

William Bowden Phillips: Early Pioneer of Mariposa County

The Story of a California 49'er



**Researched and Compiled by
Warren B. Carah**

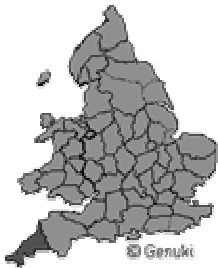
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William Bowden Phillips: Early Pioneer of Mariposa County

Origins

William Bowden Phillips was not a well-known California pioneer. In fact, he was but little noticed by anyone. But in his movements across America and the impressions he made with the people he met, he left behind enough clues of his passing to permit the creation of a story that is remarkable for the simple fortitude demonstrated by this man. In a single lifetime that began with very limited experience and pinched resources, he spanned an ocean, crossed a continent literally one step at a time, and after losing everything, rebuilt his life to provide for the needs of his large family in Mariposa County, California.

William Bowden Phillips was the youngest of six children born to Gregory Phillips and the former Sarah Bawden. He was christened at the Parish Church in Redruth, Cornwall on December 24, 1809. It is likely William Phillip's middle name was originally intended to be Bawden, but the various record keepers over time used Bowden instead and it stuck.



Cornwall in S.W. England

William's siblings included:

John, christened January 29, 1800 at Redruth, Cornwall
Joseph, christened June 21, 1801 at Redruth, Cornwall
Mary Bawden, christened March 25, 1804 at Redruth, Cornwall
Maria, christened April 27, 1806 at Redruth, Cornwall
Sarah, christened April 17, 1808 at Redruth, Cornwall

Not much is known about the British Phillips family, but it is likely they were miners, given their location in the heart of the mining district of Western Cornwall.

Cornwall in the early 1800's was undergoing significant social and economic change with the industrial revolution introducing new technology to deal with the changing dominant industry: tin and copper mining. Up until the late 1700's, most tin mining in Cornwall was essentially the application of human labor to hand dig alluvial deposits of the metal. From an economic and technologic standpoint, the industry structure was essentially feudal and individual miners frequently contracted their labor for in-kind payment from the landowner.

Wage labor did not come about until hard rock mining developed after the easy surface deposits were depleted. This type of mining required large amounts of capital for the equipment needed to pierce the earth, run tunnels, remove over-burden, pump excess water, etc. Entities such as organized labor were unknown to the typical Cornish miner but the days of the independent contract miner were coming to an end.

The advent of hard rock mining, combined with severe market fluctuations in the price

for tin and copper, forced many miners out of work with little or no local employment alternatives. Some Cornish miners moved to other British locations to mine coal or lead, but the opportunities were very scarce compared to the army of miners who needed jobs. Thus, in the first decades of the 19th century began the huge emigration of Cornish miners out of England.

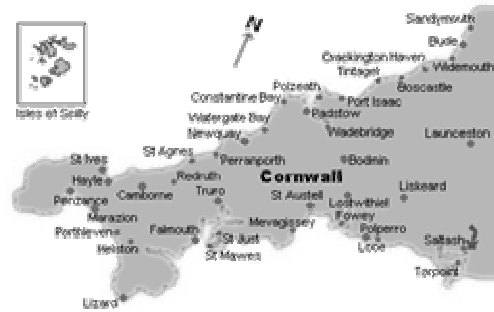


**Old Stone & Thatch
Cornish Miner's Cottage**

In the Phillips family of Redruth, the decision to emigrate was made around 1832. The exact circumstances of the move are not known, but the brothers John, Joseph, and William Phillips made their way to America and settled at the large Cornish settlement at Mineral Point, Iowa County, Wisconsin. The area, known as the Galena Mining District, was a large source of lead and had attracted many Cornish miners by the 1830's.

William's oldest brother, John, made the trip to America as a recent widower with his two young children, Simon, age 3, and Agnes Lucretia, who was just an infant. John's wife, Elizabeth Ashton, whom he had married in 1827 in Devon, probably died from complications of the birth of her daughter on February 6, 1832.

Joseph Phillips appears to have come to Mineral Point somewhat later than his brothers John and William as the 1850 Iowa County, Wisconsin census shows his youngest child was born in England in 1842. There is also evidence that Joseph had been previously married in Cornwall. Additional research is planned to ascertain all of the facts concerning Joseph Phillips.



