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SOLOMON PERRY SUBLETTE: MOUNTAIN MAN OF THE FORTIES

By JOHN E. SUNDER*

THREE weary Mountain Men, leading a small string of pack mules, joined a larger group of travelers bedding down in the snow near the bank of El Rio de las Animas. Tall, rugged Solomon Perry Sublette and his two "clever companions," Bill Garmon and Fred Smith, carried government express dispatches to Taos and Santa Fe. The other adventurers were several days out of Bent's Fort on the Arkansas bound for northern New Mexico, determined to "kill and scalp" anyone party to the Taos rising and recent murder of Governor Charles Bent. The year 1847 was unpropitious for American authority in New Mexico, and the men encamped near the Purgatory that wintry night, February 11, slept in dangerous territory.¹

Lurking Indians, biting wind and blistering sun were Western elements all Mountain Men endured, and "Sol" Sublette was an old hand who could take whatever nature provided. For at least nine years he had wandered the plains and mountains from Missouri to California, Idaho to the Southwest, trapping, trading, exploring, never marrying, never settling down for more than a few months. His Western exploits were common Sublette family fare. At thirty-two he was the youngest of five brothers. William, the oldest, had died two years earlier after twenty years of Western activity.—had died a wealthy, highly respected Missourian. Milton was buried at Ft. Laramie. Pinckney had perished in an Indian engagement. Only Andrew, several years Solomon's senior, was alive, living in Missouri, preparing to serve in the Mexican War.²

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1. Lewis H. Garrard, *Wah-To-Yah And the Taos Trail* (Norman, 1955), pp. 123, 137; Ralph P. Bieber (ed.), *Wah-To-Yah And the Taos Trail* (Glendale, 1938), pp. 200-201.

2. File of Andrew W. Sublette, Capt. U. S. A., 1846-1848, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group No. 94, MSS., National Archives; *Daily Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), August 1, 1845; *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), December 15, 1843; List of Persons killed in the Fur Trade, Sublette MSS., 1819-1860, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis (Hereafter cited: Sublette MSS.).

All of the brothers were conditioned to a hardy outdoor existence by boyhood years in hilly, sparsely-inhabited country. Solomon, born in Lincoln County, Kentucky, shortly after the War of 1812, was named for a maternal uncle, Solomon Whitley, and quite possibly for Oliver Hazard Perry, naval hero of the Battle of Lake Erie. Phillip A. Sublette, Solomon's father, prospered as a tavern owner, part-time farmer, land speculator and county officeholder. Isabella Whitley, Solomon's mother, was the second oldest daughter of Colonel William Whitley, the renowned Indian fighter and lord of an imposing brick home overlooking the Wilderness Road in Lincoln County, Kentucky.³

The postwar trans-Mississippi land boom engulfed the Sublettes in 1817 and drew Phillip, Isabella and their children from Kentucky across the booming Old Northwest to the French settlement at St. Charles, Missouri Territory. Babe-in-arms Solomon was bundled up with the family property and carried west.⁴ At St. Charles his parents returned to tavern-keeping, operated a ferry for a short time and helped Americanize the entrenched French culture of their newly-adopted town. Settlers flocked through the community; fur traders floated past the levee bound for the rich, virgin trapping regions along the Upper Missouri; and Solomon's new world was a small child's-eye-view of wagon wheels, plodding oxen, bemoccasined Indian traders and a Territory in transition.

Tragedy came early in his life and stayed late. His par-

3. Solomon's actual year of birth is conjectural. The granite shaft marking the Sublette burial ground in Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis, states that he was forty-two years old at the time of his death, August 31, 1857. Stella M. Drumm, who worked for many years on the Sublette Papers in the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, accepted 1816 as his date of birth. Records in the Probate Court, St. Charles, Missouri, place him last in the chronological list of Sublette heirs. The frequently accepted statement that Pinckney W. Sublette was the youngest of the five Sublette brothers seems to be inaccurate.

