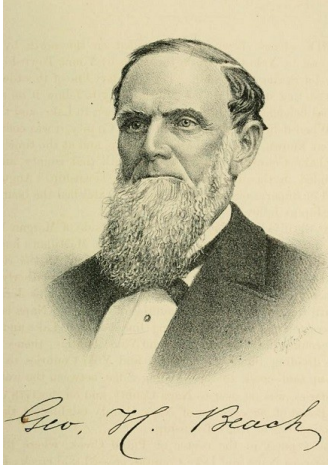


George Holton Beach 1817-1896



GEORGE H. BEACH was born October 5, 1817, at New London, Connecticut, the son of Chauncey and Mary (Holton) Beach. His father was born on the banks of the Connecticut River, near Chatham now Portland, and his mother in Winchester, New Hampshire. His parents moved to New London about 1805, where his father was engaged in the mercantile business.

During the war of 1812, his father was appointed supplier to the forces stationed south of and near his town. When the British threatened to land at Light-House Point, three miles away he, with hundreds of his fellow-civilians, volunteered his service, standing guard at Light-House Point until the British withdrew to a point

nearer New York. Prior to their

departure they threw ball and shell all one night into the American camp.

Just when the shells were falling thickest, a volunteer named Charles Loudon, who was under fire for the first time, in his fright slipped unseen out of camp and jumped over a stone wall, dropping one foot into an iron messpot of scalding hot soup. The moment the cook saw the foot go into the soup he called out, "Take your foot out of that pot!" The man obeyed promptly, leaving a portion of the flesh of his foot with the cook. From that time on the phrase, "Take your foot out of the pot," became a lasting by-word.

In 1821, when young George was four years old, his father died, leaving six children: three girls and three boys. At the age of seventeen the subject of our sketch left school, taking a situation as a bundle carrier for Charles C. Williams in the dry-goods business. After going up all the rungs of the ladder, he entered into business for himself, in partnership with his brother, under the firm name of C. E. and G. H. Beach. They suffered such reverses in the crash of 1842, that they were forced to suspend business. Soon after Mr. Beach accepted an offer to become principal salesman for the firm of William A. Buckingham & Co., of Norwich, Connecticut, wholesale and retail dealers in dry goods and carpets, they being manufacturers.

In 1845 Mr. Beach again began business for himself in dry-goods in Norwich, in partnership with Mr. G. B. Goddard, the firm being Goddard & Beach.

June 1, of that year, Mr. Beach was married to Miss Elizabeth T. Morgan, daughter of Dr. Consider Morgan, of East Windsor, Connecticut, where she was born. They built a comfortable residence and settled down to stay.

In the summer of 1848, finding that by long and close confinement his health was breaking down, he determined to try his luck in the new El Dorado, exciting stories of the gold discoveries in California having been confirmed to his satisfaction. He sold his interest to his brother and began preparations.

He shipped a frame building for his business purposes to California, and a full stock of merchandise were shipped via Cape Horn, and on February 1, 1849, Mr. Beach sailed on the steamer *Falcon* for Chagres, Panama. There was a delay of twenty-eight days waiting for the *Oregon*, which was on its way out via the Cape. On this trip an effective choir was formed under the leadership of Mr. Beach, the ladies, whose voices were rich and full, supplying alto and soprano. C. Loomis sang, tenor, John Benson and Mr. Beach sang bass. T

They reached San Francisco April 1, without accident of note. On the fourth day after landing Mr. Beach completed the purchase of a business lot on the north side of

Sacramento street, 110 feet west of Montgomery, for \$3,000, of which \$1,000 was cash. On the 9th he started for the Southern mines, via Stockton, taking a small stock of high-colored handkerchiefs, calicoes and scarfs. With these, and buying and selling job lots of miners' goods from pack trains, he returned to San Francisco the latter part of June with money sufficient to pay off his land indebtedness and settle the freight on his house and goods, which arrived early in July.

The store was erected, goods moved in, and business begun. In addition to merchandise, Mr. Beach had three consignments of vessels to him sailing from different ports in Connecticut. He also purchased invoices of goods brought by adventurers, and bought interests in small sailing vessels and steamers, receiving their agency and directing their business. He was also agent for the ship Glenmore, running to Panama; the brig Sarah M. Farlaine, running to Portland; the schooner Alfred, to the Sandwich Islands, and the steamer West Point, to Sacramento. In passing through the two great fires of 1850 and 1851, he lost his store and large stock each time, the loss of both being probably \$50,000. In July, 1851, his wife arrived.

