

John E. Stewart to Thaddeus Hyatt

John E. Stewart wrote from Wakarusa, Kansas to Thaddeus Hyatt, president of the National Kansas Committee, describing his work on the underground railroad. This letter detailed the inclement weather and difficulties he encountered as he helped slaves to escape from Missouri, as well as his procedure for locating the slaves and hiding them in his wagon. Stewart sought to gain assistance from Hyatt, mainly in the form of provisions and horses. He also needed advice about what to do with the escaped slaves to ensure that they were not captured and sold again into slavery.

Creator: Stewart, John E

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Wassenaar
Thaddeus Hyatt Esq.
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Thaddeus Hyatt.

My Dr. Sir.

About two hours since I arrived at home after an absence of eight days, during which I have suffered more than I can describe to you, my hands & feet are frozen, my ears are about an inch thick & my cheek bones are destitute of skin. & what is worse I have only a few hours for rest to day, as I must start on the road again at night fall, to seek a place of safety for two of my black brethren. That I have brought thus far from the land of bondage since the rescue of Day, I have spent a great portion of my time in this way, & have brought away from Mo. fourteen, including one unbroken family. of which I feel rather proud, & very thankful that I have been able to do so much good for the oppressed, & so much harm to the oppressors. At some future time I will write you some extracts from my diary, which I think will interest you, for we have had many hairbread escapes, considerable fighting & some interesting conversation.

But my object in writing at this time is to obtain council, & if possible help. As I know you are well posted in these matters, & well acquainted with the most influential friends of Freedom.

We have two difficulties to contend with, First Poverty, we have to find our own waggon & horses, pay our own traveling expenses &c. &c. & in many cases to find something for the slave we rescue, who are nearly always destitute of everything. True we have many friends here who lend a helping hand, but all we can get is but ill sufficient to cloth & equip the fugitives.

John E. Stewart to Thaddeus Hyatt

During my last trip, the only horse I had fit for
such a trip, gave up the ghost after traveling
to 3 miles in less than 10 hours, he was a good horse, &
I have no doubt is gone to the land where all good
horses go, but his loss will seriously hinder me in
my future operations.

For I am in the habit of letting my team into other
people's pens, of buying something, say, pigs, potatoes
&c, &c, get into conversation with some slaves,
find out some who wish to escape, appoint a meeting,
show them in the bottom of the wagon give them
some weapons to defend themselves with, and then put
it through for life. & sometimes our success depends
upon the fleetness of our horses, sometimes on a steady
hand, when the revolver cracks.

You know sir that my means are very limited, my family
gets none of the luxuries, & but few of the comforts of this life,
but they do not complain, & if you can get me a little
of the needful I ~~thank~~ you armory your numerous
friends I promise you to spend it economically in
carrying forward the irrepressible conflict.

Our second difficulty is, what to do with the
slaves when we get them, there is something
wrong in Schastka, & Iowa I am fearful that
some have been captured, here I sent back, Is there
any organization that can be brought to bear so as to
take charge of fugitives, Please write me all the
information you can on this point, as soon as possible
the mean time I will do all I can in this great cause
feeling satisfied that the day is not far distant, when
the final triumph of Freedom will be complete.

I must conclude this with a remark my wife just now
says that a wicked institution Slavery is, say she
it makes us all wicked, I feel that I should like to
turn every slaveholder up. I believe I should it
would be right for you to shoot them.

Yours in the Irrepressible Conflict

John E. Stewart