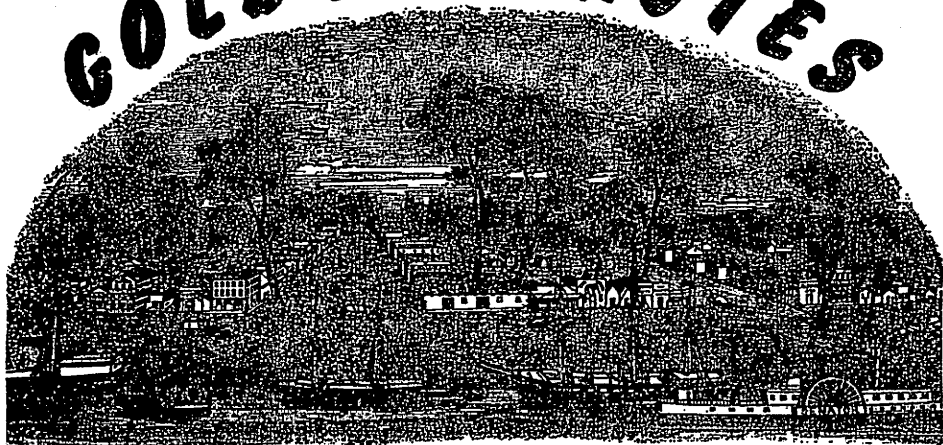


GOLDEN NOTES



SACRAMENTO, WINTER OF 1849. (Facsimile of an illustration from the original edition.)

Sacramento County Historical Society

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SACRAMENTO: JANUARY, 1850

Sacramento city, as the embarcadero is called, was clearly visible from the fort, reposing on the plain in its white summer costume; the plains on both sides down stocked with cattle, mules, and horses, from which the ocean emigrants purchased their supplies, there being no animal market in San Francisco. For a mile from the city there was a suburb of snow-white tents of different shapes and sizes, erected amongst the fine open trees that skirted it, presenting a pretty and most unique appearance, and on entering the town I found nine-tenths of the houses made of the same material, nailed on very light frames indeed; the streets laid out with great regularity, and of a fine width, many of the majestic trees being permitted to remain, casting their delicious shade about, and adding wonderfully to the novel and pleasing effect. The shops and stores are very spacious, and excellently assorted, quantities of even light portable goods are piled out under the verandahs, where they remain night and day — strange as it may appear in this mixed community, with perfect security; such was the apprehension of summary punishment that followed detected theft.

Town lots were fetching wonderful prices at that period; sites with front-ages twenty-five feet by twenty-five feet bringing from 3,000 to 5,000 dollars, with a steady upward tendency. There were no hotels; but in lieu of them there were boarding-houses, where your bare meals cost you twenty-five dollars per week, attached to each there was a large apartment, littered over with hay, where you paid one dollar for the privilege of lying on the ground in your own blanket. If you remained over one night you rolled your blanket up on the spot where you lay, and left it there; but as all did

not go to bed at the same time, or in the same trim, you were subject to have your snoring interrupted by the iron-heel of a huge boot on your nose, or the knee of a staggering emigrant in search of his nest on the pit of your stomach; nor was it unusual in the morning to find a congealed tobacco spittle on your cheek, or like a big soot-drop on your blanket

There was a large fleet of fine shipping in the river, lying afloat close enough to the banks to discharge by gangway, the river being very deep, and tidal for fifty miles above the city. Several splendid ships were dismantled, and converted into stores, boarding-houses, and hospitals, their crews having all deserted, and there being no possibility of getting them down to the coast. I saw A-1 ships there, 400 tons burden, offered for 8,000 dollars without getting a customer; and fifteen-ton boats, suited to river trade, selling readily as high as 2,500 dollars. Wages of all sorts were very high at that time, a common labourer getting twelve dollars and his keep, and any sort of tradesman from one ounce to twenty dollars. The cost of tightening the tyres of a waggon was thirty-two dollars, and that of shoeing a horse twelve dollars; however, as the emigrants came in, those unparalleled charges were gradually fined down, but never to what I would call a reasonable level.

