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Letters of Tamsen Donner

There are seventeen extant letters written by Tamsen Donner that range in date from about 1819 to 1846. The Huntington Library acquired seven of them, Nos. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, and 16, in 1935 and 1937 from Eliza P. Houghton, Tamsen's granddaughter. They are part of the Papers of Sherman Otis Houghton, 1831-1914, HOU 1-152.

In 1995 John S. Houghton and Ann Houghton Smith, Tamsen's great-grandchildren, donated seven more letters, Nos. 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 15, to the Huntington Library. They are part of the Papers of Eliza Poor Donner Houghton, 1820-1978, HM 58111-58197.

Two letters, Nos. 2 and 4, were not included in the 1995 donation, perhaps because they are typed transcripts. What happened to the originals is as yet unknown. Ann Houghton Smith shared these transcripts with historian Mark McLaughlin, who in turn shared them with me. Their authenticity is certain.

Tamsen addressed all but the last two letters to Mrs. Jonathan Poor—her sister Elizabeth, called Eliza by most and Betsey by Tamsen—who lived in their hometown, Newburyport, Massachusetts. Tamsen named

her youngest daughter, Eliza Poor, after Betsey, and refers to her as "Aunty Poor" in one of the letters.

Note: All spellings, crossouts, parentheses, underlines for emphasis, irregular capitalization, punctuation or lack of, and so forth, are Tamsen's. The notation &c. means "et cetera"; do. means "ditto." Tamsen often left out periods, used carets (not shown here) and insertions, and used dashes frequently—a busy woman grabbing a little time here and there to write letters.

LETTER 1

From Huntington Library, HM 58152. From Boobartown & Wells, Maine to her sister Betsey. Year unknown. Unsigned. The Huntington Library estimates that Tamsen was 20 years old, making the year 1821, but it is likely a few years earlier, 1818 or 1819. Her niece, Frances, wrote that Tamsen started teaching at 15, so she may have gone to teach in Maine anytime from 1817 on.

Boobartown June 23rd

Sister I was so tired last eve that I could not perform my promise (that of writing to you every evening) I set out from Bangor at six yesterday morn & arrived here a little past sunset. It being very rainy I was prevented from going to Wells today & I was not sorry for 33 miles over a rough road is a long journey. I think I never felt the importance of performing my duty as I do now. I am with Mrs Boobar now who treats me kindly. She is indeed a kind woman. just came in here & saw me writing on my trunk & offered to assist me in making a writing desk.

24 And now Betsey I am seated in my little room at Wells. I have had a curious journey. There are nine families here & I shall have about 20 scholars. I think I shall enjoy myself highly.

26th Yesterday I removed from Mrs Sargeant's to Mrs Shipley's & therefore could not write to you. I shall begin my school on monday. The family in which I board ~~are~~ is pleasant & I expect to be content. I shall write to you today.

LETTER 2

Typed transcript of original (whereabouts unknown) from Mark McLaughlin. The typist may have added commas and capitals because the punctuation seems more exact than most of Tamsen's other letters. The heading says simply "Williamsburg" and "June 7, 1821?" Someone—perhaps a family member—has inked in "Mass?" and 1824?" The letter is most likely written from Williamsburg, Maine, since Tamsen says she is close to Bangor, and also mentions "Mr Greenleaf's information." There were Greenleafs in Williamsburg, Maine, at that time—in fact, Moses Greenleaf published "Statistics of Maine" in 1816. The date is most likely 1820 or early 1821, since she asks why her mother hasn't answered her last letter. Her stepmother, Hannah Cogswell Eustis, died January 1821, so Tamsen wrote this letter before her death or before she received word of it. (If this letter was written in 1820, it most certainly pushes the first letter earlier. It also implies that she had had other teaching posts in Maine.) Note that her brother, John, was still alive. (He died in 1831.)

Williamsburg

June 7 182

Dear sister

I have no paper here but this and therefore I shall offer no other excuse for sending it. Tis quite cool to-day.

I am surrounded by my little schollars [sic] who are buzzing as fast as possible until school begins. This is by far the most interesting school I have found in this country. The children have advanced considerably in their studies. I have a convenient school house, pleasantly situated, board in a remarkably agreeable family. Mr Greenleaf is a man of good information and his wife has a sound well cultured mind. She is a sister of Mrs Wilder. The children naturally interesting are rendered still more so by the excellent government which they are kept. They have a large library of books. So much for me. Now let us say something about you.

O you say something about my wants. I have none but those which will this week be supplied. You forget that I am near Bangor. You were kind to

offer to send me some clothes but unless I am unfortunate I hope I shall not be a burden to those friends who have a right to expect better things, and it is so much trouble to send home, that I rather give a higher price for goods than be at the pains. I intend to write to my father and both my brothers by this conveyance and will get you to see that they are sent to them. Why was it so few of my friends wrote? and why did not my mother answer my last letter to her? I fear I have not answered all questions and said all about myself that you will want to hear.

Good afternoon

T. Eustis

LETTER 3

From Huntington Library, HM 58:53. A later letter suggests that Tamsen had been back to Massachusetts, scrambling jobs together, but could hardly make enough to support one. She turned 23 two weeks before writing this to her sister, Betsey, from Norfolk, Virginia, on her way to North Carolina for a teaching position. Her mother was a Wheelwright, so Captain Wheelwright may have been an uncle or cousin.

Monday November 15th 1824

My dear sister

You requested me to be particular when I wrote from Norfolk. Many occurrences flit by and received hardly a glance of the mind & those which did interest are so blended with their causes & effects as to form a mass so undigested & confused, ~~that~~ as to render it impossible for me to give you a correct & particular statement. There is one impression, however, which rises above this huge chaos & presses itself upon my notice; it is that the hand of God is remarkably visible in directing my steps: so fully aware am I that he will guide me that I feel not the least hesitation in proceeding. In Boston a gentleman at the boarding house interested himself so far as to find a vessel for me & Capt Wheelwright engaged my passage & waited upon me on board. The

captain has been very kind. An unpleasant wind detained us in Hyannis Roads & he politely took me to his house & entertained me two days. In which time the School committee waited on me requested me to set a price & engage to keep six months. We left there on Thursday & now in Norfolk.

Thus my sister one half of my journey is accomplished. And I leave it on record for the benefit of those who may wish to follow my example—that so far from considering me an outlaw people of all stamps, from the Senator, Author, & Southern planter downward have treated me with attention & respect & though they have sometimes wondered at my conduct they have never despised me. And I never shall be despised. I meet not so frequently with the look of indifference among strangers as at my own town.

