

Act transcribed

7/30/1951

Letter from Uncle Frank

F. R. GRIST TO REUBEN KNOX, St. Louis.

With Capt. Stansbury's expedition  
The Camp  
near Fort Post  
Leavenworth

May  
Tuesday, 29, 1849.

(1)

My dear Father,

This is absolutely the very first available opportunity for giving you anything like a satisfactory idea of my circumstances and prospects. I could not learn whether my party had gone or not - till my arrival on the very spot, and until that should be ascertained my only definite course had been to hold myself in readiness to take advantage of circumstances as they might occur - with always the agreeable alternative of being the bearer of my own letter. But it is all over. A word dissipated the anxiety of so many days and I just saved myself. We are all together here encamped, to break up and move tomorrow. I have been met with all cordiality I could desire and I hope that we shall keep on the same terms of good fellowship. One difficulty only shall or can prevent me from setting out with the party. Capt. Stansbury, who has received and treated in every other respect with the utmost kindness, has either difficulty or hesitation in fulfilling his promise with regard to a horse and equipage. Mr. Shoemaker (is it spelt so) advised me in the strongest terms not to start with them until this is satisfactorily settled. I have a right to demand it, and it is easily in their power to furnish it. I have intimated as much to Lt. Gunnison, who made the proposal, and he has represented the case to the commander. The Capt. promised to make a requisition tomorrow morning on the Quartermaster for the outfit. So the matter stands at present. I must endeavor to avoid any disagreement with the Capt, but it is too serious a matter for me to allow myself to be put off and trifled with, besides my dignity and right in the party is compromised. The matter will soon be settled. I do not anticipate any but a favorable arrangement. The Capt. seems anxious to accommodate me and certainly keeps us in prime STYLE - so far as the mess table and the tent apparatus go. Instead of

taking a military escort as he at first intended, he prefers to arm the whole party with rifles and ~~hdsters~~ pistols and dispense with other protection. He has five guides and will take a route not travelled by the emigrant parties. Our camp establishment is in app~~le~~-pie order, forty or fifty fine fresh mules picked from the army ? - new wagons and tents and all the luxuries of the season among the stores which are liberally supplied to the table at which are seated the capt, the Dr. Mr. F. and myself. Lt. Gunnison is confined to his tent by indisposition.

I found on arriving here that in some respects my outfit was very incomplete. At the instance of the Capt. and the Dr. I had to purchase two more blankets, miserable ones, the best to be had at Weston, and I ought to have got four, the two that I carried being thin and cold and too small to cover me. I got the others today. Last night I should have suffered but Mr. E. shared his bedclothing with me. Flannell shirts too I was advised to get, but could not. Other small indispensable articles besides swelled the expense to an alarming amount for me - still my outfit is not complete and I cannot make it so. \$1 here will go as far as \$10 at the Lake. Before we get there I learn, we shall pass through terrible extremes of temperature, and then a six months ~~xx~~ winter residence in such a climate. I find that from the style of the officers and gentlemen, my companions, I shall have to pay more attention to neatness of appearance. By the advice of Gen. Wilson and Dr. B. I took the stage at ? for Independence to gain time. I was fairly humbugged all round - barely reached I. in time to take the St. Onge? ! Capt. Jewett is one of the fraternity. All this, stage fare, meals and lodging for 48 hours. Way fare on the St. cost me \$20. My SCANTY purchases here cost \$13 more, and I have not been wasteful, but so it stands, and I have tried horse jockeying once or twice on the road to get my hand in. Horses and mules 75 and 100.



Spanish and Indian ponies, (just what I want) 40 and 70. The Capt. thinks of getting some of these when we reach the Indian Country far out - here they are too much in demand.

So now, Pa, I have stated as distinctly as possible my situation and intentions. I should like to add several articles to my outfit if I now had the means, but they can not be had here, and it is flatly impossible that they could be sent from St. Louis. So we must ever make the best of it. If ever you should have an opportunity to send me to the Lake a PATENT FOLDING COT (every one of the party have one but myself), and one or two heavy pea-jackets and woolen shirts and a SMALL ROLL OF CANVASS - or enough cash to enable me ~~xx~~ in emergency to buy a pony or horse. If you should have such an opportunity during my absence, send any or none of the articles just as you think proper. One thing I do want and need and can not get - a pair of 3 or 4 point FINE Mackinaw blankets - these just when you can. What I have are too THIN, too FLIMSY, and too SMALL. I shall have to beg or borrow and the very idea MAKES ME SICK. One more article I must if possible procure here - a dragoon overcoat with re                      ?purse, it will cost from \$3 to \$10 if I can get it from a soldier. Excuse these details but I have these things to attend to before our start tomorrow morning, besides my horse equipment and half dozen other things. All the letters that are for the settlements must be left when I start. I write in great haste on a box-top by a similar candlestick, after having spent the whole day in riding to Weston and back, though it is but 10 miles. Mr. Shoemakers, formerly of Fort Armstrong, I found stationed here and owe him something for good advice and kind offices. Gen. Wilson told me I might go with him! Dr. Birdsell gave me a very warm invitation and Miss Sophie H's daughter also. I am sincerely glad that I shall not be under the necessity of taxing their kind professions. Dr. B. gave me a letter

to a friend of his Q. Master here, Major Ogden, who treated like a dog in his own kennel and I left him quiet possession of it. I received one cordial hearty invite from a party of rough old traders to join with t to go a foot, on an hours acquaintance.

My love to all till next opportunity. Tell Ma I am in good hands and don't intend to be imposed upon. I've seen more human nature since I left home than all my life together before. I must stop. Goodby, we break up tomorrow. F. R. GRIST.

Cousin Laura's gone to Grand Ma, and the idea just strikes me you go with them. Ma shall open this letter and Ma, if I cannot leave a note for Cousin L. or Grnadma in time, please tell them all about this and give my love in your next.