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D-329 2:79: Transcription of Letter from Elizabeth Lewis to John B. Lewis, February 4, 1858

This transcription contains language contemporaneous of the time and is being presented as part of a historical record. Please note that the transcription has not been reviewed for final editing.

Libby to John Lewis in San Francisco

Hartford Feb 4, 1858

My Dear Husband

I received that document as well as a good long letter from your dear self. I am glad your mind is relieved at last, I know how it is very hard for you to give our home in San F---It is for me also. I am very much attached to it yet I think it is better for you do to it (although I think it is done at a sacrifice) than to borrow or mortgage. I sometimes feel as I had no home to go back to, but home is where the heart is, and that dearest is with you. I could not get the deed acknowledged in Farmington. I went to see about it yesterday, but Samuel Cowles said he was not authorized to transact the business, so this morning early, I took the stage and came over to Hartford. George went up to Mr Goodmans office. He is commisioner for the state of California, so I hope it is all right. I am glad you get the money down, dont you give up the deed until you do. I have not written my name very beautifully because I had not a decent pen, neither is it exactly against the seal – why is not Mr Jackson’ full name on the deed – Since I wrote you last, the very night after the steamer sailed, Farmington was the scene of much excitement – about six o clock in the evening a fire was discovered issuing from Lucuis Dormans barn. He lives on the road going over the mountain, nearly opposite the old Hooker place. Anson Bodwell had a house just above him and Erastus Phelps a little west, the house Chaucy Hart build in between, Dorman and Erastus Phelps. Everybody ran to the fire. The bell rang ec They have a very good engine, but a few days before the hose had been party oiled by some one who took care of it, the rest was left to finish on the next pleasant day, so it was not in order, ready for immediate use, but it was arranged after a while. About eight o’clock and before Dormans was through blazing, another cry of fire was heard. It was Festus’ barn filled full of hay & stalks and his cows, horse ec. Dorman was partially insured and his wagons and horse were saved. Father had been up there keeping the brands off from Anson’s house and do all he was able to, towards putting out the fire. He had just got home and was eating his supper, when his wife looked up and said “your barn is all on fire”. It was not streaming up to the very top. The barn was locked. Father took the key and hastened to unlock the door, he could not find the key-hole, his hand trembled so. He thought at first that it was filled up – Then he went round back to get the horse stable door open, but could not get a board off until he tried the cows stable, he at last got in and tried to let the animals loose. The smoke and all affected him, his knife dropped into the manger – and it was providential. I believe he succeeded in getting one loose, and if he had done so with the next, he would have gone to the west end of the stable, and would, no doubt have lost his life – as it was he was taken out by force. He went to the door once to get air and then back again to do what he could. He said he tried to find the door the second time but could not, as soon as people came,

his wife kept telling them he was in the barn, but it seemed as if she could not make them understand. She tried to get in herself. When Father was brought out he could not speak – and he still suffers from pain in his left side, caused by pulling of the boards. It is a wonder he was saved. The barn was just as full of hay as could be, and was all in a blaze in no time – He lost a horse, two cows and a fine heifer and one or two animals of the male gender. I never knew so much excitement in F--- of course when they saw the second fire we all knew it was the work of an incendiary. Guards were sent to different barns and street were watched all night, but while Father's barn was burning, the fellow was found and many were inclined to put him in, and let him blaze too. His name was Harrington, he has lived in F--- at several places. also at Father's, but he never had any difficulty with him, but he is an ugly fellow- is now in jail awaiting his trial. Every one thinks he will go to the states prison – Father's corn was mostly in the house, his buckwheat was saved, part of it. If there had been a breath of wind we should have had such fires as Farmington never saw. He was seen going towards Henry Lewis' barn also – Father's loss is about \$700. He bears it much better than I expected. The loss of the cows is a great deal for them. I do not suppose Mother Bodwell has much money except that she gets for butter and eggs ec. People have been very very kind. Mr William Whitman gave him \$10 and offered him hay next morning. Mr Norton also – afterwards a paper was circulated and over \$100 collected. Henry Lewis gave him \$15, besides throwing in a debt which would make it about \$20. Dr Thompson gave \$10, Fisher Gay \$10 worth of lumber and told them to send for milk whenever they wished – Others were equally kind – They all sympathize with him so much. he is so old he feels as if he could not go to work and build again. I should have gone to Collinsville to-day if I had not been obliged to come over here.

