

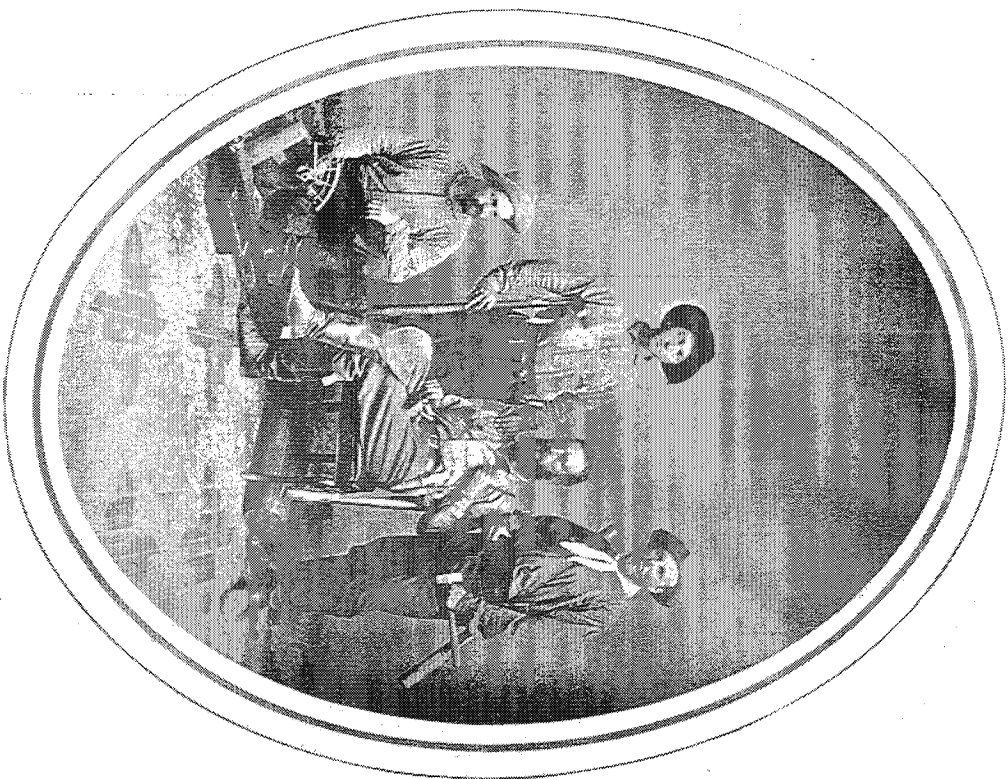
**UP AND DOWN
CALIFORNIA
IN 1860-1864**

THE JOURNAL OF WILLIAM H. BREWER

4TH EDITION, WITH MAPS

*"Like a trip in a time machine—
intimate, vivid, and full of adventure and discoveries."*

—Tom Stienstra San Francisco Chronicle



THE FIELD PARTY OF 1864

GARDINER COTTER BREWER KING

UP AND DOWN

CALIFORNIA

IN 1860-1864

THE JOURNAL OF WILLIAM H. BREWER

FOURTH EDITION, WITH MAPS

EDITED BY FRANCIS P. FARQUHAR
WITH A NEW FOREWORD BY WILLIAM BRIGHT

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Camp No. 24, Nipomo Ranch.
Wednesday, April 10.

We camped on Saturday, April 6, about four miles from the Mission at a little ranch owned by an American—the Ranch Alamo Pintado. It was a lovely spot. Large oaks scattered here and there, the green grass beneath, and the great profusion of flowers, made it look like a fine park. There are two species of oaks here.³ One is an evergreen, with great spreading branches, gnarled and knotted trunks, worthless for timber because it is never straight and it has so many branches, but beautiful, as a tree, with its dark green foliage. The other is a deciduous tree. Like the first it branches low down, so it, too, is useless for timber. It is a most beautiful tree, however, the large limbs branching in great curves—not Gothic arches like the elm, but great round curves, great Roman arches of thirty to fifty feet span, coming down again near the ground. Sometimes such a limb will be thirty feet high twenty or thirty feet from the tree, and again near the end almost touch the ground. A tree close by camp, under which I wrote on Sunday, had a head of over a hundred feet in diameter, and the trunk was about fifteen feet in circumference in the smallest place below the branches. A trailing lichen hangs from every branch, delicate as lace, of a greenish gray color, swaying with every breeze—the effect is beautiful.

