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IN THIS ISSUE—

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RALPH B. JORDAN
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SAMUEL
BRANNAN

THE STORY OF SAM BRANNAN

MORMON COLONIZER, CALIFORNIA'S FIRST
MILLIONAIRE, SAN FRANCISCO'S FIRST
VIGILANTE

By RALPH B. JORDAN

*Pacific Coast Division News Manager
of International News Service*

THE OUTSTANDING FIGURE IN THE HISTORIC '49 DAYS OF CALIFORNIA AND THE TURBULENT DECADE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING WAS SAM BRANNAN, A MORMON ELDER, WHO ROSE TO THE HEIGHTS, PLUNGED TO THE DEPTHS, REDEEMED HIMSELF AND DIED AT PEACE. HIS LIFE, PRESENTED HERewith, IS ONE OF THE MOST COLORFUL AND INTERESTING IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1846, came roaring in on a wave of ice and snow—and clouds for the Latter-day Saints.

In the Middle-West, with the Prophet Joseph Smith dead, Brigham Young was preparing for the great trek to the mountains. In New York, beset by grave problems, several hundred members of the Church were gathered under the wing of Samuel Brannan, presiding Elder.

An amazing man, Elder Samuel Brannan: deep-chested, broad-shouldered, six feet in height, sporting sideburns and an imperial, the dress of a dandy, flashing black eyes and a voice that boomed like thunder.

"I have here," Brannan roared at his congregation, "permission from the Church authorities to take ship to the West Coast. It shall be done."

Describing this "permission" documents in the Historian's Office of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City have this to say:

"In November, 1845, Orson Pratt, who presided over the branches of the Church in the Eastern and Middle states, issued his farewell message to the Saints in those parts, prior to taking his departure for Nauvoo to join the Saints in their removal westward. It had been decided that the *Messenger*, a paper published in New York in the interest of the Church, by Samuel Brannan, should suspend publication, and

that the editor should charter a vessel and take his press and fixtures, as also a company of Saints from the Eastern branches, by way of Cape Horn, to California, as the distance to travel from that point to their probable destination in the Rocky Mountains, it was thought, would not be so great, and the trip would be attended with much less expense. At the same time those who had sufficient means to buy for themselves teams and outfits were advised to make their way to Nauvoo, to join the Saints there and journey westward. . .

"Elder Samuel Brannan laid before the conference his instructions from the authorities of the Church, directing him to go by water to California, and he called upon those who desired to go with him to give in their names. By the end of December (1845) Brannan announced through (the Church paper) the *New York Messenger* that he had chartered the ship *Brooklyn*, of 450 tons, at \$1,200 per month, the lessee to pay port charges. The time for sailing was first announced for January 24, 1846, the fare was fixed at \$50 for adult person, with \$25 additional for provisions; children . . . to go for half fare."

Brannan said it should be done, and it was done. He filled the little ship *Brooklyn*, with more than two hundred Latter-day Saints, print-

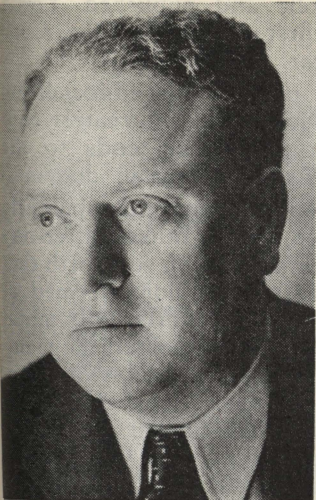
Documents in the Church Historian's office say: "There were soon 300 applicants for passage in the *Brooklyn*, and of that number 238 finally took passage, consisting of 70 men, 68 women and 100 children. There were two or three persons not members of the Church who also went with the company.