For information on the Sublette-Whitley family see the archives of Lincoln and Pulaski counties, Kentucky, 1797-1826. Also see the Lincoln and Pulaski county tax lists, at the Kentucky Historical Society, for the same period. The Draper Collection of Kentucky Manuscripts (Microfilms of the Draper Collection in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin), 1775-1845, now at the Filson Club, Louisville, contains additional valuable information.

4. St. Charles County Census Record, 1817, MS., St. Charles County Court, St. Charles, Missouri.

ents died of illnesses modern medicine might have cured, and he and his young sisters and brothers were entrusted to close relatives. William and Milton, the older boys, entered the fur trade, since economic conditions after the Panic of 1819 were uninviting in St. Charles. Solomon was taken by relatives who had followed the Sublettes to Missouri.⁵ He matured during the eighteen-twenties and early thirties—matured and basked in the reflected light cast by his remarkable brothers. While he received a modest education and learned to ride, shoot and understand the countryside, they exploited the far western fur potential. Since William was the oldest brother and financially the most successful, he took charge of Solomon's career and carefully provided for him in his estate.⁶

In 1836 Solomon turned twenty-one. William offered to establish him in business. At first Solomon "could not make up his mind what course to pursue," but through William's positive suggestions decided finally to open a clothing store at Independence. The choice was sound: Independence was the outfitting point for both the Santa Fe and Oregon trails, times were good and the Sublettes had excellent business contacts in western Missouri. Robert Campbell, William's partner, then in the East, purchased an expensive outfit of shoes, hats, boots and Indian goods for the prospective store. While Campbell gathered the order, Solomon, to gain experience, clerked at Smith's St. Louis clothing shop.⁷

After a month's work behind the counter at Smith's store, Solomon traveled to Independence "well reconciled and anxious" to secure an advantageous location for his shop and to prove to his family his business ability. He found a desirable location, opened his doors in mid-April and six months later granted William a power of attorney. Business was good the first year, seemed even better the second and continued prosperous into the third. He restocked items—cigars, shaving

5. For extensive information on the Sublette-Whitley family in St. Charles see the St. Charles County archives, 1817-1827. The archives of Callaway County, Missouri, contain many references to the McKinney family.

6. Will of William L. Sublette, 1831, Sublette MSS.

7. W. L. Sublette to Robert Campbell, January 4, 12, 30, February 9, April 20, 1836, *ibid.*

boxes, shoes and socks—purchased from Independence wholesalers, yet he did not repay William for the greater part of his original supply.⁸

The Panic of 1837 set in motion a depression wave which bit by bit surged westward, bringing trying times to Mississippi Valley merchants. Solomon grew restless with a shopkeeper's existence. His St. Louis companions dared him to "throw away [his] . . . old hats and coats" and return to mint juleps and the ladies. Since he disliked keeping shop, he closed his door, sold William his "negro man Cato," whom he had purchased in Independence, and substituted parties and cards for a merchant's life.⁹

During the spring and early summer of 1838 he visited Arkansas and Louisiana and sold a jack and several mules at Natchitoches. He liked stock-trading enough to return to St. Louis where William agreed to support his new equestrian interest. With a "drove of horses" in hand, Solomon set out for New Orleans and the "Southern Country." His success was very limited, however, in fact too limited to be promising, and he dashed to St. Louis, leaving horses and mules at Washington, Arkansas, to be sold by a friend.¹⁰

As might be expected he did not return to Arkansas, but parted company with William in St. Louis, hurried to Independence and, by late spring, 1839, was on his way to Santa Fe.¹¹ William had spent over three hundred dollars financing his young brother's unproductive southern ventures. Solomon's outstanding debt to William was well over three thousand dollars by that time, although Sublette and Campbell held him responsible for only his clothing store accounts.¹²