I am now at what the world terms "a stylish boarding house." To describe it meets not my present feelings. O friends I would not forgo the pleasure of your society for more than all this it is dreary in the midst of splendor if in all that show there is no friend to smile, no being to love you.

My letter to Mr Roberts was of infinite importance. Tell Cousin Jane they had guessed at the news. I leave here tomorrow morning in a gig for Elizabeth City from there I go to Tyrrel in a shingle vessel & there my journey ends. I do not regret nor shall I the fatigue expense nor embarrassment to which I have subjected myself. My heart is big with hope & impatient with desire. And this day needful for rest finds me agitated & restless. The past & present is swallowed up in the future. I believe I am not influenced by the love of novelty for passionately fond as I am of scenery I have learned to look almost with disgust upon that which in other circumstances would have delighted me. Happy am I to be enabled to hide my feelings so successfully as to cause many I meet to wish to be in my situation. I think likely I may return immediately. Unless I can be respectably employed [sic] I certainly shall. From the character the country bears I may expect to find a Williamsburgh. I know nothing however, compared to what I shall know.

If experience teaches me as many lessons in life to come as in life past I shall be well versed indeed. How highly she charges for her tuition! How cutting to the soul are some of her reprimands. Pity the instruction she gives could not be transferred. Then all would not smart. But 'tis the lash that

gives it its importance & tis the keenness of the suffering that it occasions that renders it unnecessary for her to repeat it. How often have we said, when we saw the consequences of rashness impending "Be pleased to spare the blow," when after it has fallen we have loved, even loved the agony.

What a complex piece of machinery is the human soul. How interesting & various are its constituents. How many are the situations it requires in order to its full development. And in every situation what a vast quantity of ideas & tones of feeling does she discover to herself which occasions her to exclaim in a kind of ecstasy, Thou ever fruitful source of entertainment, why need I wander? How delicate the touch, how nice the texture, how well finished every part, how perfect the super structure. My God, I I [sic] thank thee, that thou hast given to me this inestimable gift & hast enabled it in every situation to furnish a rich and delightful banquet.

I will leave the remainder until afternoon as this kind of writing is a sort of commodity you can pick up anywhere Excuse me 'twas in my heart & I said it. In the meantime I will go & sit with the ladies.

I have called at Mrs Whiteheads she seemed like Northern people. I could have spent days in hearing her converse. Could cousin Jane have heard half the enormities she heaped upon her friend she would have loved the woman. We both knew the secret both tried to make the other speak and left it. It is late, I am tired, I go at seven in the morning. When I get to Tyrrel I will again let you hear from me.

T Eustis

LETTER 4

Typed transcript of original (whereabouts unknown) from Mark McLaughlin. From North Carolina to Betsey. Tamsen is 29. There is a six-year gap from the last letter. Edna M. Shannonhouse of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, has written that a Miss Eustis taught the "female department" at the Elizabeth City Academy in 1827. In December 1829 Tamsen married Tully Dozier, and they now have a little boy. They've only been married a little over a year, and twice Tully has been seriously ill.

The typed signature on this letter is "Tamsen Dosier"—one of the two letters where Tamsen apparently signed her first name. This transcript, presumably typed by a family member, spells Dozier with an s, instead of a z. Tamsen is typed with an s and no e on the end. In Tamsen's own hand in the original letters, it's fairly easy to mistake her z for an s, but with a magnifying glass, it's clear she always closes s and never closes z. Without seeing the original letter, we can't tell how she actually signed this. This letter is remarkable for her mention of their strong dislike of slavery to the extent that they plan to move west.

Camden Jan 23 1831

My dear Sister

The commencement of a new year & the change of season have failed to draw one character from that pen, which has so often been employed by them; nor have the frequent communications of a well beloved sister been more successful. But as this will be the last day the office will be under my husband's care I feel unwilling to delay writing to you.

March 1831

I wrote thus far and was interrupted by the gentleman who came to receive the Post Office from my husband's hands, and as my letter was unfinished it could not be franked. I almost finished another, but Mr Dosier [sic] accidentally tore it & I concluded to send this. I am at a loss how to proceed. I know whether I write to the dead, or to the living.

Are you offended with me? What have I said, or neglected to say? What have I done, or neglected to do? Still I cannot persuade myself that you do not feel interested in my happiness. I would not do it if I could. I will therefore tell you how the world goes with me. My husband who was near the grave when last I wrote is recovered. My son grows finely and resembles Grandmother Wheelwright considerably.

We sunk money by boarding & have given it up—have but one at this time. My school prospers & with my husband's exertions we make a comfortable living.

We find it a great advantage to keep an account of expenses; had it not been for that I could not have been convinced of the unprofitableness of boarders. I advise you to do so. We have removed a few miles from our last home & by that means have lost the Post Office. I had had excellent health since I saw you, but Mr Dosier has twice been reduced very low since we were married. His precarious health and our strong dislike to slavery has caused us to determine upon removing to some western state. But not until next year. Mary will have there a fine chance for her trade & I hope she will come to us. How is father? and all friends, are they well

Your sister,
Tamsen Dosier

LETTERS 5 AND 6

From Huntington Library, HOU 8. I count these as two letters although the second is written on the bottom of the first, they are written seven months apart and are markedly different. From North Carolina to her sister, Betsey. In the first letter, Tamsen is 29, and life is busy and happy. In the second, she's 30, and her life has been devastated. A curiosity: In her letter before this one, dated January 23, 1831, she says her son "resembles Grandmother Wheelwright considerably." Now five months later, she says, "he bears no resemblance to our family, being a true copy of his father." Tully is still postmaster. Apparently his replacement didn't work out.

Camden Co June 28th 1831

My dear sister

This busy world so fully occupies me that with difficulty I find time to write to you though its cares are not so many as to prevent my often thinking & speaking of you. Your letter relieved me of many anxious thoughts & mine I presume will be acceptable as it will tell you of the health of those who I doubt not are dear to you. My child has been very sick for a few days we feared we should loose [sic] him but at this time he is in fine health and

sitting upon the table while I write he at one time scolds me for the inkstand, at another knocks my knuckles with a spoon. He bears no resemblance to our family being a true copy of his father. If he lives I shall very much desire he should have a northern education.

