

**California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold
and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and
water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox.
Edited by Dale L. Morgan**

THE ROAD

from

CHAGRES TO PANAMA

according to N. GARELLA, FALMAR and others

by

H. TIEDEMANN

CIVIL ENGINEER

Published by E. L. AUTENRIETH engr. on stone by

J SCHEDLER

NEW YORK

1851

California As I Saw It

CALIFORNIA

AS I SAW IT

Pencillings by the Way of its Gold and Gold Diggers!

and Incidents of Travel by Land and Water

by William M'Collum, M. D.

A returned Adventurer

SAN FRANCISCO IN 1849, FROM THE HEAD OF CLAY-STREET.

With Five Letters from the Isthmus

by W. H. Hecox

Edited by

Dale L. Morgan

THE TALISMAN PRESS

Los Gatos, California 1960

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Library of Congress Card 60-9512

NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

1. "The *Crescent City* off Chagres" is from *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, Boston, Aug. 30, 1851, vol. 1, p. 288, "Sketched for us by D. W. Nayson." (Steamship in the foreground is *Crescent City*. In background is the castle of San Lorenzo.)

2. "Deck of the Ship *Niantic* at Sea," is from *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, Boston, Aug. 2, 1851, vol. 1, p. 212, "Sketched for us on the spot by Mr. G. W. Naylor, a passenger, and..drawn by *Manning*."

3. "Map of the Isthmus of Panama" reproduced as the end-papers of this edition is from E. L. Autenrieth, *A Topographical Map of the Isthmus of Panama, together with a separate and enlarged map of the lines of travel, and a map of the city of Panama*. (New York, J. H. Colton, 1851.)

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To my father's younger brothers, my own friends,

O. J. Morgan

Harold P. Morgan

Ralph W. Morgan

who contracted the California fever at an early age

and have never yet recovered

DALE L. MORGAN

Deck of the Ship *Niantic* at Sea.

Introduction

William S. McCollum's *California As I Saw It* is one of that enticing category of rare books, narratives of personal experience in the California Gold Rush published while the Gold Rush was still in progress. California literature has swelled to such an extent that it has scarcely been appreciated how small and select is the class of works to which McCollum belongs. Even including two doubtful titles, the number totals only sixteen. Because some were printed in out-of-the-way places, occasionally a new title comes to light, but such works were usually printed in small editions, readily swallowed up by time, and increasingly long intervals separate each discovery. It may be that the whole number will never grow beyond twenty-five, perhaps not beyond twenty.

Necessarily we disregard the letters and journals sent back to the States for publication in hometown newspapers. These comprise a large and diffuse literature, of such proportions that there is no early prospect of its being brought under scholarly discipline. Relatively few of the works that now concern us appeared from the presses of established book publishers. In many instances, returned Forty-niners got out pamphlets at their own expense for local sale. McCollum's narrative, it is true, issued not from a press in his home town, but from a nationally known publisher, George H. Derby & Company, in nearby Buffalo, but it would seem that this was a matter of economy; probably he got a better price for the printing in Buffalo than he could obtain in Lockport. At least, George H. Derby & Company seems not to have publicized McCollum's pamphlet before or after its appearance, and the rarity of *California As I Saw It* suggests that it was printed for the author in a small edition. (It was advertised for sale in a Lockport paper on April 24, 1850, obtainable at O. C. Wright's Book Store for two shillings, but I have found no notice of it in Buffalo papers.) McCollum says that his purpose in publishing this account of his California experiences was

primarily to spare himself the tiresome retelling of his adventures to interested inquirers, though doubtless he was not averse to recouping on his California outlay. The publication of books nearly always displays traits of vanity, but it seems likely that McCollum points at the motivation of many other returned Californians who have left narratives of their experiences.

Most of these narratives have been reprinted, and it is surprising that a century—and a decade on top of that—should have intervened between the original publication of *California As I Saw It* and this new edition, particularly in view of its rarity. Wright Howes, in his *U.S.-iana* (New York 1954), placed McCollum among the class of “superlatively rare books, almost unobtainable, worth \$1000.00 and upwards,” and, indeed, very few copies are known to exist. A listing will bring others forth, but I have located copies only in the Bancroft Library, the California Historical Society library, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, the Yale University 11 Library, and the Buffalo Public Library, six in all. Although the memory of McCollum has been preserved in his home town, the fact that he had once published a pamphlet describing his California adventures had sunk from sight there until I began the inquiries attendant on the present book.

Let us have a look at that narrowly delimited literature of which McCollum is so striking an example. It is amusing that the first two personal narratives to be printed were both out-right frauds, and though we may leave them out of account, some notice should be taken of them before we go on to the genuine narratives.

Published by Joyce & Company at New York late in December, 1848, was a 32-page pamphlet purporting to have been written in the main by “Henry I. Simpson, of the New York Volunteers,” and having the title, *Three Weeks in the Gold Mines, or Adventures with the Gold Diggers of California in August, 1848*. Suffice it to say, there was no Henry I. Simpson in the New York Regiment of Volunteers, and insofar as the narrative is factual, its information is drawn from the well-known report of Colonel R. B. Mason, August 17, 1848, which had accompanied President Polk's Message to Congress earlier in December. The author of this work was perhaps the James Bithell who entered it for copyright. He eked out the “personal narrative” with a “Description of

California” and some “Advice to Emigrants, Ways to Get There”—the latter borrowed without credit from the New York *Herald* of December 13, 1848.

Less flagrant, in the sense that it was a true work of fiction, rather than an elementary plagiarism, was a work published in London early in 1849 as by “J. Tyrwhitt Brooks, M.D.”, with the title, *Four Months among the Gold-Finders in California; Being the Diary of an Expedition from San Francisco to the Gold Districts*. Purporting to have been sent from Monterey on October 11, 1848, to the author's brother in England, the narrative is a wonderfully ingratiating hoax got up in his salad days by the later well-known writer, Henry Vizetelly. Having made effective use of Frémont's report, 12 Colonel Mason's official letter, and a few other sources, the Brooks work was accepted as a veracious record of personal experience, and not until Vizetelly published his autobiography in 1893 did the secret of the authorship, and the circumstances of its composition and publication, come out. * As soon as it appeared in London, the work was seized upon by publishers in other countries, and American, German, Dutch, French, and Swedish editions were printed.

It was not until Douglas S. Watson publicized the facts in “Spurious Californiana.” *California Historical Society Quarterly*, March, 1932, vol. 11, pp. 65-68, that the true authorship of the Brooks narrative was generally understood by students of California history.

A good many authors had the ill-luck to depart California too early to incorporate “I was there” chapters into their books, Edwin Bryant and J. Quinn Thornton being conspicuous examples; another is Lieutenant Joseph Warren Revere, whose *A Tour of Duty in California* was published in New York early in 1849 with the wry confession that at the date of his departure “the vast deposits of gold had not been discovered. I had travelled over the richest placers a hundred times, but it had never occurred to me to wash the golden sands over which I travelled and upon which I often slept.”

So it happens that the first separately printed record of personal experience in the Gold Rush is one outrageously unique. This is a journal kept on board the *Henry Lee* during a voyage around the Horn, the printing of which was begun while the voyage was in progress, and completed in San Francisco harbor after arrival September 13, 1849. On what authority I know not, the veteran bookman Wright Howes comments that although the work is usually listed under the name of the printer, J. L. Hall, the journal itself was written by George G. Webster. The title is: *Journal of the*

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Hartford Union Mining and Trading Company. Containing the Name, Residence and Occupation of each Member, with Incidents of the Voyage, &c. &c., printed by J. L. Hall, On board the Henry Lee, 1849. The *Henry Lee*, purchased by this Connecticut company, sailed from New York 13 on February 17, twelve days after McCollum left there. Despite all the delays McCollum experienced, he reached San Francisco nearly two-and-a-half months sooner; this is one reason, perhaps, why the present work is the only clear example of a 'round-the-Horn narrative among the books I describe. It is almost solely a record of the voyage, but has a concluding description of San Francisco ending on a note of foreboding: "The reports from the mines are so contradictory that no reliance can be placed in them. But the majority that come down from the mines think that the first and second harvest is past."*

Hall, who in early life used the name John Linville Hall, but later reversed it to Linville John Hall, got out a new edition of the journal in 1898 under the title, *Around the Horn in '49*, adding an "Introductory" and a long appendix, "Among the Mines and Miners in '49 and '50." At this time he was chaplain of the Connecticut State Prison at Weathersfield. Another edition was printed by the Grabhorn Press at San Francisco, 1928, for the Book Club of California.

The first-published book to detail personal experiences in the mines came from the pen of Theodore T. Johnson, who had sailed from New York on February 5, 1849, as one of McCollum's fellow-passengers in the *Crescent City*. Johnson's *Sights in the Gold Region, and Scenes by the Way* (New York, Baker and Scribner, 278 pp.) appeared late in 1849, so well received that a second edition, revised and enlarged to 324 pages, was got out in 1850. Further enlarged to 348 pages, and with a new title, *California and Oregon*, four more editions were printed at Philadelphia between 1851 and 1865; thus it is one of the more common narratives of the Gold Rush and has yet to be reprinted in modern format.* Johnson was fortunate enough to have a ticket from Panama to San Francisco in the steamer *Oregon*, so that unlike McCollum he wasted little time on the Isthmus and was inside the Golden Gate by April 1. He made at once for the Northern Mines, and his account of conditions on 14 the American River in mid-April, 1849, is remarkably interesting. However, it took him barely a week to decide that "the prospective or actual rewards of gold digging in California, were too often totally and miserably inadequate to induce us to submit, not only to the discomforts of a life greater than those of our horses and dogs at home, but to association with vice in its worst

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forms, combined with a certainty of impaired health, and a corresponding risk to life itself.” Just 13 days after reaching Sacramento on his way to the mines, Johnson passed through again en route to San Francisco, and on May 1 he sailed for Panama on the first return voyage of the *California*. By June 26 he was back in Philadelphia, and when more tardy Forty-niners had not yet left home, he was already advancing upon his literary labors. Despite the briefness of his stay in the diggings, Johnson wrote honestly and entertainingly of his experiences, and his book may be read with as much profit today as in the year it appeared.

There was also an edition printed at Dublin in 1850. The original edition of Johnson's book was reviewed in the Buffalo *Daily Courier* as early as November 9, 1849. The second edition was noticed in the *Courier* of May 21, 1850.

The only other book of 1849 reflecting personal experience in the Gold Rush is one of altogether different character. F. P. Wierzbicki was a Polish physician, who had come out to California in the spring of 1847 as one of the New York Regiment. His *California As It Is, and As It May be, or, A Guide to the Gold Region* was published at San Francisco by Washington Bartlett, two editions being printed, both dated 1849. (The preface of the first is dated September 30, of the second December 30.) This pamphlet has been called the first book in English printed in San Francisco, or for that matter, in California; and as a practical guide for gold seekers, it was the most sensible production of the year. But it can scarcely be called a narrative of personal experience, little more being said of Wierzbicki's own adventures than that the author was warranted in publishing the work by his residence of several years in the country, together with his familiarity with its whole extent, “not excluding the Gold Regions in which he passed more than four months rambling over its mountains, and even crossing the Sierra Nevada to the verge of the great Western 15 Desert.”*

Copies of both editions of Wierzbicki are in the Bancroft Library. His work was reprinted at Tarrytown, N.Y., in 1927 as *Magazine of History, Extra No. 126*; and again, edited by George D. Lyman, at the Grabhorn Press in 1933.

A larger number of narratives of personal experience accompanied McCollum's into print in 1850, besides one original map of note, that of William A. Jackson, which with an accompanying textual “appendix” is an excellent summary of developments in the California gold region but only by inference says anything of Jackson's own experiences.* The personal narratives fall into three

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categories: accounts by men already in California at the time of the gold discovery, the books of Buffum, Colton, and Ryan; accounts by men who reached California overland, of which Isham's is the only extant example; and narratives by men who traveled at least part of the way by sea, including Delavan, Kip, McCollum, McIlvaine, McNeil, Taylor, and Tyson. To this slender list may possibly be added T. Butler King's report to the government on conditions in California; and in a class by itself, James Abbey's *California. A Trip Across the Plains, in the Spring of 1850*, printed at New Albany, Indiana, late in 1850, remarkably early in imprint for an overland diary of its year.

Jackson's *Map of the Mining District of California* was published in New York early in 1850, received with praise by the San Francisco *Alta California* on April 17, 1850. See the discussion of it in Carl I. Wheat, *Maps of the California Gold Region* (San Francisco, 1942), pp. 78-79, where it is also reproduced. The rare "Appendix" which accompanied the map together with the map itself, was reprinted by T. W. Norris at Christmas, 1936. The map has been reproduced in a number of works, notably in California Historical Society *Quarterly*, December, 1934, vol. 13, opp. p. 378, and again in the Society's edition of Jacques Antoine Moerenhout's *The Inside Story of the Gold Rush* (San Francisco, 1935).

The Gold Rush proper ended in 1850, with a marked slackening of emigration to the Golden Shore in 1851, so narratives of personal experience published after 1850 are disregarded here. That Bible of those who worship at the shrine of overland travel, Henry R. Wagner and Charles L. Camp's *The Plains and the Rockies*, lists in its third edition of 1953 eight titles printed in 1851 reflecting the experiences of men who traveled overland to the diggings by different routes in 1849-1850, some of these so rare or recently found that despite their California interest they went unremarked by Carl I. Wheat in his centennial bibliography of 1949, *Books of the California Gold Rush*. I pass by these eight works to note, only in passing, two more distinctively Californian titles. The first is William Shaw's *Golden Dreams and Waking Realities*, printed in London in 1851 as the narrative of a young Englishman who voyaged to California in the *Mazepa*, first ship to leave South Australia for the gold regions, which arrived at San Francisco about the beginning of September, 1849, delivered Shaw up to a brief and generally disagreeable stay in the Stanislaus Diggings, and toward the end of the year took him gladly back to Australia. The second, printed in New York as one of the most down-to-earth narratives by an Argonaut, is Daniel B. Woods's *Sixteen Months at the Gold Diggings*. A Philadelphian, Woods crossed Mexico from Tampico to San Blas, and first in the schooner *San Blasiña* and then in the Scottish bark *Collooney* reached San Francisco June 25, 1849. Afterward he mined on various branches of the American River, then moved to the Southern Mines

and worked for an extended period at Hart's Bar before starting home on November 9, 1850. Via the Isthmus, he got back to Philadelphia February 8, 1851. Few others give so full an account of the drudgery of mining, pursued under conditions of "work or perish."

After the first confusion of the Gold Rush died away, regularization of travel by the Isthmus route having made it less of an adventure than it had been in 1849, narratives of travel to California via Panama vanished for a time from the literature. These changed conditions are at least reflected by two little handbooks mentioned here as a matter of information. *Gregory's Guide for California Travellers; via the Isthmus of Panama. Containing All the Requisite Information Needed by Persons Taking this Route. By Joseph W. Gregory, Proprietor 17 of Gregory's California and New York Express*, published at New York in 1850 by Nafis & Cornish, was got out by Gregory in the interests of his express company. All but 9 of its 46 pages are given over to reprinting the text of the California State Constitution; and what might be described as the preface, dated San Francisco, January, 1850, appears as an advertisement which explains: "The Proprietor of this Express, in his late journey through the Gold Region of California, established Branch Offices at all the important points in the Mining Districts, where Express matter will be received and forwarded in time for the departure of every steamer from San Francisco, by *especial Messengers*, who go through to New York, via Panama and Chagres, without delay." Gregory does say in his text how much personal pleasure the Isthmus route afforded him.* The second guide appeared in 1851: E. L. Autenrieth's *A Topographical Map of the Isthmus of Panama, Together with a separate and enlarged map of the lines of travel, and a map of the City of Panama*, published at New York by the well-known map publisher, J. H. Colton; this work, of which the accompanying "remarks" comprise 17 pages, has yielded the map of the Isthmus route by H. Tiedeman reproduced as the end papers of the present book.*

Gregory's guide was advertised for sale in the New York *Daily Tribune*, March 13, 1850, and a notice appeared in the *Alta California*, April 18, 1850. With the omission of the California Constitution and an introductory note by Edith M. Coulter, it was reprinted at San Francisco by the Book Club of California in 1949. This map is largely though by no means exclusively indebted to a "Carte Topographique de la Partie de l' Isthme de Panama comprise entre Panama et Chagrés avec le Tracé du Canal Maritime proposé pour la Jonction de l'Océan Atlantique et de l'Océan Pacifique...dressée en 1844 par Napoleon Garella Ingénieur en Chef au Corps Royal de Mines, 1845." This may be found reproduced in 30th Congress, 2nd Session, *House Report 145*

(Serial 546). Garella, sent out by the French government to examine the Isthmus with a view to ascertaining the practicability of a canal, submitted his report in May, 1845.

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This rapid survey of the literature of personal experience in the Gold Rush is pursued beyond 1851 only to mention the engrossing work of the "Returned Californian" (John M. Letts), *California Illustrated*, printed at New York in 1852, of primary interest here because the author reached Chagres in 1849 at almost the same time as McCollum, in the bark *Marietta* from New York, and was afterward a shipmate of McCollum's in the voyage of the *Niantic* from Panama to San Francisco.

Coming back to the titles of 1850, we may take up first the early-on-the-scene accounts. Much the best of the three presently known is E. Gould Buffum's *Six Months in the Gold Mines: From a Journal of Three Years' Residence in Upper and Lower California, in 1847-8-9*, of which Philadelphia and London editions were got out in 1850.* Buffum originally went out to California in 1847 as a lieutenant in the New York Regiment, and after an extended period of military service, in September, 1848, was freed for adventures in the mines. He sought gold on the Bear and Yuba rivers, Weber Creek, and the Middle and South Forks of the American River during the fall and winter of 1848-1849, and then went to San Francisco, where he became associated with the *Alta California*. His book is observant, workmanlike, and not impossibly "literary" in tone, the curse of so much writing of this period; the scene he describes is that relatively uncrowded time before the Forty-niners arrived in force.

A new edition, edited by John W. Caughey, was published at Los Angeles in 1959 by the Ward Ritchie Press. Some letters by Buffum printed in contemporary newspapers have gone unremarked, notably one to his father written from Sutter's, November 4, 1848, printed in the New York *Daily Tribune*, April 11, 1849; one written from San Francisco, June 17, 1849, extracted in the same paper for August 6, 1849; and another from San Francisco, June 20, 1849, printed in the New York *Herald*, July 28, 1849.

Another member of the New York Regiment, who sailed out to the Pacific with reinforcements a year after Buffum, was William Redmond Ryan. His two-volume *Personal Adventures in Upper and Lower California, in 1848-9; with the Author's 19 Experience at the Mines*, was published in London with a preface bearing date of March 25, 1850. (A Dutch translation, with superior plates, was published the same year.) Ryan arrived at Monterey February 18, 1848, and soon was sent to

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Lower California, where he served until August. Eventually discharged at Monterey, with some companions he made his way to the Southern Mines (it is chiefly the diggings on the Stanislaus he describes). Like so many others, he soon “began to entertain strong misgivings as to whether the results obtained by such severe toil were at all commensurate with the sacrifices made in connexion with it,” and turned back to Monterey. In April, 1849, Ryan came up to San Francisco, and six months later, without revisiting the mines, returned east via the Isthmus. His well-illustrated book is considerably more “literary” than Buffum's, not to its advantage.

The last of our three observers of 1848 is Walter Colton, who came to California in 1846 as a Navy chaplain, and remained as the first American alcalde of Monterey. His *Three Years in California*, published in New York in the latter part of 1850, is an entertaining and enlightening book, including an account of a visit to the Southern Mines extending over a period of nearly two months in the fall of 1848.* Colton did some gold-hunting, but he says that the miners looked upon him as “a sort of amateur gold-hunter, very much given to splitting rocks and digging in unproductive places,” and he adds, “indeed, this was not far from the truth, for my main object was information, and a specimen of wild mountain life.”

Colton's *Three Years* ran through many editions, some under the title, *The Land of Gold*; it was also reprinted at Oakland in 1948 under the title, *The California Diary*. A photofacsimile reproduction of the first edition, edited by Marguerite Eyer Wilbur for the Stanford University Press, 1949, includes an account of his arrival in California in 1846, taken from his *Deck and Port*, and some letters of 1846-1848 to his wife, first published in his posthumous *The Sea and the Sailor*. Still uncollected is Colton's interesting California correspondence of 1847-1849 to the Philadelphia *North America*, which was widely reprinted in the contemporary press.

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Let us now take up the nine titles published in 1850 most nearly comparable to McCollum's, to which only Johnson is akin among the titles of 1849. The first of these is basically a diary of an overland journey across South Pass: G. S. *Isham's Guide to California and the Mines and Return by the Isthmus with a General Description of the Country. Compiled from a Journal Kept by Him in a Journey to that Country in 1849 and 1850.** Printed at New York, this is a slim 32-page work. The last eight pages are devoted to a description of the diggings after Isham's arrival at Coloma, which was about August 12, as also of several California cities, the doubtful agricultural potential of the

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country, and the return home via the Isthmus. (Isham left San Francisco December 9, 1849, on the bark *Paoli*, reached Panama by a 58-day voyage, sailed from Chagres on the *Alabama* February 19, and via New Orleans, Cincinnati, and Detroit reached his home at Lyons, Michigan, on March 17; his final note is dated at Lyons 13 days later.)

Only two copies of this *Guide* are known, one at Yale, the other in the library of the American Antiquarian Society. James Delavan sought no personal celebrity; it is from the copyright notice that we infer him to have been the author of *Notes on California and the Placers: How to Get There, and What to Do Afterwards. By One Who Has Been There*, printed at New York by H. Long & Brother, a retail book firm.* Delavan was much given to anecdotes in dialect dialogue, the omission of which would have materially improved his text while considerably reducing its 128 pages. He sailed from New York on the *Falcon* February 1, 1849, and from Panama on the *Oregon* March 13, thus reaching San Francisco Bay April 1. Nearly two weeks later he got off to Sacramento, and most of the spring and summer he occupied himself in prospecting and mining on various branches of the American River. In the early autumn he visited Stockton on his way to what he dismisses as a “tedious peregrination over the southern mining region,” but returned to San Francisco October 15 and took passage in the *California* November 1. Arriving at Panama on the 22nd, he boarded the *Falcon* at Chagres, and after transferring to the *Ohio* at Havana, arrived back in New York on December 9, 1849. Rather astringent in his attitudes, Delavan recalls at the end of his narrative that he has had some hard things to say about the Panama route, but still it is the best that can be traveled.

Delavan's pamphlet was reprinted at Oakland by Joseph A. Sullivan in 1956. It was advertised as published “this day” in the New York *Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1850.

Anonymously published was Leonard Kip's *California Sketches, with Recollections of the Gold Mines*, printed at Albany in 57 pages.* A prefatory notice, dated Albany, February, 1850, explains: “The Author of these Sketches being applied to by friends, who wished *reliable* information on California, hastily compiled these Recollections of the Country. They were intended for one of the daily papers, but the friend to whom they were sent (in the absence of the author), has assumed the responsibility of publishing them in this form, for the benefit of those who are meditating a voyage to the El Dorado of the West.” This narrative begins on arrival in San Francisco in an unnamed

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vessel, tells of going on to Stockton in the schooner *Elizabeth*, and of a brief season of gold-digging in the “Mukelumme mines,” ended by sickness, lack of provisions, general ill-success, and the preparations that would have to be made for winter mining. Kip's is a generalized but realistic report on conditions in the mines at this time. He returned to San Francisco, having been absent two months, and ends his narrative on this gloomy note: “Some years hence, and it is probable that this may be the picture. A few farms may be scattered through the richer valleys of the country; a few incorporated companies, with heavy steam machinery, may be successfully pounding out the fine gold, which scarcely now repays the labor of mere unaided hands; a few little towns may be scattered here and there, the inhabitants of which will obtain a living by supplying the thinly settled country; and for the general supply, a few little brigs and schooners may ply up and down from Panama, to which city, and which alone, will roll the gigantic stream of the commerce of the Indies. Reprinted at Los Angeles by N. A. Kovach, 1946, with an introduction by Lyle H. Wright.

William M'Ilvaine, Jr.'s *Sketches of Scenery and Notes of Personal Adventure, in California and Mexico. Containing Sixteen Lithographic Plates*, was printed at Philadelphia in 42 pages. * As the title indicates, its superb plates are the primary reason it was published; the text, though interesting, is brief, and keyed to the views. McIlvaine arrived in San Francisco on June 1, 1849, after a 60-day voyage from Callao in an unnamed vessel, and visited Sacramento, Stockton, and the Southern Mines before leaving San Francisco November 1 in the *California*, the same ship taken by Delavan. He left the *California*, however, at Acapulco, crossing Mexico to Vera Cruz, and then going by steamer to Mobile, Alabama.

Reprinted, with a foreword by Robert Glass Cleland, at the Grabhorn Press for the Book Club of California, 1951. The plates appear to rather better advantage in the original than in the larger proportioned reprint.

One of the most striking of these narratives of 1850, interesting as much for its revelation of a crusty individual as for its report on the insights into the Gold Rush, is *McNeils Travels in 1849, to, through and from the Gold Regions, in California*, a 40-page pamphlet printed at Columbus, Ohio. * Samuel McNeil was a shoemaker who knew his own worth. He set out from Lancaster, Ohio, on February 7, 1849, voyaged to New Orleans in the steamer *South America*, and took passage February 28 in the steamer *Maria Burt* for Chagres. This vessel sprang a leak and returned

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to New Orleans, so he and his companions took the steamer *Globe* to Brazos, where they arrived March 4. By way of Reynosa, Monterrey, Saltillo, Parras, and Durango, they made their way to Mazatlan. Disgusted with his company, McNeil left them on May 10, taking passage 23 in a Danish schooner, the *Joanna Analuffa*, which brought him to San Francisco May 30. He went on at once to Sacramento and to Smiths Bar on the North Fork of the American River, but after spending some time there, came back to San Francisco. Returning to the mines, he went to what he calls the “Stanish Lou” river, then worked his way north—“to the mines on the Macallemmy river, and thence to Bear river to the Middle Fork of the American River, and then to Weaver's Creek, thence to the Horse Shoe Bar, on the North Fork of the American river, and to Juba river, thence to Feather river and to Trinity river.” Finding gold-digging too hard labor, he returned to Sacramento, where he traded for a time. Finally having got together some \$2,000, McNeil sailed from San Francisco in the *Panama* September 2, reached Panama 20 days later, sailed from Chagres September 24 in the *Alabama*, arrived at New Orleans September 30, at Cincinnati October 12, and soon after was home again. There is nothing in the least literary about McNeil's pamphlet; it is even more plain-spoken than McCollum's, and as full of commonsense observation about the country and the people seen.

Reprinted in photofacsimile for Frederick W. Beinecke at the Yale University Press, Christmas, 1958.

In marked contrast is that polished piece of professional travel literature, Bayard Taylor's *Eldorado, or, Adventures in the Path of Empire*, first published at New York in two volumes by George P.

Putnam.* Taylor, already a successful author, went out to California as a correspondent for the New York *Tribune*, and his book is rewritten from the dispatches printed in that paper. He left New York in the *Falcon* June 28, 1849, going via the Isthmus, and reached San Francisco in the *Panama* on August 18. His were extended and brilliantly described travels—south to San Jose, east to Stockton and the 24 Mokelumne Diggings, returning to San Francisco by the same route, to Monterey and back by land, thence by water to Sacramento, on to the Mokelumne Diggings again, and finally back to Sacramento and San Francisco. The chief defect of his narrative is its point of view, that of a detached observer rather than that of a participant. “I was strongly tempted,” Taylor says at the time of his last visit to the Mokelumne, “to take hold of the pick and pan, and try my luck in the gulches for a week or two. I had fully intended, on reaching California, to have personally

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tested the pleasure of gold-digging, as much for the sake of a thorough experience of life among the placers as from a sly hope of striking on a pocket full of big lumps. The unexpected coming-on of the rainy season, made my time of too much account, besides adding greatly to the hardships of the business.” He departed from San Francisco in the *Oregon* January 1, leaving her at Mazatlan to cross Mexico to Vera Cruz and return finally to New York via Mobile on March 10, 1850.

A modern edition, with a well-considered introduction by Robert Glass Cleland, was published at New York by Alfred A. Knopf, 1949; this edition includes the T. Butler King report appended to the original. From a scholar's point of view, Taylor's contemporary dispatches to the *Tribune*, which his book rather slights, are in some respects superior to the book narrative, more specific as to dates and other details.

James L. Tyson's *Diary of a Physician in California Being the Results of Actual Experience Including Notes of the Journey by Land and Water and Observations on the Climate, Soil, Resources of the Country, etc.*, was published in New York by D. Appleton & Company as a work of 92 pages.* (It was Appleton who had brought out the American edition of “J. Tyrwhitt Brooks, M.D.,” and one of the advertisements in the Tyson volume is still valiantly promoting the Brooks narrative as the *only* account of actual experience in the mines.) Tyson had sailed from Baltimore January 16, 1849, aboard the schooner *Sovereign*, bound for the Brazos, Vera Cruz, or some other handy port. En route, the company decided for Chagres, 25 which they reached on the evening of January 29, being towed across the bar by the river steamer *Orus* next day. Tyson started up the Chagres River on January 31 in the *Orus*, but soon had to take up the journey by land. The date he reached Panama is not stated, but he engaged passage in the British bark *John Ritson* and sailed, he says, on February 16, reaching San Francisco on May 18 after a disagreeable voyage. From San Francisco Tyson soon made for Sacramento and the Northern Mines. Like Johnson, he has much of interest to say about the Oregonians then in the country. For a time he ran a hospital, but finally came back to San Francisco, from which he sailed in the *Oregon* October 1. Tyson arrived at Panama October 23, crossed the Isthmus via Cruces, and took passage in the *Empire City*, reaching New York on November 11, nine days from Chagres. No biographical information about Tyson has appeared, and none is furnished by his narrative, other than that he started from Baltimore, and after reaching New York, hastened on to “the Monumental City.” His is a generally interesting account

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of experiences in the Gold Rush, the more notable in that he reached the Isthmus, if not quite in the first wave, at least ahead of the second, which bore along Delavan, Johnson, McCollum, and Letts.

Reprinted at Oakland by Joseph A. Sullivan, 1955. A review appeared in the Buffalo *Daily Courier*, April 6, 1850. In the New York *Herald*, February 24, 1849, appears a letter from Chagres, January 31, written on board the schooner *Sovereign*, the vessel in which Tyson voyaged from Baltimore. In the same paper, July 29, 1849, a letter by "R. M. G.," written from San Francisco, June 16, tells of the arrival of the *John Ritson* from Panama on May 18, with Tyson among her passengers.

Thomas Butler King's report to the Secretary of State, dated at Washington March 22, 1850, has been mentioned as the second of two doubtful additions to our list. It was printed as a government document, and also as an appendix to Bayard Taylor's book, but is made bibliographically noteworthy by a 34-page separate printed at New York by William Gowans: *California: The Wonder of the Age. A book for Every One Going to or Having an Interest in that Golden Region; Being the Report of Thomas Butler King, United States Government Agent in and for California.*^{*} This report embodies only a very sketchy personal narrative. Although he does not say so, King 26 sailed from New York in the *Falcon* on April 19 and reached San Francisco in the *Panama* June 4. During the summer he accompanied General Persifor F. Smith on a tour of the interior, returning on August 16 to fall ill four days later, as a result of which he was confined to his room more than two months. King, who had been a Georgia congressman of distinction, and was later collector for the port of San Francisco and an unsuccessful candidate for the Senate, visited California not to hunt gold but as the personal adviser to President Taylor respecting conditions in California as they bore on Statehood. His report is a full and interesting commentary on California as he had found it, touching many aspects of its life. When he departed California on his return to Washington he does not say.

A copy of this edition is in the Bancroft Library. For further information see the main text, Notes 40, 53, and 54, and see footnote 15 above.

The sole narrative by an 1850 emigrant printed early enough to demand inclusion in the present list is that of James Abbey, primarily a record of an overland journey from St. Joseph to Weaverville, with a few additional diary entries, August 20-September 9, 1850, describing initial impressions of gold-hunting in the vicinity of Weaverville, up to the time Abbey mailed his diary home. The extensive title is: *California. A trip Across the Plains, in the Spring of 1850, Being a Daily Record*

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of Incidents of the Trip Over the Plains, the Desert, and the Mountains, Sketches of the Country, Distances from Camp to Camp, etc., and Containing Valuable Information to Emigrants, as to Where They Will Find Wood, Water, and Grass at Almost Every Step of the Journey, printed at New Albany, Indiana, as a 64-page pamphlet.*

The Abbey diary has been twice reprinted, extracts by Seymour Dunbar in *History of Travel in America* (Indianapolis, 1915) pp. 1301-1318 and the whole by William Abbatt in *Magazine of History, Extra No. 183*, Tarrytown, N.Y., 1933.

A seventeenth title to go with the sixteen enumerated I have noted in a recent work concerned with the diaries of 1849 kept on the South Pass route.* A copy has yet to be found. All that is known of it is a notice in the *St. Louis Missouri Republican*, February 21, 1850, concerning "A Book for Californians" published by Fisher & Bennett of St. Louis, described as a "little book" comprised of "the journal of Maj. John Stemmons, of Rocheport, Mo., noted down in the shape of familiar letters to his friends, and embracing every incident connected with his trip to California, over the Plains, last year."

See Dale L. Morgan, ed., *The Overland Diary of James A. Pritchard from Kentucky to California in 1849* (Denver, 1959), which contains a bibliography and chart of travel by all known diarists who crossed South Pass en route to California, Oregon, or Utah in 1849.

We may remark in passing, though not as a proper title for our list, Major Osborne Cross's report on the march of the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen to Oregon in 1849, printed as a government document and also separately at Philadelphia in 1850, which describes scenes of the Gold Rush overland across South Pass, if not of California and the diggings.*

For an account of the various editions, see Wagner and Camp, *The Plains and the Rockies* (Columbus, Ohio, 1953), No. 181. The Cross diary, with other documents, has been reprinted, edited by Raymond W. Settle, as *The March of the Mounted Riflemen* (Glendale, 1940).

So at length we come back to William S. McCollum's *California As I Saw It*, some of the kinships of which with the other narratives of 1849-1850 have been touched upon. A facsimile of the title-page is reproduced herewith; the wrapper-title, enclosed within an ornamental border, is: *California/As I Saw It./Pencilings by the Way/of its/Gold and Gold Diggers!/and/Incidents of Travel/by Land and Water./By William M'Collum, M.D./A Returned Adventurer./Buffalo:/Published*

by *George H. Derby & Co./1850*. The copy in the Bancroft Library, the basis of the present edition, has covers of a golden hue and measures 22 x 14.5 cm., the pagination being iv, [5-72. The original bears marks of haste in production, including numerous spelling and typographical errors, which so far as noted have been corrected in the present edition, but McCollum's spelling of personal and place names has been left as in the original, occasionally corrected in brackets. The chapter titles, except for that of Chapter VIII, are mine, but the summary headings are his own.

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I have added a group of five letters written from the Isthmus by W. H. Hecox of Buffalo, originally printed in the Buffalo *Daily Courier*, March 8, 9, 29, and April 13 and 21, 1849. Apart from their value as having been written by one who came from the same part of New York as McCollum, who traveled to the Isthmus in the same vessel, and was in Panama at the same time, they possess extraordinary interest as a record of experience by one who abandoned the journey to California after getting part-way there. Neither diary nor separately published narrative by such a Forty-niner has ever come to view, and the experiences of most such men are recoverable only in the form of casual interviews printed in newspapers along the lines of their homeward journeys. I have found no record of Hecox outside these letters, except that the *Courier* on February 8, 1849, immediately after the sailing of the *Crescent City* from New York, mentioned the names of W. H. Hecox and William Lovering, "of this city," among the passenger list. His actual return to Buffalo seems to have gone unremarked by the *Courier*, and I am unable to say what became of him.

As a contribution to understanding of the Gold Rush via the Isthmus in 1849, I have also compiled a table of "Arrivals of Vessels and Passengers at Chagres for California," December 27, 1848-April 30, 1849, of which more is said hereafter.

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McCollum's pamphlet describes him as an M. D. and displays him as voluntarily or involuntarily practising in California. It gives us, too, a considerable insight into the kind of person he was—disposed to adventure, even-tempered, alive to the world around him, fair-minded, possessed of a

sense of humor and of a generous spirit, rather well-read, abundantly acquainted with the medical fads of his day—and shows his sense of long identity with the western New York community. But it does not furnish much in the way of biographical information. For details of his life I am indebted to Mr. Clarence O. Lewis, official Niagara County Historian, who has sent me obituary notices that appeared in Lockport papers at the time of his death in 1882. They vary in minor details, and leave it uncertain whether he was born in 1807, but together they provide a very good picture of the man in his times.

One account says, in part:

“Dr. McCollum was of Scotch descent, born at Millerstown, Pa., in 1808 [i.e., 1807?], and came from there in early childhood, with his parents, to the town of Porter, Niagara county, N. Y. The westernborder of the State, the *frontier*, as it was then called, had been but recently the theatre of military operations, and still felt the effects of these influences that war is so prone to leave in its wake: add to these the deprivations that a new and sparsely settled country imposes, the self-denial endured, the self-reliance that results, and we shall more clearly understand the surroundings of his youth and early manhood, and their influence in the development of his character.

“His education was obtained in the common and select schools of the day. Working on the farm in summer, and attending school in winter, he acquired that physical and mental discipline which gave a sound mind in a sound body.

“He taught school prior to reading medicine, than which to a certain extent, there is no better preparation to a course of study. As to preceptors, he had the advantage afforded by such men as Dr. Smith of Lewiston, Hyde of Youngstown, and Southworth of Lockport, men in their day of large practice and good reputation. He attended lectures at Fairfield and Geneva Medical Colleges, but did not obtain a diploma, as he chose to save the money necessary to graduation to purchase books and instruments; taking out a license to practice, which granted equal privileges at far less expense.

“In after years he received an honorary degree of M. D., conferred by the Buffalo Medical College. He was a close observer of men, and had an almost intuitive perception of the character and ruling motives that governed those with whom he associated....

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“His attainments in general knowledge, his habits of thought, his quick perception of character, his estimate of ability and true worth, his supreme contempt for shoddy, his disgust of folly and stupidity, his sense of the ludicrous and his enjoyment of wit and humor, his stinging repartee and biting sarcasm, his fund of anecdote, and love of the beautiful in nature; his sympathy for the sick and suffering, his fidelity and attachment to friends, none but such as knew him well, can fully appreciate or understand. Many of his sayings and unique expressions will survive long after the generation that knew him shall have passed away. He possessed a well formed and manly physique, and during the most of his long and active life enjoyed robust health.

“He practiced medicine about forty-five years, most of which time was spent in this city, and nearly all in this county, excepting a short time in California and on the Isthmus of Panama.

“He suffered for the last three or four years of his life from disease of the spinal cord, which terminated in paralysis and death on the 19th of November, 1882, near the commencement of the 76th year of his life.

“He died at his pleasant home on Cottage street, in this city, presided over by his daughter, Mrs. Carlin, a most estimable and cultured lady, who, with her daughter and little son, Hyde, bestowed that lavish care and attention he so much needed, while awaiting, full consciously, the progress of disease and the sure approach of death.

“As the remains lay in state, his residence was thronged by those wishing to pay their respects to one whose loss they deeply felt. Especially was this true of the poor, who expressed, in touching words, their appreciation of the kindness of one who, for many years, had been their physician and friend.

“His funeral was attended by a large concourse of citizens; the physicians of the city were almost without exception present. A selection from their number acted as bearers and deposited in the beautiful cemetery of Glenwood his mortal remains. Returned to mother earth they rest in peace....”

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Another account, in the Lockport *Daily Journal*, gives the date of McCollum's birth as October 5, 1807, and says that when seven years old he moved with his father's family to Canandaigua, New York, thence to Porter in 1815. When of age, and until 1830, he taught school at the latter place.

“He then went into the office of Dr. Hyde of Porter, and commenced the study of medicine. Later he attended lectures at Fairfield where he was licensed as a physician. In 1835 he became associated with Dr. Lewis Smith of Lewiston, N.Y. In 1835 he married Miss Smith, a sister of his partner. He remained in Lewiston until 1844. In 1845 after attending medical lectures at Geneva he came to Lockport (also in N.Y.) to practise medicine. In 1849 he made a trip to California but returned in 1850 to Lockport, having been gone about 12 months, but soon went to the Isthmus of Panama as physician for the Panama Railroad Company. He was gone about one year and half on this second trip. Upon his return to Lockport he again practised medicine. His reputation as a Doctor was very high. He was brusque but very charitable to people who could not afford to pay their bills.

“He died Nov. 19, 1882 leaving two daughters, Mrs. Mary Carlin of Lockport and Mrs. Martin of Spurbrook N.D. and several grandchildren.

“Dr. McCollum's wife and one daughter died some years ago. A sister Mrs. Richard Smithson of Youngstown, N.Y., Mr. Abram McCollum, a brother, of the same place....”

McCollum incorporated into his pamphlet direct contributions by two of his fellow Forty-niners from Lockport, together with a quotation from another. Concerning the first of McCollum's “co-authors,” Lyman Bradley, I have found little information, but Mr. Lewis identifies the second as Elliott W. Cook, who was born in Rhode Island about 1820 and came to Lockport in 1837. He recruited Company A of the 28th Regiment in Lockport, and during the Civil War he was promoted

to Major and then to Lieutenant Colonel. Before the war, for many years, he had been a gunsmith in Lockport, and his guns 32 have become collector's items. Later he served for a time in the customs office at Niagara Falls, but his health failing, he moved to Riverside, California, where on January 15, 1877, he shot himself. To him and his wife Malvina were born two sons, Charles and George.

Charles J. Fox, whom McCollum credits for an account of Panama “contained in sketches of ‘California Experience,’ which he has published in the *Niagara Cataract*, of which he is the editor,” left an obituary printed in a Lockport newspaper of October 8, 1859:

“We are called upon to record the sudden death of Charles J. Fox, long and familiarly known to the people of this place and county. He expired at his residence in Buffalo at 2 o'clock on Tuesday morning last. His disease was Congestion of the Lungs.