In the West, Solomon criss-crossed the countryside be-

8. S. P. Sublette Power of Attorney to W. L. Sublette, October 17, 1836, *ibid.*; Bill of J. Baise (?) to S. P. Sublette, 1837, *ibid.*

9. Note of S. P. Sublette to Sublette and Campbell, December 1, 1838, *ibid.*; I. T. Peck to S. Sublette, June 28, 1836, *ibid.*; Bill of Sale from S. Sublette to W. L. Sublette, July 18, 1838, *ibid.*

10. Sublette and Campbell to W. D. Stewart, February 8, 1839, *ibid.*; J. Walsh to S. T. McAllister, February 8, 1839, *ibid.*; S. P. Sublette to T. Sharp, May 2, 1838, *ibid.*; Order of S. P. to W. L. Sublette on T. Sharp for R. Guin, 1839, *ibid.*; J. S. Burt to W. L. Sublette, December 9, 1839, *ibid.*; S. P. Sublette to John Chinowth (?), May 3, 1839, *ibid.*

11. S. P. to W. L. Sublette, May 1, 1839, *ibid.*; W. L. Sublette to T. Sharp, May 14, 1839, *ibid.*

12. Balance Sheet from Sublette and Campbell Ledger, December 1, 1842, *ibid.*

tween Santa Fe and Bent's Fort. For three years he trapped, traded and lived off the land, perhaps working closely with Louis Vásquez and Andrew Sublette, then trading on the Upper Platte and Arkansas. The termination of their partnership possibly influenced his decision to return to Missouri to "get some assistance." From Taos he moved northeastward to Bent's Fort, joined a small party under Joseph Williams returning from Oregon and was in Independence late in October, 1842.¹³

Undecided as usual about his future, he rejected a friend's proposal that he return to the Southwest and offer his services to the Texas Republic. Instead, he lingered in Independence during early November, 1842, investigating the produce market for William. Solomon "had no means" to do otherwise and intimated that Andrew had broken an old, though questionable, promise to assist him financially. William was in western Missouri on business later in the month, met Solomon, paid at least one of his outstanding bills and accompanied him eastward to a family reunion at the large Sublette farm—Sulphur Springs—in St. Louis County.¹⁴

Spring arrived late; its days filled with grief and frenzied activity. Sophronia, the last of three Sublette sisters, was ill during the winter and died suddenly in April.¹⁵ William prepared to join Sir William Drummond Stewart and a large group of friends in a "pleasure" trip to the valley of Green River; Andrew was in poor health; and the Hereford family, new lessees of resort facilities at Sulphur Springs, were busy with management details. Solomon decided to accompany William to the Green and was sent to western Missouri to collect debts owed Sublette and Campbell and to purchase livestock for the expedition. In May he joined William's party near Independence.¹⁶

13. S. P. to W. L. Sublette, October 29, 1842, *ibid.*; Joseph Williams, *Narrative of a Tour from the State of Indiana to the Oregon Territory in the Years 1841-42* (New York, 1921), pp. 86, 88.

14. S. P. to W. L. Sublette, October 31, November 23, 1842, Sublette MSS.; A. W. to W. L. Sublette, December 9, 21, 1842, *ibid.*; Receipts of S. Noland(?) and Samuel C. Owens to S. P. Sublette, October 29, December 13, 1842, *ibid.*

15. *Daily Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), April 21, 1843.

16. Stella M. Drumm and Isaac H. Lionberger (eds.), "Correspondence of Robert Campbell 1834-1845," *Glimpses of the Past*, VII (January-June, 1941), 50, 53, 55-56; Instructions for S. P. Sublette from Sublette and Campbell, 1843, Sublette MSS.