Having a branch store in Marysville, Yuba County, under the firm name of Beach & Brown, run by Brown, he discovered the latter to be a defaulter in \$10,200. He had him arrested, but only a small part was recovered. Mr. Beach sold his San Francisco lots for \$14,000, replenished his store at Marysville from the funds, and took charge himself. On August 31, he was caught in the Marysville fire, saving nothing from it but what was in his safe. This was the third conflagration he had passed through, in eighteen months. No insurance could be obtained; and he very naturally was very discouraged over trade.

But he allowed nothing to daunt him, although the capital which his steamers had been earning had become impaired by heavy competition; and, not feeling willing to venture longer in merchandising while no insurance could be obtained, sold out his steamer interests, and, joined with John Perry, Jr., and Benjamin Smith, both of San Francisco, and Henry D. Beach, of Sacramento, he opened an office for the purchase of gold dust in Marysville, shipping the dust to San Francisco daily and receiving coin in return. In a little over a year he shipped more than a \$1,500,000 in dust. Here, again, however, Mr. Beach was doomed to loss as well as profit.

Having been admonished by physicians that he must desist from blowing dust (the only process then in vogue for separating the black sand from the gold), he employed a competent clerk named Frank Morse, well educated (and a son of a Presbyterian clergyman in Ohio), whose duty it was to sleep in the office, partly as security against burglars, and partly to get off early shipments. He proved an absconder with \$4,000. The whole of this loss falling on Mr. Beach, he defraying the office expenses by agreement some three months prior to this.

In the spring of 1852 Mr. Beach had inaugurated the express business of Wells, Fargo & Co. Later, a Mr. Frank Rumrill offered to do the company's business at a much less figure than Mr. Beach was receiving. A compromise was offered Mr. Beach, but he refused to continue it for less, having the proof that there were risks. It was consequently given to Mr. Rumrill, and the result was that the latter became a defaulter to the company for over \$50,000 in about two years.

Mr. Beach owned a half section of land on the east bank of the Feather River, three miles south of Marysville. In the winter of 1853 gold dust had run up to too high a price for much profit and had lost its mercantile character. Owing to this, and the injurious effect of blowing dust, upon his health, he gave up the business and moved to his ranch. A year previous he had imported nursery stock, including grape cuttings in great variety,

from the East, as well as grape-vines on a large scale, laying the foundation for the orchard, vineyard and nursery business. This place he named the "New England Gardens," and was popularly known all over the State, especially with nurserymen and San Francisco fruit dealers.

His sale of trees and vines extended into all the neighboring counties, even into Plumas, Trinity and Siskiyou. In this business Mr. Beach found his search after happiness satisfied, as he thought. He was a great lover of nature; had got away from fires and dishonest partners and thieving clerks, and could see no enemy in his path. But in this new undertaking he had to contend with inexperience of climate, soils, and seasons. It was a pioneer undertaking. But Mr. Beach was not a man to hunt difficulties; he was much more apt to thrust them aside. All seemed a problem of success. He was bold in experiments, solving problems only to be obtained by experience,—a work by which the whole State has since profited greatly.

Ill luck seemed, however, to follow him. In 1855 grasshoppers covered that section of the State for a month, leaving not a vestige of fruit on his trees, and doing thousands of dollars' worth of damage to his nursery stock, as part of their legacy to the State. In 1856 he harvested a fair crop on parts of his orchard. In 1857 the grasshoppers repeated the ravages that season to a total loss of fruit and great damage to the nursery; 1858 was a good year, yielding him \$20,000, but yet not enough to recompense the losses of the previous bad years. 1859 caught him again with the grasshoppers with nearly as disastrous results as before. These reverses, together with the floods depositing millions of tons of the miners' debris in his orchards, vineyard and nursery, almost burying them under, discouraged him beyond endurance, and he sold out, leaving himself without a dollar.

In 1857 he had been elected a Vice-President of the State Agricultural Society, and in 1858 Recording Secretary of the same, which constituted him one of the Board of Directors, receiving and disbursing \$30,000. In 1863 Mr. Beach entered the wholesale and retail store of C. L. Ross, Marysville, as a salesman, and in 1865 he changed to the wholesale house of A. C. Dietz, San Francisco. In 1868 he became a commercial traveler for Englebrecht & Mayrich Bros., with a first-class salary.

