

**A Collection of Letters**  
**Written By**  
**Sophia Huldah *Buckman* Seely**  
**From the Oregon Territory**  
**To her Family in Illinois**  
**1852 - 1860**  
**And a Letter Written by**  
**Calvin Franklin Buckman to his Family**  
**1858**

**With Transcription, Forward and Endnotes**

**By**  
**Fred Hinke**



### **Revision History**

June 1, 2015	Initial Distribution
June 24, 2015	Revision 1

### **Revision Notes**

June 24, 2015: Added endnotes and photographs provided by Carole M. Hayden.





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## Foreword

The first seven of these letters were written by Sophia Huldah *Buckman* Seely between 1852 and 1860 to her family in Illinois and, within my wife's family, have been referred to as "The Oregon Trail Letters" though they were all written after Sophia and her family had arrived in Oregon in September 1851. The letters provide an interesting insight into those matters which were important to Sophia. The feelings she expresses, her concerns, and her comments about her family, schooling and the economy are matters which are timeless. The last letter was written by Sophia's brother Calvin to their father. I include it in this collection in part because it has been kept with "The Oregon Trail Letters", though Calvin wrote his letter from Illinois, and because Calvin mentions Sophia in his letter.

Each letter, including Calvin's, is written on a single sheet of paper which unfolded measures about 9-3/4" high x 15-1/2" wide. For writing, the paper was folded to 9-3/4" high x 7-3/4" wide. The left hand edge of the first page of each letter is actually the fold of the paper. Several of the letters have an embossing in the upper left corner of the 1st page. Keep in mind that the embossing is not really at the edge of the sheet but immediately next to the fold of the page. The embossing do not appear to be all the same and are difficult to make out in the original though one of them does have the word 'London' reasonably clear in the embossing.

I have presented each transcribed page opposite the original and I have tried to keep the transcribed text in line with the original. (If you are reading this as a Word document, in Word 2007 or later, on the 'View' tab, click 'Two Pages'. The Adobe .pdf version of this document is suitable for a printed copy.) For that reason, I have added notes to the text as endnotes<sup>1</sup>. If you hover over the endnote [1] with the cursor, the endnote text will be displayed. Many of the endnotes, hopefully accurately, identify some of the individuals who Sophia mentions in her letters. Thank goodness the writing style of the day was such that she invariably included the last name of each individual. I have relied on the Early Oregonian Search web site:

(<https://secure.sos.state.or.us/prs/personProfileSearch.do?searchReset=true>)

provided by the Oregon Secretary of State to identify many of these individuals and their relationship to Sophia and her family. I would greatly appreciate an email from anyone who can identify other individuals, can provide corrections or additions to my endnotes or transcriptions for which I will cheerfully give you credit. Send your email to [fredhinke@gmail.com](mailto:fredhinke@gmail.com) with a subject line of 'Sophia Huldah Buckman Seely letters' or something similar. Please reference the date of Sophia's letter in your email. I live in a relatively rural area of Loudoun County, VA with limited Internet services. Please do not email me the entire document with your edits embedded.

Sophia was either an excellent speller or a devoted user of a dictionary; I suspect the former. Sophia's brother Calvin, whose one letter is the last in this collection, was the one who needed to use the dictionary. The number of misspellings picked up by Word, with a couple of simple exceptions, seems astonishingly small. The exceptions - Sophia consistently spells 'today' and 'birthday' as two separate words; perhaps consistent with the conventions of the day. In the transcription I have retained her and Calvin's spelling and punctuation as well as cross outs and underlines and I have forced Word to ignore spelling and punctuation errors. For the text that I have been unable to read, I have substituted [????].

A special 'Thank You' to Cameron Blevins, a Ph.D. candidate at Stanford University. (<http://www.cameronblevins.org/>). His dissertation tells a spatial history of how the U.S. Post

shaped the development and geography of the nineteenth-century American West. He very kindly responded to my 'out of the blue' posting to his website with the following insight. While it is impossible to say with any certainty from where the letters were mailed and how they travelled to Illinois, the letters probably traveled from Oregon by steamer to California and then overland by any number of different routes depending on what year a particular letter was mailed. See: <https://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/overland-mail.htm>.

Also, see: <http://cameronblevins.org/gotp/> for a map depicting the opening and closing of post offices in the western United States. Zooming in on Oregon and the time frame of 1850 – 1860 shows that most of the post offices in the then Oregon Territory are in the present day Interstate I5 corridor. The post office in Oregon City opened in 1847.

A very special "Thank You" to Carole M. Hayden. She has spent several years researching the Seely and related families and has self published a book "Our Heritage: Seely, Arnsperger and Bell". Sophia and Lucius' oldest child, Jira Joseph Seely, is her great great grandfather. She read the initial distribution of this collection, deciphered several words which I was unable to decipher and provided material for several additional endnotes, including several pictures which I have so annotated. She has also served as my editor. Thank You, Carole.

The fact that these letters have been preserved is pleasantly surprising, though they were certainly family treasures then, and still are. However, a reasonable question one might ask is how did I, more accurately, my wife, Nancy, end up with these letters - particularly since my wife's maiden name is 'Terwilliger'. The short, honest answer is "I don't know". That said, I offer this theory based on the genealogy that I think is at least reasonably accurate:

Joel Buckman, Sophia Huldah *Buckman* Seely's father, is my wife's Great Great Grandfather. Sophia's Mother, Huldah *Lillie* Buckman died when Sophia was not quite 4 years old; Joel's second wife, Hannah *Bowker* Buckman, died in 1838 when Sophia was about 14 years old, so the 'Mother' that Sophia refers to in her letters is actually her 2<sup>nd</sup> Stepmother and my wife's Great Great Grandmother, Sally (or Sarah) *Watts* Buckman. Joel and Sally had 1 child, Benjamin Buckman, my wife's Great Grandfather, who was about 10 years old when his 'big sister' Sophia moved to Oregon. (Sophia mentions 'Bene' several times in her letters.) From the 1870 census for Cartwright Township, Sangamon, Illinois, Benjamin is the only Buckman child still living with his parents, who presumably still have the letters in their home. In 1880, after Benjamin's father has died, Benjamin's mother, Sally, is living with Benjamin who is now noted as 'head of household' in the census. Sally presumably kept the letters she received from Sophia when she moved in with her son Benjamin (or perhaps Benjamin just continued to live in the house where he was born). Benjamin had several children, the youngest, Pearl Juno *Buckman* Terwilliger is my wife's Paternal Grandmother. She presumably inherited the letters and passed them on to her oldest son Earl Buckman Terwilliger, my wife's father.

Finally, readers, PLEASE share these letters with your friends and family and, where appropriate, include them in your family genealogy library. There are many other letters, journals and travel logs from other individuals and families who made that long perilous journey to Oregon and other places in the west, but each story is unique and there is a tiny bit of American history recorded here that can be found nowhere else.

Fred Hinke  
Leesburg, Virginia



**Sophia Huldah *Buckman* Seely**  
**Photograph provided by Carole M. Hayden**  
**Date Unknown**



**Lucius Alexander Seely and Sophia Huldah *Buckman* Seely**  
**Photograph provided by Carole M. Hayden**

While the date of this photograph is unknown, Thwaites was in business at 167 and 169 First Street in Portland, Oregon from 1885 to 1903.

Lucius Alexander Seely was born in Madrid, St. Lawrence County, New York on August 10, 1820. Sophia Huldah Buckman was born in a neighboring town, Potsdam, St. Lawrence County, New York, on February 16, 1824. They were married October 16, 1842 in Sangamon County, Illinois at the home of Sophia's father, Joel Buckman. Lucius died on November 5, 1896 in Clackamas County, Oregon. Sophia died on November 11, 1900 in Clackamas County, Oregon. They are buried together in Pleasant View Cemetery, Sherwood, Clackamas County, Oregon.