The Stewart-Sublette group, a bit in advance of a large Oregon-bound contingent of settlers, headed across the muddy prairies towards the Platte. Solomon took charge of a small outfit under Jesuit fathers Peter De Vos and Adrian Hoecken, traveling with the pleasure party to Flathead Indian missionary work. From eastern Kansas to Ft. Laramie the combined expedition frolicked across the plains on clear, sunny days and grumbled in the rain. They celebrated the Fourth of July on the Platte and a few days later rolled onto Laramie plain.¹⁷

Solomon remained at the fort when the expedition left on July 8—remained to erect a more Christian monument over his brother Milton Sublette's last resting place. The old, crude wooden cross was broken, badly in need of repairs.¹⁸ He spent most of the summer at or near Ft. Laramie and in the autumn took a supply of Indian trade goods down to the South Platte and Upper Arkansas. Meanwhile, in November William returned to St. Louis, pleased with his trip, yet in failing health. On New Year's Day, 1844, he drew up a new will, bequeathing most of his valuable property to Andrew, Solomon and Frances S. Hereford, his "estimated [*sic*] female friend" and future wife.¹⁹

William—perhaps responsible for financing Solomon's outfit to the Upper Arkansas—received frequent letters during 1844 from his younger brother. Solomon reported in the spring that "trade is a ragin [*sic*] very high there is a plenty of goods and very few robes." The Indians had "stolled [*his*] horse," another horse had distemper and, he added, that on one occasion he walked fifty miles from an Indian village to his camp for lack of proper transportation. Trade to Santa Fe was hampered by political difficulties, but he remarked to friends that he might spend the summer in Spanish country

17. M. C. Field Diary of 1843, Entries of June and July, MSS., Missouri Historical Society. Also see the M. C. Field sketches published in the *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), 1843, and reproduced in Kate L. Gregg and John F. McDermott (eds.), *Prairie and Mountain Sketches*, Norman, 1957.

18. *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), December 15, 1843; M. C. Field Diary of 1843, Entry of July 5, MSS., Missouri Historical Society; Gregg and McDermott, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

19. S. P. to W. L. Sublette, February 2, 1844, Sublette MSS.; Last Will and Testament of W. L. Sublette, January 1, 1844, *ibid.*

and return to the Arkansas later in the year. He suggested that William join him in the mountains for the summer—for his health, not for trade, since trade continued erratic. Unless he could “get some business” in St. Louis, Solomon intended to remain where he was in the West.²⁰

Instead of going to Santa Fe for the summer he plunged into the Colorado Rockies to hunt sheep and antelopes to send to William’s farm. In early October he reached Ft. Pueblo, having completed his hunt, and on the twentieth of the month was at Taos to lay in winter provisions. He had not heard from William in nearly a year and a half and feared that his older brother might be quite angry over unpaid debts. Andrew, who had returned to the West that year for his health, joined Solomon, on the South Platte or at Bent’s Fort, and passed the time with him in Taos. Solomon envied Andrew’s farming experience—the “happiest life that a man can lead”—but Andrew, freed by the mountain air from his persistent cough, did not intend to return permanently to the Sublette farm.²¹

The two brothers were back on the South Platte before winter made travel difficult. As soon as the snow cleared in March, Solomon went to Taos for provisions and returned to meet Andrew who was following the buffalo along the Arkansas. Both had considered a jaunt to California, but Andrew decided to return to Missouri that summer. Solomon sent William “10 or 12 pounds of Beaver and Forty Dollars” to settle some of his debts and turned westward to pick up the California Trail. His brother-in-law, Grove Cook, whom Sophronia had divorced two years before her death, was in California and Solomon intended possibly to “establish himself [there] when he [liked] the Country. . . .”²²

20. S. P. to W. L. Sublette, February 2, April 18, May 5, 1844, *ibid.* Solomon may have been employed by Bent and St. Vrain in the years 1843-1845. See Harrison C. Dale, “A Fragmentary Journal of William L. Sublette,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, I No. 1 (June, 1919), 105.

