

**Letters written home
From the West**
By James Smiley Buchanan
1858-1870

Courtesy of Fort Vance Historical Society

Freeport April 6, 1858

I received your letter last Friday and was very glad to hear from you. We have this morning got clear of the balance of our horses. We traded four of them for 180 acres of land, in Missouri valued at 3 dollars per acre. I don't know how it may turn out but we found that we could not sell them at all, on reasonable terms. I don't know what next we shall undertake. French expects to start North to an Aunt of his tomorrow morning. I met Jerry Gantz here on yesterday. He told me that he saw you in Washington a few days before he left home. It was the two grays, the Danley mare and the Thompson mare that we traded for the land. Jerry Gantz is in town buying a braking team he expects to break this summer, reap again harvest and thrash in the fall. I should like to know whether Dem or Republicans beat in our township at the last election. I have got tolerably well again but subject ~~to~~ every now and then to Diarhoea which I don't think much of. I feel a good deal like as if I was out of a job and didn't know what to go at this morning, but I don't know when I shall go home. Yesterday was a big day in this town. We had a big fight here between the bar keeper and an Irishman. The Bar Keeper first knocked the Irishman. The Irishman got up and clinched, the a scuffle and the Bar Keeper came out on top. They then pulled him off. He then got a pistol and threatened to shoot the whole lot of Irish. We sold our saddles this morning at auction. I got 1.25 for your saddle. Write soon to Rockford.

Yours in haste

J S B

Copied from the original letter.

Does Scroggins still go to Anders yet? Is he going to marry this fall? Give me the new courtships. Give my compliments to Jonathan Mc W (or Mc?) and all my friends.

Ogle Co. Ill. Sept. 5/58 (1858)
Moneytown? (Montown, Monetown?)

Bro

John I rec'd your letter and a letter from S Mc B since I have written to you, I rec'd yours last night and Sama about one week or ten days ago. I was very glad to hear from you. I also had a letter from Liz Buchanan stating that you and Father had been both sick with dyspepsia. I have had very good health all harvest and fall till last week. I took a diorhea (diarrhea) Sabbath night but I worked till Tuesday. At noon I had to quit work (we were thrashing) and come to the Shantee which I was about three hours coming 2 1/2 miles. I thought I never would get home in the world. I got some stuff and a glass of gin and did not thrash and more till Friday. It has pretty much stopped over me but I am very weak and has to be very careful what I eat. We got our crop all cut and saved. We have 34 stacks and I think it will average from 55 to 60 bu to the stack. We have thrashed two days and what we have thrashed has over run 60 bu to the stack. Our machine thrashed about 1200 bu of wheat last week and lost one day. We are storing our wheat at Baileyville, a station on the Illinois Central Rail Road four miles east of this, but we have to haul about six (miles) to get there. We have no storage to pay if we sell to that firm, but if we ship our wheat to Chicago or sell to any other firm we will have to pay 2 cts per bu. Our wheat when it is well cleaned is Pa. 1 wheat. They grade wheat here the same as they do wool at home. They have three grades, No. 1, No. 2 and rejected. I don't know what we shall do with ours as yet. We shall hold onto it untill we get it all threshed anyhow. Our oats did not turn out very well. They lay down and got very ripe before we got them cut. We only had about 500 bu of thirty acres. Thrashing is a very poor business in this country. This season wheat turns out poor and oats very poor. They are generally cut and put up without tying, and make it very tedious thrashing and machines are very plenty (plentiful?). One day last week we counted nine all running in sight of ours. I don't think our thrashing will last over three or four weeks and I am not very sorry. We have a very good machine, very convenient. The thrasher and cleaner stands on trucks and can be set in 5 min. She runs with a gum belt 65 feet long. The horse power is swung under the wagon by rollers and is very easily loaded or unloaded. Horses and cattle are very low at present. I saw on Friday week ago a fine span of mares, one seven and the other eight, sold for \$185 with a large colt. I bought a fine young bay horse for \$90 in harvest. I sold of him to Charles Spooner. He was sold last spring for \$125. The man could not work him, but he makes a splendid machine horse and drives very nice in single harness. I don't know who I shall get home. Gere Gantz and I has taken 311 acres of land for next year. The most of it has had one crop and some new braking. It is just one mile west of here I am this ~~year~~ year. We find three fourths of the seed and gives one third in bu delivered to Baileyville. We expect to Board ourselves this winter. There is three of us, I guess Isaac Gantz will go home this winter. They have Shanteed and boarded out before. There is also two hundred acres of nice braking to do on the farm which we intend to do. We are to sign Articles next Thursday if nothing brakes. Cattle is not worth over seventy five dolls per yoke and some good cattle can be bought for 60. Gantzs boys have 4 yoke. We are using them now hauling our wheat and straw away from the machine. Last Friday we I heard the Great Douglas Vs Lincoln discuss political matters. It was the largest cro I ever was in. You wouldn't think to travel over Northern Ill. that there was so many people lived in it. French will go home about two months or maybe sooner. He has been with me all harvest and stacking and he is helping us to thrash at present as soon as we are done thrashing. We have had an Irishman hired since we commenced to stack at \$14 per month. We have to hire all the hands to do our thrashing and keep them night and day. We have from eight to ten men all the time now. Hands are pretty hard to get at present by the day. They charge from 50 to 75 per day. I want you to write soon and tell how Old Dick looks. I should like to see him out here as good sized horses as he scarce here. Tell me how the Spanish Merinos get along and what you get for your wool.

I sent Sam a paper last week. Tell him to write again. Tell Axd that I never got his letter. Tell him to write again and direct to Freeport Box 401, Stephenson Co. Ill. I shall write to him as I get time. Tell Jim H. I want him to write soon. I find Jim a very interesting correspondent. Tell Jas H? that Coffee and Spooner is to be married on the 7th day of next month to the two miss Frenchs. I have had an invitation to wait on Coffee. Since harvest I attended and participated in a very large dance. There was 29 tickets sold at 60cts each. You may tell Jim Hodgins that Miss Clora Kirk was caught by the lady of the house upstairs in bed getting herself pretty well screwed by a little Dry Goods clerk. It raised a great talk in the neighborhood. I send enclosed the latest Chicago grain market.

Your bro.

J. S. Lufanan
(my name in Dutch)

Write soon--soon.

Note: The above is a letter from James Smiley Buchanan to his brother John Foster Buchanan, written from Illinois. Several of the neighbors from Washington County had moved to Illinois in pursuit of a better life, including the Gantz brothers, Coffee, French, the French sisters etc. S. Mc. B. is Samuel McGune Buchanan, another brother of James Smiley Buchanan. Liz Buchanan was a daughter of Thomas Buchanan, son of James Buchanan. Her Mother was Jane Smiley. I am not clear as to who Scroggins and Anders are that he mentions in the letter--evidentially friends still in Washington Co. I am not sure who Challes Spooner is but assume he must be a fellow who went west with the group since he is mentioned twice with the assumption that John would know who he was talking about. Iere (or Jere?) and Isaac Gantz were two fellows who went west with the group and later accompanied James Smiley Buchanan in a wagon train across the plain to California. It is interesting to note that he attended the famous debate between Lincoln and Douglas. I think the various Frenchs mentioned are all from the French family who were famous preachers in the North Buffalo area. The French fellow was teaching school in Illinois and later went to Texas where he settled near the Beedi River. The OLD DICK that he asks about is a family horse they were quite proud of and who won many races about the area. he was evidentially a large horse. The thing about the Spanish Merinos refers to Merino sheep, which were introduced to this country by the Buchanan family, cousins of ours, who must have given our bunch some of them. AXD referred to is Alexander Buchanan, another brother of James Smiley Buchanan. Jim H. is Jim Hodgins, who lived on a farm nearby the Buchanans. Clora Kirk I know nothing about but she must have gone west with the group since Jim Hodgins knew her.

