



INSIDE THE VAULT

The Overland Trail
with Dr. Sarah Keyes

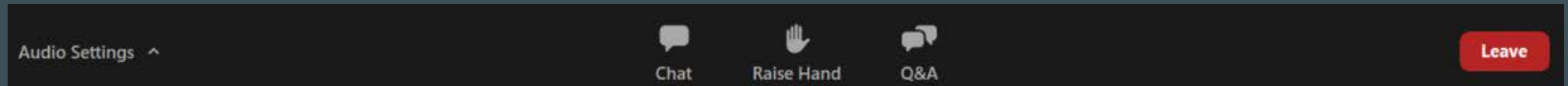
THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2024

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THE
GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE
of
AMERICAN HISTORY

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How to Participate



- If you would like to ask a question, you can use the Q&A feature.
- We will be answering audience questions throughout the session.
- The views expressed here are those of the historian.

For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.

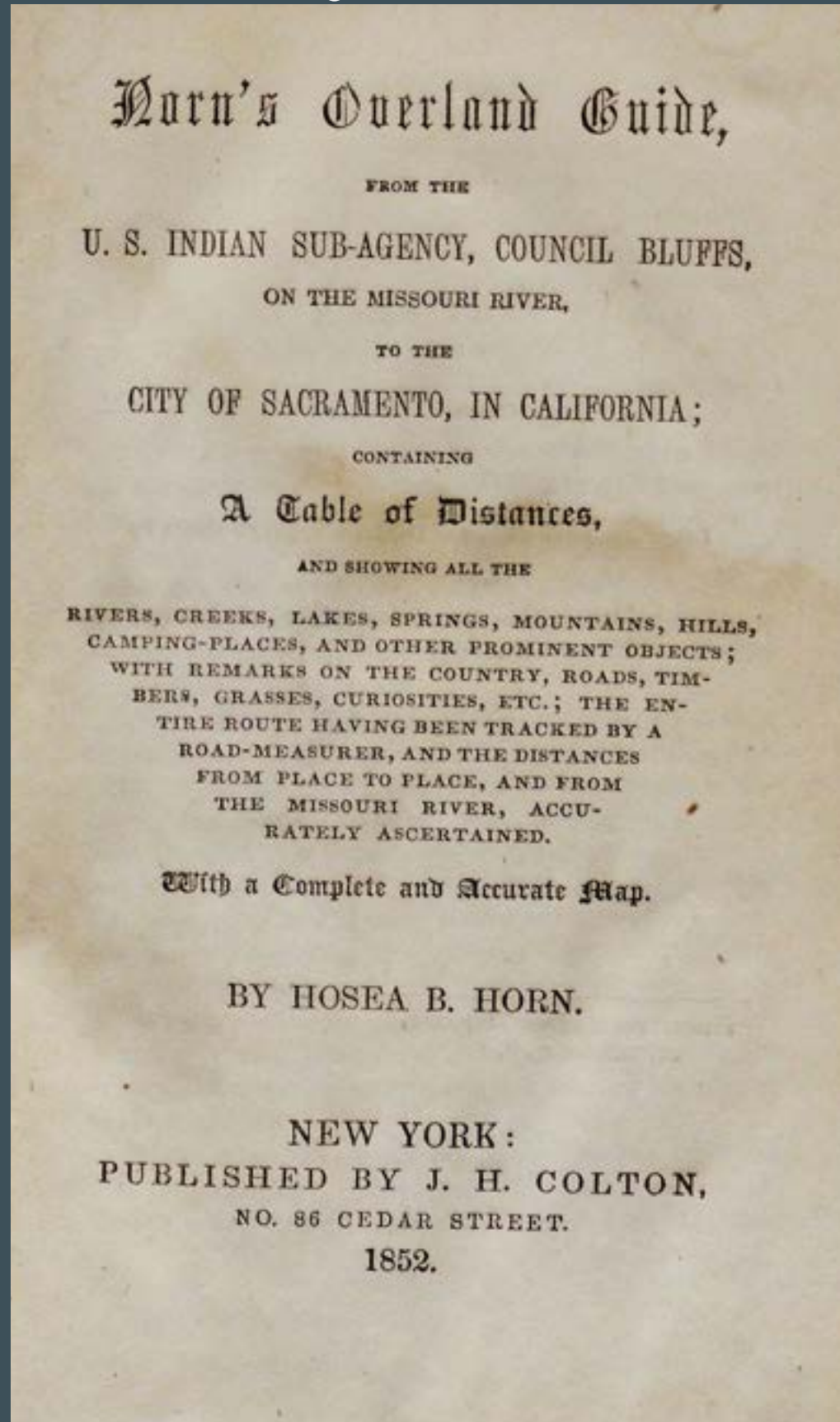


Dr. Sarah Keyes

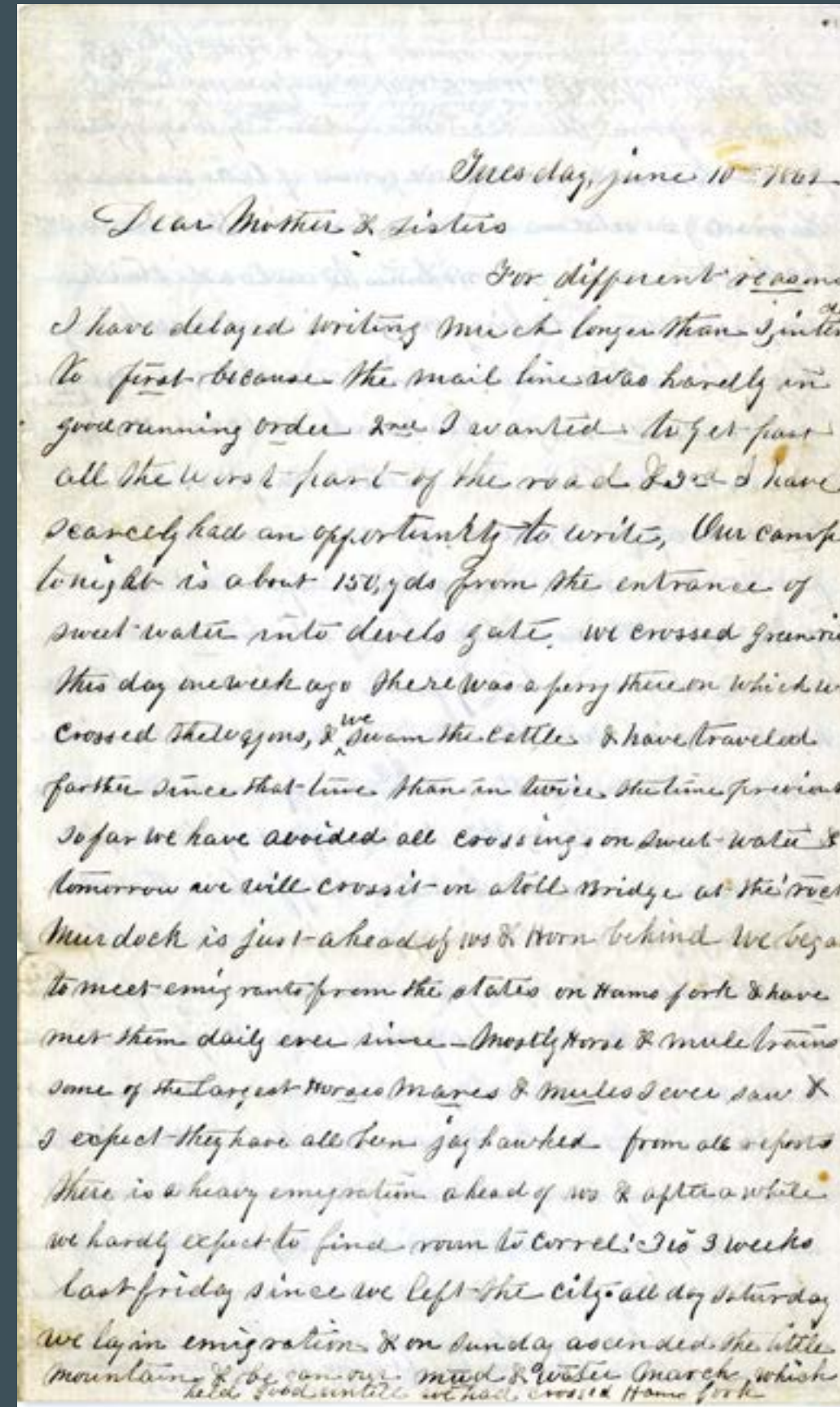


Sarah Keyes is a historian of the United States. She specializes in the nineteenth century and the history of the US West. Her first book, *American Burial Ground: A New History of the Overland Trail*, was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in October 2023. *American Burial Ground* places death at the center of the history of the Overland Trail and, in doing so, offers a sweeping and long overdue reinterpretation of this historic touchstone.