I do not intend to boast of my husband but I find him one of the best of men—affectionate, industrious & possessed of an upright heart. These are requisite to make life pass on smoothly. His health is improved very much so that he is able to attend to his business. I know you have a kind husband who furnishes everything to make you comfortable but you did not know of my lot in life. We live in a very comfortable way Mr Doziers trade is tolerably profitable. My school has been less so since the birth of my child & I have been compelled to discharge my boarders on that account. Our family consists of, my husband, child, two, little girls, (boarders) a white girl [hired girl] & myself. We have a horse 3 cows, 2 calves, 24 hogs hen, turkeys & ducks. Last year we made enough corn, pork bacon, &c. to serve us this year & perhaps a little to spare. This year we tend no land as we had no servants of our own Mr Dozier thought it was unprofitable We have a fine potato patch & if we could send them to you could give you plenty of sweet potatoes as we shall make several hundred bushels.

I am anxious to go to Ohio but there are so many inducements for us to stay that I hardly think we shall leave. This is indeed a delightful country where everything is produced in rich abundance that is necessary for the support of man. Mr Dozier just told me to ask you if you could get potatoes from Boston & says he will send you 20 or 30 bushels if you ~~have~~ can. My husband is yet Postmaster you will please to direct us before & yet write frequently while he retains the office.

I am truly sorry for Aunt Davis' death The girls are indeed alone but she has been feeble a long time My love to them & all other faces

Jan 26th, 1832

My sister I send you these pieces of letter that you may know that I often wrote to you if I did not send.

I have lost that little boy I loved so well He died the 28 Sept. I have lost

my husband who made so large a share of my happiness. He died on the 24 December I prematurely had a daughter which died on the 18th of Nov. I have broken up housekeeping & intend to commence school in February. O my sister weep with me if you have tears to spare.

Your sister

LETTER 7

From Huntington Library, HOU 9. From North Carolina to her sister. Tamsen had just turned 31. Ten months earlier, she had written Betsey that her husband and children died, and apparently wrote follow-up letters. It appears that she had only recently received Betsey's response to this news, and nothing from her brother, William. She doesn't mince words about her hurt—and her anger, which she says she doesn't feel—but resolves to only express it once, and then she immediately returns to equanimity. She says she had made arrangements and could have visited the north twelve months ago, but didn't because of Betsey's and William's lack of interest in her bereavement, but that time is off. Tully died only eleven months before this letter. Regarding her three-month and six-month attacks of former years, malarial fever would cause periodic attacks.

November 22nd 1832

My dear sister,

I have delayed writing until I had an hour that I could call my own when the labours of the week had ceased & I could think what I pleased & write what I think.

I could not but notice the prophetic language with which you commenced your letter. It seems that there is in the minds of those closely attached a principle, or feeling, rather, that lets them know how it is with each other. That very night on which your letter was dated I was struggling with a fever & preparing mind & body to part. I thought, and those around me thought, that we should soon be separated that a few more such fevers would terminate the career that I had commenced. Sister I could die very easily. One after

one of the bonds that bound me to earth are loosened & now there remains but few. You are the strongest—& when I realize how little you need me, & how small is the portion of enjoyment you derive from me, I am satisfied, that my time is not long. Two, perhaps three letters a year, & all the rest of our intercourse is fanciful.

I will own the truth. I had made arrangements to visit the north & could have done it twelve months ago but when I looked back & reflected how small was the interest my brother & sister took in my affairs. How I had struggled with sickness, poverty, & bereavement unpitied by them & kept them in ignorance because they wrote not to inquire I concluded to stay where I was. I have stayed & I will stay, until you are more at leisure. For sure if you cannot find time to write, you could not find time to sit down & talk to me if I were with you. I love you & am not satisfied with thinking you are well & happy. I must know it—know it every month. I will not write two letters to get one of yours & I will not go home until I find you are glad to see me. & I will not believe you want very much to see me when you let month after month pass without putting pen to paper. I do not feel angry but I thought I would write the exact feelings of my heart & leave you to act upon them. I am heartily tired of this style of writing. Look back to every letter you have received from me since I have been a widow & see if they are not all filled with entreaty—this is not. But after this if I do not hear from you once a year I will not complain. Here I will draw a line & resolve I will never again say "Sister write oftener" or anything that looks like it.

How often since I received your letter have I visited you in fancy both sleeping & waking I see you blessed with competence, good health, fine children & an affectionate husband. I am at ease about you & have only to wish that the day may be far distant when you shall be separated. I ardently wish that Mr Poor may live many years to enjoy the fruits of his labour. I intend to have my portrait painted. Not that I think it will be such a pretty picture but I wish you to have it, as I am so little with you.

I am still in Plymouth Academy & think I shall stay here. I have enough for my wants & know not that I could better myself by change. I am more

healthy here than I have been in many years. The water is excellent for low country & I am 50 miles nearer the mountains than formerly. That I think must be an advantage. I have been sick only a fortnight & then I was very sick. But that is nothing to the three months & six months attacks of former years. But enough of this. I ought always to give you the bright side, & do try to—but somehow today I have been unfortunate, & must have got up in a grumbling humor. But I am very happy having a knack of believing that all things are for the best, I soon reconcile myself to the evils of life & please myself with thinking that there will some good result from the greatest misfortunes. I must go & put this in the office. Love to all friends.

Farewell Your own Dear sister

LETTER 8

From Huntington Library, HM 58154. From North Carolina to Betsey. Tamsen is 32. When I first saw this letter, it was ripped, a half page gone, parts stuck to each other with red sealing wax. Fold lines were sewed together with white thread. Somebody in the Poor or Donner family carefully tried to preserve it. The Huntington has done a remarkable job of restoring it, though it's still incomplete.

Camden April 21st 1833

My dear sister

Several weeks ago I was made glad by the receipt of a letter from you & though you are never particular & always write too little I gain much pleasure by hearing from you. The fear that you were dead followed me & came between me & enjoyment during the day & my dreams were but pictures of your wretchedness. At one time I would wade through mud in darkness & never find you at another would see you with a pale face & wretched dress wasting with sickness in a most miserable apartment. I would wake & find it a dream but still a fear that it was portentous would in spite of reason, hover round me. But you are well & happy & knowing that I am not unhappy. Yes, my dearest sister, my enjoyment is blended with yours.

