

via New York

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G. H. Villard Esq  
H. M. Customs

W. Villard  
N.Y.

W. Villard Esq

England



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RF 4-10-2014  
5,000



I have not had time  
 to write you more  
 than a few lines  
 but I am enabled to  
 let you know of my  
 health and getting  
 along as well as I  
 expect. About a month  
 after writing my last  
 letter to you we were  
 ordered off on an expedition  
 against the Mojave  
 Indians on the Colorado  
 River. And after 300  
 miles travelling we  
 arrived in Fort  
 Yuma about 200 miles  
 from here and one of  
 the chief stations of  
 the California Overland  
 mail. We started from  
 Fort Yuma with 100  
 pack mules and were  
 in full marching  
 order with knapsack  
 on our backs and  
 all a soldier's accoutrements and this through  
 a country which the newspapers describe  
 as being much worse  
 than the burning  
 sands of Arabia. That  
 was exaggerated  
 however. The ground  
 was not so bad as  
 I have ever seen  
 though comprising  
 sand and rocks. The  
 Indians seeing



as the army is a queer place you would be  
surprised to see at laying down  
with war. Rifles loaded by our side ready  
to catch at the first alarm. These Indians  
however are very cowardly and but for  
armed they are principally upon a wild  
beaver that grows upon the trees and what  
which they manage to take. The weather  
here is very hot and disagreeable and  
intolerable. There is not much wood here  
but we have a first rate supply of water  
so that is something to think of you and know  
how different my thoughts were when I  
left home to what they are now. How much  
more I know of the good and bad of  
the world. How many things I have seen  
that I have read of in books that were  
believed before.

My paper will not allow me to say  
much more and as I cannot get another sheet  
of paper my life I must wind up saying that  
I will send you no good health and hope  
you this to W. Ireland as I cannot write too  
letters and give my best love to all my sisters  
Remember me also to all my friends  
and to you that would care to know of  
my welfare and believe me to remain  
your ever affectionate brother  
John W. Ireland  
Direct your letter to  
Company of  
So. Mojave  
Colorado River  
California  
I will now light my pipe and have a  
little meditation. It is Sunday and I have  
quite forgot your lessons for which  
I ever thank you so



# NEW MEXICO TERRITORY

## Fort Mohave

Fort Mohave, originally named Camp Colorado was established on April 19, 1859 by Lieutenant Colonel William Hoffman during the Mohave War. It was located on the east bank of the Colorado River, at Beale's Crossing by the recommendation of Lieutenant Edward Fitzgerald Beale. It was later renamed Fort Mohave nine days later by Captain Lewis A. Armistead.

The fort was established to protect emigrants to California traveling through the northern route in the New Mexico Territory on the Beale Wagon Road, and across the Mojave Desert on the old Mojave Road. It was also used as a base of operations against the warring Mohave Indian tribe.

Map of courier route to San Francisco



Soldiers Letter from Fort Mohave ~ July 31, 1859

Sent via New York to Folkstone, England carried by military courier to San Francisco arriving entering the mail on Sept. 5, 1859 as prepaid 59 cent rate, with Oct. 9, 1859 arrival postmark at Folkstone on obverse.

Walter Thomas member of Company F 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry writes to his mother about the very hot weather and life at the newly formed camp. The letter traveled many miles to reach San Francisco over a long and dangerous route in the southern desert and up the central valley of California.

*"I am writing this now on a bunch of willows so you must make all excuses for it and remember I have little convenience. We will soon have an express running so that I shall be enable to write you regularly and let you how know I am getting on. The Indians here have broken the treaty and captured 15 mules which they consider very good meat and eat them. I will now light my pipe and have a little meditation for it is Sunday and I have never forgot your lessons for which I ever thank you."*

*Your ever affectionate Son, Walter Thomas*



San Francisco, Sept. 5th, 1859.

Folkestone, Oct. 9th, 1859.

via New York.

G. H. Vlieland Esq., H. M. Customs, Folkestone, Kent, England.

Mrs. Vlieland.

Fort Mojave,

Colorado River,

California.

July 31st, 1859.