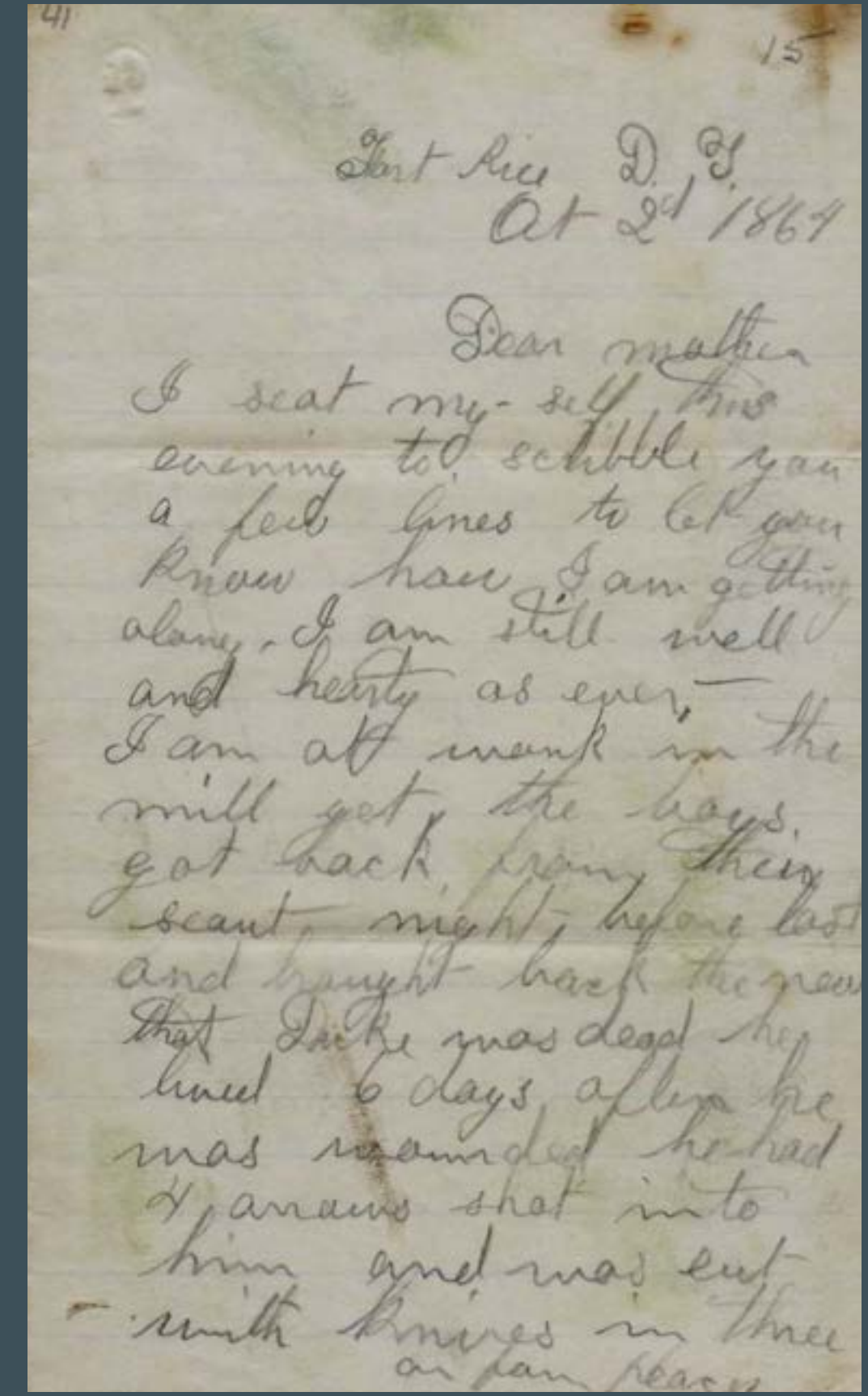
Today's Documents



Horn's Overland Guide to California and Oregon, 1852.
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04152.01)



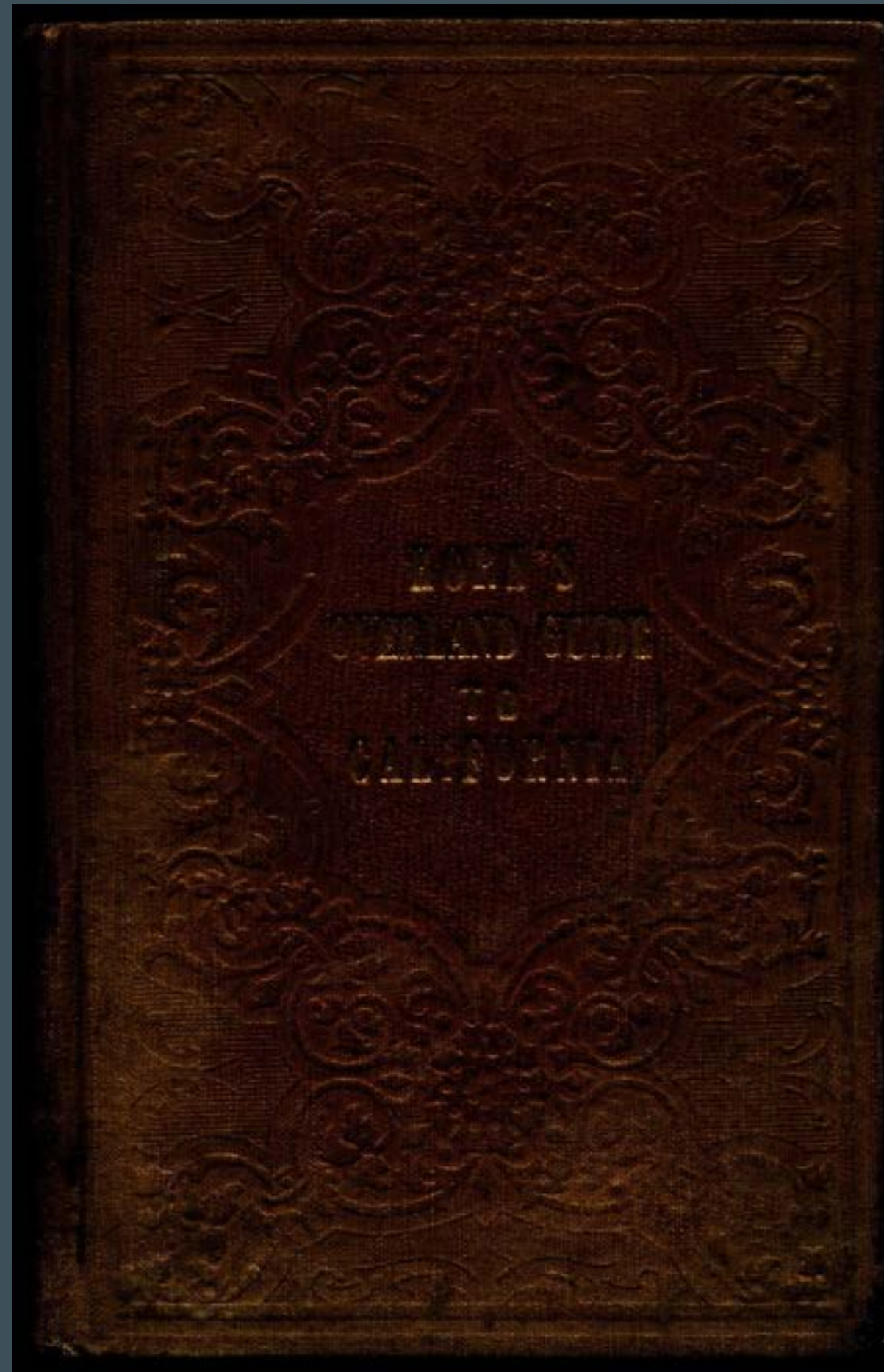
Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters, June 10, 1862.
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05493.01)