Grand Prairie, Ill. Sept. 25th, 1858

Mother,

I was no little surprised when I opened and read a letter from you, and now I am seated, a late hour, to answer it with a pencil because I had no pen and ink convenient, but I hope that you can read it. We are now done thrashing at home. We had sixteen hundred and twenty five bushels of wheat in all. We have our wheat on hands as yet, in store at Baileysville. It is only worth sixty five cents per bushel. I have been boarding with Alxd (Alexander) Coffee and his sister all summer. His sister leaves for home week after next and he is to be married the same week, and don't expect to take up house for about one month and I don't know where I shall stop for awhile. His sister has washed for me ever since I have been here. Gantz and I has been bargaining for a farm for near one month and has not closed a bargain as yet. There is a family on the farm and we won't have it unless they leave there. There is six hundred and forty acres all in one field with two roads running through it. There is about three hundred acres broke and the rent that he wants for it is one third of the crop delivered ay Baileyville and he finds one fourth the seed. There is a man offers to hire himself and wife, three beds, two cows and one yoke of oxen to us next summer for thirty five dollars per month. They now live in Wisconson. They are formerly from Ohio. We expect to board ourselves and keep back this winter and attend to our stock. We will have six head of horses and three yoke of cattle. Isaac Gantz expects to start home in about one month and take a bell founder col with him. French expects to start home in one month or six weeks if I go into this. I don't know when I shall be home. I wrote to John three weeks ago but never got an answer. French has been with me near two months now. He leaves tomorrow for Winslow. Tell the boys to write soon.

Yours in haste
Jas S. Buchanan

*****In an upper corner of this letter, written by either James S. Buchanans Mother or Father, are the words "Old Dick is hearty and well. I think John will never part with him". I think this refers to a horse they had that John F. Buchanan was very fond of.

*****Isaac Gantz was a local boy about Taylorstown who went "west" with a group from the area. He and his brother later went on to Colorado and maybe further in a wagon train with James Smiley Buchanan.

*****French was S.Webster French, who also went "west" with this group. He later went further west and settled "on the banks of the Beedi" in Texas. He was a school teacher and descended from a famous family of ministers in the Washington County area.

****John referred to above was John Foster Buchanan, brother of James Smiley Buchanan. He lost his hand in 1852? and remained a bachelor.

Bachelors Lodge Feb. 1st, 1859

Well, Sam, I rec(d your letter about two weeks ago and got one from John this evening, so concluded that I would fill the last part of a sheet of paper that is about the Lodge in reply to them both as I have nothing of any particular importance to write. I judge it will hold all I have to say. We have traded one span of horses for two yokes of cattle and got some Boot. Cattle is going up here very fast. They are worth 75 to 125 dollars per yoke. There is men hunting them daily for to go to Pikes Peak. There will be from three to four hundred leave Freeport for the diggins the first of next month. Gantz boys have determin to go. I have not altogether concluded to go, but think most likely I shall go. I don't think we shall start before the 10th of next month. It will cost from 150 to 200 dollars to the man to get there including teams and six months provisions. It is calculated to take one wagon to four men with three yokes of oxen and one yoke of cows. I have got the marrying business postponed until I come back, or else mine Frau under certain contingencies will come to the diggins provided I am successful and civilization takes place in the gold region. But enough of this stuff. I am not gone yet. We have had some pretty cold weather here and some very nice. The snow is mostly gone and the Prairie is a Sea of Ice. The roads are fine. Jas D. Cury and I leave on a trip to Rockford Oregon City to morrow morning.

I have very good health this winter and I am in pretty good Order living on Back grub. I weigh 193 lbs. and I was very glad to hear from all the neighbors. Sorry to hear of Mattie Hodgens illness. I expected a letter from her. She promised me a description of John's wedding and (Infais?). Mag Coffee was to leave Rockford for home last Monday. She said she would go to see you all and tell you all about the Baches (Bachelors?). Her and the two Miss Kirks paid the Baches a visit about two weeks ago. I got a letter from Jim & Nancy Reed this evening. I wrote to the Hodgens two or three days ago. Write immediately when you get this and tell me who waits on the Ladies from the Taylorstown Singing and I shall tell you more about the Pikes Peak ~~arrangement~~ arrangement.

Yours in haste

Jeems

****Written to his brother Samuel McCune Buchanan before setting out with the wagon train on the trip to the far west.

****The Hodgens were a prominent family in the Taylorstown area and always close friends of the Buchanans.

****The Coffee family originally lived near Taylorstown, part of them at a place known as Coffees Crossing on the B & O Railroad on the old road from near Taylorstown to Washington.

Pawnee Reserve. May 29th 1859

Well John,

I am now between three and four hundred miles from Leavenworth City and we are not yet half way to Pikes Peak. We are on a new road called The Express Route. We have had tolerably plenty of wood and water with the exception of two nights that we had to camp on the plains and live on crackers and water and one morning drove 6 miles before breakfast, which makes a fellow feel very hollow. We have all had good health but J. Gantz. He was pretty sick for two or three days but he has got pretty well again.

Our train is sixty four men, forty six head of cattle, three ponies, one horse and two mules which the boys caught up on the road. One of them cannot be rode. It has throwed everyone that has tried her. We suppose that they belong to some company that has been destroyed by the Indians. We have heard of several depredations but they have not annoyed us in the least. The country is black with buffalo. They are a great deal plentier than the sheep is in your country. The different trains killed eleven head of them yesterday. We have plenty of meat. A number of the party are jerking it and drying it before the fire. Elk, deer and antelope are seen almost every day but they are hard to get a shot at. One of our train, an old man of 50 or 60 years of age, started after two elk one morning and got lost. He was about 36 hours without anything to eat, had but one load of powder with him, was treed by the wolves and had to stay there all night. We were sure that he had been killed by the Indians or stamped to death by the buffaloes. Some of the party had gone back to hunt for him, but yesterday evening about sundown he came in to camp and was welcomed back with three hearty cheers from the crowd.

We have met several men from the mines. The reports are not very favoragble. Provisions are very scarce. There is no U.S. Mail from here but Jones and Kassel (Kaspel?) have an express that they run from Leavenworth to Denver City. They charge 25 cts a letter from or to Leavenworth. We are at least one hundred miles from any settlement. We don't travel on the Sabbath Day when we are where we can camp over, but sometimes water, grass and wood are so scarce that we have to go on. Today we are camped by the side of a small stream. The water is tolerably good for creek water, wood scarce and the grass very scarce. The boys have come in from killing another buffalo. With the rest of the boys, some are washing, some baking, some hunting but there are a few who are reading there Bibles, running bullets, cleaning there guns for tomorrow. Write as soon as you get this to

Denver City

K.T.

We expect to be there in four weeks.
Good bye. Your Bro. James.