21. A. W. to W. L. Sublette, October 20, 1844, Sublette MSS.; Receipt of S. P. Sublette at Fort Pueblo, October 9, 1844, *ibid.*; S. P. to W. L. Sublette, May 5, October 20, 1844, and S. P. to A. W. Sublette, May 5, 1844, *ibid.*

22. A. W. to W. L. Sublette, March 3, April 6, 1845, *ibid.*; George P. Hammond (ed.), *The Larkin Papers* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953), IV, p. 10.

He and a party of fifteen crossed rapidly to California, passing at least two groups of emigrants along the way. On October 7, Solomon reached New Helvetia (Sutter's Fort) and was welcomed by Sutter himself who concluded that the youngest Sublette was "a Man of considerable property." Either Sutter was deceived or Solomon had profited greatly during his months between Taos and the South Platte. He and some of his party moved to Yerba Buena (San Francisco) where they celebrated the holidays in high style. Late on Christmas Eve they "made a great hurahing" outside the door of William A. Leidesdorff, one of the more prominent local merchants. Later that night Solomon, no doubt in his cups, returned to abuse the merchant "shamefully, telling him that he had struck terror through all the towns he had been at, and would strike terror through [him] before he left [that] town." Then with a flourish he tossed two large stones on Leidesdorff's adobe bungalow roof and went his happy way!²³

Seven months in California convinced Solomon that his future was not on the Pacific Coast. He surveyed possibilities in land and livestock, probably visited Grove Cook and his new bride, Rebecca Kelsey Cook, either at their Santa Cruz home or at Sutter's Fort, and decided to return to Missouri. Possibly he had news of William's death the previous July and believed he should participate in the estate settlement. William had dictated a new will the day before his death, designating Robert Campbell and Andrew as executors. Solomon was granted considerable real and personal property. During the winter, while he abused merchants, his brother's will was in probate.²⁴

Late in May Solomon and ten others, under hire as herdsmen to Joseph Reddeford Walker, drove eighty mules and horses from Pueblo de Los Angeles eastward over Walker

23. Hammond (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 150; H. H. Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft* (San Francisco, 1886), XXI, pp. 577-578; *New Helvetia Diary of Events from 1845-48* (San Francisco, 1939), pp. 5-6.

24. J. A. Sutter to S. P. Sublette, December 22, 1845, Sublette MSS.; Last Will and Testament of W. L. Sublette, July 22, 1845, *ibid.* See also Record of Wills C, 1840-1850, pp. 181-182, MSS., St. Louis Probate Court, St. Louis. For the story of Solomon's California venture see Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., "The Enigma of the Sublette Overland Party, 1845," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXVIII No. 4 (November, 1959), 331-349.

Pass through the Sierras to the Humboldt and on to Ft. Hall. Walker rested his herd at the fort, but Solomon and three friends pushed on to Ft. Bridger and Ft. Laramie. Since provisions were low at Laramie and the neighboring Sioux were touchy, Solomon's tiny party turned south along the front range and reached Bent's Fort in mid-August. There they joined a party heading east along the Santa Fe Trail. Three weeks later Solomon rode into Weston, Missouri, and took passage on the steamboat *Little Missouri* for St. Louis, arriving about September 10.²⁵

Andrew, Frances, and Solomon worked steadily throughout the autumn on pressing items in William's estate. Solomon inherited a small herd of prize cattle; wearing apparel; William's "largest double barrel gun"; one-half of William's land in Cole County, Missouri, including town lots in Jefferson City; and approximately one-fourth of his brother's seven hundred acres of improved St. Louis County land. By the will he was freed of all debts with the exception of a small sum due Robert Campbell.²⁶

The estate brought Solomon only temporary security; he was soon in debt and his spirit roamed westward. Despite a siege of ill health, he accepted an appointment to carry government dispatches to Taos and Santa Fe—not an enviable duty—beginning late in 1846. From Ft. Leavenworth, the day before departure, he wrote Frances that her presence in St. Louis the previous autumn brought him great happiness. "You may look for my return in due time," he promised, and asked her to discount any rumors she might hear of his death. He intended fully to return, court and win his brother's attractive widow.²⁷

Throughout January and early February, 1847, Solomon's small party tramped over heavy snow across Indian country along the Arkansas to Bent's Fort. Their mules subsisted on ice-encrusted dry grass and strips of cottonwood bark. At Bent's Fort they heard of the Taos rising, and Solomon "made

25. *Daily Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), September 11, 1846; Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail* (Garden City, 1946), pp. 242-243, 264.

