Box 1 Folder 16

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[*Addressed to:*] Mr. Erastus Burr —
Norfolk [*Connecticut*]

[*Extracts from Ralph E. Burr's letter, first date, Feb. 25 1845?*]

"Have recently had the extreme pleasure of receiving one letter from home which was commenced 14 Nov. Am still working for Wood & Clark. Mr. Clark & Mrs. Wood have both told me at different times that they would give me employment long as I remained in Cal. [*California*]" If they give him good wages intends to stay. He once wrote he had $65. a month — said nothing about it in this. Says. "I commenced here as waiter, & am now waiter, cook, Steward, Barkeeper, Store keeper & packer— do not have very hard work, but am pretty busy from before daylight till eight in the evening do not feel much like writing after work nights."

"The winter has been pleasant, much like your Oct. weather. Had the blues for a time after arriving in Cal. [*California*] & the worst when out of work. but say positively I am not disappointed in anything but the living & that is better than I expected. If I was to stay here until first Apr. could then start for home & reach N. York [*New York*] in a year from the time I left there & pay my expenses here & back & have a hundred dollars in my pocket — would not go home tomorrow if anyone would give me a free ticket." Has not been sick a day since he has been in that house & weighs 170 lbs. without coat, vest or boots — "People who expect to spend their lives in Cal. [*California*] Think no more of a bit (12 1/2 cts. I believe) than they would of a cent at home, but I do a little" "Feb. 27 – rec'd [*received*] two letters from home yesterday, one mailed at Flemington [*New Jersey*] Sept 2. & one at Norfolk [*Connecticut*] Sept. 17. & another from Flemington [*New Jersey*] & one from Daniel mailed at Parks Bar. Have written to him & one to Ethan Pendleton this forenoon."

[*P*]oint Defiance [*California*] is 30 miles Northeast of Marysville [*California*] at the junction of the South & North Yubas "Carrie asks if I find I know much about cooking – I don't know <u>much</u> about it, but they had a cook hired here when I first came who made cooking his business & they considered him good, but the boarders all say I cook better than he did."

[*written across side:*] Ralph wishes to be remembered to all friends —

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Point Defiance [*California*], Sep. 14, 1853.

Dear Brother & Sister,

For the first time since the 20th of last Oct. I am lying idle a day. My feet have been troubling me a little for three or four days & today are quite painful to walk upon, so Mrs. Wood is cooking while I rest. It appears a little like rheumatism don't know whether 'tis that or standing & running on the floor so much, we have had pretty busy times for a week or two, more boarders coming in, Have been so busily employed I have scarcely written any letters this summer, & have recd none since early in the spring excepting one from Ethan Pendleton & one from Daniel, Ethan was across the bay from San Francisco at a heavy job of cutting & hauling wood, presume he will make a good thing of it. Dont know where Daniel or any of the other boys are except Le [*Levi Grant*] he is here working by the day at five dollars. It has been cloudy & rained a little this morning which is the first rain we have had since last spring only a little thunder shower one night 3 or 4 weeks since. Fluming companies have just commenced taking out the gold & a heavy rain enough to raise the rivers & carry away the dams would break thousands of men, but we dont look for such a rain yet. It probably will not come for two months. cannot tell yet how the river companies will do but there is a fair prospect of most of them doing well. the company Levi works for worked about 25 men & took out over 2000 dollars last week it has cost them 7 or 8000 to get into the river. Although there is a great deal of gold in the country, still no one seems to be very rich that I know. It costs a great deal to live the way people generally live in this country. After a

man pays 10 dollars a week for board & plays cards for whiskey & oysters & watermelons every night & now & then a day, he is not going to have much money unless he has rich diggings, & there is not a man that I know but that will play for these things excepting Mr Wood Le [*Levi*] & myself. Out of twenty five or thirty men who compose the population of this point, I dont believe there are six that are worth 1000 dollars & most of them have been in the country since '49. Tis true that soon as men get 3 or 4000 dollars they generally leave for home but there are thousands & thousands who never have saved that much although perhaps they might have done it had they been as saving and industrious as you & other people are at home. Still everything a man eats or drinks (excepting water) or wears must be bought at an extravagant price. Most men will have what they like if they see it. I have been as industrious & saving as any man could be since I have been in the country. have worked every day I could work, have not drunk a drop of liquor nor bought more than a dozen melons or any more clothes than just enough to be dressed as decent as other people & all the money which I have sent home & which is now due me is $1020.38 cts & I had $40 of that when I got here.

I actually dont know what to write about that would interest you, there is no one or thing here that you ever knew & I have stuck so close to one place that I know but very little about the different parts of the country. The farming is all done in the valley down south or southwest from here & people say almost everyone has the chills there & a good deal of fever, no one has the chills here unless they caught them in the valley. Farming is not as profitable as it was last year although it is money making business now. I would'nt want anything better than to farm & about 25 or 50 cows all the good cheese you could make would sell for 50 cts a pound & butter for ,75 or 1,00 all the Beef you could raise from 20 to 30 cts a pound: but to <u>buy</u> a farm it would cost as much as one at home, & if you take it up it costs a great deal to fence it & make any improvements, in many places there is no timber for rails & then boards must be bought at from 40 to 50 dols a thousand – good milk cows would cost from 100 to 150 dols each, & if ever I have money enough to buy one a farm & stock it here I am going home. Suppose if I stay here four or five years more things will be so changed that Norfolk [*Connecticut*] will hardly look as it did when I left I shall scarcely know the place, the fence round the green & trees must be a great addition to the looks of the place. I often try to think how everything looks & all of you get along but somehow it always seems just as it was when I left although I know there is a change

Driving cattle across the plains from Missouri & the western states has been a very profitable business for two years & will likely always pay well but men say who came across this season that stock is getting scarce & high in the states so there is not so much profit to be made on it hereafter. Last year $2000 worth of stock in Missouri would be worth $20000 here. Teaming is good business. Teamsters get 4 cts a pound for hauling goods from Sacramento here 60 miles The roads are rather rough & hilly but a four mule team will draw 35 or 40 hundred & make a trip every six days. but I cant get a team for a good stout six mule team with wagon & harness is worth $3000. So I must work along as any poor boy has to at home. Wish I could be there a little while to see you all. little Mary trudging off to school. Eddie strutting round in pants little Sam running all round & getting into all kinds of mischief, & Abbie [*Abigail E. Grant Burr*] a perfect little woman if she has staid with "Gramma Grant." Now Mr. Erastus & Mrs. Nancy I want you to write me a letter & tell me all how you are getting along as honestly as I have told you about myself. I would give ten dollars for a letter this minute from you. Remember me to all the uncles Aunts & cousins down your way Olive & Harriet in particular. Tell Uncle Cressey I am right glad I came here for I dont think I shall loose anything pecuniarially & what I have seen & learned will more than compensate for what little sickness I have had,

Your affectionate brother

R. E. Burr [*Ralph E. Burr*]

[*Written across first page:*] Sept 25. Have had quite a little spot of the rheumatism. it went all over me except my left arm. was not nearly as bad as when I had it at home Had no physician took the medicine Dr Welch gave me. am well now & shall go to work in a day or two.

R.E. Burr

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