THE AUTHOR and the editors of "The Improvement Era" wish to acknowledge with appreciation the aid of W. Aird Macdonald whose invaluable firsthand research at the sites of Sam Brannan's activities and whose photographs of Sam Brannan scenes have materially enhanced the color and historical value of this article. W. Aird Macdonald, President of the Oakland Stake of the Mormon Church, writes as follows:

"While I was a San Francisco newspaperman, covering an assignment in Calistoga, California—eighty miles northeast from San Francisco—I first learned of Brannan's activities there, which started me on the trail of 'that old Mormon' as he was known there. It has been a most intriguing quest. Few men have reached the heights, swayed the power, basked in the fame, or sunk to the depths, that measure the life of this courageous free-booter."

ing equipment, three complete flour mills, plows, harrows, and other useful commodities, and sailed out of New York harbor bound for San Francisco Bay, although all he knew of his destination was that it was somewhere on the West Coast.

A great adventure? But Sam Brannan was a great adventurer. Then in his early twenties, he was fearless, clever, and generous; also



RALPH B. JORDAN

INTO THIS story of the rise and fall of the man who once owned one-fourth of Sacramento, one-fifth of San Francisco and one hundred sixty thousand acres of land in Los Angeles county, the author has breathed the roaring spirit of one of California's most colorful historic figures. Ralph B. Jordan, formerly a member of the bishopric of the Oakland ward of the Mormon Church, ranks high among newspapermen, and in March of this year was made Pacific Coast division news manager of International News service, at which time INS said of him:

"The new coast news chief came to International News Service six years ago with a record as a reporter and editor which already had established him as 'top' in the West. . .

"Reared and educated in Salt Lake City and an athlete at the Salt Lake High School, University of Utah and Utah State College, Jordan turned first to sports writing. His college and newspaper career was interrupted by the World War in which he served as a machine gun officer. He returned to finish college and go through the Salt Lake newspaper mill. . ."

scheming, ruthless, and ambitious: a flaming paradox of good and bad.

Born in Maine in 1819, he had started his adventuring early, pushing into the wilds of Ohio, where, at the age of 17, he purchased his time from a printer to whom he had been bound out and became a traveling printer and journalist. A publication failed him in New Orleans, another in Indianapolis. He wandered into New York, heard a Mormon missionary, embraced the newly-restored Gospel enthusiastically and started publishing the *Messenger* for the Church.

Then came the westward migra-

tion. Brigham Young led his people overland through the wilderness; Sam Brannan, under Church direction, took his colony of Mormon Pioneers by sea. He stalked the pitching deck of the little *Brooklyn* like a Napoleon, drilled his men like a top sergeant, and laid out a set of rules for men and women alike to follow or "suffer the consequences."

The *Brooklyn* beat down the east coast of America day after day and week after week. On board bugles blared. "Attention!" barked Brannan at his men. "To your work," he cried to the women, who made up the cabins and cooked. The whole ship was on schedule hour by hour and even the winds seemed to heed it.

A boy was born. "Name him Atlantic after the ocean of his birth," Brannan suggested. Atlantic it was. The *Brooklyn* rounded the Horn. A girl was born. "Call her Pacific," proposed the irrepressible Brannan. Pacific was her name.

The highroad of the Pacific at that time led to the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands on the route from New York and Boston to China. Only stray ships ever touched on the California coast. One fine spring day Brannan sailed into Honolulu harbor and found Commodore Stockton with the frigate *Congress*.

"I'm going to California," Sam boasted to Stockton, "and take a place on San Francisco Bay called Yerba Buena from the Mexicans. There I'm going to build a city for my people and the United States. I've got a battalion of well-drilled men but I need guns."

WHEN THE *Brooklyn* resumed her weary way, one hundred fifty rifles were stacked beneath her billowing canvas. But even so, it is probable that her passengers were unaware of the bold plans of their leader to fly into a private war of his own with the republic of Mexico. Brannan was that cunning.

After a total of six months on the high seas the *Brooklyn* sailed through the Golden Gate on July 31, 1846, and into San Francisco Bay, already so named by the imaginative traveler, John C. Fremont. His eyes alight with the fires of conquest and adventure, Brannan stared eagerly at the tiny hamlet of Yerba Buena—the San Francisco to be—as it clung miserably to the steep sandhills.