Bakers Prairie, Febuary 16, 1852<sup>i</sup>

This day my dear parents brings my twenty eighth birth day and where am I ? not with you most certainly, one year ago to day and I was under the parental roof<sup>ii</sup>, with all my little ones but to day I am in Oregon far from those dear friends that I love so well, but I must not complain it was my choice to come here with my husband rather than be left.

To day Lucius and Joseph<sup>iii</sup> are gone to help bury a young man that died in our neighborhood last night, he had been to California and lost his health, and been in the decline about a year, but his labours are ended and he is at rest. For the last ten days I have had Mr. Alexander and son here, they are fitting up a house on the claim that Joseph held, joining ours. They have bought it and are going to be near neighbors to us.

Last Saturday Waters Carmon<sup>iv</sup> was up to see us, he is well and the talk is that he is doing well, he said to us that he some expected that his Father would come to Oregon in the spring and bring all of his children. I do not think he ever intends returning. We received a very welcome letter from Mr. Brown<sup>v</sup> about two weeks since, he stated that you had been sick, and that Frank<sup>vi</sup> and family were down at the time he wrote, Oh how I wish it was I, but that wish can never be gratified. Father, I wish you could be set here without undergoing that long journey, I think you would like the country much, it is very mild and pleasant here much more so than I expected. Were you here I think you



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Last Saturday Waters Harmon was up to see us, he is well and the talk is that he is doing well, he said to us that he some expected that his Father would come to Oregon in the spring and bring all of his children. I do not think he ever intends returning. We received a very welcome letter from Mr. Brown about two weeks since, he stated that you had been sick, and that Frank and family were down at the time he wrote, Oh how I wish it was I, but <sup>that</sup> wish can never be gratified. Father I wish you could be set here without undergoing that long journey, I think you would like the country much, it is very mild and pleasant here much more so than I expected. Were you here I think you

would say that we had the handsomest place you ever saw it is a small prairie, surrounded by tall timber, which is ever green. Our house is situated on the banks of the Molalla river which divides our timber from the prairie it is a small swift running stream. We are eight miles above Oregon City, and about two miles from the Willamette river. The soil here is sandy therefore we have no mud, as for the productions of the place as far as self knowledge goes, we have yet to test it, but I never saw better vegetables raised than we have here, they bear a good price owing I suppose to the mines<sup>vii</sup> mostly. Potatoes are from fifty cents to one dollar a bushel, and onions from four to five flour five dollars a hundred, butter fifty cents a pound, chickens one dollar a piece, eggs from fifty to seventy cents a dozen. It takes about all an emigrant can make to buy his provisions for the first year, but Lucius keeps in good spirits, he says to tell Father he will come out above board yet, he has got him a cabin put up and cut and split the rails, and fenced one hundred and fifty acres of his prairie, and if he has gained nothing more, that he does not have to haul his rails and wood seven or eight miles, as our timber is joining our prairie<sup>viii</sup>. But let me tell you all this is bought at a dear price, we have to come a long way to get it, and xxxxxxx moreover we have to go without society as you might say, and be separated far from our dear friends we have had a school house erected and anticipate having a school this summer, good teachers are as yet rather scarce.

Say to Harris Lyman if you please, that his boy is in Oregon, about seventy miles above us, with a family by the name of Willcox that he was bound out to him by his

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Say to Harris Lyman if you please, that his boy is in Oregon, about seventy miles above us, with a family by the name of Wilcox that he was bound out to him by his

Father-in-law after the death of his wife, we passed her grave at the soda springs<sup>ix</sup>. Mr. Marsh was killed in the massacre where Dr Witman and family were killed. Mary Marsh is living in Oregon City<sup>x</sup>. There is not one Indian where I supposed there was twenty, I have not seen but one since I came here, I do not think they will be here long as the Territory is getting filled with whites.<sup>xi</sup>

I meant to have filled out my letter, but want of time is my only plea, give our love to all our friends there. We are all well, little Frank<sup>xii</sup> with the rest, I wish Grand-pa could see the little fellow, he is a fine boy. Good night. Do write to us, we want to hear from you all.

Sophia H. Seely.

To Father and Mother Buckman.

Father in law after the death of his wife, we passed her grave at the soda springs. Mr. Marsh was killed in the massacre where Dr. Witman and family were killed. Mary Marsh is living in Oregon City. There is not one Indian where I supposed there was twenty, I have not seen but one since I came here, I do not think they will be here long as the Territory is getting filled with whites.

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Sophia H. Seely.

To Father and Mother Buckman.



Bakers Prairie. Oct 27<sup>th</sup>. 1852.

My ever dear Parents

Shall I say that I am ashamed that I have been so long silent, Truly I am but I have not seen the time to write before, and it is now late but as I have an opportunity to send a letter to the office, I will improve the time. We are all well and there is not much of anything new to write; we expect our school to commence Monday morning<sup>xiii</sup>, we had been very much afraid that we should not get one this winter, the gentleman that is going to teach is an emigrant, and has been working here during the last week, so that we are a little acquainted with him he appears to be a very nice, steady, pious young man, of the Methodist denomination. Since I last wrote to you Waters has been here with his new bride; he was married the twelfth of September<sup>xiv</sup>, she appears to be a fine woman, she also belongs to the Methodist. W<sup>xv</sup> appears to be very anxious to have his children here I think perhaps not more so than those that have the care of them there. Lucius has got his fall wheat in, and has been breaking more prairie, he designs breaking about thirty acres, he is now hauling rails as he has hands splitting them, I was very glad that he hired, for it is hard labourious work, and he is very thin in flesh, but still is hearty, it makes me hard work for my own family is large enough but with good luck, they will be done in ten days.

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The emigrants are about all through now<sup>xvi</sup>, but such a state of sickness and suffering I never heard before, the cholera has been among them and swept them off by the hundreds. I heard it estimated that from the Missouri river to Fort Larimy there was a grave every half mile; while those that were permitted to come on, many of them their teams give out by reason of the grass being burnt off, I heard one lady say that they had been obliged to go six miles from the road in order to find a little grass for their cattle<sup>xvii</sup>. I tell you Father they see a cruel hard time this year; I am truly glad that I persevered and we came through last year, you know that two or three weeks before we started L<sup>xviii</sup> gave up the idea of going to Oregon until another year, well had it not been for my persuasions he would have staid there, and come this year, It did seem to me if I had to come then was the time, moreover every thing is more than double the price that emigrants have to buy, to live upon, flour is now twelve dollars a hundred, and potatoes three dollars a bushel, and so on, now as far as eatables are concerned, we have them from our own raising, with a little to turn off. I sent twelve pounds of butter to the City<sup>xix</sup> a few days ago, for which I received nine dollars in cash, I can get one dollar a bushel for turnips, and all the expense of raising was to scatter the seed upon the ground, we have raised from fifty to seventy chickens, from three hens (for that was all we could get in the spring) for which we could get one dollar a piece at our door. All that it wants in Oregon to get a good living, is to be industrious. Yet a person can get a living almost any where if they will be industrious, and use economy, if they have their health, and I verily believe that Oregon can boast of a climate as healthy as any in the world. The weather is always mild, the winters are warm, and although