William, who was in his early 20's at the time of the trip to America, was single and probably accompanied his older brother John to Mineral Point, Wisconsin.

Many Cornish were active participants in the Methodist Church and the Phillip's were no exception. The first Methodist Church at Mineral Point was established in 1834 and William Phillips is listed as a founding member in the local histories of early Iowa County, Wisconsin.



Miner's Work-place Bath

Most of the mining enterprises in the Galena Mining District were family affairs as the ore bodies were close to the surface and did not require large equipment to work. Most of the men in the area were in fact miners, but some pursued farming to feed the large population of those digging in the ground. This included Joseph Phillips, an older brother of William. William's oldest brother, John, saw other opportunities in the large

population of hard working miners, and established the first, and for some years, the only brewery in Iowa County, Wisconsin. His brewery was located on the outskirts of the town of

Mineral Point and it was said to have a very fine product. This was probably the beginning of the Phillips family involvement in the hospitality industry.

On January 23, 1838, William B. Phillips married Catherine Lean at Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Catherine had been christened at Camborne, Cornwall on July 30, 1814. Catherine was the daughter of Joseph Lean of Camborne and Elizabeth Trewren of Ludgevan, Cornwall. She came to Mineral Point with her parents around 1834. Catherine's family history has been traced back to the early 16th century in Cornwall. Catherine's father, Joseph, died at Mineral Point in 1847.



Galena Mining District Mill

Catherine Lean's siblings included:

George Trewen, christened Dec 8, 1810 at Camborne, Cornwall
Joseph, christened Oct 3, 1812 at Camborne, Cornwall (died young)
Joseph Trewren (No. 2), christened Mar 23, 1816 at Camborne, Cornwall
Elizabeth, christened Sept. 5, 1818 at Camborne, Cornwall
John, christened Sept. 9, 1820 at Camborne, Cornwall
Robert Truan (sic), christened May 4, 1822 at Camborne, Cornwall
William, christened July 22, 1825 at Camborne, Cornwall

Catherine's brother Joseph was active in local politics in Iowa County, Wisconsin and held a number of public offices. Her oldest brother George maintained the family mining tradition and eventually went to mine copper at Houghton in the Michigan Upper Peninsula where he died in 1869. Her brother John's family eventually moved to Iowa where they became farmers.

Shortly after arriving in Mineral Point, William's oldest brother, John, was remarried to Eliza Trewarthe, also of Cornwall. To John and Eliza were born: Thurza (1835), John D. (1840), Teresa Salome (1842), and Mary Hockins (1849). These children were in addition to the son and daughter John had by his first wife.

After his marriage to Catherine Lean, William Phillip's family started to grow with the births of Joseph L. (July 23, 1838), Sarah Jane (1839), Caroline (1842), and Elizabeth M. (March, 1849). Research is still on-going to determine William's occupation while the family lived in Mineral Point.

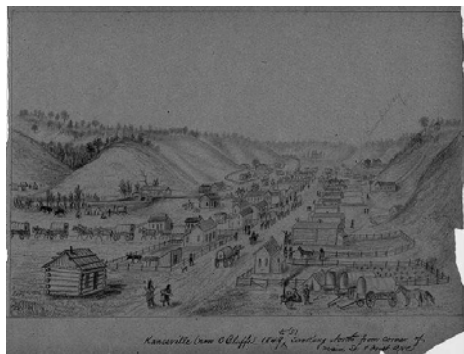
Wagon Train to Salt Lake

The response to the news of the gold strike in California in 1848 appears to have been sensational in the Cornish communities in the Galena Mining District. Literally hundreds of Cornish miners made hasty preparations to travel to the gold fields. Many went back to the East Coast to catch ships to take around South America or to Panama to reach California. But many

more chose to go overland and they prepared for trips that would begin in the spring of 1849. It is unlikely we will ever know how the matter was analyzed, debated, and decided, but in the Phillips family John and William Phillips decided they were going to go to California. The book, The History of Iowa County, Wisconsin, published in 1881, lists hundreds of persons and families that decided to try their luck in California. The sudden depopulation of the area created critical labor shortages and the economy of the Galena District was depressed until the Civil War.

