

Mississippi River, Lee County, Iowa Territory  
Above Montrose 1/2 mile Camp of the Pioneers  
September 22 A.D. 1846

Mary W. Woolley, Camp of Israel  
Omehaw Nation, Cutler's Park west of Missouri

My Dear wife and family,

"I employ this morning in penning a few line to you, altho I have no particular news as I know of, as the subject of the war, is of course the talk there as well as here, seeing that the messengers from here must have arrived by this time or will soon and before this can reach you. We arrived here on Sunday after noon , this is Tuesday morning. I and Bro. Whitney were visited by the trustees and requested to go with them to Nauvoo, which we did that evening, and we stayed with Bro. Haywood that night. In the morning I came over the river on some business expecting to return in a few hours to Nauvoo, but after being here a short time, found Bro. Whitney on this side, shortly after I left him he was visited by a posse of the Mob under arms, who demanded his name and whether he was a Mormon or anti-Mormon. He told them his name and that he was ant-Mormon. They wrote it down and left for the temple, the place of headquarters of the Mob. He expected there was something brewing so he picked himself and travelling bag up, and left for the Iowa, and we have not heard from them since.

"The city is now in possession of the Mob, who are ransacking every house in it except those that are known to be not of the highest order. The temple is their headquarters they have a barrel of whiskey in it and are drinking and carousing in mob style. The eastern part of the city I am told presents a dreadful spectacle, as that was the place of the engagement. Over one hundred cannon balls have been thrown into the city, destroying several houses and other property. The log buildings of that part of the town were torn down by the Mormons and hauled together to make forts and breastworks for the defense of the city. I have not been to see the field of battle yet. I have a desire but it is not safe for me to go to town. Several were run from there yesterday, and I shall not expose myself by going over again.

"I have not even seen our old residence, yet I would like to have taken a walk thru the city, merely to witness the desolation, for there is nothing else to be seen there. There are not many faces there and what there are, are strange and haggard and look more like devils and ghosts than anything else. Previous to the war the grog shops and devils holes had grown to over one hundred in number, and as they increased in number they grew in wickedness, until Nauvoo is now like Babylon of old, a sink of iniquity, a place of foul spirits, and a gathering place for the damned. All that beauty, all the grandeur and all the loveliness that once was there has fled, it has gone and gone forever. Desolation and the cries of the damned are the only sounds that you hear, even in hours of the night that should be still and quiet, and when a saint desires to calm his mind and the people would pay their devotion to Him that has preserved them, they are all at once aroused and terrified by the shock of the cannon, and report after report is herd in succession with the hoarse grumbling of the drum, until there is no time to rest, and hardly any space that is not filled with alarm.

"The night we were there, when all supposed there was peace, three heavy discharges were made at the temple between nine and ten o'clock and we knew not but the war was commenced, but it ceased again and partial quietness stole on by degrees, until those most exhausted by war, and worn out by fatigue, were stolen away by sleep and were left a few hours to enjoy their slumber.

“But to return to Nauvoo as it was. As to business, you know how it teemed with mechanics, with merchants, with business of every kind, six months ago. Now not store, not a workshop, scarcely, and now only a few grocery stores, such is the state of affairs. But more when I return.

“As to our journey, we have had a tedious one and somewhat laborious, but we arrived here in safety and all well. We expect to leave this afternoon for Keokuk and thence to St. Louis. We will go with our own wagon and arrive there after dark with a view to leave before daylight tomorrow morning. Nothing of importance has happened on the way. We came through Garden Grove and saw the people there, a good many sick.

“I will now write a few lines upon another subject and one too of some interest perhaps to us, and one that you will feel as much about as the preceding, whether for good or evil. The state of things here are such that it is impossible to effect much, particularly under the unfavorable circumstances that matters were in when we left. I mean in regard to Louisa. I will give thee a full account as far as pen and paper can do it, as to our interview.