There was one peculiarity about the city, then containing about 10,000 souls, that could not fail striking a stranger immediately, which was the total absence of women and children. Native Californians were constantly coming to and fro, galloping, as is always their custom, at full speed, even through the most crowded thoroughfares; but they manage their horses with admirable skill, and can rein them up in an instant, from the severity of their bits. Numbers, too, of the native Indians were constantly strolling about, too idle to hire themselves out, even at the high rates offered

When able to toddle about town, I was amazed at the extent of improvement in the limited period of my absence — to be sure, edifices, were of simple construction, and capable of being erected with great facility; nevertheless, when I surveyed one fine new street of goodly proportions, with well-stored shops and a busy population, which had sprung into being and bustle in so brief a space, I could not repress my wonder and amazement; others also ambitiously planned were fast approximating to occupation, the most imposing piece of architecture in each being as a matter of course, a capacious hell, or gaudy gambling rendezvous, one of which was emblazoned in letters of immense magnitude, with the quaintly characteristic name of "The Gold Diggings."

William Kelly, J. P., *An Excursion to California With a Stroll Through the Diggings and Ranches of That Country*, Vol. II, London, 1851.

SACRAMENTO'S HISTORIC BUILDINGS

By Alice Fisher Simpson

Situated on California's largest river, navigable to ocean-going vessels, and lying astride the important trails to the Sierra Nevada, Sacramento City became the grand receptacle of overland immigration and the hub of the Northern Mines in the great Gold Rush of 1849. With 1854 she became an even more important center of commerce and business enterprise, when

she was chosen as the permanent capital of the lusty, young State of California. By the middle 1850's, business houses, which in 1849 had centered along the embarcadero from I to M Streets, had spread east beyond Fourth Street and along J and K. The "City of the Plains" was fast taking form, and the pioneer Sacramento merchants and business leaders were writing a dynamic chapter in California's golden history.—

Today, with the passing of more than a century, and in spite of the disastrous fires and floods which ravaged the young city on the Sacramento, a number of the original old commercial buildings of the 1850's are still standing. In view of the fact that nearly all of these historic structures, together with the sites of others long since gone, are located in the west end of the city — an area currently under consideration for redevelopment — it is interesting to note briefly the part many of them played, directly or indirectly, in the building of a mighty Inland Empire.

By June of 1849, when the Gold Rush reached its height, trade and commerce were expanding rapidly, as most of the gold mined in the northern camps was being funneled through Sacramento City. Eleven wholesale houses could be counted along the embarcadero, while huge, overloaded freight wagons moved through the dusty streets, bound for the distant gold camps. The river trade was brisk too, with sea-going vessels often moored for a mile along the waterfront. Into this theatre of chaos and excitement, in the late summer of 1849, came a young New York bank clerk named Darius Ogden Mills. The quiet, determined young man of twenty-four first opened a small merchandise store on lower J street, near the river landings. Then, sensing the dire need for a bank, he opened a banking and exchange office in October, and began dealing in gold dust, nuggets and New York exchange. The new establishment, devoted solely to banking and exchange, was one of the first institutions of its kind in California. With his own hands Mills weighed the gold dust of the first depositors, the hardy argonauts of '49, who made the early history of California. In 1850 the financier formally founded the Bank of D. O. Mills and Company, and in 1853 erected an imposing new building on the south side of J street, near the corner of Third. In 1865 the bank moved to a larger building, which is still standing on the southeast corner of Second and J.

Facing the embarcadero, at what is now 919 Front Street, was the site of the City Hotel, completed in September 1849, at a cost of approximately \$100,000. The new hostelry was one of the first real hotels in California and "quite a notability in its day", states the *City Directory* of 1851. The building frame had originally been erected on the American River near Brighton by Captain John A. Sutter, for use as a flour mill. With the discovery of gold and the subsequent abandonment of the project, the building was purchased by Sam Brannan and Company and moved to what was then a corn field on Front Street between I and J.

Nearby, at what is now 921 Front Street, was the site of the famous old Eagle Theater, also built in 1849, with sail-cloth walls and a sheet metal roof. It was the first structure in California to be erected exclusively for use as a theater, and according to Bayard Taylor in his *El Dorado*, the miners received

their gold dust's worth of entertainment.

On the southwest corner of Front and K, near the steamer landing, was the site of the stage station, terminus for numerous stage lines in the early 1850's running between Sacramento and the various points of the Northern Mines. Probably in no other American city was staging conducted on a larger scale than in Sacramento City during the 1850's. According to *Sacramento Illustrated* (pg. 22), published in 1855, there were thirteen different stage lines operating in Sacramento City in March of 1853, employing sixty-seven coaches and more than seven hundred horses.

