

In The Hotel Lobby

Somehow most people always want what they can't have. Now don't be getting suspicious of your neighbor, because the Lounge Lizzard has covered almost a thousand miles the past two weeks, and my, what a job the trash man has had getting rid of all the paper, and all the boxes, and all the Christmas trees! One big truck coming toward us we noticed particularly. It looked for all the world like a moving pine forest, and when it did finally pass us we realized it was the last of the Christmas trees on their way out to the dumping ground. It seemed kind of a sad ending, but then it doesn't do to be too sentimental. They had served their purpose, and I am sure if they saw all the happy little faces, smiling around them that they would have thought only of the happiness that they had brought. I'm sure the Lounge Lizzard covered many hundred miles the past two weeks, by rail and motor—Corpus Christi, Houston, Galveston—quite a holiday, in fact. The decorations everywhere were lovely. Festoons of pine and cedar across the main streets and archways, of wreaths and Christmas lights, electricity everywhere, millions and millions of gay colored lights, sending out their cheerful greetings all along the way, for a "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." Which reminds me of a very interesting letter I have, and which will be interesting to reproduce, especially as this country has changed so completely, so much that what now are no distances, were once great adventures. The following letter is the property of Mrs. W. W. MacGregor, of Laredo, Texas, and was written in the month of December, 1853, by her grandfather to the folks back home in old New England. Mrs. MacGregor, herself, was born in Montgomery County where her father lived later, and after his death she moved with her mother to Corpus Christi to be with her grandparents. Mrs. MacGregor, herself, can tell many an interesting tale of the travel of earlier times before the railroad and motor car and good roads made so much possible.

Anderson, Texas
December 11, 1853

My dear Brother,

I cannot doubt that you will be glad to hear of our safe arrival in Texas. We embarked on Monday

from New York as I expected, but the ship did not leave the harbor until Thursday for want of fair winds and a crew. We then reached Galveston bar in fifteen days clear sailing. Then after waiting two days for the tide, we crossed over the bar some seven miles out, and anchored in the harbor Saturday night at Galveston. Sunday morning we took steamer for Houston some ninety miles up Galveston Bay and Buffalo Bayou. This Bayou is a curiosity. It is only wide enough for the boat to pass, and so crooked that you can seldom see water more than ten rods ahead. Now the boat rubs on this side, then on that, and next on both.

Ten miles below Houston a railroad leads out into the country, and "mighty heaps" of cotton are brought in at this place. The wharf is made of one-half a cord of oak posts, laid like the end of a wood pile. The water is from twenty to thirty feet deep even when it is not more than twice that in width.

From Houston here it is sixty-five miles through prairie and timber land. The road goes where the wagons are pleased to drive, and there is so much travel that there are sometimes eight or ten parallel tracks, and we could sometimes see twenty teams at once, with four to six yolk of oxen to each, and from ten to twelve oxen. The drivers carry their own snack and whiskey, and the cattle are turned loose to feed. Farmers make money here.

When we came into Grimes County the appearance changed. It is a rolling country and the proportion of oxen and timber land is about as in New England when each farmer has a wood lot reserved. The farmers build on the summit of a hill in a grove, so that their houses look like those in New England when trees have been planted around them. Sheep are feeding here, as fine sheep as you see north. A man may keep as many as he pleases only having a man to tend to them or having his land fenced. He need not buy land. The country is all common, and a thousand sheep will give as many dollars worth of wool in a year, for the flox will soon double. So they make money.

Most of the time we have been here, the weather has been fine and warm as June. They have melons till up into December. Corn is now worth \$1.00, and the farmers

allow one man for each twenty acres of corn and cotton, i. e., one man tends forty acres, one-half corn and one-half cotton. Goods are from fifty to a hundred percent higher here than in the north. Soon there will be railroads, and then Texas will be a great country. It is larger than the New England and Middle States put together. It is healthy, although we all came up here from Houston to avoid the fever.

Land in the vicinity of this village, or city, has risen from two and a half to ten dollars in four years. A man not far away bought a farm for three dollars per acre, a year since has raised a crop, and now can have six dollars per acre. Those engaged in raising stock make all the money they wish.

Alonzo is doing very well, and I think we did well in coming on. Lucious writes that he sent money. If you have not received it please let me know. We expected to find letters from home on our arrival here, but they have not come yet. A letter from Lu and one from Norwech is all.

Please drop me a line and let me know your whereabouts. I wrote to Sam recently. Our expenses were \$64.00 each, so we have something to send back when we find that letters go through.

I remain,

Your affectionate brother,
P. Jones

Note. The little bayou is now a regular lane for the big steamers of the world to go backwards and forwards on.

The Lucious of the letter was Lucious Jones, later rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, San Antonio, preceeding the days of the Civil War. He served as chaplain in Silbley's Brigade, and was shot while holding a flag of truce over the body of a wounded soldier on the battle in New Mexico. This wound later caused his death. Alonzo was a younger brother who, in 1858 returned to Boston, and served there as ticket agent at the old Colony Station for many years, and up to the time of his death.