"Not over fifty or sixty people in the town," Brannan murmured, letting his eyes run over the three hundred, including the crew, who lined the rails of the *Brooklyn*. "There should be no real resistance."

And then his fiery gaze fell on the flagstaff of the Mexican customshouse, the "Old Adobe," in the center of the sand-blown Plaza. He gulped in astonishment. For snapping in the breeze was not the flag of Mexico, but the Stars and Stripes.

BRANNAN'S MOUND

From the top of this mound, Sam Brannan erected a high tower from which to view his vast domain. It was from here that Sam with great gusto and pride showed his visitors to Calistoga his vast vineyards in this fertile and picturesque valley seventy miles north of San Francisco. This mound became a tropical garden, for Sam brought many plants native of Mexico. Note the two large palm trees, planted by Sam, now towering eighty feet in the air. On the hill are still found cacti and Century plants. The buildings at the right, are the bath and swim pools, where the steaming geysers spout their boiling water fifty feet into the air.

Photograph by W. Aird Macdonald.





Photograph by W. Aird Macdonald.

CALISTOGA

Looking east on Main Street, Calistoga, the capital of Brannan's empire, which, with its steaming, spouting geysers and hot mud baths, he hoped to make as famous as New York's Saratoga. Legend has it that Brannan intended to call it "Saratoga" but having imbibed too freely before the ceremonies, thickly stuttered something that the clerk understood as "Calistoga." Being a good sport, Sam let it stand, and later showed some pride in the new word he had coined.

The large white building at the right is Sam's great hotel built to house one hundred guests. Brannan was a generous host, and when his San Francisco friends migrated to the geysers over week-ends, Sam furnished everything. They were royally wined and dined. And when some of his guests complained of the long, hot and dusty ride from Napa, Sam built a 27-mile railroad and planted shade trees on both sides the entire distance. Many of these great trees still border the paved state highway that links these two towns. Many of these trees are the tall graceful poplars so characteristic of Mormon settlements in Utah.

Captain John B. Montgomery on the United States sloop *Portsmouth* had beaten Sam to Yerba Buena by three weeks.

"I swore at that American flag," Brannan said years later. "I could have torn it down. That's how badly I wanted to take the town myself."

Sam Brannan and his fellow passengers were joyfully received by the meager population of Yerba Buena, which included but "two white ladies." These people, wayfarers who had drifted through the Golden Gate from time to time and put up shacks around the Plaza, spent most of their time gambling on horse races, bear baiting, and bear and bull fights.

"A churchman," one of the Yerba Buenans laughed. "We must initiate him."

With great glee they blindfolded Sam, whirled him around three times and told him to make for a stake they had planted in the center of the Plaza, meanwhile laying bets on how long it would take him. Sam made straight for a slimy pool at the edge of the Plaza from which adobes were made and soon was up to his neck. Yerba Buena howled its appreciation; Sam laughed too, and immediately was "one of the boys."

The next Sunday Brannan preached the first sermon in the San

Francisco to be, at least the first in English. A British bartender named Brown two decades later recorded in his memoirs that it was "as good a sermon as anyone would wish to hear," but added significantly that "many persons now will no doubt be surprised to learn of his (Brannan's) serving in that capacity."

A few days after his sermon Sam performed the first marriage ceremony in Yerba Buena under the American flag. Brown says: "I never enjoyed myself, at any gathering, as I did there. A general invitation was extended to all . . . everyone returned to their homes perfectly satisfied and ready to pronounce the first wedding a grand success."

Brannan seemed destined to be first in everything in Yerba Buena for he next became the first defendant in a trial by jury in the struggling community. He was charged by his fellow Latter-day Saints with misusing funds he had collected from them on shipboard.

"We elected Elder Brannan president of our association," one of the witnesses testified, "and paid him our dues. After we landed we asked him what he had done with the money and he said it was none of our business."

