

TALES FROM THE TRAIL

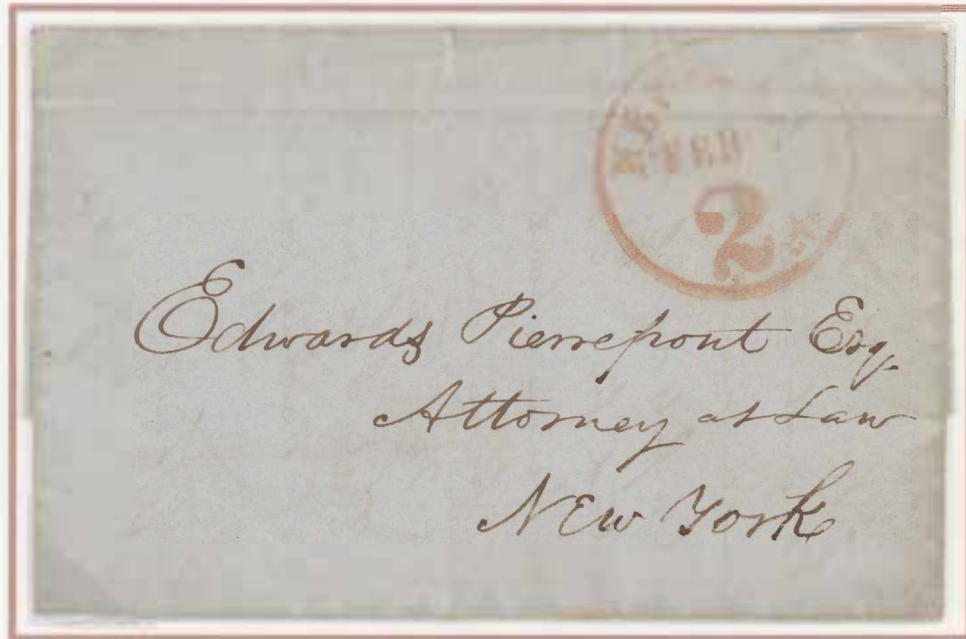
1846 ~ Mexican War ~1849

San Diego January 1, 1850

E Pierpont, Esq.

Dear Sir:

I wish you and Fayweather a happy new year but hope you have not wasted your sympathy by uttering any such wishing for me for they would be of not benefit to me who are sitting on the beach of this miserable place like a poor exile of ruin looking towards home & waiting for a steamer which I expect to continue for one month to come. Ten months since I left New York & am still seven hundred miles this side of "El Dorado". The overland journey has proved a "smashery". It smashed all our wagons and half our mules, but has annihilated nearly a whole year of my life.



Written at San Diego, California January 1, 1850

Postmarked at New York February 7th 1850 Carried privately with Paid 2 at New York

I wrote to you from Pecos, near Santa Fe, saying that I should probably work through to the Pacific & return by sea to New York and reach there next spring or summer. I then expected to return by the Horn, but so much time has since run out that I now intend to return, after going to San Francisco, by way of Panama & hope to be at home about the first of May.

But what has left me so long on the route? Don't ask me. "O Regina jubes, remorse doldrem" You will probably see in the newspapers many details of the route down the Gila & across the desert. Read the worst and think of me. But aside from the positive grief's of this journey there is one fact which I will mention for your benefit when you shall set forth to enjoy your wealth in traveling, that is, that traveling through an uninhabited territory is nonsense of the most tedious kind.

We reached here on the second day of December, we cannot go on by land at this season on account of the mud & we are therefore waiting for a steamer. One has already been here but would not take us, being full & another is not expected under a month then may have us as the other did; said report rarely come here & thus you will see we are in a bad fix.

Very truly yours

E. Norton

A letter from a "Gold Seeker" who traveled the dangerous southern route via the Gila River.

San Diego January 1, 1850

E Pierpont, Esq.

Dear Sir:

I wish you & Fayeweather a happy new year but hope you have not wasted your sympathy by uttering any such wishing for me for they would be of not benefit to me who are sitting on the beach of this miserable place like a poor exile of ruin looking towards home & waiting for a steamer, an occupation in which I have been industriously engaged since the second day of last month & which I expect to continue for one month to come.

Ten months since I left New York & am still seven hundred miles this side of "El Dorado". The overland journey has proved a "smashery". It has not only smashed all our wagons & more than half our mules, but has annihilated nearly a whole year of my life.

I wrote to you from Pecos, near Santa Fe, saying that I should probably work through to the Pacific & return by sea to New York and reach there next spring or summer. I then expected to return by the Horn, but so much time has since run out that I now intend to return, after going to San Francisco, by way of Panama & hope to be at home about the first of May. Although I am yet far enough from San Francisco & the mines, I am yet near enough to see through the ---?--- glare which enveloped them when seen from the distance of New York. I have seen many persons on their way back who all utter the same howl the brethren of which is that San Francisco is the last place but one to which any "human" should go and that one is the mines, the next place beyond.

But what has left me so long on the route? Don't ask me. "O Regina jubes, remorse doldrem" You will probably see in the newspapers many details of the route down the Gila & across the desert. Read the worst and think of me. But aside from the positive griefs of this journey there is one fact which I will mention for you benefit when you shall set forth to enjoy your wealth in traveling, that is, that traveling through an uninhabited territory is nonsense of the most tedious kind. Natural scenery, bountiful fansies, towering mountains, trackless forests, rushing torrents; all that I have seen of this would not even pay a man for one days suffocation footing it through the sands of the Gila. Ten minutes survey of a prairie or a range of mountains paints on your memory a resemblance to all similar scenes & every succeeding hour day & month only presents you a repetition of the preceding without enough of interest to withdraw your half opened eyes from the tail of the mule behind which you are trudging. No, travel over regions that have been signalized by events if you wish to keep awake, and where you can realize the difference between yourself and other brutes by keeping up an intercourse with others of your species. For weeks & month we would have been glad of an encounter with the Comanches or Apaches as a relief to the solitude of our journey. "Mean is a social animal"

We reached here on the second day of December, we cannot go on by land at this season on account of the mud & we are therefore waiting for a steamer. One has already been here but would not take us, being full & another is not expected under a month then may have us as the other did; said report rarely come here & thus you will see we are in a bad fix. I suppose you have written to me & have been expecting an answer & I have written from here to explain myself. And my respect to Mrs. Fayeweather & tell Havens if he is still with you that I do not think he has any cause to lament not having joined the "great emigration".

Very truly yours

E. Norton