William Alden to his mother, October 2, 1864.
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02831.41)

Horn's Overland Guide

1852



Horn's Overland Guide,

FROM THE

U. S. INDIAN SUB-AGENCY, COUNCIL BLUFFS,
ON THE MISSOURI RIVER,

TO THE

CITY OF SACRAMENTO, IN CALIFORNIA;

CONTAINING

A Table of Distances,

AND SHOWING ALL THE

RIVERS, CREEKS, LAKES, SPRINGS, MOUNTAINS, HILLS,
CAMPING-PLACES, AND OTHER PROMINENT OBJECTS;
WITH REMARKS ON THE COUNTRY, ROADS, TIM-
BERS, GRASSES, CURIOSITIES, ETC.; THE EN-
TIRE ROUTE HAVING BEEN TRACKED BY A
ROAD-MEASURER, AND THE DISTANCES
FROM PLACE TO PLACE, AND FROM
THE MISSOURI RIVER, ACCU-
RATELY ASCERTAINED.

With a Complete and Accurate Map.

BY HOSEA B. HORN.

NEW YORK:

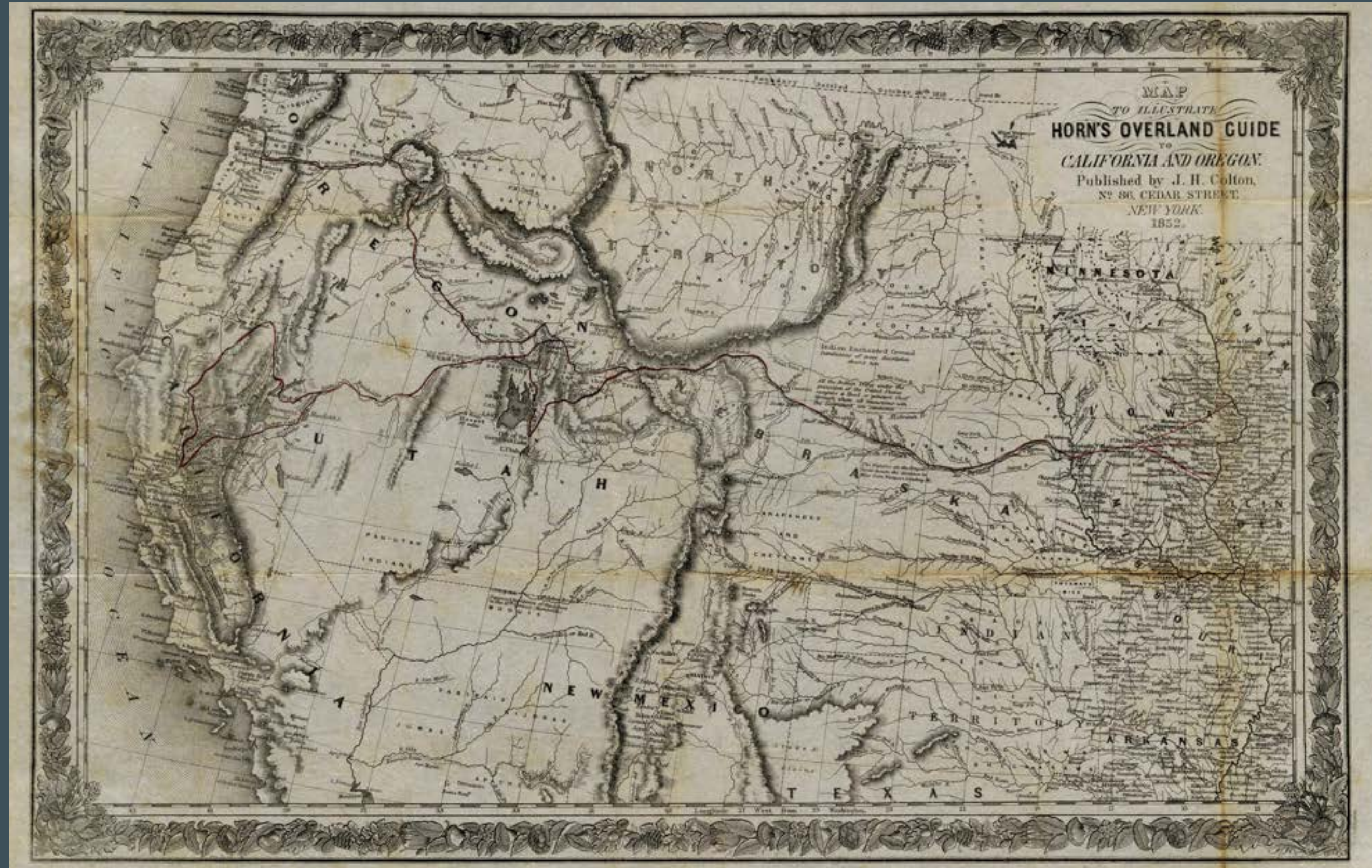
PUBLISHED BY J. H. COLTON,
NO. 86 CEDAR STREET.

1852.

Hosea B. Horn, *Horn's Overland Guide to
California and Oregon*, 1852.
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04152.01)

Map from *Horn's Overland Guide*

1852



Hosea B. Horn, "Map to Illustrate Horn's Overland Guide to California and Oregon," 1852. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04152.02)