“The day we arrived we camped two miles back at Montrose, till we sent a messenger to learn the state of things at the seat of war. While that was going on I had two hours to spare so I went across to Perry’s in the jack oak grove to learn where she was. From them I learned that she lived at a Mr. Luce’s some two miles back on the road, but that she was not there as it was Sunday and she was going with them to the river today. But the whisperings were to me to go, so I went back two miles to the place and found her at home. I walked in, gave her my hand, which she took reluctantly, as I thought. We passed the common salutations of strangers, and she gave me a seat. I did not take it, till I picked up my boy who was playing in the cubbard. I kissed him and embraced him, and he looked me in the face, and laughed as tho I had not been more than a week from him. He was well pleased and did not wish to go from me, altho he is commonly afraid of strangers. The children of the family were there, and I had no chance to speak to her further. She inquired for thee and some of the children individually, and the family and friends in general. I then told her that I had but a very few more minutes to spend, as I had to be with my company that was two miles off in forty minutes. I asked her to take a walk that way, a small distance, which she did. I took the child and walked the road near half a mile with her, reprimanding her and receiving the same in return for sometime, and found that she had heard many things that I had not said, and that there was someone trying to undermine me and had for some time. She told me that she had no notion of any man, that she was determined not to marry any man, that she had not ever promised any one, but that she had told out that idea more to match me than anything else, that she had not ever written to the camp or anywhere else that she was married, that she was not, nor ever would be, that she was going east soon, that she was expecting her father every boat. He wrote to her a short time ago from Ohio on his way here, that her mother had advised her not to marry. My time was out and I had to leave her. She promised to write to thee and her sister, and I left her, not knowing I should ever see, as it was agreed if we could not go to town, we would go straight on down the river, so I came to the camp and in a short time the messenger came and the trustees, so we put to Nauvoo. Then the history in the place I have already given. So yesterday I wrote a note to her that she could meet me at the camp and I could have some more talk with her. The reason I did not go to her was she was afraid, as she is living with the Gentiles and denies Mormonism, she passes as an apostate, and when I found her, she was not much short of it. A hundred tales are told her by the mob party and dissenters from the camp, till she was nearly ready to deny it to me. But when I refuted the tales and reasoned with her and told her I had not seen or done as she had heard she said she would believe me. But as I said, I sent a note to her, she got a horse and boy and they came on horse back to the camp, where I took the privilege to talk to her an hour or more, her feelings being much changed since yesterday, altho she was just as fearful of the Gentiles seeing me say a word to her, almost, she said they were jealous of me as she had lived with me and I did not take her out. And from an observation made by me of the company, as we moved out, in the presence of the man she lived with, they learned that

there was a difficulty, and they judged that I wanted her for a spiritual, so she said she feared that I might be in danger, so this accounts for my sending for her. She now feels better and says if her father does not come in a few days, that she will do as I told her that is to try and get a wagon and come to the camp. She said she would come to the camp if she could be used as she ought, said she had been treated with so much coolness by thee and I about the time we left that she did not care much what she did, and had made up her mind to marry for spite and not for love, but on seeing me the last time and knowing I was gone she changed her mind and told sister Gheen to tell the folks that she had abandoned her former project.

I charged her with all the reports I could think of and she either denied them or told me them in a different way so that the things had been represented me to destroy my feelings for her and told her things in a way that would wean me away from her. But I cannot tell quite all we said, and I have very near too. She left and went home with her friends and I am glad I got to see her before she went east, she send her love to thee and all the children and she will write herself.

"I will say that Riter and his family are on this side in a tent, that Jane Downing has been sick and he and his family are coming on I believe. I saw John Barton and family. I saw Mary Ann in Mt. Pisgah, she was going on. I saw sister Shurtleff at Garden Grove, she is well and in good spirits. I do not know what more to say that you would like to hear. As to your condition I know not, have not heard a word from you since I left, but I hope you are all well, and pray that you may be happy and that you will love each other as I love you and if you feel as I do, you will be desirous to cultivate the best of feeling. Remember me to the children in love. Bless them and they shall be blessed I think thee had better let Ellen read this letter and my part of it that thee wishes to be kept secret charge her not to speak of it to anyone.

"So I conclude by saying, I wish I could be with you tonight and I would tell you more. May God add his blessing and save us in all our difficulty.

"And I ever remain your husband

Edwin D. Woolley

P.S. You will say to Bro. Whitney's folks, he is well and in good spirits and is now sitting on this side of the river looking thru a spy glass at his carriage on the other shore. Sister Whitney is just cooking our dinner and we shall soon have a feast on some mutton we bought this morning. The Saints are about all over except the trustees and they will have to flee soon or I am no prophet.