"All lies," roared Brannan, and got off when the jury could not agree on a verdict.

That was the parting of the ways for Brannan and his band of courageous Latter-day Saints. His way led to fame and riches, then to disgrace and poverty. Theirs led to the gold fields and on to Salt Lake City, or to oblivion in the heterogeneous mass of gold-seeking humanity which poured over the sun-down slope of the high Sierras.

SAM BRANNAN next appears as builder and operator of the first flour mills in California. Then he constructed a combination residence and printing plant just behind the

Old Adobe and published Yerba Buena's first newspaper, the *California Star*.

"This paper," he editorialized, "will eschew with the greatest caution everything that tends to the propagation of sectarian dogmas."

Sam kept his word and apparently set a pace for the other Latter-day Saints, for a historian sets forth that "none of the Mormons seemed at pains to make converts." It might also be added that most of the members of his party drifted away from the Church, their slack enthusiasm letting them slide further and further from their faith into the world which swallowed them and robbed them of their glorious inheritances.

"However," continues the historian, "the Mormons maintained good relations with the Gentiles. The men were industrious, intelligent, public-spirited; the women chaste, the children well-behaved."

The Yerba Buena Mormon Battalion continued to drill and soon was put to a test tinged with humor. Brown wrote about it thus: "Lieutenant Watson, from the *Portsmouth*, used to rap on my window late at night and say as a pass word, 'The Spanish are coming,' so I could fill his jug. One night I didn't hear Watson. He rapped and rapped

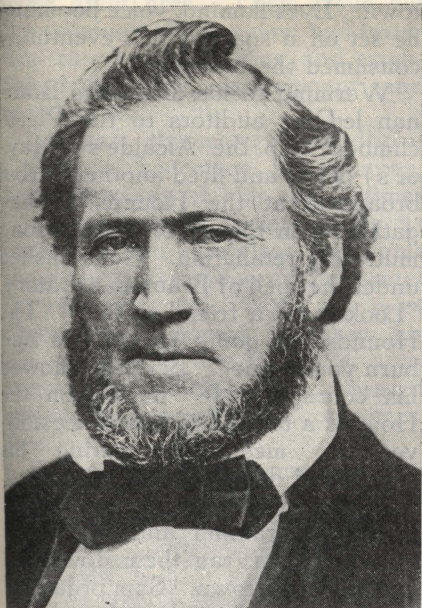
Not to be confused with the Mormon Battalion that marched from Brigham Young's party in the East to the defense of Southern California.

CALISTOGA'S FIRE-BELL

From bitter experience with fire—for Brannan had five times led in the rebuilding of San Francisco when fire had laid it waste—Sam Brannan built an ornate fire-house with belfry and a great bell that called the citizenry to battle hungry flames. This building still houses Calistoga's fire department, but Sam's great bell, still visible in the tower, has been supplanted by a screeching siren.

Photograph by W. Aird Macdonald





PRESIDENT BRIGHAM YOUNG, PRESIDING OFFICER OF THE CHURCH WHEN SAM BRANNAN WAS DIRECTED TO TAKE THE "BROOKLYN" TO THE WEST COAST, AND WHO LATER REJECTED BRANNAN'S PROPOSAL TO TAKE THE PIONEERS TO CALIFORNIA.

and then fired his pistol and called out loudly, 'The Spanish are coming.' The Yerba Buena Mormon Battalion and the Marines from the *Portsmouth*, quartered on shore, turned out quickly and sent some shots at scrub oaks bending in the wind. They were very excited. The next morning Watson told me if I ever mentioned what had happened I would be a dead man."

Only once more was the Yerba Buena Battalion called out. This time a coffee pot exploded in the new City Hotel and the word ran through the sandhills that "the enemy is upon us." A charge on the hotel revealed the truth that no Spanish were encamped there.