26. Last Will and Testament of W. L. Sublette, July 22, 1845, Sublette MSS.; File of Estate of William L. Sublette, File 2052, MSS., St. Louis Probate Court.

27. S. P. to F. S. Sublette, January 7, 1847, Sublette MSS.

application . . . for an additional force" which he was to meet south of the Fort. The force materialized unequipped, and Solomon holed up near the Purgatory to wait out the insurrection. Fortunately, he learned from a traveler that the rising was subdued. Reaching Taos, he delivered a precious packet of dispatches to Colonel Sterling Price and, after a visit to Santa Fe, headed home late in March. Two months later he reached Ft. Leavenworth.²⁸

Before leaving for the Southwest he petitioned Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri for "some . . . appointment in the Indian country." Solomon had in mind specifically an Indian agency on the Missouri. He reminded Senator Benton of his years of residence "amongst the tribes and his service in California," which suggests that Solomon played a part in California politics during the winter of 1845-46. The Senator, an old friend of William Sublette's, promised help and a few months after Solomon's return from Santa Fe offered him the agency for the "United tribe of Sacs & Foxes of the Mississippi." Solomon accepted, at a yearly salary of fifteen hundred dollars, and was assigned through Thomas A. Harvey, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis and an old Sublette family political adversary.²⁹

His appointment was greeted by the press with "general satisfaction" and the expectation of efficiency. Certainly he possessed enough experience to undertake the job, yet in less than a year he resigned. Writing to the Office of Indian Affairs on April 18, 1848, he relinquished his position. He was compelled to do so through "continued sickness," he said, but the possibility remains that politics, the instability of his personality, new business prospects and his intention to take Frances as his wife were of greater consequence.³⁰ Frances, who had "rather bad luck" with the Sublette farm during the winter, had accepted Solomon's proposal.³¹

28. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1847, *ibid.* This letter is reproduced in Bieber (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 200.

29. S. P. Sublette to Sen. T. H. Benton, December 11, 16, 1846, Sublette MSS.; U. S. War Department to S. P. Sublette, October 21, 1847, *ibid.*

30. S. P. Sublette to Col. W. Medill, April 18, 1848, *ibid.*; *Jefferson Inquirer* (Jefferson City), November 6, 1847.

31. Theresa Hereford to S. P. Sublette, January 30-February 1, 1848, Sublette MSS.; S. P. to F. S. Sublette, April 23, 1848, *ibid.*

Solomon joined Frances at Independence and on May 21, 1848, married her in a quiet ceremony at the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church. They were "busily engaged preparing to leave" for California and had placed friends in charge of the Sublette farm and William's unsettled estate. By June 1, they were ready to depart; then, at the last minute, cancelled their plans. Frances was seriously ill. Solomon remained at her side until she recovered partially, but sufficiently to permit him to enter the Santa Fe trade.³²

Frances' brother, Thomas Hereford, had persuaded Solomon to join him and transport an expensive line of merchandise to Santa Fe. Solomon agreed to the business proposal and made the overland crossing to New Mexico, although he "never wanted to commence the trade." In the autumn of 1848 he returned briefly to St. Louis on a "pleasure trip," but was again in Santa Fe by mid-May of 1849. There he learned that his southwestern affairs were disordered and that his goods were at market in Mexico.

