

## Guide to the Mellor Gold Rush Letters

- Repository:** Marietta College Library, Slack Research Collections  
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<http://library.marietta.edu/spc/index.html>
- Creator:** Mellor William Vincent; Mellor, Benjamin Young
- Title:** Mellor Gold Rush Letters
- Dates:** 1849-1852
- Bulk Dates:** 1849-1852
- Quantity:** 1 mss box
- Abstract:** The Mellor Gold Rush Letters collection contains nine letters written between 1849 and 1852. The majority of the letters were written from various California locations as Benjamin Young Mellor and William Vincent Mellor sought to “strike it rich” during the California Gold Rush. The letters kept the brothers’ father, Samuel Mellor of Malta, Morgan County, Ohio, up to date on their progress and setbacks, as well as provided observations on West Coast life. In their correspondence, Benjamin and William record the details of mining life, their fellow 49ers, and Californian economic and political concerns. They also impart advice to friends and family who might be prospective gold rushers.

**Identification:**

**Language:** English

### Biography

Born in 1822 and 1824 respectively, Benjamin Young Mellor and William Vincent Mellor were the youngest sons of Samuel and Margaret (Young) Mellor, English natives who immigrated to the mid-Ohio Valley region in 1802. Little is known about Benjamin and William’s early years. However, in 1849, as their letters detail, the brothers left Ohio and sailed to San Francisco (via Cape Horn) to seek their fortunes in the gold fields of California.

Although in 1852 Benjamin could give his father no concrete idea of when he and William would return, the brothers had returned home to Malta by 1853. Benjamin married Jane Massey, with whom he had one son, Alexander. Unfortunately, Alexander died in infancy and Benjamin himself died on 1 October 1854.

William apparently “accumulated some means” in California and upon returning home worked as a farmer. In 1857 he married his brother’s widow, Jane (Massey) Mellor. The couple had three children: Annie (15 April 1858 – 8 January 1906), George S. (16 November 1859 - ?), and Perley B. (4 October 1861 – 2 August 1909). George married Lulu E. Burtenshaw on 3 April 1900; they had no children. At some point, Perley moved to Marietta, Washington County, Ohio. He married twice, (1) Rose Donovan (d. 1902) in 1898, and (2) Carrie S. Hoffman on 14 February 1906. With Rose, Perley had one daughter, Rosemary. She and husband Ned Sutton had two daughters, Ann R. and Sara Sou.

### Scope and Content

This collection contains nine letters and one envelope written between 1849 and 1852. Eight of the letters and the envelope originate in California. The majority of the correspondence is from William V. Mellor and Benjamin Y. Mellor in California to their father, Samuel Mellor, in Malta, Morgan County, Ohio. The letters detail the trials and tribulations of male gold rushers during the height of the California gold rush.

## **Statement of Arrangement**

Original letters are arranged chronologically in the first folder, followed by typed transcriptions of their contents, also arranged chronologically, in a second folder.

## **Restrictions**

There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection. Copyright restrictions may apply to materials. Permission to publish materials must be obtained from the repository and from the copyright holder.

## **Indexing Terms**

### **Subjects:**

California Gold Rush  
Gold mining

### **Persons:**

Mellor, Benjamin Y., 1822-1854  
Mellor, William V., 1824-1885

### **Places:**

Malta, Morgan County (Ohio)  
Sacramento (California)  
San Francisco (California)  
Weaverville (California)

### **Material Types:**

Correspondence

## **Preferred Citation**

Mellor Gold Rush Letters, 1849-1854. Marietta College Special Collections.

## **Detailed Description of the Collection**

Box 1/Folder 1: Original Mellor Gold Rush letters, 1849-1852

1. William V. Mellor, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to his father Samuel Mellor. Describes William, Benjamin, and companion Washington's journey from Malta, Morgan County, Ohio, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ultimately en route to California. 18 January 1849.
2. Benjamin Y. Mellor, San Francisco, California, to his father Samuel Mellor. Describes the sea voyage from New York to San Francisco via Cape Horn. Also provides first impressions of California, particularly in the form of lists of prices per product. 25 July 1849.
3. Benjamin Y. Mellor, California, to Samuel Mellor. Gives an account of the brothers' dealings, work, and earnings thus far and further listing of Californian prices per products. 20 September 1849.
4. William V. Mellor, Sacramento, California, to Samuel Mellor. Gives an account of the brothers' gold prospects. Tells the story of an old man who claimed to have discovered a golden lake and almost lost his life when he could not lead a group of miners to it. 20 June 1850.

5. Benjamin Y. Mellor, North Fork of American [River, California], to Samuel Mellor. Describes the brothers financial ups and downs, both as a result of their prospecting and their trials in collecting a loan made to a fellow miner. 22 December 1850.
6. Benjamin Y. Mellor, San Francisco, California, to Samuel Mellor. Describes Benjamin's separation from William and Washington and details Benjamin's work as a carpenter/wage laborer in San Francisco. Enjoins "Henry" (younger brother?) to be a "good boy." Includes envelope postmarked from San Francisco, 14 June. 13 June 1851.
7. William V. Mellor, Weaverville, California, to his brother Benjamin Y. Mellor. Describes his mining activities. Advises his brother to join him in Weaverville. 7 September 1851.
8. William V. Mellor, Weaverville, California, to Samuel Mellor. Describes his mining activities. Comments on California food and its cost. Also includes some remarks on immigration to California and the state's politics. 15 February 1852.
9. Benjamin Y. Mellor, Sacramento, California, to Samuel Mellor. Informs Samuel that he is "again" putting off going home to Ohio. Includes a copied out note from William advising Benjamin once more to join him in Weaverville. 20 March 1852.

Box 1/Folder 2: Transcriptions of original Mellor letters; content is the same as Folder 1.

1. William V. Mellor, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to his father Samuel Mellor. 18 January 1849.
2. Benjamin Y. Mellor, San Francisco, California, to his father Samuel Mellor. 25 July 1849.
3. Benjamin Y. Mellor, California, to Samuel Mellor. 20 September 1849.
4. William V. Mellor, Sacramento, California, to Samuel Mellor. 20 June 1850.
5. Benjamin Y. Mellor, North Fork of American [River, California], to Samuel Mellor. 22 December 1850.
6. Benjamin Y. Mellor, San Francisco, California, to Samuel Mellor. 18 June 1851.
7. William V. Mellor, Weaverville, California, to his brother Benjamin Y. Mellor. 7 September 1851.
8. William V. Mellor, Weaverville, California, to Samuel Mellor. 15 February 1852.
9. Benjamin Y. Mellor, Sacramento, California, to Samuel Mellor. 20 March 1852.