Brannan's mills and newspaper flourished and he went in heavily for Yerba Buena real estate, thereby plunging into a feud with Dr. Robert Semple, of Bear Flag revolt fame, publisher of the only other newspaper in California, the *Californian*, at Monterey. Semple was booming a townsite at the northern end of San Francisco Bay, now called Benecia. He and Brannan carried on a fierce and vitriolic war in printer's ink, both as to personalities and townsites, and out of it came an incident important in history, a new name for Yerba Buena—San Francisco.

Semple called his acres of sand Francisca after the wife of the Spanish General Mariano Vallejo, owner of the site, and to come as near as

he dared to appropriating the name of the great bay of San Francisco. What Semple didn't dare do only seemed a good idea to Brannan. Collaborating with the Alcalde of Yerba Buena, one Lieutenant Bartlett, of the *Portsmouth*, Sam jumped at the name which Semple was too reticent to lift. In 1847 Yerba Buena by official proclamation, became San Francisco, and Semple, because all his boosting for Francisca was misinterpreted by strangers to be for San Francisco, switched his town's name from Francisca to Benecia, Madame Vallejo's middle name.

GENERAL SHERMAN, of Civil War fame, was an aide to the military governor at Monterey at this time and a good friend of Semple's. The General wrote in his memoirs: "Such impudence in stealing the name of San Francisco, a little circumstance big with consequences. Benecia should be the city of palaces . . . the name San Francisco fixed the city where it is; for every ship master knew the name of San Francisco Bay but not Benecia or Yerba Buena. So all ships consigned to California came pouring in and anchored in front of San Francisco."

After that *coup* Brannan turned his attentions to establishing a school in the new city and made the first contribution toward a red frame school house which had a brief but hectic career as a place of learning, town hall, court house, and jail, finally being known as The Public Institute.

And then Brannan made his first big mistake. He quit the Church. He set out to meet President Young and the first party of Pioneers as they moved West. Brannan with two other Latter-day Saints, rode horseback a hundred miles up the Sacramento valley, then another hundred up the American River canyon, over the snow-capped high Sierras, and down the eastern slope of this great range into the desert wastes of what is now Nevada. Three hundred miles he pushed across the badlands to Great Salt Lake and then into the mountains again, until he met President Young on the Green River near Fort Hall.

"A Paradise on the West Coast," Brannan was enthusiastic in his talk to President Young. "I'll lead you there; to the promised land; to a land of milk and honey and sunshine and plenty."

He traveled West with the Pioneers, glowing in his fervor to all

who would attend him—until that dramatic July day in 1847 when Brigham Young looked over the Salt Lake Valley from the Wasatch mountains and said: "This is the place."

Sam must have thought his ears had played him false. This alkali flat covered with sagebrush preferable to his lovely California? It couldn't be. But it was. Brannan argued with President Young and then shouted: "If you won't come to California with me, I return alone, through with you and your Church."

Off he rode, to retrace his lonely way across desert, mountain, and valley to California. But the devil must have ridden with him.

And what of the stand of President Young? The very next year the gold rush started to California, unloosing a flood of events which swept away most of the Latter-day Saints in San Francisco. What would have been the result had President Young and his people been in this flood? The answer, it seems, is that Brigham Young was indeed inspired with great wisdom.

Sam Brannan has been called the original Californian because, when he returned from Salt Lake, he got out a special California edition of the *Star*, which still remains a model of its kind, and sent two thousand copies through the Middle-West and East by Pony Express to interest prospective settlers who still thought the territory was "populated chiefly by greasers and fleas."

Another enterprise, a most opportune one, now attracted Brannan. He opened a store at Sutter's Fort

SAM'S DISTILLERY

This old, dark red building is one of Brannan's distilleries that he built in his vast domain near Calistoga, California. It was the product of his distilleries and wineries that caused his undoing, and toppled him from his eminence of power. In later years this old distillery was turned into a stable that housed race horses, when Calistoga became a racing center of Northern California.

Photograph by W. Aird Macdonald.