“Mr. Fox, we believe, was born in Lockport as we know that he was educated and lived here until a few years since. At an early age he commenced the study of law, but in 1847, before entering upon its practice, he became one of the Proprietors of the *Niagara Cataract*, a free soil democratic paper, with which he remained connected until it was discontinued [1851]. At the breaking out of the gold fever in California he went there and remained two years. In 1853 we believe, he became proprietor of the *Niagara Democrat* [a Lockport weekly began at Lewiston in 1821], and in 1852 he was appointed [Erie] Canal Collector at this place which office he held for two years. The duties of the various positions he discharged with credit. His memory will be cherished by his old acquaintance as that of a warm friend and genial companion.”

Further data on the four “co-authors” of *California As I Saw It* come from the original census returns in the National Archives at Washington, D. C. During July, 1850, the census-taker from Lockport, Niagara County, visited all four men. Elliott W. Cook on July 9 was described as aged 32, a gunsmith, and born in Rhode Island. His wife “Melvina,” 26, and sons Charles, 7, and George, 3, all were recorded as born 33 in New York. Charles Fox on July 11 was set down as 25 years of age, a printer, and like his wife Charlott, 22, born in New York. Harriet, 3, was noted to have been born in Pennsylvania, and Charles, 1, in New York. Two girls lived in the family, Lucy Carpenter,

11, and Betsey Brunet, 12, both of New York birth. Somewhat surprisingly, William McCollum on July 19 was listed as dwelling in an apparent boarding establishment, the household of William C. House, Gent. McCollum's age was given as 42, which would go to confirm the year of his birth as 1807. His profession was stated as physician, and his birthplace New York (not Pennsylvania, as stated in his obituary); he was noted to possess \$800 in real estate. The otherwise elusive Lyman Bradley was enumerated on July 26, the schedule giving his age as 43, a painter, born in New York, and having \$1500 in real estate. In his household lived Laura Bradley, doubtless his wife, aged 33, born in New Hampshire; and Hannah Stevens, aged 76, possibly his mother-in-law, born in "M" (Massachusetts?). McCollum was not recorded at Lockport ten years later, when the 1860 census was made.

McCollum himself records in the opening pages of his narrative the names of the twenty men comprising the Lockport company with which he set out, one of whom died at Panama, while two others turned back. Another of the company, as seen in Note 42, *post*, ultimately settled at San Diego. But we shall give attention here only to the acknowledged head of the company, Ezekiel Jewett, who attained to a celebrity beyond any of his Lockport companions of 1849. The biographical sketch that follows is drawn mostly from *Remarks of Robert E. C. Stearns on the Death of Colonel Ezekiel Jewett, before the California Academy of Sciences, June 18th, 1877*, of which a copy is in the Bancroft Library, with supplementary data from Mr. Lewis.

Jewett was born in Rindge, New Hampshire, October 16, 1791, the son of a physician. On the outbreak of the War of 1812, at the age of 19, he was commissioned an Ensign in the 11th Regiment of U. S. Infantry, and served in the brigade of General Winfield Scott, seeing action at Lundy's Lane, 34 Chippewa, and Fort Erie, and being promoted for gallantry. At the close of the war, he and a few other young officers went to Chile to help in overthrowing Spanish rule. He served three years in cavalry, was taken prisoner, paroled, and in 1818 returned home, where on June 10, 1819, he married Elizabeth Arnold. Five years later he moved to Sacketts Harbor, New York, and in 1826 was appointed caretaker of Fort Niagara. With Jewett's consent, late in 1826 the celebrated "Masonic traitor," William Morgan, was imprisoned in the fort's powder magazine. Morgan was subsequently killed, touching off the violent anti-Masonic movement. In June, 1830,

Jewett was tried for conspiracy and kidnaping, but, the evidence being circumstantial, he was found not guilty. With his family and servant, he continued in charge at the fort 17 years, occupying his leisure hours with a study of the natural sciences, also making a collection of ethnological material. In 1843 he removed to Lockport, where he organized the Jewett Scientific Society for the Study of Geology and Paleontology and other sciences, and devoted all his time to geological pursuits. During 1844-1846 he made several journeys to the Lake Superior region, exploring its mineral resources, and also adding largely to his ethnological collection, subsequently given to the Smithsonian. Stearns comments in his memorial address that the vicinity of Lockport at this time “was equal to any, if not the best single point in the world for the student of palaeontology. The heavy cutting, through the Niagara limestone, for the locks of the Erie Canal, then in process of enlargement, revealed many wonderful palaeontological secrets. It was while Jewett was reaping in this interesting field that he was visited by Agassiz and Ed. de Verneuil, of France, and the acquaintance formed at that time with these eminent men ripened into a friendship which was terminated only by death.”

McCullum tells us that Jewett was taken sick while crossing the Isthmus and was an invalid during the whole of the stay at Panama; nevertheless Stearns quotes from a report by Dr. Philip Carpenter to the British Association for 1863 on his 35 conchological activities while there: “Colonel Jewett went to Panama...in January [February], 1849, spending ten weeks in that region, including Taboga. This was two years before Professor Adams' explorations. Thence he sailed to San Francisco, where he spent four months in exploring the shore for about fifty miles from the head of [entrance to] the bay. After laboring for a week at Monterey, he spent ten weeks at Santa Barbara and the neighborhood, thoroughly exploring the coast for fifteen miles, as far as San Buenaventura [modern Ventura]....Before his return to the East, he also collected at Mazatlan...and Acapulco.” Jewett was further described as “unsurpassed in America as a field palaeontologist, possessed of accurate discrimination, abundant carefulness, and unwearied diligence and patience,” no one better fitted to collect materials for a scientific survey of the coast. Stearns adds that at Santa Barbara Jewett also made a collection of pliocene fossils, referred to in Carpenter's report.

An admiring glimpse of Jewett embarking upon this scientific activity is afforded by McCollum's narrative, after the two men had given up the gold-hunting each found so uncongenial; and on leaving California the Doctor writes of the Colonel: "His acknowledged scientific attainments, that were of little use to him when with me delving, and lifting rocks, under a hot sun, in the southern mines, it is hoped, will prove available in the new enterprise he has undertaken." In 1856 Jewett was appointed curator of the State Museum of New York at Albany, but after ten years he resigned and moved to Utica. In the meantime numismatics attracted his attention, and between 1859 and 1864 he is said to have got together "one of the largest and most valuable collections of coins and medals in the country." On the outbreak of the Civil War, though then 70 years of age, Jewett wrote to his old commander, Winfield Scott, expressing his readiness to enter the service again, and could scarcely be reconciled when answered that the burdens and management of the war must devolve upon younger men.

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"In 1866," Stearns concludes, "he visited California again. It was in the month of June of that year when I met him for the first time and with a few members of the Academy, made up a small party for a short excursion to Bolinas Bay. There are others. . . who must remember with pleasure the climbing of Tamalpais, the descent to the Bay, and the 'walks and talks' with him on that occasion. He was with us but a few months, but sufficiently long to endear himself to all. After returning East, he made several journeys to Florida, during succeeding winters, collecting everything of interest to himself or which might be of service to others. While visiting the East in 1868-70 I again had the pleasure of his companionship on one of these Florida excursions, and with the lamented Stimpson, our little party of three spent the months of January, February and March in the delightful winter climate of that country, collecting along the eastern shore and among the keys on the Gulf side of the peninsula. In November 1869, in company with his friends, Dr. and Mrs. Newcomb, he made a second visit to Panama; but the climate affected him so severely that he was obliged to return, after a brief stay of only five weeks. He again visited Florida in the winter of 1872, being the fourth time, for the purpose of collecting as before, and was as usual, successful. As may be supposed a man so incessantly active and untiring as Colonel Jewett, was widely known and appreciated in scientific

circles, and possessed the friendship and esteem of very many of the most distinguished men of the day.

“In 1860 Hamilton College, New York, honored him with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy; and his services to science were further recognized by many learned societies at home and abroad, of which he was an honorary member. [He was a corresponding member of the California Academy of Sciences.]

“In 1862 he met with the severest affliction in the death of his wife [by whom he had three sons, John, Joseph and Louis]; after this sad event he made his home with his daughter [Sarah], Mrs. A. A. Boyce, and upon the removal of herself and family to California, about two years ago, accompanied them to Santa Barbara, where, on the 18th of last May, after a brief illness, he closed his eyes forever, at the ripe age of eighty-six years.

“Imperfect as is this rapid sketch, it is sufficient to give you some idea of the career of this remarkable man, of his wonderfully active and prolonged life, which exhibited, nearly to its last moments, indomitable energy and perseverance. Intellectually of quick perceptions, eager in the pursuit of knowledge, and enthusiastic in his love for and appreciation of nature; actuated by a high sense of honor, and of the most rigid integrity; he was also a man of generous sympathies and impulses. Of exceeding modesty, flattery was distasteful to him, and he was sensitive to the publication of anything in his praise. While courteous to all, he was critical in the selection of his friends, with whom he was exceedingly companionable, and by whom he was greatly beloved.

Thus a fellow scientist in eulogy, and if he had nothing to say of Ezekiel Jewett's early involvement with William Morgan and Masonry, leaving that memory to be preserved in western New York, it is with only a trace of irony we observe that there were no more William Morgans in Colonel Jewett's life.

iii

Grave symptoms of gold fever had begun to manifest themselves in the United States before the end of November, 1848, as stories from California and from returned travelers gave cumulative evidence of the truth of the gold discovery. As early as December 2, a writer in the *New York Herald*, commenting on the immense quantity of all kinds of merchandise in process of being shipped “to the new El Dorado—California,” warned against “the influence of the now prevailing gold mania.” Two days later the *Herald* had news from New Orleans that some parties were trying to make efforts to muster enough to purchase the steamer *McKim* for the purpose of going to California, and a Boston report had a company of 100 men about embarking for the same destination.

But general infection waited upon President Polk, and his Message to Congress on the State of the Union, December 5, 38 1849. The President reported the accounts of the abundance of gold in California to be “of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service, who have visited the mineral district and derived the facts which they detail from personal observation.... The explorations already made warrant the belief that the supply is very large, and that gold is found at various places in an extensive district of country.” All other pursuits but that of searching for the precious metals, he added, were abandoned: “Nearly the whole of the male population of the country have gone to the gold districts. Ships arriving on the coast are deserted by their crews, and their voyages suspended for want of sailors.”

The gold fever that had burned in isolated localities now flared up as an epidemic. Every rootless spirit, and many there were, with the Mexican War barely concluded, was aflame to be off for California; and a good many apparently rooted spirits felt the same way. At this season, December, 1848, the overland routes were winterbound. Any who proposed to leave at once must go by sea, accepting the weary five-month passage around the Horn in a far from favorable season, or going by ship to a port along the Gulf of Mexico or the Caribbean Sea so as to cross the continent in a southern latitude.

The newspapers were full of advice at once, and sound advice, at that. The New York *Herald* of December 13, 1848, discussed the different routes to California, coming to the conclusion that only two were feasible with any degree of comfort, economy, or safety. The safest route, and probably the cheapest, was that via Cape Horn; ships would take passengers from New York at from \$300 to \$100, depending on the circumstances and accommodations offered. Moreover, the only chance to forward or carry goods to California was by ships bound direct, and now that there were so many up, freights were not very expensive. But the route via the Isthmus was given primary attention:

“The Chagres steamer leaves New York monthly, as also 39 the British West India Mail Steamers, and they reach Chagres on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus in about ten days. Canoes are here employed, and passengers carried thirty miles up, when they are transferred to the backs of mules, and in this way reach Panama in two days, where they will take either a steamer or sailing vessel for San Francisco. The steamers belonging to Aspinwall's line leave Panama on the first of every month, when fairly organized; but for the present they are advertised to leave January 5, February 15, and the 1st of March. After this, they take their regular monthly departure. The distance by this conveyance from New York to San Francisco, is about 5,500 miles, thus set down:—From New York to Chagres, 2000 miles, Chagres to Panama, 50, Panama to San Francisco, on the arc of a great circle, 3,440. The whole distance will occupy from 25 to 30 days. The cost of crossing in this way the isthmus from the best sources of information, will not exceed \$20, being performed, as we have already stated, by canoes and mule carriage. The former will soon give way to the steamer *Orus*, which has been purchased to run on the Chagres river. Passengers are in the habit of crossing the isthmus, who take the British line of steamers down the west coast of South America, which seems to establish the feasibility of its being without difficulty crossed. Passengers should provide themselves with the means to guard against contingencies, as they may arise, from the non-arrival of the steamers at Panama. The greatest difficulty in going by this route will consist in a large amount of baggage; nothing over 150 pounds weight can be carried with safety. The price of passage on our steamers from New York to California, by the above route, is \$420. There is a medium class of passengers taken for considerably less, or sailing vessels leaving here for Chagres will take passengers for much less. And there is also a third class passage from New York, by way

of Panama, in the *Orus* and Aspinwall's steamers, by which the whole cost is less than \$200, viz: \$65 to Chagres, \$20 to Panama, \$100 to San Francisco." It was also noted that the British steamers, which left New York on the 13th of each month, touched at Chagres. "Their price 40 to that point is ten dollars less than in our own steamers."

It so happened that the events of 1846 which had made the United States a continental nation, the settlement of the Oregon question and the conquest of California and New Mexico, had forced the government to improve communications between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. In March, 1847, Congress authorized the setting up of a fortnightly mail service by steamer between New York and New Orleans (touching en route at Charleston, Savannah, and Havana), with a branch line to run between Havana and Chagres, right of passage across the Isthmus having meanwhile been obtained from Nueva Granada (Colombia). The contract for this ocean mail was awarded to the United States Mail Steamship Company, which began construction of two large ships, the *Ohio* and the *Georgia*. Owing to their size and other difficulties, the *Ohio* was not put into service until September, 1849, and the *Georgia* not until January, 1850. To fill the gap until the large steamers became available, the smaller *Falcon* was acquired. A new vessel, she sailed on her first voyage to Chagres via New Orleans on December 1, 1848. This was just four days before President Polk's Message touched off the Gold Rush, and she carried only 20 passengers—mostly government officials—on leaving New York. (Another 173 piled aboard before she left New Orleans on December 18, and their arrival at Chagres on December 27 inaugurated the Gold Rush across the Isthmus.) When eventually all the steamers of the United States company were in operation, the *Ohio* ran between New York and New Orleans, the *Falcon* plied between Havana and Chagres, and the *Georgia* operated between New York and Chagres direct, with a stop at Havana for coaling.*

I have drawn many details concerning the mail steamers, on either side of the Isthmus, from John Haskell Kemble, *The Panama Route, 1848-1869* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1943), supplemented primarily by reference to the 1848-1849 files of the New York *Herald*. See also Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers [of the Pacific]* (San Francisco, 1938).

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An opposition line, without mail contracts, was brought into being by the Gold Rush. In its issue of December 13, 1848, the same which handed out the advice on routes to California, the New York

Herald observed that no less than 15 vessels in that city were then preparing to leave for California, and predicted that before the end of the week, the number would swell to at least 20; at Baltimore there were four, at Boston three, at Philadelphia 11, and Newburyport and New Orleans had their ratio. "In addition to these there are ten vessels preparing to leave for Chagres, with passengers, among which are the steamers *Isthmus* and *Orus*. A number of young men waited upon Capt. Stoddard, of the *Crescent City*, and endeavored to persuade him to extend his course as far as Chagres. If her owners should make such an arrangement, we doubt not but that her splendid cabins would receive the full complement."

For a fact, the very next day J. Howard and Son advertised the sailing of the *Crescent City* for Chagres direct on Saturday, the 23rd, saying that passengers by this steamer might expect to arrive at Chagres in time to meet the Pacific Mail Company's steamer of January 5 at Panama. She would stop at New Orleans on her return voyage. The *Crescent City* was a larger and faster ship than the *Falcon*, built in 1847 for the New York-New Orleans run. She reached Chagres January 2 with her first 180 passengers, the first of six such voyages completed by mid-summer of 1849, and a happy augury for her owners. In July, 1849, she was joined by the *Empire City*, a yet finer vessel, and the two ships together became popularly known as the "Empire City Line." It was in the *Crescent City*, on her second voyage, that McCollum reached Chagres, though he came home eventually in the *Falcon* and the *Ohio*.

While these developments had been shaping on the Atlantic side, the government had taken steps to put a steamer mail in operation between Panama and Oregon. (San Francisco was made the terminus later.) A contract was given to a firm incorporated as the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, in which William Henry Aspinwall, his uncle Gardiner Greene Howland, 42 Henry Chauncey, and Edwin Bartlett were the principal figures. They built three nearly identical steamers, the *California*, the *Panama*, and the *Oregon*. The *California*, first to be completed, sailed from New York via the Straits of Magellan on October 6, 1848, and the knowledge that she could be expected at Panama early in January entered largely into the calculations of those who first sailed for the Isthmus. The *Panama* left New York the same day as the *Falcon*, December 1, but engine trouble forced her back to port under sail, and she did not get off finally until February 17, 1849. The

Oregon sailed from New York on December 9, 1848, and was expected at Panama in mid-February. The majority of those who left New York in late January and February hoped for a passage from Panama up to San Francisco, if not by the *Oregon*, then by the *California*, returning to Panama after completing her first voyage.

All the same, there were misgivings about the Isthmus route, and alarming tales were current as early as December, 1848, about thousands of people stranded there. The prevalence of these rumors led the *Herald* to inquire into the facts, in its issue of December 19, 1848:

“In looking over our files carefully, we find that two vessels only have sailed for Chagres, since the appearance of the excitement—on board of which are sixty or seventy persons only; and this number, with the addition of a few who might have left the British West India islands, is about all that may be expected at this place for a fortnight to come. The steamer *Falcon*, which left some few days before the *John Benson*, had about twenty on board for Chagres. These, if landed safely, can depend, with the utmost certainty, upon quick conveyance to Panama, as there are at present employed upon the Chagres river a sufficient number of boats to carry at least one hundred persons across per day, and we are credibly informed that some of these canoes are capable of carrying one hundred half barrels. But, should there be any thing like the number of persons at Chagres that has been stated, it is doubtful if accommodations can be obtained to the extent necessary to ensure their speedy passage to the Pacific. There have been no departures from any of the ports in the United States, for Chagres, except New York, for more than six weeks, and those from this port number but two, carrying about eighty persons, all told, which falls far short of the calculations made by the papers through the country.” It was suggested that the *Crescent City*, up for sailing on the 23rd, would be the first to enter Chagres, “and the owners, we understand, are determined to use all endeavors to facilitate the transshipment of her passengers to Panama, where it is likely the British mail steamer which stops at that port once a month, will be in readiness to convey them down the coast. The last accounts from Valparaiso, Callao, and from Guayaquil, reported a large number of Americans, Chilian, and Peruvian vessels in each of those places, as being without employment, and ready to embrace the first opportunity that would lead to active business of any description....”

The *Falcon* returned to New York January 24, followed by the *Crescent City* on the 27th, both with generally encouraging news about the prospects of getting on to California from the Isthmus, and at the time McCollum left his home in Lockport, both vessels were up for their second voyages, the *Falcon* to leave February 1, the *Crescent City* on the 5th. It was in the steerage of the latter that the Lockport company obtained passage.

Despite all the good things said about the Isthmus route, the majority of the gold-seekers sailing out of U. S. ports went via Cape Horn. That may have reflected the seafaring tradition of the East Coast, distrust of “overland” routes (of which the Isthmus was considered one), the superior facilities for carrying baggage, the greater cheapness of the route (especially for large organized companies), or the simplicity of boarding a ship and just sitting put until the time arrived to step ashore in San Francisco. Nevertheless, it is enlightening to look at some statistics periodically compiled by the *Herald*, covering sailings from all U. S. ports. The first such accounting, on January 16, listed by name 36 vessels which had sailed via 44 Cape Horn carrying 1,164 passengers, officers and crews swelling the total to 1,682. By contrast, 530 passengers in 7 vessels had sailed for Chagres. Several such accountings were made as the season advanced, and on April 19 came a comprehensive tabulation, with a recapitulation reporting that 11,527 passengers, or a total of 14,191 including officers and crews, had sailed via Cape Horn in 225 vessels, while total sailings for Chagres came to 3,547 passengers in 52 voyages (several vessels having made two or more trips). Other routes had attracted gold-seekers to a lesser extent, to this time, at least. To Vera Cruz had gone 698 passengers in 11 vessels; to Brazos 765 in 11 vessels; to Corpus Christi 103 in 3 vessels; to the San Juan River 118 in 2 vessels; to Tampico 87 in 2 vessels; to Galveston 87 and to Lavaca 122, each in single vessels. The grand total came to 19,717 persons in 309 vessels.

The precision of these figures is more seeming than real, for there is great variation among contemporary reports as to the total who sailed in any given vessel; vessels were forced to return to port for one reason or another, so that their passengers sometimes were counted again in other vessels; some vessels escaped the census; and yet others which left port with announced destinations turned up elsewhere—a conspicuous example of this last being the schooner *Sovereign*

out of Baltimore, which swells the Cape Horn totals but came to Chagres with Tyson and a good many others aboard. Still, the errors may cancel out; and the proportions may be about right, especially as between the Cape Horn and Chagres routes, though it seems certain that these proportions altered as the season wore on; in all probability, a much larger number took the Isthmus route than rounded the Horn during the latter half of 1849. From the point of view of arrivals at San Francisco between March 31 and December 31, 1849 (which is not quite the same thing as departures from the East Coast to the close of 1849, and which also leaves out of account those, like the passengers in the *California*, who reached San Francisco early in the year), a finding has been made that of some 30,675 arrivals, 12,237 45 came from U.S. ports via Cape Horn, 6,000 via Panama, 2,600 via San Blas and Mazatlan, and the rest from other quarters.* We must remember, of course, that ships were lost at sea, that emigrants died or turned back, and that not all who sailed from U.S. ports for Chagres or other way points had California as their destination. As a contribution toward knowledge of travel by the Isthmus route, I have prepared, on another page, a tabulation of arrivals at Chagres to the end of April, 1849, corrected and amplified from several partial tabulations made for the contemporary New York *Herald*. This list is by no means final, subject to further correction and amplification even for its period. I have not commanded the information that would enable me to extend it over the entire year 1849, but the period covered has its own appropriateness, in that it corresponds closely to the time McCollum spent en route to and waiting upon the Isthmus.

See H. H. Bancroft, *History of California* (San Francisco, 1888), vol. VI, p. 159n, crediting the investigations of J. Coolidge of the Merchants' Exchange. The New York *Herald* of June 24, 1849, quotes from the Washington *Republic* of the previous day official statistics from the Collector of San Francisco as to the number of persons arriving at San Francisco in American and Foreign vessels, October, 1848-March 31, 1849, the total arrivals by sea being 2,433. These are listed by country of citizenship, not by route, vessel, or port at which voyage originated; still, the breakdown is illuminating: Mexico or Lower California, 454; United States, 340; Chile, 270; France, 178; Germany, 100; Peru, 90; England, 86; Ireland, 42; Spain, 40; Italy, 39; Scotland, 34; Sandwich Islands, 24; Brazil, 23; and a scattering from other countries. Probably the majority of those from the United States came via the Isthmus, and on the *California*. The grand total of arrivals by sea, if the above two lists be combined, is 33,108 from October, 1848, to the close of 1849. Of these, less than 6,500 would have come via the Isthmus.

Writing over a year later, McCollum spared only a few words for the departure of the *Crescent City* from New York on February 5, 1849. Theodore Johnson provides a fuller ⁴⁶ account, and one even more detailed appears in the *Herald* of February 6, where it is said that the crowds and confusion were so great that the time of sailing was delayed nearly an hour, the excitement on boat and pier very high, and a general feeling of hilarity prevailing over the assemblage. “The scene was extremely picturesque, and it was amusing to behold the various dresses of the passengers, attired as they were, some in India rubber, some in differently colored oil cloth—white, black, green, yellow—and some of no color at all. Here was one with an India rubber tent; another with a life preserver as large as a balloon; and a pair of waterproof boots large enough to cover half his carcass. Every fashion of hat and cap was put in requisition—Dutch, French, Italian, Chinese, Spanish, down to the latest California slouch. Rifles, muskets, shot guns and revolvers, were to be seen strapped to the backs and sides of the adventurers, in a profusion that seemed to indicate an invasion of a different character to that of a gold region. The steamship *Hermann*, lying on the other side of the pier, was filled with spectators, her decks being covered with snow, which had been falling fast all the fore part of the day, some persons commenced snowballing those on the dock. The compliment was returned in good earnest, and in a few moments hundreds engaged in the animating sport, which continued for about half an hour.... The scene wound up by those on board the *Hermann* running up a white flag on the top of an umbrella, although they did not surrender till every man in the shrouds had been shot down.”

The *Crescent City* pulled away from the dock a few minutes before two P.M., the *Herald* says, “amidst the firing of cannon, and vociferous cheers from an immense multitude.” Johnson adds that “the excitement of the surrounding multitude was manifested by the most enthusiastic shouts, and many seemed ready to leap on board to accompany us to El Dorado,”—and in truth, cases were known of men who had gone aboard vessels to bid goodbye to friends, only to be carried away by the excitement and sail with them. The southward voyage is well described by McCollum and Hecox, and only a few ⁴⁷ additional details need be added.

This being the period before steamships came fully of age, the *Crescent City* was a smoke-spouting side-wheeler and a three-masted sailing ship for good measure, the sails sometimes being hoisted to take advantage of a following wind. When, in August, 1849, she was preparing to sail on her seventh voyage to Chagres, the *Herald* devoted some space to this “noble and favorite ship,” saying that so perfectly had she performed, the time occupied in the voyage had in no case varied two hours, “invariably making the distance in eight days and 10 or 12 hours.” The perfection of her engine, built by Secor & Company, was dwelt upon: “It has never faltered during the heaviest weather, and the ship has never ‘laid to’ for a moment, no matter how severe the storm....She has thus far made quick time, and for beauty of model, or comfort and splendor of accommodations, is hardly to be surpassed.”* The *Herald* also praised her captain, the “deservedly popular” and “accomplished” Charles Stoddard, and except for some hard things said of him in the annals of this second voyage of the *Crescent City*, it must be said that he got a universally good press in 1849. An interesting representation of his ship, sketched by D. W. Nayson on the occasion of one of her visits to Chagres, is reproduced in the present work from a contemporary illustrated periodical.*

New York *Herald*, August 29, 1849.

Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, August 30, 1851.

The principal event of the voyage, after the passengers mastered their sea-sickness, was the near disaster on the evening of February 10. Late that afternoon the *Crescent City* had made Caycos Island and headed for the Windward Passage. One of the passengers, Leonard S. Hotchkiss, in a letter written three days later, says that about 9 P.M. “the Isle Inagua” was made out close under the bow. “The moon had just begun to rise, and it was rather dark. As soon as the discovery was made, the engine was stopped, the sails taken in, the ship backed off, and we stood to the eastward. Had the night been very 48 dark, or the vessel without steam, we should probably have gone ashore, on what I presume to be a desolate island—a few moments more and we should have been lost, but we were providentially saved.” Theodore Johnson comments that half an hour after moonrise, “the engine was suddenly stopped, and the cry of breakers ahead passed with electric rapidity from stem to stern. Going forward, we beheld with awe the surf and white beach of a small island on both bows; the ship seeming to be in a little cove within a mile of the shore, and going stem on, ten knots

an hour. The island proved to be Little Inagua, uninhabited except by turtle, and our escape from wreck was most providential, as most of the Bahamas have coral reef extending far into the sea. The look-out man in the fore top had gone to sleep, the first mate, who was officer of the deck, had failed to see the danger, and a sailor off duty first gave the alarm.*

This letter, clipped from an unidentified paper probably published in New Haven or Bridgeport, is pasted into a scrapbook, *California Newspaper Clippings, 1848-1849*, preserved in the Bancroft Library.

David N. Hawley remembered the episode somewhat differently, in a statement given many years later to H. H. Bancroft. He said they had on board two or three old New Bedford skippers, and he himself had been to sea with his father, a ship captain. "We were not by Cape Hatteras twelve hours before I perceived that Captain Stoddard was not fit to command the vessel, and I became satisfied that he did not know where we were running. I noticed that he was getting under the effects of liquor, and presently it was discovered that the steamer was headed for the land, and close upon it, and in ten minutes more she would have been beached upon Little Inagua, and if it had not been for one of those old whaling skippers, we should have been lost. He saw the danger, and rushed to the Pilot House, and got the mate up, and called to the Engineer to stop the vessel just in time to prevent her striking, and she had to back out of that cove half a mile or so."*

MS. Statement in the Bancroft Library, C-D 98.

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Narrowly averted shipwreck, however, was just an incident of the voyage, and it is a commentary on human nature that when the getting up of indignation meetings among the passengers began a few days later, the cause was a more homely one. In his letter Leonard Hotchkiss says: "Much fault was found by the passengers against the owners and agents of the vessel, for taking so many passengers in the steerage, and for not furnishing better fare. Most of the passengers expected the fare of a boarding-house, and they were not a little disappointed. With a 160 passengers in the steerage, there are only three waiters [besides the stewardess, the only woman aboard], and although we have plenty to eat, it is only the coarse fare of sailor.... The steerage passengers are getting up an indignation meeting against the owners, the proceedings to be published, warning persons not to take passage in the steerage unless the number is limited."

By this time, Chagres was just over the horizon, and plans for crossing the Isthmus were up for discussion; “some of the great men among us,” Johnson says, “the militia colonels, doctors, and bearers of despatches, presided over our deliberations, or spouted in the most effective mass-meeting style,” as a result of which mule, boat, and baggage committees were appointed, “which ended only in delay, vexation and trouble, although they exerted themselves to the utmost.”

The trouble was that so many vessels reached Chagres at the same time, the brig *Winthrop*, the steamer *Falcon*, the bark *Marietta*, and the steamer *Crescent City* all arriving within a few hours of one another on February 14. They discharged in the neighborhood of 750 passengers to compete for transportation across the Isthmus. At least, by this time ship captains had learned circumspection; six out of eight sailing vessels that had reached Chagres in December and January had wrecked upon the bar at the mouth of the Chagres River, so that passenger vessels were now satisfied to anchor out in the open roadstead, transporting passengers and their baggage ashore in canoes, while sailing craft which required entrance to the basin or inner harbor arranged to be towed in by the small steamer *Orus*. The *Orus* had made her appearance at Chagres January 14, the intention of her owners being that she should primarily be employed in transporting passengers up the Chagres River as far as her draft would permit.

The passengers of the *Winthrop* and the *Falcon*, first on the scene, tied up the facilities of the *Orus* and left the passengers of the *Marietta* and the *Crescent City* to make what shift they could among the local owners and operators of canoes—dugouts fashioned from trunks of large bay trees, the common mahogany. Leonard Hotchkiss, in his serially composed letter, shows how the situation unfolded from hour to hour. Writing after arrival, on the evening of the 14th, he says:

“Our committee who went immediately on shore, have sent word that they have engaged a sufficient number of canoes to take all our baggage up the river, and they have gone on to engage mules. Another committee go in the morning to engage canoes for our persons.

“The *Orus*, it is said, only goes up the river 18 miles, and we have therefore thought it best to take canoes all the way to Gorgona or Cruces. We are told that there will be no trouble in getting

through; as it is believed we have got the start of the *Falcon* passengers, in obtaining canoes and mules. Our committee learned that there was a vessel at Panama which would take all the passengers, and also that it was healthy there. I do not see, therefore, why our prospects for getting over are not good. We have classed ourselves into three divisions for leaving the vessel, my lot falling in the second....

“Morning of the 15th.

—All confusion in going ashore. Canoes along side taking baggage and persons ashore. Some of the natives have on shirts and pants; others only a strip of cloth around their hips.

“15th, Evening.

—This has been a very exciting day, not only on board ship, but in Chagres.—The negro with whom our committee contracted for canoes, refuses to fulfill the agreement, the contract not being signed, and we are now all to do the best we can. A large part of our passengers have gone on 51 shore—some have gone up the river, and some remain at Chagres. Some who have gone on, have left their baggage behind. I intend to stick to mine as long as is consistent. I expect to get it landed to-morrow, and proceed up the river, as it is said there are plenty of canoes....

“I have not yet been on shore, but those who have report a singular state of things; men and women going about in a state of nudity, &c. Tropical fruits are plenty, but I think it best to avoid them.

“The method of unloading our baggage is quite novel. A large canoe, manned by six or eight natives, comes along the side, where there is quite a sea, the wind being on shore. The baggage is lowered away, and when an opportunity offers it is dropped into the canoes. When the large canoe is loaded, it is paddled into shoal water, where the baggage is transferred to a small canoe and taken to the shore. Such a jabber of Spanish I never heard before, as these natives make.

“The *Orus* has started up the river with a load of the *Falcon* passengers.

“Chagres, Feb. 16th.

—I came on shore this morning with my baggage, and have engaged a canoe to take me to Gorgona for \$8. Provided the natives do not back out, I shall proceed this afternoon. There is no certainty that they will adhere to their agreement, although my baggage is on board the canoe....I have been about the town—things look clean and neat, and I have seen nothing of the nude men and women as was reported. The ladies dress in style, with their laces and ruffles.”

McCollum declined to get excited about these matters, but others were aroused to a high pitch of excitement over the negotiations for canoes. A *Herald* correspondent signing himself M. E. R., in a Chagres letter of February 17, tells how a committee of six from the *Crescent City* had been sent on shore to procure canoes, and goes on to say: “Our committee made an agreement with a Mr. [Julien] Ramos to convey the baggage belonging to the passengers, (305 in number,) to Gorgona, for the round sum of \$960—distance 45 miles. This was a verbal agreement, made in the presence of all the committee and the first officer of the *Crescent City*. The next morning, after our committee had left for Gorgona, Ramos returned to fulfill his engagement—declared to those left behind that he had made no such agreement with our committee, but that if we could produce a written bargain to that effect, bearing his signature, why he would abide by it. Thus our passengers were thrown upon the tender mercies of this man. The manly and decided stand taken by Captain Stoddard against this Ramos, no doubt saved all from being perfectly fleeced; as it was, they had enough of it. The writer of this saw one party pay \$300 for a single canoe to Gorgona. While defending his passengers against these impositions, Captain Stoddard was asked by Ramos, why he took such an interest in the matter? His reply was that they were his countrymen and passengers, and sooner than see them thus imposed upon, he would arm his crew and take the town. This threat had some effect in bringing his canoes down from an outrageous to an exorbitant price.”*

New York *Herald*, March 4, 1849.

Theodore Johnson tells the tale somewhat differently, saying that a contract had been written out and signed, but that when the committee proposed to have it certified by the Alcalde as was usual, the canoe owners “strenuously and most indignantly objected: no indeed, they were gentlemen,

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

men of honor; their word was as good as their bond. The committee finally yielded the point, chiefly relying upon the liberal sum agreed to be paid by us. Surprised at our facile compliance with their original demand, they determined at once to bolt from their contract, and had now done so, demanding the most exorbitant prices for canoes.” The remonstrances and threats of Captain Stoddard in their behalf being for a long time unavailing, at length “revolvers were quickly put in efficient condition, and bowie knives made their persuasive appearance. Whip the rascal, fire his den, burn the settlement, annex the Isthmus, were heard on all sides. Fortunately for themselves the high contracting parties understood English, and their ears being 53 sensitive at the moment, and their nerves more so, the dirty brown of their complexion speedily changed to a livid white, and they came down in their villainous demands, barely in time to save their shantee from a come down on their heads. Their rascality, however, was in the main accomplished, in the way in which they had cunningly foreseen and intended; for many of our impetuous young men, led by the example of a few selfish old travellers among us, and wearied with delay, had engaged canoes for themselves, making private bargains on the best terms they could; but even then they were frequently deprived of a canoe after the bargain was concluded, on the plea that others would pay more. As soon as this game was understood by us, we quietly selected and took possession of the canoes which we required, agreeing to pay them eight dollars each person for passenger canoes, and at the rate of about three dollars per hundred pounds for baggage to Cruces or Gorgona, half to be paid in advance.”

Interesting is it that McCollum does not join in all this highly vocal outrage, permitting himself instead to wonder how some Yankees might have comported themselves, given a comparable opportunity for profiteering. With those who had remained behind to look after the baggage of the Lockport company, he got off early Sunday morning, February 18, in one of the big freight canoes. The type, it seems, was called a *cayuca*, though the dugouts of the Isthmus became known generally to the Americans as *bungoes*, a bungo being, as Johnson explains, a “species of roof made of the branches of leaves of the palmetto, extending some six or eight feet in length, and just high enough to creep under upon our hands and knees; leaving space enough at the stern for the seat of the *patron*, or captain, who, with a short broad paddle, both aided to propel and steer the

canoe.” The small canoes, of the type Johnson took, were not generally recommended, and it is to be observed that his party of four paid \$8 each, plus about \$3 per hundred pounds for whatever total their baggage weighed, whereas McCollum's detachment of the Lockport company, after 54 taking in enough to bring their number to 14 persons, with 6 or 7 tons of baggage, ended by paying out some \$80 as their share of the expense.

Thus departed Chagres' transient population, southward up the Chagres River, most of the *Winthrop* and *Falcon* passengers transported in the *Orus*, the *Crescent City* contingent going in canoes, and the *Marietta* passengers, as we learn from John M. Letts, delaying to build their own boats for the ascent of the river. The crossing of the Isthmus at this time and under these different circumstances is abundantly described for us in the narratives published by Delavan, Johnson, McCollum, and Letts, to say nothing of letters written to newspapers by Hecox and others. Another interesting narrative of the crossing, had I space for it, is by one of the *Falcon's* passengers, R. D. Hart, contributed to the first two issues of the *Panama Star*, February 24 and March 3, 1849. Some of the *Crescent City* passengers had got to Gorgona by February 19, for on that date we find them having another whirl at that popular recreation, the holding of indignation meetings. The results were sent along for publication in the first issue of the *Panama Star*:

“WHEREAS, The undersigned passengers in the *Crescent City*, from New York to Chagres, have been subjected to great imposition, disappointment, delay and expense in their voyage from New York and transit across the Isthmus, and having also suffered from misrepresentations with regard to the facilities of proceeding from Panama to California, they feel that they can only accomplish a duty to their countrymen and effect justice toward themselves and the several agents of the above Steamer, by a true and thorough exposition of the facts.

“*First.* The agents and owners in New York, represented that the Steamer *Orus* could proceed to Gorgona on the Chagres River, and that the whole expense of reaching Panama would not exceed \$20 to \$25.

“In reply, we assert that the Orus could only proceed 18 miles, or one third the distance to Gorgona, and that the 55 expense of reaching Panama for one person and 300 pounds of baggage is not less than \$45, and in some instances \$60—and of this expense \$1 each was exacted to land passengers by the officers of the Steamer at Chagres.

“Second. The agents and owners represented that they had been informed that the British Steamers had placed their relay vessels on the route from Panama to San Francisco, and that there would be little or no difficulty in obtaining vessels at Panama. The voyage from Panama to San Francisco in sailing vessels was stated to occupy 25 to 30 days.

“In reply we assert, That the British Steamers do not run to San Francisco and their Consul informs us that no orders have been received to place any of their vessels on the route. In regard to the voyage in sailing vessels, the agents of the American Steams in Panama, now state that it occupies 50 to 70 days, and they in conjunction with the American Consul refuse to facilitate our voyage in any other vessels than their own steams, and justifying the same on a plea of duty to the owners.

“We desire also to make it known that there are now upwards of one thousand passengers upon the Isthmus in transit and awaiting passage from Panama, in the vessels which may chance to arrive at that port, that the number is increased by daily arrivals at Chagres, that only a small portion of the whole have tickets for the Steamers, and there is but one vessel (a brig) now at Panama which is full. The above statement is vouched for by the undersigned now congregated at this village, awaiting the arrival of part of their baggage and their transition to Panama; the state of affairs at the latter port having been ascertained by a committee sent forward by the passengers who have returned to this place and made their report

GILBERT A. GRANT,

GEO. W. TAYLOR,

JAMES C. ZABRISKIE,

EDWARD WARREN,

GEORGE H. BUCKLY,

Committee of the Crescent City.

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And two hundred passengers on board *Crescent City*. Gorgona, Feb. 19, 1849."*

George W. Taylor, one of the committeemen, got up a further Card at Panama, March 29. This was printed in the Trenton, N. J., *Gazette*, April 17, 1849, and in the *Herald* the following day.

Theodore Johnson appears to have set out in his small canoe on February 15 and to have reached Gorgona on the 17th. McCollum did not get away from Chagres until the 18th, arriving at Gorgona the day after the *Crescent City's* committee had completed its true and thorough exposition of the facts. Johnson does not say how long he remained at Gorgona, except that it was for some days; McCollum stayed on for three days before continuing across the hills to Panama. Some of their fellow passengers remained at Gorgona for several weeks when they realized that there was no immediate prospect of getting on to San Francisco; there continued to be difficulties in the transport of baggage, and the situation of Gorgona was regarded as more healthful than that of Panama. But from February 24 to what came to seem almost the end of time, McCollum and his fellows of the Lockport company waited upon events in Panama.

V

The first wave of gold-seekers to wash across the Isthmus, at the beginning of 1849, had experienced difficulties and apprehensions similar to, if not quite on the same scale as, those of the second wave on which McCollum was borne along. There had been pressure on the transport facilities, and in particular there had been anxiety about the availability of shipping for continuing on to San Francisco.

Most of the early-comers had placed their hopes in the *California*, expected to reach Panama about January 5. The *California* made a famous voyage, and those who at length reached San Francisco

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in her ever afterward considered 57 themselves among the very elite of Forty-niners.* She carried only a few passengers on leaving New York, but arrived at Panama on January 18, 1849, with 17 cabin and 52 steerage passengers, mostly Peruvians taken on board at Callao, where she had found the gold fever already raging. Their presence aboard the ship infuriated the Americans who held tickets for a passage up to San Francisco, and who demanded that the Peruvians be put ashore or transferred to a sailing ship. Fully aware that if they went ashore they would never get aboard again, the South Americans never once left ship during the *California's* 13 days in port. They were rewarded by their persistence, for when the *California* resumed her voyage on January 31, Americans and South Americans jammed together in her, 365 passengers besides the 36-man crew

See *First Steamship Pioneers* (San Francisco, 1874); Victor M. Berthold, *The Pioneer Steamer California* (Boston, 1932); and Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers [of the Pacific]* (San Francisco, 1938.) Edward E. Dunbar published his reminiscences of the voyage up from Panama in the *California* in his *The Romance of the Age; or Discovery of Gold in California* (New York, 1867), pp. 48-91; and the diary of Levi Stowell on the *Falcon*, across to Panama, and thence north on the *California* is edited by Marco G. Thorne in *California Historical Society Quarterly*, March, 1948, vol. 27, pp. 33-50.

