

Sacramento County Biographies

Information thanks to Nancy Pratt Melton:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nprmelton/sacharv2.htm>

HON. OBED HARVEY, M. D.

HON. OBED HARVEY, M. D.--Nothing can be of greater interest in connection with the historical volume of a county than a page from the life history of those who, having become identified with the material and social interests in early days, have contributed so largely to its growth and development, and left the impress of their personality upon their generation. As grandly illustrative of this remark we take pleasure in noting here the principal facts of the life of the subject of this sketch. Dr. Harvey is a native of New York State, and was born in Wayne County, near the shore of Lake Ontario, September 7, 1825, the son of David Harvey, a farmer, and Nabby, *nee* Ainsworth, a native of Wilbraham, Massachusetts. The latter was of Welsh ancestry, while the Doctor's ancestors came from Scotland; and it is a matter of family history that both his great-grandfather and one of his sons died on a prison ship while serving their country during the Revolutionary war. A portion of Dr. Harvey's boyhood was passed at Gilbertsville, Otsego County, New York, where he attended the academy and began the study of medicine, under Dr. Roderick. Later on he went to St. Charles, Illinois, where his parents resided, and, continuing his studies under Prof. G. W. Richards, was graduated with honor at the Rock Island Medical Institute, which was subsequently merged into the University of Iowa, in 1848. After practicing his profession for two years at Genoa and Elgin, the discovery of gold in California was attracting the attention of the civilized world, and he became one of the pioneers who braved the difficulties and dangers of a trip overland, to the land of golden promise, arriving with his party at Hangtown (now Placerville), in El Dorado County, August 3, 1850. Here he practiced his profession, and in conjunction with Dr. Asa Clark, now of Stockton, had charge of the El Dorado County Hospital; was also associated with Dr. Keen, a prominent physician and politician of that county; and during the years of his residence there he was interested in mining and in many enterprises of public moment. In 1859 he was a delegate and active member from that county to the first railroad convention ever held in this State; it was held in San Francisco and was one of the incipient movements in the final establishment of a public highway across the continent. On his way East in the fall of 1857, on the steamer *Central America*, he was wrecked, September 12, at 8:00 P.M., off Cape Hatteras, being one of forty-nine passengers saved out of about 425; they were picked up by the Norwegian bark *Ellen*, after having floated on a piece of the wreck about nine hours. The Doctor was entirely alone during the most of this struggle on a separate piece of the wreck; sighting a light in the rigging of bark some distance away, he made his last vigorous effort in swimming, and by use of his voice attracted the attention of the crew and soon was alongside the vessel; and when a rope was thrown to him grasped it and was drawn up to the gunwales of the vessel, when the strength in his hands gave way and he dropped back into the water. This occurred three times. Finally a ship's ladder was thrown him and in some way he tangled himself up on the end of it and was safely drawn on board, about four o'clock in the morning. Arriving in New York, the medical department of the University of New York conferred upon him an honorary degree. Also while there he attended as a delegate from the California State Medical Society the meeting of the American Medical Association held in the city of Washington, District of Columbia, in 1858; this being the first or second occasion the State Medical Society of California was represented at a meeting of the National Association. Loud applause greeted the calling of his name by the secretary incident to his perilous voyage, and the Doctor was the recipient of many warm complimentary expressions and congratulations upon his almost miraculous escape. He has made several other visits East during the intervening years, but always returns with increased regard for the comfort and advantages of his adopted State. In 1869, when the town of Galt was started, Dr. Harvey located there; and having acquired a large landed interest he laid out the town, and since then has made his residence there. Having relinquished his medical practice, he has devoted his time to his large and varied farm interests. He has about 3,500 acres, mostly devoted to dairying, grain and stock, with a small orchard and vineyard of choice selected fruits. He has taken an active interest and leading part in raising means for the erection of school buildings, churches, and the establishment of other public improvements; and it is in this

connection especially that we may be permitted to refer to his remarkable wife, *nee* Susan Mitchell Hall, to whom the Doctor was united in marriage in May, 1868. She is a native of New Haven, Connecticut, and brought with her to this land sunshine, not only the traditional "steady habits" of her nativity but also the culture and inbred refinement and educational acumen for which the Elm City is famous. Their only son, following a taste for scientific pursuits, is completing a course of study at the Institute of Technology at Boston, while their only daughter is a pupil at Ogontz, the celebrated institute for young ladies near Philadelphia. Thus each in a way is being fitted to fill the place in life which he or she is destined to occupy. Politically Dr. Harvey is a Republican. A Whig in the early days, he was largely instrumental in the organization of that party in El Dorado County in 1852, and during the first Lincoln campaign he was brought forward by his friends and elected to the State Senate and served in that capacity for three years; and later served in the Assembly. Was one of the prime movers in the organization of the Union party at the beginning of the last war. He has been an active, prominent director of the State Asylum for the Insane at Stockton for the past twelve years, and has filled many other positions of honor and responsibility.

Transcribed by: Jeanne Sturgis Taylor.

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