Fremont's Route



Hosea B. Horn, "Map to Illustrate Horn's Overland Guide to California and Oregon," 1852.
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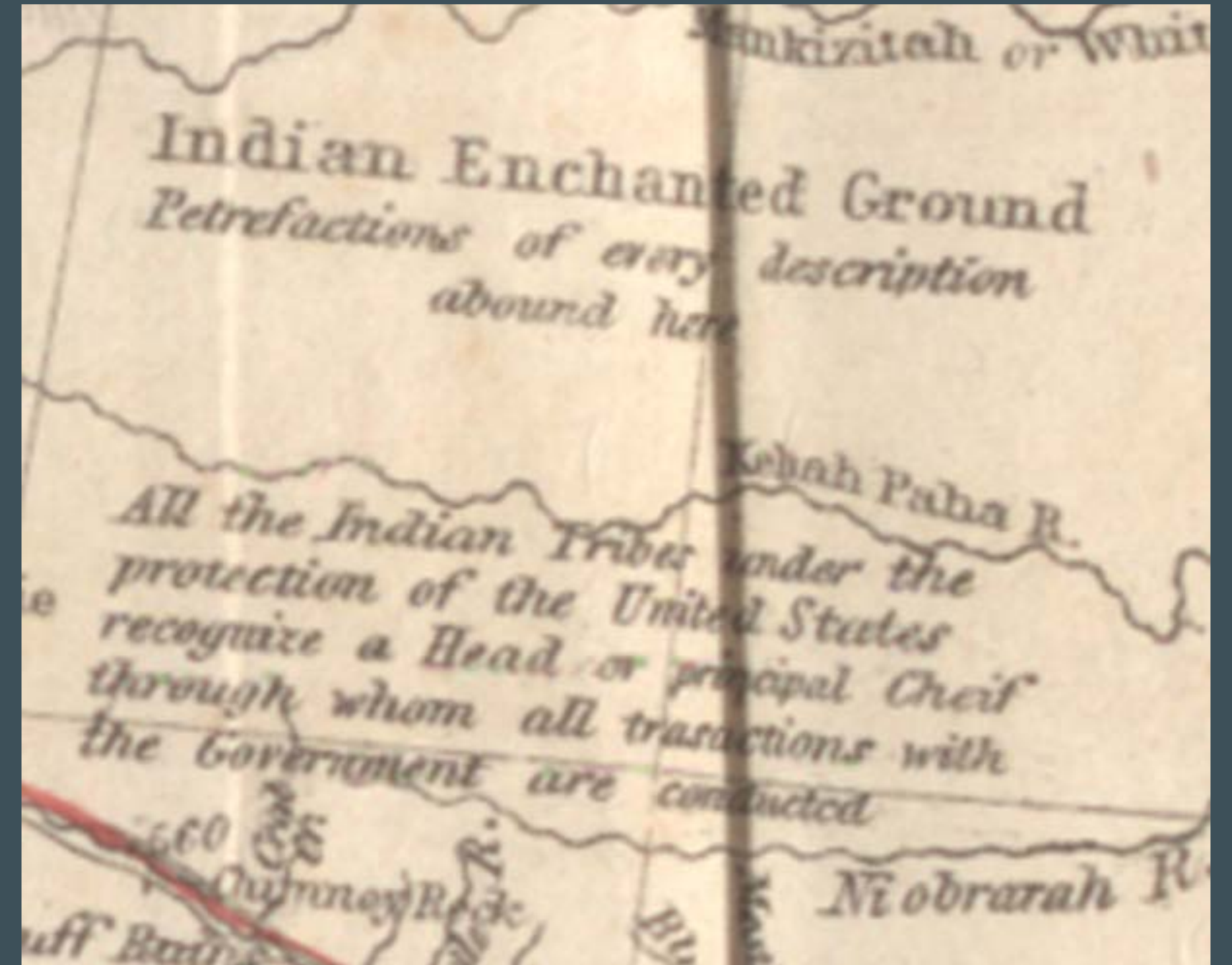


Hosea B. Horn, "Map to Illustrate Horn's Overland Guide to California and Oregon," 1852. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04152.02)

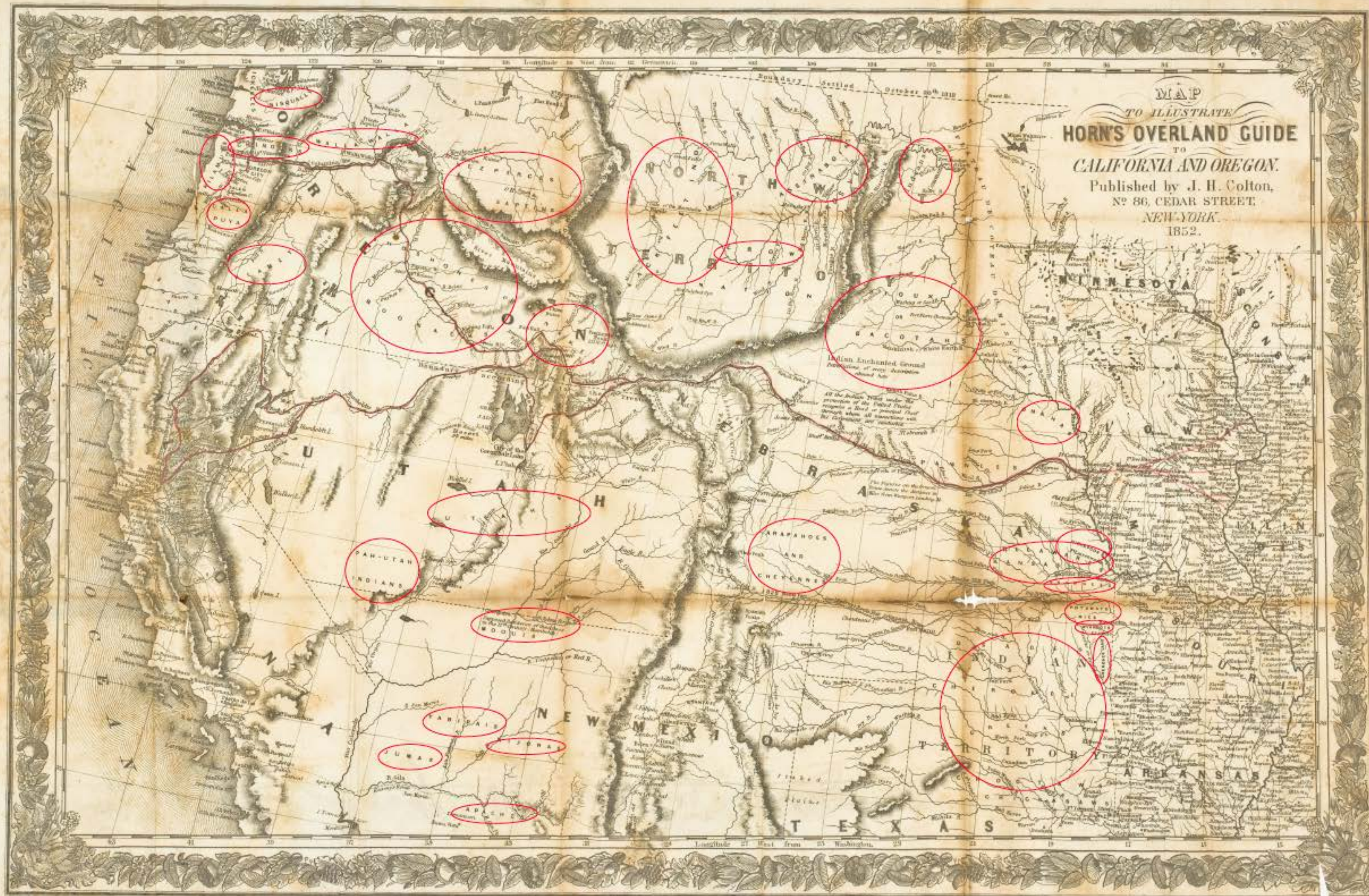
Map from *Horn's Overland Guide*

1852

“All the Indian Tribes under the protection of the United States recognize a Head or principal Chief through whom all transactions with the Government are conducted”



Hosea B. Horn, “Map to Illustrate Horn's Overland Guide to California and Oregon,” 1852.
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04152.02)



Hosea B. Horn, "Map to Illustrate Horn's Overland Guide to California and Oregon," 1852.
(The Newberry Library)

Advertisement from *Horn's Overland Guide*

1852

Great Bargains

Can be made buying Improved Farms in the vicinity of COUNCIL BLUFFS and KANESVILLE, of the Mormons, who are desirous of selling out, to join their friends at Salt Lake City. No portion of the great fertile West is better adapted to grain growing and grazing, is any better watered, or has a finer climate. From three to six hundred dollars will buy an excellent farm there. Emigrants would do well to look at this region of country before purchasing elsewhere.

Samuel Russell

1835-1896

- Farmer and lumber salesman
- Born in Canada, lived in Missouri
- Emigrated in Mormon Settlement in 1861
- Joined “down-and-back” wagon train in 1862
- Served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints between 1882 and 1883
- Fought in Black Hawk War in 1866

The Homestead Act

- The act established three steps:
 - File an application for up to 160 acres
 - Farm on the land
 - After five years, file for the deed of the land
- Union soldiers could use the time they served as part of the five-year requirement.
- Citizens who had “borne arms” against the government were not eligible.