Those who could not be accommodated aboard the *California* took passage in the rare sailing ships which chanced to touch at Panama about this time, or waited with small patience for the *Oregon* to come up from the south, or for the *California* to return from San Francisco. This latter proved a delusive hope; only too well had President Polk forecast the future in summing up the recent past: "Ships arriving on the coast are deserted by their crews, and their voyages suspended for want of sailors." Within a week of her arrival at San Francisco on February 28, the *California* was deserted by all her officers and crew save the captain and a single engineer. And in any event, she could not have sailed soon, for coaling arrangements had gone awry. It was May 1 before the *California* obtained 58 coal and a crew so as to steam out through the Golden Gate, and May 23 before she returned to Panama.

Meanwhile the *Oregon* had appeared at Panama, trailing her plume of smoke. News of her arrival on February 23 electrified all then traveling across the Isthmus, particularly those who held tickets entitling them to board her—mostly the passengers of the *Falcon*, though a few from the *Crescent City* had wangled tickets before leaving New York. When McCollum and others of the Lockport

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contingent reached Panama on February 24, it may be imagined how longingly they looked to where she lay anchored, several miles out in the open roadstead south of the port. The *Oregon* sailed for San Francisco March 13 and steamed in through the Golden Gate April 1, with Delavan and Johnson aboard. Her captain, warned by the fate of the *California*, took every precaution to retain his crew, and also met with better fortune in respect of fuel, having been able to coal at San Blas. The *Oregon* steamed south again on April 12, once more refueling at San Blas, and returned to Panama on May 4, the first arrival from California since the brig *Belfast* on February 5. The belated *Panama* thrashed up from the south about the middle of May, and sailed for San Francisco on the 18th, just five days before the *California* followed the *Oregon* back into port.* But all this steamship activity came too late to be of any use to McCollum and his fellow passengers of the *Crescent City*.

See again the works cited in footnote 21.

The Isthmus for many years had provided so little in the way of incentive for sailing ships to visit Panama that the Forty-niners could regard as a piece of luck the appearance of any vessels that put in as the Gold Rush surged across the narrow neck of the continent. John M. Letts wrote in retrospect: "Great anxiety was felt by the Americans at Panama to proceed on to California. The sun had passed overhead, and was settling in the north, indicating the approach of the rainy season. Many were sick of the fever, many had died, which added to the general anxiety. Many had procured steamer tickets 59 before leaving home. The steamers had passed down to San Francisco, been deserted by their crews, and were unable to return, and there were no seaworthy vessels in port. The indomitable go-a-head-iveness of the Yankee nation could not remain dormant, and soon several 'bungoes' were 'up' for California. Schooners of from thirteen to twenty-five tons, that had been abandoned as worthless, were soon galvanized, by pen and type, into 'the new and fast sailing schooner.' These were immediately filled up at from \$200 to \$300 per ticket, passengers finding [provisioning] themselves. In the anxiety to get off, a party purchased an iron boat on the Chagres River, carried it across to Panama on their shoulders, fitted it out, and sailed for California. The first 'bungeo' that sailed, after getting out into the bay some three or four miles, was struck by a slight flaw of wind, dismasted, and obliged to put back for repairs. This caused a very perceptible

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decline in 'bungo' stocks. Many took passage in the British steamer for Valparaiso, in hopes to find conveyance from that port. The passengers of one of ' *the fast sailing schooners*' when going on board, preparatory to sailing, found that the owners, in their *zeal to accommodate their countrymen*, had sold about three times as many tickets as said vessel would carry. Instead of allowing fourteen square feet to the man, as the law requires, they appear to have taken the *exact-dimensions* of the passengers, and filled the vessel accordingly. The passengers refused to let the captain weigh anchor, and sent a deputation on shore to demand the return of their money; but lo! the disinterested gentlemen were 'non est inventus.' After a long search, they succeeded in finding one of the worthies, and notwithstanding his disinterested efforts in behalf of the *public*, he was locked up. The captain fearing personal violence, left the vessel privately, and for several days was nowhere to be found. The passengers, however, entered into a compromise with themselves, the first on the list going on board. The mate informed the captain and they were soon under way. The owner, who had been so persecutingly locked up, having 60 formerly been an operator in Wall Street, resolved to slight the hospitalities of the city, and took his leave when the barefooted sentinel wasn't looking." The pungent advice of Theodore Johnson was: "I would advise any person to attempt to *swim* from Panama to San Francisco, rather than take passage in a *sailing* vessel. Get a *Pacific steamer's ticket*, before leaving New York, or do not attempt this route."

Reports written home or brought back by vessels returning at Chagres from January to May display more concretely the situation as it developed. The day after the *Crescent City* returned from its first voyage, on January 28, the *Herald* advised: "At Chagres, an agent of the ship was despatched express to Panama, to facilitate, if possible, the transit of the *Crescent City's* passengers, and obtain information of the condition of the road, and the state of matters at Panama, in reference to the thousands represented as there waiting conveyance to San Francisco. The agent arrived in Panama, in fourteen days from New York, and found but 200 to 300 waiting there, and when the *Crescent City* left Chagres [January 9] there were not over 500 passengers on the Isthmus."

A Panama letter of January 7, printed in the *Tribune*, commented: "We found three or four hundred persons waiting here, but plenty of provisions, and no sickness.... Sixty of us have chartered a schooner for San Francisco for \$4,000, and will soon be off. There is another schooner here, which

has also been chartered by a company. The ship *Philadelphia*, at anchor here, will also sail on the voyage.”

The *Tribune* also reported an awe-inspiring development: “In case the *California* should not soon arrive, some of the travelers were talking of an expedition by land, along the coast.”*

New York *Weekly Tribune*, February 3, 1849.

The *Herald* of January 29 had advices one day later: “There were three schooners at Panama announced for San Francisco. They would leave between the 8th and 20th inst. with passengers. The *Humboldt*, coalship, was also there but 61 would not go to California. The bark *Philadelphia* was not there, as previously reported, but was daily expected. She will probably be chartered to take passengers to the gold region, and one or two vessels from the South were to touch at Panama, on their way north.” By February 15 the *Herald* had Panama dates to January 18, the day the *California* arrived. “She and two ships that were there, would take all the passengers to San Francisco—between six and seven hundred—who were waiting their departure on the 20th ult.” A correspondent advised that the ship *Philadelphia* was then discharging her coal alongside the *California* at Toboga, and would immediately depart for San Francisco. “A schooner is already preparing, and a schooner left a few days since, both having some 60 on board.” Another Panama letter of January 23, printed in the *Herald* of February 24, gave information that the schooner *Angelita*, 25 passengers, was to sail that very day for California; the British mail steamer *Forth* was just in; the coal ship *Philadelphia* would leave next week with some 300, and a schooner of 70 tons would also sail on Monday with some 25 on board. The next report, written from Panama on February 6, told of the sailing of the steamer *California* at the end of January, and in a postscript said that the *Philadelphia* and the *John Ritson* were the only vessels up, both full, with 250 passengers en route from Chagres unprovided for. One vessel only was at Panama to be put up, though arrivals were hourly expected.* Another Panama correspondent, writing on February 8, said that the brig *Belfast* had arrived from San Francisco three days before. The ship *Philadelphia* would sail tomorrow with 200 passengers, and “our bark,” the *John Ritson*, on the 13th with 120 more.* And, as a last letter before the arrival on the Isthmus of the second big wave of the Gold

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Rush, a Forty-niner who reached Panama February 11 wrote home to say that the *Belfast* would sail shortly, following the British bark *John Ritson* which had sailed on the 14th with 120 passengers, all she could accommodate. But two ships were then in port, the ship *Humboldt*, from Bremen with coal, awaiting the arrival of the *Oregon*, expected to load guano for home, and the *Belfast*, to leave in a few days. "At present there are about one hundred and fifty persons here waiting for an opportunity. The greater part of these take the steamer [the *Oregon*]." This writer added, "A gentleman connected with the custom house informs me that 900 persons only left this port for San Francisco since the excitement broke out."*

New York *Herald*, March 25, 1849.

New York *Weekly Tribune*, March 10, 1849.

New York *Herald*, March 25, 1849.

The *Crescent City*, returning to New York on March 3 from her second voyage, carried home the news McCollum had heard on arrival at Chagres; the *California* had sailed January 31 with her "375" passengers, including the obstinate Peruvians; the *John Ritson* had sailed on the 13th, with over 100 passengers; the *Belfast* was up and would sail in a few days, full; a schooner, bought by Chris. Lally and party, had sailed on the 1st with 25 passengers. It was estimated that from 100 to 200 Americans were at Panama, with enough en route across the Isthmus to bring the total awaiting passage to almost 1,000 persons.*

Ibid., March 4, 1849

The day McCollum reached Panama, February 24, a *Herald* correspondent wrote from that city. The *Oregon*, which had arrived at 8 P.M. last night, brought only seven passengers, but would fill up very fast, "as I presume there are at least twelve hundred persons between Chagres and Panama, destined for California. Of this number, only about three hundred have tickets for the steamer *Oregon*; and it reported that there are no vessels at any of the ports on the Pacific, which intend visiting here to transport passengers to California. What will become of those now here, Heaven only knows. Steerage tickets in the *Oregon*, which cost in New York one hundred dollars, have been sold for four hundred dollars—and I heard five hundred dollars offered for one this morning."*

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Ibid., March 25, 1849.

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For a fact, the ship news the *Panama Star* could report this day in its first issue did not amount to much. “Vessels in the Harbour of Panama.—One Bremen barque with coal for the steamer; one small schooner of seventy tons, which is offered for sale in shares at \$300 per share, (twenty-eight shares, each share entitled to two passages;) one old coasting schooner of 50 tons, is also offered for sale, price \$6,000. She is worth about as much as a New York oyster boat.”

James Delavan, clutching his ticket for the *Oregon*, remarked that “the desire to embark was most intense, and tickets for the steamer rose to an enormous price: even those for the steerage readily brought four hundred dollars, while three hundred dollars were paid by many for passage on board various sailing craft, some of which were scarcely worthy of any nautical designation. So great was the rush, that many adventured upon this long voyage of 3,600 miles in small vessels of fifteen or twenty tons. Many went down the coast, to Callao, in an English steamer, hoping to obtain an upward passage from that port [this, it will be recalled, had been the recommendation of the *Herald* back in December]; while hundreds allowed themselves to be huddled on board miserable vessels, not capable of accommodating one-eighth of their numbers.”

The second issue of the *Panama Star*, March 3, recorded that the bark *Equator* of New Bedford had arrived on the 25th from a whaling cruise, 18 months out, with 450 barrels of oil. “She was up for San Francisco the next day, and in a few hours every ticket (130 in number) was taken at \$200 each. She will sail in about ten days.” Also: “The schooner *Constellation* was purchased by a party of Americans, and are now fitting her out for San Francisco, and will sail in a few days, with 35 passengers.... Col. J. C. Zabriskie and party go in her.” This circumstance was calculated to put the Colonel in a better mood than he had been while composing true and thorough expositions of the facts at Gorgona.

But indignation meetings were in full flower again, as we learn from the *Panama Star* of March 17: “...the meeting 64 of last week held by the Americans awaiting passage here, to attempt to put down a system of fraud and speculation in the prices to California, had the effect to reduce very

considerably the rates first asked, and to prevent speculation in tickets. Of the numerous persons who signed, we have heard of but one, who proved faithless to his word, his signature and his honor. How far his conduct will insure the respect of those he represented, or the confidence of honest men, remains to be seen.”

Three days later a Panama correspondent sent to the New York *Tribune* a general account of the shipping situation as it then existed:

“It is judged there are now in this city at least 1,000 Americans, and 500 more between Chagres and this—1,500 in all.

“The steamer *Oregon* left here on Tuesday morning, 13th inst. with 226 passengers. There are now some six vessels, of different sizes, up for San Francisco, all of whom have their full complement of passengers engaged. They are

The British bark *Collooney* 140 passengers fare \$200

The Am. Whal. bark *Equator* 130 passengers fare 200

The Am. brig *Felix* 60 passengers fare 200

The Am. brig *Orion* 40 passengers fare 200

The Schr. *Constellation* 30 Col. Zabriskie's Co. 200

Also one or two small Spanish coasting schooners, 40 passengers in all. Total number of passengers 460.

“There is also here the bark *Humboldt*, with coal for Howland & Aspinwall. I understand that \$60,000 have been offered for her, but that she is under bonds of \$10,000 to Messrs. H. & A. to return for another freight of coal.

“The most exorbitant prices are readily paid here for vessels by speculators, who, taking advantage of the scarcity of conveyance and the desire of parties to get away, get any price they choose to demand for the passage.

“Steerage passages in the steamers have sold readily for \$500; and as an example as to how desperately anxious parties here are to get along, and unwilling to risk the uncertainty of 65 other means of conveyance, I will state a fact: A gentleman from New-York has actually bought a large canoe, 60 feet long, 8 feet beam, 6 to 7 feet hold, and intends with a party to make the voyage in her.

“It is the opinion of our Consul and the better-informed emigrants that there will be within a very few days a sufficient number of vessels to take off all who are now remaining. The U. S. Consul here...informs me that very few vessels have visited this port. ‘Not as many in five years as within the past three months,’ was his language....”*

New York Weekly Tribune, April 21, 1849.

These are the circumstances McCollum and Hecox describe for us, and in which Hecox decided that he would be better off to return home. All that made possible the long wait by so many gold-seekers was that the Isthmus had proved healthy beyond all expectation, the “Chagres fever” or “Panama fever” having troubled few, and no sign of the dreaded “black vomito,” virulent yellow fever. Nor, as the best piece of luck in the whole affair, had the spreading, world-wide epidemic of Asiatic cholera yet begun to ravage the Isthmus. There had been a bad scare in January, when the *Falcon*, in her first voyage out of New Orleans, had deposited some cholera cases at Chagres; for a while the governmental authorities at Panama had considered enforcing a 40-day quarantine at Chagres on all vessels arriving at that port from the United States. William Nelson, the American consul at Panama, had written the Secretary of State on January 25 to describe this situation; he had got the order modified so as to apply only to vessels from New Orleans, Navy Bay being designated as the place for the 40-day wait. * Nelson did not think the idea would work, as there were no troops to keep voyagers from spilling ashore. Perhaps only the 66 schooner *Florida*, arriving at Chagres

from New Orleans January 30, was affected, the quarantine lasting in that instance for one week.* It was late in the spring before the cholera, which by that time was ravaging the interior of the United States, gained a foothold on the Isthmus.

Consular Dispatches, Panama, Records of the Department of State, National Archives. Nelson was American consul at Panama from 1841 to 1849; oddly, only this and a letter of March 24, 1849, dealing with Colonel J. B. Weller's dissatisfaction over arrangements made for the transport of his Mexican Boundary Survey Commission across the Isthmus, reflect the disturbed state of things at Panama in 1849.

See my table of arrivals at Chagres, *post*; and see also the comment in a Chagres letter of January 31, written on board the schooner *Sovereign* from Baltimore in New York *Herald*, February 24, 1849.

John M. Cushing, who had been one of McCollum's fellow-passengers on the *Crescent City*, in his reminiscences elaborates somewhat upon McCollum's tale of the coming to Panama of the vessel that would carry them, and John M. Letts as well, on to San Francisco. About the first of April, he says, his friend the Consul learned from Payta that a whaleship had put in there for supplies, and that the Captain had heard so much of the "rush" to California and of the crowds who were on the Isthmus that he had decided to switch from whaling to gold hunting, and would arrive in Panama in a month or so. "This made lots of people happy though the prospects were slim for getting off yet." Soon after a letter came along from the captain of the ship at Payta, saying that he would take 250 passengers to California, giving preference to those who had been on the Isthmus longest, the Consul to act as agent for the ship. "This was good news to those of us who came on the *Crescent City*, as all who came next to us, with many others, had either gone, or had secured passage on the other ships now in the harbor." Time rolled slowly on; four ships came in, loaded, and departed, and still there was no sign of their deliverance. But at last she arrived: the ship *Niantic*, in her own bizarre way one of the most notable vessels that figured in the Gold Rush.*

These reminiscences, written in 1905, are published in Society of California Pioneers *Quarterly*, October, 1929, vol. VI, pp. 119-134.

Both McCollum and Cushing provide interesting details of the *Niantic's* character and prior history, but the fullest account of her past is given by F. C. Matthews in the *Quarterly* of the Society of California Pioneers, October, 1929. In part, 67 Matthews writes: "The ship *Niantic* was a slow sailing, bluff bowed, three masted, full rigged sailing ship engaged in the China trade, and owned by the prominent house of N. L. and G. Griswold of New York. She was extremely broad for her

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very short length; was four hundred and thirteen tons register, and could probably take eight or nine hundred tons in storage.

“Just before the Port of Canton was blockaded in 1840, during the Opium War, she was in that port, loaded with tea and silk. Captain Doty, who was in command, was very ill when the ship was about ready to sail. With him, however, was Captain Robert Bennett Forbes of Boston. Captain Forbes was a partner in the firm of Russell & Company, an American firm located in Whampoa; and as he was very anxious to go home on business, he navigated the ship while Captain Doty made the entire passage lying in a cot swinging over the table in the small cabin. The trip was tedious and hard, the ship being forty-four days from Macao to Anjer, and the whole run something over one hundred and fifty days. Probably this was the last and most profitable voyage of the *Niantic* as a merchant ship.

“In 1844 she was bought by C. T. Deering for the whaling business, and on June 4, 1844, sailed for Sag Harbor under command of Captain Slate, bound first for the whaling grounds off New Zealand. She was absent until February 1, 1847, when she arrived at Sag Harbor with one hundred and twenty barrels of sperm oil, twenty-four hundred barrels of whale oil, and ten thousand pounds of bone.

“She was then sold to Burr & Smith of Warren, R. I., and under command of Captain [Henry] Cleveland, who had his two sons as first and second mates, sailed from Warren on September 16, 1848, for the northwest Pacific where her operations were to commence. Putting into port at Payta, she found a communication from Mr. Nelson, the American Consul at Panama, stating that there was quite an emigration from Panama to San Francisco, and urging a passenger certainty versus a whaling venture.

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“Having a good supply of provisions on board, Captain Cleveland took the *Niantic* to Panama....”*

An evidently less reliable account of the antecedents of the *Niantic*, originally printed in the *San Francisco Alta California*, 1872, is reprinted in T. A. Barry and B. A. Patten, *Men and Memories of San Francisco, in the 'Spring of '50'* (San Francisco, 1873), pp. 133-135.

So Cushing relates, she arrived with 150 mules for the British government, as well as several hundred thousand feet of lumber, enough for her own use for berths, and for two more vessels on the way. "Our Captain was a shrewd old fellow and he made a small fortune in selling to other vessels, water casks, kettles for cooking, beef, pork, hard bread, etc., at the most exorbitant rates. He was offered two and three hundred dollars for passage, but he refused all offers until all of us were taken."

The *Niantic* was anything but the rotten old hulk she has sometimes been called; those who took passage in her counted themselves fortunate ever after, especially when they heard of troubles that befell some of the other sailing vessels which shipped out of Panama at this time. One of her passengers, writing in 1893, recalled: "She came into Panama with a clean, whitewashed height between decks of seven feet in the clear, and sailed away with 280 good, glad men. The good old ship brought us [to San Francisco] in sixty-four days, and in all that time never a pump-brake manned or called for, never a creak of timber joints and never a smell of rottenness. Her passage for time was unprecedented, and not often beaten since.*

Letter by "R. J. C.," San Francisco *Call*, March 26, 1893.

But before we go to sea with the *Niantic*, let us have a last look at the shipping situation on the Isthmus prior to the first return of a steamer from San Francisco, the *Oregon* on May 4. A correspondent of the *Herald*, writing from Chagres on April 30, listed all the vessels then at Panama, with their expected passenger contingent. These included the ship *Humboldt*, which after all had been sold for the staggering sum of \$60,000, with 350 passengers; the ship *Niantic*, 225; the brig *Two 69 Friends* (which as it turned out made a horrible voyage), 120; the brig *Josephine*, 80; the brig *Soledad*, 70; the brig *Copiapo*, 100; brig unknown, 100; four schooners, 150; and also "two whale ships, and six other vessels just arrived—enough to convey all the emigrants from the Isthmus to San Francisco."* The totals are somewhat different, but the effect is the same in a round-up of Panama news afforded by the New York *Weekly Tribune* of May 19, which names the ship *Sylph* of Fairhaven and the Hamburg ship *Sophia* as among four vessels not yet taken up. A further report on May 26, with advices from Panama to May 4, said that sufficient sailing vessels were

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

then at Panama to take all the emigrants to the diggings, except those who held the steamer tickets. Among the ships, the *Humboldt* was advertised to sail May 10, the *Sophie* May 6, the *Norman* May 28, the *Circassian* May 10, and the *Howard* May 20; among the barks, the *Sylph* May 6, the *Seymore* “soon”; and the brig *Copiapo* “soon.” To these might be added “several small craft and schooners,” advertised to carry 230 passengers. And finally “The ship *Niantic*, Cleaveland, master, sailed May 2, for San Francisco, carrying 230 passengers.”

New York *Herald*, May 13, 1849. The eventual sale of the ship *Humboldt* is reported in the New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, June 11, 1849, reprinted in the New York *Weekly Tribune*, June 23, 1849.

Thus belatedly the shipping resources of the Pacific Ocean were mustered to end that weary season of waiting in Panama, that foregathering at sunrise each morning on the wall of the old town, to search the southern horizon for the sails of an approaching ship—an experience none who underwent it ever forgot.

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John M. Letts joins with McCollum in picturing the high-hearted departure from Panama in the *Niantic*. On the morning of leavetaking, he says, “bungoes commenced plying between the shore and ship, which was at anchor some five miles out, and at 4 P.M., all the passengers were on board. The captain was 70 still on shore, and there was an intense anxiety manifested. Many had come on board in feeble health; some who had purchased tickets had died on shore; many on board were so feeble that they were not expected to live. I was one of the number; we all felt that getting to sea was our only hope, and all eyes were turned toward shore, fearing the captain might be detained. At half-past five his boat shoved off, when all on board were electrified. As he neared the ship all who were able prepared to greet him, and some, whose lungs had been considered in a feeble and even precarious state, burst out into the most vociferous acclamations. The captain mounted the quarter-deck and sung out, ‘Heave ahead,’ when the clanking of the chain and windlass denoted that our anchor was being drawn from its bed. At half-past six, the *Niantic* swung from our moorings, and was headed for the mouth of the ‘Gulf of Panama.’ Again the shouts were deafening. No reasonable politician could have wished a greater display of enthusiasm...”

What the passengers had not bargained for was that the master of the *Niantic* kept a steady course to the south, paralleling the coast of South America. McCollum more or less passes this by in his narrative, but Cushing, in his reminiscences, makes too good a tale of it for us to do the same.

“When we left Panama our course was south by west and for days we followed it without a change, much to the disgust of many of the cabin passengers, of whom there were thirty, and who thought they knew more than the captain. Everything went along nicely for some twenty days, but still the ship followed the same track. Some days we would have a nice breeze and then it would die away. Then for days it seemed as though we would not move at all. There was many a talk about the course, but no one dared to say a word. Not a speck appeared in the horizon, not a vessel of any kind showed herself to the hundreds of eyes constantly on the lookout, and there was nothing but sky and water above and around. We amused ourselves as well as we could, and still kept heading south....

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“We crossed the equator, going as far as two degrees south without any signs of change. The climate was hot and, at times, the air was oppressive. At last our court passed a resolution that we must have a different order of things, or we would never get to California. So a Committee was selected to visit our Captain and find out his reason for going so long in the direction he was taking, and to boldly protest against the present conditions. Our Captain was invited on deck and the Chairman, a very smart fellow and a good speaker, addressed him in very forcible terms.

“Captain Cleveland listened attentively and, after asking if the speaker was through, replied in a very few words thus: ‘I am sorry you have gotten yourselves into this predicament through me, but I cannot help it. I have spent my life in this ocean and I know what I am about, while very few of you were ever out of sight of land in your lives. Now if I should take your advice and go the way you want me to, we should find ourselves in what sailors call ‘the swamp,’ a place to be avoided, if possible, by all careful navigators. Once in that place we might go along nicely for a spell, then suddenly we might be becalmed. The current would carry us farther and farther in. We might stay there a week or perhaps a month, and might never get out. Now I propose to follow this same

course until I strike the Trades. Then, when I am satisfied I shall change my course and hope very soon to land you at your destination. If you are satisfied with this explanation, all right; if not, I am sorry for you, but can't help it. I navigate my own ship. Good-day!"—and he went below.

"The Committee, as well as most of those who heard him, felt mean enough, though many considered themselves insulted and were angry. Things went on, however, for several days. Then, while all were asleep about two A.M., everyone was suddenly aroused by the call 'All hands!' and the sudden careening of the ship! We soon found why by going on deck, for the ship was headed northwest under full sail, and a sparkling breeze. For days she bowled along and never once during 72 the voyage altered tack or sheet. All hands were happy then, and the 'growlers' wanted to see the captain but he could not be found. All we had to do now was to be happy and wait. We were headed the right way, every hour was bringing us nearer to the 'promised land.'"

Letts provides a few dates, saying that on May 6 the *Niantic* came in sight of snow-capped Chimborazo, and on the 12th reached the Galapagos Islands, passing very near, "But as it was almost sunset, we did not lower our boat." They crossed the equator, and made one degree south latitude. "Then standing west, in order to fall in with the trade winds, we reached 110° west longitude. We then headed north on our course to San Francisco, but there was no wind. We had a calm for several days, accompanied with rain and mist. The weather was excessively hot, causing everything on board to mildew. Our clothes, boots, trunks, &c., were covered with mould. Those who were sick became worse, and others were attacked. Our ship rolled about like a log, without sufficient air to cause a ripple. There was a general uneasiness manifested, and something foreboding in every face; all were indisposed; we felt that there was a destitution of vitality in the atmosphere. On the 6th of June one of the passengers was attacked with the ship-fever, which immediately proved fatal. He died at three o'clock in the morning, and at ten was brought out, sewed up in canvas, and laid upon the gang plank. A bag of sand was tied to his feet, a prayer read, and at the signal, the end of the plank was raised, and he slid gently into his grave. It being calm, we watched the spot until the last bubble had risen to the surface. This was to us an afflicting scene; a gloom seemed to rest upon every countenance. That one of our number should have been taken away by a disease thought to be contagious, and one so malignant in its character, gave rise to

emotions of the most painful dejection. The ship was immediately cleansed, disinfecting fluid was distributed profusely, and we escaped the farther appearance of the disease.”

Letts adds that they soon fell in with the northeast trade 73 winds, which bore them rapidly along, but caused the *Niantic* to make so much leeway that on arriving at 38° north latitude, the latitude of San Francisco, they were at 140° west longitude. They then tacked ship and stood in for the coast of California, having baffling winds and calms for several days, but they fell in with the northwest trades so as to be carried rapidly along. The wind increased to a gale, described by both Letts and McCollum, which lasted for two days. The ship laid over, Letts says, “so that her main studding-sail boom touched the water, and on the 1st July the gale carried away our gib [jib]. On the 3d, we discovered weeds and logs floating in the water, indicating our proximity to land.” An observation ascertained that they were 60 miles from San Francisco, which they might expect to make by 8 A.M. next morning. The passengers all got busy packing up. “The retorts, crucibles, gold tests, pick-axes, shovels, and tin-pans, are put into a separate bag, and laid on the *top*; each determined to be the first off for the mines. Each one having conceived a different mode of keeping his gold, one would exhibit an ingenious box with a secret lock, another, a false bottom to his trunk, a fourth a huge belt, while a fifth was at work on the fifteenth buckskin bag, each of 20 lbs. capacity. All were looking to the glorious future with a faith that would have removed mountains, particularly if they were suspected of having gold concealed underneath.” Fog obscured the scene next morning, but when it burned off soon after noon they found themselves 20 miles north of the Golden Gate. Not wishing to come to anchor before morning, they shortened sail that night.

On the morning of July 5 the *Niantic* was but a short distance from the Golden Gate, making for it with a fair breeze. “A large ship was abreast of us, making for the same point. A schooner spoke us, and wished to pilot us in, but our captain not relishing California prices (\$200), declined.* ...We could not have made a more auspicious entrance. It was a delightful morning, with a fresh breeze, and the tide rushing in at eight 74 knots. When we had made the entrance, we could see through into the inner bay, directly in the centre of which is an island of considerable elevation, which serves as a beacon to inward-bound vessels. The passage in was entirely without interruption, and

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

the scene most enchanting. It seemed to us that the gates had been thrown open, and we ushered in to view some fairy scene. At our left was the little bay of 'Saucelito' [Sausalito] (Little Willow), where several vessels were lying cosily under the bank, taking in water.... At our right, the shore is bold, and still further on, a point of considerable elevation juts out into the bay. The tide is still bearing us along with headlong speed, and we are obliged to take in all sail with the exception of the flying-jib. As we neared the point we changed our course, making as near it as practicable, and, as we round it, San Francisco is spread out before us, where rides a fleet of two hundred sail. We feel that we have attained the acme of our ambition, that we have really entered the 'Golden Gates.' We pass along, and passing several vessels, come to the United States man-of-war, *Gen. Warren*. Our patriotism, at this particular time, was not of a nature to be smothered into silence. We took off our hats, opened our mouths, and it was soon evident that our lungs had lost none of their vigor by exposure to the sea air. We passed most of the shipping, and finding a convenient place our captain cried out 'haul down the flying jib,' 'let go the anchor,' and our ship rounded to, as if willing to rest after a run of sixty-five days."

Cushing also gives an amusing account of this episode.

Thus the narrative of John Letts, so interesting to compare with that of McCollum. Various figures are given as to the number of passengers she brought to San Francisco, up to 289, but the Harbor Master's report, listing her arrival as on July 5, 1849, fixes the total at 248.* Cushing places a period to the voyage by saying that a committee of the passengers called upon the Captain to apologize for their treatment of him, and to thank him for his courtesy. "The Captain was polite but cool, saying only, 'Gentlemen; I have nothing to say; your voyage is up; go ashore.'"

F. C. Matthews, as heretofore cited, p. 136.

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The voyage of the *Niantic*, too, was up; never again did she see deep water. From the anchorage off what was called Clark's Point, the first eager passengers were taken ashore by the ship's boats. A few, like William McCollum, remained aboard some days longer, until they had completed arrangements to leave for the interior. This brief period as a floating hotel and warehouse accurately forecast the future of the *Niantic*. A few months after her arrival, she was sold to parties in San

Francisco, who at high tide hauled her close in shore, near what was then the foot of Clay Street at present Sansome, the shoreline then being half a mile west of its location today. Her masts were taken out, her rigging and some of her ballast removed, piles driven on each side to keep her erect, and she was used as a storehouse, if not quite a storeship. It is said that the *Niantic* thereby earned her owners \$20,000 per month for some time, far better than she could have done at sea.*

John S. Hittell, *A History of the City of San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1878), pp. 165-166; and see the letter of "R. J. C." cited in footnote 42.

William Kelly inquiring after a friend in February or March of 1850, found his office to be on the deck of the *Niantic*. "Her hull was divided into two large warehouses, entered by spacious doorways on the sides, and her bulwarks raised upon about eight feet, affording a range of excellent offices on the deck, at the level of which a wide balcony was carried round, surmounted with a verandah, that was approached by a broad and handsome stairway. Both stores and offices found tenants at higher rates than tenements of similar dimensions on shore would command..."* An English artist, Samuel Francis (Frank) Marryat, son of the well-known novelist, arrived in San Francisco about this time and painted a number of water colors of characteristic scenes. One was afterwards reproduced as a colored lithograph in his book *Mountains and Molehills* (London, 1855), displaying the singular aspect of the *Niantic* in this 76 final phase of her history; in explanation Marryat said: "The front of the city extending rapidly into the sea, as water-lots are filled up with the sand-hills which the steam excavators remove. This has left many of the old ships, that a year ago were beached as storehouses, in a curious position; for the filled-up space that surrounds them has been built on for some distance, and new streets run between them and the sea, so that a stranger puzzles himself for some time to ascertain how the *Apollo* and *Niantic* became perched in the middle of the street; for although he has heard of ships being thrown up 'high and dry,' he has probably sufficient nautical experience to observe that the degree of 'height' and 'dryness' enjoyed by the *Apollo* and *Niantic* resulted from some other cause than 'the fury of the gale.'"*

William Kelly, *An Excursion to California...* (London, 1851, 2 vols.), vol. 2, pp. 239-240.

The colored lithograph from the London edition of Marryat's book is reproduced in the Society of California Pioneers *Quarterly*, October, 1929, with the inappropriate caption, "San Francisco, 1849." The New York, 1855, edition of Marryat has an inferior black and white version of the same plate.

This phase of the *Niantic's* varied history ended in San Francisco's fifth great fire, May 4, 1851, when she was burned to the waterline. On the site was erected a hotel also called the Niantic, the foundation of which rested on what remained of the hull. At the time, this was regarded as the best hotel in the city. Gradually the Niantic Hotel lost status, and in 1872 it was torn down to make way for a four-story business block, the Niantic Building. The tale is that when excavations were being made for the new foundation, workmen found 35 baskets of champagne that had been buried since the fire of 1851. Although champagne, beyond a certain point, is not improved by age, this wine "had been so completely covered as to be almost excluded from the air, and some of the wine effervesced slightly on uncorking, and was of very fair flavor." (The brand, a favorite French variety, was Jacquesson Fils.)*

Hittell, *loc. cit.*; Barry and Patten, *loc. cit.* The Boston illustrated periodical, *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, in 1851 reproduced not only a view of the great fire in which the *Niantic* was destroyed, but also "Deck of the Ship *Niantic*, at sea," curiously said to have been "sketched for us on the spot by Mr. G. W. Naylor, a passenger, and...drawn by *Manning*. It represents the ship *Niantic*, just before the dinner hour, while running down the south-east trades, bound for Panama from San Francisco. Since the artist sketched the same, the *Niantic* has returned to San Francisco, and is now used in the harbor as a store-ship. She was formerly a whaler, and belonged to Westport, in this State." The two views appear respectively in vol. 1, pp. 165 and 212.

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In 1907 a third Niantic Building was erected, and on its Clay Street side, on September 19, 1919, the Historic Landmarks Committee of the Native Sons of the Golden West placed a bronze tablet commemorating the ship and hostelry which had occupied the site. Bronze does not compare with books in preserving the glory of the world, but those who have read the pages of McCollum, as of Letts and Cushing, may discover with pleasure this small bronze memorial to the past.

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So at length we have come with William S. McCollum to California. We shall not follow him about that golden land, sere and sunburnt in the season he saw it, observing only that like so many of the arrivals in California after July 1, he made for Stockton and the Southern Mines in preference to Sacramento and the Northern Mines. He observed the California scene with a realistic eye, and some sense of irony for the behavior of himself and all others who were caught up in the Gold

Rush. Unlike so many others, he built up no ill-will against California for not having made a wealthy man of him; he looked upon the present and the future of California and saw them fair. He chose to return home, but he retained a sense of kinship with those who remained in California and were in process of building a commonwealth there. It is more than appropriate that when after so many years a new edition of his pamphlet appears, California is its place of birth, giving him back to his own home town, which for so many years has not known him.

McCollum and I together are indebted to Robert Greenwood of the Talisman Press, who was first to feel that his narrative 78 should be revived in another generation. The unrivaled resources of the Bancroft Library for studies of the Gold Rush in all its aspects, including in this instance a copy of the rare original edition of *California As I Saw It*, have made the new narrative more richly textured and the work more pleasurable; I express my thanks to Dr. George P. Hammond, Director, and my colleagues of the Bancroft and main University libraries. Mr. Allan R. Ottley of the California State Library, Mr. James de T. Abajian of the California Historical Society, and Mr. Henry J. Dubester of the Library of Congress made particular searches; and Mr. Lester W. Smith of the Buffalo Historical Society opened essential paths for me, while the Grosvenor Library in Buffalo made available microfilms of Buffalo newspapers. Personal favors have also been done me by Mrs. Eleanor T. Harris, Mrs. Julia H. Macleod, Mr. Everett D. Graff, Dr. John Barr Tompkins, Mrs. Madeline R. McQuown, Mr. Thomas E. McQuown, and Mrs. Helen H. Bretnor. Above all, however, I wish to thank Mr. Clarence O. Lewis, Niagara County Historian at the Court House in Lockport, New York, to whom all who read this book are indebted for its wealth of personal information concerning William S. McCollum and his Lockport companions of 1849.

DALE L. MORGAN

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

CALIFORNIA

AS I SAW IT.

ITS NEW CITIES AND VILLAGS; ITS RAPID ACCESSION OF POPULATION; ITS SOIL,
CLIMATE, AND PRODUCTIONS.

PENCILLINGS BY THE WAY

OF ITS

GOLD AND GOLD DIGGERS!

AND

INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL BY LAND AND WATER.

BY WILLIAM S. M'COLLUM, M. D.

A RETURNED ADVENTURER.

BUFFALO:

PUBLISHED BY GEORGE H. DERBY & CO.

1850.

[Facsimile title-page of *California As I Saw It*

By William S. M'Collum, M. D., 1850]

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Introductory Chapter

“GENTLE READER,” I think the phrase is, and gentle, patient, and indulgent, you must be, or we shall fall out by the way, in this short journey we propose to make with each other. I am no author by profession, and should not be one in this small way of practice but for the importunities

of friends who wish to have what even a poor narrator has to say of the El Dorado of the Pacific, the gold placers, and all that relates to that distant region. And beside, this is rather a labor saving operation. Interest, curiosity, is rife in the public mind, to catch even imperfect glimpses of the Gold Region—the new and far off addition to our glorious (and permanent, let me hope,) Confederacy. It is easier to write out my narrative, and bring it within the reach of enquiries, than to repeat it so often as I must do, not to unvail to those who so good naturedly importune me.

The reader will find in this small pamphlet, all that came under my observation, worthy of note, in a journey from Lockport to California—going and returning, via the Isthmus;—commencing on the 28th of January, 1849, and ending on the 15th of February, 1850.

Truthful description, a faithful relation of events, in the absence of any exaggeration; candid opinions in reference to all I saw and heard; will constitute all the merits that will be claimed for this narrative; that goes out to the public far less prompted by the pride of authorship, than a disposition to gratify the wishes of personal friends.

In this task, I have been materially aided by the recollections and observations of two of my companions in the adventure, MR. LYMAN BRADLEY, and MAJOR E. W. COOK. In addition to what I have introduced as theirs, I have had the benefit of their suggestions, and their reflections, in other portions of the work.

“HO, FOR CALIFORNIA!”—This was the word—this the theme of talk and excitement—as all will remember—during the fore part of the winter of 1848 and 1849. Partaking of 82 the mania of the day, catching a portion of the spirit of enterprise and adventure, I became one of an association of twenty citizens of Lockport, who resolved to see, and be, a part of that of which we were hearing so much. For myself, I confess, or rather affirm, that the prospect of mining in that far off region, inviting as it then was,—glittering and bright as report had made it—did far less in inviting me into the enterprise, than the novelty of it, the charms and inducements that encountering even perils and hardships sometimes create. There were “portents in travel's history,” that had often excited my youthful admiration, “imminent 'scapes by flood and field,” that I have thought but a pleasant

admixture in the loss of life, relieving its sameness, and breaking up the dull routine of a treadmill existence; and all this had been but slightly modified by the approach of mature years. I went to see, rather than to acquire. I am not a sufficient devotee of gold to break my neck, or endanger my health and life to obtain it. It was a wild, I may almost acknowledge, a hair brained adventure; and yet it is over and past; a recollection of it is mingled with many pleasant, as well as unpleasant reflections. In looking back over its events—re-surveying the rugged path, even from home and all its comforts; there are no regrets, no wishes that it had not been undertaken. With California, and all that is in it, and belongs to it, I quit even. Should I never revisit it, I shall hope always to hear of its prosperity, and of the well being and happiness of the brave, noble hearted men who I knew and left there—many of whom have linked their destinies with those far off shores of the Pacific; are the founders of a new empire. May kind Providence soften the rigors of the climate, for their sake; light fall upon their heads, the winds from the Sierra Nevada, that sweep over the vallies in which they dwell; healthful and pure the breeze that visits them from the ocean; rich the placers they delve in for the shining ore; success, health, wealth and comfort, be with them who remain, and a welcome home, such as we had, to those who retrace their wandering footsteps.

WILLIAM M'COLLUM, M. D.

LOCKPORT, N. Y., April 10, 1850.

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The Crescent City off Chagres.

CHAPTER I.

ARRANGEMENT FOR THE EXPEDITION PERFECTED.—LEAVING HOME.—THE HOUR OF DEPARTURE A PAINFUL ONE.—THE PERILS AND DANGERS TO BE SURMOUNTED.—SAD REFLECTIONS.—WEAR OFF AS NEW SCENES ARE ENCOUNTERED; WITH THE EXCITEMENT OF TRAVEL.—NAMES OF THOSE WHO COMPOSED OUR COMPANY.—THE CROWD OF CALIFORNIA ADVENTURERS IN NEW YORK.—ENGAGE PASSAGE.—GO ON BOARD.—LEAVE NEW YORK.—FIRST NIGHT ON SHIP BOARD.—SEA

SICKNESS.—ENTER THE GULF STREAM.—PASS CUBA.—SEE THE HIGHLANDS OF THE ISTHMUS.—LAST ANCHOR AT CHAGRES.

OUR company having completed its organization, and made all things ready for the voyage, a part of us left on the 28th of January, and the rest, a few days after.

