

William P. Dole: Wabash Valley Merchant and Flatboatman

Edited by Donald F. Carmony

*Contributed by Marion H. Gray**

From Indiana's territorial period to the 1850s the large preponderance of its exports floated southward on flatboats to markets along the lower Mississippi River. This outgoing trade consisted principally of bulky and heavy products from farms and forests, some of which underwent no processing or manufacturing before leaving Indiana. The cargoes carried by flatboats ranged from live animals such as hogs and chickens to corn, wheat, oats, meal, flour, pork, lard, beef, venison, whisky, vegetables, sawed lumber, hoop poles, cheese, furs, feathers, beeswax, and ginseng. These boats varied much in size and appearance and were often constructed to suit the cargo and whim of their builders. Made locally and suitable only for the one way trip downstream, their building, loading, and navigation was at times a cooperative venture among neighbors. In other instances merchants or traders collected produce and conveyed it to market on these floating arks.¹

As early as 1820 the legislature of Indiana began designating numerous streams within the state as public highways, making them open for the passage of flatboats and other craft. Fines were provided for persons obstructing these export arteries, though mill dams could be erected on them if provision were made for the passage of boats. Rivers were at times declared public highways up to certain mills. Thus, the Patoka was so declared from its mouth to Mosley's mill; Little Pigeon, from its mouth to John Barker's mill. Hundreds of flatboats descended Indiana's rivers annually during at least the 1820s through the early 1850s, making flatboating a common experience for men and boys. Like Abe Lincoln, numerous pioneer lads got their first significant exposure to the "outside world" when they spent several weeks or even a few months away from home on account of flatboat trips to the warmer clime and generally more de-

* Appreciation is here expressed to Mrs. Gray for her suggestions and considerable help in editing the letters. The letters are owned by Elizabeth J. R. Stinson, William P. Dole's great-granddaughter, of Kankakee, Illinois. The transcription which follows is based on a xerox copy of the original letters which was obtained with the permission of Mrs. Stinson and the cooperation of Mrs. Gray. Another xerox copy of these letters is in the Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

¹ John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* (4 vols., New York, 1954), I, 280-83; R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: The Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1950), I, 413-15, 530-32; Logan Esarey, *Internal Improvements in Early Indiana* (*Indiana Historical Society Publications*, Vol. V, No. 2; Indianapolis, 1912), 60-63.

veloped society of the lower Mississippi Valley trading centers. In the early part of the nineteenth century the boatmen frequently made the return journey by foot, walking the Natchez and other trails. From the twenties, however, many of them had the thrill and excitement of making the return journey via steamboat. Some of the pioneers made dozens of flatboat trips to the lower Mississippi.²

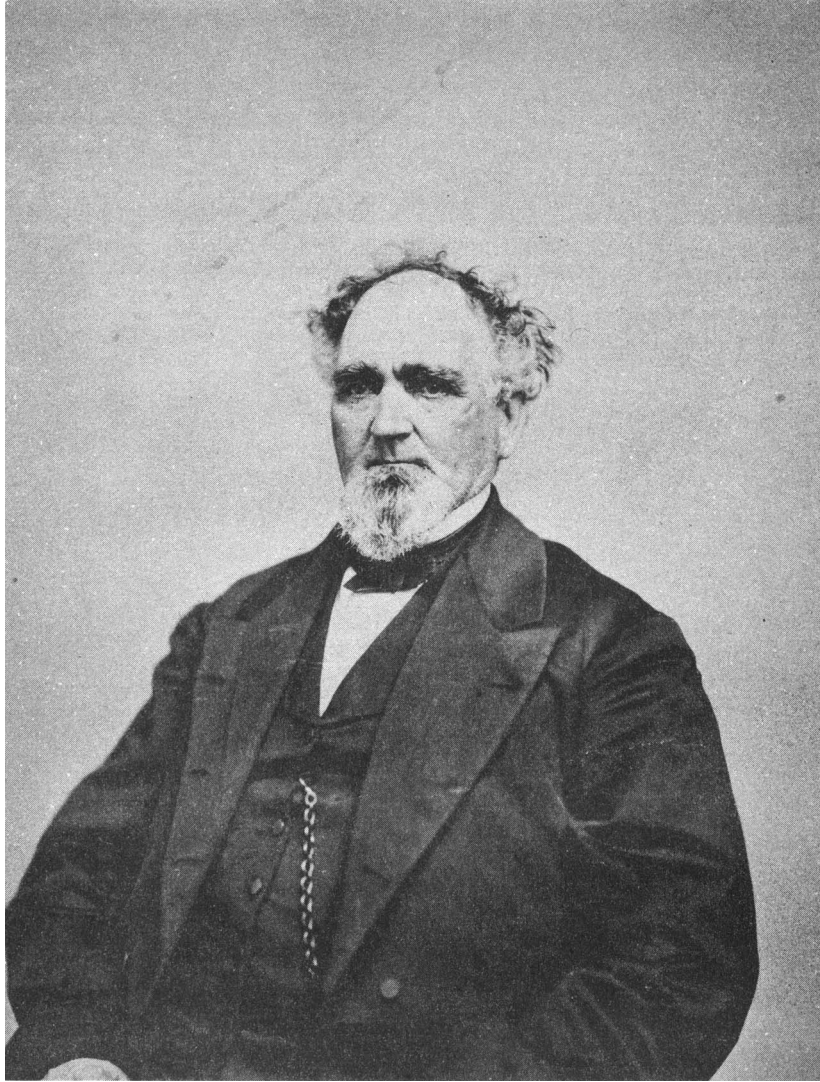
The letters which follow tell of four flatboat trips which William P. Dole made during the early 1840s from Clinton, located on the Wabash River about sixteen miles above Terre Haute, in Vermillion County, Indiana. They constitute only a portion of the correspondence between Dole and his second wife Jane Bryson Dole for these trips. Moreover, there were additional flatboat trips not here represented.³ Most of the letters were penned by Dole while floating downstream or from various market points along the lower Mississippi. They reveal much about the obstructions to and hazards from flatboat navigation, offer interesting vignettes of life aboard flatboats, afford glimpses of the difficulties, disappointments, and delays often involved in disposing of produce; and indicate the personal inconveniences and concerns arising from weeks away from home and business. The few letters from Jane Dole to her husband add vivid and moving reminders that the inconveniences and concerns could be even greater for wives and mothers at home than for their absent husbands.

Dole mingled business and politics during a long and eventful life. He was born in Vermont in 1811; after stays in New Hampshire and Ohio his family settled near Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1821. A decade later William made Clinton his home. At this small Wabash River town he entered the grocery and dry goods business, served as a dealer in produce, and became a pork packer. While a resident of Clinton "he made some eight trips down the Mississippi to New Orleans, most of them on a flat boat, selling produce at all the points from Memphis to New Orleans."⁴ During the thirties and forties he served

² See the references cited in the preceding note. An interesting and informative description of flatboating from Vermillion Township, Vermillion County, Indiana, adjoining the Wabash River in the northern part of the county above Clinton is found in Harold L. O'Donnell, *Newport and Vermillion Township: The First Hundred Years, 1824-1924* (Cayuga, Ind., 1969), 37-42. O'Donnell includes several contemporary letters concerning flatboating in the 1840s. He indicates that as many as a hundred flatboats annually left Eugene, a town in Vermillion Township.

³ In the letters which follow, see pages 355, 357, 359, 360, for evidence that there was additional correspondence. Also see pages 347, 352, for indications that there were further trips. As suggested in the ensuing paragraph, one sketch of Dole states that he made "some eight trips" to New Orleans, most of them via flatboat. The only known Dole correspondence regarding flatboating not here published is a brief letter from him to his first wife, Susan Rush Dole, April 4, 1836.

⁴ *History of Edgar County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1879), 569.