On Sunday morning Guirado and I rode to the Mission.⁴ Here was quite a town in former times, but, like the rest of the missions, it is in ruins now. A large, old church stands, but there were scarcely more than a dozen persons—two or three Californians, and a few groups of Indians—kneeling in the vast church. It looked desolate and lonely. The church was highly painted, pictures hung on the walls, but all was dilapidated. The bells were of sweet tone—we could hear them at our camp. Alongside of the church is a college, which once had a hundred or more students.⁵ It now has but eleven, three of whom are Guirado's brothers. The place is in complete ruins. Not

over half a dozen houses are inhabited, the rest going to ruin. Some are roofless, and the *adobe* walls are crumbling with every rain; some, mere banks of dirt or clay, the abode of great numbers of ground squirrels that burrow in the ruins. The old corral is torn down in places, the old threshing floor broken in—all in decay. Long lines of water courses, *sanchas* or small aqueducts, some of them miles in length, laid in stone and cement, to supply the town and irrigate the fields, are now dry and broken. The vineyards are all gone, now dry pastures, and the olive and pear trees are dead. No town is growing up in its stead. A fine cement reservoir and a mill alongside are in ruins. It is the same story that I have written before of other missions.

Here, in this county, is a great field for missionary labor—not a single Protestant church or congregation in the county, not even a mission station, the prestige of the Roman church falling, the *padres'* power lost, a race growing up more wicked, desperate, immoral than any that has gone before. The religious destitution and moral state of the county (Santa Barbara) is not easy to describe. It is the most Spanish, or Mexican, in its character and inhabitants of all counties in the United States.

Monday, we went on to Camp No. 23, at Foxen's Ranch, about twelve miles. Foxen is an old Englishman who came to America a mere boy—came as a sailor to the western coast, was hunter and trapper, then married a Spanish wife and settled on a ranch. He has been in California over forty years. He was decidedly an original character.⁶ We camped near his house, for there is only water at the ranches, at intervals of six to ten miles on an average.

The hills we passed among during the day's ride were covered with pasture, or grass, with a great profusion of flowers. Sometimes we went along a valley with fine scattered trees. But the road was worse and our erring wagon wheel once more began to show signs of weakness and Pete mended it again with

thongs of rawhide. I examined the region around and found many fossils, among them a portion of a fossil whale, dug up at the ranch, the bones very stony.

Tuesday, April 9, we came on here, to Nipomo Ranch, about twenty-two miles. Our road first wound through some valleys, then struck into the valley of Santa Maria River. This river is now entirely dry, not a drop of water, its valley a perfectly level plain, with the exception of an occasional terrace or old riverbank, about six or eight miles wide. We struck down and across this valley about ten or twelve miles, a most tedious ride. We were dry, but no water was met with for the twenty-two miles traveled except a sink-hole with stagnant, alkaline, dirty, stinking water. Our lunch of dry bread and drier cheese, which we ate as we rode along, was hardly "sumptuous."

The ride was very tedious as we wound our slow way over the plains, here a drifting sand, there a partial pasture. Nothing relieved the eye; the senses tired with the level scene. The profusion of flowers, beautiful elsewhere, now tired us with their abundance and their sameness; wind filled the air with gray dust, sometimes shutting out the sight of the hills like drifting snow. Lovely green hills lay on each side at the distance of a few miles. Many cattle and horses were feeding on the hills or on the plain. Water every four to six miles in the side canyons was sufficient for them. They seemed mere specks on the plain—a herd of a thousand like a few flies on the floor. This valley runs to the sea, and in that direction a mirage kept ahead of us in the hot air—a very good appearance of water, but not nearly so perfect as I saw on the plains in Bavaria.

How we hailed the first tree of shade we came to, a fine sycamore on the dry riverbank, with fine shade—the first we had seen for fourteen miles. We stopped a few minutes, then pushed on, crossed the dry bed of sand half a mile or more wide, and struck up a side canyon about two miles, to water, at this ranch. To be sure, the water is alkaline and stinks from the droppings of the many animals, but made into tea it is drink-

able, and we can stand it if those who live here can. They however, have a "spring," so called—a hole dug in the bank half a mile or more from here, where the water is cleaner. Bad water has affected the bowels of most of the party except me—I escape any material bad effects.

Today, Averill and I have been over the hills near here exploring the geology and botany, quite a ride and walk. We came once on a large coyote, or wolf, and got a pistol shot at him but did not hit him. He was a big fellow, and two more were seen near camp by the other men. A snake five or more feet long, but harmless, was killed near our tent just at daylight.

I forgot to mention that I killed a rattlesnake at Camp 25. He was within a rod or two of the tent, a small one, of another species from the first. There are several species of rattlesnake found in this state, but all are dangerous. This fellow has fangs sharp as needles. We examined them. When not irritated they are covered with skin, like the claw of a cat, but are erected when required for use. This fellow, like the last, did not show fight until after he was attacked.

Camp No. 26, near San Luis Obispo.

Sunday Morning, April 11.

We were at Nipomo Ranch when I last wrote. Thursday, April 11, we came on. After leaving Santa Barbara County the roads were again horrible—no road in fact, but a mere trail like a cow path, hardly marked by the track of wheels, an often very obscure. We crossed gulches down almost straight on one side, then "ker-chug" in the bottom, then up as steep on the other.

Our wagon is like the Overland stages, square covered body hung on straps or "thorough-braces," as they are called. It is too light for our purpose, although it stood the road, but the weak wheel groaned and complained at times, notwithstanding its rawhide supports.

We wound among hills, and at last at the Arroyo Grande