
Guide to the Sanford D. Johnson Letters, 1833-1853

Collection number: MS 3639

California Historical Society

North Baker Research Library
San Francisco, California

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Scope and Content

Three letters, now in fragile condition, were written by Sanford D. Johnson to various members of his immediate family. S. Johnson (also signed by Sophia Johnson) writes to Daniel Johnson of Gardiner, Maine on July 23, 1833. Sanford Johnson writes to his brother Frederick Johnson of Boston, Massachusetts from Mexican Camp, California on January 25, 1851 and to his parents and sister Eliza Sanderkin, addressed to Daniel Johnson of Gardiner, Maine, from Hickis (?) Gultch, California on January 8, 1853.

The letters were donated to California Historical Society in February 1996 by Mrs. Bud (Dona) Fuller, 1421 - 7th Avenue, San Francisco, California. Mrs. Fuller received the letters from Mrs. Terry Kamke, 1202 Roxboro Road, Longwood, Florida 32750, who in turn was given them by Bill Slade.

The three letters are transcribed below.

Saturday, July 23, 1833

Fred is quit Comftible to day we think he is on the gaining hand Altho he is very week we feel in hopes we can bring him home next week but cannot tell we shall not start with him till he is able to come we git along very well have plenty of help. Mother is well & will come home as soon as posible I shall write & let you know when we start so you will know when to look out for uss

S. Johnson

Sophia Johnson (signed in a different hand)

(This letter, handwritten on a small blue sheet of accounting paper, was folded and addressed on the reverse to Mr. Daniel Johnson, Gardiner, Maine.)

Mexican Camp, California January 25th, 1851

Brother Frederick

as I have a few lasure moments I thought I would wright you a few lines & let you know how I am gitting along I am in good health & spirits & very well contentid hard at work in the mud up to my neas in mud trying to find a little of the Ororer (?) but I dont git much but I keep a trying & feel in hope that I shall before long find enough to carry me home I suppose you have plenty of snow in Boston this winter & the people injoyit a Sleigh riding I should like to be one of these mys for I have got most tired of California there is no amusement of any cind except hard fare & plenty of hard work & I have got most sick of that It is very plesant wether here there has not been but very little rain this winter not enough to sock the ground down six inces all the snow I have seen was one littl squall that lasted about an hour and that did not stay on the ground more than five minets after the squall was over the miners cannot do much this winter they have no water to wash with & take them on an average they dont make fifty cents per day I suppose you here grate accounts from the mines of california but dont you believe all you here for I am in California & no somthing about it I can tell you somthing about the cuntry there are plenty of young men he?e that left there good comftible home & traids to come to California to make there fortune but they have got very much mistaken they have arived in the cuntry without any money & they cannot git enough to take them home it is true there is some that makes a fortune in a short time but where there is one that makes a fortune there is a thousand that dont make any thing at all,

I recived your letter from Linn in No time and I was glad to here from you & that you was most through with your traid but I was sorry to here you wanted to come to California you banish them thoughts from your mind & keep to work at your traid as long as you can make a living at home stay there by all means & not think of coming here for you no nothing about it at all & I do I feal for your well fare and interest and I would not advise you if I did not feel it my devity (duty?) so to do California is a grate temtation to young men at home if a man can make 25 cts per day at home he had beter stay where he is & not come here if you want a hundred Dollars to help your self along with I will let you have it it dont do me any good I can not use it for any perpos to benifit my self here & I have got anoug to take me home & a little more if nobydy dont steel it from me Brother William has left us since I left home I felt very bad to here of his death he was a kind Brother to us all I expect you miss him a grate deal but I hope he has left for a better would then this & we must try & be reckosied to our lot & think every thing is for the best I dont think of any thing more at presant & I will bid you good bye give my love to Father & mother & brothers & sisters tell them I am well & hartly give my love to all enquiring frinends and take a good lot your self

Affectionatly yours

Sanford

PS pleas give this billet to lois Capen dont let any one se it & dont you tell any one that she recive a letter from me if she is at home put it in an envelop & pay the postage & send it to her & you will oblige your brother Sanford D. Johnson wright often & let me know how you are gitting along

(This letter, handwritten on a double blue sheet, was folded and addressed on the reverse to Mr. Frederick Johnson, Boston, Mass. The stain of red sealing wax is evident on the reverse, also.)

Hickis (?) Gultch California Jan 8, 1853

Dear parents

Having a chance to send a letter down from the mines & knowing you would like to here from me I will improve the oppetunity my health is

very good at presant & hope this this will find you all alive & well. I have not heard from Benj for six weekes the time I heard from him he was well & harty I am about 20 miles from him this winter I have been in this palac about a month think I shall stop here till spring. I am doing but a very little can hardley make anough to pay my expencis provision is higher now than it had ever been since I have been in the cruntry It has been nothig but rain rain for the last 2 month & every River Gultch Creack & Rivean is flooded with water & if it keeps on much longer we shall have to Build us one of Noars arks or git Cat Noar himself to Build one. there will bee a grate deal of sufering this winter in California there has been a very heavy emeragrition across the Plaines the last sumer & one half of then is familes & here they are without mony friends or home and they are pittiful looking objects I can tell you. I suppose you have heard that Sacremento City has again been Burnt & Ban came very near beaing Burnt him self he was one of last that escapt. I dont now as I ought to say any thing about it but I will tell you the hole story. he got into Sacrem.. with his team about sunset he put up the team and feeling quit tired went to the Cresant City Hotel got his supper & went to bead very erley. about 11 oclock the fire broke out rite oposit the House he was in there had not meny gorn to bead but them that had heard the alearn & got up and went out & Benj did not awake till the house was afire there was a man ran into his room and sung out at the top of his vois for God sake turn out the House is on fire Ben opend his eyes nought his cloths made one bound and he was out doar & in 20 minutes the House was flat to the Ground he then run for the stable where his team was Just had time git them harness & drove out when the fire took the stable he lost nothing you can see by that that he is in good luck and now the watter is 8 feet higer in Sacrem & I hope it will be 25 feet higher and around every spectulator there is in the city tis there works that keeps up the price of provision they have got every thing in there owe hands & they mean to keep then so I have no more news to send you I will have to close

Mrs. Eliza Sanderkin

Dear Sister

as you think I sensur you ruther hard on writing Letters to me & Benj & dont know as they are worth reading but you say you do the best you can, you seam to feel very bad about it I can say I simphies with your feelings, if I have said any thing to mar your feeling I am very sorry for sading & if I was where I could speek to you I would cover your face with kisses & correct all mistakes. Nothing gives me more plasure then to peruse one of your letters altho I have not had the honer of so doing for the last 3 month I like to here from you It remindes me of former times altho I am an old Bach (?) now & ever expect to be yet I like to look Back & think of my boy hood days & the meny good times we had together very often I think of the parties we have been to & sleigh rides we have taken. I hope we may yet live to enjoy some of the same seans. you will always find me to be an eflectionate Brother to you one that thinks as much of you as any Brother on earth one how will always befriend you altho you may never see me again but as long as I do live thies are the feelings I have towards you I will say no more Give my love to all the folks & dont frgit your selves

Direct your letters Stockton California

Care of Dr. L. Brusie

Your Affectionate son

Sanford

(The letter, handwritten on a double blue sheet, was folded and addressed on the reverse to Mr. Daniel Johnson, Gardiner, Maine.)