WILLIAM P. DOLE

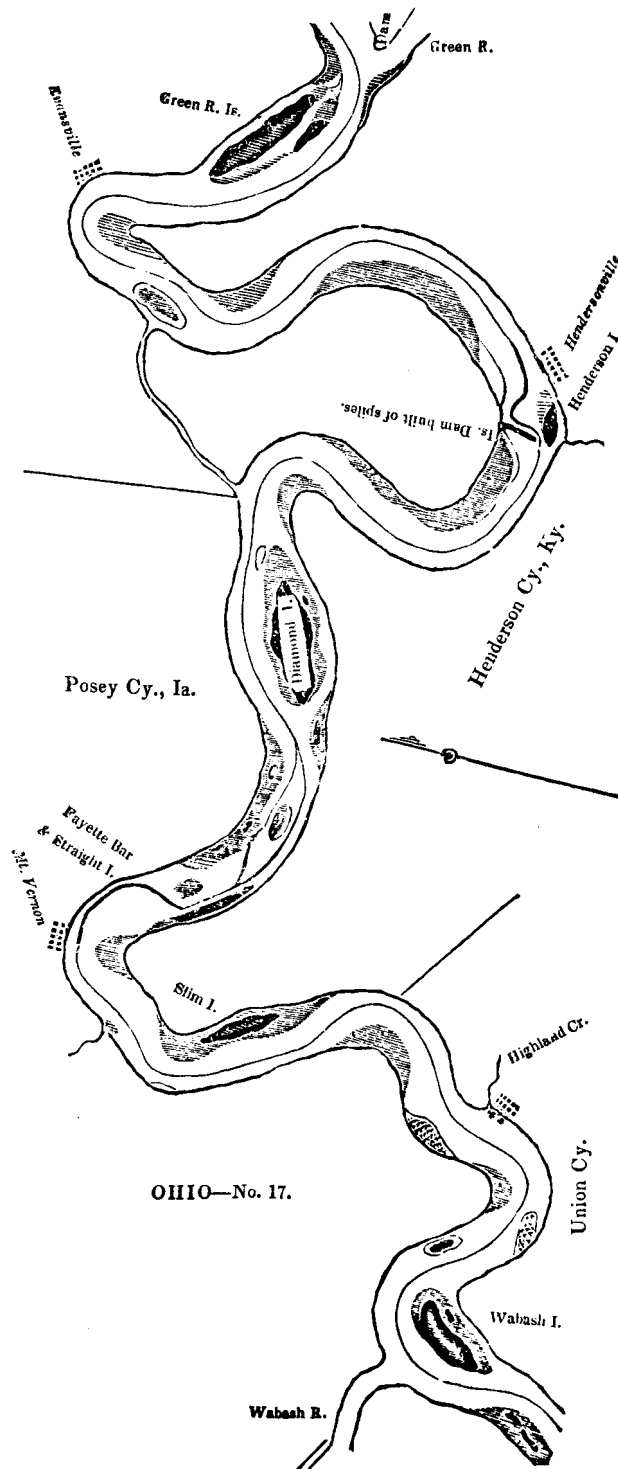
Courtesy Marion H. Gray.

various terms in both houses of the Indiana General Assembly as a representative of the Whig party.⁵ By 1860 he had moved westward a short distance across the state line to Paris, in Edgar County, Illinois, where he opened a store in partnership with William Kile. In 1860 Dole was a delegate to the Republican National Convention at Chicago which nominated Lincoln for the presidency. Soon after Lincoln's inauguration as President Dole became his commissioner of Indian affairs.⁶ After this service he retained his residence at Washington where he died in 1889.⁷

⁵ Dorothy Riker and Gayle Thornbrough, *Indiana Election Returns, 1816-1851* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XL; Indianapolis, 1960), 244, 288, 297, 308, 319, 333.

⁶ *History of Edgar County, Illinois*, 569-70.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 570; Indianapolis *Indiana Sentinel*, October 3, 1889. The *Indiana Sentinel* states that Dole was born in 1810.



THE OHIO RIVER ABOVE THE WABASH RIVER

Reproduced from Samuel Cummings, *The Western Pilot* (Cincinnati, 1840), 63. Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Highland Creek, left side.	12	859
Keep in the middle of the river for near two miles below this creek ; then go over to the right shore or near to it under the point on the right, and opposite the rocks that make in to the middle of the river from the left, then make a long crossing towards the left hand point above		
Wabash Island.	34	862
Channel right side and near the right shore from just below the head until you yet to the mouth of Wabash. This a large island and lies near the middle of the river. About two-thirds down this island, comes in		

MAP NO. 17.—OHIO RIVER.

65

Wabash River, on the right.	24	865
<p>This beautiful river takes its rise in the north-western part of the state of Ohio, and passing in a south-western direction through the state of Indiana, bends to the south, and forms the boundary between the state of Indiana and Illinois. It is navigable for the common river craft about four hundred miles ; and has been ascended by steam boats to Terre Haute and Lafayette. It receives, in its course, the waters of many respectable tributaries, among the most important of which is White river, which passes through the state, from east to west, and waters a great extent of fertile and well settled country. Perhaps no river in the world, of its magnitude, drains a more extensive and fertile country than the Wabash and its tributaries. It forms the heart of the states of Indiana ; and most of this great body of land has already been purchased, and taken up by actual settlers. It is contemplated to connect the waters of these streams with Lake Erie, by means of a canal ; the route of which has already been projected, and surveyed by the legislature of that state, and some incipient measures taken, preparatory to carrying the work into execution.</p> <p>VINCENNES is situated on the east bank of the Wabash, one hundred and fifty miles above its mouth. This place, after Kaskaskia, is the oldest settled place in the western world. It was settled by the French, in 1735. It is contiguous to a large and beautiful prairie, five thousand acres of which are cultivated as a common field, after the ancient French custom. It was for a long time the seat of the territorial government, and still has more trade than any other place in the state. The site of the town is level, and laid off with much taste. The houses have extensive gardens back of them, filled, after the French fashion, with crowded fruit trees. It has, of late, rapidly improved, and contains between three and four hundred houses.</p>		

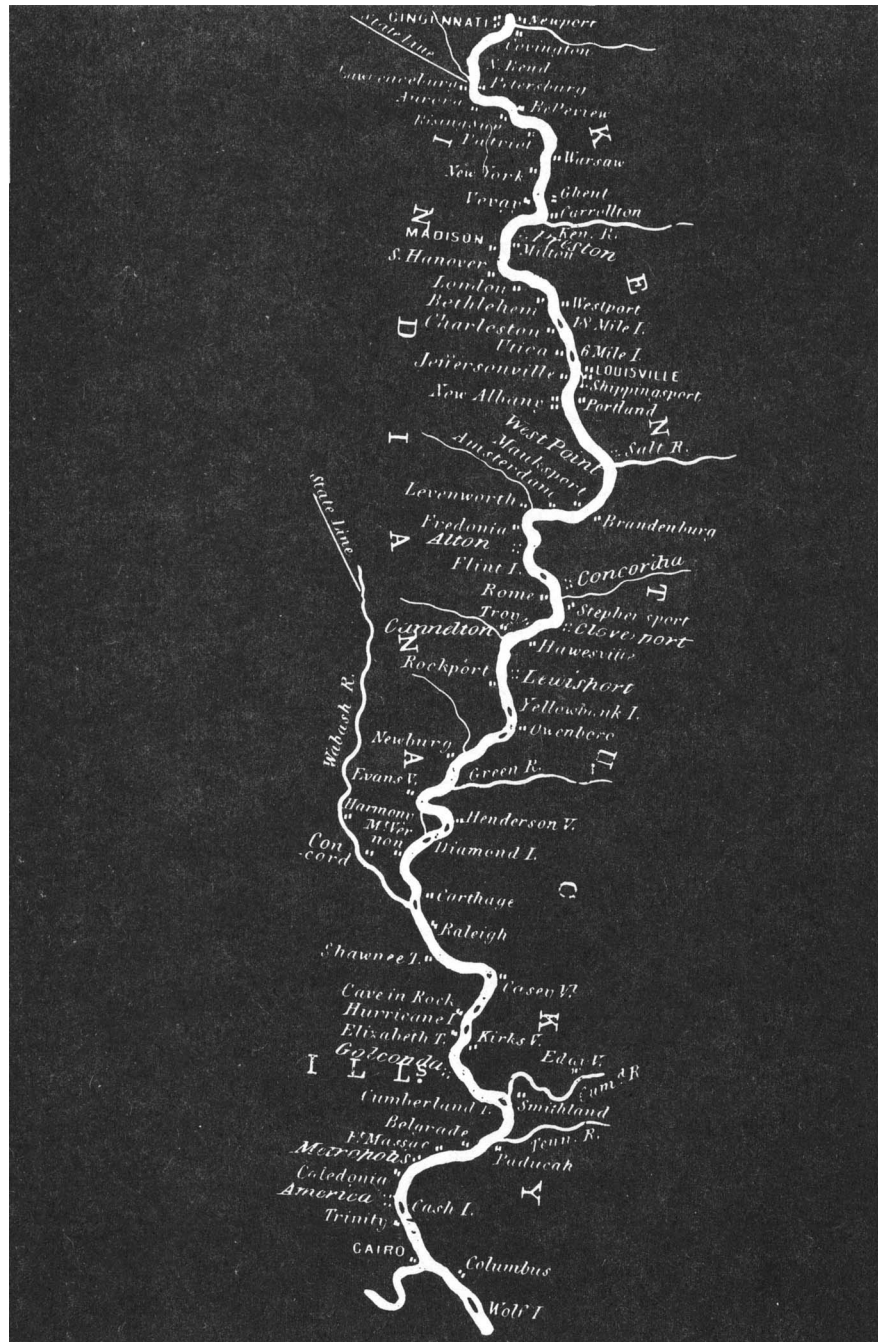
NEW HARMONY, fifty-four miles below Vincennes, is also situated on the east bank of this river, and is sixteen miles from the nearest point of the Ohio, though about one hundred miles from the mouth of the Wabash, following the meanders of the river. It is surrounded by a fine, rich, and heavily timbered country, interspersed with small, rich, prairies. Its situation is high, healthy, and well chosen. It was first settled in 1814, by a religious sect of Germans, called Harmonites, under the guidance and control of George Rapp, in whose name all the lands and property were held. They soon erected about one hundred large and substantial buildings. They laid their lands off with the most perfect regularity, and were wonderfully successful in converting a wilderness into a finely cultivated plantation, in a short time. They had even the luxury of a botanic garden, and a green house. Their great house of assemblage with its wings and appendages, was nearly one hundred feet square. There they continued to live and labor in common, until the year 1824, when the celebrated Robert Owen, of New Lanark, in Scotland, came and purchased out the entire possession of the Harmonites, at the sum of one hundred and ninety thousand dollars, for the purpose of establishing a community upon the plan of his 'social system,' and corresponding with his 'new views of society.' He was joined by two of his sons, and by Mr. McClure, a

1

wealthy man from Scotland; and in a short time his new community swelled to above seven hundred persons. But discord soon arose among its members, and one after another left the community, until the 'social system' was at length abandoned.