I have stopped & thought & hardly know whether it will be for your happiness or not to know that I calculate upon visiting you this fall. But you must make allowance for the uncertainties of life. If nothing happens to prevent I shall start for the north by the first of August. I am undetermined whether I go by steam or packet & therefore cannot tell you how long it will take me. I shall stay until the middle of November—shall visit Wm & Mr Greenleaf's family. Now do not prepare disappointment for yourself, for three months with all its changes has to pass by. But I have engaged a school for that time & have laid by money for my expenses, & I see nothing but a suit against my husband's estate that can prevent me & I think I can suspend that until my return. I long to see you all.

You speak of my return. I should be as happy to live with you as you would be to have me, I assure you. But you know that I cannot be burdensome to my friends & that the north is crowded with schools that my utmost exertions when there before were only sufficient to maintain one. That I was compelled to be separated from you, if not at so great a distance. And now I have an opportunity to supply all my wants & have only the care of 15 scholars. With them I can feed & clothe myself & lay up money enough to visit you once in a while. Then is it not better for me to stay? With you I will leave [hole in paper, the decision?] if you think I can support myself at the [hole] I will bid adieu to Carolina to return no more.

I have written to Wm & made the same proposal. Ask him his mind & let me know immediately for I must return here if I do not bring my affairs to a close before I leave & I shall leave them unsettled if I go home only for a visit.

My health is tolerable—an ague once in a while tells me I am mortal. Be of good cheer, "all the days of my appointed time shall I live until my change comes."

Where are Elizabeth & Susan Wheelwright—Martha Davis Abigail Knox John March Mrs Jane Greenleaf (she promised to write but has not, please to give her my direction & respects.) Mary Poor Harriet & Sarah Ann? My love to all and everybody.

Tell your husband I knit him a mighty pretty pair of thread socks & gave them to Mr Barnard, that I have begun him another pair & have got thread

to knit him two pair more. I have a moleskin purse drying for him & some of our fashioned fringe for you. I have laid up some stockings for you.

How is father? Has he obtained a pension? My respects to him. Tell him, life lasting, I shall soon see him. O how soon three months will roll away. But yet be not too certain. Think how often I have thought of going home.

Everything around is in bloom. The white bloom of the dog & a slug-wood tree, the jessamine & mayberry & many others perfume the air & nature seems to exert every power to appear beautiful.

Brush every tear from your eyes wipe [hole]
from your cheek & chas[incomplete]

[Rest of page ripped off, bottom half]

LETTER 9

From Huntington Library, HM 58r155. From North Carolina. The envelope says Camden Court House, July the 24th, 1833. This was written three months after her last letter to Betsy. Tamsen is 32. Note that she writes that Betsy addresses her as Tamzene.

Camden Co July 20th

My dear sister

I received the scrap you sent me & read it over again to see if I could not make more of it: but twenty lines it was & with all my ingenuity I could not make myself believe that it was a well filled sheet. But sister, I will do as you like to be done by. See how close my lines are together, how small my hand, & how many words I put in one line: & say does it not please you? & will you not smile to see my name at the last end of the third page? Well so should I like to have you write—so pleased should I be? & so would I smile at seeing no blank space in your letter. But you cannot love me as I do you for there is not so much that is estimable about me; you cannot value a letter as I do for you are not a stranger, you cannot realize the delight I feel at the very sight of "Mrs Tamzene Dozier" with Newburyport postmark. And may you never know, for to feel it must be purchased at too dear a rate.

Betsy I hate to tell you, but I must, that I shall not see you this fall. I thought about it, intended to do it, but dreaded to do it & gave it up. I desire to see you more than words can tell but there are so many unpleasant things connected with it that I have concluded to defer it a little longer. My health is excellent for the season & my spirits remarkably good. I am on the whole very happy.

I have moved about five miles from the Creek Bridge & as I cannot introduce you personally to my new associates I will give you a particular description of them. Mr Sash our lord and master is a middle aged man & in very easy circumstances talkative & to me quite obliging. Mrs Sash is a delightful woman [sic] who has long been an intimate favorite with me. She is all heart. She says, she wants to see you, sends her love, & says tell her to come while the damsons, grapes, peaches, apples, and cider are in prime. O you would love her I know. They have six children quite interesting. Mr Shaw a baptist clergyman boards with us. He is a Yankee & a man who for many years has been one of my friends. He is one of the most pleasant men in a family that I ever saw. So on the whole I must be one of the most ungrateful persons living if I were not happy. My school is near & pleasant. So much for myself.

And now for your family How is father is he with you? How is Mr Poor did he settle that Breakwater business to his advantage Where is John & whom did he marry. Have Mary & Harriet no sort of word to send when you write. When does Sarah Ann go to school. And tell me everything & anything. How's little Wm. Has he learned my name. Kiss him & tell him I will come & see him. What do you mean to name your little girl. May they live to be a comfort to you.

John still lives in Tyrrel & is well. I really wish you were all here. We could be so happy in this delightful climate. How my acquaintances at the South diminish. How are Uncle Wheelwright & families Martha Davis Mrs Brock-ways Abigail Knox Mr Withington. Miss Greenleaf &c. When you write do you take my letter & see if I ask any questions? Sometimes I ask the same thing a time or two, & get no answer at last. The sun is just setting & I promised the ladies I would walk out & meet them I will finish tomorrow morning.

This morning & nature is lovely indeed. I rise very early & I cannot describe my feelings on viewing the level dewy southern landscape. It seems as if my feelings struggle for vent & rushing to my pen are lost for want of words in which to clothe them. Why was I made with eye & heart to enjoy all these delights? Because my maker consulted my happiness. He fills me to overflow. I gaze at the beauties around me & a mass of reflections pour upon me that I cannot arrange or embody. O could I make you understand. You can for you have gazed in speechless ecstasy at the moonlight scene, when to have spoken would have broken the charm.

Sometimes I think I am very happily constituted. For the beauties of creation are open to me in a striking degree & I do think that I understand & relish the countless pleasures of retirement. But then I am so deficient in good feeling that I am a great loser. Could I possess that mild, angel like temperament how many bitter moments it would save me.

Today commences four days meeting at the Creek; there will be a world of people & preaching will be in the grove. I shall go tomorrow & next day perhaps. Mr Shaw says give my love to your sister. I saw Spence Hall & wife who inquire for you. Caroline Spruil asks for you likewise.

