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Note
History --History, California --GeneralGeographical (by Place) --CaliforniaEngineering and Technology --Mining and Metallurgy
Guide to the Levi Richard French Letters to his Family, 1850-1854

Collection number: BANC MSS 85/106 c

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Collection Summary
Collection Title: Levi Richard French Letters to his Family,
Date (inclusive): 1850-1854
Collection Number: BANC MSS 85/106 c
Creator: French, Levi Richard
Extent: Number of containers: 1 portfolio
Repository: The Bancroft Library
Berkeley, California 94720-6000
Physical Location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.
Abstract: Letters detailing aspects of his life in California, first as a gold miner, and later as a businessman. A few early letters (1850-1852) detail his life and relatively unsuccessful exploits in the gold fields. Most of the letters (1852-54), however, pertain to the time after he returned to California following a short visit to the East. They describe a somewhat more successful career as a teamster and businessman selling goods to miners, including wagons specially designed to handle the rugged terrain of the gold country, which were shipped from Massachusetts to him by his father. These later letters were written during periods of residence in Thompson's Flat, Onion Valley, Morris Ravine, New Philadelphia and Marysville.
Languages Represented: English
Access
The collection is open for research.

**Preferred Citation**
[Identification of item], Levi Richard French Letters to his Family, BANC MSS 85/106 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

**Acquisition Information**
The Levi Richard French Letters were purchased by the Friends of The Bancroft Library in April 1985.

**Biographical Sketch**
Levi Richard French, like thousands of other men during the Gold Rush, came to California to seek his fortune. This collection of 31 letters from Levi to his father Richard French details his early exploits as a miner in California. Faring poorly as a miner, he returned briefly to Boston in 1851, returning later that year to California. His letters from Thompson's Flat, Onion Valley, Morris Ravine, New Philadelphia, and Marysville indicate a greater success as a businessman than a miner. French opened several stores selling goods to miners and wagons that his father sent from Massachusetts.
The collection includes a letter from Tammy to Aunt Grace. It is unclear if either of these people was associated with Levi Richard French. For additional information on the ship *Regulus*, which French sailed on, see Thomas Williams' journal of his voyage on the *Regulus*, call number BANC MSS 78/19 c.

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**folder 1**
Levi R. French (San Francisco) to Father (Richard French) Sept. 12, 1850

- Physical Description: 2 p.
- Scope and Content Note
  Not doing well in mines. Makes arrangements to settle a debt in Boston of $300. Gives father power of attorney to settle the debt between himself and J. [G.] Ball, his uncle.

**folder 2**
Levi R. French (Boston) to Father Feb. 3, 1851

- Physical Description: 1 p.
- Scope and Content Note
  Coming home Wednesday on the second train.

**folder 3**
Levi R. French (Boston) to Father Feb. 26, 1851

- Physical Description: 1 p.
- Scope and Content Note
  Received money father sent him. Returning to California soon. Uncle Joseph did not take promissory note from him for debt.

**folder 4**
Levi R. French (Boston Harbor) to Father n.d.

- Physical Description: 1 p.
- Scope and Content Note
  Getting ready to set sail for California. Instructs father to write him in San Francisco c/o the Bunker Hill Trading Association Ship *Regulus*.

**folder 5**
Levi R. French (Thompson's Flat) to Father April 16, 1851

- Physical Description: 1 p.
- Scope and Content Note
  Tell (?) if father needs money since his business is not doing well and he is unable to send money.

**folder 6**
Levi R. French (Onion Valley) to Father July 9, 1851

- Physical Description: 3 p.
- Scope and Content Note
  Now in Onion Valley. Hopes to send money within 2-3 months if he has no more bills to pay. Describes Onion Valley. Prospects for miners are better than ever before in California. Supplies are cheap. Wishes he could send money now, attributes lack of it to his bad luck.
folder 7  
Levi R. French (San Francisco) to Father Sept. 26, 1851  
Physical Description: 2 p.  
Scope and Content Note  
Has not received any letters from home. Hotel in Onion Valley closed until spring. Sending 18 ounces of gold dust. Partner going home for winter, he has no plans yet. Write him at Sacramento City.

folder 8  
Levi R. French (Morris Ravine) to Father Nov. 9, 1851  
Physical Description: 2 p.  
Scope and Content Note  
Still has not received any letters. Continue to write him at Sacramento City. Has made no money since he last wrote. If he doesn't make some soon, he will leave the area. Expects to mine during the winter.

folder 9  
Tammy (Morris Ravine) to Aunt Grace Jan. 29, 1852  
Physical Description: 1 p.  
Scope and Content Note  
Describes typical workday mining and typical meals.

folder 10  
Levi R. French (New Philadelphia) to Father Feb. 19, 1852  
Physical Description: 2 p.  
Scope and Content Note  
Finally has received a letter. Father has shipped him wagons to sell. Will send money with the next steamer. Winter has been very dry. Business going so well he does not want to leave it to come home. Instructs father to write him at New Philadelphia by way of Marysville.