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters

June 10, 1862

“We were one & half days in crossing all this time in water & mud from knee deep up to our necks & often swimming & that water running through snow banks then in sight,”

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters, June 10, 1862.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05493.01)

Tuesday, June 10th 1862
Dear Mother & Sisters
For different reasons
I have delayed writing much longer than I intend
to first because the mail line was hardly in
good running order and I wanted to get past
all the worst part of the road. And I have
scarcely had an opportunity to write. Our camp
tonight is about 150 yds from the entrance of
sweet water into Devils gate. We crossed Granville
this day one week ago there was a ferry there on which we
crossed the wagons, & ^{we} swam the cattle & have traveled
farther since that time than in twice the time previous
so far we have avoided all crossings on sweet water &
tomorrow we will cross it on a toll bridge at the rock
Murdoch is just ahead of us & Horn behind we began
to meet emigrants from the states on Hams fork & have
met them daily ever since. Mostly horse & mule trains
some of the largest horses & mules I ever saw &
I expect they have all been jay hawked from all reports
there is a heavy emigration ahead of us & after a while
we hardly expect to find room to Corral's 3 to 3 weeks
last Friday since we left the city all day Saturday
we lay in emigration & on Sunday ascended the little
mountain & began our mud & water march which

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters

June 10, 1862

“we had 13 turnovers, 30 or 40 times to unload stuck wagons, after hitching on oxen and breaking by chains 'till we found it would not pay, One individual wagon has been to unload 11 different times”

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters, June 10, 1862.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05493.01)



Tuesday June 10th 1862
Dear Mother & Sisters
For different reasons
I have delayed writing much longer than I intend
to first because the mail line was hardly in
good running order and I wanted to get past
all the worst part of the road and I have
scarcely had an opportunity to write, Our camp
tonight is about 150 yds from the entrance of
Sweet-water into Devils gate. We crossed Granville
this day one week ago there was a ferry there on which we
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so far we have avoided all crossings on Sweet-water &
tomorrow we will cross it on a toll bridge at the rock
Murdock is just ahead of us & Horn behind we began
to meet emigrants from the states on Hams fork & have
met them daily ever since - mostly horse & mule trains
some of the largest horses, mares & mules I ever saw &
I expect they have all been jay hawked from all reports
there is a heavy emigration ahead of us & after a while
we hardly expect to find room to Correl's 3 or 3 weeks
last Friday since we left the city all day Saturday
we lay in emigration & on Sunday ascended the little
mountain & by our own mind & water march which
held good until we had crossed Hams fork

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters

June 10, 1862

“the driver of one of the wagons went down under it but Luckily for him the water was deep, he was missing sometime but at lenth poked his head up through a hole large enough for a prairie dog between the Oxen one of which was strugling in the water the other hanging on the Bridge.”

Tuesday June 10th 1862
Dear Mother & Sisters
For different reasons I have delayed writing much longer than I intend to first because the mail line was hardly in good running order and I wanted to get past all the worst part of the road and I have scarcely had an opportunity to write, Our camp tonight is about 150 yds from the entrance of Sweet-water into Devils gate. We crossed Granville this day one week ago there was a ferry there on which we crossed the wagons, & ^{we} swam the cattle & have traveled farther since that time than in twice the time previous so far we have avoided all crossings on Sweet-water & tomorrow we will cross it on a toll bridge at the rock Murdock is just ahead of us & Horn behind we began to meet emigrants from the states on Hams fork & have met them daily ever since - Mostly horse & mule trains some of the largest horses, mares & mules I ever saw & I expect they have all been jay hawked from all reports there is a heavy emigration ahead of us & after a while we hardly expect to find room to Correl's 3 to 3 weeks last Friday since we left the city all day Saturday we lay in emigration & on Sunday ascended the little mountain & by 9 am our mule & water march which held good until we had crossed Hams fork

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters, June 10, 1862.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05493.01)



Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters

June 10, 1862

“The next night we camped at Cache Cave & I saw six name scratched therein. The next morning early we made yellow creek this we found about 300 yds in width Murdock had just got through and left it nothing but a bed of mortar & water”

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Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters, June 10, 1862.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05493.01)



Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters

June 10, 1862

“The best illustration I can give of it is the answer one of our boys gave to a man who enquired; how we came over Hams fork, We did not come over it sir, we came under it, was the answer.”

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters, June 10, 1862.

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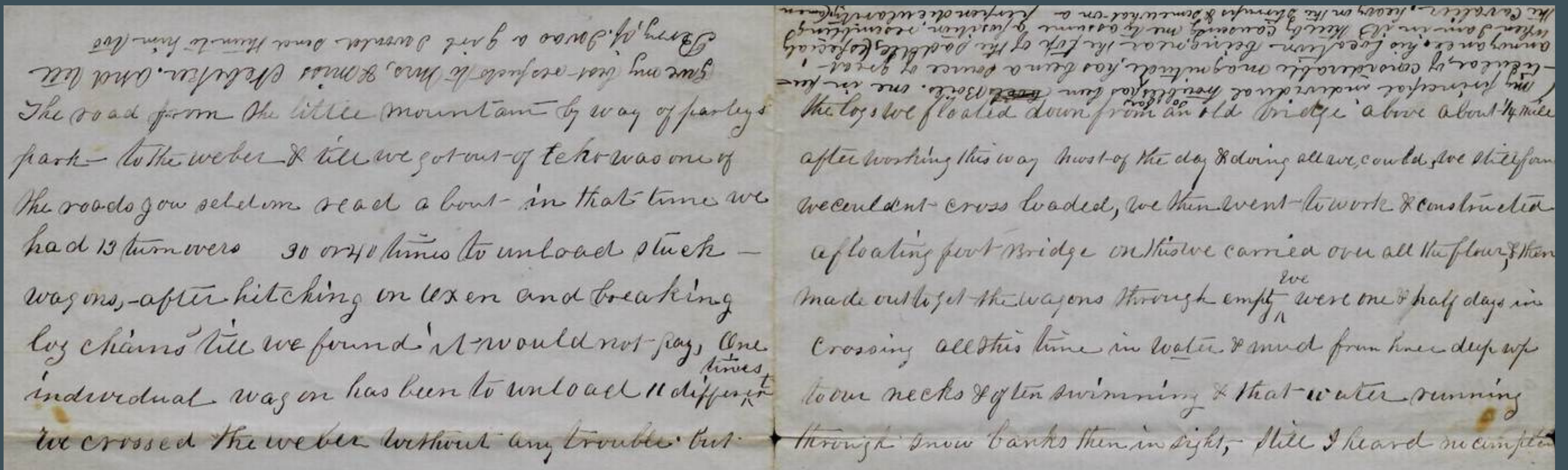
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Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters

June 10, 1862



“This letter has been written with something like a sharp stick in one hand and the paper in the other a position I seldom ever wrote in before so you need not criticise to heavily as my paper is scarce”



Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters, June 10, 1862.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05493.01)

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters

June 10, 1862



“My principal individual troubles so far has been Boils. One in particular, of considerable magnitude, has been a source of great annoyance his location being near the top of the saddles (especialy when I am in it) thereby causing me to assume a position resembling the cavalier, heavy on the stirrups & somewhat on a perpendicularity.”

Samuel Russell to his mother and sisters, June 10, 1862.