In the Phillips families, William, his wife Catherine and the four children would all go to California. In John Phillips family, it was decided that Eliza and the young children would stay behind and that John would go with his two oldest children from his first marriage, Simon and Agnes Lucretia. Some sources have postulated that Eliza and the children stayed in Indiana after John left for California, but the 1850 census for Iowa County, Wisconsin clearly shows Eliza Phillips and her children living at Mineral Point a few houses down from her brother-in-law Joseph Phillip's farm.

A wagon train was formed which probably left Mineral Point around mid-April, 1849. The party consisted of the Phillips families, Asahel Bennett and family of Mineral Point, Ransom Moody and his brother-in-law Henry Skinner of Milwaukee, Bennett's father-in-law D.J. Dilley, and several parties from Fort Washington, Wisconsin. The train crossed the Mississippi River at Dubuque and passed through Iowa City and then on to Des Moines where they joined the Mormon Trail to their jumping off point at Kanessville, Iowa. The travel through Iowa at that time of year was miserable with frequent rains, wet snows, and plenty of mud.



Kanessville, Iowa—1849-50

There were a number of so-called “jumping off points” for the trails that took the pioneers to California in 1849. Although the place names of Independence and St. Joseph, Missouri are perhaps better known, Kanessville, now the location of modern Council Bluffs, Iowa, was by far the most popular start point of the entire pioneer period from 1840 to 1860. It had a number of advantages which included the fact it was farther west than any of the Missouri locations and had a well developed Missouri River crossing, thanks to the Mormons who maintained a

ferry fleet for their own members to reach the Salt Lake Valley. And contrary to the propaganda put out by the rival Missouri outfitting towns, supplies at Kanessville were reasonably priced and the dreaded diseases of cholera and typhoid were not rampant.

It is not known exactly when the Phillips party arrived in Kanessville, but on May 29, 1849 they departed the town in the company of 40 other wagons and called themselves the “Badger Company.” While the complete list of travelers in the Badger Company has not been preserved, the Kanessville records list some 80 members, plus an additional 12 persons from the “Jackson County,” “Johnston County,” and “Clinton County” Companies who traveled with

them. These are counties in Eastern Iowa and it is likely that “Johnston” should be Johnson.

While no member of the Phillips families is known to have left a journal or diary, they traveled in the company of those that did or told others of their experiences that eventually found their way into print. Traveling with the Phillips families in the Badger Company wagon train was Ransom Moody, originally from New York, who moved to Milwaukee in 1840. When the gold rush started, he decided to take several wagonloads of goods to Salt Lake to sell to the emigrants as they passed through the town and to the local residents. He left Milwaukee in late March 1849 with seven wagons full of everything from hats to jewelry to shoes.

On March 17, 1877, a biography of Mr. Moody was published in The Pioneer, a newspaper published by the Pioneer Society of Santa Clara County, California. In the biography, a section is devoted to the trek of the Badger Company from Kanessville, Iowa to Salt Lake. Other sources for what occurred on the trip are found in William Manley’s Death Valley in ‘49, a classic work on the Western pioneer experience. Mr. Manley was well acquainted with Asahel Bennett, who was a member of the Badger Company train, and parts of Bennett’s experience are published in Manley’s book. Another source is the journal of Alexander Combs Erkson, an original member of the Badger Company, a portion of which is also published as a chapter in Manley.

The Badger Company odyssey to California began with the selection of a Mr. Cornwall as their Captain. It was a choice many came to regret. After the oxen were shod and last minute supplies purchased, the train traveled eight miles north of Kanessville on the east side of the Missouri River to a place directly opposite a west bank settlement called Winter Quarters. The location refers to where Brigham Young stayed in the winter of 1846 and where many others Mormons camped before departing for Salt Lake in the exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois in 1847. Since Mormon travel traffic was still high in 1849, the Mormons maintained a ferry capability at Winter Quarters.

The Badger Company managed to obtain permission to borrow the Mormon’s ferrying scow and hired their ferryman at a cost of \$1.00 per wagon to bring them across. All of the wagons were conveyed across the Missouri without incident by May 30, 1849.

