

Henryk Sienkiewicz¹ to Julian Horain²

Exiles, Adventurers, Artists: Letters from Polish California, 1836-1901

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Sebastopol: April 9, 1877

I am unable to express to you how your last letter delighted me; hence I'm answering it immediately even though I also gave the butcher³ a letter back to you today. This will be the third already. You report to me that all are in good health – meaning, therefore, also Pani⁴ Helena,⁵ who was not well when I left, giving me here no sense of calm. Doubtless the improvement of her health has had such a redemptive influence on

UNITED STATES MAIL,

POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, December 1, 1874. }
Proposals will be received at the Contract Office of this Department until 3 o'clock P. M. of March 1, 1875 (to be decided by the 20th), for carrying the mails of the United States from July 1, 1875, to June 30, 1878, on the following routes in the State of California, and by the schedule of departures and arrivals herein specified, viz:
Service July 1, 1875, to June 30, 1878.
46273—From San Francisco to San Quentin, 12 miles and back, daily, in suitable and safe steamboats, with a schedule satisfactory to the Postmaster at San Quentin.
Bond required with bid, \$600.
46274—From Sacramento city, by Cosumnes, to Michigan Bar, 27 miles and back, three times a week.
Leave Sacramento city Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 8 a m;
Arrive at Michigan Bar by 4 p m;
Leave Michigan Bar Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 8 a m;

the humor of her spouse that you have even noted it. I see too from the description of the anecdote with Mr. Bednawski⁶ that all are in good cheer, including Pani Helena. Praise God for that as well. I'd be truly jealous of you if I had only myself in mind and were it not for the fact that, in the absence of other causes to rejoice, there remains to me at least the solace of others being merry rather than mournful. Likewise you have no cause to envy me this rebounding merriment; thus everything has turned out delightfully, even extremely so.

I thank you once more for the letter. Enjoy yourselves there, and if you've got a bit of time left over, write to me, about whatever you wish, even about trifles, even about the ever rosier spirits of Misters Chłapowski,⁷ Zachert⁸ or Bednawski.

Excuse me for writing so many letters – this pushiness arises from a yearning for news; yet if because of this, should things turn out in such a way that I leave for Europe, then I'll desist from vexing you for a long time, surely for a very long time. I don't know when this will happen; a man is not subject to himself⁹ –

¹ Polish journalist and author; awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1905; see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/henryk-sienkiewicz>.

² Julian Florian Horain, Polish journalist; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Horain.pdf>.

³ Michigan Bar, a goldmining town northeast of Sebastopol, with the nearest post office to Sebastopol. Apparently the town butcher delivered mail.

⁴ Pan and Pani are Polish titles of respect, and are roughly equivalent to Sir and Ma'am.

⁵ Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska); see: <http://culture.pl/en/artist/helena-modrzejewska-modjeska>

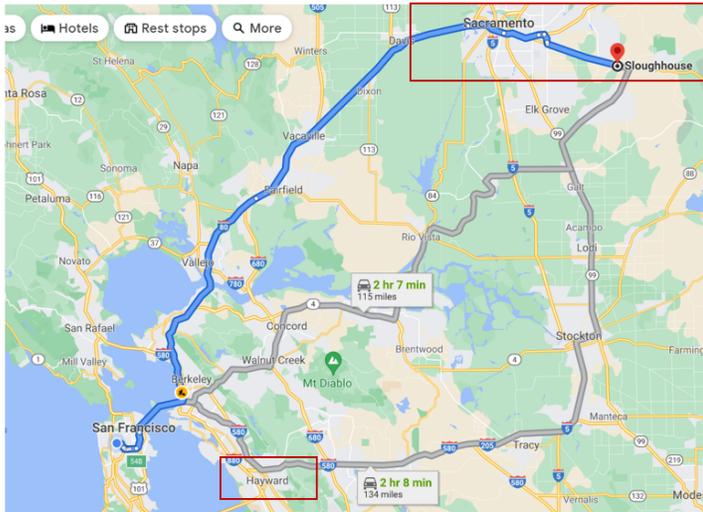
⁶ Aleksander Bednawski; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Bednawski%20addresses.pdf>.

⁷ Karol Chłapowski, husband of Helena Modjeska.

⁸ Jan Zachert; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Zachert.pdf>.

⁹ A man is not his own master, but a pawn of fate.

so on the strength of that principle, as new as it is philosophical, my departure is not subject to my will. If I should by chance go crazy, or get married to a woman with a large dowry, well then I'll stay here forever. I still don't know which of the two is more likely. It's said that many things happen suddenly and unexpectedly, a thought that's been inspired in me by Hamlet¹⁰ – which I was reading at the time I got your letter – who could not have imagined that a month after the death of old Hamlet, Queen Gertrude would have already forgotten him and given her hand to his brother?¹¹



Sebastopol was located near today's Sloughhouse

¹⁰ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.