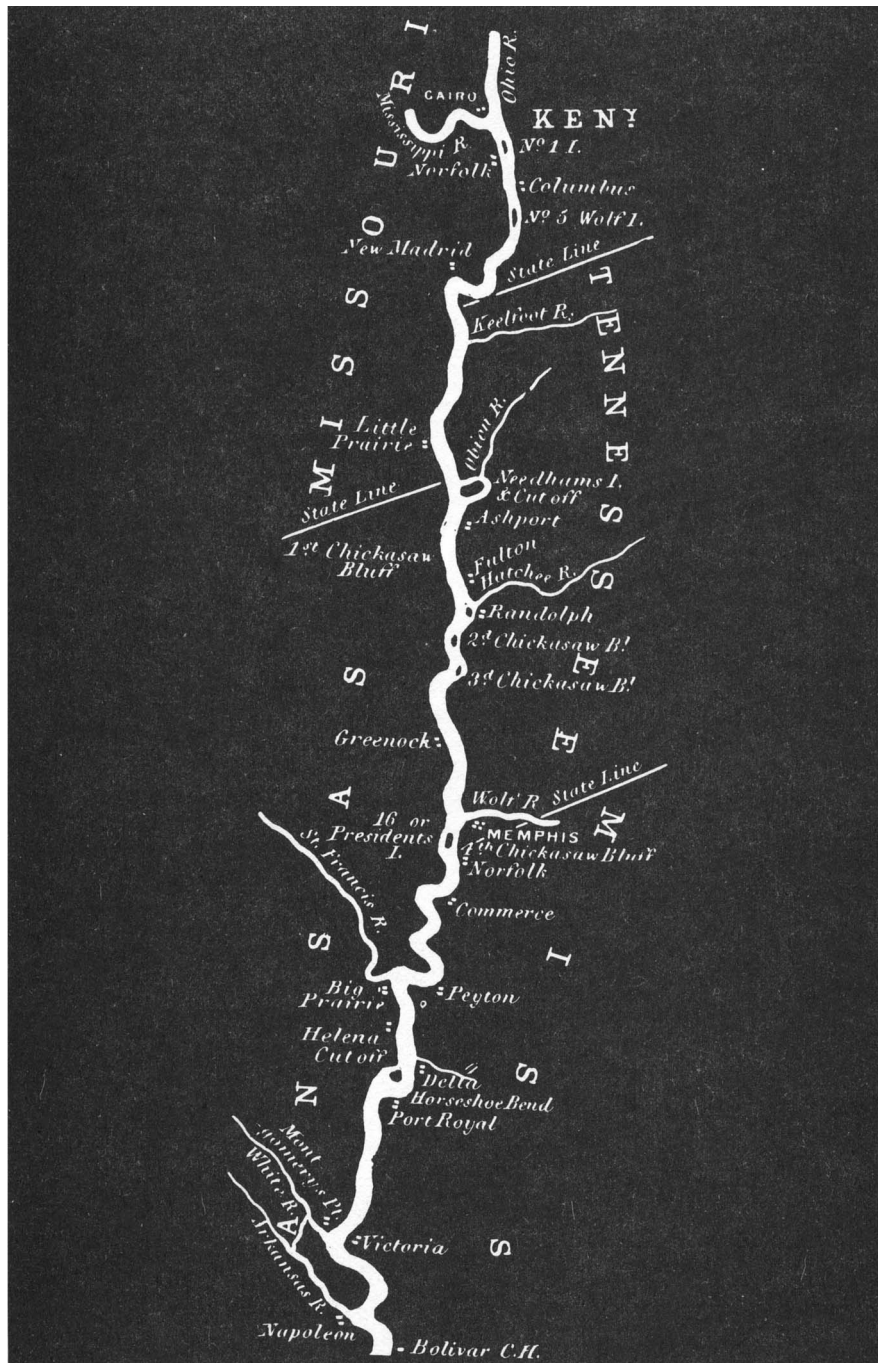
When opposite the mouth of Wabash, incline a little to the left, towards the island, to avoid a bar lately thrown up by the freshet of said river, but when you are 350 yards below the mouth go in to the right shore, (in my opinion this bar will soon wash away as I have seen one in the same place before,) near the point on the right nearly opposite the foot of the island, then ware off to the left gradually and come in near the left shore 600 yards below the foot of said island, keep down said shore until below the island about a mile; then go off to the middle of the river past the head of Brown's islands, then in to the upper houses at Reilagh on the left shore; keep down this shore near one and a half miles to the second false point on the left, then cross over (leaving a small towhead well on your right in the middle of the river,) and in to the right shore near half a mile below the foot of the island, keep down the right shore 200 yards until you are opposite a small creek, with a small mill on it; then ware off gradually in to the middle opposite Shawneetown.





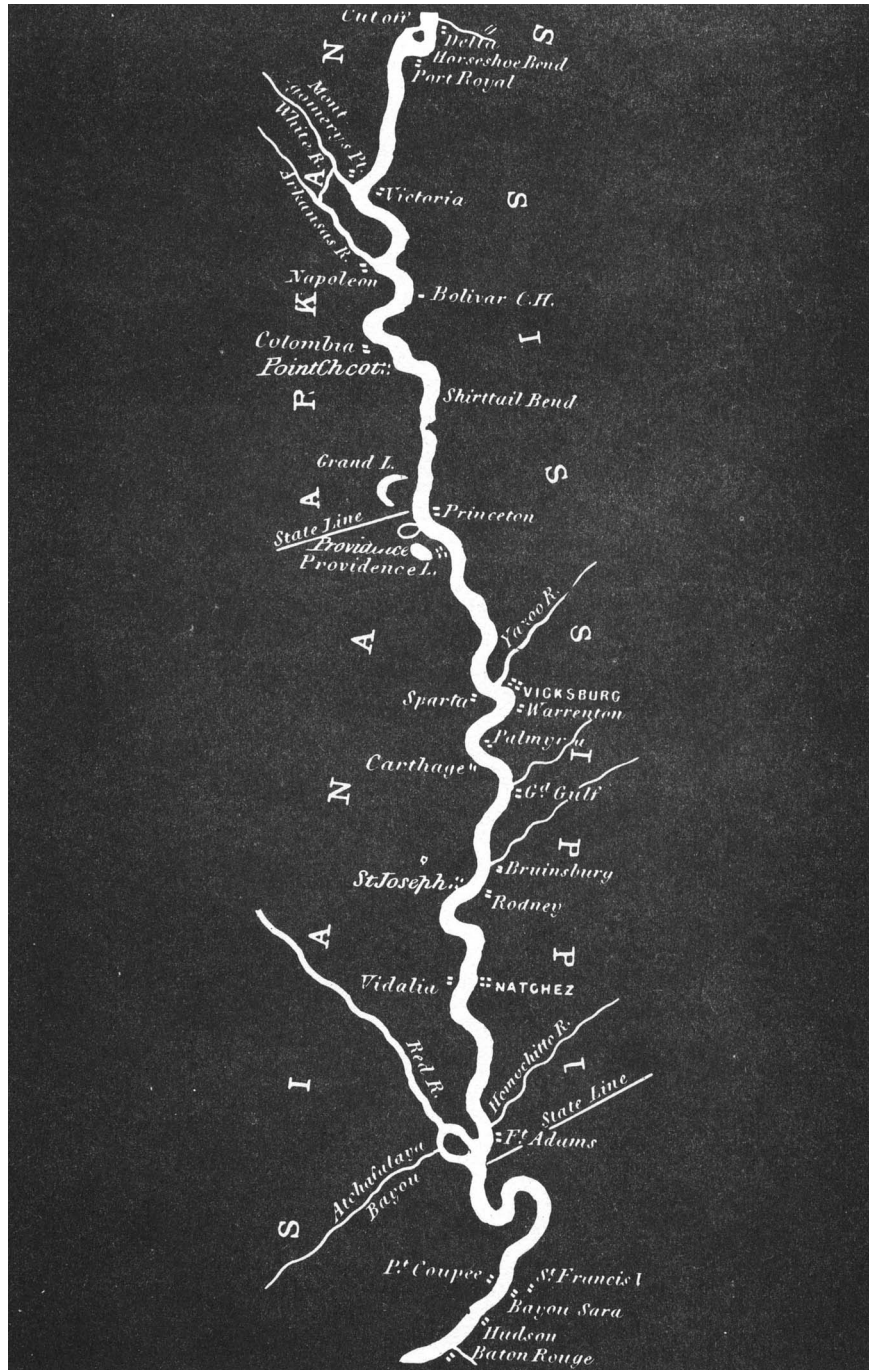
MAP OF THE OHIO RIVER (UNDATED) FROM CINCINNATI TO CAIRO

Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.