One of the unique aspects of the “Mormon Route” to Salt Lake is that travel on this road is on the north side of the Platte River whereas travelers coming from the Missouri jumping off ports traveled on the south side. Although the north side trail had the reputation of having sparse grass, Indian troubles, soft trail bed, and epidemics of cholera, quite the opposite was true. In addition, the north bank travelers were spared the troublesome crossings of the Platte that involved dealing with high water levels and quicksand.

The trip was uneventful until the Badger Company reached the Elk Horn River, 20 miles west of Kanessville, where the party was joined by the notorious Bill Hickman, Brigham Young’s so-called “Destroying Angel.” Arguably one of the worst rogues of the Old West, “Wild Bill” Hickman served in a variety of occupations including wagon train master, gold miner, ferryman and gang boss, but he is best known as a body guard and “enforcer” for Brigham Young. On Young’s behalf he chastised the unfaithful and served as a spy and soldier, especially during the

Utah Wars of 1857-58. He was responsible for the deaths of many persons, and eventually became an embarrassment to Young and the Mormon Church. Young excommunicated Hickman in 1872 after he published a tell-all book implicating Young and a number of church elders in criminal activities.

On the occasion of his joining the Badger Company, Hickman evidently was fleeing a party of Indians who sought revenge for the killing of one of their own. Hickman joined the train in the hopes that the Indians would not be looking for him amongst his “gentile enemies.” Hickman’s party, according to Ransom Moody’s account, consisted of his wife, a “female companion” (Hickman was an avowed polygamist and this second woman was probably one of his other wives), Isaac Hatch (Hickman’s brother-in-law), and Hatch’s wife. At the time of their joining the Badger Company, no one in the train was aware of Hickman’s fugitive status from the Indians.

The Indians finally discovered Hickman’s whereabouts, however, and they made a number of attempts to capture him on the trip west, all without success.

According to Moody, Hickman beat his wife frequently and brutally and was going to be driven from the train, but the guide, Captain Cornwall, intervened and allowed Hickman to stay. This probably contributed to the breakup of the train shortly after the arrival of Hickman. The train began to separate into two groups with one moving ahead of the other that wished to proceed at a slower pace. It is likely that the real reason for the split up was to distance the rear family wagons from Hickman and his entourage.

After the Badger Company reached Ft. Laramie, Captain Cornwall attended a fandango or dance at the Fort and got seriously drunk. He was so incapacitated that he ordered the train to wait for him outside of Ft. Laramie until he recovered enough to catch up with them the next day. This delay angered Ransom Moody, Henry Skinner and Asa Bennett and they ignored the order and continued on their journey. Thus, the train was now split into thirds. Moody’s party remained within sight of the main body of the train for several days but eventually arrived in Salt Lake on August 14, 1849, ahead of the others, including the Phillips, by six days.

Asa Bennett, who traveled with the Badger Company, reported to his friend William Manley that the trip to Salt Lake was not particularly difficult but was full of dissension, argument, and the occasional pulling of a gun. Presumably, he was referring to the problems associated with having Hickman along. Bennett also reported that a prize horse was lost and that several persons had died of cholera.

William Manley, who was originally from Vermont, had lived with Asahel Bennett in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. The two had agreed to go to California together and, before leaving, Manley had set out to northern Wisconsin to do some hunting. Evidently the departure date of Bennett and the rest had been misunderstood, and Manley arrived back in Mineral Point some two weeks after Bennett, the Phillips, and others had already left. Manley joined another group traveling west and eventually reached Salt Lake, but only after some very interesting experiences (See his memoirs in Death Valley in ‘49). Once in the Salt Lake area, he stumbled upon Asa

Bennett near Payson, Utah and retrieved his travel outfit that had been stored in one of Bennett's wagons.

The Southern Route to California

The arrival of the main body of the Badger Company in the Salt Lake area in late August 1849 put the party in a serious dilemma. Basically, the common wisdom stated that Salt Lake was the halfway point in the journey to California and that to avoid the Sierra winter snows, all trains had to be on their way west from Salt Lake no later than late July. The memory of the 1846 Donner Party disaster loomed heavily on every person's mind in the late summer of 1849. Complicating the problem was the fact that Indian tribes had fired the grasses west of Salt Lake, leaving nothing for stock to eat even if some parties wanted to chance a late Sierra crossing.