The final departure from home—the sundering of cherished associations—the spontaneous “God bless you,” and “farewell,” that came from fond hearts—were not unproductive of saddened, chastened feelings. No one of our picked company, and it was composed of men of fixed purposes, and determined wills, with 84 stout hearts and nerves that had been braced for the trying exigency; will fail to remember, that leaving home was a scene far more painful than any we encountered afterwards. With as much of stoicism in my nature—as much of indifference as to what fate may have in store for me; or whether she deals it out in Allopathic or Homœopathic doses, as I should like to acknowledge; with me, the hour of departure brought with it those irresistible influences that may be keenly felt, as I well know, but cannot be well described. There was danger in the enterprise, perils to be encountered by land and water, trying changes of climate, disease and privation, that could not fail to press themselves into a parting interview. That we could all return again, was more than the chances would allow us to anticipate. Who would be missing, was the natural and melancholy enquiry that each one of us mentally made. But, “Ho for California!” was the rallying cry that roused our flagging spirits, and dashing a gathering tear from the eye, as if the tell-tale intruder was exposing what we would conceal, we parted from friends and home; and the excitement and novelty of the enterprise—new scenes that steam power soon introduced us to, stifled sighs, and allayed forebodings of evil.

Our company consisted of the following persons, all citizens of Lockport:

Ezekiel Jewett, Wm. McCollum, Lyman Bradley, E. W. Cook, C. J. Fox, R. H. Bacon, W. W. Nichols, Wm. Savage, Warren Saddler, Wm. Case, J. M. Hamilton, E. W. Boardman, S. Gardner, Nelson Carman, Chauncy Herrington [Harrington], James M. Spencer, Wm. Head, J. V. D. Suydam, Chas. P. Cary, Peter Page.

Lovejoy's Hotel, New York, was our rendezvous, and a busy stirring scene did that same hotel present, for a few days, at least. It swarmed with eager, bustling, California adventurers. The few days we spent in New York, were employed in adding to our outfits such things as we had not procured at home, in shipping our stores, in the *John G. Coster*, a vessel that was going around Cape Horn; and in arranging our passage in the 85 *Crescent City*, for the Isthmus.* I cannot but smile now, to think how little the wisest of us knew what constituted a necessary California out-fit; to think how few and simple things we required, and how many unnecessary things we obtained. We had revolving pistols and Bowie-knives, dirks, and other offensive weapons, as if we were so many sons of Mars, instead of what we really were—soldiers and devotees, in the ranks of *Mammon*; as if we were crusaders, and brave and chivalrous knights, instead of diggers and delvers in the dirty earth, in search of “filthy lucre.” And our abundant stores too; we proved ourselves munificent layers in of all that seemed needful, and much that turned out to be superfluous. But let all this pass:—we turned our superfluous stores to a tolerably good account, and thanks to the “law and order” that exist in California, have preserved our “arms and munitions of war,” for future use.

The *John G. Coster*, announced to sail February 15, 1849, weighed anchor February 24 with 93 passengers aboard, a list of whom appears in the New York *Herald*, February 25, 1849. A compendium of ship arrivals in the San Francisco *Alta California*, November 1, 1849, records her arrival August 1, 157 days from New York.

Crescent City Our introduction to the ship gave us a glimpse of the “elephant.” There were 303 passengers.*

The deck was covered with coal dust, snow and mud; California baggage in all its profusion, uniqueness and variety, was piled up in massive layers, or strewed about as if tossed on board with a pitch-fork.

The *Crescent City* had 305 passengers, most of whom are listed in the New York *Herald*, February 6, 1849.

All things being in readiness, the steam up, and the planks hauled in we left the wharf at a quarter before 2 o'clock, P.M., with three cheers and three guns, the spontaneous offering of thousands, who had assembled to see us off. We, who were so far from home, had few friends to bid good bye,

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but with a large portion of our fellow travellers, it was the same painful ceremony that it had been with us.

We passed down the beautiful Bay, and pushed out into the broad ocean, the Highlands fading from the view just as darkness was intervening. There was novelty, excitement, enough to interest us who were going to sea for the first time; there was joyousness, hilarity, buoyant feelings; the making of new acquaintances with those who had become fellow travellers; home even, was forgotten, for a brief season. But night and 86 darkness threw its shadows over our spirits, as well as before our visions. The “turning in” of course, introduced us to our sleeping accommodations; and here we got a little nearer view of the “elephant.” The tiers of swung hammocks upon our canal packets, are a luxury compared with those contrivances upon the crowded ship. The berths upon the one, are like those upon the other, only “more so.” In the one case, you have the benefit of a very limited solitude; in the other, there is a species of associated, or treble misery; three are laid alongside of each other, upon successive shelves, rising one above another in close proximity,— “Not poppy or mandrago could medicine To sweet sleep,”

upon the first trial, in such a place as that in which we were stowed. Nine men occupied a space of but six feet square. The farmers in bringing into our villages dead hogs for market, dispose of them with as much regard to their comfort, as dictated the arrangement of our sleeping accommodations. There were, of us, in the steerage, 160 persons, breathing the confined air over and over again, with only a fresh supply coming down through the open hatchway. Our company were sad and merry by turns; there was occasionally a little forced gaiety—some laughed that would better have expressed their real feelings by sighing: some were jocose and humorous, who felt more like delivering grave homilies upon the folly of leaving comfortable homes to go gold hunting. We turned in at 10: some to get a little sleep and dream of home and friends; some to mutter and sigh fitfully between sleeping and waking; nearly all, with disturbed epigastrums, caused as well by the rolling of the ship, as by the horrible stench that came from bilge-water, and a pent up atmosphere.

We entered the Gulf Stream on the morning of the 6th; for two days we were mostly sea-sick, but few remaining well enough to nurse the invalids. On the 8th we had passed the Gulf Stream; sea-

sickness had mostly subsided; the spirits of all on board were revived; it was warm and pleasant, and our 87 ship was having a good run.

During the night of the 10th, we came near running upon the small island of Inagua. Man forward cried out, "Breakers ahead," bell rung, the word was given to "back her;" there was an escape from danger, but a narrow one, we had gone within a cable's length of a bluff shore.* On the 11th, we passed in full view of the Island of Cuba upon one hand, and Cape Hayti upon the other. On the 12th, we passed the Island of Jamaica, and were crossing the Caribbean Sea. Here we saw for the first time, the flying fish, rising from the water, ahead of our vessel, and again lighting after flying from 15 to 20 rods; and the porpoise, with which all readers of sea stories are familiar.

See Introduction for a fuller account of this near mishap at Little Inagua Island.

In the forenoon of the 14th, we descried the dim outlines of the highlands of the Isthmus. As we neared land, and coasted along shore, we had our first view of the luxuriant vegetation of the tropics; the palm, the cocoa; ripe fruits and blossoms, the evidence of perpetual summer. It was a charming scene for us who had just come from a cold northern clime, where the leaf had fallen, and the bud had been frozen, for long months; when winter had bound the earth and the waters with his strong chains. We, of extreme Western New York, had, a little over two weeks previous faced the blasts that sweep down from the West, or come up from the North, over the vast expanses of ice that covered the chain of Lakes; and were then fanned by breezes laden with the perfume of fruits and flowers! The sea was calm, our ships were making good progress, and we revelled under the influences of a bland atmosphere, and in the prospect of soon being relieved from a short sea voyage, to be sure—but one that had lasted quite long enough, for us, fresh water sailors, as we mostly were. We came in sight of Chagres about four o'clock in the afternoon, and soon after cast anchor in front of the frowning battlements of an old, dilapidated, Spanish Fort.

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CHAPTER II.

CHAGRES.—CHARACTER OF ITS INHABITANTS.—BARGAIN FOR PASSAGE TO GORGONA.—OBSERVATIONS AND EVENTS AT CHAGRES.—PASSAGE UP THE RIVER.

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

—GORGONA.—GOING OVER THE ISTHMUS.—ITS BEAUTIFUL TROPICAL SCENERY.—THE FLOWERS, THE BEASTS, THE BIRDS.—ENGINEERS CAMP.—JOURNEY OVER THE ISTHMUS NOT BESET WITH AS MUCH OF DIFFICULTY AS REPRESENTED.—ARRIVE AT PANAMA.

Chagres is upon a low, marshy site, elevated but slightly above the level of the waters of the river. There are from 80 to 100 bamboo huts, covered with palm leaf. Idleness and sloth meet you at every turn; you feel that you are in the midst of an inferior race of men, enervated by the climate, whom bountiful nature has made stolid and indolent, by exempting them from the necessity of enterprise and industry. Labor—delve or starve—work or die;—these seem sometimes, to the unreflecting, arbitrary requirements; and yet, how forcibly we are often reminded how necessary they are to the working out of the higher purposes and destinies of man! The natives of this portion of the New Grenada, * are a mixture of the Spanish, Indian, and African. They are nearly as black as African negroes, but better formed; the females especially, have good forms, and many of them good expressions of countenance. The usual dress of the men is a straw hat, linen shirt and trousers, with sandals of raw hide upon their feet. The women are slightly, but neatly dressed. They are a civil people, and generally honest, as our company, and most who have entrusted them with property as carriers across the Isthmus, will attest. They are the descendants of the Spaniards who formerly possessed New Grenada, their slaves whom they transported from Mozambique, or the east coast of Africa, and the native Indians. In those in whom the African blood predominated, the features were far more regular than those that characterize that race in our country. The specimens of the pure native Indians that we saw, were admirable; they had fine forms, and generally, 89 pleasing and expressive countenances.

While on ship board several large canoes, or “dug outs,” as they would be called upon our western waters, approached us, the crews of them disposed to chaffer with us for our passage, and the transportation of our baggage, to Gorgona. The *Falcon*, and two other vessels arrived on the 13th [14th], with many California adventurers, and altogether we made such a crowd as had seldom been seen in this, until recently, unfrequented spot. * The next day after our arrival, twelve of our

company, proceeded up the river in small canoes, the remainder, of whom I was one, staying behind to accompany the baggage.

Panama, which established its independence with aid from the United States in 1903-1904, was probably first visited by Rodrigo de Bastidas in 1501-1502. The first permanent settlement, Darién, was founded in 1510 by Martín Fernández de Enciso. He was ousted by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who explored the Isthmus and in 1513 discovered the "South Sea," the Pacific Ocean. In 1739, at the time of the creation of the viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, Panama was placed under its administration. When Spain was eventually expelled from the American mainland, Panama continued as a province in the Nueva Granada (Colombia) federation. An abortive effort at secession in 1841 was followed by many others until the establishment of the Republic, the independence of which was at last recognized by Colombia in 1922.

The other vessels mentioned by McCollum were the brig *Winthrop* and the bark *Marietta*.

We did not get our baggage all on shore till Friday afternoon [February 16]. We had bargained for our passage, and the transportation of our goods to Gorgona—agreeing to pay \$150 for canoe and men, but we took in some partners that reduced our expenses to about \$80. Our impatience to get ahead, was tantalized with delay; it seemed unnecessary—the result of sheer laziness on the part of the free and easy Granadians. It was provoking to see with what stoicism they resisted our urgent importunities. They seemed strangers to haste, and could not appreciate Yankee anxiety to get ahead—to keep moving. All the gold of California would not induce them to be in a hurry; though they were beginning to catch the spirit of gain, and were becoming pretty hard men to bargain with. It was a god-send, the discovery of gold in California and the making of the Isthmus one of the principal routes of adventurers; to the inhabitants of this small town; and they were getting disposed to make it available. But I should like to see the experiment; to see a community of genuine Yankees enjoy the monopoly of a few canoes, to transport a crowd of eager adventurers, willing to pay almost any price to get ahead: I opine, there would be such fleecing and extortion as the Isthmus has not yet witnessed.

The delay in starting gave us some opportunity to see more of the new and strange people we had fallen among. They were "dwellers in tents;" theirs was about the simplest and 90 most primitive state of human society; and yet, they were cheerful and happy. They were Catholics, by inheritance, from their Spanish ancestors; the amulets that their superstition taught them would be their mysterious guardians, were suspended about their necks, and here and there, were the rude witnesses of their implicit faith. Maternal affection! How pervading—how everywhere present—

how little modified or abated, by color or clime, by degrees of civilization and refinement; Here, in this isolated spot, upon the outskirts of a nation, or people, at least, having but little claim to all that education and improvement can effect, it was yearning as intensely, bestowing gifts of the heart as freely—and may we not say, even more spontaneously—than in the far more pretending and higher walks of life? Under a palm leaf shelter, open to the view upon all sides, lay the corpse of a young child awaiting burial. In its hands were bouquets of beautiful white flowers; the same emblems of hope and promise, were strewed over it, and wreathed upon its forehead. Burning tapers were ranged upon each side of it, and a crucifix was laid upon its breast. The mother, a personification of grief and bereavement, chastened by religious faith, sat by its side, the chief mourner; her suppressed sighs occasionally, becoming audible—her full heart gushing out in wailings and lamentations, that made even us, strangers and foreigners, deeply commiserate her sore afflictions. I thought better of the swarthy Granadians, after being a witness to such a scene. *

Near the town was a rivulet of swift clear water, in which we enjoyed the luxury of a bath—and a luxury it was, especially to us, who had begun to feel the necessity of ablution, after being crowded together for nine days, in such a sleeping apartment as I have described. There were scores of women in the clear running water, washing clothes by immersing, and then pounding them; they were spread out, dried, and sprinkled occasionally, as in the process of bleaching.

Theodore T. Johnson, McCollum's fellow-passenger in the *Crescent City*, mentions an encounter with “the tall and stately *padre* of the town, arrayed in his priestly robes of rich black silk and shovel-sombrero. As he passed, every one bowed respectfully, and he returned all with courtesy. He was going to attend the funeral of a child said to have died from the bite of a centipede—a most unusual, and even in this instance, doubtful circumstance.” Theodore T. Johnson, *Sights in the Gold Region* (New York, 1849), p. 12.

The principal object of interest in and about Chagres, is the old fortress or castle, that marks the period of Spanish occupancy.—Although much dilapidated and defaced, it bears many evidences of substantial and beautiful architecture. The gates are off, the guns dismantled, many of them lying upon the beach, having been thrown from the walls. The massive walls, from fifty to sixty feet high, command the bay and entrance to the river. Its watch towers, that were once undoubtedly, the pride of the Spanish Cavaliers, look lone and desolate. Little use have successive

generations of the present occupants of this region had for strong defences, such as this must have been.*

Saturday night, we had a soaking rain, and we were without shelter to protect us from it. I crawled with my wet clothes into a wet hammock, and paid two shillings for the hydropathic treatment.

Chagres, about 8 miles west of modern Colón, has a history dating from 1502, Columbus having discovered the port on his fourth voyage. Later in the century the port was opened for traffic with Panama, and in the 18th century it became the chief Atlantic terminus of Isthmus commerce. Decline set in before 1800 as the economy of the Isthmus degenerated, and though there was a revival during the Gold Rush, after the completion of the Panama Railway in 1855 Chagres relapsed into a scattering of mud huts, fittingly watched over by the ruined fort of San Lorenzo.

This fort, atop a 150-foot-high rock on the right bank of the Chagres River at its mouth, was originally built as a part of the general strengthening of the defenses of the Isthmus brought about by the forays of Francis Drake; the site was selected in 1595, and two years later artisans were sent out from Spain for the work. Though San Lorenzo was captured by the buccaneer Henry Morgan late in 1670, and destroyed by him early in 1671, it was immediately rebuilt. The fort was again captured by British forces under Admiral Edward Vernon in 1740, during the “War of Jenkins’ Ear,” but this was the last signal event of its history. Most of the Forty-niners who passed through Chagres examined the fort in the exercise of their inalienable rights as sight-seers. Theodore Johnson, for one, found within it “numerous old cannon, mostly dismounted and covered with rust,” on some of which could be deciphered “the date 1745, with the Royal Arms of Spain.” A few brass cannon, in better preservation, he noted within the main citadel, along with “some damp and useless old powder.” Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 11. John M. Letts, who also visited the fort at this time, like many other artists among the Forty-niners sketched its interior as well as its aspect from the sea; see his *California Illustrated* (New York, 1852), plates opposite pp. 13, 15, and 16.

We finally got off, early on Sunday morning [February 18]. Our canoe was forty feet long, and four feet wide in the clear, hollowed out from the huge trunk of a bay mahogany tree. Its load

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consisted of fourteen passengers, six or seven tons of baggage, a steersman, and eight oarsmen. Our progress was but two and a half or three miles an hour. About three o'clock, P.M., our slow and easy transporters, hauled the boat up *for night*, lit a fire, cooked their supper, and smoked their pipes as leisurely as Turks, forgetting that there was gold in California, and that we were in full chase for it. The place was called the rancho of Palanqua^{*} —which we found to mean two or three huts, a Granadian and his wife, a small cleared spot and a few cattle. The next day [February 19], although we had an early start, we went but twelve miles; the current in many places was so rapid that the oars had to be laid aside, and poles substituted.—We encamped upon the bank, where there was a growth of vegetation exceeding anything I ever witnessed; the blue grass was higher than the backs of the droves of fat and sleek cattle that were roving among it. The cattle were of a variety of colors with high and finely turned horns. The next morning [February 20] we started just before day break, —the atmosphere was bland, the stars, with a brilliancy that we had before been unaccustomed to see, were shining out upon the gorgeous landscape.

The more usual contemporary spelling was Palenquilla. Theodore Johnson called it “a picturesque little hamlet on an elevated and level part of the shore. Near it we saw a large and beautiful plantation filled with sugar cane while above and below, the margin of the river was gorgeous with every variety of tree, leaf, and plant, perfectly overgrown with vines bearing exquisite flowers....” Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 23. E. L. Autenrieth, in the text accompanying his *A Topographical Map of the Isthmus of Panama, together with a separate and enlarged map of the lines of travel, and a map of the City of Panama* (New York, J. H. Colton, 1851), p. 8, says Palenquilla boasted a “Chagres-river Hotel, where you find a place to sleep, and bad food at a high price.”

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Arriving within six miles of Gorgona, our immediate destination, we left the boat to walk across the country. Our route was over heavy timbered land; the bay mahogany, especially, was of great height, five and six feet through, with straight shafts, their tops crowned with a small tuft of branches and foliage. There was a thick undergrowth of creeping vines, and flowering shrubs. The parasitical vines were climbing almost every tree, festooning them with thick clusters of flowers. The vales imagined in Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, were no more delightful than were the realities upon this, one of the Edens of the Isthmus. It was a place where the fancy could revel, and the eye be satiated with the beautiful things of nature. To add to the rich scene, were birds of gay and variegated

plumage flitting among the trees. Our stroll was a leisurely one, as may well be supposed, where there was so much to attract the attention of those who were strangers to tropical scenery.

We emerged from the woods and entered the little village of Gorgona, about 3 o'clock, P.M. There we found those of our company who had preceded us, all in health and good spirits. Some incidents in their journey up, that they related, should not be omitted:—Major Cook had justified his reputation as a marksman. An alligator lay basking upon the shore about fourteen rods from the boat. Aiming at the vulnerable spot back of the fore leg, he fired; the monster coiled suddenly, and stretching out again writhed and gave undoubted proof that he had received his death wound. In what seemed a death struggle, he rolled off the bank and sunk. They shot several guanos [iguanas], a species of lizard. The natives are fond of their flesh and eggs, regarding both as luxuries. At the rancho of Palanque, where they too stayed over night, they heard a loud roaring in the woods, which the natives told them proceeded from monkeys; a thing they regarded as incredible, for it seemed more like the roar of lions. A Mr. and Mrs. Simmons encamped with them at Palanque. Mr. S. was going out as the employee of our government, in some capacity. It rained, they were sleeping in the open air, and their small child had been bit by some poisonous insect, and had a badly swelled and painful hand.*

On our return, in crossing the Isthmus, we passed some natives carrying a box, in which were the remains of Mrs. Simmons. She had died at San Francisco, and her husband was performing the sad office of carrying her remains home for burial.

"Capt. Simmons and lady" were included in the passenger list of the *Falcon* as printed in the *New York Herald*, February 2, 1849. The Simmons family, like Theodore Johnson, went on to San Francisco in the steamship *Oregon*. When Johnson returned to San Francisco from the mines in late April, 1849, as he wrote, "we were greatly grieved to hear of the demise of Mrs. Simmons, a lady of transcendent piety, amiability, and worth, who, with her husband, Captain Simmons, accompanied by her brother, had been our fellow passengers in the steamer *Oregon*. She was the first American lady who died in San Francisco, having fallen a victim to the Panama fever, and poetry would be too hackneyed to express her excellence." Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-196. A correspondent in the *New York Herald* of June 25, 1849, writing from San Francisco April 26, tells of Mrs. Simmons' death, saying she was from Woodstock, Vermont, the wife of Captain B. Simmons, late master of the ship *Magnolia* of New Bedford, having died soon after her arrival.

Half the way from Chagres to Gorgona, the river is from a quarter to a half mile wide; it narrows as you ascend, in some places before reaching Gorgona, it is not over 25 or 30 yards wide. The valley is wide, but ranges of mountains rise from it upon either hand. The banks of the river are from six

to twelve, and sometimes twenty feet high. They are skirted with beautiful timber trees, rich foliage, and dense, tall herbage. Drove of cattle were often emerging from the woods, and coming down to the water; alligators were occasionally stretched out upon the banks; monkeys were chattering and skipping from branch to branch; parrots, of different species and variegated plumage, were flitting around, and uttering unmusical sounds. We were constantly reminded of descriptions we had read of the scenery of the Nile.

Gorgona is located upon a bend of the river, from which a fine view of the river and valley is obtained. The valley is here about five miles wide, the mountains rising from it in successive ranges, and with increasing elevations. It is an admirable location for a town, and must become one of considerable importance—especially should it be on the route of the proposed rail road across the Isthmus. It has a far better appearance than Chagres; the streets are laid out with some pretensions to regularity. It is the head of canoe navigation, and steamboats of light draft can approach it. The dwellings or huts are of a better class than those at Chagres; they have an unfinished Catholic church that looks rude and ragged, but nevertheless, it is a church. The carrying trade is now almost the only business pursued by its inhabitants; what they did before the gold of California began to invite a swarm of adventurers across the Isthmus, the town is more than I could divine. Theirs must 94 have been as near a pastoral or primitive life, as any that can be seen in our day. The soil is teeming with the evidences of its richness—inviting the hand of man to its cultivation, by showing what it is capable of doing without it—but it is undisturbed, save in a few stunted spots of less size than our ordinary kitchen gardens. All else is left to spontaneous production. They have herds of cattle; these, with game, flesh, fish, fowl, easily procured, must have been their principal sustenance. But it is with them as with the rest of the world, wants increase with the facilities for gratifying them. They are rapidly changing their habits since they have an opportunity to earn money, and luxuries that they have been strangers to, are brought within their means and their reach.

There are two establishments in the place that are dignified with high sounding names—and the Granadians have tall names for almost everything. One is called the “Hotel Francois,” and the other, the “Hotel Americano, & Espannal.” The last named is kept by the Alcalde of the place, a high

functionary. He is a mixture of Spanish and Indian; in his wife the African predominates. They have nineteen children of all shades, colors and complexions. The hotel is a one story hut, the wall of bamboo, plastered with clay; no glass in the windows; there is no such luxury upon this part of the Isthmus.*

Gorgona, "the place of rocks," as Theodore Johnson says, was the principal terminus on the upper Chagres for dry-season travel, though Cruces, some miles higher up, attracted most of the rainy-season travel. Autenrieth advises that one could find at Gorgona "two or three good hotels to rest and recruit in for the next day's journey over land. Miller's Hotel and the French Hotel are kept as well as is possible in such a secluded place." He adds: "The Spanish and American house, kept by the former Alcalde, is very highly spoken of"—which shows that he had not read Johnson's book. Johnson took up his abode with "the Alcalde, or chief magistrate of the town; who, besides being the richest man, was notorious as the greatest rascal and cheat in Gorgona. [He] was a mixture of Spanish and negro, wore spectacles for dignity, and was deaf for convenience...." Not long able to abide the Alcalde's establishment, which he pungently describes, Johnson boarded for most of his Gorgona stay at "an old hut in another part of the village, occupied by a live Yankee named John Smith...." Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-33.

I should have mentioned in its appropriate place, that the Chagres river abounds in fine fish. We could see them but could not catch them. We had those of our company who could bait a hook and cast a line, like true disciples of Isaac Walton, but the fish of the Isthmus could not be induced to take their hooks. They seemed, happily for them, strangers to that species of martyrdom. And yet their shyness of the hook puzzled us much, for they would catch with avidity crackers, bits of beef, &c., that were thrown to them.

We stayed at Gorgona three days [to February 23], some of our company longer. There was very little use in being in a hurry, for we had heard that we should get no immediate passage from Panama, and we were in hopes that mule transportation across the Isthmus would be cheaper as soon as the rush created by three arrivals at Chagres had a little subsided. Our goods were from three to four days on the road from Gorgona to Panama. We paid at the rate of about \$5 per 100; the mule pack loads were from 150 to 200 pounds. The mules were small and jaded. It was painful to see the cruel drivers beat and urge them forward, up hill and down, through sloughs, and over jagged stones. It was almost as bad as to witness, in our own boasted country of civilization and refinement, the merciless canal drivers lashing the poor beasts upon the tow paths, while they are moving on with their heavy tasks,—“low in the flesh and high in the bone,”—their shoulders

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lacerated and bleeding under the collar. I thought of all this, and had not the face to upbraid the half-civilized Granadians.

I cannot agree with some adventurers whose letters I have read, as to the great difficulties of getting over the Isthmus, from Gorgona to Panama. To be sure, it is rather a tedious journey; but it is a short one, and there is much there to interest one who is not disposed to walk carelessly, with a stolid indifference to scenes in which there is so much intermingled to claim admiration. The northerner has there, under a change of climate that has somewhat enervated him, to endure a fatigue that he would not think much of at home. Hundreds of the pioneers of settlement in Western New York, with their families, had to make wilderness journeys far more difficult than the crossing of the Isthmus. And here, I cannot refrain from remarking, generally, that in the most interior and isolated of the mining districts of California, there is not as much of privation and suffering to be encountered as were met, bravely endured, and triumphantly overcome, by the first settlers of many portions of the Holland Purchase. My venerable and highly esteemed friends, Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks, of Lewiston, had more of severe hardships to encounter in their first advent to Western New York, through the woods, from Utica to Geneva, than I have known any one to meet with in California. There are some “elephants” to be seen there, it is true, but nothing equal to a 96 family of emigrants making their way through deep untrodden snow, and sleeping at night by camp fires, exposed to all the rigors of a northern winter.

The road across the Isthmus is but a mule path, as all readers of California adventures have been told; and a very narrow one at that. The traveller is almost continually in the shade of the dense and dark green woods. Occasionally he gains an eminence from which he can look out upon a widespread panorama of successive ranges of mountains, deep vallies, and interminable forests; there he plunges again into the “darkling wood,” where he cannot look out even by looking up.

I have often wished that friends at home could have seen us with our California outfit—rifle in hand, and haversack at our sides—leisurely threading our way over this narrow pass that was leading us to the “golden gates” of El Dorado; or bivouac [k] ing at night upon the ground, in our blankets and rubber *ponchos*.

We chatted and whistled, sung and halloed, the echo of our voices coming back to us from the deep recesses of the forest,—just as suited each one's fancy. We were enjoying the “freedom of the woods.” The herbage, the flowers, the ripe fruits of a perpetual summer were around about us. The atmosphere was bland and pure; here and there growing in all their native luxuriance, were the green house plants that we cultivate with so much care, and so much admire. With us, they are stunted and feeble exotics—there, they were in all the perfection, size and beauty, that nature intended. I fear to give such a description as they would bear, lest I should discourage the cultivation of them, which I should regret; for if we cannot have them in perfection, let us have what we can get of them.

It was truly a romantic excursion, and one which we shall long remember. In the midst of scenery that was new to us—that which we had read of, but of which we had formed but imperfect ideas—there were quadrupeds and birds, such as we had only seen before, imprisoned, “robbed of their perfections,”⁹⁷ in travelling menageries. There were different species of parrots and paraquets; in their beautiful colors of red and green; some of them large as our partridges; there were two kinds of pigeons of small size, one of them not unlike our mourning doves; and a great variety of small singing birds, and game birds, such as curlews, snipes and plover. There were of beasts of game, the deer, hare, squirrel and wild hog. The latter are somewhat dangerous; they will often, when in droves, attack men and force them to take to the trees. There were, also, the cougar, a small striped tiger [jaguar], the hyena, and a kind of monkey peculiar to that region. I have mentioned these beasts and birds as those common upon the Isthmus—not that we saw all of them, but we saw many that I have named. The bay of Panama abounds with pelicans, and an endless variety of water fowls, many of them peculiar to that region. The rock islands in the bay are white with their excrements, or guano.

We were out but one night in crossing the Isthmus, encamping upon the summit of the narrow ridge that separates the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific. There we found a corps of Engineers, encamped, surveying a route for a rail road across the Isthmus.—They were our countrymen, glad

to see us—hospitable, and willing to impart to us such information as they possessed that would be likely to benefit us.*

The United States having obtained right of transit across the Isthmus by treaty with New Granada in 1846, the Secretary of the Navy in 1848 entered into contracts for the construction of five mail steamers to run between East Coast ports and Chagres, and three to run between Panama and Oregon (San Francisco was made the principal terminus later). The existence of these steamers, as we have seen in the Introduction, primarily justified choice by Forty-niners of the Isthmus route to the gold fields. An immediate corollary of the establishment of the steamship routes was seen to be the building of a railroad across the Isthmus, and in December, 1848, the Panama Railroad Company obtained a charter from New Granada for the construction and maintenance of such a road. This company was not incorporated by the New York legislature till April, 1849, but meanwhile an engineering expedition was sent to the Isthmus by the Company's moving spirits, William Aspinwall, Henry Chauncey, and John L. Stephens. Most of the engineers sailed from New York January 23, 1849, in the bark *Templeton*, reaching Chagres February 6. As set forth in the *New York Weekly Tribune*, February 3, 1849, the force was made up of a Chagres Division under William Norris, Principal Engineer, with John May and E. W. Serrell as 1st Assistants and George Wolcott and George Stoddard as 2nd Assistants; and a Panama Division under W. H. Sidell, Principal Engineer, with Captain Lloyd Tilghman and J. L. Baldwin as 1st Assistants and J. H. Mandeville and J. Williams as 2nd Assistants. Dr. M. B. Halsted was surgeon. Sidell, whose manuscript journal of the Survey, January 9-June 23, 1849, is now preserved in the Canal Zone Library at Balboa Heights, stayed behind to sail in the *Crescent City*; it was his division, still commanded by Captain Tilghman (as mentioned by Theodore Johnson), that McCollum encountered west of Gorgona. The *New York Herald*, March 25, 1849, contains a long letter from Panama, February 15, 1849, by one who had sailed on the *Templeton* with the engineers, and this correspondent also lists many of the personnel. Another letter in the *Herald* of May 16, 1849, written from Gorgona April 24, tells of accompanying the engineers to Mandingo Bay. Their eventual return to New York in the *Crescent City* is reported in the *Herald* of June 24, 1849.

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

The preliminary labors of the engineers, between February 10 and May 25, 1849, are touched upon only lightly by F. N. Otis, *History of the Panama Railroad* (New York, 1867), who also does not mention what we learn from Lockport sources, that McCollum in the early 1850's served for a time as surgeon during the building of the railroad. They are, however, summed up in a communication by Chief Engineer George W. Hughes, June 10, 1849, printed in 30th Congress, 2nd Session, *House Report 145* (Serial 546), pp. 670-675.

To within nine miles of Panama, it is a dense native forest; after that, there are frequent evidences of ancient Spanish occupancy,—crumbling brick walls, tiles scattered about, and groves of second growth forest trees. There are several ranchos where refreshments can be obtained, between the summit and Panama.

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CHAPTER III.

FIRST VIEW OF PANAMA AND THE PACIFIC.—THE NEW INTEREST THE ISTHMUS HAS ACQUIRED.—SETTLING DOWN FOR A LONG STAY.—THE THROG OF ADVENTURERS ON THE ISTHMUS.—THE NEW CITY OF PANAMA.—MY COMPANION'S DESCRIPTION.—THE NATIVES COURTEOUS AND OBLIGING.—THE WOMEN SHOPKEEPERS.—OUR NEWLY ACQUIRED BAD SPANISH.—SMALL COMMERCE AND BUSINESS OF PANAMA.—ISLAND OF TOBAGO.—BOWLING GAME.—THE PADRE; HIS DOMESTIC ESTABLISHMENT.—TROPICAL PRODUCTIONS.—PINE APPLE, ITS CULTIVATION.—FISH.—FISHING FOWLS.—SEA ANEMONE.—WHALES, SHARKS AND PORPOISES.—HISTORICAL INTEREST OF THE ISTHMUS.—ITS SPANISH OCCUPANTS.—OLD PANAMA.—A CITY IN THE WOODS.—THE NEW AND THE OLD WORLD.—WILD BOAR, AND WILD HOGS.—CATTLE.—FOWLS.—LIVE FENCES.—AMATEUR SPORTSMEN.—TURKEY BUZZARDS.—HOW WE SPENT OUR TIME.—A ROW.—NEWS OF A VESSEL.—SECURED A PASSAGE.—MORE DELAY.—OFF AT LAST.

We arrived at Panama on the 24th day of February—some of our party having preceded us. On arriving within three miles of the city we saw the spires of the Cathedral, and a fatiguing walk—as the last three miles of a journey is apt to be—brought us to the city and gave us our first view of the waters of the Pacific.

The readers of newspapers have been surfeited with descriptions of this halting and waiting place of California adventurers. It is but within a short time that it has become a place of interest, or one of which the people of the United States possessed much knowledge. It once had a little celebrity, as the place of meeting of a Congress of American Republics; an interest, which was much enhanced in Western New York, from the fact that an esteemed fellow citizen, the late Hon. Wm. B. Rochester, acted as Secretary of the U. S. Delegation. This was during the Presidency of John Quincy Adams. * Some descriptions of Panama, either written by Judge Rochester, or derived from 99 him are among my early recollections. All that, however, had faded from the public mind until California gold began to induce searchings upon the maps—such studies of geography as had never before been seen out of the schools,—to find a short route for avarice to reach its promised easily acquired abundance. Yet I must not pass it by in these imperfect sketches, for it was a marked spot in our journey. It was where we were obliged to stay for long and tedious weeks, exposed to diseases incident to the unacclimated—with a feverish impatience to be getting on to the promised land.

The Congress of American Nations convened at Panama June 22, 1826. The only American nations represented were Colombia, Central America, Peru, and Mexico, though the United States sent plenipotentiaries to act as observers. The vain hope, fostered by Bolívar, was that a union might be effected of the republics which had lately won their independence from Spain.

Our first business was to rent two small rooms, for which we paid two dollars per day, and we were soon keeping bachelor's hall, taking turns in the duties of marketing and cooking. Provisions were plenty; timely supplies having reached there when the rush of adventurers came, and would have soon created a famine; but the inhabitants awaked as from sleep—emerging from a dreamy existence, by the clatter, bustle and excitement of an army of visitors that came to them through an unfrequented avenue; had caught the spirit of gain—with a true Yankee intuition, had discovered

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their advantages, and were exorbitant in their prices of everything we were obliged to buy. There were at this time not less than one thousand awaiting a passage to San Francisco, and the number was more than doubled before there began to be any considerable despatches.

The present city of Panama—the NEW one, it is called, though it is rather the remains of an old city, more than half depopulated than having any claims to *newness* —is at the head of the Gulf of Panama.

I had written out my own recollections of the place, but they were imperfect, and I have therefore, in part, substituted the recollections and faithful description, of one of our company, C. J. Fox, Esq., contained in sketches of “California Experience,” which he has published in the *Niagara Cataract*, of which he is the editor:—

“The harbor of the city of Panama is not so good or convenient as that of the old one, vessels being obliged to lay off 100 several miles for secure anchorage in consequence of the shoal water for some distance from the beach. The appearance of the bay from the walls of the city is very beautiful. On the right it is studded with small Islands from which the city receives its principal supply of fruits and vegetables.

The walled part of the city is on a point of land surrounded by the waters of the bay, on the north, east and south sides. The bay, however, in which there is any depth of water, and where the shipping visiting that port, anchor is on the east side of the city. The present location of the city was undoubtedly selected for security from attacks by sea. The main portion of the city in which is located the public buildings, churches, &c., is surrounded by a massive wall, with a gate opening upon the sea on the east, and one towards the country on the west. On the walls fronting the sea are still remaining several pieces of brass cannon which have stood so long useless that their carriages have rotted away and become unserviceable. Most of the business of the city is done within the walls; the circumference of which is from one and a half to two miles, and which contains, perhaps 3000 inhabitants.

About a mile west of the city is a high hill completely commanding it, upon which Bolivar is said to have planted his cannon when he took the city some 30 years ago.

*

Between this hill and the walls are the suburbs of the city, in population nearly equalling that within the walls. The buildings of the city are mostly of brick and stone three stories high and built in a style peculiar to their age and the national character of the inhabitants at the time. Three fourths of the front rooms of the basement stories are occupied as small stores or grog shops, which the women have charge of almost exclusively; the basement generally has an open court with a hall leading through into the stables, out-houses, &c. The floors of the basement are all brick or stone, the rooms above are generally large and well ventilated, with the usual number of windows, which are open and shut with blinds, the article of window glass being entirely unknown. The roofs are all made of the old fashioned tile, 101 making them fire proof as well as water proof. Nearly every house has a balcony in the front and rear. The streets are narrow and generally paved, with gutters for the water to run off in, in the centre; the side walks are scarcely four feet wide, the whole being very rough and uneven. The streets and pavements bear sufficient evidence that they were never intended for, as they never have been used by wheel carriages; everything being carried on pack mules and an inferior kind of a horse or pony, or on the backs of the natives.

Simon Bolívar, the Liberator of much of South America, was the hero of more than 200 battles between 1813 and 1830, when he died, but he never trained a gun on the city of Panama. John M. Letts, *op. cit.*, p. 39, says: "In the immediate vicinity, and overlooking the city, is a mountain called 'Cerro Lancon [Ancon],' which was once fortified by an invading foe, from which the city was bombarded and taken. On the summit a staff is now seen, from which the stars and stripes float proudly in the breeze. This was erected by the Panama Railroad Company, to point out, during the survey, the location of the city." The version of Letts, too, seems to be simple folklore.

In the centre of the walled portion of the city, is the grand Plaza or public square of several acres, surrounded on the west by the Cathedral, on the south by the old house of Representatives, and on the north by a Seminary, the principal street is that of Calle de la Merced, extending from the gate opening upon the sea in the east, to the Puerta de Tierra, the principal gate leading to the country

in the west.* It presents quite a business-like appearance about these days, being surrounded with Americans who make it a kind of Broadway. The business and general appearance of the city have

undergone quite a change since the emigration to California commenced. It will soon bear marks of Yankee enterprise which will astonish the natives. Should the California fever continue a few years, there will be abundant opportunities here for making fortunes. The people appear to be in everything at least half a century behind the age. The mechanics of all classes have few of the improvements of modern times.

A street-plan of the city of Panama as of this time is included in E. L. Autenrieth's work, cited in Note 8.

There are several English merchants in business here, who have to a very limited extent introduced articles of European manufacture for various uses. The streets are generally quite filthy, which in some seasons I should think would make the city very unhealthy. The water used for drinking, cooking, &c., is brought from wells, springs, &c., about a mile out of the city.

The whole city is but the spectre of its former greatness. In the days of its glory it was undoubtedly a magnificent place, in which great wealth, with all the luxuries, the refinements and 102 the vices of the Grandees of Old Spain were concentrated. Its general appearance at the present time gives abundant proof of this but the whole city is now one extensive ruin. The walls of many large and magnificent buildings, several of them churches upon which immense amounts of money were once expended, are still standing in every direction throughout the city as monuments of their former grandeur, and the extravagance of the age in which they flourished. The buildings which still stand and are occupied by the inhabitants, are dilapidated and bear marks of the ravages of many years past. The idea of re-building a house destroyed by fire or making any repairs as the natural decay of time would require, does not appear to have entered the heads of the present generation.

A large majority of the inhabitants of the city are a mixture of Indian and negro, who were slaves before the province of New Grenada gained its independence, and the people drove off their Spanish masters. There are, however, now many Spaniards residing here who have returned since the revolution.”

The Spaniards mostly fill the government offices, and form the principal portion of the trading and business men of the place, and are socially, the aristocracy, the unmixed descendants of those who occupied the spot in the days of its glory and grandeur. Those who inhabit the suburbs and tributary

neighborhoods, are of the mixed blood that has been named—are a species of peasantry, cultivate small patches of ground, raise a little poultry,—and are the market men in a men [*sic*], in a small way. We found not only the public officers, but the people generally civil and accommodating. They seemed pleased with the influx of strangers, and well they might be, for it was scattering gold among them almost as broadcast, as it is in the soil of California. The merchants['] stores contained tolerable assortments of goods. The soldiers that my friend Fox speaks of, looked as if they were the descendants of Falstaff's company. They went through the manual exercise every day, and their musicians had a passion for drumming and fifing, carried it to an extent that made it a great annoyance. 103 It was a lazy life they were leading, and it was putting them to much better use when they were sent to mend the road from Cruces to Panama. The shops were mostly kept by Spanish women, all vivacious, and rather pleasing in their manners. We could address them only in our newly acquired Spanish, and of course made awkward work of it. I have no doubt that even now they are repeating rich anecdotes of some of our unfortunate mistakes in the use of their language. Those of our company who wished to appear pretty well in the eyes of the dark haired senoras of the Isthmus, wrote down, and conned over their lessons of gallantry.

Before the discovery of gold in California, Panama was but the occasional stopping place of whale ships; their local commerce was of but trifling magnitude; and travellers across the Isthmus must have been “few and far between.” The British miners of Chili and Peru, have hitherto been the most frequent visitors of Panama. Convoys of mules have come monthly over the Isthmus with their gold and silver. There are not more than fifty acres of cultivated land in the immediate vicinity of the city.