RESIDENCE OF SAMUEL BRANNAN—1849

Copy of painting in office of Society of California Pioneers, San Francisco. "This painting was given by Charles G. Yale to Edward Bosqui in 1885, and bears on the back the following legend: 'Sam Brannan Residence, Washington and Stockton Streets, San Francisco, 1849. George Yale's Residence 1851-53. Only house saved on that side of street in the great fire of May '51. This house was an exact copy of the original one built by Sam Brannan in 1847, which fire destroyed in '49.'"

(Sacramento) which was the center of an inland empire of thousands of fertile acres belonging to a shrewd Swiss, Captain John Sutter. What happened then Brannan himself recites as follows:

"Captain Sutter made a contract with Marshall, Weimer and Bennett (Weimer and Bennett were honorably discharged members of the Mormon Battalion which had been formed in the East, and were en route to Salt Lake from the Mexican War) to put up a saw-mill in the Fall of 1847 on the south fork of the American river, where the town of Coloma now stands. Having a store at the time, I agreed to furnish them with all the necessary supplies on Sutter's account. On the 24th of January, 1848, when Marshall let the water into the mill-race, and the water had run clear, he picked up a piece of gold and gave it to the wife of Weimer. A number of young men from the Mormon Battalion were at work on the mill, all of whom left their work and commenced washing out gold, and that was the end of the mill building."

But it was the start of the great gold rush.

Brannan continues: "Marshall, Weimer and Bennett and Captain Sutter . . . charged everyone ten per cent of what they found. Some of the boys (from the Mormon Battalion) became dissatisfied and went prospecting down the river for themselves, and found diggings on an island which has since been known as Mormon Island."

THERE is some doubt about the activities of others as reported by Brannan, but there is no question about what Brannan himself did. He resumed his authority over the Latter-day Saints and collected ten per cent of their gold for tithing, the miners being uninformed of the episode with Brigham Young.

Sherman in his memoirs says that with his chief, Colonel Mason, he found Sam collecting tithes on Mormon Island.

"One of the miners," says Sherman, "approached Colonel Mason and inquired whether Brannan had any legal right to take tithes. 'He has a perfect right to collect them,' the Colonel replied, 'as long as you are fools enough to pay'."

That ended Brannan's income from tithing but led to his excommunication. President Young heard of his actions and sent a member of the Council of the Twelve to Sutter's Fort to reason with him and bring the Lord's money back to the Church where it rightfully belonged.

"You tell Brother Young," Brannan is reported to have said to the Apostle, "that I'll give up the Lord's money when he sends me a receipt signed by the Lord."

San Francisco refused to take seriously the word that gold had been found until Brannan, waving a flask of flashing gold dust, went bellowing through the streets: "Gold! Gold! Gold! on the American River!" The city, except seven men, followed him back to the river, and his newspaper, with all other business enterprises suspended operations. San Francisco "simply wiped itself off the map."

Then came the deluge of gold seekers from the outside. San Francisco overnight became a roaring city of tents. Sam's real estate investments skyrocketed; his store at Sutter's Fort did a tremendous business, and he became California's first millionaire.

A few months later, in the spring of '49 Sam Brannan stepped into the first of his finer roles. The Hounds, an organization of ex-convicts and other ruffians, held the city in a reign of terror, which culminated in a frightful murderous attack on the Chilean section.

The next morning Brannan mounted a barrel in the middle of

"While documents in the Church Historian's office do not report this incident in just this way, it is reported that Parley P. Pratt and Charles C. Rich, both Apostles of the Mormon Church, visited Brannan at different times and appealed to him for financial aid which was denied.

town. Eyes flaming, voice booming, he set off a spark which eventually consumed the Hounds.

Warming to his dramatics Brannan led his auditors to the Plaza, climbed atop the Alcalde's (Mayor's) office, and fired another verbal broadside at the Hounds. They gathered on the edge of the throng muttering retaliation. Guns flashed under the spell of Brannan's oratory. "Look out," a friend called. "The Hounds are going to kill you and burn your home." Brannan showed his courage. He "hurled on the Hounds a torrent of his choicest invectives, meanwhile baring his breast and daring them to fire."