folder 11  
Levi R. French (Marysville) to Father May 10, 1852  
Physical Description: 2 p.  
Scope and Content Note  
Sends $150 draft note. Has not received a letter in some time. If he sees Willis in California, he will make Willis pay the debt Willis owes his father.

folder 12  
Levi R. French (California) to Father May 17, 1852  
Physical Description: 1 p.  
Scope and Content Note  
Sending a second draft of $150, since first one was not received. Would like a receipt to let him know the remainder of his promissory note has been cancelled.

folder 13  
Levi R. French (Marysville) to Father Sept. 24, 1852  
Physical Description: 2 p.  
Scope and Content Note  
Sending bill of exchange for $200. Leaving today for Morris Ravine. Sends regards to friends at home.

folder 14  
Levi R. French (Morris Ravine) to Father and Sister (Maria) Dec. 28, 1852  
Physical Description: 2 p.  
Scope and Content Note  
Received Nov. 4 letter. Willis affair settled. Sending $100 as his father requested. Should be able to send more money after he receives wagons and harnesses. Presently has 2 claims. Thanks Maria for letter.
folder 15  **Levi R. French (Morris Ravine) to Father March 21, 1853**
Physical Description: 2 p.
Scope and Content Note
Received letter. Wants father to send 12 carts as light as possible. Now trading and making
daguerreotypes. Can't send money now since it's all been used to start the business. Hopes
to make $200-$500 per week.

folder 16  **Levi R. French (Marysville) to Father May 3, 1853**
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Has not heard anything about the wagons. Wants father to send a freight bill as soon as the
wagons have been shipped.

folder 17  **Levi R. French (Marysville) to Father June 17, 1853**
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Still has not received freight bill nor any letter concerning the wagons. Repeats instructions
concerning them in case previous letters not received.

folder 18  **Levi R. French (Thompson's Flat) to Father July 7, 1853**
Physical Description: 3 p.
Scope and Content Note
Gives specific instructions for modifications on the design of the next shipment of wagons.

folder 19  **Levi R. French (Marysville) to Father Sept. 4, 1853**
Physical Description: 2 p.
Scope and Content Note
Sold one of the wagons for $575. Now has a partner named Smith and the two plan to open
a second store. Business amounts to about $9000.

folder 20  **Levi R. French (Marysville) to Father Sept. 10, 1853**
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Has received letter with second freight bill. If father has not started the carts, he shouldn't
since Levi can make more money with wagons. Business doing well. Second store is open.

folder 21  **Levi R. French (Marysville) to Father Oct. 2, 1853**
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Business concerns.

folder 22  **Levi R. French (Marysville) to Father Nov. 8, 1853**
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Received wagons. Business is dull. Leaving Marysville tomorrow for home in the mountains.

folder 23  **Levi R. French (Morris Ravine) to Sister (Maria?) Nov. 23, 1853**
Physical Description: 4 p.
Scope and Content Note
Received letter. Sends regards to family, advice to sister. Rainy season has started.
folder 24  Levi R. French [?] to Father April 25, 1854
Physical Description: 2 p.
Scope and Content Note
Have the wagons been sent yet? Has not been able to sell others. Money has been tight during the winter. Health is not good.

folder 25  Levi R. French (Thompson’s Flat) to Father May 30, 1854
Physical Description: 2 p.
Scope and Content Note
Health improved. Business not good at present. Lost $1500 because of his partner, who he no longer has. Instructions for 3 running gears.

folder 26  Levi R. French (Thompson’s Flat) to Father Sept. 3, [1854]
Physical Description: 2 p.
Scope and Content Note
Discusses money he owes father. Building a new store. Also building a ditch to bring water to miners. Has lost a total of $3000 because of his partner.

folder 27  Levi R. French (New Philadelphia) to Father Sept. 26, 1854
Physical Description: 2 p.
Scope and Content Note
Has received order for two more wagons. Instructs father on how he wants them built. Sketch of how he wants them built.

folder 28  E. K. Dodge (Vermont Hill) to Levi R. French Sept. 28, 1854
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Reorder of two wagons.

folder 29  Levi R. French [?] to Father n.d.
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Re E. K. Dodge order.

folder 30  Levi R. French (New Philadelphia) to Father Oct. 29, 1854
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Not able to send money. Waiting for the wagons to arrive. Going to San Francisco next week.

folder 31  Levi R. French (New Philadelphia) to Father Dec. 10, 1854
Physical Description: 1 p.
Scope and Content Note
Wagons must arrive by April 1. Business is dull.

folder 32  Four envelopes addressed to Richard French. Penciled dates on back may correspond to letters.
folder 32  Democratic Ticket, n.d.
folder 32  Adams and Co. California Express notice to R. French that package has arrived, Nov. 12, 1851