As a consequence, a rather large assemblage of would-be gold seekers sat in scattered camps about 30 miles south of Salt Lake contemplating their next course of action. Perhaps the most bewildering decision the travelers faced was to over-winter in Salt Lake. There were many reports of Mormon kindness to the California bound travelers and offers of work, food and shelter for those that had suffered misfortune. On the other hand, there were an equal number of incidents of unfairness in Mormon courts of law, outright thievery, extortion, and demands for religious conversion before a needy traveler would be offered food, shelter or work. There was a special acidity reserved for anyone who hailed from Missouri as the Mormons eagerly revenged their supposed ill treatment by citizens of that state.

It was in these circumstances that a third alternative was discussed amongst the travelers and Mormon officials in Salt Lake in the fall of 1849. Brigham Young proposed that the settlers travel south from Salt Lake and join the Spanish Trail and proceed from there to Los Angeles. The Spanish Trail route was well known to the Mormon leaders; detachments of the Mormon Battalion that had served in the Mexican War used it to reach California from Missouri and then back to Salt Lake just a few years earlier. The main drawback to this route was that it was a pack train trail and had never been traveled by wagons before with the lone exception of one vehicle that was driven from San Diego to Salt Lake in 1848.

It has been suggested by some historians that the Mormon cooperation in helping the settlers get to California via the Southern Route was nothing more than a device to get these gold seekers to do the difficult task of breaking a wagon trail. This trail would be for later movements of Mormon travelers and goods to and from southern California ports. However, even if the manipulation charge is true, the trail breaking effort also served the needs of the pioneers as it allowed them to be on their way to California instead of spending the winter in Salt Lake.

The Mormon leadership nominated a guide for the would-be gold seekers to consider who had extensive experience on the Spanish Trail route. He was Jefferson Hunt, a former company captain in the Mormon Battalion and who had traveled the route several times. Hunt agreed that the route could be traveled by wagon and offered to guide a train for a fee of \$10 per wagon. The owners of some 107 wagons agreed to the proposition including the Phillips and

Bennett party, Henry Skinner, Alexander Erkson and family, and William Manley, who would travel with Bennett.



**The only source of fresh protein
for most of the trip to California**

Due to the summer heat and lack of water/feed, a train taking the “Southern Route,” as this road came to be known, could not leave much before the end of September. During this period, most wagon owners spent their time making repairs, fattening their livestock and acquiring supplies. Some Phillips family lore has been handed down that says John Phillips and his son and daughter elected to over-winter in Salt Lake. This writer believes that this enforced waiting for the weather to cool has been mistaken for assuming John Phillips and family stayed in Salt Lake over the entire winter.

As further evidence that John Phillips did not spend the winter in Salt Lake, we turn to the diary of Ransom Moody. Moody, who traveled with the Phillips brothers in the Badger Company across the Plains, had accumulated a large cattle herd during the trip that he planned to sell in Salt Lake. It was more difficult to sell the cattle than he had anticipated and he had to stay behind when his friends Asa Bennett and Henry Skinner joined the Hunt wagon train. Despairing he would be “the only one left in Salt Lake from the original company,” he finally sold the cattle and joined a train guided by a David Huffaker that left Salt Lake on November 10, 1849. And also, there is a reasonable belief that one J.A. Phillips referenced in a report by Alexander Erkson later in the trip is, in fact, John Phillips (see below).

And finally, William Manley, who arrived in Salt Lake without horse or supplies, reclaimed his travel outfit from Asa Bennett and sought out a supply of provisions. Manley records he purchased flour and bacon from the brothers John and William Phillips of Mineral Point, Wisconsin at the wagon encampment and jumping off point near what is now Payson, Utah.

The Hunt party consisted of some 107 wagons, about 500 persons and around 800 head of livestock. The train was divided up into smaller companies with names like San Joaquin or Sand Walking Company, Jay Hawkers, Bug Smashers, Buckskins, Wolverines and Hawkeyes. The organization was semi-military in style and the idea was that each company would take the lead of the train for one day and then fall back to the rear until it rotated back to the front position again. In practice, however, the system was far too cumbersome and the train too large to manage properly.

When the train started for Los Angeles on October 1, 1849 it barely made 5 miles from Payson before stopping at Santaquin for the night. This very slow pace characterized the movement of the Hunt led train for a number of days and quickly led to a lot of grumbling among the impatient gold seekers. The situation was exacerbated when the train was stopped for

sick travelers or for observation of the Sabbath.