He continued this until he removed with his family in the interests of their health to St. Helena, Napa County, where he took an engagement at a large winery there and made his trips regularly twice a year into Oregon and Washington, building up a fair trade. A severe attack of pneumonia in the spring of 1885 leaving him in somewhat impaired health, he relinquished his traveling occupation and settled down in the real-estate and insurance business in St. Helena.

His ill luck was not yet ended, however, for September 15, 1889, a fire broke out in the central building of the fine block he had erected on Main street and the property was totally destroyed, including his office furniture, books and papers of every kind. His net loss above insurance was \$3,000, and rentals amounting to \$110 a month. This was his fourth misfortune by fire, though this time his loss was partially covered by insurance.

Mr. Beach is a horticultural enthusiast and has solved the problem of citrus culture in Napa County. In his garden he has a dozen bearing orange trees, six to fourteen years old, surrounding his fine residence, which was fortunately saved from the fire, all of them in the best possible condition. Through his influence half the citizens of St. Helena are growing orange and lemon trees successfully in their gardens. Mr. Beach has also a nursery in the foot-hills near the town, containing 3,000 orange and lemon trees, now of salable age, and sound, healthy stock. They are three years old and all of his own growth from the seed.

Mr. Beach is an active and energetic Republican. In 1856 he took a very active part in the organization of his party (Republican) in his county, as well as in the adjoining counties on the north, he then living at his orchard, or New England Gardens, Yuba County, near Marysville, and aided to carry the State in 1860 for Lincoln, organizing clubs in the northern counties. He comes honestly by his principles, having inherited Whig doctrine from his parents, continuing with that party until the organization of the Republican party. His first presidential vote was cast for W. H. Harrison in 1840. He helped organize the First Congregational Church in San Francisco; in 1849 organized the first two choirs that were formed in the State,—that of the church above named, and the First Baptist Church of San Francisco; also the first choir in Marysville.

He is a member of the Pioneer Association of San Francisco, and for twenty-five years has been a member of the Abou Ben Adhem Lodge, No. 112, Intl. Order of Oddfellows, San Francisco. He has three children living, one son having died in 1876. Those living are: Arthur B., George H., Jr., and Lizzie; all at home.

The writer is indebted to this worthy old pioneer for many facts and incidents utilized elsewhere. Soon after Mr. Beach left the store of W. A. Buckingham & Co., Mr. Buckingham was elected Governor of Connecticut, and in consequence of his great enthusiasm in all his movements, especially in raising troops and equipping them at his own expense at the outbreak of the Rebellion, he was dubbed the "Connecticut War Governor." On the close of the rebellion he was elected United States Senator. About this time Mr. Beach, happening to be at Calaveras Big Trees, California, by consent of the proprietors there, selected one of the tallest and handsomest Sequoia giants, and gave it the name of Governor Buckingham; and on his return to San Francisco had a marble tablet cut and lettered and sent to the proprietors; and the tablet still remains in good condition, and it is hoped will remain through generations to come, to keep his memory in the minds of the thousands who will visit the wondrous grove in years to come.

Mr. Beach says to the writer of this, that in looking backward he wonders how he has kept up his courage in passing through so many eventful vicissitudes. At his age, now seventy-two, in 1890, he has the manner of one of but sixty at most.

George Holton Beach - Born 10/5/1817, New London, Connecticut; buried 5/18/1896, Lot 26, Block E IOOF ; Elizabeth Beach, same location. Married Elizabeth Morgan on 6/1/1845.

Additional Comments:

Extracted from

Napa-San Francisco-Yuba County CA Archives Biographies.....Beach, George H. 1817 -

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Author: Lewis Publishing Co. (1891)

Memorial and Biographical History of Northern California.



Pioneers Conduct the Funeral of George H. Beach

ST. HELENA, Cal., May 18.— The funeral of George H. Beach, who died on Saturday, was held to-day from the Presbyterian church, services at the grave being conducted by John F. Pinkham, marshal of the Society of California Pioneers of which the deceased was an honored member. Mr. Beach came to San Francisco in 1849 and in 1852 opened the business of Wells, Fargo & Co. in that town. He had been a resident of St. Helena since 1872 and was at one time a very wealthy man. He was 78 years of age. A widow and three grown children survive him.

[Source: San Francisco Call, Volume 79, Number 171, 19 May 1896]