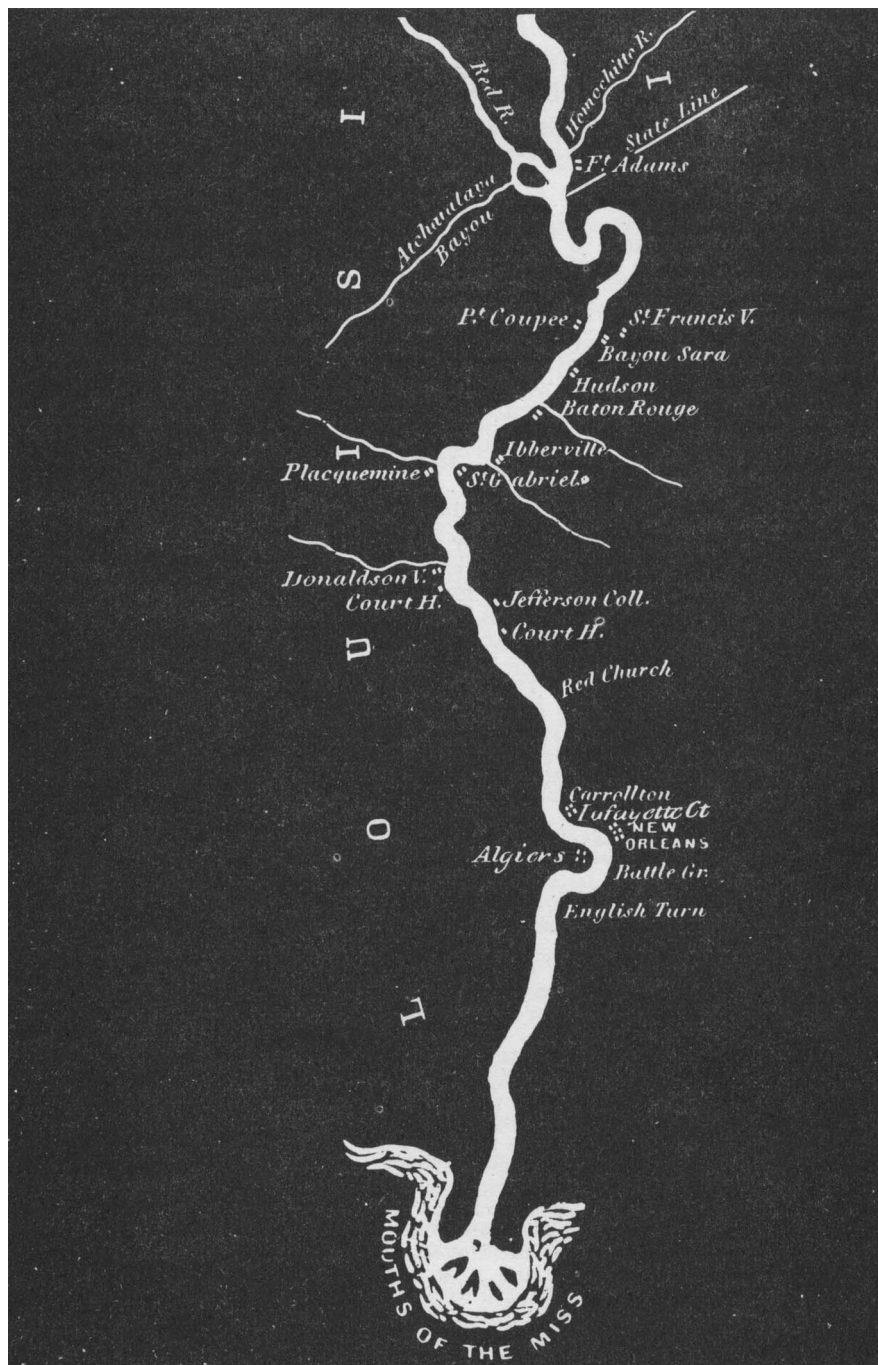
MAP OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER (UNDATED) SOUTH FROM CAIRO

Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.



MAP OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER (UNDATED) CONTINUING SOUTH

Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington



MAP OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER (UNDATED)
TO THE MOUTHS OF THE RIVER

Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Dole Letters¹

1840

Grand Rapids,² Wabash river
Wensday 26th day Feby 1840

Dear Jane

having ben driven to the willows by the winds blowing to hard for us to run any more to day I shall spend a Little of the day in writing to you believing as I must from my own feelings that you will be pleased to receive a Line from me allthough it contained no news but that all was well. I hardly now how to write to you not Knowing in what state of health my Letter may find you—you will have heard no doubt before you receive this that we did not Leave Walkers' Bluff³ untill Sunday after noon—we should have Left Sooner but one of my hands *sloped*⁴ Leaving me a Little out of *Sorts*. however in sending Brother Joseph for a horse to go to Clinton for a hand he con[tracted?] with a Mr Johnston to go with us Which was a Very good arangement as he Johnston owed me twenty Dollars and was not worth a cent so that much is saved, but I was not a Little disappointed in being [again?] deprived of the *necessity* of going to Clinton for a hand as I had made great calculations on seeing you again before I Left but that may be [Jus?]t as it is for I say in good faith that I who have been from my home so much and so often never regretted Leav-

¹ The handwritten letters were transcribed from photocopies. Spacing of dates, openings, and closings has been standardized throughout; paragraphing is as in the photocopies. Elevated letters have been brought down to the line; obvious repetitions, flourishes, and items crossed out have been omitted. Commas apparently intended for periods have been changed to periods; otherwise punctuation is unchanged. Errors in spelling remain; [sic] is used only when there might be a question of an error in transcription or printing. Obvious capitals or lower case letters have been retained; several letters (c, m, s, w, y) are not always distinguishable as capital or lower case, and the editor has selected according to size and letter formation. Where words are indistinguishable, a possible insertion has been made in brackets. Bracketed items indicate insertions by the editor. Words or letters followed by a question mark in brackets indicate the editor has chosen one alternative of possible transcriptions because of ambiguously formed letters. The sign, @, has been used in place of Dole's "a" with an irregular swirl which seems to mean the same thing. Space has been left to indicate sentence groupings where there is no punctuation in order to increase readability. When possible, places have been located except for Cairo, Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, and New Orleans which are readily located on maps. Only in a few cases have people been identified because adequate sources are lacking. According to Mrs. Gray "Brother Joseph" and Allen mentioned in the letter of February 26, 1840, are respectively the brother of Dole and Allen Rush, a cousin of Dole's first wife.

² The Grand Rapids of the Wabash were located south of Vincennes. They and other obstructions in this part of the Wabash extended for a distance of about fifteen miles, beginning about six miles below the mouth of the White River and ending about nine miles north of same. For descriptions of these obstructions see Indiana, *House Journal* (1823-1824), 200-201; *ibid.* (1833-1834), 218-19.

³ Walker's Bluff was located near Terre Haute down the Wabash River from Clinton. A. T. Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Vigo County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1874), 34.

⁴ "Slope" generally means to run off, apparently the meaning here.

ing it so much as this time. I could not meet my debts if I staid & I was not doing my duty to you in Leaving you confined as you were to a sick bed all of which has harassd my mind not a Little but with it all I have one consolation and a great one too which is that I believe you to be satisfied that I was doing for the best and that you was willing I should Leave

We have come this far without any accident and I have Every reason to suppose we shall get down Safe the Boat is so Light that we cannot will stave her and the boys can pull her any place but through the wind. I took cold as is usual with me when I first come on board the boat not finding quite as comfortable a place to Sleep as a good feather bed in a warm room I am however getting the better of it & I calculate in a few days to be the stoutest hand on board. Allen Says I am now three times a day to wit Breakfast, Dinner, & Supper. he is our cook and makes a Very good one—we use [that?] top of a chicken coop for a table & between them & the hogs we have no need of a smelling Bottle—I believe Allen has not forgotten but once to wash his hands before making Bread after cleaning out the hog pens so you see we are a very cleanly set of fellows—Just as you said the old [?] Pantaloons have all gone to smash at Least the Boys say so I cant see behind me or I should Know for myself. I mean to take them off some of these days and see if it is as bad as they say that the whole is gone. Joseph is all fair & makes a Very good hand—

I do not Know where this Letter will be mailed perhaps not untill we get to shawnetown⁵ in the mean time I shall be filling up the Ballance of the sheet with nonsense for you cannot expect much Else from me as I am so situated as to have no news but it is pleasant to me to write to you as while doing so I allmost [?] I am talking too you instead of writing—which happiness I trust in providence I shall soon again Enjoy—supper is ready so good by for the present—

Thursday 2 oclock P.M.

a Very fine day and we are mooving along in fine spirits we are now about 15 miles above New Harmony⁶ & Expect to run all night in which Case we shall be in the ohio river tomorrow we have [15?] passenger on board going to the mouth of the river so you see we are not short of hands the hogs are getting fat & will be in fine order before I get down

⁵ Shawneetown, located in southern Illinois on the Ohio River a short distance below where it receives the Wabash, was a town of considerable importance in the pioneer era. See R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: The Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1950), I, 40-41, 125, 537, 573, 597, 600; II, 288.

⁶ New Harmony, situated on the Indiana side of the lower portion of the Wabash River had been the site of a Harmonist community under Father George Rapp, 1814-1824, followed immediately by a short lived community sponsored by Robert Owen.