The situation was not helped by some serious route errors instigated by Hunt himself. In seeking a shortcut from Beaver Creek (near present Greenville, UT) to bypass the Black Mountains, Hunt sought a route through the Escalante Desert. Almost a week was wasted in backtracking when no water could be found.

The “Southern Route” to California crossed a number of ecological zones as it progressed southwestwards. The bio-community in the Utah portion of the route was quite diverse and the travelers generally had no problem finding water and grass feed for their livestock. Many cold water streams that hosted a good trout fishery traversed the area. Small mammals were numerous, especially jack rabbits, and were frequently hunted for food.



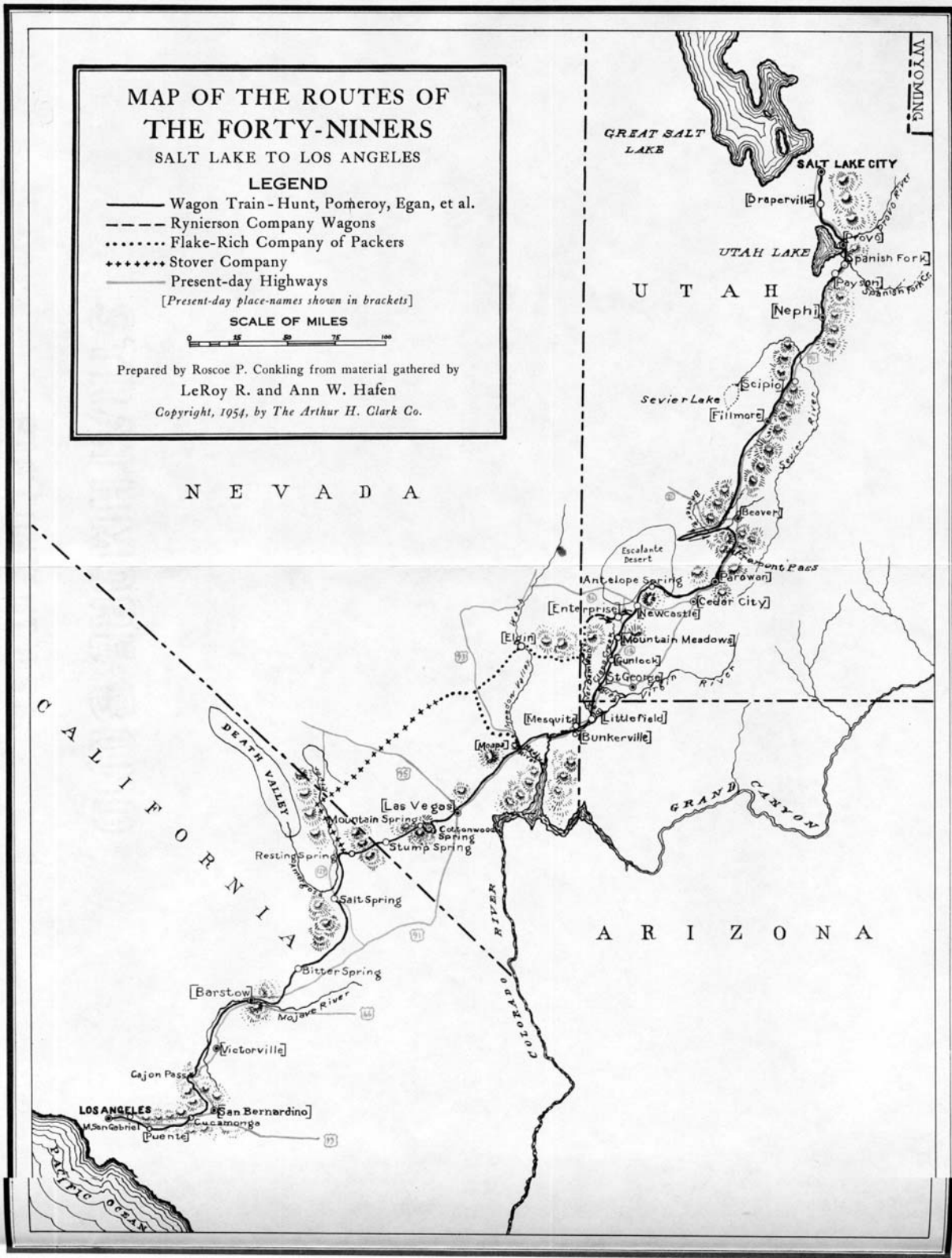
Spanish Trail at Enterprise, Utah. Note wagon ruts.