To overcome all unamiable feelings—to participate in the joys & sufferings of others,—to trace every incident in life to a Supreme power & realize that it is also the expression of goodness. To have an abiding sense that a being who knows what is best & loves me guides the most minute concerns of my life. I say to know & feel & do all this, is the darling wish of my heart. This will reconcile me to bereavement—to absence from you & to disappointment in my shortsighted plans. And now I must leave you again, and though I would cause a feeling of sadness or anxiety to come over you Yet I must say farewell.

T.E. Dozier

LETTER 10

From Huntington Library, HM 58156. Written to Betsey from North Carolina. Tamsen is 34. The letter is in very poor condition, with a chip of paper missing.

Camden April 14th 1836

My dear sister

I am now visiting in Camden & am at Ann Dozier's (now Mrs Grandy). I saw Mrs Marchant yesterday & several of my Camden friends who inquired for you. Left Tyrrel last week. I rather think you never will have a brother-in-law. Matters have been settled [in?] rather an unexpected way. I hope for the best.

I am in excellent health & expect to take a school the 1st of May. I know not exactly where but when I determine I will let you know. Think not I am unhappy. Far from it. I realise that on me heaven has been lavish of its blessings.

Tell Wm when you write to him that I cannot tell where he is as I have lost his direction. Here I must stay 3 months longer & it may be then I will go west.

Love to all. You will excuse my short letter—as I am visiting & do not like to be impolite.

Your sister

T E Dozier

LETTER 11

From Huntington Library, HM 58157. To Betsey from Camden, North Carolina. Tamsen is 34. Her reference to Mr Greenleaf's prophecy "fifteen years ago" about her teaching would have been in 1821, another indication that Tamsen went to Maine earlier than has been estimated and that letters 1 and 2 were written earlier. Her anticipated annual salary of \$1,000.00 would have been remarkable at the time, especially for a woman..

Camden September 13 1836

Sister

I have delayed writing to you until I could give you some information where I shall be & what I shall do. Last week I received a letter from William dated

April 5th which has been to Tyrrel & Currituck & I know not where. It was by far the most affectionate letter I ever received from him. He says he would be not only very much disappointed but also very much hurt if a new school or a new place of abode kept me from him. Query. Did Wm ever invite me to his house on a visit? Would he now but from self interest. And will he think the favor was conferred by me or by himself when I leave a school worth \$500 a year to take care of & educate his children. You say he says "he will take care of me." I am greatly obliged to his lordship & to gratify you both I will allow him to take care of me so long as I am necessary to him. But—I am abundantly able at present to take care of myself & to supply every necessary and unnecessary want. When bereft of husband & children & stripped of what he left behind, by the hand of the auctioneer [hole, bad?] health I had to struggle with my feelings—engage as a private instructor for a mere trifle & teach while I was unable to hold my head from the pillow. I say if then my brother had offered me a home (as Mr Poor did) I might not have accepted it, but I never should have forgotten it.

You may think I do not feel for Wm. Deeply do I feel for him & I know how he suffers. But I have not forgotten the cruel indifference of former days & that indifference was occasioned by a course of conduct praiseworthy in motive & honorable in its tendency & successful in its accomplishment. I never did receive a favor from him yet.

My school never was as good as it is present & I believe were I to stay I might make it worth \$1000 a year. This day it is worth \$600 & was every week improving until I said I was going away. But I asked my heart, what I ought to do & when the question was settled there & I had communicated my determination all was done & all moves easily. I cannot leave until about the last day of October as my term does not close & I cannot collect until then. O how painful it is to think of leaving forever, friends endeared to me by reciprocal kindnesses, by long acquaintance & similarity of sentiment. I wish Jane had my school. Mr Greenleaf's prophecy has been verified. Fifteen years ago, he said, my plan of instruction would one day be found to be superior to the old one. My school is visited by the strangers that pass & the visitors for miles around and since the people have become convinced of

its excellence they are as extravagant in their praises as the multitudes [are apt to be?] If I should only believe what they tell me I should think that since the days of Solomon none like unto me has arisen. But, somehow, I cannot believe they mean all they say. This is a charming season, so calm, so mild & the wood filled with wild flowers. & grape whose rich foliage climbs from branch to branch & from tree to tree & beautifying all with its rich chest

[letter ends without signature]

LETTER 12

From Huntington Library, HOU 10. A fragment. This letter was ripped in half horizontally. It is a double page—four pages—written on three sides with partial address on back side. Tamsen, 35, has moved to Illinois to care for and teach her brother's children, and is asking Betsey to send items she needs to set up housekeeping.

Waverly Morgan Co Feb 24th 1837

My dear sister,

Two months ago brother wrote you & as we have not heard from you I presume you have not received our letter. I know not where to begin or how to write. I am here & well—have a plenty to do & plenty to eat, this ought to satisfy me. I wish you were here. Mr Poor would find it pleasant as he could make excellent bargains. I have expected him all winter.

This country affords every flattering prospect to new beginner & were I young I would get here by some means—as it is I don't care much where I am. I have found the world on my side here
[next page]

1 mahogany bureau a dining table with end tables. Doz chairs finished except putting together a plain straw bonnet & if there is anything left put in unbleached cotton cloth. The bureau & tables I should like entirely plain of mahogany the chairs stool bottomed. Put the bonnet & chairs in the bureau drawers & get some cotton wadding & line the boxes to defend the furniture

it will be useful to me. & if you can spare a bed that will be acceptable to me & put it into the table & the looking glass grandmother gave me into the bed. The boxes I should like of clear pine as there is none in this country & we can use it in finishing I forgot a bedstead till now if you can find some cheap yet neat posts (low) & headboard send them. Mr Poor will please to put them up as dry goods are put up when imported & direct them to William Eustis, Waverly Illinois Care of Joshua Chiever Alt[on?] Ill. George Clark & [illegible] Boston I

[second page ends here]

[third page. Different handwriting. From Frances Eustis, her niece, brother William's oldest daughter.]

Dear Aunt

I have an opportunity of writing [sic] you. We are all well. Aunt Dozier, and Aunt Harriet are getting ready to receive [sic] company. We give them stools to sit on.

Frances has written so far & intended to fill the page but company came in & neither she nor I can do it. Miss Winslow says be sure and remember me to your father & sister. Farewell my sister.