Fryday 28th Feby 1840

The sun is Just rising and bids fair to be a pleasant day we are within a few miles of the mouth of river & shall take Breakfast in the Ohio River I have ben up all night at the Stearing oar and of course feel rather Drowsy to write but I Know Allen intends writing so I have Brother Joseph at the stearnng oar and shall finish my Letter before Allen gets up that he may have a chance to write. The river has driven off more than half of the Inhabitants down this way. many families have thier stock & Every thing on not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre of dry Land Many Places we see cattle hogs &c in the water and no chance of getting away & the water still rising. there must of necesety be a great Loss of property if the river gets much higher the people are considerably frightened at the prospect I shall send this ashore at shawnetown and hoping it may come speedily to hand & find you much better than when I Left home and that we may after a short seperation meet again Long to Enjoy the hapiness of Each others society

I remain your Loving Husband

Jane Dole

Wm P. Dole

Memphis March 4th 1840

Dr Jane

We arrived here about noon to day being Just ten days since we Left home. all well and in fine Spirits I shall not sell any thing here as prices are Very bad & Money Good for nothing Corn in the Ear is selling at $62\frac{1}{2}$ pr Bbl Shelled at 40 cts at Least these are the prices told me here I have not seen any Salt pork is worth but six Cts pr lb hams $6\frac{1}{2}$ to 7 shoulders 5 to 6 cts Whiskey at 30 cts pr gallon Live hogs are not selling here at all—the news from below is rather bad being about such as I have given above I fear our Corn speculation is a bad one but I still hope we will not Loose much⁷ what I shall get for my hogs it is impossible to tell I think I shall not Loose any thing on them I have sold most of my hams & shoulders at $6\frac{1}{2}$ to 7 cts which is the highest I have heard of any selling—When I shall be at home is beyond my power to tell as it entirely depends on how soon I can make Sales there is no wabash boats⁸ here at this time & I shall Leave to day So good by

Wm P. Dole

⁷ Since Dole himself seems not to have been a farmer, presumably he had bought corn of farmers in Vermillion County or along the way. This uncertainty frequently exists concerning corn and other items in these letters. Inasmuch as his trips apparently began either in or near Vermillion County, it appears probable that most of his cargoes were obtained in this area. The instability of prices and related questions concerning western markets is emphasized in Thomas Senior Berry, *Western Prices Before 1861: A Study of the Cincinnati Market* (Cambridge, Mass., 1943).

⁸ Dole apparently is not referring to a particular type of boat but is suggesting

Tuesday 10th March 1840

Dear Jane

We are now about one days run above Vicksburg runing along Very Well Lashed to Kiles Boat⁹ we had a Terrible time night before Last in a Storm we was runing & about 12 oclock at night a storm came up drove [us] on an Bar Island¹⁰ it was so dark we could not See one another on the boat when we struck the Island we not Knowing which way to pull to get off attempted to fasten her when the wind blew a perfect hurricane & drove us off into the river again Leaving Joseph on the Island the wind raved & rain poored down and we runing as hard as the current & wind both would carry us not Knowing where we would strike or where we was going the night was so dark that we could not see trees untill we struck them & tore off a part of our roof. the boat struck so hard that she checked up a Little & run out on the Bank Just below, the ground being over flowed & stopped. we had not got off next morning when Kile came along & Landed helped us off & the Boats are now together runing along safe enough. Joseph was brot to us next morning in a skift—I was anxious to hear certain [news] from the N. Orleans market before we run the boats all the way down and a steam boat comeing along I took charge of Both Boats & Kile has gone to New Orleans & is to come back & meet me at Natches at Which place the Boats will wait for him¹¹ I shall probably mail this at Vicksburg tomorrow as I shall go on shore there in a skiff if the Boats do not land. one of my hands went home from Memphis & I hired another I made five Dollars by the exchange & got a better hand. I have nothing to say in regard to my buisiness at home as I have Every Confidence that Robinson will attend to it & can better Judge what ought to be done than I can from here—You see [I never?] Let an opertunity pass of

that he did not then know of any flatboats at Memphis which had descended from the Wabash River. Since March was early in the season, perhaps Dole considered it a favorable circumstance that he seemed to be ahead of the heavy traffic with a chance of disposing of his cargo before heavy competition developed.

⁹ This is probably a reference to William Kile. See *History of Edgar County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1879), 569, where William Kile is named as a partner in the store which Dole later established at Paris, Illinois. Here and elsewhere mention is made of the practice of lashing boats together enroute downstream.

¹⁰ The changing course of the Mississippi and the Ohio created numerous islands, sandbars, sloughs, cutoffs, and other obstructions to navigation. Because of such obstructions detailed guides were published to warn boatmen of their location and give helpful information on how best to navigate to avoid them. Two of the best known of these guides were Zadok Cramer's *Navigator*, initially published at Pittsburgh in 1801, and Samuel Cummings' *Western Pilot*, first published at Cincinnati in 1822. Both guides had a number of editions. For information concerning them and other guides see Leland D. Baldwin, *The Keelboat Age on Western Waters* (Pittsburgh, 1941), 56-61. From the letters here published it is uncertain whether Dole used such a guide.

¹¹ Several of Dole's letters indicate that he both bought and sold produce at various points along the lower Mississippi River. Here and there he tells of information obtained or sought about markets at New Orleans or other places. As these letters illustrate, New Orleans was not the only depot for the cargoes of flatboats even though it was the principal one.

writing to you & in return I expect to get a Letter from you in N. Orleans if not in Natches

I Remain Your husband

Truly & effecttionately

Wm P Dole

Jane Dole

Vicksburg 12th March 18[40]

I have Just Sold fifty head of my hogs here at 6 cts pr lb neat but my money had to be shaved off¹² & the Sale when I got it into good money amounted to about 4 cts which is a Loosing buisness I shall Leave here tomorrow morning for a market below which is said to be no better

Wm P. Dole

Rodney¹³ 15th March 1840

Dear Wife

I am now Lying at this Place with my hogs & the Load of corn on which Kile started. Kile Left the Boats for New Orleans 8 days ago & was to Meet me with the news from below (or write) at Grand Gulph or Natchess what has become of him I cannot tell but he has had more than time to return & I cannot hear from him. I had an opertunity of selling some corn here at a price that would save us cost & stopped & sent Stewart to Natchus for Kile but no Kile or Letter was to be found consequently I am Left to guess at what to do with the corn I have however conluded to stop the Load here as the Price of corn here will pay us back our money while the news from N. Orl[ans?] is that corn is down to 35 cts pr Bushel & the best I can hear it is 40 cts which would be a Loossing buisness—I have Sold about 5.00 [*sic*] bushels here & all my Pork & Lard the corn will pay cost & I have made about \$100.00 clear on my Little Lot of Pork which is doing Very well with that. I shall start for N. Orleans this morning with my hogs as I cannot sell them here & the report from below is that they are Very Low ther[e?] but raising a Little & I think they will come up a Little before I Sell. I shall send two or 3

¹² In the 1840s there was no federal bank in operation, but numerous banks existed under varying degrees of state supervision. Since banks generally issued notes which circulated as money, it was often impossible to know their fair exchange value. Hence notes were frequently discounted by the person or bank which received them, a practice known as note shaving. In this instance the "shaving" had been severe—about thirty-three and a third per cent. For a further discussion of note shaving see Buley, *The Old Northwest*, I, 585-86.

¹³ Samuel Cummings, *The Western Pilot* (Cincinnati, 1840), 113, locates Rodney on the left bank of the Mississippi about forty miles north of Natchez. As used by Cummings, the left bank is the east bank and the right bank is the west bank of the river. His estimates of distances are obtained by following the course of the river and, hence, often much longer than the actual distance. Grand Gulf, mentioned in the opening paragraph of this letter, was also on the left side of the Mississippi between Rodney and Vicksburg. *Ibid.*, 112.

of the hands home from here & this Letter with some of them—my health is rather on the mend Joseph & Allen are well No more at Present

Jane Dole

Your husband
W. P. Dole

1841

15 miles below [New] Harmony night March 30th 1841

Dr Jane

we having tied up to the willows for the night & calculating to reach the ohio River tomorrow I have conluded to commence a Letter to you to be Mailed at Shawneetown—we have got on safely but slowly so far having Laid by all day monday at Vincennes¹⁴ for wind—my health is Very good and I believe we shall have no difficulty getting along as we can manage the Boats with perfect Ease—we have not Lashed the Boats yet but Expect to do so on reaching the ohio river I have Very Little to say as there is nothing on the river worth relating & I am not far Enough down to hear anything of the markets all I can do therefore is to write some thing that you may hear where we are now & then which is no doubt a satisfaction at Least I Know for myself I could not enjoy anything more than the news that my Jane & my Babes¹⁵ were well, unless it should be the much wished for pleasure of again meeting them by my own fireside, which pleasure I hope in a few short weeks to Enjoy—you will not fail of course to write to me—Write amediately upon the recpt of this to Donaldsonville La¹⁶ as I shall stop there allso to N. Orleans—Kiss my children for me—I am no believer in Dreams but I have ben all day thinking of William having Dreamed Last night that I saw him Drowned in the river at Clinton it is getting Late & I must go to sleep hopping my Dreams will be pleasant for the future, good night

O had I the Wings of a fairy
Just two or three hours this night

¹⁴ Vincennes, located on the Wabash shortly above where it receives the White River, had been the largest of the outposts which the French had established in the present Indiana area during the first half of the eighteenth century. From 1800 until 1813 it had been the capital of the Indiana Territory. New Harmony and Vincennes were principal points on the Wabash between its mouth and Terre Haute.

