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MC194:Folder 15 Mudd, George to Mudd, Stephen, 1879 December 10

This transcription from the original letter contains language contemporaneous of the time and is being presented as part of a historical record.

Jacinto, Colusa Co, Cal
December 10th 1879

Mr. Stephen Mudd

Dear Brother

Your letter of Oct. 14th was received a short time ago. I was much pleased to hear from you but sorry to hear of your hurt, and your being out of work. If you have been off work for seven months, you must be pretty hard up, but you don't say so, only that you have not money to emigrate with. If you are in need, and unable to work, or to get work, I could most any time [lend?] you five pounds to help you over the hard times, and perhaps more, just according to the state of my own affairs. My business is not in very good condition at present, so that I can not control much money so as to spare it at one time; but can always I think, spare you enough to keep ~~the~~ you from hunger or begging.

I am doing a large business, and will have this year 2250 acres in wheat and barley. It is "make or break" with me this year; and from the way the rains have started this winter, I think I shall "make." We have had three years in succession of short crops, so you may conclude that we have pretty hard times here. I have had five crops since I bought my partner out, and only one of them was a good one; and as I had to pay him thirty thousand dollars for his share and also pay all the debts of the partnership, and had to borrow all the money, I have had an immense amount of interest to pay every year. I have just about kept the interest paid, and have also bought about twenty three thousand dollars worth of more land. So you see I am deeply in debt, but I have a large amount of property to pay it with, and will come out all right if I only have time.

All kinds of business is important now, and if we have a good crop I think we shall all come out all right. California has had the hardest times she ever saw, during the last two years, and noth-ing but a good crop will bring things out again. Land during this time has decreased in value, until [sic] none could be sold at all, except at ruinous sacrifices. I have nineteen hundred acres of land that I have wanted to sell for three or four years, but could not. If we have a good crop this year, land will improve in value and will being to sell again. Whenever I can sell that land I am all right, and will have 1075 acres left on my home place, which is all I want to farm; and I will sell that too, as soon as possible after the rest. William lives eight miles from me, but close to one of my farms. He has owns 460 acres of land, and farms it. He is in debt very deeply, and is very hard up, but we all get a living. He is in no condition to help you any. And from what I can learn of Jim in Missouri, he is equally hard up, though perhaps not so much in debt. There is no money to be made at farming in Missouri. Brother James talks of leaving there soon, and

moving further north to Minnesota or to Dakota Territory, both in the United States. I seldom hear from Jim, only by his letters to Will. Jim lost his wife and is married again last spring. He has five or six children.

William's wife, Jane, died on the 30th September last, after being sick several months. Will has five children, the oldest fourteen (a girl) and the youngest not yet three, he has three boys and two girls. We have two children, both boys, one nearly four, the other seven months old. We are all well. Will's family are all well, but he is not very well. He is broken down a good deal, the loss of his wife has gone very hard with him, and has left him in a bad position. He intends to leave here as soon as he can get out of debt a little and sell his land so as to have something left. He does not know where he will go yet, but I think further north. I shall leave here too whenever I can get out of debt and sell out; but if I get out with as much as I expect to do, I do not think I shall go to farming again; but if I do, I shall probably buy land in the Southern States, Georgia or Florida, and raise sheep and wool. This is a very hot climate here, in summer, ranging from one hundred to one hundred and fifteen and some-times twenty degrees. The work is constant from one years end to another in farming. In summer working 16 or 17 hours a day no matter how hot and 12 to 15 hours a day in winter. We live on a broad Plain, in the great Sacramento valley, which is here 40 to 50 miles wide, with the Sacramento River running through the middle of it. The valley is still broader lower down, and is closed in by the mountains about 40 miles above here; the valley narrowing from here up. It is about 150 to 200 miles long. We are about 150 miles from San Francisco, on the sea, and the River empties into the Bay of that name. The River is navigable to this point and still higher up. Steamboats plying on it constantly. The River is about six miles from my place, and I haul my wheat to it, to ship on the boats. A railway runs up the Valley to within eleven miles of my place, and will come within four miles of it when it is built further up the Valley. A high range of mountains is on each side of the valley; that on the west called the Coast Range Mts., and that on the east the Sierra Nevada Mts., the latter being where all the gold mines are. Gold mining has got to be such that, for the most part it requires a large amount of capital to successfully carry them on. I do not know much about them in this State, but wages have come down to from a dollar and a half to two and a half a day, and there is perhaps ten men for every one man's work. Will and I mined in the State of Nevada lying east of California, and at that time did very well, getting four to five dollars a day in the Silver Mines. Wages are down there also, and overrun with men. Wages here in the Valley on a farm, is at present thirty dollars and some are down as low as twenty a month of 26 working days, and board (that is and fed). This is, all the time except in harvest, when the wages are forty to fifty dollars a month and board. It is a hard life, almost night and day to work, and a good deal to do on Sundays—especially in harvest time. Harvest lasts perhaps three months in a year. I would not work on a farm here at all, except for myself, and only then till I can get out with some-thing. If you were here, I could give you plenty of work, at whatever wages are at the time; but we are liable to leave at any time after we can sell out. So you might come here and in a year or two we would be leaving and then you would either have to do the same or stay by yourself. The wages you could make here would not more than support your family. You can get no land here without paying a big price for it. It would cost you and wife 80 to 100 dollars a piece [sic] to get here, (you do not say if you have any children) and if you could not save anything, you would be no better off. After we had left, you might not be able to keep in work, as work here is very uncertain and men are constantly changing about. On the whole, Will and I can see no encourage-ment for you to come here, though we should like you to do so if we were going to make a

permanent home here. I will write to Jim, to tell him to write to you and give you all the information he can. If he moves north, and you are determined to emigrate, I think it is probable you would do best to go where he does, and take up a peice [sic] of Government land, which you get for nothing. You would then make a living anyway; but to come out and depend on working for wages, I think you are better where you are. Get what information you can from Jim and then see; and if you decide to emigrate, and need help, I will help you if I can. If you are in need now, write and let me know.