*In letter of Aug. 1, 1858 to J. Gantz, says "James has been
familiar with Mr. Gantz. Letter says to write to Gantz at
Postmarked July 29th 1859"*

William K. Buchanan, M.D.
889 Lynnhaven Lane
Akron, Ohio 44313

Copied from the original in my possession. W.K.Buchanan 12/8/1983

July 10th, 1859

Sunday morning on the waters of Clear Creek in a canvas town they call Golden City, your Bro. Jeems has ^{sealed} ~~sealed~~ himself to address you a few lines. I wrote two letters on the road out here but never got any answer. We got to Denver City the 15th June all right. I have spent three weeks in the mountains prospecting in company with 12 men. Some of the miners are making money very fast...from 20 to 40 dolls per day but it is only one in a hundred. The ^{greater} ~~greater~~ part of them is not making grub. There is some very rich lodes but they vary from 30 to 40 feet burried in the stōnes and boulders and takes capital to work them so as to pay. But I have no doubt in saying that these mines are very rich if they were thoroughly prospected. At this time there is a great many sick in the mines with dysentery and mountain fever. Both the Gantz boys have been sick with bowel complaint but they are better and at work again. I have very good health so far. Can sleep on the ground with a pair of blankets over me and the starry firmament for a roof for three weeks and never take a bit of cold. The Gantz boys and I have dissolved partnership. They, in the first place, intended to go home but since they have got well they intend to go on to California. A train of 50 men and some 15 or 16 wagons ~~xxx~~ leave for California tomorrow morning. I have raised a wagon and yokes of cattle to go with grub for two men. Its 1200 or 1500 miles from here. I have four men beside myself, two of them provisions themselves. frieght is worth 10 dolls a hundred from here to Salt Lake or 20 Doll through to California and 10 hundred is a load for two yokes. I think I can clear something on the trip if I have good luck. We expect to be 100 days on the road. Take on provision to last to Salt Lake City from here. Then buy the rest there to last through. I have an able miner from New York in my crowd. I think he is a very fine man and rish. He is a brother in law to the Abram Anderson Dec'd & was acquainted with Wishart French. I send a small specimen of Rocky Mountain gold enclosed. It is said to be worth from 50 to 100 dollars. Direct your letters to Sacramento City, California or Placerville, Eldorado Co. Cal. You need not expect to hear from me inside of three or four months. Good Bye.

Your Bro Jeems

Give my compliments to all my friends and tell them to write to me.

*****There is no salutation on this letter, but it was likely written to his brother Samuel McCune Buchanan as he usually signed his letters to him "Jeems".

Dutch Flat June 3rd 1860

Bro Sam,

I rec'd your letter of Feb 1st last night and was glad once more to hear from my old "native home", if it was four months coming to the Placer of the World. I got one letter from you and three from French within the last few weeks. They are the only news I have had from the States since I came to Cal. Enough of this. I have written a number letters home that I have never got any answer to. I almost thought that you had entirely forgotten me. Well, I suppose you want to know what I have been doing since I came to California. Well, about ten days after I came to Sac I took the fever and chills and shook for about five weeks. I then left Sac and came up to the mountains. My Disease then took a turn to what they call Dropsy. My legs, hands and every part of the body swelled as tight as the skin would hold. But I am a great deal better at present. I have tried mining twice but my health would not permit working in the cold water up to the knees, and wet all over every day don't agree with me. I have been working a little in the timber this spring making riffles, for instance, sawing blocks off a three foot log six inches thick. I have a partner from Fayette County, Brownsville, Pa. He is a Dr. A. J. Colvin, an old fillabuster under Walker of Nicaragua. He has a wife and two children in the States. We have a pretty good cabin, a good spring of water and plenty of wood half a mile from Dutch Flat (a mining town of from six to ten thousand inhabitants). I have begun to think that I can make as good a biscuit filling, a beef stake, boil potatoes or bake beans, flap jacks or other fixings with any the fair sex of old Pa. We generally wash the dishes once a week. We have a full set of tin but no Chinaware. I had all the money, my revolvers, tobaco, needle and thread stolen from my cabin about one month ago. In fact, everything I had that was worth anything. Left me a woolen shirt, canvas breeches, one of blankets. At the mines some few men are making money here but it is only one in fifty or a hundred. I had some thoughts of going back to Washoe or Truckee Valey and taking up a ranch but the Indians have commenced depredations in that quarter and killed near one hundred men or over and it is not considered safe to travel in that direction. So I think I shall stay about Dutch Flat this summer. You say that your travels don't extend farther than church or R Valley Literary Society. Perhaps you may never know so much of the world as I have seen but, if you are content, you had better stay there for I never expect to be there again unless I am very lucky. California is a strange country--in place of churches they have Dance Houses. A few weeks ago there was three men buried up and killed in the same claim that I had worked in. Two of them I was acquaint with. Another cut his own throat the same day because they had charged him with robbing sluice boxes. But I must quit. The Steamer Mail closes today. Give my best wishes to Father & Mother, my respects to all my friends. When you write again, direct to Dutch Flat, Cal. I don't care anything about your political affairs. They don't concern me now a days. Tell me all about the neighbors and neighborhood.

Your Bro James

P.S. Address Capt. Jas S. Buchanan, Dutch Flat, California. The last letter I got of yours had been opened before I got it. That is the style that French always writes to me. Don't put Esq, any more.

James

No Envelope with letter. Evidently to his brother Samuel Mc C. Buchanan.

Miners Ravine Nov 30th 1860

Bro Sam,

I rec'd yours of Oct 10th today and one from Jos Hodgens also and was very glad to hear from home. About two months ago I left Dutch Flat and come South about fifty miles and five miles from Sacramento City and one mile from any place. I am now stopping on the Croxford & Co. Ranch. It contains 100 acres of level land with a tolerable house and 15 acres paled in with 1500 grape vines on it for a vineyard and a brush fence round the outside. The two partners follow farming in the summer season. They are only here about once or twice a week. They have offered to sell me one third of their ranch & stock for \$600. They have 6 Spanish horses, 100 hogs, principally sows and shoats, 100 hens, 10 pigeons and two first rate dogs, which is the whole amount of the stock but I haint got quite money enough yet and I must contract myself until I get it. I have a very good chance if I have my health and I am bound to have a ranch and team in Cal.

Ranching here is raising mainly stock. They don't pretend to raise grain. Hay pays the best. It is worth \$60 dollars per ton at present in the mountains and was \$125 last spring. They use hay presses here & bail it up in bails from 200 to 300 lbs before they haul it off. Stock lives here the year round without any feed. The land is interspersed with small oaks and pines which furnishes mast for hogs almost the year round. This time a year the folks in the mountains drive their stock to the valeys, turn them out and never look after them till next spring. The weather here now is beautiful, a slight frost and the days are pleasant. It never snows here and when it does it generally rains three or four days or a week. We have splendid tomatoes growing on the vines, cucumbers, and it is but a week or so since the water melons got done. The grass is starting and it resembles the first of May in Pa. The farming here is done in Feb. and March. The harvesting in May and June. The boys are young men, one of them a Coach driver from the City of Bosten. His name is Alxd Cathcart. He is only 25, a regular jockey, trades in everything and he wants a wife badly and has her picked out although he never seen her but twice and spoke to her but once. He hired another to court for him--is to give him fifty dollars if she will marry him. She says she will do it and he says "he is all right if the d....d bitch will only have him". But he must go another trip to get the fifty dollars. She is an Irish Biddy and has the reputation of been a good cook and house keeper. That is all he wants. He says "damn the lovin, I want something good to eat and a clean shirt when I come home is all that I want". Asa Croxford is the other mans name. He is a quiet, agreeable sort of a man. I like the boys very, very well. So far they are sober, industrious men, allow me to be my own boss and tells me all their business and allows me to act as if I was a partner. I would not have left Dutch Flat if I had had a good partner, but the Doc liked his liquor and politics too well for me. I could do well there on my own hook. I was glad to hear of Old Dicks success. I should rather have heard of him been dead than heard that he ever was beat. He is good a horse as ever lived. Tell John never to part with him. Keep him in remembrance of me. I got a letter from Mother sometime ago. It was rec'd with grateful heart and perused with interest. I don't know how to answer it. I would send her my likeness but it looks awful now a days, my front teeth nearly all gone, my hair is gray as a badgers tail and Sunday clothes I have none. I sent a Sac paper to John and one to you and a letter to alxd. I told him to get the Review sent to me.

over

If he don't do it, I wish that John would and I will have the Union sent to him. It is the best paper in Cal. I must quit. Tell John to write to me himself. I can read his writing. I have something special to write to him if he will only write to me. Write soon and I will always answer every letter I get. I got a letter from Liz Buchanan. I answered it but never got any more. Tell me where you write to when you get Gantz's letters. I have written to them twice but never got a letter since I left them. The Gantz boys are good boys and I should like to hear from them. Give my best respects to Father and Mother, my compliments to all enquiring friends.