¹⁵ The two "Babes" were Dole's children, William and Persis. U. S., Seventh Census, Indiana, Vermillion County, Clinton, 1, microfilm copy, Genealogy Division, Indiana State Library. This 1850 census lists William P., age 33, Jane, 32, Persis J., 14, and William R., 12, Dole.

¹⁶ Cummings, *Western Pilot*, 123, describes Donaldsonville as the capital of Louisiana and comments that it was rising fast in importance. He locates it approximately seventy-seven miles above New Orleans and about sixty-two miles below Baton Rouge.

Id Waft myself home to my Jeney
Id Distance the Winds in my flight

Wm P. Dole

Thursday 31st March or 1st of April
I do not know which) a fine sunshiney morning, all well, Just run
Blocks Cut off,¹⁷ the Boys are Locking the Boats &c &c &c &c &c in
fact I have nothing to write unless I fill the Ballance of this sheet
with a Sonnet to my Deary & that to me would be an up hill buisi-
ness—I saw a man this morning Just from N. Orleans he reports
pork rather on the decline corn firm at \$1.00 pr bbl & scarce if that
should be true I shall avail myself of it as there is not much corn
ahead of me on Lamot, gills, Ellison, and other Praries¹⁸ the Corn is
yet in the Cribs on the Bank of the river I could have bought on
Ellison Prarie at 15 cts pr Bush (Cash) & Boats @ \$1.00 N. Smith
of Vincenes—an old Produce Dealer Recd a Letter from Lindly N.O.
a few days ago stating that sack corn was 42 to 45 & on the rise, if So,
Booh[er?] will no doubt get in in time to receive that price as his
Boat must now be in the Mississippi & his directions were not to stop
night or day untill he arrived at N.O. I have moore hopes of making
a Little money this spring than I have had any spring yet but no
telling, untill I get down

We shall reach the ohio some time this after noon—we are now
Just above Shawnetown¹⁹ and I must close this Letter Mr Edgar
wishes to be remembered to you. The Boys all send their Love
to whom it May Concern, we shall run all night to night. The Ohio
River is Very high & raising No more at present

¹⁷ The exact location of Block's Cutoff is not known, but this letter indicates that it was probably on the lower Wabash. The Wabash, like the Mississippi, also changed its course from time to time. In its issue for April 18, 1835, the Vincennes *Western Sun and General Advertiser* included a communication stating that Edward Smith, an engineer who had been appointed to survey the Wabash River, with a view to its improvement, would during the season publish "a chart of the river for navigators, from Lafayette to the mouth of the Wabash" The anonymous correspondent explained that such a guide would be duly appreciated by all engaged in boating on the Wabash. If such a guide was ever published, no record of it has survived apparently.

¹⁸ David Thomas, an American pomologist, florist, and writer, who visited Indiana in 1816, described the area which includes these prairies. He indicates that they could be viewed from the bluff at Merom on the east side of the Wabash River in Sullivan County, Indiana, between Terre Haute and Vincennes, although they were all located in Illinois. Thomas mentions the La Motte, Ellison, Union, and Gill prairies as visible from "The beautiful bluff above *Turtle Creek* . . . now called *Merom*" See Harlow Lindley, ed., *Indiana As Seen By Early Travelers* (Indianapolis, 1916), 124-25, 131. With regard to navigation of the Wabash River Thomas states: "The Wabash is . . . remarkable for its serpentine course, and from Vincennes to Fort Harrison [near Terre Haute], which is only reckoned seventy miles by land, it is computed to be one hundred and fifty by water." *Ibid.*, 112-13.

¹⁹ This letter seems to have been written in stages. In any event, by the time Shawneetown had been reached the Ohio had of course already been entered.

remember me as I am
Your Loving Husband
Wm P. Dole

Fort Pickering²⁰ Apr 6th 1841
1½ miles below Memphis Tenn

Dr Wife

I arrived here this Evening and having an opportunity will write a few Lines to inform you at Least where we are from time to time how we get along &c—Edgar has been sick for the Last few days but is getting some better SE Patten has strained his Back in Pulling so as be unable to do any thing & I do not think he will be able to do any thing more this trip so you see we have a Light Crew of hands which makes Very hard work besides we have had but two Days without wind since we started & that raft of hoop poles²¹ is as unmanageable (in wind) as *Ed Crob* & I often think of the times you and him have—I have Just been shown by a Commission merchant of this Place (in whose Counting Room I am writing) a price courrant of 27 march which is the Latest news from N. Orleans it quotes Corn in Sacks firm at 45 to 48 in Ear pr Bbl 65 to 70 cts pork has declined a Little mess 12.00 to 12.75 prime 9.00 Bulk pork 4¼ to 4½²²—I have also seen a man this Evening Just from N. Orleans who says the above statement of Prices was correct say 8 Days ago he says also that hoop poles is worth 30 to 35.00 hoops would be some thing Less if I get \$25 I shall be satisfied Booher is ahead but how far I do not Know something Like 100 miles I suppose perhaps more Scott Mol[ain?] Passed me in the Ohio River but he is not far ahead as I have been close after him untill to day—we shall Leave here tomorrow morning as fast as possible for the Coast. Booher will I think get in in time to get 45 cts at Least for my shelld Corn & 35 cts for my oats if so that Land will pay me a profit of about \$2.00. what I shall be able to do with my Land is more than I can yet tell a few days moore will tell the story however—My grocery Licence must be Renewed in may—Judge [Tingle?] or Bales would attend to it for me no doubt.

²⁰ Fort Pickering is not mentioned in the 1840 edition of Cummings' *Western Pilot*. But Cummings' *The Western Pilot* (Cincinnati, 1841), 95-96, indicates its location as about three miles below Memphis. He also suggests that it then had decidedly the advantage over Memphis in the river business on account of its landing and bid fair to become a place of importance. It is worth noting that in this letter Dole has a similar comment and predicts that Fort Pickering will doubtless take the lead over Memphis.

²¹ Hoop poles were slender green saplings, often white oak or hickory, which were bent around barrels in circular form with their ends tied together to hold the staves of barrels in place. Because pork and other items were packed in barrels, hoop poles were much in demand as Dole's letters indicate.

²² The varying grades and kinds of pork are discussed in Berry, *Western Prices Before 1861*, 232-33.

the commisssoners would pass an order for the issue of the Licence & I will pay the money & take them out as soon as I return²³—this place which was no place at all at Least a town Last spring is now becoming a rival of Memphis & will I have no doubt take the Lead of it, in time as the Memphis Rail Road terminates here & the Landing is good there is a Sale of Lot on the 28th Inst

I believe I have nothing moore to say at Present

Yours truly
Wm P. Dole

Rodney Apr 15th 1841

Dear Wife

I arrived here Last night at Dark all well but rather out of *sorts* in Consequence of the difficulty of making sales Corn is worth here 75 pr Bbl when it can be Sold at all but there is nothing but a retail buisiness doing & that slow the farmers having most of their Corn on hand of their own Raising Mess Pork is selling at 13.00 here from store but no one can obtain that price but a Commision Merchant My old friend Bone offers to sell my Produce for me but I fear it will detain me here to Long and I am anxious to get on the coast with my hoops which is now worth there (as well as N.O.) 30 to 35.00 pr thousand but if I have my usual Luck they will fall before I can get in—the Last price Courant Reed here marks Sack Corn in N.O. at 47 to 48 & advancing this was on the 7th Inst Just 7 Days ago the report here is that it has gone up to 50 & 55 cts Booher must now be in N. Orleans or was there & the prosp[ect] is that the shelld Corn will pay me a fair profit oats has allso advanced to 40 & 45 cts pr Bushel pork is Low & falling Mess \$12 & on the decline Bulk Pork 3½ to 4 Corn in the Ear must fall to 5 *bits*²⁴ or Lower I saw some sold at Vicksberg at 56¼ pr bbl by the load I still ask 75 but have not been able to get it yet Except for a few Bbls I shall probably not stop again untill I arrive at Baya Sara where I shall commence coasting²⁵—Esqr Paine is here we have ben together since we Left Vicksberg he wishes you to say to Mrs Paine that he is well so is his hands [J?] Cook & Ellis & Wm Barrick—my hands are all well—there is general Mourning here in Consequence of the Reported Death of Gen.

²³ In the pioneer era both groceries and taverns commonly sold liquor and were among businesses which were generally licensed.

²⁴ Since a bit was a Mexican coin worth twelve and one half cents, five bits would equal sixty-five cents. Western dependence on silver coins of Mexican and Spanish origin is noted in Berry, *Western Prices Before 1861*, 362-63, 487-89, and *passim*.

²⁵ Bayou Sara was located on on the left side of the river about thirty-six miles north of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as indicated in Cummings, *Western Pilot* (1840), 119. The remark about "coasting" may possibly indicate that Dole thought navigation would no longer be necessary.