[envelope—fourth page—is addressed Apple Creek, Feb 27th—the rest is ripped]

LETTER 13

From Huntington Library, HOU II. From Illinois to Betsey. Tamsen is 36. Joseph Dozier was Tully's father, Tamsen's first father-in-law. Note regarding the fever cake in her side: "When persons have fever and ague for a long time a hard cake forms above the edge of the ribs on the left side, as large as a plate, this is commonly called an ague cake, and is known to be the result of the hardening and enlargement of the spleen, situated on that side of the body." W. W. Hall, Health at Home, or Hall's Family Doctor (Hartford CT: James Betts, 1876), 115.

Sugar Creek Jan 16th 1838

My dear sister,

I have waited with no little impatience for a letter from you. Every time I have seen or heard from brother I have to obtain the wished intelligence & for a month I have sent twice a week to the Sugar Creek post office in vain I expect to see Wm here tomorrow & shall put in a word or two after his visit.

Since I last wrote you I have heard of the death of Jos. Dozier & many more of my Southern friends. My desire to return to them weakens as I become interested in this country. Think you that my wandering feet will rest this side the grave? My health is constantly improving. Fatigue & constant employment have produced a salutary effect. The fever cake in my side has lost 3/4ths its size & I sometimes think my constitution will triumph over disease. My school has been more difficult than I have been accustomed to but I believe I have given satisfaction. In March I shall return to brother's to continue there until he finds a wife. His children seem delighted with the thought of my returning to them. For myself I have no large expectations & therefore shall be in little danger of being disappointed I was sorry I wrote to you as I did I am glad I came here. Had I not a narrow house would have been my home. The furniture you sent I did not see until two weeks ago as I do not go to brothers, you know. Our children are very interesting & well worthy our love—they speak often of you & wish much to know more about your babe. Did you think I took so little interest in it as that you could anticipate no questions. Oh! my sister how many thousand inquiries would I gladly make about you & yours. I was much pleased with the furniture bonnet &c. & Mr Poor has my thanks The overplus I will send by Mr Greenleaf when he goes back. Has Mr Poor given up the thought of coming to see us? Has Mr Kinny relinquished his plan. If so, I am sorry. Mr Greenleaf is our neighbor. He left my boarding house this morning in fine health & spirits. He has purchased a delightful place. Is very much beloved & has a prospect of doing good. Take pains to let his mother hear from him. I did not think of writing this morning or perhaps he would have sent some word. He intends to return in the course of the year. If Wm should marry & I can afford it I shall see you then but do not calculate upon it.

Wm has raised an immense crop hundred bushels wheat do. oats & one thousand bushels corn & hired but 12 days labor. I have learned to spin & have spun the stocking yarn for Wm's family. Also I make vests, pantaloons & short jacket. I have knit 15 pair of stockings & as many pr socks since June & am about to learn to weave. So you see how smart we western folks are. We suckers think we know as much as the Yankees. For you must know I am not called yankee here; but a Southerner. Here many of our Eastern people think they will come & bear rule, setting a pattern of good manners & fine living—they really appear ridiculous & it makes me sorry for them. Bring up your children with enlarged ideas & teach them better sense than to say "We are the people."

And now my dear sister, I wish I could look into your heart & find out why you are so guarded in your expressions. Instead of that easy free manner that once marked your communications, you are as systematic as though you were giving in evidence. Is it because we are so much separated that you are beginning to feel estranged or do you really feel unwilling to trust your pen for fear it shall go wrong.

On one subject I was silent or nearly so. I was not want of confidence but delicacy of feeling that kept me silent & not until you suspected Mr [McClure?] of unhandsome conduct did I speak. I do not feel sorry for the course I pursued & shall always respect the man. He has made another unsuccessful attempt in the matrimonial line. You need not fear having a brother-in-law, for I know not a man old enough for me in the county. Tell Sarah Ann there are many here for her & she may have her choice if she will come out. Where are Mary & Harriet? How are father & Mr Poor? Tell me something about the children.

To say that I have any particular source of anxiety or cause of unhappiness I cannot. To say that I have any particular pleasure I cannot. Life moves on as smoothly & quietly as a summer stream Has Wm recovered of his deafness? Try that salt & water. Is Jane Brockway well? She could get a good school here but nothing like the southern one I offered her. On the prairie grows a fragrant flower shaped like an Indian mockasin & bearing that name. A beautiful white spotted with pink The rich luxuriant foliage of the

woodland the abundance of wild fruit & the extended prairie carpeted with verdure & bespotted with an endless number & an immense variety of blossoms feasted my eye during the summer. And now the lofty arch of heaven, dressing itself at sunset in such "glorious apppareling" produces a feeling of amazement & delight. I stop, I gaze & am awestruck. Winter has been mild. Snow has not been an inch deep as yet & I walk to school more than a mile in the open prairie & have lost but two day. I will wait till tomorrow. I may see brother.

[Next sentence is different handwriting] Sarahan I am candidate for matrimony.

J. S. [Coulter?]

Feb 3rd

All well. Have not seen Wm yet. Shall return to his house in four weeks. Mr Greenleaf well. First snow day before yesterday about four inches. Miss Winslow gone to Waverly [sic, Waverly] to live with her brother.

[Address on envelope—folded over paper—says]

Sugar Creek

Illi 5 Feb

Mrs Jonathan E. Poor

Newburyport Mafs.

LETTER 14

From Huntington Library, HOU 12. To Betsy from Springfield, Illinois. Tamsen is 38. Seven months earlier, on May 24, 1839, she married George Donner. She was 37 and he was about 52, with eight children from his two previous marriages. Only Elitha and Leanna, the two daughters of his second marriage, were still at home. At the time of this letter Elitha is 7, Leanna is 5, and Tamsen is three months pregnant (with Frances).

Springfield Sangamo Co Jan 12. 1840

My dear sister

Your long expected letter at length came to hand. Shall I tell you I was glad to hear from you? You seem to be so cheerful that I hardly have room to wish for you here: yet were Mr Poor here with his capacity to "get & keep" I should heartily rejoice. Would he but come & see. A man that can keep from starving in Newburyport cannot help getting rich in Ill. Is not father's health remarkable. Tell your little girls that mine are sitting, the one of them cracking walnuts, & the other marking on a slate & would be glad indeed to see them. Mary had better marry & come along. Mr Donner would soon find business for her husband & my house should be a home for her until she could be better suited. Tell Sarah Ann there is but one single girl in our neighborhood & lots & lots of men. Jane Maria I should think was out of her element. Where are Betsy & Abigail. How does Harriet & her family get along, Enoch, John, where are they.