Your Bro James

P. S. My adress is Capt. J. S. Buchanan, Fulsom, Sacramento Co., Cal. Old Dick is worth \$3,000 here. Heavy draught horses are worth more than any other kind.

Above letter addressed to: S. Mc.Buchanan Exq.
Taylorstown
Washington Co.
Pa.

Envelope is a small yellow one, different than others he sent. No postage stamp or postage mark of any kind evident except the Postmark: Sacramento City Cal 1860

Sac City Dec. 22nd, 1862

Bro

Sam I rec'd your letter on Saturday and was very glad to hear from you. Shortly after I wrote to you I hired out to a man to drive an eight horse team to Carson City on the other side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It is about 150 miles from Sac over the big mountains where you have hills five miles long to go up on one side and about the same to go down on the other. The road is a good grade but very narrow and a great many short turns and it takes all the skill I was able to bring to bear on break (brake) and line to handle a six tin craft, although there is a great many of them used in this country. The break (brake) is put on the near side the same as a two horse wagon, only a great deal larger and the but (butt) end of your line fastened to the lever so that can ride your saddle horse and work your Break (brake) on good as if you ride the wagon. I drove over one trip which took about 20 days. Since that I have been laying off. I have turned seven of my team out on a ranch. I kept one old favorite up. I have the use of team this winter for its keeping. I think I can get a job on a gang plow where I can get from 60 to \$100 permonth and found for two or three months and that will keep me untill the spring trade opens across the mountains. Truth is things has not gone very well with me for the last year. I am all of \$700 worse off than I was one year ago, but I don't care so long as I have good health. I have generally pretty good health. I have had one or two little spells of rheumatism that I did not like much but they did not last long and was very glad of it. I suppose the war excitement is not near so high here as it is in the States. Cal. is ready all the time as yet to furnish her share of volunteers. There is a number of companies stationed here ready to leave whenever called on. The state election is in Sept. The state went Republican. The Dem party is divided here between the Secesh and Union Dem and that gives the Republicans a maj. Why it is the war and politics don't interest me much--willing to make a child's bargain with them, "let me alone and I shall not bother you and your Negroes". There is a great many Secesh coming to this country lately. They tell some awful tales of the Union troops barbarity, but don't deny faults on both sides. But I must quit. Write soon. Tell me all the news of the neighborhood. When you talk about the names of the folks on R. Valley (Rural Valley) they sound strange to me. I think Alex'd was in luck to get clear of his drafting so easy for I suppose there is no man would hate to go worse than he would. I don't want the Review anymore as I am not settled any place and hardly know one day where I'll be the next--but I must quit.

Your Bro Jeems

P.S. I acknowledge that some of my letters are pretty rough but this is a rough country and I generally write according to the humor I am in and I shall never feel insulted at your reproofs. I feel anxious to get away from Sac City for I have a great many acquaintances here and it costs too much money to keep up with the age. It has been raining some for a day or two. The ^{only} rains of any account that we have had this fall. This will give the ranchers a chance to commence plowing. Write soon and send to Sac City--in care of Joshua Baker, Corner of I and 12th St.

***This letter written to Samuel McCune Buchanan, brother of writer, James Smiley Buchanan.

Four Mile House Sep 18 1864?

Bro. John,

It has been a long time since I have written or heard from you. And, I am very anxious to hear from home once more. I sent two papers to you and a letter to Father and never got an answer to either one. About four months ago. I have been driving for the last four months until three days ago and never lost a day except the Fourth of July but what myself and team done their regular days work. Times is hard here, money scarce. We feel the effects of a Pacific Rail Road here already. But Greenbacks are not in circulation yet. I have not been well for the last two weeks. I have had a very sore breast and side and a bad cough, but I think I am a great deal better since I have quit driving. We have very exciting times here at present the laboring class against Chinese labour. I think we will have a little war. And, I should like to see it. I am red dy take a hand at any time. I threw a teacup nearly through one the other day where I was eating dinner. They threatened to have me arrested but my M....c Bro's told them to go slow, they would catch the wrong man. Write soon. Give my love to all enquiring friends. I shall likely pay a visit to Old Pa. this fall as the Fair is getting very low on P. R. Road.

I am still your Bro. James

P.S. Direct to Gold Hill, State of Nevada, in care of Bill & Joe. A couple of my friends in business there and will take care of my letters when I am not there. In this peculiar country. that is the name of the firm.

James

Above letter addressed to : Mr. John Buchanan
West Middletown
Washington Co.
Pa.

Mailed in an envelope having an embossed three cent U.S. Postage. Envelope also has large printed "PAID WELLS FARGO & CO. Over Our California Coast Route". Embossed postage stamp cancelled with a large letter "D".

Postmark not legible.

1864? Also mentions having sore breast & side & mean cough in letter of 21st, 1864

Direct to Jas. S. Buchanan
Sacramento City, Calif.
Plain. No titles or care of
anybody.

Some shit tore your letter open before I
got it.

Sac City Dec. 19th/63

Sam,

I got your letter a few days (ago and) was very glad to hear from (you) and highly pleased to see your (fine) likeness. Makes you out quite a good looking young man very much changed within the last few years. Six years or almost it mak a great change in people of (your) age. If the country has a change (as) much in appearance as you (have), I should feel like a stranger, but I don't suppose I shall ever be there. Nothing less than a fortune of twenty thousand dollars will ever take me back to Old Pa. although I should like very much to see my parents, brothers and a few old Chummies. But there is a certain Abolition Self Godly Christian community in that Old State that I have no curiosity to see--only to look at--with scorn and contempt.

