant in a box immediately and try your luck in raising. It grows on a vine about 1 foot high with large leaves like grapes & fruit is 3/4 of an inch in diameter, a bright scarlet and of the finest flavour I have ever tasted. If cultivated it would surpass all other varieties. The finest variety of strawberry known was produced from seed. Sept. 18th

After writing thus far whilst waiting for our men to come in with the hindmost Wagons I had concluded to send this off as any letters going after today will not be made up for the Steamer which leaves on the 1st Oct., but fortunately the Wagons have arrived and after a boistering and confused meeting I am able to announce that the Va. Mining Company is now amongst the things that once were and that the discordant elements composing it will soon be scattered to the four winds. We will proceed at once to sell all the property and divide the proceeds, which I think will be about 200 $ to a man. Small parties are already forming to work together and in fact some parties were formed on the route in anticipation of this result. Most of us however will wait until all is sold and divided that we may buy understandingly and then strike for the Diggings where I learn we can work all the Winter.

Aisquith has been appointed by the Company to go to San Francisco and bring up our letters which it is possible he can get by swearing in as Deputy Postmaster and looking for himself. Should he succeed in getting any for me I will answer them by the Steamer that leaves 1st November, but feel no uneasiness should you fail regularly to hear from me, as I may be out of reach of the P.O. at a season when the Rivers are unfordable for I wish to expend my efforts for a fortune as soon as possible and return home. There are many things I wished to write but have forgotten in the hurry and bustle of the Camp and as my last leisure moment is over and the time for action arrived, I must hurry on to a close. You can hardly imagine my feelings of dread and uneasiness to hear from home. With you, the case is different as I wrote when leaving St. Joseph, Fort Kearney, Fort Laramie, and Salmon Trout - all of which I hope you have received. But I came here with no letters for 5 months and but small likelihood of getting any for months to come.

Give regards to Mother and Fanny and Mary and your Mother, also to all inquiring friends and, for Gods sake, write often or at least by every Steamer. I had to like to have forgotten one thing - It is to get McCormick or some other to fix your teeth before they are too far gone and let me know in your next letter. Let me know how John James is getting on with the Farm and tell him to abandon all idea of coming here if he has any until I return as the dry streams have proved that the gold here is inexhaustible. For instance in the day diggings, as they are called, the sand is gathered from the beds of streams in the summer, which are then dry and washed. This was done in many places last summer and repeated this season at the same places with equal success, but I must close.

Yours Affectionately,
Edwin A. Riery

(Note: In his last paragraph when Edwin refers to his mother, he would be speaking of his stepmother, Priscilla Hardesty Riery. The Fanny he refers to would be his sister-in-law, Frances Kercheval Grantham Riery - widow of his brother George Henry Riery. The Mary he refers to here may have been a sister-in-law on his wife's side of the family.)
Dear Sister,

I have taken the present opportunity of scribbling you a few lines to let you know that I am yet in the land of the living and in good health and spirits and hope this may find you all enjoying the same blessing. I received your letter dated Aug. 11th only a few days ago through the neglect of the clerk overlooking it and also one from William dated Sept. 27th. He was well and talked of paying you a visit the coming summer when I hope to meet him there as I begin to want to see my mammy. I was glad to hear that you were all well and that your children were apt to learn. You know how badly I want to see them. I would give a good sized lump to see them. I feel a good deal like starting as one of my old partners and messmates leaves this evening for San Francisco on his way to the Old Dominion. Burwell has given out the idea of going and send for his wife by Murphy who will return in the spring and when he gets back I will pay you a visit and return in the fall and some old womans girl will have to come with me. This is, if they feel like it and if they don't, they need not and I am as well satisfied as they are. I send this letter by Murphy which he promises to deliver personally and you will find him to be a very gentlemanly and clever young man. He will give you all the news, therefore I will cut mine short. Tell Frank and Mary the next time they write they had better get two or three more to help them and maybe they all could fill it as they both made out to write a page and a half the last letter. You will please direct your letters after this to Placeville as young Harrison talks of leaving the office here shortly who has forwarded our letters for us.

I send you a lot of specimens which I wish you to keep in the family just as a show until I come and I will bring some prettier ones and put with them. These are some that I found myself and kept. There is a piece of mettle with them that is found in the ravines which is called here sulphur. Dinner is just ready and I must close by sending my love to all the family and inquiring friends and accept the same from your brother,

John T. Boley

You will excuse this hurried letter and Murphy will give you all the news.

John T. Boley

(Note: This letter was probably written to Jane C. Boley Riely - widow of Edwin A. Riely.)