Little Charlie is at Lennies, Last Saturday I went down to read your letters – took Charlie with me, towards night it became very cold so we staid all night. Sunday was the coldest day we have had. I came up to Aunt C's in the morning expecting we would come up in the middle of the day, but it was so cold I told Mother to keep him all night. Monday it was mild and pleasant and I thought Mother would surely come but she kept him. I had company and could not well go down, expecting every moment he would come. Tuesday it stromed, half rain, half snow & ice. Wednesday morn I went down early. He was delighted to see me but did not wish to go up to Aunt C's. I stayed all day, found I must come to Hartford, and so left him last night, when I spoke of coming home, he coaxed me as prettily as he knew how (and that is pretty well) dont go Mama- dont Aunt Jane will let you stay – I stayed and put him to bed – He was very much pleased, is just as good as a little kitten without me. He is troubled with those hateful pin worms – is pretty well. He went down with ragged shoes, and while there wore a hole in the knee of his pants, the first one, now I suppose there will be no end to the patching. Lenny gave him a pair of new shoes, and Mother was making him a pair of pants. I told Lenny I thought I had better have stayed away a little longer and then he would have a new suit – I am glad I did not bring him with me as Georges baby has the measles. She is over the worst of it, unless she takes cold. She is a nice child. All are well and send love to you and Charlie – Little C told me to tell you that he was a good boy, and kissed me for Papa, Unken C and Dan. Tell Mrs T and Bacon I will write as

I can. Give my love to all. Perhaps this will find you with Charlie at the ranch. Lennie and Mother and all are as well as usual. Mother Bodwell has lost her mother, all send much love-

I believe I wrote you that i had drawn what James had in his charge. There was \$80.88. I gave him a receipt for it – You ask me if I have money enough. I know dearest you will think I have spent a great deal. I have much more than I expected to, but I have bought no gee gaws or fancy fixings whatever, and have only spent what is absolutely necessary to pay expenses and keep Charlie and myself decently clothed. Still there are two or three things I would like to get – if you feel as if you could afford it – I thought I could box up my work table and send that, and that could be packed full, and if you thought best I could get a carpet (ingrain) and put it in the box, also some cotton cloth and linin & some common towelling ec. You must write me just what you think about it. I should like a double brocha shawl. I have about \$20 left which rightfully belongs to little Charlie – no write me just what you think all about it. You did not write me whether you had exchanged houses with Dan or not. If you refer to your own house – do not put on any new front – If there is a good large bed room put on the pleasantest side about 12 feet square – then divide the front part into two rooms, say the front one 12 by 12. and we can get along – I do not wish you to take everything you have got for the house. I would rather you pay every cent you owe. These drays and Robert Mac and everybody else you owe. I would like to get you some clothes too. Lennie will give you a pair of pants, if you will send your measure – I cannot send you any plan because I do not know which house you are going to use. I shall not probably start before the 20th of April. Do not think dear hubby you must have things all nice for me when I come you are always too good and kind for me, I did not tell you what shawl or carpet would cost. The fact is I am writing in such an awful hurry. I can hardly think. \$25 would get a good shawl, which would last me a life time, a carpet would probably cost about \$20. I shall not get any nice new bonnet as you anticipate, but have my old one fixed up. I think it will answer my purpose – Give my love to brother C – and tell him to please write Father – he feels it very much because he has not written him. Do not work too hard, take good care of yourselves. Much love to you dear one and good bye hoping to meet very soon. I am as well as usual – write all news particularly. Love to all

Good by dearest from your ever affectionate wife

E B Lewis

Tell Charlie to look out of that Colt of Mine I have written in such haste, I hardly know what I have written as I send by to-nights mail to New York to leave in the steamer to-morrow noon -