Since I wrote to you I have been to Aurora, a Lacke? Quartz mining town in Nevada Territory 250 miles distant from Sac. I drove six animals with reins. I was 26 days (making the) trip and got 3-20 dollar gold (pieces for) it after I got back. I was offered (?) per month to drive an eight (mule) team all winter but I was afraid my health would not stand it. In fact, I was very unwell all summer untill the last two trips in the fall. I got better and now with the exception of slight touches (of) rheumatism in my right shoulder (I am) in as good health as ever I had in my (life). Twice this summer I had to quit my team and give up good jobs on account of my health. I have been so badly crippled up that I could neither put my clothes off nor on for weeks at a time and still drove and attended eight animals. I have a very good job at present. I get \$16 dolls per week and only two hirses to drive at a time. The man is a very fine young man--has four very good emigrants mares and two horses he calls the six and their harness worth \$2,000. He had 7 but sold one for 350 dolls. Any place else I could savesome money but Sac I can't save one cent. Draw my money every Sat---and befor (night) Sat I am perhaps 5 or 10 dolls in (?) although my whiskey and tobacco is (?) myself if I wish to make it so. I (can) make money fast in this Country but to save it is impossible for me. Some days 3 or 400 dolls in my pocket--and perhaps the next without enough to buy my breakfast. But ere this reaches you next New Years morning I expect to (turn a) new leaf, quit all my vices, Save my money and put it in the mines for a big thing. (One) thing I always expect to team but don't expect ever to own another team of my own. I can always get a good team to drive and a No. 1 team is worth \$4,000 dolls or more and I think if I had that much money I could invest it to better advantage. I might as well been worth 10,000 since I have been here as not. If I had only saved money and done as I ought to have done but I would not take 15,000 for what I know and have seen in this little old world. But Sam I suppose from the cut of your jib that this frating, teaming, mining business interests you very much. I suppose if you are well you are at church today listening to the prayers and harangues of some good old Union aboliton father, a place where I havenot been but once since have been in the County and that was Catholic where they said (it all) in Latin or some other kind of gibberish. (There are) plenty of churches of all kinds here but (I don't) know anything about them. But hark () Uncle Billy Orange with two 8 mules (bellowing) that wakes up the Christians here of a Sunday. But excuse me Sam, I was up last night until between two or three o'clock and cannot write much of a letter, but read it yourself and burn it. Tell Jim Hodgens to go slow and learn to peddle before he Witches for life. Tell me all you know about (?) French, whether he is dead or alive or (recovered) from his wounds. Do you go to school? Who is (? Galey?) Barr? Is Old Grey Dick and old Jim alive? (Tell) Flack to call his young one for me and I will (send) him a suit of Cal. harness (if it is a him). Has (Alexander) and more young Bucks? Tell him to make a boy (for me). I fear the Buchanan race will become extinct. I expect to

in Sac. I have been enrolled but don't fear the draft much. I don't presume I would be excepted. I suppose if I had been in the States I would of been in some Army long ere this. But it is now near two o'clock in the afternoon. I must go put on a clean shirt and go see my fancy woman this afternoon. Write soon. Tell all my friends to write and I shall answer there letters as I am settled for thw winter.

Your bro
James.

Note: This letter was badly mouse chewed. I have filled in what I think were the missing words, enclosing them in brackets. The letter was written to Samuel McCune Buchanan by James Smiley Buchanan, his brother. The French mentioned may have been S. W. French who originally went to Illinois with James S. Buchanans group. When the others went to California, Frenchwent tothe banks of the Beedi River in Texas. The reference to his wounds are a mystery--did he go into the army in the Civil War and get wounded? If so, which side?

Sac City Oct 1863

Bro Sam,

It has been a long time since I heard from you but I suppose it is my fault. I did not answer your letter. The reason was I have not been two nights in one place since I wrote to you when I was able to write. I have been driving team all summer across the mountains when twice I had to quit and lay off with rhumatism. The quick changes from a very warm climate to where there is everlasting ice and snow is very hard on the constitution and more than that, it is very hard work to drive and attend to eight animals with a cargo of twelve or fourteen thousand pounds. I have been getting sixty doll per month, grub and whiskey found which costs from two to three dollars per day and had a chance to take an eight horse team and work on the other side of the mountains but I am afraid my health will not permit. I have been seven times across the mountains since the first of April but we expect a storm soon now and if I was caught up there with a team in the snow and mud it would kill me. I shall probably make another trip this fall on light team but that is all. I intend to put every cent I can make in the mines on the other side. They are making new discoveries almost every day and they are immensely rich. They take out silver rock that is worth \$2,000 per ton. Some men make there independent fortunes in a day. I have a partner in Star City Humboldt mines prospecting where flour is 25 cts per lb, meat 25, other things in proportion. I have not heard from him for near two monthes. The mines are very rich in that vicinity Sam. I have not much of any interest to you to write but write soon and tell everything. I must quit.

Your Bro James

Above letter addressed to: Sam'l Mc Buchanan
Taylorstown
Pa.

Envelope had an embossed thee cent U. S. Postage stamp.
Postmarked: Sacramento Cal. Oct. 8, 1863

Sac City May 20th, 1864

Dear

Bro. It is with sorrowful heart that I commence these few lines this morning. I rec'd Robt Hodgens letter stating that Bro. Sam'l had died after an illness of three weeks, taking sick away from home but being removed home before he died. He did not state many particulars in regard to his death more than he "was first taken with Cramp Colic, and that his disease afterwards settled on his lungs and carried him off. I feel and deeply deplore the loss because he was my only correspondent for years. He was a fluent, beautiful and instructive writer. Last winter he sent me his photograph. I was surprised to see the alteration in his appearance. But I sympathize with Father, Mother and yourself more deeply and I feel the loss you have sustained altogether irreparable. He was the youngest and naturally the favorite of their old age, the only bro left at home for Boon companion to yourself. You knew him in infancy, childhood and manhood, whilst I only really knew him in his first two stages. Let me know all the particulars of his death; was he sensible when he died? Do you think he was aware of an approach end? What Doct. attended him? At what place did he lay when he was away from home? What was his age when he died? Had he rec'd a letter from me since he had written to me? Had he been given to consumption before he took sick? What kind of a meeting was he attending when he took sick? Was he a member of any church society or company? But he is gone, much as you must grieve over the vacant seat at the table, the empty bed and the loss of his society. You must console yourself that he is gone from a world of troubles and its to be hoped to a better world where there is no pains, no anguish, but an "everlasting peace". I had been absent from Sac the last ten days to San (San Francisco?) with a lot of horses. Imagine how stunned I was when I got Rob Hodgens letter and read the deplorable news. The new and being up all night last night on the boat has put me in very bad plight for writing. My health is good and has been very good all winter. I have been trading & training horses all winter and spring. On some of them I done well, others not so well. I got fifty dolls for training one mare. I drove her one month to sulky and single waggon and fetched her from 4-25 sec to 3-10. In another months care and training I think I could make her go down in the fifties. I have just returned from taking four to the great City of San Francisco, the largest and most business town I ever ~~was~~ was in. I expect to go to driving team soon for the summer. My stable has been rented the last month. Times are very hard here at present. We have had a remarkable dry winter. The crops, with few exceptions through out the state is almost an entire failure. Barley is worth 4 1/2 cts pre lb in this city, new hay 40 dolls per ton, old is 60 dolls--when former seasons it used to be from one to two cents per lb and hay from ten to twenty dolls per ton. I learned that Alex'd and his family had left Taylorstown. Has he sold his town property and where has he bought. But I must quit. Write immediately and let me know every thing. Excuse this pithy letter for I feel bad.

Your Bro James

P.S. Always address Jas. S. Buchanan
Sacramento City,
Cal.

***Written to John Foster Buchanan by James Smiley Buchanan regarding the death of their mutual brother Samuel McCune Buchanan.

Sacramento City July 14th, 1864.

Bro.