Among the Islands of the Bay, near the city of Panama, is that of Tabago [Taboga].* It is about twelve miles distant. It is about ten miles long by four wide; mountainous, some of the peaks being elevated five hundred feet above the waters of the Bay. Detached parties of those awaiting a passage, were often out there for sport and recreation; six of our company with others, mostly invalids, remained there a week. There is a village upon the island, of from three to four hundred Spaniards, and those of mixed blood. The padre, (priest), was a sleek haired Indian, an exquisite in

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his way. During the Sunday that we were there, after mass, a large number of the islanders played an unique game, the name of which has escaped my memory. It was a species of bowling game, the earth being used instead of an alley. Pins were set up, and sticks, resembling rolling pins, were trundled upon the ground to knock them down. It was a gambling game, as we 104 discovered; the *padre* played with great avidity, and bet freely. I was compelled to think that he was too much a man of the world for his cloth. Women and children formed a part of his domestic establishment. The women were asked whose children they were: “*quien sabe*” was the reply,—“*who knows?*”

The off-shore islands, Taboga and Taboguilla, were regarded by the Forty-niners as rather more attractive than Panama itself. James Delavan, in his *Notes on California and the Placers...* (New York, 1850), p. 19, said of Taboga, “This is a beautiful island, the largest in the bay; very productive, supplying Panama with vast quantities of the choicest fruit and vegetables. Vessels always water here, as Panama is deficient in that necessary; being itself supplied in a great measure from fountains, some three miles distant, by means of water-carriers, with their mules.” Similar remarks are made by John M. Letts, *op. cit.*, p. 37, and by Theodore Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

It was a delightful, salubrious spot—“hot as blazes” to be sure, but fanned by gentle sea breezes, and therefore not unhealthful. There were groves of orange and tamarind trees, flowering shrubs and vines, melons, corn, tomatoes, beans, and pine apples, cultivated in small patches. The pine apple is produced here in perfection; it is cultivated by setting shoots in the ground, from which there are successive growths of the fruit. In some spots, fine fruit was growing where there had been no artificial cultivation for years. There was a climbing of trees by the natives that attracted our attention: they would go up a tall cocoa tree with their hands and feet, keeping the body detached from the tree, instead of hugging it, as in our manner of climbing. The natives of the Island take a species of fish that they call the *gropar*, weighing from 150 to 200 pounds, which are fat and of a delicious flavor; and another species, called by a name which signifies “king fish,” about the size of our salmon, remarkable for its symmetrical shape, and beautiful colors. The *sardine*, a small fish, but three or four inches in length, congregate near the shore, sometimes blackening the surface of the water. It is exciting sport to see the pelican, the “man-of-war bird,” and the gull, diving for them, and rising with their prey in their beaks, and sailing off to alight upon the rocks and trees to enjoy their repast. There were great varieties of the richest sea shells that we see in the cabinets of our conchologists, not empty tenements as you see them there—but with their live occupants. The sea *anemone*, is among the variety of interesting things abounding here. You see upon the

water what seems to be a pretty flower, reaching out for it there is a receding from the touch, and it contracts and sinks. It is a small species of *polope [polyp]*, that thus imitates a flower by expanding its gills upon the surface of the water in the 105 process of breathing.

A boat load of our company who had been out to the Island one day, on their return fell in with droves of sharks and porpoises; the former, four or five at a time, after coming near the boat, and if menacing no attack, reminded them of the frightful stories they had read of their voracious appetites. They saw a shoal of finback whales, blowing at a rate that made it resemble the blowing off of steam from an engine. This species of whale is frequently seen from the battery at Panama. They have but little oil and are hard to take.

There is much of historical interest connected with new and old Panama. A research, a going back to gratify an intense curiosity that is excited by the evidences you see there of former greatness and grandeur, would involve the necessity of much historical investigation, the facilities for which did not exist then, and I have been unable to avail myself of them since my return to the United States. We should at first get a glimpse of this portion of the Isthmus in the accounts of extended discoveries that followed the advents of Columbus. It was embraced in the conquests of Pizarro, Balboa and Cortez, and in the rambles of De Soto. It was successively occupied by the native Indians, the Spaniards, and now by a race in which the blood of all is intermixed. How immutable, how full of vicis[s]itudes are human affairs every where—how especially are we reminded of it here. The massive walls of a modern city are crumbling and going to ruin and decay; much of it is deserted and desolate; and not far off are the ruins of one of which this was the successor, in the deep forest, in and around which desolation is brooding with a profound and melancholy stillness that has been undisturbed for ages, save by the occasional visitor whose curiosity has been excited by the casual mention of it by the natives; and casual there [their] allusions to it are, for they are but poor antiquarians.

And this brings me to the task of giving a brief and imperfect sketch of *old* Panama, for the materials for which I am indebted to those of our Company who visited it; for I have 106 often had occasion to regret that it was not embraced in my rambles.

It is upon an extended plain, elevated from twelve to thirteen feet above the waters of the Bay. A forest covers its entire site, and embosoms it as densely as it would be in our thickest and heaviest timbered lands. It was built of brick and stone, with tile roofing. The forest is so thickly wooded, and so filled up with underbrush, that you approach sometimes within a few rods of a massive wall, from 30 to 60 feet high, before seeing it. There are blocks of buildings half fallen down, and sections of walls, peering up among the trees. There is an immense Cathedral, the walls of which are but partially injured. A gigantic cottonwood tree is growing within the space enclosed by the walls; and upon one of its arches a tree is growing thirty feet high. In one instance, a high wall is supported by a tree that has grown upon it and struck its roots down upon either side firmly in the earth. There are the remains of a watch tower standing, 100 feet in height, 40 feet square at the base, and 30 at the top—the walls seven feet thick, pierced with loopholes out of which to fire upon an enemy. Small trees are growing in tops of the tower, and vines are climbing up its sides. The rows of buildings would seem to have been regular, fronting upon narrow, paved streets. It must have been once a magnificent city, strongly defended; to which was transferred the style of architecture, the luxuries, the pride and high bearing of old Spain in her palmy days of conquest and power.* But a change has come over it! The strong arm that was thrown around all this portion of the American Continent—which embraced within its fold the fairest portions of the New World, even the broad valley of our own “father of waters,” and on, on, beyond it, the vast expanse of wide prairies, ranges of mountains, lakes and rivers, to the shores of the Pacific; is relaxed, palsied, retains but an Island [Cuba] of its former extended Empire in America;—and that weary of its embrace, and struggling to be free! Old Spain, decayed and rotten at the heart, crumbling in its centre, as are these walls and towers 107 that once helped to mark its greatness even in this far off Colony, is too feeble for foreign conquest now; can hardly maintain its home existence. A few feeble Colonies that within the memory of living witnesses, have separated themselves from another of the kingdoms of the old world—have since acquired from Spain her possessions bordering upon the Gulf of Mexico, including what she had previously ceded to France; then Texas, that Mexico in freeing herself, had wrested from her; then of her once possessions, the vast extent of country embraced in New Mexico and California. We sojourners upon the Isthmus of Panama, hailing from that glorious

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confederacy of States, that had thus from a small and feeble beginning, gone on to extended empire—strengthening, laying broader and deeper the foundation as it advanced in magnitude; were walking over and straying among the ruins that marked the splendor and wide rule of a decaying monarchy of the Old World; on our way to help people—to carry our laws and institutions, to a new accession upon the shores of the Pacific!

Old Panama, founded in 1519, was destroyed at the time of its capture by Henry Morgan in 1671. The city was rebuilt in 1673 at a site 5 miles to the west, the object being to locate it nearer the port. If old city and new city are considered as one, Panama is the oldest city of European origin on the American mainland.

These are not reflections, perhaps, that belong in an unpretending narrative of a trip to California; but they will come upon the mind and be associated with remembrances such as are seen upon the Isthmus. We of the new, thought of the old world, and were cheered by the contrast—tread the earth with a firm step and a proud consciousness of the glory and grandeur of our country, that had once resounded to the tread of the haughty grandees of Spain—the proud Castilian—who were here rioting in their conquests, long, long, before our country had a separate existence. We sang “Hail Columbia,” and whistled “Yankee Doodle,” with zest that we could hardly have enjoyed at home.

Petrea, in the “land of Idumea,” is hardly less a desolation, than is the site of old Panama. The wild animals common to the Isthmus roam over its desolated streets and have their lairs, their coverts, and their chaparrals within its deserted walls. Some of the sojourners upon the Isthmus had fine sport hunting tigers, deer, wild boars, monkeys, squirrels, alligators, upon 108 the spot where in other days there had been “tilts and tournaments,” where “Fair eyes had looked out Upon eyes that looked again.”

There are hogs, of the common domestic species, wild now, the descendants of those introduced from Spain. The wild boar is a distinct indigenous species, has frightful tusks and teeth, no tail, of rather a fox color, having a musk bag upon the tops of the rumps. The meat of the young ones is of fine flavor.

It was amusing to see the amateur sportsmen assembled on the Isthmus. All had brought guns with them, and all thought they must use them. Most of them acted as if it was new business—were

as awkward in the use of fire-arms, as vagrant boys that go out from our villages and among the farmers, and just about as pleased with learning that they could shoot. They kept popping away, in and about the city to the great annoyance of the civil Granadians. They shot the turkey buzzards, and that was against Granadian, or Panama municipal law. The lazy, sleepy, dull specimen of ornithology, was plenty in the city, walking tamely about the streets, and roosting on the trees and in the dilapidated buildings. They are regarded as useful scavengers, and are therefore protected by law. The shooting of them by the new comers, was first mildly objected to by the Granadians, and finally stopped by a publication of the law and intimations that it would be put in force.

The domestic fowl, or hen, that we saw in and about Panama, is very much like ours, but with the difference of being perfectly tame; submitting to be taken up and handled, and manifesting no fear. There are but one breed of dogs, I think, in Granada. They are degenerate, small and badly formed, generally imperfect specimens of the race—the consequence, doubtless, of a long continued breeding “in and in.”

The cattle are uniformly small, but have fine forms and colors, with beautiful coats of hair. A long course of breeding “in and in,” has diminished the size without impairing the form.

One singular fact will illustrate the extraordinary soil and 109 climate of the Isthmus: fences are made by first inserting freshly cut stakes in the ground, that answer the immediate purpose, and a permanent thick hedge is soon formed by the stakes taking root, and throwing out thick clusters of foliage.

These notes of a traveller are getting as discursive as were our walks—one mode of passing of the time that hung so heavy upon our hands, while obliged to remain upon the Isthmus; and I begin to fear quite as monotonous. Yet I have fancied that the reader will be interested in learning how we, impatient adventurers, stimulated by all the glittering prospects that were ahead of us, managed to undergo the severe ordeal of long weeks of disappointment and delay. The diary of a day will subserve that purpose, for there was a great uniformity in our pursuits, or rather in our manner of getting along without any especial pursuits.

Take a pretty early start in the morning; bathe in the salt water, (usually,) and make ready for breakfast, which was prepared by one or two of our number as their turns came; then take a stroll about the city, or its environs, leisurely, among the massive crumbling walls, over which a rank vegetation of the tropics, has commenced throwing a shadow that time will make as dark as that which rests upon the ruins of the old city. Taking some path that led off into the forest, we would discover frequently, the decaying walls of what may have been the out residence of a Spanish grandee. Sometimes our walks would extend to where there was an immense gorge in the earth—the quarry from which the massive outer-wall of the city had evidently been taken. Those of our company most fond of the use of their rifles, would shoot at a mark, or go out hunting; some would stroll upon the beach and gather shells if they had a taste for conchology, or beautiful pebbles, if they had a taste for the twin sciences, geology and mineralogy. When the sun had become so elevated as to send down its rays so hot that you could have almost cooked a beef-steak upon the scattered tiles, we would return to our quarters, enjoy a siesta, and while away the time till four o'clock in the afternoon, the hour of dinner. 110 After dinner there would be a stroll of all hands upon the beach and battery to strain our eyes in hopes to catch the glimpse of a vessel coming up the Bay. In the evening a part of our company would be in our quarters, reading, writing, playing cards for amusement, singing and occupying themselves the best way they could devise. Some would go out and stroll through the town, often stopping to witness a “*fandango*,”—(a Spanish dance,)—on the *plaza*, in the open air. Thus wore away the days, with occasionally to be sure, a greater variety in the way of doing nothing, than has been enumerated.

It should be mentioned that independent of the *fandangos* of the lower orders, in the open air, there are frequent Spanish dances in the houses of the better classes, where we could always be admitted as spectators, and be civilly treated, as long as conduct deserved it. The row that occurred, a false account of which, I am told reached the newspapers of the United States, occurred as follows: At one of these private *fandangos*, strangers, who were civilly admitted as spectators, threw small coin upon the dancing floor, which boys would squabble after, and thus annoy the dancers. This incensed the Spaniards; a row ensued; dirks were drawn, pistols fired, women screamed. None were killed, but some were pretty severely wounded upon both sides. Fortunately, most of the caps

exploded without firing the pistols; owing to the humid atmosphere on the Isthmus, this is apt to be the case with fire arms that have been loaded even twenty-four hours. Our sympathies, touching this affair, were generally with the Granadans.*

An account of this affair, from the *Panama Star* of April 29, is printed in the *New York Weekly Tribune*, May 26, 1849:

“A disgraceful row occurred on Sunday night last [April 22], at a fandango held in one of the houses fronting the Cathedral, which resulted in the infliction of divers wounds upon eight or ten persons, several of whom were Americans.

“It is difficult to judge which party is censurable for the origin of the fight, so many representations are given by the persons engaged, as well as the spectators. It seems, however that it was not accidental but intentional; a lot of small coin having been thrown upon the floor among the promiscuous crowd of dancers, intended, and successfully, to get up a sc[r]amble for the money. This, first resorted to by a Spaniard, and repeated by an American, had the intended effect—the row began, and chairs and knives, and pistols were liberally used, at the expense of many heads and limbs. The natives were very seriously injured, and two Americans considerably cut and bruised; others were slightly wounded.

“We understand that in consequence of this disgraceful fight, the Governor has taken measures to bring into the city a considerable military force, to aid what is already here in keeping the peace and protecting the rights of persons and property. For efforts of this character to execute his duty, we are well persuaded Gov. Herrera will have the approbation of a great portion of the American population, who scorn, as highly as he possibly can, the reckless few who flock to public resorts of this kind on infamous and vicious errands.”

William Penn Abrams, whose MS. diary is in the Bancroft Library, was in Panama at this time, and on April 23 he refers to the prevailing excitement occasioned by the affray.

While at Panama our company was not free from invalids the most of the time; eleven of them at one period, were under the care of physicians. Col. E. Jewett was taken sick while crossing the Isthmus, the attack having been brought on by heat and fatigue. He was an invalid during our whole stay there, but soon recovered after getting out to sea.

One of our number, Chauncey Harrington, died upon the Isthmus, after an illness of eight days. Death—the cold lifeless 111 corpse, the shroud, the coffin and pall, the funeral obsequies,—are sad things, at home, when our friends “die among their kindred;” but how infinitely are the shades of the tomb darkened, under circumstances such as attended the death and burial of our companion!—It was a solemn scene when we bore him to his grave, and under the thick foliage of the cocoa and palm trees, at the foot of a hill west of Panama, listened to the impressive burial service of the Episcopal Church, read by a layman. We turned away sorrowing, and most of all, that there were chords to be broken, hearts to bleed, fond hopes to be crushed, when the tidings of his death had reached home. *

W. H. Hecox, in his letter of March 18, refers to Harrington's death the night before; see p. 186. A correspondent writing from Panama March 24, 1849, in the *New York Weekly Tribune* of April 14, 1849, says further: “Many have been taken sick in this place, and last Sunday the Americans had the melancholy duty to perform of following two of their number to the grave. They were Chauncey Harrington of Lockport, about 28 years of age, and said to have a wife and one child at that place. The other Chas. Miner of Utica, aged 19 years. The last I understand had been very imprudent, eating large quantities of fruit; indeed, a very large part of the sickness may be attributed to this cause.” This correspondent, who signed himself “D,” was censorious of the American Consul, William Nelson, who did not “grace with his presence the funeral obsequies of the two deceased persons.”

On the 24th of March, two of our company, William Case and Peter Page, started to return. We regretted their determination, were very sorry to part with them, yet could hardly blame them, for we had had an untoward commencement, a wearying delay; and ahead of us, was enough to appal even stout hearts. But, “Ho, for California,” was still the watch word, the cry that rallied our flagging spirits, and bid us wait, wait, and then on to the golden sands of the Pacific!

After we had been at Panama six weeks, we learned through the U. S. Consul, that the *Nyantia*, a whaler, was coming from Payta, for passengers for San Francisco; the Consul having authority to take the names of applicants. There was, as may well be supposed, a rush for precedence—to

see which should get their names entered first. There were from two to three thousand passengers waiting, and the ship could take but about two hundred and fifty. The whole of the Lockport Company were fortunate enough to secure a passage. We stipulated to pay \$150 each for a passage to San Francisco.*

Concerning the *Nyantia* and the circumstances of her voyage to and from Panama, see the Introduction.

Then came nearly three long and tedious weeks, waiting for the arrival of the vessel. It came at last. Intense was our anxiety as she hove in sight, to be assured that it was the long looked for *Nyantia*; and joyful we were of course, when she dropped her anchor, and the Captain came on shore and put an end to our doubts. But then came nearly three weeks more of tantalizing delay. Although the vessel had unloaded at Payta, 112 most of all that belonged to the business in which she had been engaged, still it was a work of some magnitude to convert a whaler into a passage ship; berths had to be erected, cabins re-arranged; the ship had to be thoroughly cleansed, and the water casks filled. All this went on slowly we thought, and so it did. There was scolding and impatience, fretting and fault-finding; aye, and some swearing, I am obliged to add. If our army "swore terribly in Flanders," wearied passengers of the *Nyantia*, improved upon the example, in Panama. But little does it disturb your old "salts" of the ocean, to be railed at by "land lubbers." They were provokingly stoical and indifferent, touching the feverish impatience of California gold hunters.

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CHAPTER IV

SAIL FOR SAN FRANCISCO.—THOSE WHO HAD STILL TO WAIT.—OUR SHIP, ITS OFFICERS AND CREW.—LIFE ON SHIP BOARD.—ONE DAY AS A SPECIMEN.—OUR EVENINGS, AND THE WAY WE EMPLOYED THEM.—FARTHER AND FARTHER FROM HOME.—A CLERGYMAN.—ANNIVERSARIES.—SHARKS, PILOT FISH, PORPOISES, THEIR SPORTS.—FLYING FISH.—DRIVEN FAR OUT OF OUR COURSE.—A GALE.—BAY OF SAN FRANCISCO.—THE CITY, ITS LOCATION.

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

All being finally ready, on the first day of May, we went on board, after bidding good bye to the Granadians with whom we had made acquaintance; not forgetting our friends of the shops, with whom we had chatted in our imperfect Spanish. We parted with those who had still to wait, deeply commiserating their misfortunes; a fellow feeling had grown out of mutual sufferings by delay, that made us wish that the *Nyantia* was large enough to take them all on their way.* Toward evening, we rejoiced in seeing the “rags” of the old whaler fluttering in the wind. In consequence of calms and head winds, we were sixteen days in arriving at the Gallipagos Islands—one thousand miles—passing a day's sail to the leeward of them.*

Theodore Johnson, who sailed north to San Francisco in the *Oregon* March 13 but very soon got his fill of the gold mines, arrived back at Panama on May 22 to find the *Oregon* again on the point of sailing for San Francisco, among whose passengers, “to my great surprise, I found an acquaintance who was a fellow passenger in the ‘Crescent City’ in February, and had waited all the intervening time for a passage in the Pacific steamer.” Johnson adds, “He nevertheless reached San Francisco, as I afterwards learned, some days before two sailing vessels, which had left Panama at the time of my departure in the ‘*Oregon*,’ in the month of March.” Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

Unfavorable winds made it slow sailing to California ports from Panama. Characteristically, the *Nyantia* sailed south to the latitude of the Galapagos Islands, well below the equator, to find the trade winds, and afterward she had to make considerable westing. The delays thus occasioned were such that almost all passengers preferred the more direct and expeditious, if also more expensive, steamships, once the first pressures of the Gold Rush relaxed.

But I am “running before the wind” with my narrative, and that is more than can be said of our sailing at the commencement of our voyage. I should have first described our ship, its officers and crew. As I have said, it was a Warren, R. I., whaler, built originally for the China trade, but transferred. It was 480 tons burthen, of staunch build, and with pretty good sailing qualities. It was commanded by Captain Henry Cleveland, who was not only a good specimen of a sailor, but equally a good specimen of a man. He was a native of Rhode Island, thoroughly inured to sea service, and yet appearing more like a plain New England Farmer than a sailor as he was, every inch of him. His first and second mate were both his sons, active and gentlemanly men. The steward was a California adventurer like ourselves, a young lawyer from Maryland, who had taken the berth as a measure of economy. He was a 114 thoroughly educated, gentlemanly and intelligent man. May that good fortune that his merits deserved, be with him in his new home.* . The majority of the

crew—32 in number—were Kanakas, natives of the Sandwich Islands; peaceable, inoffensive men, active and excellent sailors; the remainder were Irishmen, and natives of New England.

In his reminiscences printed in the Society of California Pioneers *Quarterly*, October, 1929, vol. VI, pp. 119-134, John M. Cushing recalls that the eldest son, “a large, dark complexioned, black whiskered man, was called by his first name, Freeman, and was Commander. The second mate, a tall, slim man, who went by his surname as Mr. Cleveland, was a very fine fellow.”

It was a metamorphosis, such as was not common before the rush to California commenced—the converting of a whaler into a passenger ship—but the courteous old captain, his officers and crew, were not wanting in all they could do to make our voyage as pleasant as circumstances would admit.

Our manner of living upon ship board was as follows:—We were divided off into messes of twelve each. Our rations were served out to us by the steward, though we had to furnish our own knives, forks and dishes, and wash them. Our ordinary rations were, coffee for breakfast, with pretty good sea bread, and cold meats; for dinner, bean soup, boiled pork and beef, with bread. This fare was varied every two days in the week, by the addition either of boiled rice, sweet potatoes, or *duff*,” a mixture of dough, raised over night with yeast, boiled in bags, and eaten with molasses. For supper, tea, sea bread, and cold meats if asked for.*

Cushing says further: “We were divided into messes of twelve each. A captain was chosen for each mess, and a man named Bradford, who was in later years a judge in California, was chosen Steward. Each mess was provided with a tub for meat, with a ten gallon pail for coffee, a large pan for hardtack, and each individual had his own utensils for eating purposes. On deck just abaft the foremast were two large two hundred gallon kettles such as whalers use for trying out the blubber, and these were kept hot all the time in cooking. When dinner time came our Steward would call out ‘Mess number one!’ and so on. Each captain would then walk up with his tub and pail, get his supply of salt beef and pork and his tea or coffee, his bread, etc. The allowance was for twelve hours, a breakfast and supper, coffee and tea only. The next day at noon, mess number twenty-two was called first and so on down to number one, so every mess had an equal chance. Our fare was excellent and there was plenty of it, and variety too, as duff, rice, beans, etc., came around in their turns. Each mess soon found a spot of its own which no one ever interfered with, and all went on smoothly. Mr. Freeman was a strict disciplinarian and very obliging. He would not allow a scrap of anything to be thrown overboard, nor a drop of water to be used except for drinking. The second day out he nearly frightened a young fellow out of his wits when he found him scrubbing his teeth at the water tank. He stood on the poop deck where everyone could hear him, and after that there was no water wasted.”

One day on ship-board will give the reader a pretty good idea of the manner we wore of the long voyage: get out of our berths about as soon as the sailors had finished washing the decks, which operation commenced regularly at 4 o'clock; draw buckets of salt water, with which we could make but imperfect ablutions. Upon first coming upon deck the enquiry would be: "How does she head this morning?" Then came breakfast and dish washing. Each one would pass the forenoon according to his mind; there would be reading, writing, bringing up of diaries, or journals, card playing for diversion, (no gambling was allowed,) looking out upon a monotonous sea, to descry a sail, or witness the aquatic sports of its finny tribes. After dinner, there would be sleeping in the open air upon the decks, with no shade but that afforded by the sails—or, whileing away 115 the time in a lazy, listless, stoical indifference, such is only known as one of the influences of a tropical climate. After tea it would be cooler, fine breezes would spring up, the body and mind would revive from their lethargy, and we were "all right again." There would be fiddling and dancing, song singing and story telling, long and tough yarns spun; jokes and repartees, (and we were not without those who could perpetrate them, rich, racy and cool); castles would be built glittering and bright as the gold we were going after to build them with; and then when the shades of night were thrown over and around us, resting upon the sea and the noble ship that was careering over its waves; we would turn in and dream of home; sighing heavily and sadly, as a half waking consciousness, reminded us that we were getting farther away from all its endearments; but lulled to slumber by the siren voice of the goddess of gold, and gain, that was impelling us over the sea, as she compels her votaries elsewhere, to trample upon the kindlier feelings and sensibilities of humanity.

We were fortunate in having for our fellow passenger, the Rev. Mr. Mines, an Episcopal clergyman, who was going out to found a church in San Francisco, in which enterprise he has been successful, as we were all glad to hear, for few could be better fitted for such a mission.* He had service every Sunday, and his discourses were singularly appropriate, adapted to his hearers, and the circumstances by which they were surrounded. It would shame some worshipping congregations on land—where gay dresses, frippery, lolling upon cushioned seats, worldly thoughts and aspirations are so mixed up with serious things—to have witness[ed] "the rough and weather beaten sailor," the "dare devil" California adventurer, the officers men and passengers of the good ship *Nyantica*,

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

listening with deep and “reverential awe,” to the spiritual teachings of the Rev. Mr. Mines, upon the quarter deck

Flavel Scott Mines, born in Virginia in 1811, was educated at Princeton. He prepared himself for the Presbyterian ministry, but changed his views and became a minister of the Episcopal church. Afterward, for six years, he was pastor of St. Paul's Church at Frederiksted, St. Croix, in the Danish West Indies (now the Virgin Islands). Eventually he went to New York, but news of the gold discovery inspired him to take up his labors in California. McCollum mentions him again in San Francisco, where he founded the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. He oversaw subsequently the building of New Trinity Church on Pine Street, and the Bancroft Library has a printed copy of the *Sermon* preached by him at its opening, January 25, 1852. He died in San Francisco on August 5 following; and the Bancroft Library has also *A Tribute to the Memory of the Rev. Flavel S. Mines, A. M.*, published at St. Croix in 1853, from which these facts are principally derived.

The Anniversaries of the battles of Bunker Hill and Palo Alta [Alto], occurring on our voyage, were celebrated after the fashion at home, with an oration, odes, toasts, and “music 116 by the band.” We were moved to these demonstrations, partly by genuine and unadulterated patriotism, as we would have all to understand, and partly, because they helped to break up the sameness of a long sea voyage.

Independent of such amusements as we could devise on ship board, in calm weather, we had much sport in watching the habits of a great variety of fish that swarm in this part of the Pacific ocean. There would be occasionally shouts of the porpoise performing antics, feats of lofty tumbling, as if for our especial benefit; and farther off, on either hand, whales would be spouting—(the fin-back)—seemingly imitating the jets of water and spray, that issues from the hydrants of the Croton water works in New York. The dolphin would come sailing around our vessel, as if to show us his beautiful variegated colors, appearing like a rich pattern of changeable silk. The shark was almost daily prowling around our ship, a pirate and free booter as he is well known to be. He has a bad reputation as even all landsmen know, and we thought him unworthy of so pretty an attendant as is his “pilot fish,” that seems, by some strange provision of nature, to be “bound to service” to a most unamiable master. We thought it inconsistent with the “freedom of the seas.” The little slave is not over 10 inches in length, its color, a light cream ground work, small black stripes over its back and sides from head to tail. There seemed to be perfect harmony between the two. There would be swarms of flying fish, that would occasionally rise from the water, to escape the pursuit of the “skip jack” and albacore, but lighting again, would become victims of their pursuers, who had shot ahead

and instinctively marked the spot where the flight would end. And in turn, the albacore and skip jack, would be taken by some of our expert anglers; the former weighing from five to ten lbs., and the latter from three to five; both fine flavored, as we thought, who were weary of salted provisions.

We saw no land after leaving the Gallipagos [Galapagos] Islands till we arrived at San Francisco. By a succession of winds from the north and north-east, we were driven out of our 117 course, some twelve hundred miles to the westward, which must have delayed us nearly three weeks.

Three days before arriving at San Francisco, we encountered what we thought was a severe gale, and it would probably have passed as a pretty respectable one, among sailors. There was at first, a sudden departure of clouds, there was a clear sky and an atmosphere, remarkable for its transparency. Just what we would have taken for a sign as full of hope and promise as the “bow in the clouds,” our experienced old commander construed very differently. Every thing was made “close and tort;” in an incredibly short space of time, from a top gallant studding sail, and a running before the wind, we were holding on our course under a close reefed topsail. The sea that had a little time before been calm and quiet, was disturbed as if by a sudden frown of Neptune—wave after wave, came, each one higher and more furious than its predecessor; till our strong ship was laboring gallantly to overcome them; creaking at every joint, yet at every trial of strength, giving us increased confidence in her power of endurance. A heavy sea would come, a huge wave, whose errand would seem to be to engulf us; but our good ship would meet the shock, and climbing up, up, till it reached its crest, would sink with majesty into the huge “trough of the sea,” and move on, as if in proud defiance, to grapple again with its powerful adversary. At intervals, there would come a wave more spiteful and furious than the rest, and dashing against the ship, columns of water could rise and be dashed over the decks, as if the mad element resisted and baffled, was revenging itself in another form of attack.

It was anything but sport for us at first, for we had been seasoned to it only by a few light blows. It was our first introduction to a regular gale. When the storm came on, we felt to make the proposed exchange of Gonzalo in the “Tempest:” —“a thousand furlongs of sea For an acre of barren

ground.” or, studying with him the doctrine of fate, concluded that if —“not born to be hanged, We stood a poor chance.”

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But after a little, a few gentle brushes such as I have attempted imperfectly to describe, our confidence in the ship and her commander and crew, prevailed, and we rather enjoyed the excitement, the rolling and tumbling, after a hum drum life as we had been leading upon the Isthmus, and in the usually calm waters of the Pacific.

Before taking the reader on shore I will give him some account of the magnificent Bay of San Francisco. In looking to the future there is much interest connected with it. It is to be not only the principal port of Upper California, but the maritime emporium of all the west coast of America, a port of entry of the commerce of Asia and the Islands of the Pacific. It is to be to all of our newly acquired possessions on the Pacific coast, what the Bay of New York is to the old states bordering on the Atlantic, with some peculiar advantages—one of which is the absence of any formidable rivals—that the Bay of New York does not possess. Before the discovery of an ounce of gold in California—as soon as it was known that it became a part of our country—the future greatness and magnitude of San Francisco; its splendid Bay, in which “all the navies of the world” could be anchored, and safely sheltered; were duly appreciated by our government, and its agents. The discovery of gold has but given an impetus to what would have been in its absence; and added to be sure, the advantages and resources, that were before deemed sufficient to build up rapidly, a great commercial emporium. It is a great mistake to suppose that California would have been a barren accession, if there had been no gold mines. In the absence of them, the accession of the country—the wresting it from the imbecile misrule of Mexico, with which its harassed and oppressed people had become wearied long before an armed force was upon its soil;—would have been followed by a steady emigration from this country, a filling up of the rich vallies with wheatfields, vineyards, herds of cattle and sheep; there would have been our steam-boats upon its rivers, our mill-wheels upon its water falls; ere now, all this would have commenced, and ere now, the noble 119 Bay of San Francisco would have invited to it, American enterprise to improve its admirable natural facilities. Ere now, the accession of California, would have been a prominent feature in our career

of progress. I make these remarks, out of their place perhaps, but I wish to do away with the false idea commonly entertained, that our new possessions upon the Pacific coast are only inviting to “gold diggers,” to temporary enterprise, when indeed, they have so much to induce permanent settlement; when they present so wide and encouraging a field for agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial adventure and industry.

But I started to give some description of the Bay of San Francisco, and have wandered away from the task. Nature has nowhere fashioned a spot better adapted to the uses of commerce. It is as if a skilful engineer had projected it who had in his mind the vicissitudes and wants of a wide expanse of ocean navigation. Approaching it by sea, at a distance, you catch the outlines of a coast range of highlands; and drawing nearer, they have terminated abruptly, forming a bold shore, against which the surges of the ocean are dashing and revelling; the “deep roar of the restless waves,” growing louder and louder, as you advance. The scene is interrupted by a gap, a cleft in the long range of highlands; seemingly a gateway has been left open to allow the waters of the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, and the broad vallies that extend on either hand for hundreds of miles, pent up by mountain barriers to flow through and mingle with the waters of the Pacific. Nature has even been partial to this spot as may be seen by a glance at the map of Upper California, and has shut out from the ocean vast inland tributaries, to unite them here, and make a magnificent aggregate offering. Viewed from spurs, or nearest offsets of the coast mountains, it looks like one of the mountain passes in the highlands of Scotland, except that it terminates in a broad expanse of water, instead of an extended sweep of low lands.

The entrance to the Bay is about one mile wide, with a deep channel, varying slightly in width, until it has formed a strait through the highlands, of about five miles in extent: after which the Bay opens to the right and left, extending thirty-five miles in each direction, having a total length of more than seventy, and an aggregate coast of over two hundred and seventy-five miles. Although in fact but one Bay, in two localities, upon the northern portion of it, projecting points of land contract it, which have indicated the geographical designations of the main, or San Francisco Bay, San Pueblo [Pablo] Bay, and Suisson [Suisun] Bay. The view that would not embrace the strait that leads to the ocean, would be not unlike that of some of our lakes, resting quietly between mountain

ranges. There are Islands in the Bay, rising to the height of three and eight hundred feet, some of them mere masses of rock, and others covered with grass. Directly fronting the entrance from the ocean, mountains, a few miles from the shore, rise about two thousand feet above the water, crowned by a forest of the lofty cypress, which is visible from the sea, and makes a conspicuous land-mark for vessels entering the Bay.

The city of San Francisco is located on the west shore of the Bay about eight miles from the ocean, beyond the strait, where the high lands receding, have thrown out two spurs, or promontories, a valley or slope from a half to three fourths of a mile in width, lying between them. From the waters of Bay, the ground gradually rises throughout the whole extent of the city plot, buildings having already been built on elevations of from two to three hundred feet. The old Spanish or Mexican town of Yuba Bueno [Yerba Buena], a small cluster of buildings—standing upon the water's edge—forms the focus, around which the new city has expanded in the form of a half circle. Viewed from the waters of the Bay, the buildings rise one above another like an amphitheatre. There are low grounds, and gentle slopes enough, to form but a small portion of the city if it should fulfill its everywhere conceded destiny; streets and buildings must climb even to the tops of high hills, and indeed, the process has already commenced. The soil of the city is sandy loam,—sand predominating. Two capacious wharves have already been built, which the largest steam boats plying in the rivers can approach with safety.*

The San Francisco McCollum describes lay half a mile back from what is now the Bay shore, centering about the present Portsmouth Square. The Bay waters then washed in approximately as high as Montgomery Street.

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CHAPTER V.

SAN FRANCISCO.—AN ANOMALY IN THE HISTORY OF CITIES.—TENTS AND CANVASS HOUSES.—RETURNED GOLD DIGGERS WITH THEIR “PILES” AND “LUMPS.”—RECKLESSNESS.—“STOOPING DOWN.”—A MIXED POPULATION.—A MUTUAL POLICE.—A COUNTRY OF “ONE IDEA.”—PRICES OF LABOR.—BRICK

MAKING.—PRICES.—GAMBLING.—THE PLAGUE SPOT.—DISSOLVE PARTNERSHIP.—
START FOR THE MINES.

So much for the topographical description of San Francisco, and now it is presumed, some account of the city, “as I found it,” will be looked for: and it is a difficult task, for it is unique—a thing without a parallel,—one that admits of no comparisons, for there is nothing like it in the histories of cities. We have prided ourselves in this country of knowing something of the sudden rise of towns and cities: we have had our Lowell, Syracuse, Rochester, Lockport, Buffalo, and farther Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee. But all these are eclipsed, by the enterprise of our own people, in a locality, far, far away, upon the western coast of the Pacific, in a region of which we knew nothing, but a few years ago, save that which we gleaned from an occasional book of travels; where it is less than two years since the “stars and stripes” were first thrown out to the breeze, to confirm our accession and jurisdiction! True has it been said that the world's history has no page so marvellous as the one that has been turned here!

Such an anomaly must be seen to be justly appreciated. No language will convey to the reader, a tithe of its singular features. I will speak of it here, as it was upon our arrival the 5th of July, and in another connection, as it was a few months after, when we passed through it on our return home. The population of all kinds, permanent residents, gold diggers on their way to the mines, and miscellaneous adventurers, was between six and seven thousand. There was a show of frame and brick buildings on one or two streets, some of them tolerably respectable in size and architecture, but most of them exhibiting evidence that they were put up in a hurry. Canvass houses and tents completed the landscape of the embryo city, and they were scattered about in profusion, occupying vacant lots and squares, here and there stretching off in some favored locality, and forming detached colonies. It was a ragged, novel scene. There were at least four thousand “dwellers in tents” and canvass houses. It was a busy population, bustling, full of excitement, of bright and buoyant hopes. With the newly arrived adventurer, there was a foretaste of what his imagination could easily convert into a self-possessed reality; there were the glimmerings, the assurances, of the full fruition of his most ardent expectations. The returned gold-diggers were there with their “piles,” exhibiting the glittering “lumps” and bags of “scales” and “dust”; elated with their acquisitions;

in some instances, giddy with their suddenly acquired wealth—opening to the imagination of the new comers rich “placers” and a wide field bestrewn with the object of their long and tedious journey; weaving upon a warp of reality a glittering woof of fancy. “Light comes, light goes,” is an old adage, and it was well illustrated at San Francisco. There were prudent men among the returned gold diggers, but the majority of them were as reckless of their gain, the product of severe toil and privation, as if they had scooped it from the surface of the earth, instead of delving for it beneath. There was but little coin in circulation—no paper money of course—gold as it came from the mines was the principal medium of exchange and traffic. It was rated at sixteen dollars an ounce, and weighed in all manner of scales; many of them such as our apothecaries would not trust with their moderately high priced drugs. No body thought of disputing weights, or contending against “down weights,” as some of our economical farmers would, when selling their coarse grains. There was not much difficulty growing out of infinitesimal, or homoeopathic fractions and divisions, for there were allopathic prices for everything. Liberality, profusion, was catching: those going to the mines, seeing how flush those were that had been and returned, depleted 123 their consumptive purses as if they had been plethoric. The conclusion was, that when their money was gone, they had only to go out to the mines, stoop down, and pick up more. But ah! that *stooping* down, that creaking of joints under a new discipline—that forward leaning of the vertebra, till it described a half circle, and keeping it there until it would hesitate to go back to its place, like the bow which has been too long bent; that back-ache and head-ache; there was far less of fun in it, of play and poetry—it was, to tell the truth, more “like work” than had been taken into the account; as the reader shall be told, if his patience will continue with us in our adventures.

Most, of all we found in San Francisco, were from this country, though there was a sprinkling of Mexicans, Chileans, Peruvians, Chinese, Sandwich Islanders, and a very few from England and France. The Chinese were generally, carpenters, laborers, and keepers of rude shops and eating houses. They were not, I should judge, your real “celestials,” but a kind of half way “outside barbarians,” who acquired a little knowledge with the world, by dwelling in the commercial marts of China. The shop keepers were as keen as if they had taken lessons in our own Puritan, over-reaching, New England; and although the cooking in their eating houses, was generally of a

strange hashmedley, I saw no “chop sticks,”—no mourners of the canine species, for their martyred companions; no veritable rat tails in their soups. The Chileans were generally traders and keepers of eating houses; were mostly harmless and inoffensive. The “Kanakakers [Kanakas],” or Sandwich Islanders, were common laborers and porters. There were a few native Californians, not to exceed two hundred. The city government consisted of an alcalde, and some kind of city council; the municipal affairs were crude and undigested, as a matter of course; and yet there was a tolerable government, a security of life and property which could hardly have been anticipated; its strength and support being the character of a large majority of those suddenly thrown together, whose self-preservation depended upon the maintenance of law and order.

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There were not less than one hundred vessels in port, mostly American; a few Chilean brigs. The number was rapidly accumulating. When a vessel reached there, it was soon deserted by its crew, and left with its officers; and in many instances officers and all, were off to the mines leaving the vessel to take care of itself. Sailors are proverbially fond of their pursuit—have usually a contempt for land service; but gold, its supposed easy acquisition—in this instance, prevailed over enlistments, engagement, and discipline.

Gold and gold digging absorbed everything. California was emphatically, a country of “one idea.” It was there, the reign of Mammon,—all were his votaries, and they were as absorbed, as “set apart” for his service, as if bound by religious vows. There had been but little of systematic agricultural pursuits, since the breaking up of the mission establishments, many years previous, but, on the discovery of gold, this, as well as all other ordinary pursuits, was abandoned. In a semi-official letter, from Captain S. [*i.e.*, Joseph] L. Folsom of the U.S. Army, serving in California, of date, September 18th, 1848, a little over seven months from the first discovery of gold, the following graphic sentence occurs:—

“Villages and districts, where all had been bustle, industry and improvement, were soon left without a male population. Mechanics, merchants, lawyers, doctors, magistrates, were alike off to the mines, and all kinds of useful occupation, gold digging excepted, were apparently at an end. In most

cases the crops were remarkably good; but they are generally lost for the want of laborers to secure them. In some parts of the country hundreds of acres of fine wheat will rot in the field from the improbability of getting white laborers. Vessels are left swinging idly at their anchors, while both captains and crews are at the mines."*

This letter, written from San Francisco to Major General Thomas S. Jesup, Quarter Master General, U.S. Army, is now in the T.W. Norris Collection in the Bancroft Library, endorsed as having been received at Washington on December 15, 1848. Released to the *Washington Globe*, it was widely reprinted, e.g., in the *New York Herald*, December 24, 1848.