The emigrants are about all through now, but such a state of sickness and suffering I never heard before, the cholera has been among them and swept them off by hundreds. I heard it estimated that from the Missouri river to Fort Laramie there was a grave every half mile; while those that were permitted to come on, many of them their teams give out by reason of the grass being burnt off, I heard one lady say that they had been obliged to go six miles from the road in order to find a little grass for their cattle. I tell you further they see a cruel hard time this year; I am truly glad that I persevered and we come through last year, you know that two or three weeks before we started I gave up the idea of going to Oregon untill another year, well had it not been for my persuasions he would have staid there, and come this year, it did seem to me if I had to come then was the time, moreover every thing is more than double the price that emigrants have to buy, to live upon, flour is now twelve dollars a hundred, and Potatoes three dollars a bushel, and so on, now as far as eatables are concerned we have them from our own raising, with a little to turn off, I sent twelve pounds of butter to the city a few days ago, for which I received nine dollars in cash, I can get one dollar a bushel for Turneps, and all the expence of raising was to scatter the seed upon the ground, we have raised from fifty to seventy chickens, from three hens (for that was all we could get in the spring) for which we could get one dollar a piece at our door. All that it wants in Oregon to get a good living, is to be industrious. Yet a person can get a living almost any where if they will be industrious, and use economy, if they have their health, and I verily believe that Oregon can boast of a climate as healthy as any in the world. The weather is always mild, the winters are warm, and although

a great deal of rain falls through the winter, yet the rain is so warm and gentle, that it does not seem half so disagreeable as I had anticipated. But Oh the loss of friends we deeply regret. It seems as if our gains were small, when we are so far removed from that sweet society we once enjoyed. Could I have one distant thought that your faces I should ever behold again, it would not seem so hard, but the vast distance that lies between forever forbids. Oh may he who watches over all, grant that we may meet where parting is no more. November 15<sup>th</sup> 1852.

As I lost my opportunity of sending my letter, I will add a few more lines, I had thought to have finished it on your birth day<sup>xx</sup>, never the less my thoughts were with you. In sister Browns letter she stated that she anticipated a visit from Father; would that I could say so too. Mr Carman and wife have gone to keeping house by themselves, she made him promise before they were married that he would keep no hands, they live close to Mr. Durham's<sup>xxi</sup>. I suppose you would like to know who she looks like, she is about as tall as mother, dark complected, blue eyes, and dark hair, so you see that she does not resemble Sister Waters seems to think her the pink of perfection; during the summer she lived at Mr Durham's as one of the family for which she received twenty-five dollars a month. She had forty dollars a month offered her if she would go out nursing, but she did not like the idea of being a servant. She seems quite a lady in appearance, and is not afraid of work. I truly hope that she is just the wife he kneeds. Now if he can find any one who is willing to bring his children out here, he says he will pay them well for their trouble; I should like to hear the particulars all about the children, who they are with and how they are getting along, I want you to write and tell me all about your crops, how many cows you milk, and all about home

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how many apples you have, and wish I could eat one with you for I have not tasted one since I have been in Oregon, tell me how many hogs you have to turn off, and in short everything about the home of my youth, that I may peep in and see how you are getting along, Tell Bene<sup>xxii</sup> that I am waiting for that letter from him, Tell Silas<sup>xxiii</sup> I think he might spend one hour in writing to Sophia, Lucius says he is going to write a long letter to Father Buckman, Give our love to all the friends and keep a share for yourselves. Your daughter

, Sophia H. Seely

Nov 19<sup>th</sup> My dear parents. My letter is still here and I begin to think when will you get it? but as opportunity offers I will write on, you know our second Mother<sup>xxiv</sup> used to say, frequent dates showed that we were often thought of. I do not mean that so long a time shall pass again without my writing a few lines at least. Lucius has been digging his potatoes, and has got one hundred bushels to sell, he says that off from about three acres he has raised five hundred dollars worth of produce, we keep one hundred bushels of potatoes for our own use, We have heard from Waters and wife to day, they are well, I hope you will not do as you have been been done by, but write soon, excuse this hasty scrawl, and I remain

Your daughter, Sophia H. Seely



how many apples you have, and wish I could eat one with you  
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1952

Bakers Prairie. Nov 27th, 1852.

My ever dear Brother,

Five months yesterday since your very kind letter came to hand, and yet I have not answered it. At that time Lucius he would write and I thought I would wait until another time. I was glad, very glad indeed to get a letter from you, We received one from Father at the same time, I answered his right away, and have written to him once since. I have sent one to Frank, and two to sister Brown, but although you are last in the list of letters, yet dear brother you are not least in my thoughts, but I suppose you would hear from me by the others and that would answer in the place of a letter, I ought to write to Father much oftener but it seems as if time would not permit.

I am rejoiced to hear that you are doing well, and enjoying good health. Be not weary dear brother in well doing, but strive to inculcate great and lasting truths in the minds of those under your charge<sup>xxv</sup>. It is a great thing to have little ones looking up unto us for guidance and direction, I trust you may feel the importance

We are all well, and Joseph also. Joseph worked about three months for Mr. Durham last summer for which he receive sixty-five a month; but wages are not so high now on account of the vast number of emigrants. Lucius has been hiring now for seven weeks, some of the time paying a dollar a day, and the rest a dollar and a quarter, but school wages as yet keep up. Bayburn and Bob Walker are getting fifty dollars a month this winter

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Five months yesterday since your very kind letter came to hand, and yet I have not answered it. At that time Lucius he would write and so I thought I would wait untill another time. I was glad, very glad indeed to get a letter from you, We received one from Father at the same time, I answered his right away, and have written to him once since. I have <sup>sent</sup> one to Frank, and two to sister Brown, but although you are last in the list of letters, yet dear brother you are not least in my thoughts, but I supposed you would hear from me by the others and that would answer in the place of a letter, I ought to write to Father much oftener but it seems as if time would not permit.

I am rejoiced to hear that you are doing well, and enjoying good health. Be not weary dear brother in well doing, but strive to incubate great and lasting truths in the minds of those under your charge. It is a great thing to have little ones looking up unto us for guidance and direction, I trust you may feel the importance

We are all well, and Joseph also. Joseph worked about three months for Mr. Durham last summer for which he received sixty-five a month; but wages are not so high now on account of the vast number of emigrants. Lucius has been hiring now for seven weeks, some of the time paying a dollar a day, and the rest a dollar and a quarter, but school wages as yet keep up. Brazburn and Bob Walker are getting fifty dollars a month this winter

They were both here not long since on the way to their schools. I suppose you knew them both, as they went to school on the prairie at the same time and boarded at Stephen Child's Dec 5<sup>th</sup>. Last summer here was very pleasant, and the fall warm with gentle rains, we have had no cold weather yet. Sometime last summer George Ferry went to the mines he staid with us over night as he was on his way, we have heard from him once he was well, but not doing much. D Kitson is also there, and [??] Roberson; likewise John Taylor. H Slates<sup>xxvi</sup> is teaching school at fifty a month. James Morgan has bought him two town lots in Salem; about thirty miles above here, and is doing well. A Watts is improving his claim, he has put in twenty five acres of wheat this fall. R. Alexander that bought Joseph's claim has sold it again and moved to the Umqua Valley; Mrs Alexander is very low with consumption, I found her to be a very nice woman.

Waters<sup>xxvii</sup> is married and if I had not given a description of her in several of my letters I would now, but suffice it to say that they both seems suited, therefore we should be. We have a school now, and Jira says he shall soon be able to write a letter to some of you. We have just received a letter from Mother Seely and said that Mr Brown was very sick, I shall be very anxious to hear from him again. Lucius is now hauling wheat to town, wheat is four dollars a bushel every thing is now very high. Lucius has now sold his oxen and is to deliver them up on saturday, he had four yoke to sell for which he ~~gets~~ receives one hundred and fifty dollars a yoke; he had four hundred and fifty paid down and gets the rest saturday. The next thing is to get some horses, for those that came in this year, he can get for one hundred



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but those that have been here and [?????] up, he  
would have to give from one fifty, to three hundred,  
Lucius is going to start to find horses next week. Lucius  
says tell Silas when he wants to hear all about Oregon again  
Just write to him. I tell you Sile I think it was to bad for  
him to write you such a letter, but the fact is he does not  
want to encourage any one to come to Oregon, not that he does  
not like Oregon, but he wants them to come on their own  
say so. And I certainly hope you will never come unless you  
can come with some of your own folks; for it is a long  
journey and you are in a measure helpless and want some  
one that cares for you, so that in sickness you may be  
taken care of. I would like indeed to have you here you  
may be sure, and all the rest, for I feel as though I  
were alone; but I have my own dear family you know  
with me, and you are with those that love you and care  
for you, Therefore try and be content until you see the  
way open before you. I must close by committing you  
to the care of our Almighty Father who careth for us  
all. Silas write often and make glad the heart of your  
dear Sister. We all join in love to you, give my love  
to Father and Mother and Bene. Tell Frank if you see  
him that I am still in Oregon. Excuse this hasty scrawl  
and my great ink blot, for it was a mistake.