John I came to this city on the 2nd day of this month and expected to find a letter from you but was sadly disappointed. About six weeks or two months ago I rec'd a letter from Rob't Hodgens stating that Bro. Samuel had died of disease of the lungs, first taking sick of bilious colic away from home and being removed home it settled on his lungs and he lingered a few days and went to his "long home". Poor Fellow. I was sorry to hear of so young a man being cut off in the prime of life or just the commencement of manhood. And as I was very anxious to hear the particulars of his illness, I set down and wrote to you immediately, and a few days afterwards wrote to Rob't Hodgens. I shortly afterwards started over the mountains with a team and got back here so sadly disappointed in not getting a letter. I spent the 4rth with a part of the team I was driving on an Omnibus. We had, I suppose, the largest procession of military Firemens Associations of different kinds ever turned out on the Pacific Coast. The preparations cost near \$5,000 in hard coin. I have been driving an eight horse team until last Sunday morning. I was going down "J" (I?) Street between 3rd and 4rth on my way to the washwomans for a clean shirt when the animal I was riding (a very fine mare belonging to Mr. Thomas Gordon valued at \$300) was run into by the fill or shaft of a butchers wagon and killed in about twenty minutes after the occurrence took place. Mr. Gordon instituted suit against the butcher for damages and detained me as a witness so that I had to get a man to go out in my palce. The suit came off on yesterday but we don't get a decision until Monday next. I think we can't help but get the amount sued for, but it will be in Greenbacks, only worth about thirty five cents on the dollar, which will make only about \$100 for his mare. I am getting \$60 per month for driving an eight horse team--large American horses, The least horse in the team weighs 1180 lbs. My leader is a Morgan horse, the most intelligent animal I ever drove and I have drove a great many since I left old Pa. I can make as much money or more and stay in town but when I am in this city with my acquaintances it is impossible for me to save one dollar. Some days I make as high as twentyfive dollars for driving a horse two hours and selling. Before next morning like I won't have enough to buy my breakfast, and I am counted Saving to the most of the Jockeys and sports of this place. I drink no strong liquor since last New Years Day. Previous to that time I had drank pretty hard, never getting drunk but had got so habituated to it that I was nearly dead without it. But I soon got over it and never had better health in my life than I have had last winter and spring, with the exception of that old rupture which is getting worse every year. It has got so that a truss won't hold it or do it any good. I have had two within the last year and neither one of them is strong enough. I expect it will end my earthly career some day. Times are very hard here. Freight is very low and grain and hay is very high. Freight that we used to in former seasons get from 6 to 10 cents per lb, we only get from 2 1/2 to 4 1/2 this season. Grain and feed is very high. Barley is worth 3 3/4 perlb . Hay from 40 to 50 dollars per ton. It was worth from 50 to 60. Every teamster that can find a green spot of grass is turning out his team. Horse stealing and highway robberies are every day occurences here. The Stage a few days ago was robbed of twenty thousand in bullion. Three of the robbers have been caught and all the bullion except two bricks has been recovered. Almost every day some poor teamster is nipped for his hard earned pittance of change. I must quit. Be particular in addressing your letters to Jas. S. Buchanan, Sacramento City, Cal.

Yours truly
Jeems

Sac City Nov 8th 1864

Dear Father,

I received your letter almost two weeks ago but during that time I have not had time to answer it. On the first day of the State Fair I got to this town with nine hosses and two wagons (having lost one on the trip). Incredible as it may appear to you, I left this City with ten hosses, two wagons, one weighing fortytwo hundred and sixty and the other thirtyfive hundred and twenty, with nine tons burthen aboard of them, delivering in twelve days six tons & eleven hundred and forty pounds in Carson City Nevada Territory on the East side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles from here. My employer then concluded he would not send me back again as freight was very low and feed was very high. I then went to driving his stock on Omnibus here in this City, for which I got three dolls in gold per day during Fair time for driving from 9o'clock A.M. to 6 P.M. He and his bro want me to stay with them all winter but they cannot pay me high wages for the Omnibus line does not pay much except in Public Times. They are like bros to me. I am counceled in regard to all their business with the privilege of selling, trading or hiring any horse they own and they own over forty, principally all large American horses. They were once considered worth sixty thousand dolls but now they are horse poor. They have offered me all the horses I want for their keeping till next spring, but times are so hard and feed so high, I don't think that I shall undertake any business for myself. Tomorrow night, if I live, I am going to ride over a stage route of forty miles and back again 6 hours. The Proprietor and I goes in a light Concord Wagon, four horses, three changes up and the same stock and changes back. He wants me to go to work for him--drive the whole route. No stock to care of and the wages more than the Gorden boys can pay--60 or 75 per month and about four hours work every day. If I drive Omnibus, I will have to commence at nine o'clock and drive to 6 P.M. but no stock to look after, nothing but a bus to wash and grease every day and make my time to a minute. They have a regular route having certain points at a certain time, the busses passing at the same place every time taking on and off passengers at the rate of twelve and a half cents per head. Ordinary times we use two horses in the forenoon and two in the afternoon. The tow buses require eight horses and it costs \$320 dolls a month to have them fed and taken care of independat of drivers board and wages and you must guess it takes many a passenger at 12 1/2 cents per head to pay expenses. I write this more to give you an idea of what a living populous City Sac is for its age. During the State Fair Races nigger meetings, we put on four horses, doubled the fare and took from \$30 to fifty dolls a piece every day. Now I have told you all I know about my situation. I am unsettled as to what I shall do the coming winter. Staging is a hard, dangerous business in this country in winter time. Mud to wade, rivers to swim. Sometimes driving bus is a tedious, monotonous business that you must be every bodys friend and especially womens and babies. Today I polled a vote for Geo B. Mc Cleland, but I suppose it was thrown away. The Blacks will carry this State. The Gorden boys are both strong Demo. I have not been very well for a month or six weeks. I have had a very sore side and breast with a mean cough. I have not been driving for the last three days on that account and don't intend to go to work untill I feel better. If anything should ever happen me, write to Jas J. Gorden, Sac City. I think he is as good a friend as I have in the world.

Over

I intended to send you my likeness--went and paid 40 dollars for a suit of clothes, shaved my upper lip and fixed up, but when I looked at myself so poor and blackened with the sun and wind, I weakened and deffered it to some other time. So good night.

Jas S. Buchanan

Write soon. Direct as before.

J.S.B.

Above letter addressed to: Mr. Thos. Buchanan
West Middletown
Wash Co
Pa.

Envelope embossed with a three cent U.S. postage stamp. Also has engraved in black on the envelope: "Paid Wells Fargo & Co. Over Our California and Coast Route". Postmarked: Sacramento Cal Nov 8, 1864.

Sac City May 21st 1865

Dear Father,

I answered your last letter late last fall but never got an answer to it. When I wrote to you last fall I was driving Omnibus. The rainy season broke the Bus Company and never got a cent for driving. I then took a large Transient and Sale Stable, run it one month and it bursted me out clean and clear of money and everything else. I then went to the Lousiania Race Course and stopped there the balance of the winter until about four week ago I came to this City. I got kicked on the leg below the knee cutting through the pants and drawers to the bone with a plain shoe and was laid up two weeks that I could not walk at all. I expect to go to driving across the mountains soon but I have not found a situation to suit me yet. My health has been very poor this winter. I have troubled with rhumatism in my shoulders and legs all winter--sometimes so bad I could not put on my own clothes. I have not much to write---out of luck and don't feel good no how.

Remember me to all my friends. Give my love to Mother & brothers.

Your Son Jas S. Buchanan

Above letter addressed to: Mr. Thom. Buchanan
West Middletown
Wash. Co.
Pa.

Mailed in an envelope having an embossed three cent U.S. postage stamp which was cancelled by a series of cross hatched ink marks. Envelope also has large printed "PAID WELLS FARGO & CO. Over Our California Coast Route".

