

Napa. April 10, 1850

Mr. F. Burr

Dear Sir,

I hope you will excuse my negligence in not writing to you before now, but I will try to atone for it in this letter. I don't think there will be any use in my describing the gold mines or telling you of the great fortunes that have been made here, so I shall confine my remarks to myself, my situation, my prospects, and to the great revolution which has taken place in this country during the last three years. In the first place, I am well, am clerke in a store at twelve hundred dollars a year, have purchased a tract of land containing two hundred and sixty-six acres. It cost me \$750.00. I have put \$1400.00 worth of improvements upon it, have fifty acres under a state of cultivation, forty acres sowed to barley which is now eight inches high, ten acres to potatoes, corn, beans, melons, and all kinds of vegetables. All are doing well. I let the land to a couple of fellows upon shares for I have not time to attend to it myself, and more than that, I object to hard work in Calafornia myself. For the above tract of land I have been offered seven thousand dollars independent of the crop which is on it, that is at least worth five thousand as it stand, but I refused. This land is in the great Napa Valley, on the creek at the head of navigation and adjoining Napa City, the shire town of Napa County, one of the most beautiful places in the [page 2]: country.

My prospects I expect in a few weeks to jump from the state of single blessedness to the state of connubial felicity – who would not at the age of twenty-four. It is time to settle in life and to have a companion to soothe and cheer you on through the ups and downs of this transient life. Situated as I now am, it is probable I shall stay in Calafornia for some years; I may take a trip to the states in the course of a year but it will depend altogether upon circumstances for I shall not leave Calafornia to settle anywhere else until I have made enough to live independent and that I am in a fair way of doing now. When I sit down and contemplate the situation of this country as it was three years ago and then look at it as it is now, I feel as if I had awoke from a dream, but it's a stern reality. San Francisco three years ago contained but twenty-five houses and about five hundred inhabitants – now it contains upwards of third-thousand inhabitants and some of the most splendid buildings that ever was built. Lots then were sold for \$15.63, now the same have been sold for \$50,000, and everything else is in like proportion. Throughout the whole country, towns, villages and cities have sprung up as if by magic and all for gold! gold! And the cry still is Gold. Three years ago, seven vessels lay in the harbor of San Francisco, now over three hundred lie there mostly deserted by their crews. Then steam was unknown, now the steam vessels find their way into every river, creek and inlet of the country. [page 3] Then the long dreary dismal voyage around Cape Horn had to be taken from New York, here now thirty days is

the passage, thanks to the immortal Fulton. Then horses of the best kind could be bought for \$10.00, now for the same the price is \$200.00. Now milk \$1.00 the quart; butter \$1.50 per the pd., 20 c. for corn now \$4.00 for a bushel, onions, \$1.00 per #, cabbages \$1.00 per head, and everything else in like proportion. A great country is Calafornia, but at this late day I would not advise anyone one to come here unless he comes with plenty of money, for the harvest is about past and soon there will be nothing but gleanings, at least for speculators. Anyone who would like to farm it would do well if he was here at the harvest time, since the climate of this country is beautiful. Now whilst I am writing, the sun is pouring down his rays as hot as I ever known it in the states and the vegetation is all life and animation, stock of all kinds are rolling fat.

Give my respects to your wife, to Betsy and family, and to all the good people of Worthington not forgotten, Aunt Betsey and all the rest of the Benjamin tribe. Write to me as soon as you receive this if possible for I long to hear from W[orthington?]. Yours with respect, Fordyce L. Benjamin. Direct your letter to Napa City, California.