¹¹ Gertrude is Hamlet's mother.

Regarding me, I only know that both Captain Piotrowski¹² and I will probably leave Sebastopol to settle in Heywards¹³ – where in quiet and solitude I shall finish my play,¹⁴ which is worthless in itself but invaluable to me for the principle: “Know thyself!” since I know from it that I’d do better splitting wood someplace than roaming further on the literary field. Anyway, it’s nothing new. Captain Piotrowski just went to Miss Plumer’s¹⁵ to flirt with her while I, like a good buddy, stayed at home, so as not to bother him. All of this is ever so jolly.

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|----|----|
| Plummer Oliver P. | M | 16 | 51 |
| — Mary L. | W | F | 40 |
| — Mary E. | W | F | 21 |
| — Alma | W | F | 17 |
| — Harry W. | W | 16 | 19 |

I thank you once again for your letter – and for the good news about everyone’s health. Please extend my salutations to all. Please kiss Pani Helena’s hands with the deepest honor and respect, but with nothing added on your part. You cannot understand – nor would such a thing be proper – what it means to find oneself near the circle of her who is the pride and glory of her entire nation, its unrivaled greatness, the personal expression of its national genius, goodness, truth

and beauty. If you understood this rightly – you’d ask yourself various questions, as I do, walking through the Sebastopol garden, more than once having spoken to myself: “How is it? – Oh, clown! – that you, who are nothing, have dared to speak to Her in any way but on your knees?” Be that as it may, I am less troubled than others by my conscience, for I’ve told Pani Helena more than once that she’s too good, too successful, both for me and for everyone. Please draw no inference, from these my words, in your preferans¹⁶ circle. This acknowledgement of greatness comes from someone who is nothing. I share these thoughts with you as a man of letters, also as one who inhabits the land of ideals, so there’s nothing strange about my not wanting what for us is plainly spoken to be misinterpreted and sent out on the wagging tongues of narrow-minded fools. I flatter myself that you understand me. Anyway, this is not about me personally. As I’ve mentioned before, it looks like I probably won’t be staying in America much longer, and once I’ve left, this place here behind me will grow cold and its memory fade away.

Everything here is now likely. It’s been good to be among you, and still is, but again I repeat that a man is not subject to himself. So speak of my plans to no one. It could just as well happen that I won’t be leaving – and my personal wish, were that to be the deciding factor – would dictate that I remain here forever. I’ve taken a liking to America and to all Americans with the exception of California aristocrats and others who

¹² Captain Rudolf Korwin Piotrowski; born in Poland; lived in the former mining town Sebastopol, Sacramento County and in San Francisco; co-founder of the Polish Society of California; served as Commissioner of Immigration; see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Piotrowski%20in%20City%20Directories.pdf>.

¹³ A California town known variously as "Hayward's," "Heywood," "Haywood," "Haywards" (since 1876), and "Hayward" (since 1911).

¹⁴ *American drama (Dramat amerykański)* described by Sienkiewicz as a “critical-satirical-sentimental” play; written for Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska); the featured character, “Helena Steven,” is modelled after Modjeska. Modjeska translated the play into English. The play was never published.

¹⁵ Oliver Plummer’s family lived near Capt. Francis Michel in Cosumnes, as documented in the 1880 census record. Some of the Plummer family are buried in the Pioneer Cemetery in Sloughhouse.

¹⁶ Preferans is a Russian card game that became popular in the 1830s.

strike me as masses of bumpkins, regarding which I think that Gray¹⁷ is right: SKEWER THEM.¹⁸ But never mind that. I tell you seriously that my state of mind is very bleak. The only thought that gives me comfort is that we're moving to Heywards. Closer to you, for whom my friendship is more sincere than you think – closer at last to San Francisco. – You ask why I left, inasmuch as I was happy there. Don't ask me! Now a sad perversity requires that I remain at least until I finish this play.

It's unlikely that both captains will arrive on the 17th of April (how's that for a date?).¹⁹ Cap(tain) Piotrowski might be there because he has an appointment with Salomon²⁰ on the 20th, but Pan Franciszek²¹ is not well – he probably won't last long. You wouldn't believe how he's aged. His nose is turning white and it's grown sharper – his eyes are filming over²² – which puts him in a constant fury. Because of this he may soon be at peace, more deeply and unceasingly at peace than any of us have ever been in life. There would be something in this for us to envy, were it not that this good fortune will overtake us too – but who knows, perhaps you, who are younger, or I, who am young, will meet with it earlier. Sometimes I wish for this – sometimes not. More often not, for I have a great, great faith in life. Especially at present; I don't know how it will be later. Meanwhile, the trick is not to poison oneself with bad ideas, doubts, etc. – to do something anyway, though the rabble-thoughts sometimes drag my head down so that it's impossible to fend them off.