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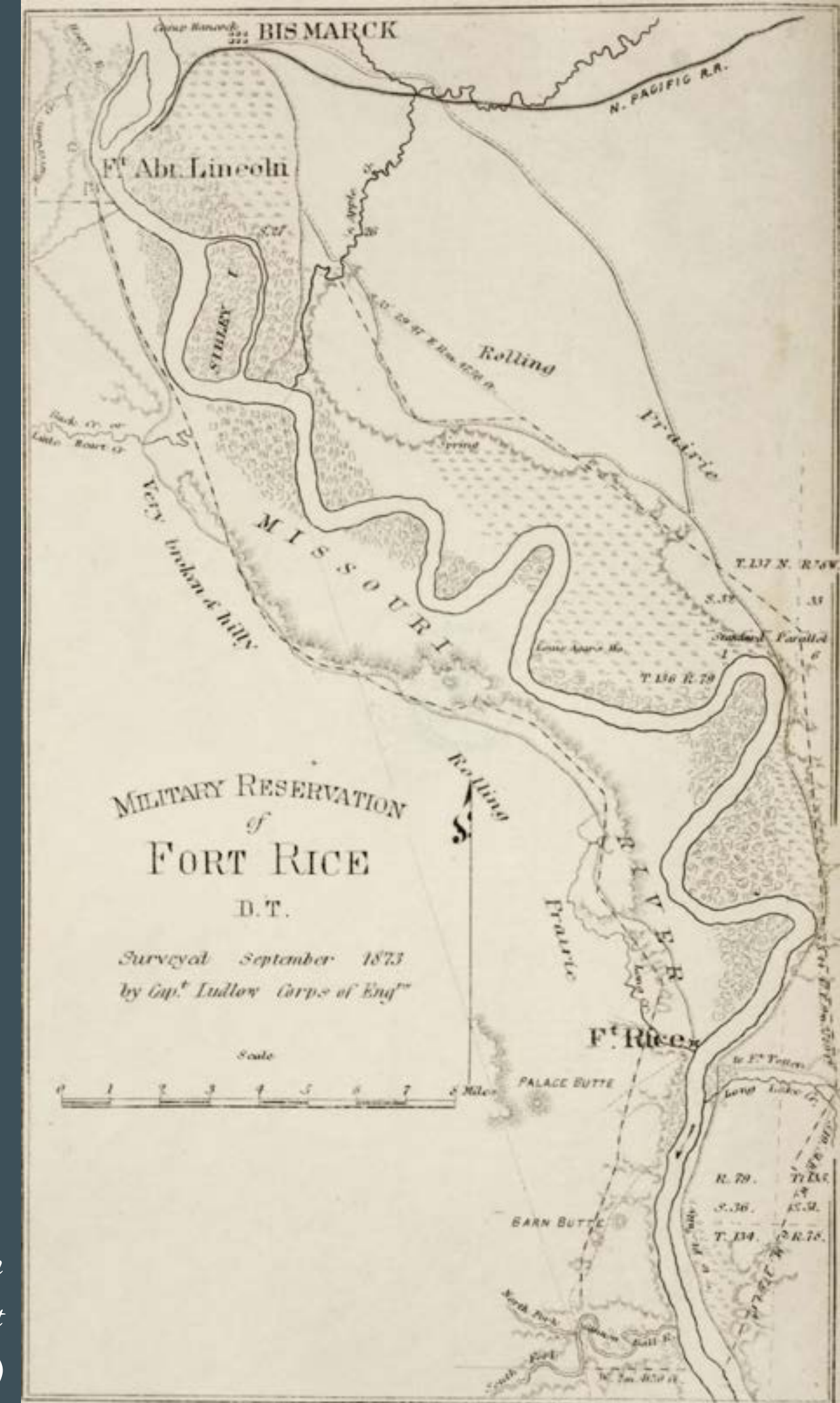
William H. Alden

b. 1844

- Born in Iowa
- Wrote to his family while on the Sully Expedition
- Led by Alfred Sully, the expedition was the largest military campaign against Plains Indians to this date.
- Expedition ordered by President Abraham Lincoln

Fort Rice

- Established July 7, 1864, by Sully
- In Dakota Territory (1861)
- Now the state of North Dakota
- First of a string of forts
- Established to guard northern routes



Map of Fort Rice, published in *Outline Descriptions of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri, Commanded by Lieutenant General P. H. Sheridan*, 1876. (The Newberry Library)

Map from *Horn's Overland Guide* 1852



Hosea B. Horn, "Map to Illustrate Horn's Overland Guide to California and Oregon," 1852. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04152.02)

William Alden to his mother

September 9, 1864



“We have had two fights with the Indians this summer fought them once for three days in succession but finally whipped them.”

time We have had
two fights with the
Indians this summer
fought them once for
three successive days

in succession
but finally whipped
them Well I must

William Alden to his mother, September 9, 1864.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02831.40)

William Alden to his mother

October 2, 1864



41
15
Fort Rice D. T.
Oct 2^d 1864

Dear mother
I seat my-self this evening to scribble you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. I am still well and hearty as ever. I am all week in the mill get the boys got back from their scout night before last and brought back the news that Duke was dead he lived 6 days after he was wounded he had 4 arrows shot into him and was cut with knives in three or four places

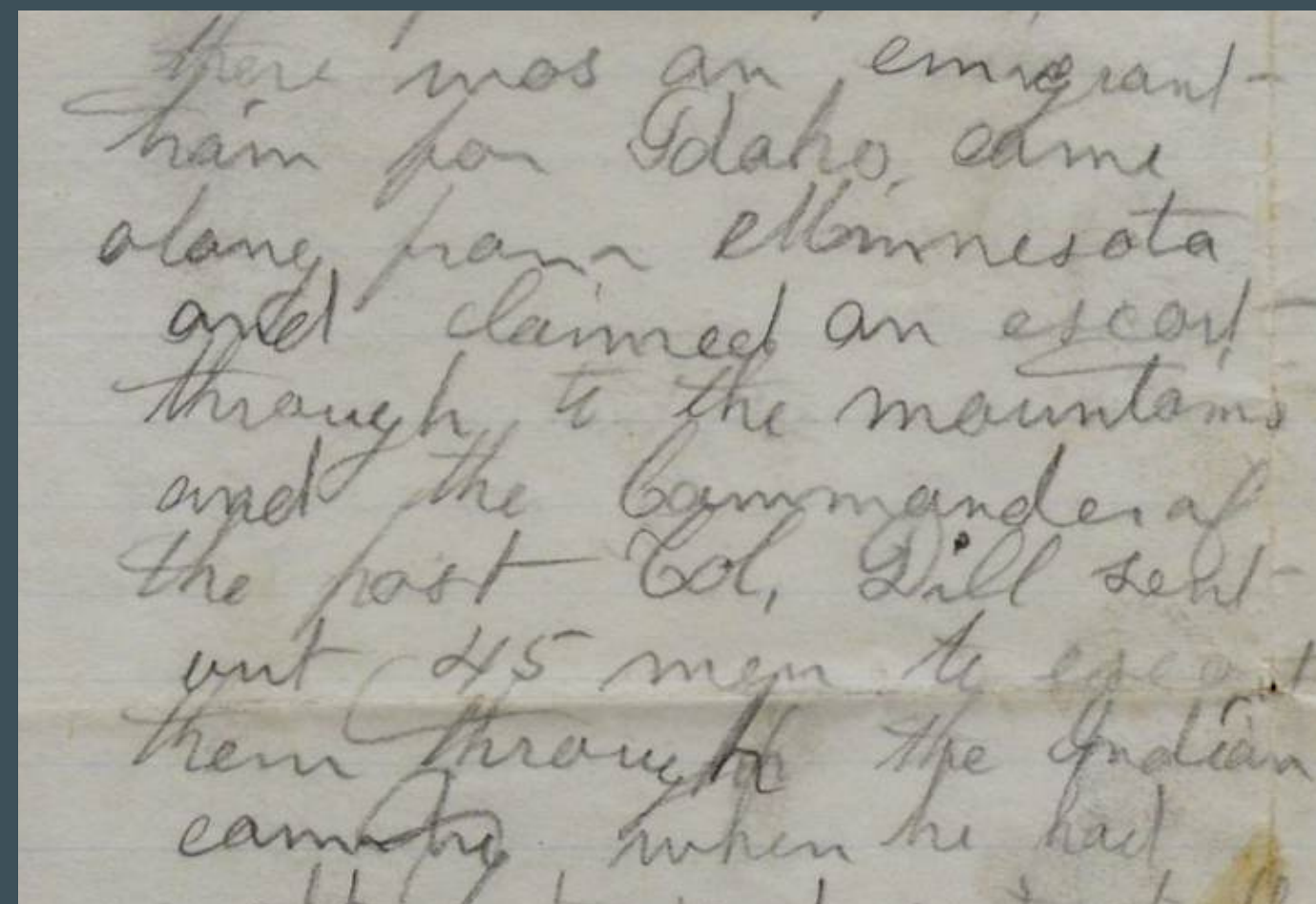
with the exception of Duke the boys all got back all night. The way they happened to be out there was this - about 3 weeks after we had left this point there was an emigrant train for Idaho, came along from Minnesota and claimed an escort through to the mountains and the commander of the post Col. Dill sent out 45 men to escort them through the Indian country when he had ought but sent any at all he had ought to have kept all of the emigrants here till spring but you see that he sent out

these men with them and got out about 200 miles west of here and the Indians attacked them and kept them surrounded about two weeks before relief could be got out to them when they got out to them the Indians had all left the train I expect that they seen our boys coming up and got out of the road we sent out 1000 men 200 cavalry and the rest of them was Infantry Well enough of this for now so good bye for now I will write again soon so no more at present from your son W. A.