Harrison which I suppose is true beyond a Doubt²⁶ John Payton is behind how far I cannot tell Dowing is ahead. when I shall be at home is uncertain but I shall be as expeditious as I can & I think I shall make a shorter trip than Last year—I believe I have no further news I can say nothing about buisness for I have forgot all about it having so much to think of here do the best you can Charles must be industrious in making Collections

Jane Dole

Your Husband
Wm P. Dole

New Orleans Wensday April [?]th 1841

Dr Jane

Having an oportunity of sending a Line To you by Wm Barrick who will start home tomorrow I take a few moments while Every one Else is asleeping to write to you allthough I have nothing of importance to say I recd your Letter a few days after I arrived here dated 1st Apr I first called at the P.O. came away much out of *sorts* as I went Expecting a Letter & found none it was afterwards handed me by Hadden who had forgotten he had it for me. I was pleased to Receive it allthough written so soon after I Left home but should be better pleased to get one of a Later date which I am in hopes I shall do tomorrow—the Boys will get home before you Receive this & will no doubt tell all the news so that on that acount I need not Enter into particulars—my corn I sold on the coast as I before wrote you, at a small profit as well as part of my Lard & hams & shoulders all my hogs heads &c. I sold after Leaving Donald[son?]ville 17,000 hoops 6 at \$18.00 & 11 at \$20.00 pr thousand which was about cost—the Balance being 28,000 I Brought into the citty & fortunately sold all of them at \$22.50 cts pr thousand to some planters below N.O. they bought my Boat @ \$15.00 and after taking 8,000 out here I have to send Joseph 18 miles down below N.O. to see to counting out the Ballance he will start by daylight in the morning & will probably be gone two days—so you see I have wound the old Hoop pole Boat up after a hard sweat at about \$1.00 profit—the Last of the sack corn sold today 186 sacks @ 46 cts for coffee & sugar coffee @ 11¼ & suger 6¾ in Bbls which was a good sale corn can be had now on the Levy at from 40 to 44—the Last price [?]is 44 being the Loast any of my corn has been sold for it will average 46 cts or near it my Beans will not sell at all at least not for more than 200 pr Bbl I have put them in store at Olneys & shall Leave them. the chickens was sold at \$4¼ pr Doz I have not yet setted the ac[coun]t of sales with

²⁶ According to Dorothy Burne Goebel, *William Henry Harrison: A Political Biography* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XIV; Indianapolis, 1926), 377, President Harrison died April 4, 1841.

whitcomb & Booher & consequently cannot tell how it will come out but I think it must pay a fair profit although there has ben a considerable Expence here for sucking &c, &c. I have nothing now to sell but my bbl pork which goes to inspection tomorrow & if it stands the *Racket* there²⁷ I shall have no difficulty in selling it at 12 for mess \$10.50 for M.O. & 9 for ch[o]ice & I may do a Little Better as pork is a Little on the Look up in consequence of all the heavy dealers having stored all their pork & Limited it a few Dollars above the market which makes small Lots of good Bbl pork go off a Little more ready but bad Enough yet in all consience—Bulk pork is Very Low choice Lots 4 cts hog [?] & from that down to 2½, Lard 6½ to 7 cts & in good demand—Esqr Paine is here With one Boat the Hoops he Left down the Bya[uu?] which I think will be a Losing buisness—corn is rather on the decline here at present 75 slow at Retail & 62½ by the good 4 foot guage some sales are made on better terms but that is really the market price but it must come up in 2 or 3 weeks & if had not had so hard a time this spring & become perfectly wore down I should buy corn on speculation and stay a while Longer. I shall as it is start home whithin a week so I now think—I shall buy as many groceries as I did Last spring and if I can get Cr a considerable amt more & I want all the collections made that can possibly be made to pay for Freight I would send you some money for my Bank debt but think I shall be home by that time. as this Letter is rather a price courrant than a buisness or Love Letter you can show it to Dr. Kile if has any wish to hear from the market—I shall get the money due the Dr & myself from Mr [?] \$74.00—I am writing in the Boat where the musquetoos are as thick as you can imagine & I cannot stand them any Longer so adieu for a few days when I shall put up at your Tavern for the summer.

Jane B. Dole

Wm P. Dole

N. B. Whitcomb, Booher & myself will Likely start home together say next sunday or a day or two Later

1842

Ap the 1 1842

Dear William

haveing an oppertunity of writing to you I wont let it pass unimp[roved] I have nothing to good to write the Measles ar still raging yet we ar all getting aloung slowly except William. he took [ill?]

²⁷ The term "suck" generally indicates some kind of cheat or deception. Here it seems to be used to indicate money lost through inspection irregularities. Inspection laws as well as questions regarding weights and measures are considered in Berry, *Western Prices Before 1861*. See in particular Chapter VI, 139-54. See also 232-33 concerning the grading and inspection of pork.

the day you left he got along with the Measles rather better than rest of us did but after they went in on him he took cold and it settle on his louns he has been very sick and I cant say he is any better but I am in hopes he will get along with good atention I have not had a good night sleep since you left my own health is very bad there has ben Several Deaths since you left Kaitharn Rush old Mrs Downing and some others in the Country

Sonday Aprail the 3

I cominence this letter to send on the flat Boat but the Watter fell so fast we thought it best not to start it we heard the water on the Rappids²⁸ was not sufficiant to let it over and no prospect of a rise soon I concluded to finish it and send it by Mail I think William is better but he has ben very sick about the time william was the worst I herd you was coming home on the Sparton it got here on Frady Mornig about daylight I was shure you was on it in a bout [10?] Minates I herd some person step on the porch and you May guess how my heart *Jump*t but O how I was disappointed it was Mr Swan he brought me a letter its true was a satisfaction but nothing in comparison to what I was expecting but I am in hops it is better so if you had come I could not let you go again for I never could bear a nother parting for belief me that during a period of your absence I cannot partakes of any real enjoyment because all I do is alloyd by the knowledg of kowing my heart beloved cannot enjoy it with me

I toll Mr Downing of his Mothe[r's] Death Peara has ben very sick but is gettin[g?] bette rest of his Children are getting

you must excuse my bad writing for William has ben crying all the time I have ben writeing for me to rock him I will write soon abetter letter Sos you can read it

W P Dole

yours truly
Jane Dole

April 8th 1842
5 miles below Tenn River

Dear Jane

You will no doubt be surprised at the slow pace we are travelling as it is now upwards of two weeks since we Left home & we are not out of the Ohio. Since I wrote from shawneetown the wind has ben constantly blowing so that we have only arrived at this place about 80 miles in five Days. if we were alone I should think we might perhaps be wasting our time but as all the Boats that crossed the rapides on the same day & most that crossed the day before we did, are strung along the shore aboive & below us we think we have done our duty

²⁸ This is possibly a reference to the Grand Rapids below Vincennes described in note 2.

The ohio is quite Low and from the quantity of Sand Bars that Stare us in the face at Every turn we think it unsafe to run windy days or dark nights. AB Cuninghons (with Conkeys Boats) is fast on a Bar at the mouth of Tennessee River or Paduca.²⁹ Jno Payton is here with us—Downing is ahead—

As we had to Lay by yesterday for wind & as *Conkey* is one of my particular friends I turned out all hands yesterday with Paytons Crew to help Andy off the Bar & succeeded in getting one Boat off & as we had done so much good we concluded to Lay by today although the wind had nearly abated and get the other off So all hands are up helping him while I am taking care of my Boats & writing to you which is next to the pleasure of talking to you as I sometimes while writing forget that you are not preasent—my boats are tight and Easily managed & I aprehend no difficulty in getting down safe but shall be in no hurry as I Expect to have to wait for a market if I sh[oul?]d go amediately down. I supose Dibble is probably on the way if there is water, in which case he will probably overtake me—where I shall mail this is uncertain probably at cario [Cairo, Illinois]

Saturday 9th April (morning)

I had written the foregoing with a pencil having Lost my Ink but having got some yesterday concluded to write over the pencil marks & Let it go—We got Andy off yesterday and he is afloat Just ahead well pleased as you may be sure—we floated all night and are not far from the mouth of the ohio there is now 17 of us (all from clinton) in company so we are far from Lonesome when we can forget “the girl we Left behind us” Especially as there are two fiddles & five fiddlers in company we have music at all tims of day & night—it is really delightful when floating along in the night to hear played some good march which as it rebounds from the hills over the water allmost persuades you that you are realy answered by another instrument instead of an *Echo*

Mr Yeager of Perrysville³⁰ is allso in company with us he is sick at Least so as not to be able to be up Long at a time he is now in bed in our boat

I have a note somewhere in my notes against Goodin Holiway of Terre Haute payable to I. T. Richardson which I wish sued if not Paid on presentation—tell *Dick* allso to settle with F. H. Mitchel if he can before he Goes down the River—allso have Chester Clark get a note on F. H. Mitchel which he is to Let me have for some Lumber &c which he got of me—Mr Clark will furnish a bill of the Lumber which

²⁹ Paducah, Kentucky, is located at the mouth of the Tennessee River. Cummings, *Western Pilot* (1840), 72, describes a large sandbar at the mouth of this river.