It may be that you may never visit me & I will endeavor to give you some idea of my situation. husband & I live two miles from the capital on a farm containing 80 acres. 60 of which is under fence & in cultivation the remainder fenced & woodland. Our house is story & half, two rooms below a passage through & three above. We have an excellent well of water, an orchard of young apples peaches pear trees coming on. Have Jackasses, horses, cows, pigs, geese, turkeys, hens. Mr Donner has another farm of 160 acres 1 1/4 miles distant from the one we live on 80 acres of which is woodland. Cows sell at 16 to 20 dol the summer feed cost nothing. They graze on the prairie & corn sells at 2 5cts per bushel. We sell our milk at 5 cts per quart at this time by the quantity at the door. Eggs are 2 5cts a doz. Butter brings 20cts. lb half the year. My husband hauls two loads of wood a day to town for which he gets \$4.50cts & gets it cut for .62 1/2cts. You see there are sources of income. Bees do well here on the wildflowers. I find my husband a kind friend who does all in his power to promote my happiness & I have as fair a prospect for a pleasant old age as anyone. Mr Donner was born at the south, in N. Carolina, at eighteen he went to Kentucky, thence to Indiana then to

Ill. & a few years ago to Texas. But his movings, he says, are over: he finds no place so much to his mind as this.

Wm was here a few weeks ago & took Frances [Tamsen's niece] home. They are all in good health. One or the other of his girls have been with me ever since I was married. They speak often of Aunt Betsey & her family Wm is building up quite a settlement around him & in a few years he will be finely situated. He lives 22 miles from me. It is very convenient for him to come to Springfield to market & to see his sister. He is as good as the bank, highly respected but an amusing droll sort of man. I should not mind his not writing to me one bit. If it would help you out of trouble or into any improvement he would write if he were hungry before he would eat but he has so much corn, oats, turnips &c. to see to that he unloads his waggon before he comes in to see me when I go to see him. Mr Greenleaf is living very snugly & both are very much respected. But I do not hear often from him.

My husband says there are many opportunities for good bargains. That we are well & are glad of it & if you are fond of rabbits he wishes you would come & kill them to keep them from barking his apple trees. Come & he will go with you to hear the members speak as the Legislature meets at Springfield.

I will close for fear I may have a wish to send to the office but I hope to fill this page. How is little Wm's health? I expect you are all but buried in snow as we have more than we have had in many years. Our prospect for wheat on the ensuing years is flattering. We are building an elegant stone state house 180 feet long & 150 feet wide. A railroad is in progress from Meredosia on the Ill to Springfield that will open a ready communication between Springfield & St Louis.

And now my sister what more can I say. The time is short, it looks dark-ish like the approach of night & I have been in the house all day. I will send my love to my friends, forgiveness to my foes, & my particular regards to your husband & the rest of the family. My respects & kind remembrance to our father.

Your sister

Direct to "Mrs George Donner Springfield Sangamo County Ill"

LETTER 15

From Huntington Library, HM 58158. From Springfield, Illinois, to Betsey. Tamsen is 40. Her daughter Frances was born July 8, 1840. Her daughter Georgeann, later known as Georgia Ann, was born December 4, 1841. It appears that she signs this letter Tamzine as the i is firmly dotted. However, there are ink smears nearby, so it's most likely Tamzene.

City of Springfield Sangamo Co April 3rd 1842

My dearest sister,

After so long a silence I hardly know where to begin or what to say. My last letter to you was written after the birth of "Frances Eustis" & to it I received no answer. I know not that it reached you. To give you the outlines of my fortune from that time on is all I can do.

My health is excellent & my spirits good. I am as happy as I can reasonably expect in this changing world. Things have turned round very much to my satisfaction. I have quit keeping school. My husband's brother has removed from the farm, Mother died about three weeks ago & father has gone to spend the summer with one of his sons. My husband is kind to me. The security money that embarrassed us we have nearly paid & we have a plenty around us to make us comfortable. Our neighbors call us rich & we feel that few are better off than we are. Indeed my dear sister was your family near so that I could visit & see you occasionally I should have all my large wishes gratified.

We have another daughter 4 months old today. We call her Georgeann. Both are healthy. Frances begins to talk—has blue eyes, fair skin & red cheeks, light curly hair & is as thick as she is long. Never was sick but two days in her life & lives on bread & milk. Georgeann has black eyes & hair, dark skin, & never knew pain that I know of. She lies in her cradle beside me in a sound sleep.

Everything is cheap here. Butter 8cts, eggs 4cts doz. Hens doll. a doz. Bacon 3 cts. Superfine flour \$2 hundred weight. We shall milk 5 cows this summer. They feed on the prairies & come home without trouble to their calves every night. Stock is no expense except in winter.

Last week the place looked like a garden. About 50 peach trees were in bloom besides several pear & cherry trees. The gooseberry bushes & wild plum were crowded with bloom & the sweet briar perfumed the air. Never in March was there such a sight on this farm. The apple trees are now quite covered with blossom. The bees are humming in the flowers & I am writing by an open window.

Tell Wm his Uncle George thinks as much of a horse as he does. He has little horses & big ones & mules & jackasses & if he will come he will let him ride them. Is Mary married? She had better come out here. Mr Donner sold a likely mare last week for \$50 & takes labor in pay. This is the country for the industrious poor man. The railroad comes within three miles of us & Springfield improves rapidly notwithstanding the pressure for money. Do you suffer with the rest.

Wm is doing well, improving his place & making things comfortable around him. His wife is a pleasant woman & suits him exactly. Elizabeth is to [hole, be married?] in the fall to John Bargar Frances was [hole, here?] last fall seven weeks. The two boys are serviceable in the field. Charles, his babe, grows finely. He comes to market every five or six weeks & stays all night with us. Mr Greenleaf has a fine garden & lives very snugly, is much respected, & I doubt not will make a good living.

May 2nd

So far I wrote & put off finishing my letter until I came back from Wms. Week before last Mrs & Miss Eastman visited me from the city & told me Mrs Greenleaf has gone east to visit her friends. You no doubt will see her.