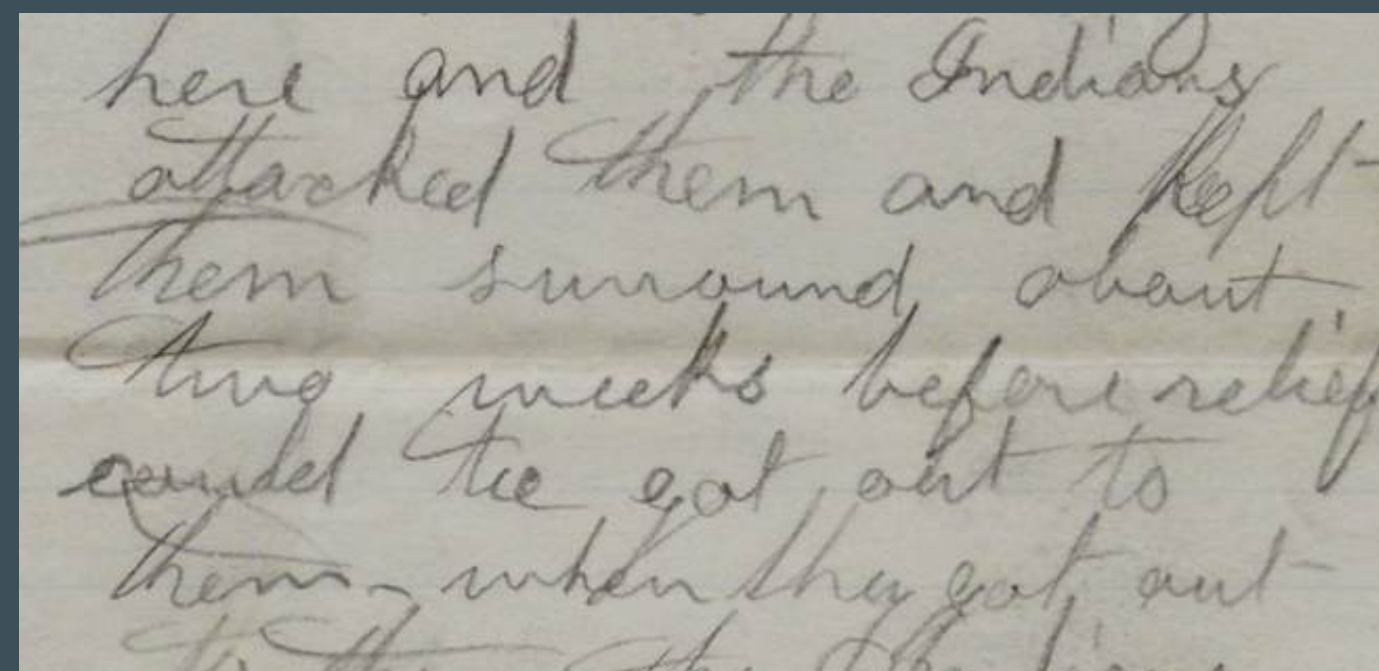
William Alden to his mother

October 2, 1864

“...an emigrant train for Idaho came along from Minnesota and claimed an escort through to the mountains and the Commander of the post Col. Dill sent out 45 men to escort them through the Indian country...the Indians attacked them and kept them surround about two weeks before relief could be got out to them.”