In the showdown the cut-throats fled, but Brannan and his crowd pursued them, ran them down and finally out of town. Sam organized a charity for the victims of the hoodlums and installed law and order for the first time in San Francisco. He was riding the crest of the wave of popularity—California's leading citizen; but he was riding to a fall. In Sacramento (the city grown from Sutter's Fort) and San Francisco he plunged feverishly into the wildest of frontier life, desperate gambling, heavy drinking, and sensational affairs with the notorious courtesans of the day.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE, 1849, occurred the first of the six great fires which, in a year and a half, devastated young San Francisco. After the fourth fire Sam Brannan said: "Well, the bay is still here, the people are here, and the mines are still left; let's get busy." He and his associates built another city. But after the fifth conflagration Sam roared: "This is the work of the gang still infesting San Francisco, wicked enough to do this or any other heinous thing."

The next day, June 9, 1851, the famous Vigilance Committee was organized in Brannan's office. He was its first president. The committee immediately came to grips with the gangs in scenes of wild turbulence, but Sam showed his power by leading his committee in the capture and hanging of John Jenkins, a giant Australian, who had stolen a safe from a wharf in broad daylight. Brannan seized the rope with the cry: "Every lover of liberty and good order lay hold."

Sam now was playing his greatest civic role. The sixth fire ravished the city, burning his cherished home and newspaper plant, but he and his followers saw to it that there were no

more great fires. They drove out the criminals, built a new and beautiful city from the ashes, and established a stable government and social order.

Bancroft, the most unfriendly of California historians to Brannan, has this to say of him at this time: ". . . so long as society holds its course in San Francisco, his name should be held in honored and grateful remembrance. With the most cheerful recklessness he threw his life and wealth into the scale; anything and everything he possessed was at the disposal of the committee, free."

By the early '50's, Brannan owned

However, in 1859, when Sam was forty years of age, his fortunes turned. He bought nearly the entire Napa valley, north of San Francisco, to exploit its famous hot springs, which he named Calistoga. He built a rail line, tree shaded roads into the valley, a grand home, a private race track, a distillery, and a winery. He also imported grape vines and many vineyardists from Italy. But the only investment in the valley that paid him dividends was his distillery and its output "stole away his brains." His friends reported in San Francisco that he never was sober after noon any more. His wife and four children left him and went to Germany, his friends fell away, and his fortunes disappeared.

SAM BRANNAN, penniless, bloated with drink and half paralyzed from dissipation, came back to San Francisco, borrowed whatever and whenever he could, and then, dirty, ragged, and unshaven, sank to the gutter, sleeping in the back rooms of saloons by day and begging drinks by night.

But Brannan still had physical courage. An ardent Union man, he made the front pages of the nation's newspapers during the Civil War by attacking a slave captain in a San Francisco hotel and later coolly faced a gang of desperadoes intent on killing him, taking eight bullets in his rum-soaked body without flinching.

One day in a dim alcoholic haze he remembered his Mexican bonds in a New York bank vault. He got the Mexican government to deed him a tremendous tract of two million acres and, at the age of sixty, was again on the front page in New York and San Francisco with grandiose schemes of colonization. But the Yaqui Indians, who were already on Sam's acres, refused to get off, and that was that.

Old, sick, drunk, deserted, and shunned, Brannan married a Mexican woman and went to her little desert ranch on the border near San Diego. And then—a miracle. Brannan redeemed himself. Loafing like a peon around the ranch his thoughts traveled back across the years to the days of his youth when he was an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ. The Gospel as revealed to Joseph Smith was one of redemption, of understanding, of humility, of joy, and of salvation. Brannan fell to his knees and prayed for the first time in forty years, out

there under the burning sun and in the biting wind of the desert. He prayed for a chance at redemption on this earth and in the great beyond.