Edward S. Salomon

But truly I'm gladdened to know that all of you there are joyful and optimistic. By all of you I mean you personally and Pani Helena, as the others leave me neither warm nor cold. To those who are sympathetic, I wish well; the unsympathetic I would send to hell, and that's the long and short of it. I would like to contribute to your joyfulness – if then, when I write a letter that's cheerful and amusing, not greasy, then read it, when you have a chance, to Pani Helena. Maybe it will bring a smile to her lips. This one, which I'm writing now, you'd better not read. However little I might mean to her, I know she is so good my soul's acidity would cast a shadow on her happiness. I would rather take on any other sin than one like this. Bow to her, kiss her hands, tell her that I'm healthy, happy, enchanted with nature and grateful for the various Watson and Plumer girls and other Sebastopol frumps – that will be *all right*. I likewise promise in future letters to be rather more Wilkonski-an²³ than Byronic.²⁴

¹⁷ American botanist Asa Gray (1810-1888); his *Darwiniana* was considered an important reconciliation of religion and science. "He wrote many books on the subject of botany, aimed at audiences of different educational backgrounds, but his great work was a comprehensive flora, the *Manual of the Botany of the Northern United States*, first published in 1848, and subsequently in many editions. He was a close colleague and avid supporter of Charles Darwin and his defense of the theory of natural selection, coming, as it did, from a devout Christian, undermined the popular notion of his day that to be an evolutionist was to be an atheist. His essays on Darwin's theories were collected together in a volume called *Darwiniana* (1876)."

¹⁸ Our translation of "Piererezat" - a Russian word meaning to cut, to lance, to slit, to saw, to traverse.

¹⁹ The Warsaw Uprising of 1794 or Warsaw Insurrection (Polish: insurekcja warszawska) was an armed insurrection by the people of Warsaw early in the Kościuszko Uprising. It began on 17 April 1794, soon after Tadeusz Kościuszko's victory at the Battle of Raclawice.

²⁰ General Edward Selig Salomon (1836-1913), the governor of Washington Territory and a San Francisco legislator; he was sympathetic to the Polish cause.

²¹ Franciszek Michał Wojciechowski (Francis Michel) was about 66 years old in 1877;

see: <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Franciszek%20Michal.pdf>; see <http://www.polishclubsf.org/Cosumnes.pdf>.

²² Literally "His eyes are going behind a sheet [as in 'sheet metal']." Probably ocular cataracts, the most common cause of vision loss in people over age 40.

²³ August Wilkoński (1805-1852); author of humorous tales depicting the lives and customs of rural folk.

²⁴ George Gordon Byron, commonly known as Lord Byron, was an English poet, peer, politician, and a leading figure in the Romantic movement.

stitution; he was afterward a rancher in this county, where he died some fifteen years ago. The family comprises an only son, J. Edward, who takes charge of the various farming operations, and a daughter, Catherine A. The homestead is situated on the old "Jackson road," seven miles east of the Capital City; the Placerville railroad cuts it in twain, and affords them a convenient station almost at their gates. The house a commodious modern structure, sheltered by gigantic "black" oaks, and surrounded by beautiful flowers, tended evidently by some loving hand, is a picture of home comfort and genial hospitality. Here then we see resting from his labors a man whose life has been one of more than usual activity, truly a representative man, one who has done much to advance the agricultural and fruit-growing interests in this favored section of the State, and we gladly accord him a prominent place in the annals of this county.

LIVER PLUMMER, a rancher of Cosumnes Township, was born in Yates County, New York, November 26, 1829, his parents being William and Delliha (Fitzsimmons) Plummer. The family moved to Illinois in 1844. The father, a native of Pennsylvania, lived to be seventy-six, and the mother to be seventy-four. Grandfather George Plummer, a native of New Jersey and a Revolutionary soldier, lived to the age of ninety-one, and his wife, Hannah McMurtrie, reached ninety. Receiving a limited education in the district schools, Oliver worked on his father's farm until he set out for California. Crossing the plains, he arrived in Sacramento, September 20, 1852, and went to teaming with the two horses he had driven from Illinois. After eight months he opened a miners' store on Dry Creek, near Drytown in Amador County, which he carried on about three years. Mr. Plummer was married at Cosumnes, May 18, 1856, to Miss Mary L. Wilson, born in South Bend, Indiana, Septem-