³⁰ This is apparently a reference to Perrysville, Indiana, situated on the Wabash River in the northern part of Vermillion County.

charge to his ac[coun]t & credit him with the amt of the note he gives you on Mitchel. the Lumber is \$125 per hundred (inch measure)—I want W. A. Richardson to Have F H Mitchels notes on his corn & the quicker it is done the Better as Richardson may require money of me if he does not get notes in time consequently push Mr Clark to get the note—Tell Harlly to collect if Possible the amt he Lent to Enos Sumpter he can probably secure it by some person f[rom?] whom he goes down the river—Tell *Dick* if he can use the Shawneetown money which I Left in the pocketBook to buy Whiskey or can change it off for other money to do so—it is at Par along the river for goods—but cannot be changed for other moneys—the state Bank is worse, in Fa[c]t I cannot use it at all—

The prices below for corn is [so] Low that I do not Like to ma[ke] th[e] [fi]gures so shall Let it go til ni[ght] Time

Remember me to all friends

yours affectionately

W. P. Dole

Clinton April 21th 1842

Dear William

I take this opportunity of writing to you, and I donot know wht to write, for it has been so long since I heard from you. it has been 3 weeks since I heard from you. I got a letter from Shawnetown and I expected another in a short time but was disapointed from mail to mail if there is anything the matter of courese you are excuseable but if not I think I have good reason to scold. for it has caused me a great deal of uneasiness. I have written 4 letters to you, and I think you will get some of them. I directed them all to New Orleans. for I thought it the most certain place to get them I have been sick since you left home. but am a little better now So that I can Sit up Some I cant tell you what has been the matter for it has been every thing but the worst was a pain in my head and side the Doctor thinks I took cold after the Measles and settle in my Side I want you to come home as quick as you can I dont want to make you uneasy and neglect your buisness to come for I have all atention that is nesenary I have had the Doctor but I dont think he done me any good and I quit takeing his Medison for he is not my Doctor notime he only came when it suited him. it is bad [to?] be a lone and be well but it is much worse to be sick. I have been alone 2 before but I dont think I ever past the time So unhappy before I have not been well anugh to ride out any yet and but little of time that I could leave my room but one sattisfaction I have to know the time will come when you will be with me at home—I want you not to make arangements to go back their again but I fear if the prices be as bad as we here they ar that you

will not have the chance to go a gain but I have made up my mind for the worst and if I am disappointed let it be a greeable so but one sattisfaction greater then all others is to know that I have you for wich is all the real happiness I want in this world with you I could be happy let my sittuation be what it may it is t[im?]^e I quit wrteing for I am writing so bad you cant read it but I deserve credit for writing as well as I do for I have a very soar Blister on the *Back of my neck* and I know you know somthing a bout that I have Sent to the postoffice and if I dont get aletter I Shall think you ar Sick or have forgotten me one or the other Shure but I am disappointed again I think you ar retalliateting you ought to look over the past I have written every week since you left home but last week and I didnot set up one hour in a day

Dick saw Mr Dandy this morning he told him he saw you last Wenday was a week in N. Orleans that is the first I heard since you left Shanetown I was pleased to hear you was well that was all he kew I supposes you had gone on a Steamboat to see what the Markets was below from the account he gives they ar verry bad and the river full of Boats all the way up—the Wabash is verry high at this time I think it will not be nesenary fo[r] me to write again for I think you will be Started home before it would get t[here?] I believe I havenot any thing more to [write?] and I cant write any longer if I had for my hand trimbles so bad the Children ar both well William Bails Wife has been Sick three weeks the Docte[r] says she cant live I never Saw as mutch sickness at this [season] of the year in my life Mr Ray has Book 100.00 Dollars for Coffins since you left

Dick and the grocery is getting along slow but Shure he is verry atentive to his buisness he has been verry good since you left verry agreeable indeed I want you to take good care of yourself and come home as quick as you ca[n]

W P Dole

Your loveing Wife
Jane Dole

Rodney 7th May 1842

Dear Jane

I arrived here from N. Orleans a few moments ago and found Dibble here waiting for me with his hands all well Wells was allso still here with the Boat I Left he had made no sales as the price was 37½ pr bbl & my dirictions was to take no Less than 50 cts

I wrote you a Line from N. Orleans by Judiah Malone but was in a hurry when I wrote & could not give you near all the particulars which is the Case now I received 3 Letters from you all together Just before Leaving N. Orleans one datd the 3d one the 9th & one 20th April which had they not contained the fact of your bad heath would

have been a source of great pleasure to me I hope however you have recovered your health by this time & will try & reconcile yourself to our separation for a short time yet—I believe I wrote to you that I had sold my shelled Corn @ 34 cts pr Bushel which is a Loss of about \$120.00 on the Load I made a Little on my chickens which will Leave the Loss about \$100 What I shall do with the Bal is uncertain I am in hoops however to do at Least as well but I shall have to stay some time to do it Such times never was seen on this river as the present Every thing down to Al most nothing potatoes have ben sold at 25 cents pr Barrel Corn $12\frac{1}{2}$ to 18 cts pr Bushel & 25 cts the highest, Bacon well smoked @ $2\frac{1}{2}$ cts Bulk pork $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 cents & very often Less flour is now down to 4.00 Live hogs to 2 cents pr lb neat Hoop poles 2 to 5\$ pr thousand (I hear Davidson sold at 17\$) and Every thing Equally Low. good sugar has ben sold at $1\frac{1}{2}$ cents pr lb Coffee 8 to $9\frac{1}{2}$ & C & C—Esqr Hayworth of Park County & myself Bought 3 Loads corn at Natchez yesterday as I came up at 31 cts by the 4ft guage pr Barrel to be delivered in N. Orleans on which I think we shall make some money I suppose you will be sorry to hear that I am buying Corn but you must bear it patiently. it seems Like folly for me to come home and spend the summer brooding over my misfortunes with nothing to do & nothing but ruin staring me in the face so far as buisness is concerned & consequently I think it best for me to Endeavor to do something here it may be better, it cannot be much worse I have Every confidence that Dick will do Every thing in his power for my benefit I want him to credit but Little & collect Every cent he can I may send up a few groceries before I come. If not, I yet Expect to buy before I Leave here I was pleased at the arrangement made for weddings Corn as it is bad Enough to have a full Load & worse than bad to have all the Expences with part of a Load while you manage that well my Interest will not suffer much allthough I am from home

I think the time for a man to show himself worthy of the name is when he is in difficulty & for me to give up the *ghost* (as the saying is) untill the Last dog is dead would be acting the coward & not using that Energy which is due from Every man to his family. these are difficult times and are only to be overcome by men who have to much spirit to go down untill the Last hope is Lost & I am one whose hope is pretty strongly developed. Look fo[r] me about the middle of June. You shall however hear from me often—I was sorry to hear that you would not write again after your Last Letter I hope you will take the trouble to write several Letters after that one as I shall be at N. Orleans Long Enough to get some of them—We shall Leave here for N. Orleans in the Course of an hour where I shall shell all my Corn & if the market holds at what it was when I Left then sell

mediately if not I shall hold on a while—my health never was better & you need not fear for me I think as I am allways well in the south—Dr Kile will I fear disapoint me in the money he was to pay in N. O. So you was right again & I think hereafter I shall be more ready to take your advice

Yours allways

W. P. Dole

1843

May 9th 1843

Dr Jane

As we are Laying up to shore for stormy Weather I have concluded to write you a few Lines to pass off the time we are now in the chute of Island No 40 15 miles above Memphis³¹ & about half way from home to New Orleans we have ben from home 13 Days and ought to have ben as Low as Vicksburg but the weather has ben Very bad since we came into this river we have only run one night and it stormed all that night—we tried to run to day & Came about 8 miles but the wind & rain drove us in to shore Every river is Very high the wabash was higher than I Ever saw it at the Lower part of it hardly a family was Left on its banks & the water 4 foot deep in some of the houses—the ohio was allso Very high & rising fast—the Mississippi is higher than I Ever saw it the people have in many places Left for high Land some are Living in Boats—some have their Cattle, hogs, & horses, up on stages built up for that purpose & some are Left to be drowned. we have seen Cattle belly deep in the water & no Land to go to, & hogs swimig about trying to get on the Logs & drift—all this you Know makes it harder for us to get along—as for prices of produce in N. Orleans I have not heard a word since I Left home I do not Expect it to be high there is so many boats on the river

if the weather Clears up we Can reach N Orleans in 10 or 12 days & I think I wi[ll?] Certainly be home by the 10 of June perhaps a Little sooner—it has been Very Cold on the river it seems Like March weather instead of May—the fruit trees are all in Bloom here but there is Little or no planting done yet

I am getting a Little home sick a thing not Very common for me so you may Calculate on my being home as soon as possible—in the mean time take care of yourself [There?] would [Little else?] to charm & be [n?]o home for me if you was not there to share it with

³¹ Cummings, *Western Pilot* (1840), 95, refers to Beef Island as island Number 40. He describes it as a large island lying nearer the eastern shore and gives very explicit instructions concerning how to navigate past it. Cummings indicates that it is situated about twenty-two miles above Memphis.

me on my return—with all my Love of money I believe you know it is not the end but the means of happiness for which I seek it & as Burns says I wish money not to hide it in a hedge—but for the glorious privilege of being independent & to me the pleasure would be more than doubled by sharing it with a wife whose principle aim is the peace, Comfort, & happiness of her husband—and such a wife have I

Wednesday morning 10th May

we are now in sight of Memphis & I hasten to finish this Letter. the weather is yet cloudy & windy but I have got tired of Laying at anchor and not at shore Either for my Boat has not touched Land since I Left Terre Haute—neither have I been ashore since we Left there so you must suppose I am getting tired of the Boat—Let Saml Mitchels wife know he is well—we shall not Land at Memphis—Yours Truly & forever

W. P. Dole