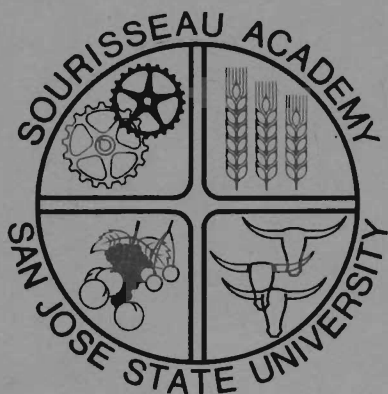


An Index to Hall's, 1871 History of San José

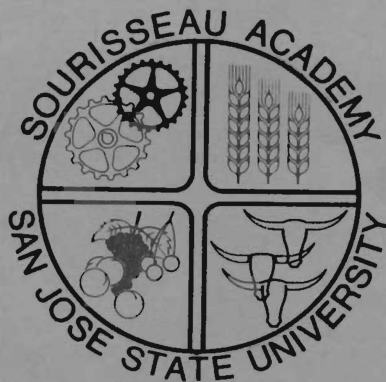
by
Everett and Anna Marie Hager

with an introduction
by
Benjamin Franklin Gilbert



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Occasional Paper No. 2, 1974



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INTRODUCTION

by
Benjamin Franklin Gilbert

Frederic Hall's *The History of San José and Surroundings: With Biographical Sketches of Early Settlers* was published in 1871 at San Francisco by A. L. Bancroft and Company, successor of H. H. Bancroft and Company. Albert Little Bancroft was a younger brother of Hubert Howe Bancroft, renowned as "the wholesale historian" of California. The Bancrofts had already been publishing books for twelve years, and although some of their other historical works were indexed, unfortunately, the Hall study was not.

Hall was born in Rutland, Vermont, on October 16, 1825. Upon completing high school, he worked in various New England cities as a clerk. By 1848 he found employment in a New Orleans commercial house having considerable business with mercantile firms in Mexico. In his new position Hall acquired a good command of Spanish and engaged in commercial dealings with Mexican entrepreneurs. One of these persuaded Hall to come to Mexico City to serve as a tutor for his son.

Hall's first stay in Mexico was brief, for he was attracted to California by news of the gold discovery. He first settled in Monterey where he learned he could make more money in business than in working in the gold fields. In 1850 he moved to San Jose and began to accumulate land and cattle. His interest in these pursuits caused him to study law and within two years he was admitted to practice. He specialized in land law and usually aided other attorneys with cases.

Hall participated in the notable case of Isaac Branham *et al v.* The Mayor and Common Council of San Jose, involving the city's pueblo lands. In 1858 Hall went to Washington, D.C. to assist in the defense of John A. Sutter's land claims before the United States Supreme Court. When he returned to San Jose, he again engaged in land acquisition, cattle raising, and law practice. Although Hall was severely hit by the drought of 1863-64 and lost numerous cattle, he somehow survived and held both individually and jointly about 9,000 acres.

In 1867 Hall was retained by Ben Holladay, the stage and railroad king, to protect his silver mining properties in the State of San Luis Potosí in Mexico. While there he was also engaged by Maximilian I, the dethroned Emperor of Mexico, in his attempted defense. Hall visited Maximilian in the Capuchin Convent where he was imprisoned and they

became good friends. However, the Mexican authorities did not allow Hall the opportunity to defend Maximilian since he was a foreigner. After Maximilian was executed, Hall journeyed to Austria and gave Francis Joseph I a personal account of his brother's capture and execution. Hall then wrote his first book, *Life of Maximilian*, which was published in New York in 1868. The book was popular and appeared in several editions under different titles.

Upon his return to San Jose from his European trip, Hall began writing *The History of San José*. Shortly after his second book was published, Hall moved to San Francisco where he continued his law practice. When San Jose participated in the nation's Centennial Celebration on July 4, 1876, Hall was invited to be orator of the day. His speech was a summary of his opus, and it was printed in the San José Pioneer of January 13, 1877.

Hall's busy life kept him single until he was fifty-one. On March 8, 1877, he and Imogene Nicholls were married at Trinity Episcopal Church in San Francisco. His personal friend and a subject of one of the biographical sketches in *The History of San José*, William T. Wallace, gave the bride away. Wallace, a son-in-law of former Governor Peter H. Burnett, was then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California.

In the early eighties Hall became attorney for the Ferrocarril Central Mexicano, a railroad company incorporated in Massachusetts and operated by Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe interests. For about four years Hall was allowed to practice law in Mexico. The Ferrocarril Central Mexicano was a success and Hall evolved into an expert on contemporary Mexican law. As a result of this experience his extensive work, *The Laws of Mexico*, was published by H. H. Bancroft Company in 1885.

After returning to California, Hall settled in Los Angeles where he practiced law. In the nineties he wrote several booklets on the mining and corporation laws of California. In 1898 he was appointed keeper of the pre-statehood archives of California in San Francisco, but he did not hold the position long because of his death on December 26, 1898.