I found Wm well & how his eyes sparkled when he saw us. but he did not say he was glad. He has a fine orchard coming on & whereas was an unvaried praise the peach & the cherry tree blooms. His prospect for making more than a living is greater, he says, than it has been since he has been here. He says he wrote to you last fall. Did you get his letter? On the whole Wm is doing very well. He comes to market about once a month & stays with us all night quite pleasant & convenient. We live so near town that we know exactly when to send to market to get a good price. I wish you could

step in. Leanna (my step daughter) is churning & says, "Mother, write that Frances has white curly hair." Mr Donner & she think she is quite handsome, but I know she is quite in the way, for I must hold the inkstand in one hand to prevent her spilling the ink & she is pulling my papers & catching hold of my pen. I just told her to send Aunt a kiss & she kissed the spot where I now write. How does Father get along. I wish Mr Poor would come out here. He would like Mr Donner I know & how quick I would put on the teakettle! My sister I write in excellent spirits. I am as happy as anybody. Give my love to everybody.

[Written on top of third page which folds to make the envelope]
Fare you well, my dearest sister, all the warm feelings of my soul are stirred up as I write that sincere & heartfelt wish. God, Almighty God bless you.
Fare you well.

Tamzine [or Tamzene] Donner
Mr Donner sends his love to you also.

[Written upside down on the bottom of third page]
May 11th So my letter is here yet. We have had a cold spell & almost all the peaches are killed.

LETTER 16

From Huntington Library, HOU 13. Tamsen is 44 and on the Oregon and California Trail. She writes Betsy from Independence, Missouri, their "jumping off" place. This letter has been reprinted frequently with minor variations. This is the original. The 7000 wagons Tamsen mentions was an error; probably she meant to write 700.

Independence, Mo, May 11th, 1846

My dear sister

I commenced writing to you some months ago but the letter was laid aside to be finished the next day & was never touched. A nice sheet of pink letter

paper was taken out & has got so much soiled that it cannot be written upon & now in the midst of preparation for starting across the mountains I am seated on the grass in the midst of the tent to say a few words to my dearest only sister. One would suppose that I loved her but little or I should have not neglected her so long. but I have heard from you by Mr Greenleaf & every month have intended to write. My three daughters are round me one at my side trying to sew Georgeanna fixing herself up in an old indiarubber cap & Eliza Poor knocking on my paper & asking me ever so many questions. They often talk to me of Aunty Poor. I can give you no idea of the hurry of this place at this time. It is supposed there will be 7000 wagons start from this place, this season. We go to California, to the bay of Francisco. It is a four months trip. We have three waggons furnished with food & clothing & c. drawn by three yoke of oxen each. We take cows along & milk them & have some butter though not as much as we would like. I am willing to go & have no doubt it will be an advantage to our children & to us. I came here last evening & start tomorrow morning on the long journey. Wm's family was well when I left Springfield a month ago. He will write to you soon as he finds another home. He says he has received no answer to his two last letters, is about to start to Wisconsin as he considers Illinois unhealthy

Farewell, my sister, you shall hear from me as soon as I have an opportunity, Love to Mr Poor, the children & all friends. Farewell

T.E Donner

LETTER 17

The last letter was written along the Oregon and California Trail on June 16, 1846, and sent back to Springfield, Illinois, where it was published in the Sangamo Journal on July 23, less than five weeks after it was written. The heading read, "From the California Company." Tamsen's daughter Eliza says that Allen Francis, the coeditor of the paper, later sent her the original—if still in existence, its whereabouts are now

unknown. The letter has been widely reprinted in books from 1880 on, with minor variations of punctuation, spelling, and the number of wagons, 420 or 470.

Near the Junction of the North and South Platte, June 16, 1846.

My Old Friend:

We are now on the Platte, 200 miles from Fort Larimee. Our journey, so far, has been pleasant. The roads have been good, and food plentiful. The water for part of the way has been indifferent—but at no time have our cattle suffered for it. Wood is now very scarce, but "Buffalo chips" are excellent—they kindle quickly and retain heat surprisingly. We had this morning Buffalo steaks broiled upon them that had the same flavor they would have had upon hickory coals.

We feel no fear of Indians. Our cattle graze quietly around our encampment unmolested. Two or three men will go hunting twenty miles from camp;—and last night two of our men lay out in the wilderness rather than ride their horses after a hard chase. Indeed, if I do not experience something far worse than I have yet done, I shall say the trouble is all in getting started.

Our wagons have not needed much repair, but I cannot yet tell in what respects they could be improved. Certain it is, they can not be too strong. Our preparations for the journey might have been in some respects bettered. Bread has been the principal article of food in our camp. We laid in 150 lbs. of flour and 75 lbs. of meat for each individual, and I fear bread will be scarce. Meat is abundant. Rice and beans are good articles on the road—cornmeal, too, is very acceptable. Linsey dresses are the most suitable for children. Indeed if I had one it would be acceptable. There is so cool a breeze at all times on the plains that the sun does not feel so hot as one would suppose.

We are now 450 miles from Independence. Our route at first was rough and through a timbered country which appeared to be fertile. After striking the prairie we found a first-rate road, and the only difficulty we had has been in crossing the creeks. In that, however, there has been no danger.

I never could have believed we could have travelled so far with so little difficulty. The prairie between the Blue and Platte rivers is beautiful beyond description. Never have I seen so varied a country—so suitable for cultivation. Everything was new and pleasing. The Indians frequently come to see us, and the chiefs of a tribe breakfasted at our tent this morning. All are so friendly that I can not help feeling sympathy and friendship for them. But on one sheet what can I say?

Since we have been on the Platte we have had the river on one side, and the ever varying mounds on the other—and have traveled through the Bottom lands from one to two miles wide with little or no timber. The soil is sandy, and last year, on account of the dry season, the emigrants found grass here scarce. Our cattle are in good order, and when proper care has been taken none have been lost. Our milch cows have been of great service—indeed, they have been of more advantage than our meat. We have plenty of butter and milk.

We are commanded by Capt. Russel—an amiable man. George Donner is himself yet. He crows in the morning, and shouts out "Chain up, boys! chain up!" with as much authority as though he was "something in particular." John Denton is still with us—we find him a useful man in camp. Hiram Miller and Noah James are in good health and doing well. We have of the best people in our company, and some, too, that are not so good.

Buffalo show themselves frequently. We have found the wild tulip, the primrose, the lupine, the ear-drop, the larkspur, and creeping hollyhock, and a beautiful flower resembling the blossom of the beech tree, but in bunches as large as a small sugar loaf, and of every variety of shade, to red and green. I botanize and read some, but cook a "heap" more.

There are 420 [470?] wagons, as far as we have heard, on the road between here and Oregon and California.

Give our love to all inquiring friends—God bless them.

Yours truly

Mrs George Donner