



Once gold was discovered, it didn't take long for companies like Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express, this one located at the northeast corner of 2nd and J Streets, to spring up to safe-keep and transport the golden prize.

Chapter 12: Stage Lines, Hotels, Bridges, and Express Companies

We have recorded the beginning and very early history of Sacramento City, and will now attempt to give a sketch of the subsequent progress of the city to-the present time.

The city was re-incorporated in March, 1851, by Act of the Legislature. The Governor refused to sign the bill, but allowed it to become a law by lapse of time. Under the charter thus granted the city was governed until 1858, when what is known as the Consolidation Act was passed, forming one government for both the City and County of Sacramento.

This regime did not give general satisfaction, and the law was repealed in 1863, the city being re-incorporated with the old limits, the government being substantially the same as under the old charter.

Reached Sacramento City at noon + stopped at the Queen City Hotel, putting my horse in a hay yard for keeping. Board was \$14 per week.



William Henry Hart,
September 26, 1852



On September 13, 1853, an encounter took place on J street, between Second and Third, between Gabriel M. Duval and Dr. James L. Downes, in which Duval was almost instantly killed.

The difficulty arose from words spoken by Downes during an election, which brought forth a challenge from Duval. This was promptly accepted by Downes, to the evident surprise of Duval, who did not seem anxious to fight. Cards passed between the parties, until finally Duval threatened to shoot Downes at sight, and attempted to do so, firing two or more shots at Downes before the latter began firing. Downes immediately gave himself up, and, on the examination before Judge Curtis, was discharged, the evidence being overwhelming in proof of the fact that he acted entirely in self-defense.

The Chinese were never given their proper due in the early histories of the California, yet they played a huge role in its settlement and development. It is not known if this Chinese man was in Sacramento at the time this portrait was taken, or was a family member of someone here.



Courtesy Sacramento Area Museums Collection Center (SAMCC)

The flood of 1852 demonstrated the fact that the streets of Sacramento were susceptible of improvement, and that, if business was to be carried on during wet weather, they must be improved. The Common Council, in 1853, passed an ordinance providing for the planking of the business portions of Front, J, K, Second, Third and Eighth streets. The contract was let to W. S. Lovell, who failed when about half through the work, and his securities were obliged to complete it. Fortunately for the city, the securities (Messrs. Spalding, Hastings and Swift) were able and willing to do so. Front street was graded and planked twenty-eight feet wide from I to M streets; J street was graded and planked from the river margin to Twelfth street; K street from the river margin to Eighth street; and Second, Third and Eighth streets from J to K streets.

The question of drainage is one which for years perplexed the brains of Sacramento's engineers, who know that it is necessary for the health of any town or city to have a quick and sure method of disposing of the sewage matter accumulating therein. During high water each year water would seep in through the earth and make unpleasant pools, which would

remain standing until evaporated, or absorbed by the earth. Pumps were tried, but with meager success. In 1864 what is known as the Sacramento Drainage Canal was commenced, and carried through to completion the following year.

STAGE LINES — Until the completion of the Sacramento Valley Railroad in 1856, the stage lines running out of Sacramento were numerous and well appointed. Haworth and Swift were the proprietors of a line running to Grass Valley and Nevada City in 1851. Messrs. Slocum and Morse owned a line to Marysville. James Birch, C. S. Coover, Charles Green, Moore, Hall & Crandall, Jenkins & McConnell, Patterson & McCombe, Frank Stevens, and Baxter & Co. were all operating lines running out of Sacramento in 1853.

In December, 1853, all of these lines consolidated, forming a company known as the California Stage Company, with a capital stock of \$700, 000. This Company was the most extensive one of the kind in existence at that time, if not at any subsequent time. The Company commenced running under the new organization January 1, 1854, with James Birch as President; Frank L. Stevens, Vice-President; J. P. Dughan, Secretary. Office, Orleans Hotel, Sacramento. Mr. Birch established the Telegraph Line in April, 1851, running from Sacramento to Nevada; sold out to Haworth & Swift in the fall, and purchased the route back again in 1853. Mr. Birch also has the honor of having instituted the first stage line in California. This line ran from Sacramento to Mormon Island, and commenced running in September, 1849. The fare was \$16, often, however, running up to \$32, according to the state of the roads and the amount of travel.

An open stagecoach full of fine ladies and gents.



Courtesy California State Library

After two or three days in Sacramento we sold our oxen, and with the proceeds, six hundred dollars, we bought an interest in the hotel kept in one of the wooden houses, a story-and-a-half building which stood on what is now known as K Street, near Sixth, close to what was then the Commercial Exchange, Board of Trade, and Chamber of Commerce, all in one "The Horse Market". The hotel we bought consisted of two rooms, the kitchen, which was my special province, and the general living room, the first room I had entered in Sacramento. I thought I had already grown accustomed to the queer scenes around me, but that first glimpse into a Sacramento hotel was a picture which only loss of memory can efface. Imagine a long room, dimly lighted by dripping tallow candles stuck into whisky bottles, with bunks built from floor to ceiling on either side. A bar with rows of bottles and glasses was in one corner, and two or three miners were drinking; the barkeeper dressed in half sailor, half vaquero fashion, with a blue shirt rolled far back at the collar to display the snowy linen beneath, and his waist encircled by a flaming scarlet sash, was in commanding tones subduing their noisy demands, for the barkeeper, next to the stage-driver, was in early days the most important man in camp. In the opposite corner of the room some men were having a wordy dispute over a game of cards; a cracked fiddle was, under the manipulation of rather clumsy fingers, furnishing music for some half dozen others to dance to the tune of "Moneyusk."

Luzena Wilson, 1849