Sac City Oct Fri 6th 1865

Dear Father,

I rec'd your letter six weeks ago but I was just on the point of starting to Austin in Nevada Territory and I had not time to answer it until the present. Austin is about four hundred miles from here. I drove eight mules with two wagons and 8,000 lbs. freight and 5,000 lbs. feed at 8 dolls and fiftenn cts. per hundred lbs. It is now 10 1/2 cts. per lb. It is a long hard trip over mountains and deserts, some places 25 miles without water, only what we haul. I have been driving this team all summer at 60 dollars per month in gold coin. My health has been better since I commenced to drive than it was, but I am far from being well. I dread the winter coming on, my bones are very stiff and I am an old man. My hair is as gray as a rat. I can do nothing else in this country but drive team, and the exposure and quick changes of climate, besides fast living, is wearing my life away very fast. I could get more wages for driving for stage, 75 dolls per month, but I am not able to stand stage. Drivers have to drive 100 miles in 7 hours without stopping, night and day, rain or shine. I suppose the wages in both cases look large but it is almost impossible for a man to be a driver in this country and mingle with the class of men he has to be with and save one dollar. The team I have been driving has changed hands this morning and my new boss has continued me as driver and says I can have a job of him as long as I want to drive. If I am spared, I intend to make a visit home to see you all, I hope, once, inside of one year. It is the first since I left that ever I have made up my mind to go home, although I might of went sometimes in tolerable good circumstances. I intend to start across the mountains tomorrow or next day morning. Another 40 day trip. I am going to put 10,000 lbs. and feed the 8 little black mules. They are a very pretty little young team, pleasant to drive but wild, easy taken care of. The man that got them now intends to put a pair of horses on the wheel and make a ten animal team of it. Ten mules are very common here and some twelve and fourteen. For driving ten, a man generally gets from 65 dolls to 75 dolls per month, but enough of this. Where is French? Is Old Dick alive yet? I am glad to hear that you have got that mill and it is doing well. That farm always was a from hand to mouth way of living. Do you keep a team? I never got any but one letter from Bob Hodgens. I wrote to him twice. What the reason his letter was returned, I do not know. I was in Sac City once or twice every week all last winter and the balance of the time there all the time. He could not of addressed it right. My letters has often been taken out and opened by a J. Buchanan. I never saw him. Accept my highest regards for my Parents. Tell my Mother I would like to write to her separately but time won't permit. Give my compliments to my Brothers and all enquiring friends. Good Bye.

Your Son Jas S. Buchanan

P.S. Write to Sac City, Cal.
Jas. S. Buchanan

Shingle Springs Apr 30th 1866

Dear Father,

I received your letter some time ago but this is the first opportunity I have had of answering it. I am now seated in a Bar Room in this little new town, not quite one year old, situated at the terminus of the Rail Road East. "You wanted to know what I intended doing this summer". I commenced driving the same team I drove last summer. I get sixty dollars per month in coin for driving eight. I was offered seventyfive for driving ten but I did not like to leave my old team and boss for a new even if it should be better. There is eighty six teams and teamsters laying in this town at present waiting for freight. The teamsters have formed themselves into an Association regulating the price of freight across the Sierra Nevada Mountains, each teamster taking his turn to load according to the registering of his name and paying six per cent of the gross proceeds of his load into the Association. Five per cent he gets back, on the first of next Dec. The one per cent goes to pay the officers and expenses of the Association. Every member of the Association is bound to prevent teams from hauling freight on the outside at any risk....for instance, cutting down wagons, hiding mules and all manner of devilment that four score idle men can invent (for the most of us have been here for two weeks or more). My boss is keeping a Hotel in this town since the first of this month. His family consists of a wife and two daughters, one sixteen, the other eighteen and a little boy ten years old. They are Philadelphians and has property there yet. It is the second time they have been in this country and I think they are as fine a family as ever I found in any country and I feel as much at home here as any place I ever found since I left my Fathers home. They all talk of going to Montana next spring and insist on me waiting till then and going with them and then going on to the States, but I feel anxious to get home this fall if I can get things in shape to go. My health is tolerably good, with the exception of a very sore leg which I got kicked near one year ago which I think I wrote you about. I have been a little lame ever since but the last six weeks I have suffered awfully with it. I have tried a great many remedies but they have no effect. I fear that the bone was injured and it has turned to kind of a gangrene decay and that I shall be compelled to submit to a surgical operation. But I shall limp and grin and bear a while yet. Well, I believe I have told you everything I can think of at present except that I expect to start across the Sierra Nevada Mountains Tuesday, the first day of May and don't expect to get back here for one month or more. I want you to write immediately on the reception of this and I will get it when I make two trips. I got Johns likeness and was very thankful for it. Also cousin James Smiley's which looks kind of skow or in a twist to me. I always neglected to have mine taken when in Sacramento City and there is no Artist here, but the first time I am below I shall have it taken. But I am ashamed to for my hair is gray with a bald acre on top of it, my teeth is almost all gone, hardly enough to hold my pipe which is almost my constant companion from habit. Write immediately to Shingle Springs, Eldorado County Cal in care of J.J.Gorden. Try and make your directions plain as possible for this is a new P.O. and I am afraid it will not come right. Give my love to Mother & John. Remember me to all my friends. I wrote to Robt Hodgens last week. He sends me a great deal of news. Also Lizzie Buchanan gives me much information. Tell John to be careful and not work to hard. I am glad to hear that Mother has got a good Biddie. Tell Alexndr that I intend to write to him the first opportunity and for him to write to me whenever he can. Give my compliments to all and accept a full share of my best wishes for yourself.

Your Son Jas S. Buchanan

P.S. Address Jas S. Buchanan
Shingle Springs
Eldorado Co.

In Care of Jas J. Gorden. J.S.Buchanan

Cal. In Care

Letter addressed to: Thomas Buchanan
West Middletown
Washington Co.
Pa.

Letter contained an embossed three cent U.S. postage stamp cancelled with two cross marks (X) by hand pen.

Postmarked: Written by hand pen: Shingle Springs April 30/66

Crosscreek June 22, 1866 (Written by hand across back of envelope)

Sac City Jan 27th 1866

Dear Father,

I thought as it was drawing near my Birth Day I would write you a few lines in this new year. I got Mothers letter about two weeks ago. I read it over and over again with interest. She told me not to answer it but to write to you. I have not been driving any for the last six weeks. I lost two mules with a very dangerous and fatal disease called Mountain Fiercy. I am still stopping with the man that owns the team on a ranch four miles south of Sac City and expect to stay here until Spring. I could get work on the Fast Frate Driving but I am afraid to undertake it in the winter. In the Spring I expect to take charge of my old team again. My board costs me nothing here, and a very pleasant family to stop with. They are the name of Delzell from Philadelphia, Pa. A middle aged man and his wife, two grown daughters and a little boy ten years old, together with Mr. Davis, another Teamster, constitutes the family. We generally go to town two or three times a week, feed the mules, hunt wild geese and hare, eat and sleep for an every day business. We are very good livers. The best that ever I found in this State. My health has been very good this winter and I enjoy it very much. I weigh one hundred and ninety eight pounds, which is heavier than ever I have been in the states. Mother wants to know how I am going home? I can hardly answer that, but, if I can, I shall go by water next fall. Not that I fancy that way of travelling. I like to travel by land, but I hate water. I feel very anxious to get home, with very little hopes of ever getting ready to go or being content if I was there, but I should like to see you all once more if it should be but twenty four hours. I have been greatly tempted to go to the Northern mines next summer (I mean the Idaho Country, which is very rich without doubt). I think that Frating will commence there next summer. It is about five or six hundred miles from here. I feel like making one more desperate effort for a fortune and then quit. I intend to write to Robt Hodgens, Lizzie Buchanan and some others soon. Write soon. I feel anxious to hear from you all. Give my compliments to everybody.

