Guide to the Edwin F. and Nancy Quinby letters

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Abstract: Edwin F. Quinby (1821-1852) was a Maine native who traveled west to take part in the Gold Rush, working at diggings throughout Northern California from 1849 to 1852. He died a week after returning back home to Maine in 1852. This is a collection of six letters: four written by Edwin Quinby from 1848 to 1850 and two by his wife, Nancy Quinby, in 1852 and 1853. They discuss Edwin's life in Maine; life in the California gold fields, especially at Mississippi Bar outside Sacramento; and Nancy's mourning of her husband's sudden death.

Conditions Governing Access
Collection is open for research.

Biographical Note
Edwin F. Quinby was born June 24, 1821, to Benjamin and Elizabeth Quinby at Saccarappa, Maine, and he married Nancy, daughter of Nathaniel and Rebecca (Swazey) Foster, on November 17, 1842. He was one of seven children, including his sister Sophronia Quinby, married to Clarendon Waters, and his brother George Washington Quinby. Edwin and Nancy had four children. Edwin moved with his family to Norway, Maine, in 1847 and preached at the Universalist Society for two years. In May of 1849, he disembarked from Independence, Missouri, for the California gold fields, arriving in the summer of that year. He stayed for three years, digging along the San Joaquin and AMerican Rivers and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains at locations like Mississippi Bar, Stanislaus, Merced, Tuolumne, and Mariposa diggings. Edwin died of "fever" in Norway, Maine, on August 26, 1852, a week after arriving back home from California.

Scope and Contents
Edwin's letters are addressed to his parents, to sister Sophronia and brother-in-law Clarence, and to his brother George. Edwin's letters discuss his preaching in Massachusetts (to Clarendon Waters, Nov. 5, 1948); his time in Independence, Missouri prior to leaving for California (to Clarendon and Sophrina Waters, Apr. 8, 1849); his mining prospects upon arrival in San Francisco and the need to purchase life insurance (to George Quinby, Jan 30, 1850); and his experiences in the gold fields of California at Mississippi Bar (to his parents, July 20, 1850). Nancy writes to her sister Rebecca about mourning the sudden loss of her husband (Sept. 6, 1852), and to her sister-in-law Sophronia and sister Harriet regarding finances following Edwin's death (Aug. 29, 1853).

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