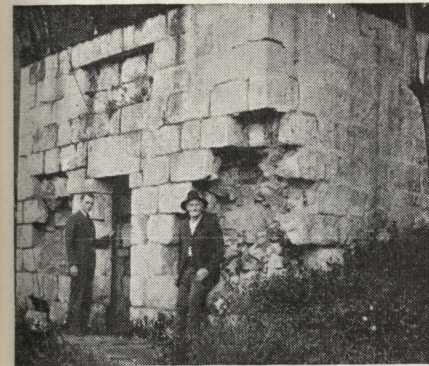
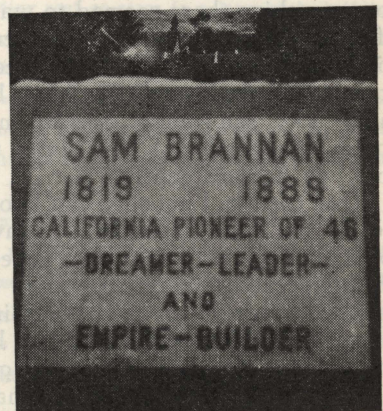
Then he arose and during the remaining ten years of his life he faithfully lived in accordance with the teachings of the Church he had deserted, never again touching liquor or even tobacco. His stooped shoulders straightened, his eyes cleared, his paralysis disappeared. He was once more a keen, handsome, and vigorous man. And now the surprising end. Suddenly the Mexican government paid Brannan an unexpected \$49,000 in interest on his huge loan. He took the money and returned to San Francisco. Neatly dressed, reflecting the health and cleanness of the desert, he paid back every dollar he had borrowed, going in and out of saloons and dives, smilingly refusing all invitations.

His debts discharged and again penniless, Brannan stood on one of San Francisco's seven hills and looked down upon the city, to him the most fascinating city in the world, the city he built, his city. It had forgotten him.

Turning slowly away, but without rancor or bitterness, Brannan went back to the desert, where he died on May 14, 1889, at the age of seventy. For a year his body lay in a San Diego receiving vault. There was no money to bury him. Then someone bought him six feet of earth in a San Diego cemetery. A two-inch wooden stake marked his grave and an obscure San Francisco street bears his name. Sam Brannan—to the heights—to the depths—and then to reconciliation and the things that lie beyond.

BRANNAN'S GRAVE

For decades Brannan's grave stood neglected and unmarked until J. Harvey McCarthy, friend and admirer, erected a tombstone over the grave at Mount Hope Cemetery, San Diego, in 1926, with the legend as seen here.



Photograph by W. Aird Macdonald.

BRANNAN'S SEPULCHRE

Here are the ruins of Sam's stone sepulchre built in the side of the friendly hills that sheltered his great vineyards. Huge blocks of stone were laid forming walls nearly five feet in thickness. A great iron door, brought around the Horn from New York kept this secret vault a mystery for twenty years after Brannan's death. While Sam's body lay in a potter's grave in San Diego, this stately sepulchre in his beloved valley in Northern California remained the silent tomb of his father, until local superstition forced public officials to blast it open with dynamite.

one-fourth of Sacramento, one-fifth of San Francisco, including all of Market Street, 160,000 acres in Los Angeles county, tracts in Honolulu and a fleet of ships, in addition to his newspaper and the huge Sacramento business. He was one of the richest men in the world, fifteen times a millionaire. One time, to celebrate the opening of a new Sacramento hotel, he entertained the entire city. He floated the huge bond issue with California gold with which Mexico threw off the yoke of Maximilian and personally paid the bills of the Mexican Foreign Legion, known during this period as Brannan's Contingent.

Historian Scherer says: "When the paint brush of advertising followed the flag West, stage coach travelers were greeted everywhere with huge signs: 'Try Tono—Sam Brannan uses it,' or 'Buy Bon-gay—Sam Brannan buys it.' Tribute could go no further."