Your Son Jas S. Buchanan

Marshal House Jan 22nd 1867

Mother,

I got your letter of June 22nd yesterday and, long as it was coming to hand, it was carefully read and the contents particularly noted. After I wrote to you last, I doctored my right leg under Doc Edwards, an old and able Surgeon, for four weeks. It had become so painful that I could not sleep nor rest anyplace with it and I could hardly walk at all. The process of Blistering and Polticeing was awful painful but it helped the leg. It does not pain me near so much but I am still a little lame. The Doc calls it enlargement of the bone from the old wound. Doctering and laying off in Shingle Springs cost me over two hundred dollars, which was considerable backset to me. Since that I have been driving ten and twelve mule teams across the mountains at from sixty five to ninety dolls per month. For the last three months I have been hauling quartz in the State of Nevada from the mines to the mills, a distance of 15 or twenty miles from the mines to the mills on Carson River. I like it better than hauling frate across the mountains this season of the year.

I have been sick about one week. A very bad cold and my system generally out of order from exposure. We have a very rough winter and we have to drive day in and day out, late and early. I have been offered one hundred dolls per month to take a twelve mule team the first of Feb. but if I do not feel better than I do now, I shall go to California and lay off to spring. The best climate in the world. This climate is very similar to Pa. only more wind. We have ice, snow and mud and Gold Hill puts me very much in mind of Coal Hill twenty years ago, about the first time I ever saw it. I should like to see it once more but I fear I never could reconcile myself to live in old Pa, again. I got a letter from Lizzie Buchanan yesterday, also. I shall answer it soon. She tells me a great many things. She is a very interesting correspondent. Tell Alexdr and wife to call their boy for me and I shall send him a Buckskin suit. Is Old Dick still living? Who is your miller now? Has Jim Ferguson quit? I must quit. Excuse this letter. It has been written in the Bar room amongst a half dozen quartz teamsters all trying to bother me.

Your Son J. S. Buchanan

P.S. Write soon and direct to American City, Nevada.

J.S.B.

Above letter addressed to : Thos. Buchanan ESQ.
West Middletown
Washington Co.
Pa.

Envelope is a small white one bearing a three cent U.S. Postage stamp.
Postmarked: CARSON CITY NEV. JAN 24

William K. Buchanan, M.D.
889 Lynnhaven Lane
Akron, Ohio 44313

Gold Hill March 7, 1869

Bro. John

I am still alive and in good health. Almost two years ago I was in tolerably good circumstances and almost ready to pay old Pa. a visit. But I saw what I thought was a good speculation, went into it and failed. Since that I have been very reckless and I have not saved any money. I have worked nearly all the time at from ninety to one hundred dolls per month and I have never saved a months board ahead. I think of going to White Pine, a very rich mining District if I have my health. There is an epidemic raging here at present, carrying off a great many of my kind (at a very short warning) called Chinese small pox. Very fatal when a man is not well nursed. Give my respects and love to Father and Mother if they are still alive and all enquiring friends.

Write soon. I have not much to write. Several of my acquaintances have died lately and buried in the night. Write soon to Gold Hill Nevada.

Your Bro James

P.S. Don't forget to write immediately to Gold Hill Nevada and I will get it.

Yours Truly J. S. Buchanan

Above letter addressed to: J. F. Buchanan Esq.
West Middletown
Washington Co.
Pa.

Mailed in an envelope containing the following imprinted lettering on a red scroll: "PAID PACIFIC UNION EXPRESS CO."

Postmarked: Pacific Union Ex. Co. Gold Hill Mar 7
and Virginia City Nev. Mar 8

Envelope also bore a three cent U.S. Postage Stamp.

Copied from the original letter.

May 6th/69

Dear Father

I received your letter of April 1st a few days ago and was glad to hear that you were all in good health except Mother, but if it is only her ankle I hope it will soon be well. Our town (Gold Hill) has been the scene of one of the most appalling calamities that ever occurred in the state of Nevada and might say on the Pacific Coast. On the morning of the 7th of last month just as the night shift was coming off and the Day shift was going ~~down~~ on. Between the hours of 6 and 7 o'clock the mines were discovered to be on fire. The three leading mines of Gold Hill called the Yellow Jacket--Crown Point and Kentuck were discovered to be on fire. They employ over three hundred men when they are running. About one half of the shift had been let down. Forty of them were suffocated with smoke and gas. Thirty five bodies have been taken out and five still supposed to remain in the mines. The sight was awful to see--those dead bodies raised up the shaft. Women crying and enquiring after their husbands. The fire still rages in the Crown Point Mine. It will be onemonth tomorrow since the mines caught fire. You may think it strange that a silver mine would be on fire, but to explain they have different levels they sink ashaft down. The Yellow Jacket is down 1000 feet then drift off from the shaft on Lead or vain of quartz and fill up with heavy timbers to keep the sides from caving on them. Some of the mines are down 1100 feet--some of them have a great many accidents---a man killed almost every day or two, but these mines were counted very good places to work and very rich. The Yellow Jacket has been worth \$23.00 per square foot. Crown Point has been as high as \$27.00 per foot. The Yellow Jacket is divided into 20 shares tothe foot. The month of March they declared a Dividend of 5 dollars to the share (or \$100 to the foot). The small pox still rages in this town. Two deaths yesterday and 5 new cases reported. Human life seems to have a great many enemies. My health is good except a bad cold. I have not worked since the fire broke out. Business is very dull here. I intend to go work the 10th of this month at 90 dollars per month in gold coin. I have a partner in White Pine new mines that was discovered last fall. Said to be very rich. He is prospecting and is in great hopes of striking something good. My job is driving a ten mule team two day trips. I think my job is a good one. Write soon to Gold Hill.

Your son J. S. Buchanan

Note: There was no envelope with this letter. It was evidently sent to Thomas Buchanan, Father of James Smiley Buchanan. At this date in 1869 Thomas Buchanan would be living in Cross Creek. Thomas Buchanan died on July 20, 1869, so this is likely the last letter he ever got from his son James Smiley Buchanan.

Gold Hill June 6th, 1870

Dear Mother,

I received your kind letter yesterday together with the photograph of my Father and yourself. And I have not language to express my gratitude to you for your kind letter and the picture. I came back to Gold Hill the 15th of last month and expect to leave here today for Ely District--White Pine, if we get a favorable dispatch. It is four hundred and fifty south east of this place. There is three teams of us going. They belong to the same man I have worked for more than one year. We drive twelve mules and three wagons apiece and get one hundred dollars per month and found in everything. The man that owns is a young man from Iowa. He is in very good circumstances if he gets work for his teams. If not, they will soon make a poor man of him. I am not well yet--but a great deal better than when I last wrote. My left side is still sore. And I dread going to drive again for fear it lays me up but there is no other alternative. I must work. I have very good friends in this country and I do not wish to become a burden to them. Don't write until you hear from me again. It is possible that I may not leave Gold Hill, but I want to get away some new place and see if I cannot make another decent stake. I have been driving team for the last ten or 11 years and I am not any better off than when I commenced. Excuse this scrawl and blotted sheet.

Give my compliments to all.

I am your

Prodigal Son J.S.Buchanan

P.S. I have written this in great haste.

JSB

*****Thomas Buchanan, Father of James Smiley Buchanan died in 1869, which explains why he was so pleased to get the photograph.

AF