My dearest Mother,

No doubt you have been very anxious not having heard from me for 7 months but this is the first opportunity I have had to write you and it is only on account of a soldier being discharged and returning to San Francisco that I am enabled to let you know of my existence. I am happy to inform you that I am in good health and getting along as well as I could expect. About a month after writing my last letter to you we were ordered off ~~xxxx~~ on an expedition against the Mojave Indians on the Colorado River. Here and after 2 or 3 weeks steam boat travelling we arrived at Fort Juma about 200 miles from here and one of the chief stations of the California Overland Mail. We started from Fort Juma with pack mules and were in full marching order with knapsack on our backs and all a soldiers accoutrements and this through a country which the newspapers describe as being much worse than the burning Sands of Arabia, that was exaggerated however the ground is decidedly the worst I have ever seen though comprising Sand and rocks. The Indians seeing a large force of 500 or 600 men coming through their country and well armed with Rifles, concluded it was advisable to make peace and consequently a treaty was made much to the dissatisfaction of the command who had all along calculated on having a brush and receiving a land warrant over the affair but we had worse troubles in sight the provision was getting short and for 21 days we were put on half rations which rarely happens in this army. I am happy to inform you that although sometimes greatly fatigued I went through cheerfully and did my duty with a good will. We are now in shanties made of willows and have been living in them for the last 4 months and as I cannot say how long I shall stay you had better address your next letter here. I received one letter from you since arriving and am indeed glad to hear you are all so comfortable by the time you receive this I shall have 2 years of my time in so consequently in 3 more I shall be free and promise to come immediately to see you. The Indians here have broken the treaty and captured 15 mules which they consider very good meat and eat them. We are waiting for reinforcements when we will give them something better (a little lead). You may guess we are out of the world when there is not a single house nearer than 200 miles nothing but a desert country and a few patches of sandy soil on which we hope to raise a few melons and beans. The Post however costs too much to be kept up long and I believe in the course of a few months we will be ordered away again I do not care how soon although having once enlisted it suits me better to be out in the wilderness than to be in a city where the fact of my being a soldier might be prejudicial to my future interests. I am sorry you told Uncle anything about it. I would not have told you if I had expected that but what is done cant be helped and I care very little what construction my friends put upon my action as I must be guided by circumstances and my own common sence. I do not know that I have disgraced myself so much after all there are many respectable men in the Army who after leaving it enter into business for themselves and do well. Their friends do not look down upon them as long as they are doing well and when they are not they are better amongst strangers. You may depend as long as I could have got on amongst citizens I should never have enlisted, but as I have made my own bed I must lay upon it and I cannot say I regret it much, it has made a man of me. Before entering the Army I was afraid to fire a gun off, could not stand by a cannon, was not shot. Now I do not fear most things and will have more to tell you off when I return. I am writing this now on a bunch of willows so you must make all excuses for it and remember I have no convenience. We will soon have an express running



so that I shall be enabled to write you regularly and let you know how I am getting on but do not feel disappointed if I do not write for six months at a time as the Army is a queer place. You would be surprised no doubt to see us laying down with our Rifles loaded by our side ready to catch at the first alarm. The Indians however are very cowardly and but poorly armed. They live principally upon a wild bean that grows upon the trees and wheat which they manage to raise. The weather here is very hot and mosquitos are innumerable. There is not much wood here but we have a first rate supply of water so that is something. I often think of you and how different my thoughts were when I left home to what they are now how much more I know of the good and the bad in the world. How many things I have seen that I have read of in books but never believed before.

My paper will not allow me to say much more and as I cannot get another sheet to save my life I must wind up hoping that this will find you in good health and happiness. Show this to Mr. Vlieland as I cannot write two letters and give my best love to all my sisters. Remember me also to all my friends who you think would care to know of my welfare and believe me to remain,

Your ever affectionate Son,  
Walter Thomas.

Direct your letter to Company ?  
6th Infantry,  
Fort Mojave,  
Colorado River,  
California.

I will now light my pipe and have a little meditation for it is Sunday and I have never forgot your ? lessons for which I ever thank you.

Typed 30.8.70.



# Arizona Mail

## Fort Mojave Soldier's Letter



July 31st, 1859.

My dearest Mother,

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Your ever affectionate Son,

Walter Thomas.

Direct your letter to Company F

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