And all this had been increasing, with a rapid influx of adventurers from abroad, in the time that had intervened between the date of Capt. Folsom's letter, and the period of our arrival. There were but two branches of business, that to any great extent diverted from gold digging, and those, arbitrarily, were principally consequent upon it. Building, in the principal marts of the mining districts, had to be done of course, to shelter persons and property; and there was necessarily a carrying trade upon the waters of the bay and its tributaries. All this demanded the employment of labor, and the prices paid were enormous. They were regulated by the earnings in the mines;—no man would work for less than he supposed he could earn in gold digging, and many got much more than they would have got in the mines. There was a brisk commercial business going on upon the bay, the Rio Sacramento, the Rio San Joaquin, and their navigable tributaries, that flowed from the mining districts. Not less than one hundred steamboats, schooners, brigs, sloops, lighters and whale boats, were upon these waters, carrying forward miners, their tools and camp equipage. San Francisco was the focus, the temporary halting place of the great throng that came across the Isthmus, and arriving by sea, spread themselves over the extended gold region. It may well be imagined that in the mass so suddenly thrown together, there was bustle and excitement; parties were leaving the newly arrived vessels and pitching their tents for a few days of preparation, or stowing themselves away in the crowded and ill-provided hotels and boarding houses; others, who were allowed a few days' stay upon the vessels they came in, were trans-shipping, directly for Sacramento and Stockton. Squads of newly arrived adventurers, were gathering here and there, to listen to the stories of returned miners, and take their advice as to the most promising localities in

the mining district, and the best mode of getting there. There was a “confusion of tongues” as in the building of the tower of Babel, for the greater portion of the world had their representatives there.

There was a novel method of brick making going on:—a large number of Mexicans and Chileans, were molding them from clay, 8 by 18 inches, and drying them in the sun. When laid in house-walls they were plastered on the inside with sand and clay, and made a tolerable good substitute for the ordinary burnt brick.

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Prices in California is a hacknied theme, but I will give a few specimens of those that prevailed at the period of our arrival:—,

Third rate pine lumber, \$400 pr. M., and brick, \$70 pr. M. Shingles M.; carpenter and joiner's wages, from \$16 to \$20 pr. day; laborers, from \$8 to \$10 pr. day; carting, \$2.00 pr. load, or from \$25 to \$30 pr. day; clerk's wages from \$200 to \$500 pr. month; cooks, from \$200 to \$250 pr. month; pork 37 1/2 cents pr. lb.; flour, from \$10 to \$15 pr. sack of 200 lbs.; Chilean and Oregon hams, 35 cts. pr. lb.; good butter, from \$1.25 to \$1.50 pr. lb.; cheese, 75 cts. pr. lb.; bread, from \$12 to \$15 pr. cwt.; potatoes, from \$3 to \$4 for 25 lbs.; milk, \$2 pr. gallon.

Gambling in San Francisco, had commenced, and was somewhat flourishing, but it remained for us to see that on our return, rife, reckless; to an extent perhaps, existing no where else in the world. It is the worst feature—the plague spot—in the whole aspect of life in California.

The captain of our vessel had very kindly favored our company, by allowing us to remain on ship board, until we were ready to start for the mines. It was five days before the last of us, and our baggage, was on the way. It was mentioned on the start, that we were an organized, joint stock company. The organization was broken up before leaving San Francisco, as a measure of utility; after finding from all we could learn there, that Fourierism was just as impracticable there as in the rest of the world; that separate, self-reliance, would be the best stimulus to exertion and enterprise;

that association could be governed by no settled rules, but had better be left to choice, and to exigency and circumstances, as they occurred.*

Fourierism was a socialistic or communitarian system formulated by the French writer Francois Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837) in a number of works published between 1808 and 1830. Primarily through the influence of Albert Brisbane, several score socialistic communities or *phalanges* based upon the Fourierite model were founded in the United States during the 1840's, the-most celebrated being Brook Farm, near Boston. None were successful.

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CHAPTER VI.

DESTINATION.—A CITY UPON PAPER.—THE SAN JOAQUIN.—MOSQUITOES.—ARRIVE AT STOCKTON.—A YOUNGER BROTHER OF SAN FRANCISCO.—HO, FOR THE MINES.—PILGRIMS OF HOPE.—A TAVERN KEEPER; THE BROAD SIDE VIEW HE GAVE US OF THE “ELEPHANT.”—LONE TREE.—SLAUGHTER OF A BEEF.—THE THIEVISH WOLF.—A MILITARY ENCAMPMENT.—THE STANISLAUS.—A CATTLE PEN.—ARRIVE AT THE MINES.—“PROSPECT” AND LOCATE.—GO TO WORK.—OUR EARNINGS.—LABOR TOO SEVERE.—LIFE IN THE MINERAL REGION.—RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO.

On the 11th of July, (the main body of our Lockport friends having preceded us, to another portion of the gold region,) Col. E. Jewett, Mr. Lyman Bradley and myself, left the good ship *Nyantia*, after bidding a cordial good bye to its worthy old captain, with whom we had spent over seventy days.

We were bound for the southern mines. Taking passage in a Schooner, we were four and a half days in going up the bay, and the San Joaquin to Stockton, one hundred and fifty miles. There is little to describe in the route. At the confluence of the San Joaquin with the Suisson Bay, there is an attempt to found a city. It has the high sounding name:—“New York of the Pacific.” It reminded me of our magnificent cities that flourished upon paper in the speculation mania at the West, in 1836-7. There was one house without a roof. I think it will be a failure.*

The resoundingly-named “New York of the Pacific” is now Pittsburg; its history is related in Ernest A. Wiltsee, “The City of the New York of the Pacific,” California Historical Society *Quarterly*, March, 1933, vol. 12, pp. 25-34.

Its claims to public patronage were advanced by the proprietors, J.D. Stevenson, G. McDougall, W. C. Parker, and Samuel Norris, in a notice to the public in the *Alta California*, May 17, 1849; the expansive townsite was surveyed by R. P. Hammond, William Tecumseh Sherman, and James Blair. At least two among the Forty-niners, E. Gould Buffum and Theodore Johnson, were impressed with the prospects of the place, but with all due apologies to Pittsburg, McCollum showed himself a better prophet.

The passage up the San Joaquin was a dreary one. The river for the greater portion of the way winds like a tape worm, through low marshy ground, where the *tules*, (or bull rushes) grow to an enormous height, not allowing us to see out, only by climbing the rigging. It is much like portions of the Erie canal and Seneca river, passing through the Montezuma marshes. But your Montezuma mosquitoes should not be named in the same century with those of the San Joaquin. Talk of those dwarfs of Montezuma, carrying brick bats under their wings to 128 whet their bills upon; the mosquitoes of San Joaquin would despise using any thing less than an Ohio grind stone! And how they were disciplined! They were well *drilled*, as we had occasion to know. They would bore through our thick Indian blankets, as if they were as thin as gauze! Swarms of them, as if they were marshaled by a leader, would come out of the tall bull rushes, and attack us sleeping or waking; their warfare was diurnal as well as nocturnal. The river is from one to three hundred yards wide, and navigable for craft drawing nine feet of water, as high up as Stockton, with but the interruption of a few sand bars; and twenty miles further, to the Stanislaus, for the smaller craft. For the entire distance from the mouth of the river to Stockton—one hundred miles, there is no settler or sign of civilization.

As you approach Stockton, the uplands, oak-openings and glades of timber, begin to approach the river. Our first evidence that we were nearing the new city in the wilderness, was the discovery through and above the trees, of the masts of some thirty brigs and schooners. The harbor is a deep bay, or arm [slough] of the river, four miles long, and generally, about three hundred yards wide. The grounds, of the new city are generally, from four to five feet above tide water. The tide of the ocean and Bay of San Francisco, sets up here, from one to two feet. It is a well chosen site. It is now the mart of trade connected with the southern mines. It is in all respects, a younger brother of San Francisco; and is destined to be one of the larger interior places in California. Its name, is in honor of Com. [Robert F.] Stockton of the Navy, who, it will be recollected bore a conspicuous part in taking possession of the country. The population, when we arrived there, was about two thousand;

it was at least five thousand on our return from the mines. There was there, on a smaller scale, a similar state of things—the same houseless multitude pitched together, heads and points, dwelling in unfinished houses, canvass houses, shantees and tents; the same bustle and excitement, and, “Ho! for the mines!” as at San Francisco.*

Stockton was founded in 1847 by Charles M. Weber, who gave it the unlikely name of Tuleburg. It was renamed for Commodore Robert Field Stockton (1795-1866), who commanded U. S. naval forces in California during the Mexican War, so comporting himself as to have kept historians arguing ever since. The town boomed after the discovery of gold, being at the head of steamboat navigation on the San Joaquin during the summer season; as Sacramento served the Northern Mines, so did Stockton serve the Southern Mines.

In the Appendix which accompanied his *Map of the Mining District of California* (New York, 1850), W. A. Jackson said as of December 30, 1849: “Stockton is situated on a slough of the same name, three miles from San Joaquin River, and seventy miles from New-York of the Pacific. The slough is navigable for steamers and barges of four hundred tons. The location is excellent, embracing the peninsula between the two principal sloughs, and extends south to Mormon Slough. Population about 3,000. It contains some good buildings, and presents the appearance of considerable business activity. It is the great depot for the southern mining region, and is destined to be a place of much importance.”

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Our stay at Stockton was a day and a half. A party of about twenty-five, that included us—most of them from our western states, hired a Spaniard, and a train of mules, forty in number to take our baggage to Jacksonville, at the mouth of Woods Creek, on the Towallome [Tuolumne] river.* We made a formidable caravan—not of Pilgrims to Jerusalem or Mecca—but Pilgrims of Hope, and glorious golden expectations! We got a late start from Stockton, and progressed but two miles, where we encamped, and for the first time tried our hand at the new life we were to lead; lighted camp fires, boiled our coffee, cooked our meat, and after a supper that we relished well, rolled ourselves in our blankets, laid down upon the ground, with all creation for our bed chamber, and

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

slept well. Next morning, we were up betimes, had our breakfast out of the way, were moving on a little after daylight; and walked twelve miles, to, American camp.* There was no water to be had in all that distance—a sore privation in a hot day;—but we found here a solitary settler—a *tavern keeper*—who had sunk a well where we filled our bottles, and held a little conversation with the settler. He was from Western Arkansas—had with his wife and five children, come over the Rocky Mountains, with an ox-team. He was a regular south-westerner, and a wife to match him. He had been in the “diggings” but had retired to keep a tavern, which consisted of a tent for his happy and contented family, and a booth for his guests. He had poor liquors, which we did not patronise; but we bought milk of him for a dollar a bottle, and some excellent jerked Elk meat. His nearest neighbor was twelve miles distant. In answer to some enquiries in reference to his experience in the diggings, he wound up by giving us the comfortable assurance that those of us who could “maul rails out of tough white oak, under a July sun, could stand it very well in the mines!” This was *cold* comfort for a *hot* day—and a hot day it was; and there was a kind of provoking manner he had, as if he enjoyed the misery he was inflicting; but pre-determined not to look patiently upon the dark side of the picture, we hurried away, and the next twelve miles 130 walk brought us to the “Lone tree,”*

* at 2 o'clock, P.M.

Jacksonville, named for Colonel Alden Jackson, had been in existence less than two months when McCollum arrived there. Woods Creek was named the year before, when the Rev. James Wood at the head of a party of Philadelphians opened up rich diggings at what was thereafter called Woods Crossing.

McCollum's name, “American camp,” I have not found elsewhere. It may have referred to the “solitary settler” here, or been used in contradistinction to the old French Camp and its Slough. The artist William McIlvaine, Jr., who took this same road to the Tuolumne a few weeks ahead of McCollum, drew a “Prairie Scene” at this first night's encampment after leaving Stockton, “at a belt of woods traversing the prairie, about twelve miles from Stockton, where there was good grass and water. From here to the Stanislaugh, a distance of twenty miles, there was but one place where water could be procured, at a spot known as the lone tree, and not even there if a large party had just before been passing.” He also commented, “In some directions the prairie looked like a yellow sea,

and the faintly descried trees like distant sails.” See McIlvaine's *Sketches of Scenery and Notes of Personal Adventure in California and Mexico* (Philadelphia, 1850), p. 15.

Another gold hunter, Lewis C. Gunn, came along a few weeks after McCollum, and said of his departure from Stockton on August 13: “Started about three o'clock, having put about sixty pounds on a wagon, and carrying about thirty on my back. We had to cross a plain that afternoon of about twelve miles without water. With our packs, we found it exceedingly trying, as the sun was very hot and was reflected from the sand. This plain extends nearly level to the Stanislaus River, a distance of about thirty-six miles from Stockton. Now the grass is all burnt up, and in the rainy season the mud is impassable, but between the latter and the month of July, it is covered with beautiful verdure and rich pasturage. We camped at a well where were some delightful shade trees, only a few of which we had passed on the road.” See Anna Lee Marston, ed., *Record of a California Family. Journals and Letters of Lewis C. Gunn and Elizabeth Le Breton Gunn* (San Diego, 1928), p. 61.

A solitary live oak, standing in the centre of a large prairie; for miles around not a tree or shrub to dispute its dominion.

The Lone Tree endured as a placename, and soon turned up on California maps. McIlvaine's comment on the locality is quoted in the preceding note. Gunn wrote on August 14, 1849: “Started at sunrise to make the twelve miles to the next watering place. Not a tree during the whole distance—one vast parched plain, and the sand and clay had not fairly recovered from yesterday's heating. In two hours the heat was oppressive. With our heavy packs, and our feet tender after the long sea voyage, we could not endure the additional bounce received from the pack, and our feet blistered most shockingly. I could scarcely reach the end of the twelve miles, and there were thirteen more before us. We stopped many times, and did not reach the well until eleven o'clock. We bathed our feet and rested till two o'clock under the Lone Tree, for so the place was designated, there being but one tree. A tent with stores was here, as also at the place where we stopped last night. Our afternoon walk was very severe and we did not reach the [Stanislaus] river till dusk.” Marston, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

The sun was scalding hot—we were wearied—camped for the night. An early start the next morning, and a walk of fourteen miles, took us to Taylor's Ferry on the Stanislaus. There was at this spot a cantonment of two or three companies of U. S. dragoons. They were to be used in case of trouble among the miners, or with the native Californians; exigencies that were quite unlikely to occur; though it was well enough to quarter them there for it was a delightful, healthy spot, and conveniently located for an expediency that it was necessary to adopt, to prevent a general

desertion: the men in alternate detachments were allowed to work in the mines on their own account. It gave to the locality a busy, life-like aspect.*

The troops, commanded by Major A. S. Miller, were two companies of the Second Infantry, though a company of the First Dragoons was under orders to join them. In June, 1849, California military authority had decided that a force should take up position at what became known as Camp Stanislaus, "for the purpose of preventing conflict between the Indians and whites, and to be at hand should a collision (as was then much apprehended) occur between the Americans and foreigners who had congregated in great numbers upon the waters of the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced rivers." All this was reported by Bennet Riley, brevet brigadier general and military governor of California, in an official dispatch of September 20, 1849, printed in 31st Congress, 1st Session, *House Executive Document 17* (Serial 573), pp. 941-942. Riley visited Camp Stanislaus on July 9, as shown by the topographical sketch of Lieutenant George Horatio Derby which accompanied his report. Riley also advised: "The necessity of keeping troops in this position to meet Indian difficulties will probably not exist much longer. The rapidly increasing mining population is gradually forcing the Indians to the south, and another season will find them so surrounded that the presence of troops, unless it be to protect the Indians, will be no longer required. The danger of the occurrence of the last mentioned difficulty has also, in a great measure, passed away."

Taylor's Ferry on the Stanislaus was operated by Nelson E. Taylor, formerly of the Regiment of New York Volunteers, who settled in Stockton, became a member of the first session of the legislature, a trustee of the State Insane Asylum at Stockton and in 1854 sheriff of San Joaquin County. In 1856 he returned east to South Newark, Conn., where he died January 13, 1894. See Guy J. Giffen, *California Expedition. Stevenson's Regiment of First New York Volunteers* (Oakland, 1951), p. 97.

Lewis Gunn wrote in his diary on August 14, 1849: "At this stopping place there is a ferry, of no use now because the river can be forded, but of use for several months after the wet season. We also found two military companies encamped here for the protection of our citizens in all the surrounding country. The soldiers receive five dollars per day, with the privilege of a furlough

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of two or three months, with provisions, to go to the mines, in companies of twenty, I believe.”
Marston,*op. cit.*, p. 62.

The Stanislaus is a beautiful mountain stream, coming down from the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, bringing a large tributary flood to the San Joaquin; passing mostly through a region of oak openings.

We crossed the river and encamped for the night. There we saw a fine specimen of California horsemanship and cattle driving. A Kentucky drover had employed a Spaniard, (native Californian,) to assist him in driving forty or fifty head of cattle to the mines to slaughter for beef. A fierce, exasperated bullock, turned to attack the Spaniard driver, who, knowing that beef was wanted, suddenly resolved upon his slaughter. Raising himself in his stirrups, he threw a lasso over his horns, and adroitly bringing it to bear upon his legs, brought him to the ground. The admirably trained horse, the moment the lasso was ready for the pull, settled back, almost upon his haunches, to assist the rider. The Spaniard dismounted, cut the bullock's throat, flayed him, and cutting up the beef upon the spread hide, had it for sale before the quivering of the flesh had subsided. We tasted the fresh beef for our supper and breakfast, and found it sweet and tender, as most of the California beef is.

The next morning early, we started up the river, upon the 131 banks of which we continued for nineteen miles, and then struck off over a high region, where we first saw signs of gold. Arriving at Green Springs, * we encamped after a fatiguing walk of twenty-eight miles from the starting point in the morning. Here was another place of *entertainment*, such as I have described as kept by the Arkansas man. We lay down and slept soundly upon the ground, the howling of the wolves our lullaby. They were the peculiar California wolf [coyote], of a yellowish color, of a size smaller than our grey wolf; the most prowling and mean of the race. Our haversack of provisions we thought pretty well guarded, for it had my companions, Col. J. and Mr. B. on either side of it, in close proximity. I was awakened in the night by the upsetting of the coffee pot, and saw by the light of the stars, one of the wolves dragging off the aforesaid haversack. Springing upon my feet, I gave close chase for a few rods, and shouting out, made him drop his booty and seek refuge

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among a flock of his comrades, who were drawn up in line to cover his retreat. The rascals had really intended to appropriate our bread and meat to their own use, and would have done so if their stealthy emissary had not upset the coffee pot, and thus given an alarm. We thus, at an early period of our adventures, got an unfavorable opinion of California wolves.

The Green Springs, of which there are two, are situated near the present Keystone in Tuolumne County.

Our journey was resumed the next morning. Before starting it occurred to us that we might want more bread than our haversack contained, and upon enquiring the price, found it was six shillings per lb. This gave us a little foretaste of prices in the mines. Our route lay over a *rough*, hilly region, but sparsely timbered, rocks were strewn over the surface, and there was gold in most of the earth, in small quantities. After going seven miles we came to a *ranch*, where there was a *corral*, or cattle pen,^{*} and an extensive range of excellent pasture grounds. It was the location of a Spanish *vaccaro* [*vaquero*], or herdsman. He could communicate with us but with signs, 132 and by a few Spanish words that we could understand; but we found him intelligent, gentlemanly and hospitable. He served us with good coffee, to which the luxury of fresh milk was added, and contrary to any thing we had before seen in California, almost resented our offer of payment. After refreshing ourselves in the shade—filling our water bottles—and bidding our agreeable new acquaintance a good bye—we trudged on seven miles further, to Jacksonville, our destination.

A pen or fold, into which cattle are driven for the purpose of being marked, or slaughtered.

We found there a colony of diggers in tents, small assortments of goods and provisions, booths, or places of refreshment; all that appertained to a central locality in the mining districts. Our tent was added to the colony, and we soon got ready to live after the fashion of our neighbors. The only thing appertaining to mining in which we were deficient, was a Rocker, and that we procured for the moderate sum of \$55. We sallied out, prospecting; found squads of miners in all directions, which we took to be pretty good evidence of plenty of gold. After a day or two we pitched upon a spot and went to work in earnest; turned over rocks, delved and dug with pick-axe and shovel, opened a multitude of holes, tin-panned, and rocked the cradle; in fact, made a pretty faithful experiment in gold digging, and our success did not meet our expectations. Our earnings were, each of us, generally, from \$3 to \$6 a day; occasionally one of us would earn \$12. Mr. Bradley, being

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an excellent house and sign painter, very rationally concluded that he could do quite as well at his trade, at San Francisco, with less of severe labor, falling in with a return train of mules, mounted one of them, and left the mines.

The departure of our friend Bradley—sorry as we were to part with him—afforded us much amusement. He paid an *ounce* for the privilege of bestriding a mule that was not even a fair specimen of his unamiable race. The pack saddle, or pannier, upon which our friend B. was seated, was as illy adapted to equestrian uses as the half section of a good sized forest tree, hollowed out, would have been. To accommodate himself to it, his legs were thrown out to a ludicrous extent; 133 his stirrups, loops in the ends of a good sized rope, thrown across the huge saddle. When the Spaniard—conductor and owner—gave the word to start, B. pulled up the halter, the mule made a plunge, and mule and rider were soon floundering upon the ground, exposed to the stampede of the whole caravan. Our friend being again in his seat, the Spaniard insisted that the mishap was all owing to the luxury of a halter, so that appendage was removed, and off went our friend B. upon a good round trot, his legs thrown out by his wide seat, and seeming to describe opposite extremes of longitude. There was fun and frolic, glistening in the eye of my old friend and companion the Colonel—when all this transpired; and our experience in the mines had not been such as to make us humorous upon slight occasions.

Col. J. and myself concluded to try it a little longer, remained, prospected and dug for about three weeks, with but indifferent success. We had fallen into the very common error that prevailed with adventurers; not as to the quantity of gold in the soil of California; but as to the amount of severe labor, under a hotter sun than we had been thoroughly inured to, to obtain it. Neither of us had been used to hard manual labor for many years, and we found that men to endure it, such as it was in the mines, must be better fitted for it than we were. Gold was not a sufficient recompense for disease and broken constitution. Where stout able bodied men, inured to out-of-door labor, by working hard eight hours in a day, might have been pretty sure of an average earning of an ounce, (\$16) per day; we could not by tasking ourselves even beyond the bounds of prudence, earn half that amount. And here I will remark generally, that the abundance of gold in California, has not been as much overrated, as the labor of procuring it has been underrated. At the end of five weeks

from the time we entered the mining district, we sold out our most bulky mining implements, and prepared to return to San Francisco. In the trip we had not but a little more than paid our expenses. We took passage to Stockton on an ox wagon—Col. J. continuing on to San Francisco, and I remaining at Stockton for four weeks, boarding with a Frenchman at a dollar a meal. The practice of medicine was not part of my errand to California, but I did a little in that way, upon a scale of prices of course, corresponding with the expense of living. It was generally healthy; dysenteries, bilious fevers, and scurvy, prevailing, but of a mild type, yielding readily to treatment.

I left, and rejoined my friends Jewett and Bradley at San Francisco.

We found pleasant companions among the miners; many intelligent, well educated men whose society we should appreciate any where. There are few better men left behind, than a large proportion of those who have gone to California. Our leisure hours we spent in each other's tents, in rational conversation, and amusements; sometimes, having exhausted the predominating theme—gold digging and its prospects—our thoughts would wander homewards, and all that we could imagine was going on there would be thoroughly discussed; cherished names would transpire, and fond memories would call up reminiscences pleasant and refreshing. Home, and all that belongs to it, are themes whose interest increase the further we wander from them.

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CHAPTER VII.

RAPID CHANGE IN SAN FRANCISCO.—GAMBLING ON THE INCREASE.—
ACQUAINTANCES FROM HOME.—PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.—OFF TO THE MINES
AGAIN.—NEW ADVENTURES.—THE SACRAMENTO.—A SETTLER.—CITY OF
SACRAMENTO.—LEAVE SACRAMENTO FOR THE MINES.—LIEZENDORF'S RANCHE.
—MORMON ISLAND.—LOCATE.—GO TO WORK.—NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL.—LEAVE
THE MINES.—RETURN TO SACRAMENTO.—MORE OF THE SACRAMENTO VALLEY.—
BENETIA.—ELECTION.—FORMATION OF A STATE GOVERNMENT.—REFLECTIONS.
—SAN FRANCISCO AGAIN.—CLIMATE.—START FOR HOME.—COL. E. JEWETT.—

REASONS FOR RETURNING.—OUR VOYAGE.—WATER SPOUT.—RE-CROSS THE
ISTHMUS.—HAVANA.—NEW YORK.—HOME.

In the two months that I had been absent, San Francisco had undergone a change, such as with other cities in the work of long years. Streets that were vacant had been built up—the city was extending in every direction—the population had more than doubled—the capacious bay was dotted with vessels; gambling had more than kept pace with the ratio of increase of population; there were not less than two hundred large and small gambling establishments. Fortunes changed hands rapidly; the rich to-day, were poor tomorrow.—Losing, a bad run of luck, gave but little trouble; the lame ducks, the “dead broke,” whistled over their losses, like philosophers, or looked as undisturbed as stoics;—went to the mines or turned their hands to something in San Francisco, to raise the wind, and go the same thing over again. It is a strange passion! The moralist will enquire, why it is permitted? It cannot be prevented. It is the natural offspring of wealth easily acquired in the absence of those restraints that exist at home. In older societies, or communities, moral observances and restraints are more or less mutual, or conventional. Abstract individuals—place them where there are none to help them persevere in virtuous resolutions; make up a large community of those 136 separate individualities, and have present the strong inducements—the means easily acquired—the absence of more rational amusements—and you would have any where, what you have in San Francisco. And after all it is but another form of avarice, the spirit of gain. It is the relying upon a turn of the card, or throw of the dice, instead of those contrivances upon a large scale—some of them sanctioned by a grave legislation—to take money out of one man's purse, and put it in the purse of another. The world is but a broad, chequered, gambling table. Where is the difference between the man who robs at the gambling table, or absorbed with the accursed spirit of avarice, prowls through life, like a stealthy thief, profiting by the misfortunes of his neighbor, hoarding up that which he wrings from industry and toil? Society will no where have a firm, moral basis, until we discriminate better—have less degrees of offence; cease to denounce one class of offences, and pounce like tigers upon another.

At San Francisco I met several acquaintances from home, and in return for the interesting relations of things there, when they left, I gave them all the information I possessed in reference to the mines. If any one wants to know how to appreciate the meeting of old friends, they should go to California.

I remained at San Francisco about one month; occasionally had professional calls, although physicians were plenty there; about paid my way without seeking practice. The regular prices were: “visit and medicine,” an ounce—(\$16)—pulling a tooth an ounce; and other items of practice in proportion. I have not figured to see what the price of amputating a limb would have been at this rate, but it would have diminished the “pile” of even a fortunate miner.

On the first of October, I took passage in a schooner, to join the large division of our company who had gone to the northern mines. I dropped the “Doctor” on the start, to avoid a mixed advent of pills and lancet, and gold digging; besides, I had an idea that a red woolen shirt, and a face scorched and scalded by a hot sun, with a beard of six months growth, was 137 incompatible with the dignity of a “learned profession.”—But I met with acquaintances from home on the vessel and they made the “Doctor” stick to me like the “shirt of Nessus.” The schooner was heavily laden with lumber, ready built houses, goods, and passengers for Sacramento and the mines. The new adventurers on board, were full of enquiries. I gave them the result of my experience up to that period, which the reader will conclude, was not very encouraging. But I was going to try it again, and that they construed favorably of course.

The Sacramento is a magnificent stream. From its confluence with the Suisson Bay, to Sacramento, it is from a fourth to a half mile wide, and has a broad and fertile valley. The first settler we saw on the banks was *Randell*, a Swiss, who had started a small but flourishing vineyard. A few miles above him, Swart, a Dutchman, who had been for many years with Capt. Sutter, had the ground broke to the extent of four or five acres. This, and the vineyard I have spoken of, were the first attempts I had seen to cultivate the soil, in California. The enterprising Dutchman, had growing corn, beans, melons, squashes, potatoes and onions in greater luxuriance than I had ever before witnessed. His marketing season had by no means ended, but he had already realized \$7,000, from

his crops, from passengers and crews of vessels navigating the river.* There were two or three other squatters in the river, and before we left, pre-emptionists were taking possession of most of the favorite spots. I am perhaps, not too sanguine, when I venture the prophecy that the valley of the Sacramento is soon to be to all that region of California what the valley of the Genesee is to western New York.

John L. Schwartz (or Swat, or Swart, or Swartz) came overland to California in 1841 as a member of the Bartleson party. Remaining in the vicinity of Sutter's Fort, in 1844 he obtained a grant on the Sacramento River below Sutter's, which he called Nueva Flandria. John Bidwell, in a letter of April 1, 1884, to H. H. Bancroft, described him as a Hollander who "died at his place about 4 miles below Sacramento in 1850 or 1, possibly 1852," leaving no immediate family. Mention of him enlivens the pages of many narratives of this period. Thus Edwin Bryant, visiting "the cabin of a German emigrant named Schwartz, six miles below the embarcadero of New Helvetia," on the night of October 25, 1846, described his host as "one of those eccentric human phenomena rarely met with, who, wandering from their own nation into foreign countries, forget their own language without acquiring any other. He speaks a tongue (language it cannot be called) peculiar to himself, and scarcely intelligible. It is a mixture, in about equal parts, of German, English, French, Spanish, and *rancheria* Indian, a compound polyglot or lingual pi—each syllable of a word sometimes being derived from a different language." E. Gould Buffum, who likewise stayed overnight with Schwartz—on October 30, 1848—and who assents to Bryant's description of him, adds that this "old German . . . emigrated to California some ten years since, and obtained a grant of six leagues of land, extending up and down the Sacramento River. . . . He has built upon the bank of the river a little hut of *tule*, resembling a miserable Indian wigwam; and there he lives, a 'manifest destiny' man, with 'masterly inactivity' awaiting the march of civilization, and anticipating at some future day the sale of his lands for a princely fortune—a hope in which he will probably not be disappointed." Bayard Taylor, who like McCollum passed this way in the early autumn of 1849, mentions passing "a ranche, the produce of which, in vegetables alone, was said to have returned the owner—a German, by the name of Schwartz—\$25,000 during the season."

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Schwartz's neighbor, "Randell," seemingly should be easy to identify, but the combined resources of the Bancroft Library and the California State Library have not enabled me to lay him by the heels.

The city of Sacramento is one hundred miles from San Francisco, and sixty-five miles from Suisson Bay. It is located on a beautiful plain; its elevation above the river is not over ten or twelve feet in low water—quite insufficient for security against the rise of the waters in the river, as the late disastrous floods that we have heard of through the newspapers, fully demonstrate. The city must either be protected by levees, or 138 another site must be chosen, three miles back upon higher lands. At the period of our arrival it contained about ten thousand inhabitants; a state of things existed there, such as I have described at San Francisco and Stockton. The buildings are better than at Stockton. It is now the great mart of the northern mines, and it must hereafter be the mart of a rich agricultural district, as well as that of an extended mineral region. Speculations in lots were as rife there, as at San Francisco. The city is laid out in squares, and streets running at right angles, leaving a broad open front on the river.*

The spectacular way Sacramento boomed in 1848-1850, second in dramatic impact only to the history of San Francisco, has left its mark on virtually every California diary of the period.

Up to this point the river is navigable for large class steamers—ships from the ocean drawing not over twelve feet of water, may go up at all seasons. Above Sacramento smaller craft can go up twenty-five or thirty miles. Near Sacramento, the Rio Americano, (American river), puts in; a spot familiar to all who have read anything of California. Capt. Sutter's Fort is on the Rio Americano, three miles from the city.* The tide of the ocean sets back to the height of two feet at Sacramento. Sutter's Fort, "Nueva Helvetia," as he himself called it, was founded in 1839, shortly after his arrival in California. I remained at Sacramento for a few days, and started for the mines thirty-five miles distant, on the South Fork of the Rio Americano.

I omitted in its proper place, to observe, that on my return trip down the San Joaquin, I found the mosquitoes had much improved by practice. They depleted with more rapidity. A person whose

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epidermis was not as invulnerable as that of a rhinoceros, stood no chance with them. We that were their victims, looked as if we were afflicted with the erysipelas, before we got out of the low lands bordering on the San Joaquin.

I found Major Cook at Sacramento, who had come down to the mines and concluded to return with me. We bought a rocker, and some other necessary implements for another campaign. Hiring our baggage transported on an ox-wagon, we commenced the journey on foot; walked seven miles the first afternoon and encamped under an oak tree; the next morning a walk of five miles brought us to Liezendorf's ranche, a marked spot in the published accounts of California adventurers.* An 139 American family occupied the place, and we were served with an excellent breakfast—an ordinary substantial home breakfast—with the addition of fine venison; a further walk of twenty-five miles took us to our destination—Mormon Island, (named from a party of Mormons who first dug gold there,) on the South Fork of the American River.* We found located there a large settlement of miners—not less than six or seven hundred; and among them, two brothers from Lockport, George and Joseph Trowbridge, and a son of the Rev. Mr. Treadway of Lewiston. Here we saw the first attempt at using improved machinery for gold washing; water wheels to work the rockers, and throw water upon the dirt in the hopper; and Brindsmid's machine for separating the gold with quicksilver. The machinery was owned and worked by an association of miners, who were doing a very good business.

McCollum refers to the well-known William Alexander Leidesdorff, who came to California by sea in 1841 and until his death in May, 1848, at the age of 38, lived a remarkably varied life. His papers are preserved in the Henry E. Huntington Library.

Mormon Island was the locale of the first diggings opened, other than at Coloma. The gold seekers who gave name to the place were Mormon Battalion members who had been working at Sutter's Mill. W. A. Jackson said at the close of 1849 that Mormon Island was "quite a considerable settlement of miners and traders, is situated on the south fork of the American River, and is twenty-five miles from Sacramento City. Of the mining or washing district, it is the nearest to that city."

After finding a place to dig that promised well, we pitched our tents and commenced the regular life of miners. Our location was among the live oaks, under their dense foliage, on the bank of the river. It was a salubrious, healthy spot; and we had the benefit of the pure sweet water of the river. The first afternoon we worked our earnings were about fifteen dollars; after that, for the ten days that we

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remained, we made from eight to twelve dollars per day, each. The yield diminishing, our hole, in fact, worked out, we changed our location, carrying our heavy baggage, tent implements, &c., three miles down the river, to the banks of the Rio Americano. The work in the mines was hard enough we thought, but the moving by hand, was still harder. Our tent was again pitched in rather a solitary spot, about one mile from the nearest neighbor. We went to work upon a bar in the bed of the river, and worked it for three weeks, realizing about the average earnings in the northern mines.* After we had been at work one week, we were joined by Charles P. Carey, one of the Lockport Company. The rains coming on we sold our tents and mining implements—fully satisfied that if we were born for gold diggers, destiny had been thwarted by habits of life quite too effeminate for the 140 severe toil and exposure that was absolutely requisite.

T. Butler King, in his official report on California dated at Washington, March 22, 1850, hazarded the opinion that daily earnings in the mines averaged about an ounce per day, at \$16 per ounce. On calculating that the period during which gold might be successfully collected in the rivers came to 65 working days, he figured that the average for each laborer would come to \$1,040, or in round numbers, \$1,000 per man. (See his report in 31st Congress, 1st Session, *House Executive Document 59* [Serial 577], published separately as *California: The Wonder of the Age* (New York, 1850). By contrast, Daniel B. Woods, in his *Sixteen Months at the Gold Diggings* (New York, 1851) gives some results of the work of 14 companies over a period of time, the daily average per man coming to \$3.16.

Packing our baggage upon a mule, and taking a lunch in our fists, we set out on our return to Sacramento, and walked the whole distance in a day; making the latter part of the walk through a drenching rain. Wet and weary, we put up at the “United States Hotel”—got a good supper—rolled ourselves in our wet blankets—laid down upon the floor,—and had a sound and refreshing night's rest. This was about as good a hotel as we found in California, but it had no beds.* Such a luxury is almost unknown there.

The earliest Sacramento City Directory, for 1851, lists a United States Hotel, T. Moore, proprietor, at 278 J Street. By 1852 there was another establishment by this name, Turpin & Co., proprietor, at 43 Front Street.

That portion of the valley of the Rio Americano that we saw, is well adapted to agricultural purposes—has a good soil—is tolerably well watered and timbered; is generally hilly,—not unlike the country along the Mohawk river in this State.

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We found at Sacramento, Mr. S. M. Hamilton of our company, who was engaged in trading. He kindly gave us quarters in his tent. In a few days we were joined by Messrs. Sylvester Gardner, N. Carman, E. S. Boardman, and Major C. J. Fox, of our company, and S. W. Wisner, Esq., who had come from Lockport to California, via. St. Louis, and over-land route. They had been at work on the Yuba river. They had been tolerably successful, and looked as if they had well earned what they had got. With beards of a month's growth, sun scorched, or bronzed complexions, they would have hardly have been recognized by their friends at home. They had suffered a good deal from sickness. Most of them had made up their minds to spend the rainy season in Sacramento and San Francisco. J. M. Spencer, and Wm. Head, two others of our company, had previously come down from the mines, and built a log house upon a beautiful location on the Sacramento, with the intention of being pre-emptionists. They will soon, if they persevere, possess a valuable farm.*

Spencer, at least, remained in California for long periods after 1849. A biographical sketch of him in *An Illustrated History of Southern California* (Chicago, 1890), p. 109, at which time he was living in retirement in San Diego, recites that he was born at Pittstown, N. Y., in May, 1820, early in life moved to Niagara County with his father, a miller, and at Lockport in 1848 married Miss Marian Niles. After coming to California in the *Niantic*, he engaged in mining, farming, general merchandising, and the hotel business. He went East several times, and stayed there from 1865 to 1873, after which he settled at San Diego. He had a son and two daughters.

While remaining at Sacramento, I attended to calls in my profession, with no intention however of pursuing a regular practice. I left about the first of December and came down to San Francisco, preparatory to starting for home.

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In coming down the Sacramento I had a good opportunity to see its valley from the hurricane deck of the steamboat; and my first favorable impressions were fully confirmed. The soil is fertile; the principal objection to farm operations there, is the liability to the occurrence of such a flood as has just been had.* To obviate this, the principal location of buildings must be back three miles from the river, upon the high grounds. It must be as it is with some of the large farms in the valley of the Genesee.

The notable flood of January 9, 1850, hit Sacramento after McCollum's departure.

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Benetia [Benicia], is another of the embryo cities of California. It is at the head of San Pablo Bay, on the strait between that and the Suisson Bay. There is already there, five or six hundred inhabitants. It is the head quarters of the U.S. troops in California; there is a cantonment, and barracks are building. It is an advantageous location; ships from the ocean—of the largest class, can reach it. The country about it is hilly, but capable of cultivation. There were several fields of wheat in the neighborhood, that looked promising.*

Benicia, founded in 1847 on the Straits of Carquinez, in 1849 was selected as the site of the U.S. naval and military headquarters in California, but its early hope of becoming the State's premier city soon faded, only briefly revived while it was officially the capital, from May 18, 1853, to February 25, 1854.

While at Sacramento I witnessed the first movement towards the formation of a state government. It was the election to pass upon the constitution, and elect state officers, a state legislature, and members of Congress.* It was a novel sight, and not incapable of producing interesting reflections. It was giving a form to chaos—a modeling from a state of existence, purely elementary, a government and laws—our institutions—upon a far off and a little time since, a foreign soil. I will leave to politicians the discussion of the right and wrong of the Mexican war; but regarding one of its immediate results, I could not avoid the conclusion that it was an end that helped to justify the means. Here was a region fitted by soil, climate—and eminently by its geographical position—to become the abode of civilization; a theatre for all the blessings that grow out of it, to be realized in their fullest fruition. Here was a capacious bay scooped out, as if intended to be the shelter and haven of rest for a long track of ocean navigation, the common highway of a large amount of the commerce of the world; at its head a 142 spot to found a city, and become the commercial mart of an extended region lying upon the shores of the Pacific. All this was discovered by, and known to Europeans almost as soon as was the mouth of the Hudson, the St. Lawrence, Massachusetts and the Chesapeake bays; all in fact, of the northern portion of this continent. But it fell into poor hands. The Spanish owners, indolent, bigoted, supine; sent there its priests to become its rulers, who making neophytes and semi-bondsmen of the simple natives, drew them around their ecclesiastical establishment to scratch the soil—to be generally as poor agriculturalists as they were badly instructed religionists. And off, in other detached and favorite localities, would be the solitary

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ranche of a foreign adventurer, or a mixed blood, native of the soil—self endowed with princely possessions of half cultivated fields, or cattle ranges. There was a show of military possession—a mixed military and ecclesiastical rule. The lazy Spanish ship was seen but seldom in the bays of the distant, neglected colony; and the ships of other nations went there but seldom, for its only commercial products were a few ship loads of hides and tallow. The region was as unprofitable, as it was undeserved by Spain. Revolution, made it a province of Mexico; and the change of masters was even for the worse. Mexican rule was blighting and unprofitable as the Spanish had been, with the addition that anarchy prevailed; no enterprize was aroused—no measures taken to improve the country. It was a political, physical, and moral waste. Such a country had by the chance of war fallen into the hands of the American branch of the Anglo Saxon race. There was about to be planted upon its soil our republican institutions; and in a broad and rapid current, there was a population of our people flowing into it, who would improve its natural advantages; turn its wastes into fruitful fields; make a rapid stride in human progress, and by the wonderful achievements of peaceful enterprize and industry, make amends for the honors and sacrifices of war. I have some doubts about the maxim, that the “end justifies the means;”—but certainly, great good to our own country, to civilization and good government 143 every where, is coming out of the freeing of this favored country from Mexican rule.

This election took place on the stormy day of November 13, 1849. California's constitutional convention had done its work at Monterey between September 3 and October 13, 1849.

I arrived at San Francisco for the third time and should have been astonished, if I had not become familiar with rapid change and progress. Population, and brief sojourners on their way to the mineral regions, had increased to a greater extent than the ratio I had before observed. The world has seen no parallel. Other cities progress from the beginning as population increases; there, a houseless throng have been thrown together, and every tenement erected, and street opened, has been the offspring of exigency. There was a change for the better in the whole face of nature. The weather was spring-like with us, when the rigors of winter have just begun to be severely felt. The hills had begun to look green, the violet was just peeping out—there were blossoms upon some of the wild shrubbery—the bud was swelling, and here and there the leaf was bursting out. The parched and arid earth had been drinking up the warm rains, and was reviving under their influence.

Vegetation that had been blighted by the long drouth, as with the long winter with us, was putting on its summer livery. All this helped to give life, animation, activity, to all that was going on in the new city. The streets on the lower grounds were trod up like a bed of brick mortar, and the throng of pedestrians that were wading through them, were like so many poachers of the brick yards.