Directly opposite the stage terminus, on the southeast corner of Front and K, was Sackett's Hotel, built in 1853. Later, this building was occupied by the What Cheer House, one of the most elegant and exclusive hostleries of the early days.

At 1023 Front Street is the old store and home of Newton Booth, eleventh governor of California in 1871 and United States senator in 1875. The store, founded in 1850, was headquarters for miners from the diggings. Now deprived of its once picturesque view of the river by a row of freight sheds, the old building still stands, a bit weatherbeaten but nevertheless dignified, with its cast iron balconies and French windows overhung by elaborate cornices. On the upper floor Booth is said to have maintained official reception quarters during his term as Governor, and a ballroom with a capacity for a thousand dancers.

Farther south on Front Street stood another historic building. At what is now 1319 Front Street, George Zinns erected the first brick house in the City of Sacramento. The two-story building, fronting on the river, was completed early in 1849 at a cost of \$40,000. According to Thompson and West in their *History of Sacramento County*, there were two stores on the ground floor and the upper story was occupied by the "Anchor Hotel".

Five blocks away, on the riverbank at Front and R Streets, was the site of the freight depot of the Sacramento Valley Railroad, built in 1855. The historic line, the first commercial railroad in California, ran between Sacramento and Folsom, and was completed in 1856.

Among the earliest business firms to spring up in the mushroom metropolis of 1849 was Lady Adams Company, importers and wholesale dealers in flour, grain, provisions, liquors, wines and cigars. In 1849 the original members of the firm had come to California from Hamburg, Germany, on the Brig *Lady Adams*, of which they were the owners, and adopted the name of their vessel in all their business transactions. According to an account in the *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 15, 1873, page 2, the Lady Adams Company erected a fireproof brick building at Nos. 13 and 15 K Street (now 115 K Street) in June of 1852, at an expense of \$29,000. All material for the structure, 27½ by 75 feet and two stories high, was brought around the Horn on the *Lady Adams*, the bricks being used as ballast. One of the few structures to withstand the terrible fire on November 2, 1852, as well as later conflagrations, the Lady Adams building stands proudly today and is looked upon as a landmark of the city's pioneer architecture.

In the immediate neighborhood are two other interesting old landmarks.

At what is now 112 J Street is a once outstanding three-story, brick structure, erected in 1853 by H. E. Robinson and occupied by Jones' Hotel, a high-class establishment in its day, and said to have been the meeting place for various organizations. At 116 K Street is Ebner's Hotel, erected in 1856 by Charles Ebner, a friend of John Sutter.

Viewing the heart of the redevelopment area today, Second to Fourth Streets, J and K, one can scarcely imagine the bustling, enterprising business and financial center that existed in this section during the 1850's. At 1018 Second Street stood the prominent Orleans Hotel, opened for business on September 6, 1850, and a favorite stopping place for celebrities of the day. An article in the *Democratic State Journal*, January 4, 1856, page 2, describes the original building as a three-story, wooden structure, built by a company from New Orleans at a cost of \$100,000, with all building material being shipped from the latter city. Like most of the city's business houses, the Orleans Hotel was completely destroyed in the fire of 1852. Rebuilt of brick almost immediately, it became the elegant headquarters of the California Stage Company in 1854, when nearly all of the city's stage lines were brought under one head.

Next door to the Orleans Hotel, at what is now 1014 Second Street, was the granite-front building of the celebrated Adams and Company Express and Banking House, erected in 1853 and still standing. On the southwest corner of Second and J, stands the old Hastings Building, erected in 1853. It was the home of the B. F. Hastings and Company banking firm, one of the earliest of such concerns in California. At one time the building was occupied by Wells Fargo and Company and the State Supreme Court. Theodore Judah, mastermind behind the plan for the Central Pacific Railroad, also maintained offices there.