Your Sister Sophia H Seely.

Silas L. Buckman.

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Your sister Sophia H. Seely.

Silas L. Buckman.

1852

This one came to ~~the~~ Uncle  
Silas. Keep ones you want  
send me a few back. Its  
all I have. Non [?] Aunt Sophia  
married a Seely + lived in Oregon



1852

This one came ~~for~~ under  
Lilas. Help ones you want  
send me a few shuck, etc.  
all I have. Now can't before  
married a belly & tick in an

Baker's Prairie Feb 15<sup>th</sup> 1857

Ever remembered

Well Father I have a mind to go home; - but no it is the Sabbath: and oft I have been taught ---- yes often that to visit on the Sabbath was wrong, well I believe I never have; but at least I may let my thoughts go a little while. Lucius is sitting beside the table reading in the Tribune, he has poured the Independent over, the Messenger and Argus, and winds up with the Tribune, the little ones are all in bed, and we are all well. And Father next I must tell you, it has been so long since you have visited me that I feel almost wronged it is now more than a year since I have had the scratch of a pen from any of my folks, and I do think that Bene and Silas might write often; Of my own neglect I need say nothing, for it shows for itself To tell of good resolutions, and good intentions and so on, when they are all broken, does not make out much.

On the fourth of March last, the birth day of our youngest boy) Lucius wrote home to Father B ---- intending the letter in place of the one that I should have written on my birth-day, but enough; I hope you will not lay it up against me. We have had an unusual bad winter, I do not think we have had six pleasant days since the rains set in: There was quite a snow-storm set in with the new year, and pretty cold weather too, the snow lay on the ground two weeks. Good Night. I will come again.



Bakers Prairie Feb 15<sup>th</sup> 1857

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Feb 17<sup>th</sup>. It is night dear parents and the little ones are again asleep, all but Harriet<sup>xxviii</sup> she is sewing her calicoes. Lucius is gone tonight and I am quite lonesome. I wonder what has become of Sister Brown it is two years this spring since I have had a letter from her, I anxiously look every mail to hear from you, --- but no tidings come, my first inquiry when Lucius comes home from the City is have you any letters? and the answer “-----” Oh shocking; it is invariably NO.

But to turn the subject a little, Lucius and myself went down to Oregon City last fall, I think October and united with the Congregational Church: You, like those with whom we united; may think we done wrong; not because we wanted to belong somewhere, but because we never had been dismissed from the church where we first belonged. I told them we came away never expecting to return, and that it was forgetfulness on our part that we had not applied for a letter of dismisson<sup>xxix</sup>. Now Father I suppose a letter is not necessary, but our names dropped . I still would have applied for a letter, but the rules of the church are such they will admit no one by letter that has been absent so long, I suppose they are the same there; The winter has been so rainy and bad that I have not been out to meeting once. Father I crave such privileges more than I once did, I feel that the soul is hungry and needs to be fed. Mr. Atkinson<sup>xxx</sup> is an able preacher, and an excellent good man. Mr A and wife have been out to see us three times, and twice have spent the night with us. Mr A with some brother minister have often called and spent an hour, ever having a season of prayer; but I would that those sesons were oftener



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prayer; but I would that those seasons were oftener

Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>. We have no school this winter, consequently the children are all at home; our youngest which we call Judson will be a year old next month, he is running all over the house, we think him a wonderful boy. Jira<sup>xxx</sup>i says, Ma you must tell Bene to go and see Hannah Brazier for me: and George<sup>xxx</sup>ii says tell him he must be a good boy and mind his Mother, so much for children

Joseph is going to school this winter, he has a young man boarding with him, I suppose it looks strange to you to think of Joseph baching it <sup>xxx</sup>iii and keeping a xxxxxxxxx boarder, and both going to school?

Produce of all kinds is very low, lows from 30 to 40 and some 50 dollars, horses from 100-50 to 200, money very scarce, and times dul --- I must tell you we had apples to eat from our own trees<sup>xxx</sup>iv.

I had thought to write more, but have not time I wish Father you would come and make us a visit, I think you might, the time is nothing and the expense not much, to come by water: and dearly would I love to see you Tell Benne to write to Sister if I never answer it will help him to compose, and then I can hear from Home. ----- By the by I think Benne<sup>xxx</sup>v is improving quite fast. We all join in much love to you all, Good night  
Your daughter Sophia.

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Produce of all kinds is very low, cows from 30 to 40 and some 50 dollars, horses from 100-50 to 200, money very scarce, and times dull — I must tell you we had apples to eat from our own trees.

I had thought to write more, but have not time. I wish Father you would come and make us a visit, I think you might, the time is nothing and the expense not much, to come by water: and dearly should I love to see you. Tell Benne to write to sister if I never answer it will help him to compose, and then I can hear from Home. — By the by I think Benne is improving quite "fast". We all join in much love to you all, Good night.  
Your daughter Sophia.

Oregon City January 1858.

Brother Silas

Need I write a whole page of reasons why? or need I but to say I am sorry that I cannot find more time to converse with those I love? I received your very wellcome letter written during your spring vacation; and have received two from Benny since. In your letters you speak of good health, and of being able to take care of yourself; certainly dear brother I am glad to hear of your prosperity here, and your hopes for a brighter world, where parting is known no more.

Indeed dear brother what doth it matter if we meet not again here on Earth ----- I know it is pleasant to see the face of a friend, and to enjoy sweet converse; --- ---- But Oh if we may but be permitted to meet above, and sing the songs of the redeemed ----- it is enough, enough.

Often have I looked back upon that last morning spent there; when for the last time my eyes rested on those faces; some of them I knew I never should behold again in the flesh: It was a hard time for Sophy who with her little family were coming to this far-off Oregon, where instead of brothers and sisters, Father and Mother, we should find the Red man; and by the by I thought much more of our red brethren before I saw them, than I ever have since. They are not the noble race here, that they have been pictured out to be.

Oregon City January 1858.

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Need I write a whole page of reasons why? or need I but to say I am sorry that I cannot find more time to converse with those I love? I received your very welcome letter written during your spring vacation; and have received two from Benny since. In your letters you speak of good health, and of being able to take care of your-self; certainly dear brother I am glad to hear of your prosperity here, and your hopes for that brighter world, where parting is known no more. " " " "

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The winter has been very mild here, much like the first one we spent in Oregon, it snowed the most of two days and one night, but melted most as fast as it fell. It rains often, but is quite warm. There have been but few mornings that ice has been found.

Times are extremely close here, or I might say hard we think we do very well to live and let live. The New – year found us square with the world, and we are very glad of it, for those that are behind now, find it very hard to pull up. We do not have any very great overplus These times, but on the contrary pretty close [????]. But It is but little we want, and that little not long, --- ---- and certain it is that we can carry nothing away; therefore it is best to be content and do all the good we can.

We are all well, but Lucius has been suffering a good-deal with the tooth-ache lately. Our children are going to school, that is five of them. Jira is studying book-keeping this winter together with reading, writing Arithmetic and geography. Jira and George think they will write to Uncle Silas before long. We intend to have Hatty<sup>xxxvi</sup> learn to write next quarter.