The reading public are familiar with the climate of San Francisco. I can add nothing to what many others have said. What are our winter months here are the summer months there. During our summer months the north-east trade-winds prevail, blowing down the coast, are cold, chilly, making fires and over-coats necessary to comfort. These winds prevail from ten o'clock in the morning till four in the afternoon; the remainder of the twenty-four hours being generally pleasant and agreeable. The winter months, may generally be compared with our September and October. The rains are frequent between the 1st of December and 1st of April; none after that. The whole of Upper California has a climate much like that of San Francisco, 144 varying, as all interior countries vary, with the sea coast—and especially, with reference to the trade winds. In the aggregate the climate of the interior of California is far better than that of the sea coast.

I found at San Francisco, Majors Cook and Fox and Mr. Bradley, of our original company, who had made up their minds, as I had, to start for home; and also Mr. Wentworth of Lockport. Mr. W. W. Nichols was there, but had determined to remain. I much regretted the failure to meet there with Col. E. Jewett of our company. He had remained at San Francisco, after his return with me from the northern mines—for a greater portion of the time in feeble health, the latent effects of his sickness upon the Isthmus; but had left a few days before my arrival. His destination was the sea coast near Santa Clara and Santa Barbara; his errand, the search for coal and quicksilver—or in fact, a general geological and mineralogical survey. He was employed by some capitalists at San Francisco to accompany the expedition, and was to have an interest in any discoveries made. I shall hope to hear of his success as will all of those who were his companions in the California adventure—a wide circle of acquaintances and friends at home—and the “troops of friends,” he made in San Francisco. His acknowledged scientific attainments, that were of little use to him when with me delving, and

lifting rocks, under a hot sun, in the southern mines, it is hoped, will prove available in the new enterprise he has undertaken.*

Jewett's subsequent history is set forth in the Introduction.

Those of us who were returning, had taken into the account that the rainy season (when little could be done at the mines,) was approaching; expenses of living were enormous; even if any, or all of us, concluded to try another season in the mines, it was about as cheap coming home as staying there during the rainy season; and besides, there were those at home who had a stronger claim upon us than any that existed in California.

We took passage in the ship *New Orleans* for Panama; paying one hundred dollars each for our passage.* We were forty-six days in making the trip. The voyage was generally a pleasant one—very little occurring worthy of note—save perhaps, what follows:

I find unaccountable McCollum's saying that he and his fellows left San Francisco in the ship *New Orleans*. Neither the arrival nor the departure of a ship by this name is recorded among the contemporary shipping notices in the *Alta California*, and port authorities kept track of such matters. McCollum does not give the date of his departure, but it was probably about December 7, which would have brought him to Panama on January 22, 1850.

When off the Mexican coast, we had a fine view of the natural, but imperfectly understood phenomenon—a water spout—which in several respects, was new, even to the old experienced seamen on board. It was a clear, warm morning, with variable breezes, that scarcely ruffled the surface of the Ocean. At a distance of about one hundred rods to the westward, suddenly there was a disturbing of the smooth water—within an area of perhaps an hundred feet, it at first boiled and foamed, then a spray of vapor arose from the turmoil, which had soon a focus in its centre, around which it whirled in a spiral form, upwards, as we often see dust, and other light substances of the earth, in the incipient stage of a whirlwind. It rose rapidly to the height of three or four hundred feet, almost perpendicular, then swayed off and after forming a graceful curve, assumed again its almost perpendicular position, until it pierced a light, fleecy cloud. Its entire height seemed to us from five to six hundred feet. As the column of vapor ascended, its base upon the ocean enlarged, until it assumed a conical form throughout its whole extent. When it touched the cloud, quick

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almost as an electric flash, the vapor disappeared, and we had the sublime spectacle of a gigantic column of clear, blue water—its base upon the sea, and its apex in the clouds!

The whole mighty phenomenon was noiseless; no sound other than the gentle ones of the waves as they broke before the bow of our ship, disturbed the stillness of the scene. The vast column swayed and undulated with the wind, as if it had been a huge sea serpent that was stretched from the ocean to the clouds! Its entire duration was from fifteen to twenty minutes, when it seemed to have performed its office, its surplus water settling down into the ocean, or rather again assuming the form of vapor, commencing at its connection with the cloud. Soon it had vanished, and not even a haze obstructed the vista between the surface of the ocean and the overhanging cloud. The cloud that it pierced was at first of a light color, as I have before 146 observed. As it begun to fill from the mighty conduit that had towered up to it, it grew dense and black, as if gorged and surfeited from its vast reservoir!

In the afternoon, we had a drenching shower, as if the surcharged cloud was returning back to the ocean the contribution it had levied in the morning.

We saw other Water Spouts in our voyage, but none that deserved mentioning, after we had witnessed the one I have attempted to describe.

Our stay at Panama was but a few hours, which we improved by calling upon the acquaintances we had made during our long sojourn there on our way out; they seemed glad to see us, for which we thanked them in as good Spanish as we could command, and hurried off to Gorgona; had a pleasant walk over the Isthmus, after a long confinement on ship-board; hired a mule train to take our baggage at the exorbitant price of \$14 per cwt. From Gorgona we went down to Chagres in a canoe, where we had to wait two days for the Steam-ship *Falcon* to arrive and discharge her passengers. Took passage in the *Falcon*, and put into Havana, to await the arrival of the *Ohio* from New Orleans, to which we were to be transferred. Sailed for New York, and then as fast as steam could carry us progressed homewards, where we arrived, and had a greeting from old friends and neighbors, that for a time made us forget the hardships and privations we had endured.*

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The *Falcon* was on hand at Chagres by January 26, and reached Havana February 1. The *Ohio* arrived at that port from New Orleans on February 3, and docked at New York February 9. Six days later, as McCollum says in his introductory chapter, he was home again.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HOME RECOLLECTIONS OF CALIFORNIA

LAWS OF THE MINES.—Some simple form of government in the mineral region, is, of course, essential. Districts are set off, their boundaries determined by local convention. An Alcalde, or Governor, is elected by popular suffrage, and an executive officer to carry into effect his decisions. There is no council or legislature. The Alcalde's court, is strictly a court of equity. He decides all matters of offence, or individual rights. Plaintiffs and defendants are both sworn witnesses; are sworn, or tell their stories without, just as parties agree. Murder is punishable by hanging; as is also larceny, second and third offence. Smaller grades of crimes and misdemeanors, are punished by whipping, cropping, and banishment. The Alcalde decides all matters of disputed claims. The system generally works well. Where all are so mutually interested in supporting the laws and good order, the decisions of the Alcalde are acquiesced in and enforced with little difficulty.

THE INDIANS OF CALIFORNIA.—When in the southern mines, we saw the wild Indians of California; those that had but recently had intercourse with white men. They were in detached, wandering tribes; would beg and steal; were naked except about the waist; upon the whole, about as bad specimens of humanity as any that we read of. When they lie around the camps, they need watching about as much as the wolves. They have a decided passion for the cast off clothing of the miners. An old hat, or an old boot, is a great affair with them. They will strut around, often with an old hat on, and one boot, which, with the buck skin girdle about their loins, constitute their entire wardrobe. They are tolerably expert with the bow and arrow—have no other weapons. They know nothing about the use of gold, and if not too lazy to pick it up, they would gladly exchange it for a red strip of flannel. They are in bad odor with all the miners; the Oregonians, especially, hunt them as they would wild beasts. An Oregonian will leave a rich placer to wreak his vengeance on one of

a race that he has learned to regard as 148 his foe, by the outrages they have committed upon the whites in Oregon.*

The bitterness of the Oregon gold seekers, and the violence of their reaction, toward the California Indians, is reported by Theodore Johnson and others, from first-hand observation; see also the dictation by John E. Ross to H. H. Bancroft, 1878, a manuscript in the Bancroft Library, concerning his own participation in the Indian-hunting. The Whitman Massacre and the Cayuse War which followed did much to condition the minds of the Oregonians.

A QUERY ANSWERED.—It is often wondered why the gold was not before discovered:—It is in a region where there was, up to the period of the discovery, no residents but wild Indians. The digging of Capt. Sutter's mill race, was the first occasion of breaking the ground, in all the mineral region. An occasional traveller, trapper, or hunter, had no occasion, of course, to excavate the earth. There is no trace of any modern knowledge of the gold, before the discovery alluded to, save perhaps, an occasional hint from hunters and trappers, that was not to be relied upon.

WOMEN.—There is encouragement for respectable unmarried females, to go to California;—especially industrious ones, qualified for useful labor; and they may rely upon it, labor is respected there, as it should be every where. Those who would not labor there would not be respectable. No where on earth would her sex be a better protection. The employment would be the keeping of boarding houses; that of seamstresses; ordinary household labor, &c.; and although Mrs. Farnham's plan of taking young women there as to a market, was objectionable;* still there is no harm in assuring unmarried women that there is a host of young men and bachelors, who intend to be permanent residents of California; who would make as good husbands as any left behind in the old states. The state of society in California—though it may be for some time less refined,—will be free from many of the evils that exist in the old states.

Eliza W. Farnham was the widow of Thomas J. Farnham, celebrated for his narrative of an overland journey from Peoria to Oregon in 1839. Her curious proposal to improve the morals of the miners by taking out a company of women was given out to the New York newspapers on February 1, 1849, just before McCollum embarked for California. In her *California In-Doors and Out* (New York, 1856), she says that more than 200 women communicated with her after the open letter was published. Only three accompanied her to California, but she attributes this to an illness of two months which beset her after the publication of her letter, disarranging all her plans. Mrs. Farnham in her book is vague as to when she got to California, but in a letter of December 30, 1849, printed in the Buffalo *Daily Courier*, February 16, 1850, she says she arrived in San Francisco two days before.

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

HEALTH OF CALIFORNIA.—My opinions will perhaps be found to differ with some others of my own profession, who have been to California. I cannot regard it generally, as an unhealthy region. There is sickness and death there; a much larger per cent, than is usual, in any of the old states, I admit. But there are causes for it independent of any thing that can be charged as peculiar to the country. Take from our New England states the same number of men that have gone from the old states to California; let them be enervated by a long sea 149 voyage, that shall embrace the tropics; set them down in our western states, or western New York; let them undergo the same change of life and habits;—endure hardships and exposures such as they have been unused to; sleep in the open air, or in tents; be deprived of their comfortable home fare; and all the little comforts and conveniences of home. In short, let all be the same, save locality—would not sickness and death be equal to what has occurred in California? I am quite sure that the per cent, would be greater; for I do not believe that the same class of men that have gone from the old states to the mines of California, would be as free from sickness and death, with the same exposures, and unusual habits, in any part of the United States, as they have been there. In addition to all the causes I have alluded to, it should be added, that the use of spiritous liquors, (that prolific source of disease every where,) is far more general in California, than in any portion of the old states. While there are many good physicians in California, there are also many quacks; and there are few sick ones that can have proper nursing and attention.

Away from the bays, and the tuelles [tules], (bull rush marshes,) there is nothing to create bilious, or intermittent diseases. The country is hilly and rolling, from the vallies on either hand, to the coast range, or Sierra Nevada mountains; the atmosphere is healthy and bracing, except in the middle of the day, in seasons of greatest heat. Bilious and intermittent fevers will prevail in the low grounds, until exposure to the sun and winds by cultivation and improvement, has removed the causes, as in many portions of the new states at the West. In the interior, away from the coast winds, I think the lightness and dryness of the atmosphere must always be favorable to weak lungs. I have witnessed there, the cure of asthma which I credited to the climate; and so far as came under my observation persons going into the mining districts with a tendency to pulmonary disease, have generally been benefited. The winds of the coast during the summer season, are unfavorable to weak lungs. The

prevailing diseases I saw in California were, 150 dysenteries, scurvy, and congestive fevers. The first named diseases are much promoted by change of habits and exposures; especially by wading in the water in the wet diggings. The dysenteries are malignant, attended with severe purgings that it is difficult to arrest, except in its early stages. The bilious fevers are generally of a mild type; other diseases, much as in this region. Good appetites are prevalent in the mines, and that helps vastly to get along with coarse food and poor cooking. There is more poor liquor drank in California, than in any other part of the world. I saw few cases of sickness in the mines that were not clearly attributable to enervated constitutions, exposure, excessive labor, intemperance, or other imprudences.*

F.P. Wierzbicki, himself a doctor, in his *California As It Is, and As It May Be, or, A Guide to the Gold Region* (San Francisco, 1849), notes that the months of July, August, and part of September were sickly in the mines, and particularly on the Feather and Yuba rivers. In general, his views were in accord with McCollum's, for he said, "The sickness is owing to the extreme heat and carelessness on the part of the miners; some of them work in the hottest hours of the day, and sometimes not protecting sufficiently their head and body from the scorching rays. Fevers, diarrhoea and dysentery are the complaints commonly met with—occasionally, scurvy shows itself; it is more apt to happen in winter time...."

One bane of the mining regions, poison oak, none of the doctors seem to have noticed, but William McIlvaine says eloquently of the Wood's Creek area: "Many of the miners were suffering with cutaneous diseases, caused by contact with poisonous plants, of which the country is full." McIlvaine, op. cit., p.17.

BUFFALONIANS.—Our city of the lakes, is well represented in the mines, and in the cities of California. They have generally carried to California their home energies and indomitable perseverance; and are "bound to succeed.*"

Many gold hunters from Buffalo traveled overland; and others traveled, before, with, and after McCollum on the Isthmus route. Aside from W. H. Hecox and William Lovering, McCollum's fellow-passengers on the second voyage of the *Crescent City*, the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, February 1, 1849, has letters from Chagres, January 2-3,

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and from Cruces, January 8, by a townsman who went out to the Isthmus on the first voyage of the *Crescent City*. Hecox tells of others who had reached Panama by March 18; and two Buffalonians, R. D. Foy and E. N. Hulbert, are recorded among the passengers when the *Crescent City* sailed from New York on April 17. Indeed, the *Courier* printed a series of reports by Foy, formerly a partner in the firm which published the paper, in its issues of May 16, May 17, June 23, and December 30, 1849, by which time Foy had returned from California. Some of the townsfolk also traveled less usual routes; the *Courier* of April 16, 1849, printed a letter from Seth C. Grosvenor written on February 27 from Guadalajara, Mexico.

AN EXTRA TRIP.—While on the Towallernes [Tuolumne], myself and three companions from the western and southern states, concluded to go further up that stream than explorers had generally advanced. Some negroes had preceded us, and returning, reported large “lumps” in that quarter. We travelled up the river, and soon began to find—not gold—but “hills of difficulty” equal to any that John Bunyan ever dreamed of. They made in upon either side, to the water's edge in many places, leaving but a narrow gorge for the river to flow through. Climbing the high steep banks, and descending them again, we would soon come to another narrow, and the same rather fatiguing ceremony would have to be repeated. Coming to a spot where the banks were from five to six hundred feet high, we resolved to give up the expedition rather than attempt to climb them. We took our back track, and it had not improved any in our absence; and arrived at our camp on Wood creek, wearied, and resolved to “prospect” in that quarter no more. We had been beyond the gold region, and beyond where there had ought to be any gold, if any body but the gatherers of samphire on Dover cliffs, is expected to go after it.

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WILD CATTLE.—In most of the mining regions there are wild cattle; or domestic ones that have become wild, being penned but once a year for the purpose of marking the calves. The bulls are cross, and very apt to attack men, especially if enraged by having any thing red placed in their sight; even a red pocket handkerchief. They go in large droves, and when upon a “stampede” the miners give them a wide berth. They have owners, but the miners often appropriate one to their own use. The beef is excellent.

THE POLICY OF OUR GOVERNMENT.—The fact must be generally known, that thus far, the mineral region has been thrown open to adventurers without reference to country or color; the rich deposits of a region that has become a part of our public domain, have been as free as the waters

that course its streams. This is certainly a liberal policy; more liberal, I venture to assume, than would have been practiced by any other government on earth, under similar circumstances. So far, perhaps, this liberal policy has been for the best; and the mineral region should continue free, and by all means, continue the property of the government. Not an acre of the best portions of it should be sold. The direct effect of its sale would be monopoly; the giving of CAPITAL an advantage over LABOR. Let labor continue as now to have free scope there, for there are few spots on earth where it is not hampered. Let us have one aristocracy of labor, as it now exists there, and must continue to exist, unless capital is allowed to control the wealth that is so broad-cast in the soil. But I would have government derive a revenue—a princely revenue—from the gold region; in the form of a per cent. exaction for every pound of gold that is produced.* A forcible system of collection—one that would guard any considerable evasion or fraud, could be easily instituted. And how could the cause of REAL philanthropy, touching that great national curse, negro slavery, be subserved, by devoting every 152 dollar thus acquired to the objects of the American Colonization Society! How appropriate too, would be such a disposition of it! If, as it is now apprehended, slave territory gets any extension by means of our new acquisition of territory, what better offset could humanity demand, than such a measure?

After this was written, I was pleased to observe, that the Hon. T. Butler King, in his report to Congress, had formally proposed the exacting by government, of an ounce on each pound of gold produced.

*

King's report is cited in Note 40. He was sent out to California in the spring of 1849 as President Taylor's personal adviser on the situation in California with regard to Statehood. His proposal was not, as McCollum intimates to exact a tax of one ounce on each pound of gold produced, but to require a permit or license to dig or collect gold for one year, the price being set at one ounce or \$16. The proceeds from this licensing system he did regard as a tax, suggesting that a suitable proportion of the amount collected be used for internal improvements in California, which would reduce the cost of living in the mines. Thus the tax would pay for itself, to the great satisfaction of the miners.

FOREIGNERS IN THE MINES.—I cannot in justice, speak approvingly of the conduct of a large proportion of our people, in California in one respect. Whatever may have been the right policy of our government in the first instance, the “golden gates” have been thrown wide open, and the people of one country have just as good a right there as of another. This is not practically conceded as it should be. In many instances injustice is done to foreigners; a spirit of domineering

is exercised over them—they are denied the common rights of the mines, and often insulted. And again, the civilized portions of the native Californians, are generally humane and hospitable; many of them excessively so; this is not always repaid in kind. I have nothing to say of the wild Indians—kindness toward them would be mostly labor lost; they seem almost incapable of appreciating the offices of humanity. But generally, our people have forgotten that a conquered and submissive people, are entitled in all things to be on a par with the conquerors. The Chileans are generally disliked by our people; so far as I saw them they were quiet and inoffensive.*

King's report of March 22, 1850, is again worth noting on the subject of foreigners in the mines. After discussing the gold discoveries in 1848 he said, in part: "... on the commencement of the dry season in 1849, people came into the Territory from all quarters—from Chili, Peru, and other States on the Pacific coast of South America—from the west coast of Mexico—the Sandwich Islands, China, and New Holland....

“The American emigration did not come in by sea, in much force, until July and August, and that overland did not begin to arrive until the last of August and first of September [but the earliest arrivals came along in late July]. The Chilinos and Mexicans were early in the country. In the month of July it was supposed there were fifteen thousand foreigners in the mines....

“The foreigners resorted principally to the southern mines, which gave them a great superiority in numerical force over the Americans, and enabled them to take possession of some of the richest in that part of the country. In the early part of the season, the Americans were mostly employed on the forks of the American and on Bear, Uba, and Feather Rivers. As their numbers increased they spread themselves over the southern mines, and collisions were threatened between them and the foreigners. The latter, however, for some cause, either fear, or having satisfied their cupidity, or both, began to leave the mines late in August, and by the end of September many of them were out of the country.

“It is not probable that during the first part of the season there were more than five or six thousand Americans in the mines. This would swell the whole number, including foreigners, to about twenty thousand the beginning of September....”

CAPT. SUTTER.—Fort Sacramento, or Sutter's Fort, is located at the confluence of the Rio Americano with the Rio Sacramento. This is a marked spot, in California; is intimately associated with the events of the conquest of the country—the discovery of gold—and all that has transpired there. Its founder is a prodigy of enterprise, perseverance, and courage. His history would make a volume in which fact and reality would be “stranger than fiction.” He is the Daniel Boone of the valley of the Sacramento. He is a native of Switzerland; was in early life an officer in the French army. Emigrating to the United States, after a series of extraordinary adventures, he capped the climax of adventure, by seeking a home, with a 153 few followers as hardy as himself, in the interior of Upper California. Few homes have been more isolated; further away from civilization; than the one he so strangely selected. Behind him was the vast unexplored regions—the long range of the Sierra Nevada mountains and the “Great Basin”; before him, and upon either hand, a wilderness, of woodland and prairie, but here and there a ranche, a mission station, and a wide expanse of ocean!

Taking possession of his ground, he managed to defend himself and his few followers, until they had erected a fort, which was strengthened from time to time, until it was proof against his assailants. At times however, they would hem in the isolated garrison, and reduce its inmates to famine; but partly by force, and partly by the law of kindness he gradually tamed his wild neighbors, and used them in the cultivation of large tracts of land; not as slaves, but vastly bettering their condition, by allowing them a comfortable sustenance for their labor. He became, perhaps, the largest wheat grower in America. He usually employed from two to three hundred Indians. In this isolated way he lived; hospitable to those of our countrymen, who visited him on their overland expeditions to California; protecting them when they needed it; and when the war commenced, affording to our troops in California, his zealous aid and co-operation. What a change he lives to

witness! with all which he is well pleased; and he well deserves to be esteemed, as he generally is, by the tens of thousands of new neighbors that the discovery of gold has made for him.*

Sutter was to the Forty-niners perhaps the best-known resident of California, an object of interest to all who laid eyes on him. His life since coming to America in 1834 and to California in 1839 was sufficiently extraordinary, even had he not ornamented it with fables, as for instance that he was an "ex-captain of the Royal Swiss Guards of Charles X of France." Erwin G. Gudde has edited *Sutter's Own Story* (New York, 1936) from his manuscript reminiscences in the Bancroft Library, but this must be read in conjunction with the critical biography by John Peter Zollinger, *Sutter, The Man and His Empire* (New York, 1939).

MOCCASINS.—The half civilized or Mission Indians, who manage by working in the mines, and in other ways, to get money, spend it without stint for such things as strike their fancy. One of our party happened to have in his trunk, a pair of beaded moccasins, such as are sold at Niagara Falls. Two Indians got their eyes on them—the price was fixed at an ounce, (\$16); both claimed the bargain, and the difficulty had to be settled by separating the moccasins; each paying an ounce.

THE RUSH TO CALIFORNIA.—I am not apprehensive that the 154 time will soon come when the mineral region will be exhausted; and there is a vast field of employment in California in other branches of business; but from all I hear, especially from the western states, I fear too great a rush this season, and principally on account of provisions. Last year a very large supply was taken out, a large surplus of many articles, great losses ensued. This year, it is much to be feared the supply will fall far short of the demand.*

These remarks, pointed like most other comments McCollum offers, were abundantly vindicated. Anxious to avoid the waste and loss of 1849, the goldseekers of 1850 took along insufficient supplies, and suffered accordingly.

PROSPECTIVE.—I think California will in the end form an exception to other mining countries. The business of mining will be systematized; there will be mixed pursuits of mining, farming and manufacturing. The earnings in different pursuits will be equalized.

BRIEF HINTS TO CALIFORNIA ADVENTURERS.—I came away from California, with generally favorable impressions of the country; as a field of enterprise and adventure; well suited to the habits and character of our people. Gold digging is not the only business to be pursued there. There is a great state to build up; an opening for enterprise and industry in all the varied,

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mixed pursuits of life. Agriculture, especially that branch of it which includes stock breeding, to produce beef, hides and tallow, for domestic and foreign markets, is to be an important branch of business. Wool growing, has a prospect of success there, unequalled in any other portion of the U. States. Where land may be had now, by settling upon it, and its title ultimately secured at government price; vast tracts, upon which both cattle and sheep will subsist for the year round, in good condition, without the expense of cultivating, harvesting and foddering; I cannot conceive any other than good prospects for the grazer and wool grower. The mining business will be permanent. If the wet and dry diggings, as they are now termed, run out, the earth, other than in the streams and ravines, and the quartz rock, will be worked by machinery. And I look for the discovery of other minerals than gold; or rather, for additional discoveries of them: silver, quick-silver, and coal, especially. Where can the plough, the harrow, the hoe and spade, be better employed, than upon a prolific soil, as that is proved to be, with a ready home market secured by the certainty of a large population to be subsisted in other avocations? It is to be eminently a commercial state too; for independent of its own commerce, it occupies a central position in the commerce of the world.

Gold digging should not be the only inducement for going to California. There should be more of emigration there, with families, with the intention of remaining, prepared for other pursuits of industry than mining. A state of inequality, such as exists there now, with reference to pursuits, cannot long exist. Labor in other pursuits than mining will pay quite well; in fact, such is now the case with many branches of labor.

I advise no one to go to California; and I advise no one to stay at home; but I will give my view generally, as to the inducements that exist there, for emigration. I have spoken of the prospects of agricultural pursuits. Mechanics, generally, will find their work much in demand at high prices, even with reference to the cost of living. Those most needed, are carpenters and joiners, house painters, blacksmiths, tailors, wagon-makers, saddle and harness-makers, gun-smiths and machinists. In several of these branches, repairing would constitute the principal employment, as the articles of their manufacture, are carried from the States and sold much cheaper than they can be manufactured there. This is especially the case with ready made clothing, mining tools, boots and shoes, and guns and pistols. The building of saw-mills, and lumbering on the head waters of

the streams is an inviting field of enterprise. I have spoken in another connection, of the demand there for female labor. The mercantile and commercial portion of our population, are quite too well informed, too sagacious, touching their interests, to need any advice from me. There is a vast field of operations there; but it as at present needs all their sagacity and all the information they can acquire, to determine what is safe and what is unsafe. There will be many fortunes made there, and many missed, or lost, in mercantile 156 operations. Too much of one kind of merchandise taken there, and too little of another. No young men should go there now, dependent wholly upon employment as salesmen or accountants. There are many excellent clerks, who have tried mining, and found it beyond their powers of endurance, and have sought employment in the cities. Of lawyers and physicians, there would seem to be no want of a supply there; but population is to be doubled this season, and an increased demand created. Lawyers will generally find something to do there, if business should be dull in their professions; which contingency I sincerely hope may occur; not from any ill-will I have toward the profession; but for the love I have for the new state; the hopes I entertain for its adoption of a simple code of laws, that will require less expounding, than is necessary in the old states.

And now, as to who should go to California, with especial reference to working in the mines:— No one but the robust men of strong constitutions, used to hard, out of door labor. The reader will remember what the Arkansas man told us on our route from Stockton to Stanislaus, about “splitting white oak rails under a hot sun.” Our Col. J[jewett]., said at the time, he was “an old scamp” for saying so; but he told us a plain, naked truth. Would it not be folly, for lawyers, doctors, merchants, clerks, in-door men of all classes, men of sedentary habits, unused to hard labor, to go out, even at home, change their mode of living, live in tents and the open air, and work at hard, severe labor, under a hot sun, eight and ten hours in a day? It is equal folly in the mineral region of California, with the important addition, that while undergoing this severe ordeal, they are encountering another; that of acclimation. Let no one go to California with the intention of going into the mines, without a full realization of the fact, that hard labor, toil and privation are inseparable from success; and let him be fully convinced before he undertakes it, that his physical abilities, and powers of endurance are equal to the task. I have seen enough of disappointment; of suffering; of men broken down

in health and spirits, in that far off region, to induce me to use 157 language thus decided and emphatic upon this branch of my subject. As I have said before, any man who can endure labor, and persevere in it, will be pretty sure to earn the value of an ounce a day, unless he is singularly unfortunate in his location.

An outfit for the mines of California, let it be especially understood, should be a very different thing from what it generally has been. Instead of being a very complicated, it should be a very simple matter. Take no guns or pistols, dirks or bowie knives; they are almost as useless there as they would be at a Quaker meeting; and if you want them, you can buy them at San Francisco for about half [what] they cost in New York. Take no mining tools; they are as cheap in San Francisco as they are in New York. Let your clothing to start with, be about your ordinary home clothing; take very little extra clothing. With the simple exception of stout red woolen shirts; you can buy all things that go to make up a necessary miner's wardrobe, cheaper in San Francisco than in New York, or for less than what the value at home, and transportation would amount to. Reduce your baggage to the smallest possible amount. If I was going to start for the mines again to-morrow, I would not take more baggage than I could conveniently carry myself across the Isthmus. Buy your camp equipage in San Francisco, Sacramento, or Stockton. If you take any thing to sell or barter, be careful and be well informed of the market. The business of securing a passage, is one of which you must inform yourself. It is not advisable to start from home until you are sure of getting a passage to San Francisco; a long delay upon the Isthmus, is a very expensive and inconvenient matter, as we had plenty of opportunity to find out. Make but a short stop in San Francisco, but go directly for the mines. Your chances of recruiting in the mineral region, from the effects of your sea voyage, is better than at San Francisco. Lose as little time as possible in "prospecting." After having found a location where the miners are doing pretty well, commence work, without listening to the exaggerated rumors of better spots, that will reach you. There are minor affairs, having reference to camp, 158 or tent arrangements, your provisions, &c., that will depend upon circumstances that cannot be anticipated even by one who has been in the mines; but but [*sic*] must be determined there, upon observation. No one should venture to go to California unless he can have from fifty to an hundred dollars left when he arrives at San Francisco. He will need it for preparation for the

mines, (if that is his destination,) even if he has good health. There is no part of the world where all are more kind to the sick and destitute; but that should be by no means relied upon; for I fear, from the fact that many are going without sufficient means, that public charity there, liberal as it is, will be exhausted.

A few directions as to the preservation of health, and I have done, leaving to my companions to supply my omissions. Take with you a small quantity of calomel, quinine, Dover's powders, soda, rhubarb, some adhesive plaster, a little lint, and a small flask of brandy. If you are sea sick, on your voyage from New York to Chagres, be upon deck, in the open air, as much as possible; if too unwell for that keep quiet in your berth, until it has worn off. When your appetite returns, be cautious in its indulgence. If you remain long upon the Isthmus, avoid exposure to the heat of the sun in the middle of the day; eat light food; indulge in fruit but moderately, especially if you have the least tendency to diarrhœa, or dysentery. Unless sick enough to require treatment under the advice of a physician, take no medicine except from five to ten grains of quinine, daily, which is a necessary preventive measure for those who have recently come under the influence of that climate. Excitement and fatigue should be avoided. When in California, either in the cities or the mines, be prudent in all things; in the cities avoid excesses; if in the mineral region, eat none but wholesome food—have regular hours of sleep; and avoid a too long continuance at any one time in the water. Remember that you are undergoing the process of a change of climate and habits, and use the precautions that that alone would suggest. If but indisposed, diet, and use the simple remedies you will have with you. If seriously sick, consult a physician.

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CHAPTER IX.

MR. BRADLEY'S RECOLLECTIONS OF SAN FRANCISCO:—RAPID GROWTH OF THE CITY.—MECHANIC'S LABOR.—PRICES.—REVENUE TO CITY FROM GAMBLING HOUSES.—WEALTHY GAMBLERS.—ABSENCE OF WOMEN.—CHURCHES.—AMUSEMENTS.—“RELIGIOUS” DECORUM.—HOSPITALITY AND BENEVOLENCE.

—STATE OF SOCIETY.—PROVISION MARKET.—SCENES AT THE POST OFFICE.—
NEWSPAPERS.—MASONS AND ODD FELLOWS.

I was one week in returning from the mines to San Francisco. I soon found enough to do at my trade, at good California prices. Every thing was going ahead like a race horse, or a steam locomotive—speculation was the order of the day—gambling was on the increase.

Mechanics' labor was regulated not only upon the assumed basis of earnings in the mines, but by the time in which a given job could be done. All were in a hurry. If you could get a job done quick enough to suit, you could have almost any price your conscience allowed you to ask; and I am obliged to say that men's consciences were generally, as a matter of convenience, left at home. Signs that I painted were put up before they were dry. I would not care to have the specimens of my San Francisco work exhibited on this side of the Pacific. Framed houses were often put up and enclosed in twenty-four hours. Passing to-day, you would see a vacant lot, and passing again in forty-eight hours, there would be a store in which would be a large stock of goods, measuring off and weighing for customers; and so with buildings for other purposes. As many as forty buildings have gone up in forty-eight hours.

The gambling establishments are all licensed by the city authorities; paying each \$50 per month, and those that are licensed to play on Sundays, pay an extra \$25 per day. The revenue of the city from this source cannot be less than \$120,000 per annum. Half of the keepers of gambling tables pay not less than \$1000 per month, for room for one table; sometimes there are eight or ten tables in a room. The smaller establishments in proportion. The games, are principally, faro, monte, 160 "rondo and lulo," cant-game, and roulette. At the aristocratic, number one establishments, no bet is allowed of less than one ounce, (\$16.) At all, bets are allowed equal in amount to the capital of the bank, which is generally from \$3 to \$10,000. Some of the keepers of gambling tables have become princely rich, are rather the leading men of the city, and the owners of some of the best city property.

One great cause of a loose state of morals in San Francisco, is the absence of female society and female influence. There are not over fifty American women, and but few others in a population of 30,000.

There is an Episcopal church, a comfortable building, with benches instead of pews;—it is under the care of our much esteemed pastor of the quarter deck of the *Nyantia* —the Rev. Mr. Mines. The services are regular, and well attended. There is a Presbyterian minister and society that hold their meetings in a tent, and a Baptist minister and society, that were preparing a place of worship.

The amusements are as variable, unique, and eccentric as the character of the population. There are masquerade balls, “model artists,” theatrical corps, circuses, negro minstrels;—all well patronized. Admission to circus, pit \$3, boxes, \$5; other amusements, at about the same rate. On one occasion a pompous handbill made its appearance:—“Mrs. Foyle, from the main army in Mexico” would give a masquerade ball, on “*Sunday* evening,” at “Washington Hall.” She gave high sounding names as references for her “eminent respectability,” and talents for conducting the concern; and wound up with the assurance that an efficient police would be present to preserve order, and that the “most strict *religious* decorum would be observed.”

The question is often asked, “How do people live who are sick, and out of money in California?” They get along better than the unfortunate and destitute anywhere else in the world. There is a fellow-feeling there, a spirit of active, practical benevolence. Charity offerings are made upon a scale of 161 munificence corresponding with everything else; \$1,000 could be raised easier there, at a call of humanity, than \$5 in any of our large villages; and these calls are frequent. I saw nor heard of no case of suffering there for the want of money. The city is about to build an extensive hospital for the sick and unfortunate. When it was understood that a large number of adventurers coming over land were in a suffering condition for want of food, all the money that could be used for relief was promptly given in San Francisco.

The general state of society in San Francisco may be inferred. Nothing is settled, of course—all but some necessary municipal regulations, is left to regulate itself; and yet, with the exception of

the vices of gambling and drinking there is not much to find fault with, and a good deal to approve. There is not as much of crime—of offences against property and persons—in the aggregate, in proportion to the population, as in many cities in the old states. A man may go as safely unarmed there, day and night, as in Boston. There is a prevalence generally, of kind good feeling—less of selfishness and overreaching in business transactions; less of jarring and discord; far less of clannish divisions of society, than in our cities and villages in the old states. There is but one species of aristocracy, and that is of Labor. Money has no influence for the simple reason that it is not so much in demand as labor. The man who has the most money is as dependent upon those who can earn it with their strength, their industry or their skill. The state of society is that of an unmixed democracy.

All the means of living are abundant in San Francisco. Rapid as population has flowed in; large as the demand has been from the mining districts; the supply of provisions has kept pace with the demand, and in some instances, to the great loss of importers, far exceeded it. The flour comes from Chili and Oregon; salted meats and fish from the United States. Fresh venison, elk meat, wild fowl, are abundant. Ducks, geese, brant, and curlew are plenty in the bay, and in market. Fresh fish are not plenty in market, for the reason, I presume, 162 that fishing is not as profitable as other employments. Vessels touching at the Gallipago [Galapagos] Islands, (“Terrapin Islands”) carry [from] there fine terrapins. Tea and coffee of a superior quality to those we get at home are plenty and cheap. Potatoes of good quality, but in stinted quantities; tomatoes and onions are brought from the Sandwich Islands; in fact, most of the garden vegetables that are used.

The scene at the Post Office in San Francisco, on the arrival of the mail steamers, is one of intense anxiety and excitement. There will be not only the citizens, but those who have come down from the mines in scores; all expecting letters from friends at home; making in the aggregate such a jostling throng as is seen upon such an occasion in no other city in the world. As there are tens of thousands letters expected, and usually come, so there are thousands of anxious waiters at the Post Office. There are six regular clerks in the office, and when the steamers arrive an extra force is employed, and yet the distribution and delivery of letters consumes days and sometimes even weeks. There are places of delivery at the Post Office; letters of the alphabet posted over each,

direct the applicants for letters which delivery to approach. If the great crowd rushed up without any order, jostling each other, but little progress could be made. So all this is regulated as follows: three processions are formed, two abreast, and thus the right of precedence is preserved; the latest comes of course, falling in the rear. When a position is secured in one of the columns, it must be retained; if you step out you must fall in the rear. Those who are pretty well in the rear often advance and buy out chances; the price being regulated by the proximity to the head of the column. An ounce is often paid for an advanced position in the line. When the office closes for the night, the columns break up to be formed again in the morning. Then there will be an early rush to secure advanced positions in the columns. Many have rolled themselves in their blankets and slept all night in front of the office to be first in the lines in the morning. This regulation is often converted to the uses of speculators. Those who want 163 to “raise the wind,” and are not looking for letters will place themselves in the lines to sell out to those who are the most anxious to get their letters and go back to the mines. This is seemingly an extravagant account of the matter, I am aware, but it falls short of giving the reader an adequate idea of the immense amount of letters that the steamers bring to San Francisco, and of the throng that rush after them in their intense anxiety to hear from home. And is it not an interesting moral spectacle? the heart, the affections, the kindlier feelings of our nature, are involved in it. These silent messengers that have found their way thousands of miles over earth and ocean, bring tidings from HOME, and those that are cherished and loved there. It is a sad thing to be far, far away, from one's own hearth stone, and all the fond associations that cluster around it; but it is a moment of relief, of joy and gladness, when you can trace there a familiar hand, that assures you that wide seas have not sundered affections, or absence chilled them; that there are those that still hope for you and care for you; that ALL IS WELL, when you most hope that all should be well.

The steamers that arrive at San Francisco bring out loads of newspapers other than those that come in the mails. The bulk of them are from our Atlantic cities, and New Orleans, the *Tribune*, the *Herald*, and *Delta* predominating. They are mostly brought by passengers on speculation; many of them paying their passage by the operation. A dollar is the uniform price for a single copy. They

are bought up with great avidity; and when San Francisco is supplied, peddlers of them put off to Sacramento, Stockton and the mines.

Masons and Odd Fellows Lodges are already instituted in San Francisco, Sacramento and Stockton; and are both useful, especially in the dispensation of charities.

There are two newspapers in San Francisco: *Pacific News*, and *Alta California*. Several others were starting. On the arrival of steamers extras are thrown out as soon as in our large cities.

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CHAPTER X.

MAJOR E. W. COOK'S RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINERAL REGION:—GO TO SACRAMENTO.—TRIP TO THE NORTHERN MINES.—RIO AMERICANO.—GO TO WORK.—THE ROCKER.—PROSPECTING.—LUCK.—OUR EARNINGS.—HOT WEATHER.—HARD WORK.—GAME.—TRIP TO THE COSUMNES.—SPLENDID SCENERY.—THE WOLF THAT WANTED BREAKFAST.—OUR ENCAMPMENT.—THE WILD INDIANS.—RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO.—DRY DIGGINGS AND WET DIGGINGS.

I left the ship in company with eleven of our former association, on our way to the mines; taking passage on board the schooner *Odd Fellow*, to Sacramento. We paid \$20 cash, for our passage; and were two and a half days going the one hundred and fifty miles.

Arriving at Sacramento, we pitched our tents and remained there three days to lay in provisions, wash our clothes, and procure an ox team to take our baggage to what we had agreed upon as our destination, the north fork of the Rio Americano. The weather was very warm, and with our ox team, we of course travelled slow, occupying nearly two days in reaching within ten miles of our destination, which was but fifty miles from Sacramento. Taking a fancy to the spot where our team had deserted us, and judging from indications, that we were in the "diggings," we pitched our tents and commenced the campaign, first, arranging our *household* affairs—agreeing to take turns in cooking—and sending out a delegation to some mines in the neighborhood, to get a little

insight into the business of digging and washing. We had brought along with us rockers,^{*} and 165 tin pans,^{*} shovels, spades and pickaxes. It was, in one respect, an inauspicious beginning, for the thermometer stood at 118 in the shade.

The *Rocker*, is about the size of a common nursery cradle, and not unlike one, with the foot board knocked out. At the head is a hopper, with a wide bottom pierced with holes into which the earth is thrown. Water is then thrown on accompanied with rocking. The earth sifts through, leaving the stones and gravel to be thrown out. The cradle, as it sets upon the rockers, has an inclination with the help of water, propels the dirt forward, flowing over cleats, or partitions, that dam up the finer portions of it, with the particles of gold, which being heaviest, have first been checked in the flow, and settled down in a streak but little mixed with black sand. This is scooped off, and the gold finally separated entire, by the use of the tin pan. It would cost to make one at home, about \$2.00; we paid \$40 and \$50.

The common tin milk pan, with a large rim, to make it stronger, and easier to handle. This is used to carry dirt to the hopper, and as indicated above. In the absence of the rocker, the whole operation is performed by that; with frequent rinsings, or pouring off of all the water and the dirt, the gold is precipitated at the bottom of the pan.

We all worked in our locality, a mile from any other operators. The face of the country where we were, was that of oak-openings, hill and dale, with a pretty plentiful supply of surface rocks; the soil, sand and gravel. There was no reliable indications as to where the gold most abounded; we experimented from spot to spot, for several days with indifferent success. I will try to give the reader an idea of the lottery like business of gold digging as we found it. Little is gained, even by experience, in fixing upon spots to dig. The science of mineralogy or geology is of little avail;— chance governs the whole matter, save that reddish earth is a pretty reliable indication of gold. Almost everything depends upon luck. Much time is spent in leaving tolerably good locations, to go “prospecting,” to find better ones. It is often with gold diggers, as with the hunters after broomsticks, who pass by tolerable fair ones, and finally, after getting almost through the woods, cut a very poor one. The best earth is found in the bottom of ravines, and gulches,^{*} though this rule has its exceptions. We stayed at Smith's bar^{*} about six weeks; sometimes meeting with very good success, and others, finding no earth that would yield what is regarded any thing like a good day's work. No one of our company, during the time, got over two ounces in any one day. I think the average yield for the whole six weeks, was about an ounce per man. There were lucky ones, and unlucky ones; some that worked harder than the rest. When 166 it was dull, and the weather was

oppressively hot, we would lay idle, or hunt, for recreation, and to obtain fresh meat. None of us were very sick, yet much time was lost in consequence of sickness.