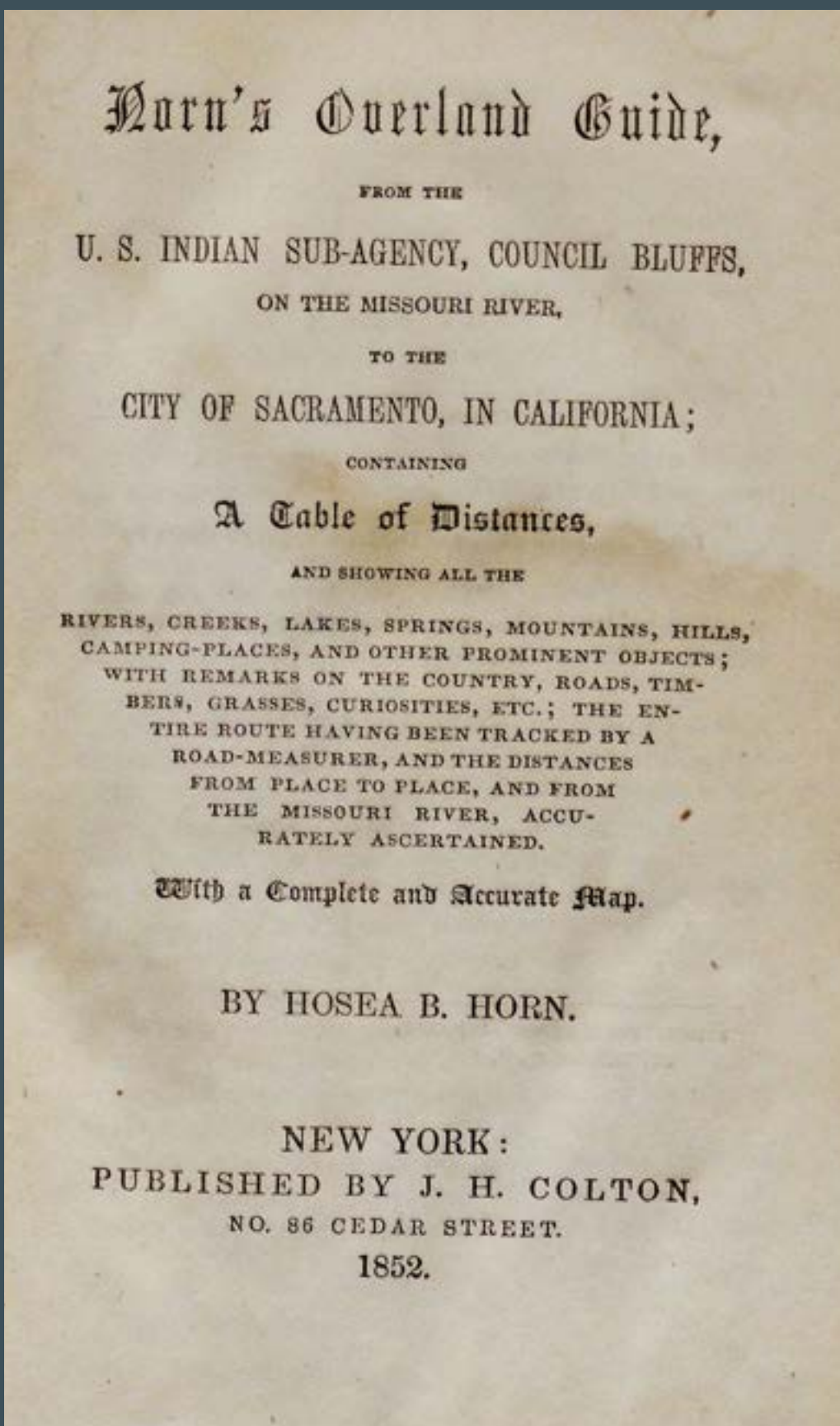


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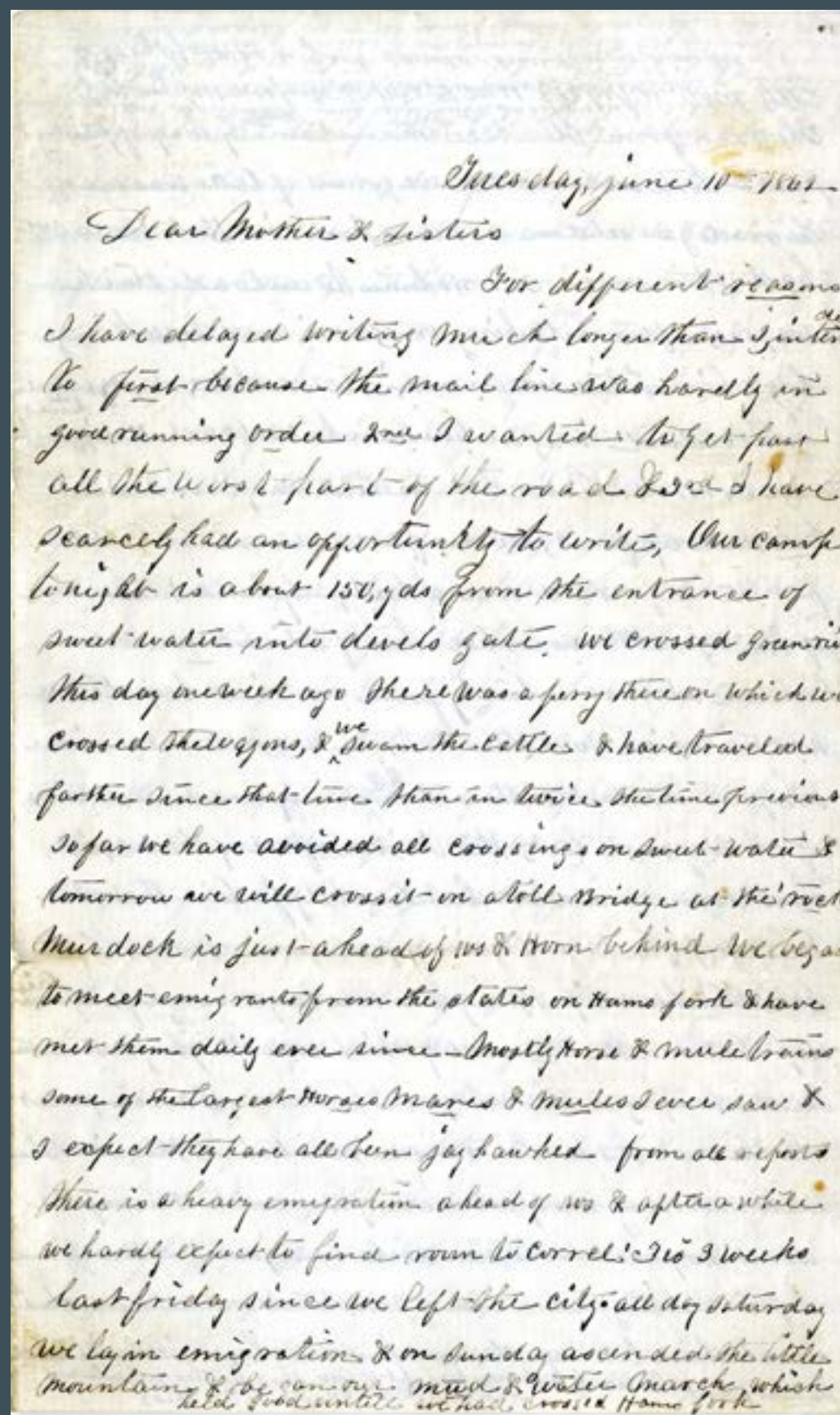


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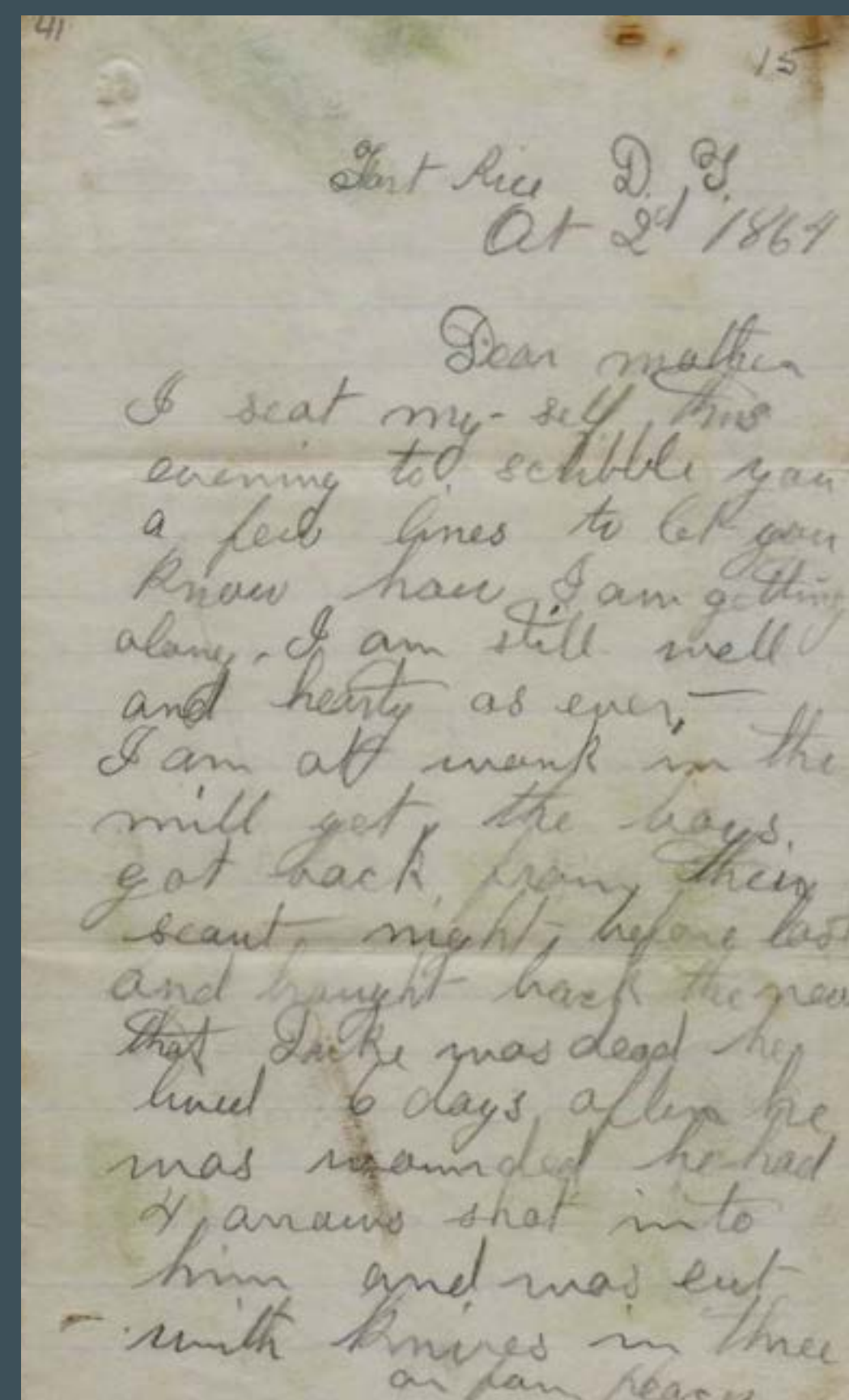
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William Alden to Mother, October 2, 1864. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02831.41)

Upcoming Programs

BOOK BREAKS:

- March 10 at 2 p.m. ET (11 a.m. PT) Dr. Brooke Barbier will discuss *King Hancock: The Radical Influence of a Moderate Founding Father*
- March 17 at 2 p.m. ET (11 a.m. PT) Dr. Sarah Keyes will discuss her book, *American Burial Ground: A New History of the Overland Trail*