The place where we now live is in a mile and a half or two of Oregon City. It is quite a pretty place, but we begin to want to go on to a farm again.

I believe I have never told you the great news That brother Joseph has taken to himself a wife. Well it is true although strange. I have never seen her but Lucius and the boys have, they say she is a very good looking girl. She was eighteen the day they were married.

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We are all well, but Lucius has been suffering a good-deal with the Tooth-ache lately. Our children are going to school, that is fine of them. Fina is studying book-keeping this winter together with reading, writing Arithmetic and Geography. Fina and George think they will write to Uncle Silas before long. We intend to have Hatty <sup>earn</sup> write next quarter.

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My writing is so near scribbling that you can hardly read it. I wish Silas that you would write oftener to Sophy. We do not hardly get any letters these days. I have not had one from Lorenda or Frank for two years; or from Father either. I know that I am very deficient, but you must remember that there is more of you there to write. I have just written to Sister Brown. W Carmen and family were with us New-years day. They are well. Silas Broadwell has visited us twice this winter. Mr Durham was here not long since. They are well. My news has run out, Good by for this time.

January 27 As the children were all in bed and asleep when I finished

my letter they wanted me to write a few more lines and put their love in. Well Silas you may always know that you have our love Lucius joins with me in love to you and all our enquiring friends. Lucius is gone to W Carmans to night. Jira is is taller than his ma, and George is not far behind. Hattie is tall and a very sprightly girl, her every movement is like her Pa. Bem is a fair boy and is tall as Hattie. Frank looks like George. Bishop looks like his Uncle Bishop and full of mischief. Judson is the flower of the flock, and looks like his Pa. So much for the children. Now Silas I expect you would know Lucius and Sophy if you were to see them. Lucius lets his beard grow all over his face, but that is nothing new for Oregon.

Write do write Your Sister Sophia. good bye.



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January 27 As the children were all in bed and asleep when I finished my letter, they wanted me to write a few more lines and put their love in. Well Silas you may always know that you have our love. Lucius joins with me in love to you and all our enquiring friends. Lucius is gone to W. Carman's to night. Fida is taller than his ma, and George is not far behind. Hattie is tall and a very sprightly girl, her every movement is like her Pa. Bemie is a fair boy and is tall as Hattie. Frank looks like George. Bishop looks like his Uncle Bishop and full of mischief. Judson is the flower of the flock, and looks like his Pa. So much for the children. Now Silas I expect you would know Lucius and Sophy if you were to see them. Lucius lets his beard grow all over his face, but that is nothing new for Oregon.

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1553-

Oregon City. February 16. 1858.

Father and Mother.

Although we write our letters Oregon City, yet we do not live in the City: but about one and a half miles from there, on a place owned by a man by the name of Perin. He is an eastern man, has had a wife and one child, but buried them both before coming to Oregon. We think him one of the very best of men, living and walking, an every day christian life.

We removed here the first of last may 1857, in order to send the children to school. At the time we had not sold our farm, but did shortly after; there was more than one reason for our selling but the principal one was the schooling of our children. We have no desire to return to our farm, but design to buy again, as soon as Lucius finds a place to suit, he has had several places offered, but it is difficult to find a place handy to school.

From my long delay in writing you would almost have reason to think that I had forgotten you, but far from it; in shifting and moving I found less time to write, but still my thoughts were busy, we sent five children, five months during the summer, and the same this winter, you see by that that it left more trotting for Sophy, and less sitting. Right here let me say that I have received two letters from brother Benne, and one from brother Silas for which they have my most grateful thanks. Oh that they would write much oftener. You can scarcely think

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How anxious we are to hear from home, so far away where we can not see the face of one of you. We have had a very pleasant open winter, with very little of what you would call cold weather, still it is snowing to-night, but in the morning perhaps there will be none to be seen, as it is so warm that it melts very fast. My shoulders ache so to night with the rheumatism, that I think my tounge could run faster than my pen can write. Lucius and Jira have been grafting apple-roots to day, have grafted about two hundred. Our orchard on Baker's prairie (or the one that was ours) has been bearing two years. I think I spoke about Lucius selling the farm in Brother Silas letter. Lucius has not bought yet another, but intends to as soon as he can find one to suit. We intend to purchase where there is a prospect of keeping up a school.

Waters and family spent New Years with us, are well. Waters talks a great deal about his children, does not know what to do, wishes they were here but is not able to go after them Mr Durham and family all well. Silas Broadwell is living with them this winter, he is a noble looking young man.

Times are very hard here this winter, produce generally high. Lucius reserved enough of the crops on the farm to last us this year, that is wheat, oats and potatoes, and also fattened his hogs there, Butter is fifty cents a pound, and eggs fifty cents a dozen.

We are so near the City that Lucius and the boys can attend Church. Mr Atkinson is one of the best ministers. he visits us quite often. I wish you could see him and hear him preach. Oh Father I wish I could see you and the friends there, but no that wish is vain. Good night.



How anxious we are to hear from home, so far away where we cannot see the face of one of you. We have had a very pleasant open winter, with but very little of what you would call cold weather, still it is snowing to-night, but in the morning perhaps there will be none to be seen, as it is so warm that it melts very fast. My shoulders ache so to night with the Rheumatism, that I think my tongue could run faster than my pen can write. Lucius and Gira have been grafting apple-roots to day, have grafted about two hundred. Our orchard on Baker's prairie (or the one that was ours) has been bearing two years I think I spoke about Lucius selling the farm in Brother Silas letter. Lucius has not bought yet another, but intends to as soon as he can find one to suit. We intend to purchase where there is a prospect of keeping up a school.

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February 18<sup>th</sup>. I believe that I have not spoken of brother Joseph taking to himself a wife, from among the fair daughters of Oregon; but strange as it may seem, it is true.

Joseph was married on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of September 1857. That being his wife's birth-day, She was eighteen that day. I have written this in two different letters, knowing that you do not receive all the letters that we write, and father Seely's family will be anxious to hear all about Joseph.

Joseph was down to see us in June last, said he was tired of living alone, I do not wonder at it for he has batched a greater part of the time since he came to Oregon.

We have a very fine view of the river where we live and the boats as they pass up and down, there are five boats now above the falls. We have not seen E Tanner lately, but hear quite often from them, they have moved to Forest Grove to educate their girls. We have one family living close by us that we think a great deal of, by the name Hatch, his wife is a daughter of Dr lacey; I think you know him by name. He died some four or five years ago, I think the winter of fifty-two in Oregon City. Dr. Lacey lived some number of years at Gales-burg Illinois. I have not seen Mrs Watts (or she that was Mrs Watts) since she was married, and have received no letters from Mary lately. It will be two years the fourth of March since Lucius wrote to you Father, and we have not received one from you since. You may think strange that I remember so well, but it was the day our little Judson was born. I call him little, but he is a fine large boy. Lucius is quite proud of his six boys. Much love to all. We are well. Do write. Your daughter Sophia H. Seely.

February 18<sup>th</sup>. I believe I have not spoken of brother Joseph taking to himself a wife, from among the fair daughters of Oregon; but strange as it may seem, it is true.

Joseph was married on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of September 1832. That being his wife's birth-day, she was eighteen that day. I have written this in two different letters, knowing that you do not receive all the letters that we write, and father Seely's family will be anxious to hear all about Joseph.

Joseph was down to see us in June last, said he was tired of living alone, I do not wonder at it for he has batched a greater part of the time since he came to Oregon.