Gulches, (ravines, or canyons.)—gorges in the earth.

Smith's Bar, like Beal's Bar which Cook mentions below, was located on the North Fork of the American, just above its confluence with the South Fork. With other diggings higher up, both are shown on Jackson's *Map of the Mining Districts of California*. In his general remarks on the mines in 1849, Jackson commented on Beal's Bar as one place where miners "were well remunerated for their outlay and labor."

Our work was mostly done in the forenoon. After dinner we would lay around under the shade of trees;—the weather was oppressively hot; at times, not a breath of air would be stirring, and we would be driven from the shade to the waters of the river, for relief. Toward evening, we would resume our labor for a short period. The stock of provisions we carried with us to the mines, lasted until within two weeks of the period of our departure, when we were obliged to purchase at enormous rates:—25 cents per lb. for flour; 40¢ for pork; a dollar a bottle for molasses and vinegar. We purchased at Beal's bar, a mile above [below?] us, where some traders had located; and where a company had turned the river from its bed, and have since, from a bar, taken over \$100,000 worth of gold.

In our company were several successful hunters, and in consequence, we were not without fresh venison, and game much of the time; in fact had some for sale for which we realized good prices. One of our company, on one occasion, shot three deer before breakfast.

Deer are plenty—a black tailed species, about the size of our fallow deer; are generally in good condition. Elk are not often in the vallies except when driven down by the deep snows of the winter. There are two kinds of wolves, and plenty of both; a large grey species, resembling the hyena; and the *kiota* or prairie wolf, about the size of our red fox. There are foxes not unlike our grey ones. Hares, of the usual size; I preserved the ears of one that were as large as those of an ordinary horse; their meat is fine. There is also the small grey rabbit similar to those that abound in our New England, and western states. There is a grey squirrel larger than ours, that lives in the trees like our black squirrel; and another species about the size of our black squirrel that burrows in the ground, like our chipmunks, but in colonies, instead of solitary holes. The quails 167 have the mixed qualities and habits, of our quails and partridges. They take to the trees, and when flushed, rise one

at a time. They are nearly as large as our partridge. The males are as well formed and feathered as the prairie cock of our western states. Two feathers resembling small ostrich plumes, rise from the crown of the head, and gracefully incline in opposite directions. I have spoken of such game as came in our way; different kinds may exist in other localities. We could not afford to shoot small game much, for shot was twelve shillings per lb. The waters of the Sacramento, the Rio Americano, and their tributaries, abound in fine fish. They were almost universally, of species different from ours, and yet all bore some general resemblance.

On the 23d of September, I joined Messrs. Head, Wisner and Carey in an expedition to the head waters of the Rio de Cosumnes, a tributary of the San Joaquin. We started on the 23d of September, with four horses and two pack mules, for which we paid from \$100 to \$175. We travelled four days over a region entirely uninhabited, save by wandering tribes of Indians; partly wooded, and partly prairie. The hills were in the form of sugar loafs, the ascent to their summits gradual, and occasionally giving us extensive views over the surrounding country. On our third day out we came upon one of them, and the view from it was like a scene of enchantment! Before us was an extended sweep of rolling prairie, and a long narrow streak of timbered land skirting the banks of the Cosumnes; and far away in the distance, looming up like the piled clouds in the heavens, were the offsets of the Sierra Nevada! The atmosphere was of that rich mellow tint that characterizes our Indian summer. It was an Italian landscape, and an Italian atmosphere through which we viewed it, if the accounts of both, that I have read, are correct.

Descending from the eminence, we struck across the plains, and encamped that night upon the bank of Dry creek. In the night I was awakened by a rattling among our camp equipage, and springing up saw a large wolf directly in our midst, leisurely making a late supper out of what we intended for our breakfast. In the effort to find my pistol, the stealthy thief took the alarm, and made a safe retreat.

We travelled on to the forks of the Cosumnes, and made our encampment in a pleasant spot, far enough up in the mountains to have the waters of the stream pure and cold; and near us was a fine spring. We were now in a region where but few mines had been worked, and we found the bars

and banks of the stream more productive than any we had found in our mining adventures. But we worked but four days: we were not prepared for the cold nights we found there; and, to confess the truth, we were a little too far in the Indian country, and away from any aid in case of hostilities, to render a long stay there agreeable. The specimens we saw of the Indians in our neighborhood, were by no means flattering, or calculated to give us any good opinion of them. They were wild as any described by the tourists over the Rocky Mountains, living principally upon fish, fresh-water clams, and acorns, with no clothing save a girdle about the loins; bedaubed with paint; frightful and disagreeable as anything we had ever seen in the human form. It was but a few day[s] previous to our advent there, that they had inhumanly murdered one of a party of three explorers. The unfortunate man had been wounded by the accidental discharge of his rifle. While his companion was absent to procure help to remove him from the wilderness, the Indians barbarously robbed and murdered him. Those we saw were cowardly, skulking, and inoffensive, for they were in small parties; but, banded together, they would have been unsafe near neighbors. Out in the woods one day, we discovered a pile of clam shells and a pile of acorns; while wondering who or what had placed them there, a crackling in the bush diverted our attention, and off a few rods was a hideous Indian, all but his loins in a state of nudity; near by his squaw, in a like condition, and two or three naked juniors that went to make up the interesting family group. They were skulking, their eyes peering out upon us with a mixed expression of curiosity and 169 fear. The squaw seemed the Sycorax of the wild region, her face bedaubed with coal-tar paint, her long, black, dishevelled hair extending down over her shoulders from a low depressed skull that had little of the conformation that could be called human; the progeny of the hopeful pair were like so many Calibans:— “Hog-born; Not honored with a human shape.”

They were not unlike the families of “root diggers,” and snail eaters, described in Mr. Fremont's account of his journies over the Rocky Mountains. They were motionless—their stare upon us as fixed and intent as if we were the “bad spirits” of their religious creed, or as if we were upon an embassy of evil to their wild and inhospitable region. We walked off, leaving them undisturbed, the “good riddance,” undoubtedly, as agreeable to them as to us.

We were about one hundred and thirty miles south-east from Sacramento, beyond where any considerable number of mines have advanced, though the gold region extends, as ascertained, far on beyond us, up the slope of the Sierra Nevada, and over its summit to Mountain Lake [Lake Tahoe].^{*} There were miners below us of our own people, several parties of mining “Mission Indians,”^{*} and, as we were told, lower down, on the Cosumnes, there are extensive grain and grazing ranches, (or farms.)

This is one of the rare allusions to mining on the east slope of the Sierra in 1849, the more interesting for displaying Cook's understanding of the fact that Lake Tahoe does lie beyond the summit. The usual concept in 1849-1850 was that the American River rose in this high and beautiful mountain lake. Half-civilized; those that have been about the Missions.

We returned to Sacramento, where I remained with the exception of some short trips made in the neighborhood, until I left for San Francisco on my way home.

I will endeavor to give the reader some idea of the position, or *locale*, of the gold in the mining districts. In the first place, it is necessary to observe that in *all the earth* that is included in the vast ascertained extent of the mining districts, there is more or less gold pretty uniformly distributed. No single shovel-full can hardly be obtained, after removing the surface soil, that would not have in it gold in minute quantities. The 170 earth is not, however, sufficiently impregnated with it to pay for working by hand labor. In after times, when the dry diggings in the ravines, and the wet diggings in the beds and sides of streams, are exhausted, we may well suppose that the earth elsewhere will be worked by machinery, with profit. I shall presume that before the casualties occurred, which I shall speak of, the gold had a *secondary* existence—uniform throughout the mineral region—in small lumps, from the size of a small shot to several pounds weight; the forms being as we see them, like those of melted lead, chilled by being thrown upon uneven surfaces. In the natural process of thousands of years, ravines, or gullies, have been excavated by water in finding its way to the vallies. As the water has worn away the earth and carried it forward by the force of its current, the gold lumps, from their specific gravity, have settled down,—so that in the bottom of the ravines we find all the gold lumps that were in the earth that occupied the excavated space. So much for the *dry diggings*. The *wet diggings* are the bars in the beds of streams, and the alluvial deposits along their

edges. Here the process has been similar; the flattened forms—scales and small particles—have been made by the attrition and abrasion of rocks, stones* and gravel, set in motion by the strong and continued currents of water, that have only existed in flood times in the ravines.

Called *gulches* by the miners.

The process, both in the streams and ravines, of separating and giving locality to the gold, has been precisely that of the rockers. Gold bearing earth being carried along by rapid currents, the gold has been precipitated, as in the rockers. The dry diggings, are worked in dry seasons by sifting for the lumps; the dirt preserved until the water comes into the ravines, where it is washed for the smaller lumps or particles.

Although some miners are luckier than others, find bigger lumps, or richer deposits, gold digging is a pretty uniform business. Success depends mostly upon the amount of hard labor that is performed. If any one wants to know how to appreciate strength, muscles, sinews, powers of endurance, a constitution 171 of iron, let him go to the mines of California, for it is these that win there, except in the unfrequent cases of hitting upon lumps of uncommon size, or finding pockets* of unusual richness. Such may come, but it should by no means be the main reliance.

These are where from the peculiar position of the rocks, spars exist between them, where gold has lodged, and been retained.

The grizzly bear of California attains to the enormous size of eleven and twelve hundred pounds; I saw a dead one that weighed one thousand, and measured the fresh foot-print of one that was nine inches across the ball. One of Capt. Sutter's men told me an amusing story of his own attempt to lasso one of the largest he had ever seen. He threw the lasso over his head, and while attempting to entangle his legs with it, the bear settled back upon his haunches, seized it with his teeth and paws, and commenced "hauling in" horse and rider. The hunter leaped from his horse and made his escape, the horse reared and pitched at a furious rate, and by breaking the lasso avoided an uncomfortable "hug" even for a horse.

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APPENDIX

PANAMA—The name was given to this portion of the Isthmus, by the early Spanish adventurers. Balboa, in 1512, soon after Ponce de Leon's expedition to Florida, headed an expedition to the Isthmus, and made Santa Maria his starting point in crossing over to the Pacific and taking possession of it in the name of King Ferdinand. Two years afterwards, he made Panama his headquarters, which may be regarded as the first attempt to found a settlement there. The old city was soon after founded, and for over one hundred and fifty years, it was a seat of wealth and grandeur; one of the principal head-quarters of Spanish dominion in America. So it continued until the advent of the "Buccaneers," who included Panama in their many conquests of Spanish colonies. One of the leaders of these banded "Brothers of the Coast,"—Henry Morgan, a native of Wales—in 1670, after having captured Porto Bello and Marycabo [Maracaibo], took possession of the Island of St. Catherines, where he fitted out a formidable expedition consisting of twenty vessels and two thousand men, and sailed for the Isthmus. The force landed at Chagres, captured a strong Spanish fortress there, which was desperately defended; sailed up to Cruces, where it disembarked, marched over the Isthmus, and invested the city of Panama, which finally surrendered after several desperate engagements. The leader of the Buccaneers, allowing his followers the largest liberty to sack and plunder the conquered city, engaged himself in a barbarous but unsuccessful amour. Smitten with the beauty of a Spanish lady who had become his captive, he attempted the gratification of his brutal passions, when she drew a dirk, and menacing vengeance, exclaimed:—"Stop, ruffian! Thinkest thou to ravish from me my honor, as thou hast wrested from me my fortune and my liberty! No!—be assured that my soul shall be sooner separated from my body." He revenged her noble conduct by fetters and torture. An immense amount of treasures was obtained by the Buccaneers, after which the city was evacuated, and has never been re-occupied. The present city was soon after founded; was built principally of wood, and wholly destroyed by fire in 1756; soon after which the commerce of the Isthmus declined, and has never since revived, until gold was discovered in California.

CALIFORNIA was first occupied by the Spaniards in 1769, or rather, this is the period of the first permanent occupancy. Unsuccessful attempts to found Spanish missions there, commenced as early as 1602. The French Jesuit Missionaries were there from about 1616 to 1768, when they

were expelled. They were immediately succeeded by the Franciscans, under Spanish auspices, and founded numerous missions upon the coast, and in the interior. It is stated upon the authority of reliable traditions, that exist in California, that the Missionaries had first to fortify themselves as Capt. Sutter did, and the *catch* their first neophytes, lassoing them by the aid of swift horses, as in the Spanish method of cattle hunting. After catching and taming a few, at each station, they would be sent out to tole in the wild ones. They would immediately become the subjects of baptism, be learned to labor, and attached to the stations. In this way each mission station had attached to it extensive cultivated fields, and immense droves of cattle. The establishments increased, and were flourishing—the Indians were happy, and their condition improving—until California was separated from Spain by the Mexican revolution; when the missions declined, and were almost exterminated by anarchy, misrule, and being plundered of their property.

After the decline of the Missionary establishments and up to the period of American occupancy, there was little but attempted revolutions, anarchy and discord. The Mission establishments were laid waste, and all that tended to civilization and improvement, was on the decline. No country in the world has, perhaps, ever undergone so rapid a change as is now in progress there.

Before the Missionary establishments declined—in 1829—the white population of Upper California was estimated to be 8,000, and that of the “Mission Indians,” at 30,000; in 1842, the Indians were reduced to 5,000. In 1831, horned cattle 174 were estimated at 500,000; they had decreased to 400,000 in 1842; and all things else had decreased in proportion. On the first day of January, 1849, the population, exclusive of Indians and Africans, was as follows:— Californians, 13,000 Americans, 80,000 Foreigners, 50,000

On the first of January, 1850, the estimate upon reliable authority, was as follows: Americans, 76,000 Californians, 13,000 Foreigners, 13,000 102,000

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By some lapse of the mind, McCollum's statistics are made to show a decrease in California's population of 41,000 during 1849.

The accounts from our Atlantic cities, and the western and south western states, would justify the conclusion that this population will be increased, at least 50,000, before the first day of July next.

The Hon. T. Butler King, in his recent able report to the Secretary of War, estimates that \$40,000,000 was obtained from the mines last year, and that the amount will reach \$50,000,000 this year; which latter estimate is to be far more than realized, if present indications are reliable ones.

IN view of the discovery of the immense mineral wealth of California—of all the events that are transpiring there—of the great present and prospective value of the accession, as a powerful stride in the fulfillment of the “manifest destiny” of our country—a fact not generally remembered, becomes interesting:—all this came very near being the property of British capitalists! At one period, when these capitalists were pressing Mexico for a debt of fifty millions of dollars, then due them, the idea was seriously entertained, of ceding Upper California in payment. The project contemplated an establishment similar to the East India Company.

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THE condition of California in 1845, may be inferred from the following extract from a letter, written from there in that year:—“The country never was in a more disorderly, miserable condition, than at the present moment. We have no government.”

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Five Letters Written From the Isthmus in 1849, by W. H. Hecox.

On board the *Crescent City*, Caribbean Sea, Lat 13.35—Long. 78.34. Feb. 13, '49. Here we are bowling along finely over this delightful sea, the eighth day from New York.—We left that famous city Monday 5th of Sept. [February], at 1/4 before 2 P.M., on board this noble ship. Dismissing our Pilot off Sandy Hook with our blessing, a loaf of bread, and a small piece of the “habitation your prophet the Nazarite conjured the d—I into,” we struck out into the broad Atlantic in a southeasterly direction to about longitude 73 deg. Then we laid our course south and ran nearly on a straight line as far as the easterly end of the island of Cuba. The first night among the Islands [February 10] came nearly proving the last of our voyage. By the gross carelessness of some of the

officers of the ship, she was nearly wrecked on one of the many reefs lying between this sea and the Atlantic. Happily some one discovered the breakers just in time to give the alarm, and caused the engines to be reversed. Three minutes later and we should have been among them.

Had a committee of weather-wise gentlemen been duly elected at New York to determine what kind of weather would be most desirable for the voyage, they could not have possibly imagined any which would have compared with that we have constantly experienced since we left home. It has been most delicious. Tuesday evening the 6th, it blew some, but only enough to cause the passengers a little agreeable sea-sickness, from which they soon recovered. One poor fellow, however, from Mass., was that night thrown against the sides of the ship and fractured his knee-pan. The weather to-day is warm, but not sultry. The trade wind, blowing from the N. E. keeps all cool, comparatively. The passengers are in summer clothing, some writing, some reading, some lounging and a few napping. There are 305 of us on board, a multitude for a ship, and composed as our friend Macbeth says, "of all sorts of people"—all orderly, courteous and obliging. I have seen no 177 gambling on board, and but little drinking. Sunday last, divine service was performed on board, at which most of the passengers were present. The officiating gentleman was a Presbyterian minister on his way to California as a missionary.*

Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 7, says the service was conducted by "the Rev. Albert Williams, of the Presbyterian denomination, concluding with the beautiful tune of Old Hundred: 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow,' which from our united voices pealed out upon the sea, through companion, hatchway, and port-hole."

The *Crescent City* is a noble Steamer, but is wanting in many conveniences to make a voyage like this comfortable. The necessity which exists of limiting the guards of Sea Steamers to the support and protection of the wheels alone, renders it exceedingly difficult to provide them with all the comforts and conveniences to be found on all our Lake boats. But such as are indispensable to health, should on no account be omitted. The *Crescent City*, incredible as it may seem to you, has no bathing room on board, and in this southern climate, nothing is so necessary to insure the health of passengers.

California as I saw it; pencillings by the way of its gold and gold diggers, and incidents of travel by land and water. With five letters from the Isthmus by W.H. Hecox. Edited by Dale L. Morgan <http://www.loc.gov/resource/calbk.079>

There are too few servants, in every department. I could mention many more things which should be amended, or the ship should not be patronized. Capt. [Charles] Stoddard is a good sailor doubtless, but is not a gentlemanly commander. All his officers from the Mate down to the Stevedore, are rough, discourteous, and intolerable. The only real excellent person on board connected with the ship is the Stewardess. There is inclosed in her unprepossessing exterior, a heart full of the kindest sympathies. In the midst of much sickness of Tuesday and part of Wednesday last, surrounded by petulant and complaining invalids, called this way by one party and that way by another, at the same time performing the parts of waiter, doctor and nurse, she always exhibited the same calm, unruffled, patient and agreeable disposition, under all circumstances, and to all men, doing her utmost to alleviate the sufferings of the sick, and to add to the comforts of all. Such a woman, in such a situation one rarely encounters, and I have deemed it incumbent on me, as I doubt not others will consider it their duty, to publish the actions and applaud the virtues of the humble but most worthy Mrs. Young, the Stewardess of the *Crescent City*.

I have just come down from an adjourned meeting of the 178 passengers on the quarter deck, to provide ways and means to cross the Isthmus. Committees have been appointed to procure mules and to superintend the transportation of baggage. We expect to find the steamer *Orus* at Chagres, and shall in that case, find little difficulty in getting up to Gorgona. But of all this I will advise you in a P. S. from Chagres.

Our only Buffalo passengers are Mr. [William] Lovering and myself, and we are both well and in good spirits, and desire to be particularly remembered to all our friends. The thermometer has ranged for three days past at about 82°, heat is gradually increasing, and we anticipate a little hot weather tomorrow at Chagres. We are to remain on the ship until our baggage is all embarked, and then we shall take passage direct for Gorgona or Cruces, avoiding Chagres, as we would a hard case with a *werry* doubtful reputation.

At Panama I will give you a detailed account of our passage of the Isthmus, and one you and your readers can rely upon. So many exaggerated reports of the difficulties of this passage have been sent

to the United States, that it is impossible for a person to get at the real plain facts in regard to it. It is desirable they should be known, and from me you shall have them.

W. H. H.

OFF CHAGRES, Feb. 14, 1849. Thermometer at 2 P.M. 92° We have at last reached this notorious town, and now lie at anchor under the guns of the Fort, about two miles distant therefrom. We arrived before the Castle, at 5 o'clock, P.M.; this being the ninth day since we left New York, and our ship having made the best run of any other, outdoing her last trip several hours.

About five miles northerly up the coast from Chagres we discovered the *Falcon* Steamer which left New York, Feb. 1st, lying at anchor with the small River Steamer *Orus* alongside receiving her freight. On running down towards Chagres we saw two other vessels, a topsail schooner and a barque 179 [*Marietta*] lying at anchor before the town, the latter apparent filled with passengers. These sights rather depressed our spirits, knowing the limited means of convey[ance] over the Isthmus, and supposing, of course, the passengers of these vessels had by this time secured them all. As soon as we anchored, however, our committee went on shore to ascertain what could be done, and much to our surprise as well as delight, found that no canoes had been engaged. The passengers of the *Falcon* were satisfied with securing the services of the *Orus*, and had sent no committee to Cruces to engage the mules. Now it so happens that the *Orus* runs up the Chagres River 20 miles only, and there transfers her passengers to the canoes for the residue of the distance. As we have all the canoes engaged, however, I reckon when they reach this 20 mile point they will find themselves literally in the boat.

We have learned here from the agent of Howland and Aspinwall that there are but about 100 passengers at Panama, and that they have already engaged their passage in a brig, soon to sail—that the California Mail Steamer arrived at Panama the 20th ult., and sailed for San Francisco the 2d inst, full of passengers—that a British relay steamer will be at Panama about the 1st prox.—That several sail vessels are expected in the meantime—and finally, that there is no sickness on the

Isthmus. So far so good. We shall all probably disembark to-morrow and the next day, and hope to arrive at Panama in all this week.

We can see nothing of Chagres from where we lie excepting the Castle, which looks down upon us from a high bluff. No low ground or marsh is visible from this distance. The whole coast for miles is bold and high, and in the distance lofty mountains are visible with their peaks “cloud capped.” I will endeavor in my next to give you an accurate description of this highly respectable city of Chagres, which I shall visit to-morrow in the capacity of a canoe committee man. I shall try to obtain admission to the castle, as I understand it has mounted some beautiful brass pieces, though their carriages are fast falling 180 to pieces.

The thermometer to-day reached 92° Fa[h]renheit—yet with the trade wind blowing constantly, the heat has not been oppressive. I reckon, however, it will be warm sleeping to-night.

As a matter of some little curiosity I append a table of latitude and longitudes and distance run for each 24 hours from Sandy Hook.

Latitude. Longitude. Dist. run.

6th 37.28 73.30 182

7th 33.57 73. 215

8th 30.04 73. 234

9th 26.44 72.07 206

10 22.48 72.18 237

11th 20.02 74.04 196

12th 17.11 76.39 241

13th 13.55 78.54 229

14th 9.52 79.33 251

and 41 miles to Chagres, 41

2031

3031 miles from Sandy Hook to Chagres, according to Capt. Stoddard. W. H. H.

PANAMA, Feb. 23, 1849. Our party consisting of Mr. Lovering, Mr. [George H.] Howard, a young gentleman from Boston, Mr. D. John, a passed midshipman from Newport, R. I., and myself, embarked at Chagres in a canoe on the 16th ult., and arrived here on Monday the 19th. Our canoe was about 20 feet long, 3 1/2 feet beam and 2 1/2 deep. About three feet from the stern and running six and a half forward is a roof of cocoa nut tree leaves, elevated about two and a half feet. This top is circular. We put into the bottom of the vessel seven trunks, three bags and two boxes. Our pilot then directed two of us to get in and creep under the covering half way and the other two to get in front and creep 181 back half way and lie down. When duly deposited, we laid heads together, two of us with feet to the stern, and two with feet to the stem. In this position we rode two days, stopping however, several times to eat and twice to sleep.

At Gorgona we bargained for mules to take us to Panama, for which place we started at about half past 6 o'clock on Monday morning. The path to this point is an uneven trail with a succession of ascents and descents of the most precipitous character until within four miles of this city. I have often seen and travelled over hard roads but this caps them all. However, we arrived at Panama at 7 P.M. Our beasts were completely tired out and we were in no better condition. The trip from Chagres here cost us \$50 each man. Some passengers have paid more and some less than that sum. Our baggage was from Monday morning to Thursday afternoon in coming from Gorgona to this place.

Panama is a walled city enclosing about 350 acres completely built over—about 1200 inhabitants, a mixture of Negroes, Indians and Spaniards, all talking Spanish—streets narrow, say 30 feet wide, paved and cleanly—houses large, built of stone with balconies to each story, no glass windows but large doors opening out on the balconies. It is a miserable place to live in, although abounding in certain luxuries. Oranges cost 10 cents a dozen. We eat four or five before breakfast but in no other part of the day—the sweet potatoes are delicious—good cigars are a cent a piece.—Two or three eating houses have been opened here, where we can have coffee, tea, steaks, bananas, rice, bread, &c., at about the same cost as at home. The bay or harbor of Panama is a poor one. The tide rises and falls over twenty feet and the winds are so unfavorable that a vessel will accomplish the trip from Cal[if]ao in Lima to San Francisco or even Valparaiso, sooner than from this point.

No person need ever think of coming this way unless they previously secure a ticket in New York for the steamer up this coast. There is but one vessel here now for San Francisco [the *Oregon*] and no one can tell when there will be another. 182 I have no doubt that half the passengers here must re[t]urn home or spend the summer in Panama. I shall wait patiently a few weeks and if no brighter prospect presents itself, I shall return to the United States. I shall do this in preference to remaining in this hot latitude through the summer. Still I hope to get up the coast and if I can do so for love or money, I shall succeed. There are no such vessels here to take passengers up the coast as represented by the owners of the *Crescent City*, and no prospect of any.

The British Mail Steamer [*New Granada*] is looked for to-morrow. If she reports no vessels from below, up for this port, several will start for home and try another route. One company from New York city have already pretty much concluded to return to Galveston, Texas, and cross there. I am pretty well satisfied that not half the passengers now here, will be able to leave for California this summer. I now regret very much that I did not remain and go over land from St. Louis. I wish, for the purpose of putting those who design coming this way in possession of some of these facts, that they should be made public. Let no one come this way who cannot procure a ticket in New York for the steamer on this side. We offered a gentleman who had two steerage tickets in a Brig which was filled up before we arrived, and which cost him \$200, the sum of \$500, but he would not touch

it. The sums of \$400 and \$500 have been offered for cabin passage tickets in the steamers, and refused. Their original cost is \$250. From this, you can infer what our prospect is here. There is one consolation however—our health and spirits are good.

Tell any of my friends to whom I promised to write, that the regular mail will not go from here until the middle of March, and as every other mode of conveyance is doubtful, I shall send them no letters until that time. W. H. H.

PANAMA, Feb. 28, 1849. On arriving at Panama we put up at the ‘Hotel los Americaines,’ happy to find even an apology for a bed, and to take 183 our meals once more from a table set out in good old fashioned style.—Thus far we had sailed before the wind. Fortune had smiled upon us. We had been favored with most delightful weather. It had been very warm, but what could you expect but hot weather in the torrid zone? We had travelled and sailed from New York to Panama in precisely fourteen days and 3 hours. Health had been vouchsafed for us, and our spirits were considerably above zero the whole way. What more could reasonable men have desired?

Panama is a walled city containing probably twelve thousand inhabitants. The streets are very narrow but regularly laid out, well paved and cleanly. The houses are built of stone, the main walls plastered without and within, and are generally three stories high. Every building is furnished with balconies for each story, except the lower one which extends the entire front. These balconies are about three feet and a half wide, paved with square bricks, and fenced in with a railing. There are no windows “as is”, windows, to these houses, but large doors occupy the places of windows, which open on the balconies, and thus save the inhabitants the expense of glass. The roofs are covered with tiles, which look like flower pots, cut in two lengthwise, and laid down with their bellies up. I suppose their heavy shingles are used on account of the service they must render upon the occurrence of earthquakes; their great weight pressing upon the walls serving to keep them from being entirely shaken to pieces, by these agreeable agues. There is a Custom House here, and also a prison and a garrison. The soldiers go about with bare feet, and an old musket in the position of “slope arms,” and seem to be principally occupied in following the chain gangs through the streets. It is the only duty they are competent to perform. I sincerely believe that twenty-four live Yankees

with good substantial corn-cobs would route an army of them. They are, as soldiers, perfectly contemptible.

An old Cathedral, now nearly on its last legs occupies one side of the principal square, and in its younger days must have 184 presented quite an imposing appearance. It has two front towers, covered with handsome sea shells. It is a building of some considerable magnitude, but presents rather a squalley appearance when viewed from a distance. Judging from its dilapidated appearance, it must be in rather reduced circumstances about this time. Windows are broken, doors are loose upon their hinges, the walls are crumbling down, and the plastering is peeling off. Every thing about it betokens premature old age, and a degree of indolence, or indifference on the part of the citizens, by no means commendable. The churches of the city are in a very similar condition. They are all old, rickety, crazy and wonderful seedy. There are two markets, the one *intra mures*, and the other without the walls.—They are very similar, except, at one only can fish be procured. At both, fruit is sold by the dry measure, and meat by the yard, a breakfast will require half a yard, and for a hearty dinner, you had best take a yard and three quarters.

The first, or lower stories of all the buildings in Panama are occupied by vendors of goods and of liquors, by keepers of eating houses, and by mechanics. The upper stories are used for dwellings. There are no dwellings separate from their stores. You see no handsome houses with pleasant yards and nice gardens; but all is stone and mortar.—There is no cultivated ground in Panama, nor out of it. Fruits grow spontaneous, and there is no use for the plow. The inhabitants are of Spanish, Indian and Negro blood. Many of them are quite fair, while some are as black as ebony.—They are honest and lazy. They move slowly, speak rapidly, and never run. Men and women, boys and girls, all smoke; the *donkeys* I believe chew. No particular regard is had for the Sabbath day. There are one or two extra services performed in the Churches on this day, and a greater number of cock fights than during the week. Admission to the cockpit which is free on all other days, costs five cents on Sunday, owing to the greater attraction of the ring. Shops and dwelling houses are all opened on this day. Indeed no stranger here knows when Sunday comes, 185 without consulting the almanac.

Cock-fighting appears to be one of the principal amusements. The cocks are not kept in a back yard or coop as with us, but are treated with great consideration and respect. There is scarcely a balcony that is not occupied by one or more of these chatting, noisy fellows. They are tied by the leg, but sufficient rope is given them to fly upon the railing, and there they sit all day long, making the welkin ring with their outrageous crowing. At night to[o], when all is calm and still, some ambitious chanticleer will fly up, flap his wings, and with a crow hoarser and more prolonged than any one our free and enlightened fowls ever aspired to, startle from their dreams the whole neighborhood of men and cocks. Then commences the animated strife. Each cock endeavors to outdo his friend in the next balcony—and such a chorus of horrid sounds you never listened to. It is perfectly appalling. But the cocks do not monopolize the confusion and noises in Panama. The bells can with justice set up their claims as competitors. Morning, noon and at night, there is a constant clang and clatter of iron tongues. The bell-ringers attached to the different churches, seem to vie with one another to see which can produce the most outrageous noises on their cracked bells. This being Lent, each hour is announced by a particular peal—and you may be assured we get enough of bell-ringing in Panama. The introduction of wheel carriages here, would add very essentially to the comfort of the citizens, as the noise, rattle and clatter of these vehicles would nearly equal, if not surpass, the united efforts of the cocks and bells. I have seen no carriage of any description, not even a wheel, except a wheel of fortune down street, but that has no *tire*, although from its constant employment during the day it ought to have by the time night comes on.

The *Senoritas* are not fascinating, because they are not pretty—they are very willing to be gazed at, however, and are inclined to coquetry. I must confess I prefer something lighter—and less greasy—more graceful, and less indolent, and above all, something which can speak English.

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From the few characteristics of the place and inhabitants I have thus humedly [*sic*] detailed, you will doubtless conclude that Panama is “ *some punkins*.” It is indeed, and were it not for the hot sun and narrow streets, its ill-planned houses, lazy men and skittish women; its seedy churches, rattling bells and crowing cocks; its bad bread, dirty sugar, sour molasses and tough meats; its smooth

skin'd hairless dogs, and emaciated cats; its cheap wines, and intolerable brandy; its cockroaches and smaller vermin; in fine, were it not devoid of every comfort and all the luxuries of life, one might possibly consent to *live* here, were there no other spot on the habitable globe, where he could calmly lay himself down and die.

Yours truly,

W. H. H.

MARCH 18, 1849 *To the Courier*:

Satisfied, after one month's detention in this place, that the chances for getting up to San Francisco are growing beautifully less daily, I shall to-morrow set out on my return to the United States. Through the politeness of Col. [John B.] Weller, the United States Commissioner for running the boundary between our country and Mexico, I have received permission to return to New Orleans on the government steamer *Alabama*. This vessel is under his command, and brought out himself and party to Chagres, where she now lies awaiting his orders to sail. He informed me she would leave on Thursday of this week.

I am decidedly *cured* of the gold fever. I never suffered distressingly from the disease—and I know of no more speedy and effectual cure than a month[']s residence in Panama. There is much sickness here, and some deaths. Last night two persons died. One a Mr. Chauncey Hanington [Harrington] from Lockport, a member of Col. Jewett's company. His disease, I understand, was an inflam[m]ation of the liver, &c. He leaves a wife and one child in Lockport. The other members of the company are generally well. Several of them have 187 been sick, but, I am happy to be able to say, are now convalescent. Young Mr. De Zeug from Clyde, N. Y. died a few days ago.

*

A Panama correspondent writing under date of March 20 in the *New York Weekly Tribune* of April 21, 1849, said in part: "There has been but one death lately that I can ascertain. This was a young man from Geneva in our own State, about 21 years of age, named William Dezeug. His complaint

was brain fever. Some of his companions informed me that he worried very much previous to the attack which proved so fatal, because he had not money enough to carry him through to California. It was probably the inducing cause of his disease....”

Several Americans have already set out on their return to the United States, and others are preparing to follow. There is but little hope of getting up the coast for several weeks, and it is impossible, for all who are now here to go up within the next six months. Still, more are constantly arriving. The *Northerner* arrived at Chagres about a week ago with 250 passengers, and several sail vessels from different ports in the United States arrive weekly. The following gentlemen from Buffalo are now here, and are all well:—Harry Waring, Mr. Todd, Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Hudson, Mr. Rice, brother of the writing master, and myself. Mr. Hudson sails for San Francisco to-morrow on the whaling barque *Equator* —the others have passages engaged.

Use your efforts to deter all seekers after gold from taking this route, at present. It will soon be sickly here. The rainy season commences next month, and then the natives themselves do not escape. Besides, there is no certainty of finding any kind of conveyance up the coast. The steamers even, cannot be relied on. They have no depot of coal at San Francisco or here, and it is highly probable their crews will desert them at the former place. I would write more but have not time at present.

Truly yours,

W. H. H.

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Arrival of Vessels and Passengers at Chagres for California

December 27, 1848–April 30, 1849 ARRIVAL VESSEL PLACE AND DATE OF DEPARTURE
NUMBER OF PASSENGERS 1848 Dec. 27 Steamer *Falcon* New York, Dec. 1; New Orleans,
Dec. 19 193 29 Bark *John Benson* New York, Dec. 11 (50,60) 1849 Jan. 2 Steamer *Crescent City*
New York, Dec. 23 180 7 Brig *Lowder* New Orleans, Dec. 28? 40 9 Schooner *Macon* New Orleans,

Dec.10; wrecked at Chagres (30,60) 13 Brig *Caroline E. Platt* New York, Dec. 20; wrecked at Chagres 14 Steamer *Orus* New York, Dec. 21 (14,50) 16 Steamer *Isthmus* New York, Dec. 25 (60,68) 16 Brig *Henrico* New York, Jan. 10 (20,33) 22 Brig *Mary Pennel* New York, Jan. 2; wrecked at Chagres 24 Bark *Harriet Bartlett* New York, Jan. 6 (65,66) 29 British mail steamer *Trent* 30 Schooner *Sovereign* Baltimore, Jan. 16 (50,52) Feb. 6 Schooner *Florida* New Orleans, Jan. 14; held in quarantine after arrival Jan. 30 (7,80)

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6 Bark *Templeton* New York, Jan. 29 60 6 Schooner *Rawson* New York, Jan. 20 (7,8) 8 Brig *Marion* Philadelphia, Jan. 21 8 14 Brig *Winthrop* New York, Feb. 1 (25,32) 14 Steamer *Falcon* New York, Feb. 1 317 14 Bark *Marietta* New York, Jan. 25 (70,100) 14 Steamer *Crescent City* New York, Feb. 5 305 16 Brig *Eudora* New York, Jan. 29 47 20 Schooner *W. Hazard* New Orleans 70 22 Schooner *William Thompson* New Orleans 64 22 Brig *Bathurst* Baltimore, Feb. 5 (11,42) 23 Brig *Perfect* New Orleans, Feb. 13 (40,45) 24 Ship *Corsair* Boston, Jan. 31 (106,112) 27 Schooner *Mary Filkins* New Orleans 26 27? British mail steamer *Clyde* 28 Brig *Sampson* New York, Feb. 9 (70,72) 28 Brig *Sarah* New York, Feb. 13 (55,56,61) Mar. 6 Bark *Guilford* New York, Feb. 15 34 7 Schooner *Ione* New Orleans 6 8 Bark *S.L. Crowell* Boston, Feb. 4; New York, Feb. 9 (50,51) 8 Steamer *Isthmus* New Orleans, Feb. 22 45 11 Steamer *Northerner* New York, Mar. 1 (150,153) 12 Steamer *Alabama* New Orleans, Mar. 2 (30,60) 19 Brig *Alida* New York, Mar.3? 53 19 Schooner *Galena* New York, Feb. 8? 3 20 Schooner *Edwin* Boston, Mar 2? (27,32)

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20 Brig *Henrico* Charleston, Mar. 5 (21,22) 24 Steamer *Crescent City* New York, Mar. 15 338 25? British mail steamer *Medeway* England via Jamaica 25? Dutch schooner *Esthers* Curacao 27 Steamer *Falcon* New York, Mar. 8; New Orleans, Mar. 20 106 30 British schooner *Sarah Ann* Honduras 11 31 British schooner *Emily* Honduras 31 31 British brig *Thetis* Honduras 80 31 Schooner *Crescent City* New Orleans, Feb. 28 (53,58,70) 31 Brig *Major Eastland* New Orleans, Mar. 12 (105,109) April 1 Schooner *Splendid* New York, Mar. 10 (25,26,35) 1 Steamer *Maria Burt* New Orleans 30 2 Schooner *Viola* Norfolk, Mar. 10 (8,10) 3 Sloop *South Carolina* Key West 14 3 Brig *Predoza* New Orleans 27 4 Schooner *Harriet Neal* Boston, Mar. 12 (30,31,33) 4 Schooner

Mary Maria St. Augustine 5 7? Brig. *St. Andrew Baltimore*, Mar. 12 24 7 Bark *Santee New York*, Mar. 22 (57,58) 12 Brig. *Dr. Hitchcock New York*, Mar. 16(45,50) 13 Brig *Leverett New York*, Mar. 26 (54,62)

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21 Brig *Perfect New Orleans*, Mar. 26 (27?) (44,54) 22 British mail steamer *Teviot Carthagen* 30 23 Steamer *Col. Stanton New Orleans*, Apr. 14 (69,70) 24 Bark *Charles Devens New York*, Apr. 6 (53,64) 26 Steamer *Crescent City New York*, Apr. 17 144 28 Brig *Azalia New York*, Apr. 10 (30,35) 29 Bark *Florida New Orleans* 70

The foregoing list is corrected and expanded from two principal lists compiled in the *New York Herald*, one covering the period to March 20, in the issue of April 10; the other covering the period March 30-April 30, in the issue of May 13. The *Herald* of April 19 has a supposedly comprehensive list of sailings from all U. S. ports, including vessels for Chagres, but this does not in all respects correlate with the record of arrivals at Chagres. Dates of departure from the various ports come initially from the list of April 19, but as far as possible, they have been checked against the day-to-day record of sailings in the *Herald* and *Weekly Tribune*. Often the two papers disagree as to the number of passengers, and further discrepancies appear in the record of arrivals at Chagres and in the various letters written from the Isthmus, the reports brought by returning steamers, and even the narratives of Forty-niners who were passengers on the vessels in question. When the number of passengers is variously stated in parentheses, the confusion of the available information is displayed. It does not necessarily follow, however, that when the number of passengers is flatly stated, its accuracy may be accepted; this may prove nothing more than that only a single source of information was available. There may also be a degree of variation in the criteria for establishing the date of arrival for 192 various vessels; in some instances the date may mean arrival off the port; in others, arrival in the inner harbor, or date of landing passengers. In short, the whole record is highly tentative, and subject to further correction and extension, but worthy of being printed in its present state, because no such record heretofore has been available to students of the Gold Rush and the Isthmus route.

Not included in the tabulation are a few vessels which presumably escaped the contemporary accounting, some of which may have arrived during the period March 21-29, not covered by the information from Chagres. These would include the Bark *Bogota* with 40 or 49 passengers, which sailed from New York February 22; the Brig *Alvaris* (or *Albrasia*) with 33 passengers, which sailed from New York the same day; and the Bark *Thames* with 54 passengers, which sailed from Boston February 23 (or March 1). The steamer *Galveston*, which sailed from New Orleans February 20 with 158 passengers, and which for a time was unreported and supposed to have been lost at sea, put into Belize, British Honduras, for repairs, as reported in the *Weekly Tribune* of April 21, which also said that the British schooner *Sarah Ann* took some of her passengers on to Chagres. No doubt others were carried by the British vessels *Emily* and *Thetis*. The steamer *Maria Burt* left New Orleans February 28, but as we learn from Samuel McNeil's narrative, she sprang a leak and had to return to port. The date of her second departure, which brought her to Chagres April 1, as recorded in the tabulation, I have not ascertained.

In addition to the three vessels recorded in the tabulation as having been wrecked at Chagres, a Chagres letter of January 24, 1849, in the *Herald* of February 15 discusses the loss of the brig *Hewannee*, the brig *Anne and Eliza*, and the brig *Othello*, all of which may have carried freight and sailed before the Gold Rush began.

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Designed and printed

by Robert Greenwood and Newton Baird

at The Talisman Press in an edition limited to

750 copies. July, 1960.