He joined his partner in Chihuahua where dull business followed unpromising prices. After selling their carryalls and a few draught animals, the partners awaited impatiently the arrival of new goods. Hereford offered to sell out to Solomon, but Solomon refused and agreed instead to a mutual dissolution of partnership. He was tired of the calico trade and was anxious to be in Missouri before winter. While Hereford remained in Chihuahua to settle business accounts and gather a herd of mules to drive to California, Solomon returned to a mortgaged home at Sulphur Springs.³³

He reached St. Louis possibly in time for the birth of Solomon Perry, Jr., his first child, shortly before Christmas. The following spring he made a short business trip to New Orleans and, in his absence, his son's health grew precarious and he arrived home to find him near death. The boy died of a

32. Record 1, 2 & 3, p. 173, MSS., Jackson County Recorder of Deeds Office, Independence, Missouri; S. P. to F. S. Sublette, April 28, 1848, April 21, 1849, Sublette MSS.; F. S. Sublette to M. Tarver, May 27, 1848, *ibid.*; Memorandum of Agreement with George Glass, June 6, 1848, *ibid.*

33. S. P. to F. S. Sublette, September 8, 1849, *ibid.*; S. P. Sublette to M. Tarver, May 29, 1849, *ibid.*; T. A. Hereford to S. P. Sublette, March 9, 1850, *ibid.*

persistent cough—possibly consumption—on April 24, and was interred at the Sublette burial ground on the farm.³⁴

There were few bright spots in Solomon's later years. He and Frances attempted to make a living from the soil, but were land-saturated, incapable of deriving a large income from their inherited holdings. Friends and relatives, always ready to request assistance, believed the Sublettes were extremely wealthy. Instead, Solomon could give their pleas little attention. He did not have the means, and the strong, deep tragic current in his life ran full at the end. Frances was seldom in good health, her conditioned weakened by the birth of two children, Esther Frances and William Hugh Sublette. Young William died at seventeen months. Esther Frances survived her parents, but died at the age of seven.³⁵ Frances succumbed after a prolonged illness on September 28, 1857, but fortunately Solomon was spared that final grief, since he preceded her in death by four weeks.³⁶ In his forty-two years of life he had missed success and happiness. He did, however, realize that his Western experiences would be useful to writers such as Joseph Ware, compiler of an emigrants' guide in 1849, who found Solomon a ready source of Western information.³⁷

In retrospect modern psychiatry could find in Solomon's life an interesting study. Orphaned at an early age and entrusted to relatives for many years, he matured too late to follow profitably his brothers' vocation. His life was overshadowed by their success, and he was unable to find security, satisfaction or an answer to his "destiny neurosis." At William's death the only strong guiding hand in his life was lost. "During his life time," Solomon wrote despondently, "I had a friend and one that would do any thing to assist me, in pro-

34. F. S. to S. P. Sublette, March 2, 1851, *ibid.*; *In the Supreme Court of Missouri, October Term 1902, Division No. 1*, p. 159. See also the Sublette burial ground marker, Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis.

35. Sallie Hereford to S. P. and F. S. Sublette, December 16, 1853, Sublette MSS.; M. L. to S. P. Sublette (?), August 12, 1852, *ibid.*; *In the Supreme Court . . .*, pp. 159-160.

36. Files of Estates of Solomon P. Sublette, File 5072, and Frances S. Sublette, File 5073, MSS., St. Louis Probate Court.

37. Joseph E. Ware, *The Emigrants' Guide to California* (St. Louis, 1849), pp. xxiii, 26.

moting happiness, reputation, & prosperity, he loved me as a father would a Son, it was one of the greatest calamities that ever fell to the lot of men the day I lost him.”³⁸ Dogged by personal tragedy, Solomon Sublette surrendered to failure and died as the new West of miner, cowhand and farmer replaced the West of the Mountain Men.

38. S. P. Sublette to M. Tarver, March 19, 1849, Sublette MSS.; John E. Sunder, *Bill Sublette: Mountain Man*, Norman, 1959; Franz Alexander, *Our Age of Unreason*, New York and Philadelphia, 1942.