We have a very fine view of the river where we live and the boats as they pass up and down, there are five boats now above the falls. We have not seen E. Tanner lately, but hear quite often from them, they have moved to Forest-Grove to educate their girls. We have one family living close by us that we think a great deal of, by the name of Hatch, his wife is a daughter of Dr. Loez; I think you know him by name. He died some four or five years ago, I think the winter of fifty-two in Oregon City. Dr. Loez lived some number of years at Galesburg Illinois. I have not seen Mrs. Watts (or she that was Mrs. Watts) since she was married, and have received no letters from Mary lately. It will be two years the fourth of March since Lucius wrote to you Father, and we have not received one from you since. you may think strange that I remember so well, but it was the day that our little Judson was born. I call him little, but he is a fine large boy. Lucius is quite proud of his six boys.

Much love to all. we are well. To write. Your daughter Sophia H. Seely.

Received April 13<sup>th</sup> 1858<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Received April 13<sup>th</sup> 1858

1858-

Yamhill Co. February 16<sup>th</sup> 1860.

Father and Mother.

You have every reason to think that I am quite negligent as it regards writing; but surely it seems to me, that were you in my place, you would think different

And right here let me say, we received a letter from Mother Seely last week, we have not heard from home before for months. I am very much pleased to hear how Benny is progressing in his studies. Tell Benny if he had not an aged Father, and a Mother who loves him so tenderly, -- that sister Sophy would like to shake hands with him in Oregon. But let me here say I know something of a parents feelings; being a mother of eight children.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

We are all well, and little Ira Robert, our youngest is walking<sup>xxxix</sup>, we are all of us so glad, for he has been a very troubles-ome child; There never has been a starker year in my history than the past year; it seemed as though there was far more to do, than I could possibly turn my hands to. I have thought of home Oh so many times, but where was the time to write. Our children have one week more of school, to finish six months, and we have sent six children, so you see Sophy has been alone, as it were with Hattie's<sup>xl</sup> help nights and mornings. The last three months we have had an eastern teacher right from Vermont by the name of King. A first rate teacher we call him. My eyes are so weak that I can scarcely see, I am afraid that they will prove to be the sore eyes. It is now late, so good bye for to night.

Yamhill Co. February 16<sup>th</sup> 1860.

Father and Mother.

you have every reason to think that I am quite negligent as it regards writing; but surely it seems to me, that were you in my place, you would think different

And right here let me say, we received a letter from Mother Selby last week, we have not heard from home before for months. I am very much pleased to hear how Benny is progressing in his studies. Tell Benny if he had not an aged Father, and a Mother who loves him so tenderly, — that sister Sophia would like to shake hands with him in Oregon. But let me here say, I begin to know something of a parents feelings; being a Mother of eight children.

We are all well, and little Ira Robert, our youngest is walking, we are all of us so glad, for he has been a very troublesome child; there never has been a sicker year in my history than the past year; it seemed as though there was far more to do, than I could possibly turn my hands to. I have thought of home Oh so many times, but where was the time to write. Our children have one week more of school, to finish six months, and we have sent six children, so you see Sophia has been alone, as it were with Phatties help nights and mornings. The last three months we have had an eastern Teacher right from Vermont, by the name of King. A first rate Teacher we call him. My eyes are so weak that I can scarcely see, I am afraid that they will prove to be the sore eyes. It is now late, so good bye for to night.



It is Sabbath evening and they have all retired. I have been to see a sick boy in the neighborhood who is not expected to live, it is the second time I have been to a neighbors house in Oregon. On the Sabbath I cannot in no wise countenance Sabbath visiting, although it is carried on here by professors and those that are not. We have had preaching once a month this winter by the United brethren; and I think I told you in my last that we belonged to that Church, being so far from Oregon City we could not attend there, therefore withdrew and joined here. We like our place much and have it all paid for; so it is our own; We have quite an orchard of apples trees pear and plums with a variety of cherries; many of them will bear this year; they have set out five hundred apple trees this spring. May 17<sup>th</sup> 1860

Three months have run round since wrote the first of my letter. The spring is very backward and cold with a good deal of rain. Lucius has done planting, and is now to work trying to drain a lake part of which lies on his farm<sup>xli</sup>. There are four or five others with claims extending into it which are interested, and are assisting him to dig the outlet. Lucius intends the lake mostly for grass, as there is a great demand for hay. It will bring twenty dollars a ton at his own door. We have seen a good deal of hard times, and drank in something of poverty, but I hope the day is dawning of better times. There never has been known harder times in Oregon than at present, there is scarcely a dollar to be had. Wages have come down to twenty dollars a month, and any amount of young men



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Should you see Franklin, tell him that we received a letter from him  
The last of winter, and will try and answer it soon. Sophia.

wanting employment. Had it not been for the new mines breaking out we should have been perfectly over-run, but then there were hundreds went; only to be disappointed. Mr Tanner<sup>xlii</sup> went and has returned, with many others. Waters and family have just been up on a visit, they are all well at present.

I never saw Waters look so bad before, he has had a bad turn with his side, he came down with it the last of February, but says he is quite well now. We have heard from Joseph lately, they are well have a little daughter<sup>xliii</sup> added to their number their little boy<sup>xliv</sup> is the age of my youngest.

Had a letter from George Ferry not long since He is in California, is well.

The boy I spoke of that I visited on the Sabbath died the Tuesday following, leaving many to mourn his loss. Oh Father death has never entered our family how thankful ought we to be. I know dear Father that you have drank deep of its bitter waters, but eer long you will be permitted to sing songs with them who have gone before in the New Jerusalem, in that happy land where parting is known no more , The thoughts of meeting those I love in that blest land, cannot be described.

And now my dear parents please do write to us and let us know your joys and sorrows.

Give my love to Sister Brown and Silas and Benny.

Tell them to write. We all join in much love to you all.

Good bye with more love than I can tell. Sophia H. Seely.

Should you see Franklin, tell him that we received a letter from him the last of winter, and will try and answer it soon. Sophia.

wanting employment. Had it not been for the new mines breaking out we should have been perfectly over-run, but there were hundreds went; only to be disappointed. Mr. Tanner went and has returned, with many others. Waters and family have just been up on a visit, they are all well at present. I never saw Waters look so bad before, he has had a bad turn with his side, he came down with it the last of February, but says he is quite well now. We have heard from Joseph lately, they are well have a little daughter added to their number. Their little boy is the age of my youngest.

Had a letter from George Perry not long since he is in California, is well.

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and now my dear parents please do write to us and let us know your joys and sorrows.

Give my love to sister Brown and Silas and Benny. tell them to write. We all join in much love to you all.

Good bye with more love than I can tell. Sophia G. Seely.

Delavan June 4<sup>th</sup> 1858

Dear Father

I have thought for a long time that I would write you a letter but have put it off untill the prsent time. Such another time we never had up here on the Mackinaw rain, rain rain. All the time Four weeks ago I had 22 acers of ground plowed for Corn two weeks ago I got 16 acres of it planted and the balance is not planted yet and I do not know when it will be. I have not been to Pekin<sup>xlv</sup> fo five weeks and cannot get there the Mackinaw is very high and has been for a long time.

We get no papers and no letters No mails come to Delavan Austin Lamphar, Cousin to Alvin had two fine mares struck by lightning and killed Dead they wer all the horses that he had, he feels pretty much broke up.

My family all well Dea Lyman and family all well. Bishop Seely<sup>xlvi</sup> and wife & child all well and all the rest of the friends are well Whare is Silas<sup>xlvii</sup> I have not heard from him for a long time

The times are every hard with us here do not know what we will do: we Shall keep eating and drinking as long as we live I supose if we can get it



Delaware June 4<sup>th</sup> 1858

Dear Father

I have thought for a long time that I would write you a letter but have put it off until the present time. Such another time we never had up here on the Mackinaw <sup>rain</sup> rain all the time. four weeks ago I had 22 acres of ground plowed for Corn two weeks ago I got 16 acres of it planted and the balance is not planted yet and I do not know when it will be, I have not been to Petri for five weeks and cannot get there the Mackinaw is very high and has been for a long time. We get no papers and no letters. No mails come to Delaware. Austin Langfear, Cousin to John, had two fine Mares struck by lightning and killed. Dead they were all the horses that he had, he felt pretty much broke up. My family all well. Dear Lyman and family all well. Bishop Leely ~~and~~ wife & child all well and all the rest of the French are well. Where is Silas I have not heard from him for a long time. The times are very hard with us up here do not know what we will do, we shall keep eating and drinking as long as we live I suppose if we can get it.

