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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Fitzgerald Dostoyevsky Hall  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
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**Personal Reminiscences of Early  
Days in California with Other  
Sketches, To Which Is Added the  
Story of His Attempted  
Assassination by a Former  
Associate on the Supreme Bench  
of the State**

George Congdon Gorham

# Imprint

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The following sketches were taken down by a stenographer in the summer of 1877, at San Francisco, from the narrative of Judge Field. They are printed at the request of a few friends, to whom they have an interest which they could not excite in others.



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## WHY AND HOW I CAME TO CALIFORNIA.

Some months previous to the Mexican War, my brother David Dudley Field, of New York City, wrote two articles for the Democratic Review upon the subject of the Northwestern Boundary between the territory of the United States and the British Possessions. One of these appeared in the June, and the other in the November number of the Review for 1845.[1] While writing these articles he had occasion to examine several works on Oregon and California, and, among others, that of Greenhow, then recently published, and thus became familiar with the geography and political history of the Pacific Coast. The next Spring, and soon after the war broke out, in the course of a conversation upon its probable results, he remarked, that if he were a young man, he would go to San Francisco; that he was satisfied peace would never be concluded without our acquiring the harbor upon which it was situated; that there was no other good harbor on the coast, and that, in his opinion, that town would, at no distant day, become a great city. He also remarked that if I would go he would furnish the means, not only for the journey, but also for the purchase of land at San Francisco and in its vicinity. This conversation was the first germ of my project of coming to California.

Some months afterwards, and while Col. Stevenson's regiment was preparing to start from New York for California, my brother again referred to the same subject and suggested the idea of my going out with the regiment. We had at that time a clerk in the office by the name of Sluyter, for whom I had great regard. With him I talked the matter over, it being my intention, if I should go at all, to induce him if possible to accompany me. But he wished to get married, and I wished to go to Europe. The result of our conference was, that the California project was deferred, with the understanding, however, that after my return from Europe we should give it further consideration. But the idea of going to California thus suggested, made a powerful impression upon my mind. It pleased me.

There was a smack of adventure in it. The going to a country comparatively unknown and taking a part in fashioning its institutions, was an attractive subject of contemplation. I had always thought that the most desirable fame a man could acquire was that of being the founder of a State, or of exerting a powerful influence for good upon its destinies; and the more I thought of the new territory about to fall into our hands beyond the Sierra Nevada, the more I was fascinated with the idea of settling there and growing up with it.

But I was anxious first to visit, or rather to revisit, Europe. I was not able, however, to make the necessary arrangements to do so until the Summer of 1848. On the first of May of that year, I dissolved partnership with my brother, and in June started for Europe. In the following December, while at Galignani's News Room in Paris, I read in the New York Herald the message of President Polk, which confirmed previous reports, that gold had been discovered in California, then recently acquired. It is difficult to describe the effect which that message produced upon my mind. I read and re-read it, and the suggestion of my brother to go to that country recurred to me, and I felt some regret that I had not followed it. I remained in Europe, however, and carried out my original plan of seeing its most interesting cities, and returned to the United States in 1849, arriving at New York on the 1st of October of that year.

There was already at that early period a steamer leaving that city once or twice every month for Chagres. It went crowded every trip. The impulse which had been started in me by my brother in 1846, strengthened by the message of President Polk, had now become irresistible. I joined the throng, and on November 13th, 1849, took passage on the "Crescent City;" and in about a week's time, in company with many others, I found myself at the little old Spanish-American town of Chagres, on the Isthmus of Panama. There we took small boats and were poled up the river by Indians to Cruces, at which place we mounted mules and rode over the mountain to Panama. There I found a crowd of persons in every degree of excitement, waiting for passage to California. There were thousands of them. Those who came on the "Crescent City" had engaged passage on the Pacific side also; but such was the demand among the multitude at Panama for the means of transportation, that some of the steerage passengers sold their tickets from that place to San Francis-

co for \$750 apiece and took their chances of getting on cheaper. These sales, notwithstanding they appeared at the time to be great bargains, proved, in most cases, to be very unfortunate transactions; for the poor fellows who thus sold their tickets, besides losing their time, exposed themselves to the malaria of an unhealthy coast. There was in fact a good deal of sickness already among those on the Isthmus, and many deaths afterwards occurred; and among those who survived there was much suffering before they could get away.

The vessel that conveyed us, and by "us" I mean the passengers of the "Crescent City," and as many others as could by any possibility procure passage from Panama to San Francisco was the old steamer "California." She was about one thousand tons burden; but probably no ship of two thousand ever carried a greater number of passengers on a long voyage. When we came to get under way, there did not seem to be any spare space from stem to stern. There were over twelve hundred persons on board, as I was informed.[2] Unfortunately many of them carried with them the seeds of disease. The infection contracted under a tropical sun, being aggravated by hardships, insufficient food, and the crowded condition of the steamer, developed as the voyage proceeded. Panama fever in its worst form broke out; and it was not long before the main deck was literally covered with the sick. There was a physician attached to the ship; but unfortunately he was also prostrated. The condition of things was very sad and painful.

Among the passengers taken sick were two by the name of Gregory Yale and Stephen Smith; and I turned myself into a nurse and took care of them. Mr. Yale, a gentleman of high attainments, and who afterwards occupied a prominent place at the bar of the State, was for a portion of the time dangerously ill, and I believe that but for my attentions he would have died. He himself was of this opinion, and afterwards expressed his appreciation of my attention in every way he could. In the many years I knew him he never failed to do me a kindness whenever an opportunity presented. Finally, on the evening of December 28, 1849, after a passage of twenty-two days from Panama, we reached San Francisco, and landed between eight and nine o'clock that night.

[1] The first article was entitled "The Oregon Question," and the second "The Edinburgh and Foreign Quarterly on the Oregon Question."

[2] NOTE.—The number of passengers reported to the journals of San Francisco on the arrival of the steamer was much less than this, probably to avoid drawing attention to the violation of the statute which restricted the number.

## FIRST EXPERIENCES IN SAN FRANCISCO.

Upon landing from the steamer, my baggage consisted of two trunks, and I had only the sum of ten dollars in my pocket. I might, perhaps, have carried one trunk, but I could not manage two; so I was compelled to pay out seven of my ten dollars to have them taken to a room in an old adobe building on the west side of what is now known as Portsmouth Square. This room was about ten feet long by eight feet wide, and had a bed in it. For its occupation the sum of \$35 a week was charged. Two of my fellow-passengers and myself engaged it. They took the bed, and I took the floor. I do not think they had much the advantage on the score of comfort.

The next morning I started out early with three dollars in my pocket. I hunted, up a restaurant and ordered the cheapest breakfast I could get. It cost me two dollars. A solitary dollar was, therefore, all the money in the world I had left, but I was in no respect despondent over my financial condition. It was a beautiful day, much like an Indian Summer day in the East, but finer. There was something exhilarating and exciting in the atmosphere which made everybody cheerful and buoyant. As I walked along the streets, I met a great many persons I had known in New York, and they all seemed to be in the highest spirits. Every one in greeting me, said "It is a glorious country," or "Isn't it a glorious country?" or "Did you ever see a more glorious country?" or something to that effect. In every case the word "glorious" was sure to come out. There was something infectious in the use of the word, or rather in the feeling,