Across the street, at 1015 Second Street, stands a venerable old structure, said to have been erected in 1853. It has been claimed for many years that this building later became the western terminus of the famous Pony Express, the historic mail service connecting Sacramento and St. Joseph, Missouri, established in April 1860 by Russell, Majors and Waddell, the outstanding freighting and staging concern of the plains. Not only did the Pony Express write an illustrious chapter in the history of western transportation, but it played a dominant part in holding California for the Union. Because of the historical significance of the old building it was given to the City of Sacramento by the Western Union Telegraph Company in 1938 and was used as a museum.

In the same neighborhood, at about what is now 121 J Street, was the two-story brick building erected by John M. Rhodes in 1853, and occupied by the *Sacramento Daily Union*. The paper was established in March of 1851, with Dr. John F. Morse as the first editor. Today the *Union* enjoys the distinction of being the oldest surviving daily newspaper west of the Rocky Mountains. With 1857 a second daily newspaper entered the field, the *Sacramento Daily Bee*, located in a building on Third Street between J and K on the southwest corner of the alley. The structure was erected in 1857 and is still standing. The first issue of the new newspaper was published on February

3rd of that same year, with James McClatchy as one of the first editors. In February of 1886 Mr. McClatchy became the sole owner of the *Sacramento Bee*, which today is one of the largest newspapers in California.

Two other old buildings in the vicinity are worthy of mention. Still standing on the southwest corner of Third and J Streets is the Overton Building, rebuilt soon after the fire of 1852 and owned by Read and Company. A prominent commercial structure in its day, the building housed the State Library and the office of the Secretary of State in 1855. Governor Bigler is also said to have maintained offices there at one time. At 919 Third Street, the old Pioneer Mutual Volunteer Fire House is also still standing. Erected in 1854, the building was the home of the Pioneer Mutual Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, one of the oldest fire companies on the Pacific Coast — organized on February 5, 1850.

One of the oldest remaining structures in Sacramento, and one of the city's most historic links with the past, is the building once numbered 54 K Street, home of the Huntington, Hopkins and Company hardware store, built in 1852. According to the *Sacramento City Directory* of 1856, the firm was established in October 1849 as C. P. Huntington. After successive changes in partnership, the name was finally changed to Huntington, Hopkins and Company in 1855. Immediately adjoining the Huntington, Hopkins Building, at what was once numbered 56-58 K Street, was the building of Stanford Brothers, wholesale grocers. This structure was built slightly earlier in the year 1852 and was later merged with the Huntington, Hopkins Building, bearing the address — 220-228 K Street. With the building of the Central Pacific Railroad in the 1860's the Huntington, Hopkins Building became the headquarters of "THE BIG FOUR".

Among the early day hotels still in operation is the Golden Eagle at 627 K Street, built in 1853 and remodeled in the 1870's. President Grant stopped there on his tour of the West. Another hotel of great importance in the old days was the Western Hotel at 215 K Street, once the largest hotel in the West. The original building on the same site was destroyed in the fire of 1854. Also still in operation is the old Dawson House, a fashionable hotel in its day, built in 1856 at 4th and J Streets. Now shorn of its former glory, it is known as the St. George Hotel.

Probably the most historic site in all Sacramento, a camp site rather than a building site, and far removed from the current march of progress, is a spot between 28th and 29th, slightly north of the present Southern Pacific Railroad levee, where the channel of the American River ran years ago. Sailing up the American from its confluence with the Sacramento, the Empire Builder, John Augustus Sutter, and his party landed there in the year 1839, close to what is now 2901 B Street, where the Swiss later established his tannery. From this spot on the bank of the American River, Sutter's land-hungry eyes sought out a knoll a mile to the south where he reared his historic fort, an outpost of civilization in the heart of the great empty valley, and the cradle of the future of Sacramento!

AWFUL CONFLAGRATION — SACRAMENTO IN ASHES

Six Lives Known to be Lost!