ber 8, 1839, her parents being William D. and Elizabeth (Garver) Wilson, both natives of Ohio. The father was born April 8, 1810, and the mother in 1818. They left Indiana for California in 1847, but wintered in Missouri, and in 1848 resumed their journey. The father was captain of the emigrant train. On the way they heard from returning Mormons of the discovery of gold in California. Mr. Wilson and part of the company concluded to seek the land of gold, while others kept to the original design of going to Oregon. On his arrival Mr. Wilson mined for a short time on Mormon Island and then moved to Hangtown, now Placerville, where, in the winter of 1848-'49 he built the first house erected in that place. The family then comprised six children; five more were born in California; nine grew to maturity and seven are living in 1889. In the spring of 1850 he moved down on the Cosumnes and purchased 6,000 acres of the Hartnell Grant, and built a tavern, long known as Wilson's Exchange, across the river from what is now the Cosumnes postoffice. He was postmaster from the establishment of that office until 1868. He was by trade a millwright and built the first suspension bridge on the Cosumnes. In 1868 he sold out his ranch and hotel and moved to Gilroy, Santa Clara County, where he died November 22, 1869. His widow, by her second marriage, Mrs. W. A. Angel, died at Los Angeles, July 13, 1877. Meanwhile Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Plummer rented Wilson's Exchange in 1857 and carried on the tavern business for three years. Mr. Plummer also rented some 600 acres from his father-in-law and went into cat-le-raising and general farming, in which he continued until 1870, after the place had been sold by Mr. Wilson. In 1871 he bought 230 acres about three miles higher up on the Cosumnes, where he still resides, and of which about 100 acres are bottom land. He does general farming, and makes a specialty of corn and alfalfa on the home place. He also owns 280 acres below Sebastopol and rents 2,000 acres, as sheep range, of which he usually keeps about 2,500 head. Mr. and Mrs. Plummer have

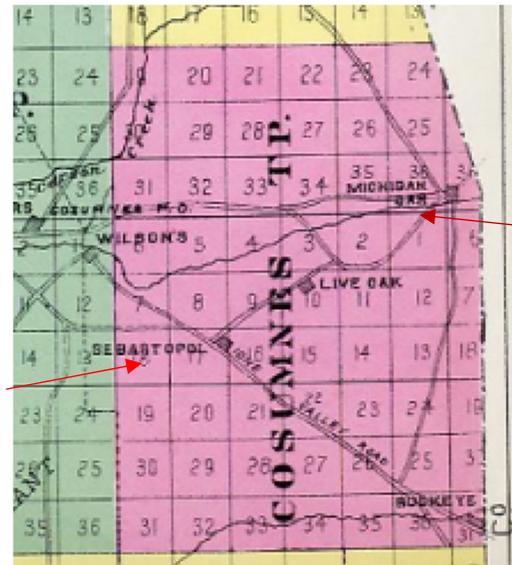
two daughters and one son: Mary Emma, born November 13, 1857, and Alma May, born December 24, 1862. These fondly cling to the homestead, a help and comfort to their parents. The son, Harry William, born April 3, 1860, was married at San Jose, January 1, 1884, to Miss Annie Fischer, born in New York, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fischer. They have two children: Oliver Christian, born September 28, 1884, and Gertrude, born July 28, 1886, who are equally at home with their grandparents on the Cosumnes or their parents in Sacramento.

| LAST NAME | FIRST NAME | Date of BIRTH | Place of Birth | Date of DEATH |
|-----------|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Plummer | Elvira (Belle) Bellriah Bailey | 9/25/1834 | WI | 3/13/1893 |
| Plummer | Oliver (Ollie) | 11/26/1828 | Yates Co. NY | 11/29/1900 |
| Plummer | Abram McMurtrie | 9/28/1826 | Yates Co. NY | 9/30/1904 |
| Plummer | John Tateman | 12/20/1871 | Sloughhouse CA | 10/24/1909 |
| Plummer | Mary Lee Wilson | 9/8/1839 | South Bend IN | 1919 |

Buried in Pioneer Cemetery, Sloughhouse, California
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=28297>



Post Office in Michigan Bar



1860 (Francis Mitchell) aka Francis Michael or Michel, etc. (Franciszek Michal) [Wojciechowski]
 Census, **Cosumnes Township, Sacramento County**

1860 Census of Sacramento County, 1860 *Michigan Bar, 1860* *500* *Francis*

Name: Francis Mitchell
 Age: 52
 Birth Year: abt 1808
 Gender: Male
 Birth Place: Poland
 Home in 1860: **Cosumnes**, Sacramento, California
 Post Office: **Michigan Bar**
 Family Number: 984