The wet weather is hurting our wheat some  
although not as much as should have think it would

June 5<sup>th</sup> Very warm to day looks as though we  
might have more rain we have been trying to  
plant corn to day planted a little and had to  
Back out. Much to deep. I am trying to break  
out the rest of my prairie I had about 40 acers  
to break this sumer: I have about 10 to break  
yet There is a great deal of Corn hurting in the  
crib up in this country A good many had their  
corn sheled and put in sacks and it is moulding  
and it (ie) the corn; cannot be got to market on  
acount of the bad roads and the river being so high  
But thanks to the children of our dog (?) we have not  
corn to haul

We are without a Minister he concluding that we were  
a hard lot; has given us over I reckon

I have not been to meeting for four weeks I hope that  
it willnot rain next Sabbath But I fear that  
it will

Are you coming up here to see us this Sumer  
and when are you coming, about what time  
Say just before harvest, well come along  
we would like to see you first rate Do write  
us a letter soon without fail Grandmother  
Estabrook<sup>xlviii</sup> is well and a little Smarter than my  
Wife

The wet wether Is hurting our wheat some  
allthough not so much as I should think it would

June 8<sup>th</sup> Very warm to day looks as though we  
might have more rain we have been trying to  
plant corn to day planted a little and had to  
back out, mud too deep. I am trying to break  
out the rest of my prairie I had about 40 acres  
to break this Summer I have about 10 to break  
yet There is a great deal of corn hurting in the  
Cile up in this country a good many had their  
corn shelled and put in sacks and it is moulding  
and it is, the corn cannot be got to market on  
account of the bad roads and the river being so high  
But thanks to the children of our day I have no  
corn to haul

We are without a Minister he concluding that we were  
a hard lot has given us ~~over~~ I reckon  
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it will not rain next Sabbath But I fear that  
it will

Are you coming up here to see us this Summer  
and when are you coming, about what time  
Say just before harvest, I will come along  
we would like to see you first rate do write  
us a letter soon with out fail Grand Mother  
Estabrook is well and a little smarter than my  
Wife



I should like to know if you have had any letters  
from Oregon of late and if you have what is the news  
Are they all alive and what are they doing  
Have you heard from Lorenda<sup>xlix</sup> lately is she well  
How much winter wheat have you got to  
harvest this sumer how many acers of  
Oats how many acers of corn are you  
tending how many acers of Potatoes  
how many acers of Sorghum how many acres  
of broom corn<sup>l</sup> how many young colts have you  
And how are you prosperd in general  
Is it dry and nise down with you have you got  
your corn plowed a once twice or three times  
One of my mares lost her colt in the winter  
One colt died this Spring one colt is alive and  
well one of my mares has got the Big Leg and  
One has got the Big Head and one is kind of  
Stiffer it all works in toards Sixty

The mules are all Right  
Tell Ben Buck: to write a letter to me and  
See if I don't answer it  
If I could think of any thing more to write  
I would down with it But I believe  
my pond has run dry So I will close

Give my respects to all my friends  
And take a Big share for your Self and  
Family Good By for this time

C. F. Buckman.

I Should like to know if you have had any letters  
from Oregon of late and if you have what is the news  
are they all alive and what are they doing  
Have you heard from Lorenda lately. Is she well  
How much winter wheat have you got to  
harvest this summer how many acres of  
Oats how many acres of Corn are you  
planting how many acres of Potatoes  
how many acres of Sorghum how many acres  
of Broom Corn how many young Colts have you  
And how are you prospered in General  
Is it dry an rise down with you have you got  
your Corn plowed a once twice or three times  
One of my Mares lost her Colt in the winter  
one Colt died this Spring one Colt is alive and  
well one of my Mares has got the Big Leg and  
one has got the Big Head and one is kind of  
Stiff it all works in towards Fifty  
The Mules are all Right  
I'll Ben Buck: to write a letter to me and  
see if I don't answer it  
If I could think of any thing more to write  
I would down with it But I believe  
my Pond has run dry So I will close  
I give my respects to all my friends  
And take a Big Share for your Self and  
Family Good By for this time  
C. S. Buckman

June 7<sup>th</sup>

We are well as yet we have had  
one more pleasant Sabbath the the 1<sup>st</sup> in June

Write Soon & Oblige

C.F.B

June 9<sup>th</sup> we are well as yet we have had  
one more pleasant Sabbath the the 1<sup>st</sup> in June  
Write Soon & Oblige  
L. F. B.

1858



## Endnotes

Most if not all of these endnotes should begin with “Probably”, or “Maybe”, or “I think”, as I have not rigorously researched each reference. In identifying individuals I have relied heavily on the seemingly reasonable assumption that anyone Sophia (or Calvin) mentions in a letter must be someone known to the letter recipient and that the individual mentioned must have spent time in Illinois. While Sophia was born in New York, her father married his 3<sup>rd</sup> wife in Illinois in 1839 when Sophia was about 14 so it seems unlikely that she would mention individuals from New York without further reference.

Fred Hinke

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**i** The first four of Sophia’s seven letters are written from “Bakers Prairie”, named after one of the earliest white settlers in Oregon, who arrived in the area in 1832. The area is in the northern part of what is now known as Canby, Oregon though the name “Baker Prairie” is still at least associated with a Canby middle school and a small cemetery. The Seely’s land in Baker’s Prairie was an Oregon Donation Land Claim #894. The Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 was a statute enacted in late 1850 by the United States Congress to promote homestead settlements in the Oregon Territory. The law, which provided for up to 640 acres of free land, brought thousands of white settlers into the new territory, swelling the ranks of settlers traveling along the Oregon Trail. A total of 7,437 land patents were issued under the law.

**ii** Not literally true. In the 1850 census, Sophia, her husband Lucius, and their then four children are living separately from Joel Buckman (her father) and his family though the two families are enumerated on adjoining census pages and are therefore probably near neighbors.

**iii** Lucius’ younger brother, who arrived in Oregon about a year before Lucius and his family.

**iv** Sophia meant Waters Carman. Here she spelled his name Carmon though in a later letter she spells it Carman. Waters Carman married Lavinia Buckman, Sophia’s next oldest sister, in Illinois. Lavinia died in Illinois in 1846 before Waters moved to Oregon. Based on very limited research, Waters and Lavinia had four children: Charles Broadwell Carman, Joel Buckman Carman, Jacob Waters Carman, and Rachel Lavinia Carman. Only Joel moved to Oregon, arriving sometime before 1870.

**v** The husband of Sophia’s older sister, Lorenda Buckman. Lorenda married William Bartlett Brown in 1837. Sophia makes several references to ‘sister Brown’ in other letters. William Brown died December 14, 1852.

**vi** Calvin Franklin Buckman, Sophia’s younger brother.



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**vii** Sophia is probably referring to gold mines. Prior to 1860, gold in Oregon was mined by “panning” sand and gravel. Mining of lode deposits which was far more capital intensive began in 1859. See: <http://www.miningartifacts.org/OregonMines.html>

**viii** Just an opinion - Lucius was certainly a hard working man. He and his family arrived in Oregon in the early fall of 1851 and less than six months later he has accomplished much.