November 2, 1852

At 11:30 o'clock on Tuesday evening, a fire broke out in the millinery shop of Madam Lanos, on J Street, near the corner of Fourth. The inspectors were counting the votes (1) and a numerous crowd were (sic) awaiting the decision of the Judges, so that no time was lost in delay. With astonishing rapidity the fire spread from building to building — up, down and across the street, in five minutes. The Crescent City Hotel, (2) on the opposite side of the street, was in flames, and being of inflammable materials and of large size, sent the fiery torrent in every direction. The hardware store of Hawthoth, (3) Eells & Co. communicated the flames to the brick block adjoining, which was speedily burned to the ground, and carried the fire up the street on both sides, until it reached Eighth street, and on the south side of J street. On the corner side, from Brown, Kenny & Co.'s brick block, which caught from the Crescent City fire, there was nothing to stay its progress but the Overton Block, on the corner of Third and J streets, on the one side, and Scudder, Carrol & Co. on the other. For a time the superhuman exertions put forth seemed to check, and it was hoped would entirely subdue the fire, and the boom of the powder, like artillery that was deposited in every building, by the hook and ladder boys, was deemed the signal for the arrest and staying of the fire on this line. In vain, however; the wind, heretofore blowing towards the Levee, increased to a gale and changed to the the north, thus turning the fire broadside on, and in five minutes it had spread to M street.

From J and Third, the fire curled around Scudder & Carroll's and extended to Dr. Morrell's drug store on the south side of J street, which proved a barrier for a time. These buildings, of wood, were built in 1849, and as combustible as powder. The flames caught the wooden building opposite, and spread to the rear on I street. At this time, W. R. McCall & Co's building caught on the roof. The burning of their building sealed the fate of all to the Levee, on both sides of the street, and bearing down the length of the city, the flames extended, soon wrapping the Orleans Hotel. The buildings all around were blown up with the rapidity of magic, carts standing ready with 25 lb. kegs of powder. The Union office next fell, the proprietors saving two presses, type and paper sufficient for a few days' supply. (4) They intended issuing an extra for the 2 o'clock boat. The Tehama block, containing Page, Bacon & Co.'s, Swift's and Grimes' banking offices, saved, wind changing, blowing directly South from them. J. B. Starr's store also made a wall to prevent the further spread of the fire in that direction. At this moment the fire reached, from the levee, J and K street to Tenth, one sea of fire, crumbling every thing to ashes. The large brick store of J. A. Haines, the brick blocks on K — with exception of that of the Lady Adams Co. on K, between 1st and K Streets, (5) are a pile of ruins. The L. A. Co.'s buildings (6) stand prominent and erect this morning, a monument to the proprietor's sagacity and good sense. The families on the line below K Street, were busy removing their valuables and furniture, when the flames crossed the brick

barrier, and swept with remorseless fury down and across, licking with its forked tongue from street to alley, apparently shrivelling the wooden buildings with a single breath. The inmates of the hospital, 70 in number, were taken in season to the levee, and from thence to a suitable house by Drs. Briarly and Williams. The City market, filled with hay, and the hospital, were the last on that line of the fire, where the citizens effectually stopped the further progress. On F street the brick building of Reynolds & Co. made but a light barrier, the roof falling in almost immediately, with three of No. 3's Engine men, who were burned to death. (7) Everything to 8th street, on the north, and 9th street on the south side of J street to 12th street on K, down to N street on the southeast, through N and M to the levee, — the El Dorado, (8) supposed impregnable hitherto, as also Merritt's, Dr. Morrill's, Scudder's, and Case & Co.'s are completely gutted.

Thus far the number of lives ascertained to be lost are six: Madame Lanos, where the fire originated was sick and is reported to have perished in her bed; three of No. 3 engine Company's men, who fell with the roof of Reynolds & Co.'s building, were swallowed up alive; the confusion of the morning, and the scattering of people, prevented a roll call to ascertain the names of the gallant but unfortunate firemen. A lady, next door to the place where the fire originated, is also reported burnt. The number scorched is enormous, all of whom, however, are carefully attended to by surgeons on board the *Camanche*. Every assistance possible was proffered by the captains and agents of the steamers, whose vessels were soon crowded with females. The levee was strewn with merchandise of every description, and the wind blowing from the northwest threw the sparks from the goods and saved them all. At 5 A.M., the fire had nearly ceased, the smouldering embers throwing huge clouds of smoke and lurid flashes, bringing desolation to the hearts of all who witnessed the sickening sight. The losses cannot be less than \$5,000,000.

San Francisco Daily Herald, November 4, 1852, page 2.

1. Presidential election of Nov. 2, 1852.
2. J. Street, between 3rd and 4th.
3. Haworth Eells.
4. *Sacramento Daily Union*, then located in Langley's brick building at 21 J Street.
5. 2nd
6. Lady Adams
7. Probably Booth and Reynolds, No. 74 J Street.
8. Corner 2nd and J.

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