The History of San José has much data concerning the origins and development of the pueblo, the early land grants, and the first settlers. Its coverage of the American occupation in 1846, the survey of the pueblo lots in 1847, and the impact of the Gold Rush in 1848 and 1849 upon the city is particularly important. Since Hall generally resided in San Jose from 1850 to 1870, his insight into the first two decades of San Jose as an embryo American city is that of a competent contemporary observer. Hall witnessed the first two sessions of the Legislature when San Jose was the state capital. He recounts well the evolution of local institutions, schools, newspapers, industries, utilities,

buildings, and transportation facilities. There are also accounts of Mission Santa Clara and Mission San Jose and a chapter on the quicksilver mines at New Almaden. The building of the California State Normal School, after its removal from San Francisco, is described as are the beginnings of the University of the Pacific and Santa Clara College. Additionally, Hall wrote biographical sketches of prominent early settlers. These included Peter H. Burnett, Jacob D. Hoppe, Isaac Branham, Andrew J. Grayson, General Henry M. Naglee and others whom he personally knew. After writing twenty-seven chapters, Hall added seven appendices. In part these contained the regulations for governing California pueblos, the private land grants in Santa Clara County, and the Mexican laws of 1837 for California.

Historians consulting Hall's *The History of San José* have both praised and criticized the book. Hubert Howe Bancroft in his *History of California* in the section, "Authorities Quoted," cited the book and the *Scrap-book* from the *San José Pioneer*. On one page in the first volume, after mentioning the *Annals of San Francisco*, Bancroft remarked: "Hall's *History of San José* should also be mentioned in connection with the *Annals* as a work of merit. In a footnote on other pages Bancroft, in referring to Hall's book, stated:

This modern work contains a tolerably accurate and complete history of San José. Documents on the early years are not numerous, and the author seems to have consulted most of them. There are a few errors in names and translation, but the book is far above the average of what has been given to the California public as history.

However, in commenting upon Hall's oration of July 4, 1876, as it appeared in the *San José Pioneer*, Bancroft noted that it "... is full of errors, many of which are doubtless due to the newspaper and not the writer." Elsewhere Bancroft criticized Hall for misspelling the name of Fernando de Rivera y Moncada and calling him the "Comandante of the presidio of Monterey," when actually he was the lieutenant governor of Baja California. Then once again Bancroft criticized Hall for erroneously stating that there was a long correspondence on the subject of moving the Pueblo of San Jose in 1797 and that the removal was made that year whereas in actuality it was effected in either 1791 or before.

Oscar O. Winther in *The Story of San Jose, 1777-1869* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1935) cited Hall over thirty times and in a footnote he remarked: "Though carefully done, this work has many shortcomings, yet it is a useful source for this subject." William F. James and George H. McMurry in their *History of San Jose* (San Jose, 1933) cited Hall, but did not comment upon his reliability.

Among other authors consulting Hall in their writings on Santa Clara County history have been Clyde Arbuckle in his *Santa Clara Co. Ranchos* (San Jose, 1968) and Kenneth M. Johnson in *The New Almaden Quicksilver Mine* (Georgetown, 1963). Arbuckle in his book has pointed out that Hall's Valley in eastern Santa Clara County is named after Frederic Hall. Among a few studies of broader scope in which Hall's *History of San José* has been cited are Josiah Royce's *California* (Boston, 1886), Cardinal Goodwin's *The Establishment of State Government in California, 1846-1850* (New York, 1914), and Rockwell D. Hunt's *California Firsts* (San Francisco, 1957).

The Sourisseau Academy wisely selected Anna Marie and Everett Gordon Hager to index Hall's *History of San José*. The Hagers are a husband-and-wife-team who had already earned recognition as the foremost indexers of Californiana. Their first major contribution to California history was their 1958 bibliography of the publications of the Historical Society of Southern California. Two years later they prepared the *Topical Index* of all publications of this society from 1884 to 1957. An appropriate aside is the fact that the very first meeting of the Historical Society of Southern California was held in 1883 on the then existing southern branch campus of California State University, San Jose, and also that the society initially maintained its library and historical collection there.

In 1961 the Hagers completed their third formidable reference tool — an index of *Westways*, and its predecessor, *Touring Topics*, an excellent magazine issued by the Automobile Club of Southern California. This accomplishment brought statewide recognition to the Hagers as true bibliophiles and they were given an Award of Merit by the California Historical Society in 1962.

When Professor George P. Hammond finished editing *The Larkin Papers* of ten volumes in 1964, the urgency of an index became paramount. The experienced Hagers volunteered to undertake this perplexing and formidable task. By 1968 the University of California Press published the index for the Bancroft Library and the vast wealth of the personal, business, and official correspondence of Thomas Oliver Larkin, merchant and United States Consul in California, was available to scholars to use to greater advantage.

The Sourisseau Academy in its efforts to foster studies of California State and local history is deeply indebted to Anna Marie and Everett Gordon Hager for an excellent and workable index to Hall's *History of San José*. It is a valuable and utilitarian tool designed to assist all who wish to research topics in Santa Clara County history in the period from 1777 to 1870. A splendid directional guide, the index will open many new vistas in a fascinating and significant research area.

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