**ix** Soda Springs is located in what is now eastern Idaho.

**x** (Carole Hayden) Walter Marsh was killed in the Whitman Massacre on November 29, 1847. He was born November 25, 1754 in Franklin Co., Vermont and resided in Sangamon County, Illinois in 1840. The Whitman Massacre in the Oregon Territory was a major event. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman were Presbyterian missionaries near present day Walla Walla, Washington working with the Cayuse Indians. Marcus was a doctor and he tried very hard to cure the Indians from the “white men’s” diseases, but of course, more Indians died than whites and the Indians (or some of them anyway) started to think he was killing them off on purpose. Some Indians attacked the mission and killed the Whitmans and many others who were there that day. Walter Marsh had been hired to run the gristmill and he was shot as he ran from the mill where he had been working. This horrific event was followed by the “Cayuse War” where the guilty parties were hunted down. The Mary Marsh mentioned living in Oregon City was Walter Marsh’s daughter.

**xi** The Oregon Territory was officially organized in 1848 and was admitted to the Union as a state on February 14, 1859. The original state constitution forbid black people from living, working or owning property in Oregon.

**xii** Franklin Flint Seely, Sophia and Lucius 5<sup>th</sup> and, as of the date of this letter, youngest child. Franklin was born September 15, 1851 on the riverboat on the Columbia River en route from The Dalles to the Willamette Valley and was then named after the boat. According to Early Oregonian Search, the Seely family arrived in Oregon on September 25, 1851, so Sophia was pregnant with Franklin before they left Illinois and as they traveled the entire length of the Oregon Trail.

**xiii** The date of this letter, Oct 27, 1852, was a Wednesday.

**xiv** Early Oregonian Search:

(<https://secure.sos.state.or.us/prs/personprofile.do?recordNumber=110628>) provides a marriage date for Waters Carman to Lucretia *Allyn* of Sept 12, 1853, though the date of this letter is October 27, 1852.

**xv** Waters Carman.

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**xvi** Sophia is presumably saying that the traveling season is about over. The Oregon Trail trip took about 5 months and obviously needed to be completed before the onset of winter.

**xvii** On average, an Oregon bound wagon train traveled about 12 or 13 miles a day so 6 miles out of the way and back is the equivalent of adding a day to the already long trip.

**xviii** Sophia's husband Lucius

**xix** Oregon City

**xx** Presumably her father's birthday, November 6, 1790, as documented by Bethel, Vermont town records.

**xxi** Possibly Albert Alonzo Durham who was born in Chenango Co., New York but had a son, George Hannibal Durham, born in Sangamon County, Illinois.

**xxii** Benjamin Buckman, Joel Buckman's youngest child and only child by Sally *Watts* Buckman. As an adult, Benjamin Buckman became a farmer in Cartwright Township, Sangamon, Illinois. He specialized in fruits, planted over fifteen hundred different varieties of apple trees as well as other fruit, nut, and ornamental trees and grapes.

**xxiii** Sophia's younger brother by 4 years.

**xxiv** Hannah *Bowker* Buckman, Joel Buckman's second wife. Joel and Hannah had one child, Hannah Wright Buckman. who died when she was about 2 years old.

**xxv** (Carole Hayden) In the 1860 US Census for Subdivision 17, Sangamon County, Illinois, Page Number 267 (as written by the enumerator) Silas (S. Buckman, age 31) is listed with an occupation of 'teacher'.

**xxvi** Possibly James Harvey Slater who was born in Springfield, Sangamon Co., Illinois Dec 28, 1826.

**xxvii** Waters Carman

**xxviii** Sophia's oldest daughter, Harriet Beecher Seely.

**xxix** (Carole Hayden) A Letter of Dismission was a letter asking the church to dismiss the member and certify they were in good standing. It was not a letter of dismissal because the church expelled them. Letters of Dismission were requests by the member that the member's name be removed from the membership roll.

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**xxx** (Carole Hayden) Rev. George H. Atkinson (May 10, 1819 – February 25, 1889), an American missionary and educator. In Oregon, he served as a pastor for several churches, helped found what would become Pacific University, and pushed for legislation to create a public school system in the Oregon Territory. See:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_H.\\_Atkinson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._Atkinson)

**xxxi** Sophia and Lucius' oldest child.

**xxxii** Sophia and Lucius' next oldest child.

**xxxiii** An interesting use of slang almost 160 years ago.

**xxxiv** Presumably Lucius purchased some apple tree saplings. On the last page of her letter dated Oct 27, 1852, Sophia is wishing she could eat an apple having not had one since arriving in Oregon and now 5 years later she is eating one from her own tree.

**xxxv** Presumably Benjamin had previously written Sophia a letter.

**xxxvi** Sophia and Lucius' oldest daughter who at the writing of this letter is about 7 years old.

**xxxvii** Given the transportation of the day, less than 2 months for the letter to travel from Oregon to Illinois seems pretty remarkable.

**xxxviii** Sophia and Lucius had a total of 10 children, one of whom was adopted. Their two youngest children, Edwin Ruthbin Seely and Emma Amelia Brainiff (adopted), were born after this letter was written.

**xxxix** Ira was almost 14 months old when this letter was written.

**xl** Harriet Beecher Seely, Lucius and Sophia's oldest daughter.

**xli** (Carole Hayden). This is probably a reference to what has come to be known as the "Seely Ditch." From Carole Hayden's book "Our Heritage: Seely, Arnsperger and Bell": "Lucius and his teenage sons dug a ditch from the wetlands to the Willamette River, a distance of a mile and a half, complicated by having to cross through other people's farms. Considered a crazy undertaking at the time, when it was finished three years later, it created 100 acres of rich farmland. More than 150 years later, the Seely Ditch is still carrying water from the wetlands to the river." (photograph)

# Seely's Folly



*Photo courtesy of the Boones Ferry Historical Society, photo featured in the Wilsonville Times.  
Lucius Alexander Seely & wife Sophia.*

Seely Ditch, once known as “Seely’s Folly,” is a man-made drainage way that flows north to south through the Coffee Lake wetlands to the Willamette River.

Lucius Alexander Seely took his family on a six-month journey from Illinois to Oregon in 1851. After searching for a place to settle in Oregon, they purchased 320 acres of land in Wilsonville from JK Bolton in 1859. One third of this land was covered by the Coffee Lake wetlands. In order to create more farmland, Seely and his sons drained the wetlands by digging a ditch one and a half miles long averaging six feet deep and ten feet wide. It took them three years to complete and resulted in 100 acres of farmland. Evidence indicates that Chinese laborers were used to work on Seely Ditch and other similar farmland excavation projects in the Willamette Valley. Local critics labeled his adventure as foolish, calling it “Seely’s Folly,” but after yielding 100 bushels of grain per acre annually for years to follow, Seely certainly had the last laugh.

**Seely Ditch Interpretive Sign**  
© Carole M. Hayden

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Entering “Seely Ditch Oregon” into a Google Maps search will locate the Seely Ditch.

**xl** Possibly Elisha S. Tanner, born Nov 14, 1814 in Connecticut with 2 children born in Illinois.

**xli** Vaduna A Seely.

**xlii** Joseph B Seely.

**xliii** The present day town of Pekin is about 15 miles north and west of Delevan. The Makinaw River flows east to west to the Illinois River and is about 7 miles north of Delevan.

**xliii** Lucius’ father.

**xliv** Silas Buckman, the youngest son of the marriage of Joel Buckman and Huldah Lillie.

**xlv** Calvin Buckman married Mary Sophia Estabrook. Her mother was named Abigail Huldah *Wilder* Estabrook.

**xlvi** Calvin Buckman’s older sister, born September 9. 1815.

**xlvii** Broomcorn is a type of sorghum that is used for making brooms and whiskbrooms. Illinois was the leading producer of broomcorn in the 1860s. See:

<https://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/afcm/broomcorn.html>