When the route crossed over into the Great Basin in southern Utah the character of the land changed dramatically and reflected the very low rainfall the area received. Creosote bush, artemisia (sage), and various cacti dominated the vegetation. The watercourses were generally lined with willow, cottonwood and scrub oak. Sweet grasses were relatively rare and the livestock had mainly salt grass as their staple.

In the Southwest, the soils were quite rocky and the Spanish Trail had a number of steep climbs for the wagons to make. Some required that the wagons be hauled up by hand including Virgin Hill near the Muddy River in Nevada and Cajon Pass in California. Game animals were essentially non-existent across the desert and it was only when the Mojave River was reached that deer were again seen. Permanent water holes were miles apart. If it were not for the unusually wet winter, a number of life-saving water sources found by the pioneers would not have existed.

As dissension in the company grew over the slow pace of travel, an apparent solution presented itself in the person of O.K. Smith, a packer who had caught up with the Hunt train from Salt Lake. Smith claimed to have a map showing a short-cut through the Great Basin to Walker Pass in the Southern Sierra. The shortcut was shown on the map to follow on the south side of an east-west mountain range extending from the Basin’s eastern edge all the way to California.

In the circumstance of the slow pace of travel, Smith’s map caused quite a stir in the Hunt wagon train party. Smith, along with a Methodist preacher by the name of John W. Brier, rallied the group to take the new shorter route. They said the new route would have them “in the gold fields in 20 days.” On November 3, 1849, at a point a little south of present day Newcastle near



Map of Southern Route from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles. From Arthur Clark Co. with Permission

Enterprise, Utah, all but 7 of the 107 wagons of Hunt's train opted to take the cutoff. Hunt was obliged to take those who wished to remain with him on the original Spanish Trail route. Included in those that left Hunt's leadership to take the cutoff were John and William Phillips.

The breakaway travelers headed west for some 30 miles when they encountered an impassible canyon, known as Beaver Dam Wash. Days were spent trying to find a way around the obstacle at a location the pioneers called Mt. Misery. After about a week of fruitless search, many of the wagon owners, including John and William Phillips, turned around to follow the route taken by Hunt and the small train of seven wagons that had elected to stay with him. Meanwhile, at Mt. Misery a few days later, a way around the canyon was finally found and 27 wagons proceeded west through the Great Basin in search of the short-cut to the gold fields. Among those proceeding west through the desert were Asa Bennett and William Manley. The agony of their struggle to reach California was recorded by William Manley in his book Death Valley in '49 which has become a classic of Western Frontier literature.

The wagons that returned from Mt. Misery to the Spanish Trail followed Hunt's footsteps but never caught up to him. The wagons broke up into smaller more manageable groups, and struggled to find water and grass for their livestock as they proceeded down the Santa Clara River to where it joined the Virgin River in northwest Arizona.

When they left the Virgin River to go overland to the Muddy River in southern Nevada, the ox and horse teams were clearly failing. Alexander Erkson, traveling with a group that included the Phillips brothers, describes his travails as he was left with only one ox team that could not pull his wagon by themselves. Drastic steps were taken to lighten the loads. Wagon planking and sides were stripped and most all goods were thrown out except food, water and blankets. Everyone who was able walked the dusty trail. Erkson noted that William Phillips was "on rations" that meant he was dependent upon the generosity of the others for his family's food.



Typical of most water courses on the Southern Route

Erkson finally secured another team when he purchased a yoke of oxen from J.A. Phillips with his last \$20.00. It is believed J.A. Phillips was in fact John Phillips. Persons like John Phillips, who had no family with small children, then gave up their wagons altogether and packed out on foot. It is not known if John Phillip's son, Simon, packed out with his father. It is likely John's daughter, Agnes Lucretia, moved over to William Phillip's wagon as Erkson notes that all of the thirty newfound packers were men.

The remainder of the trip into California was basically struggling through the parched

land from one watering hole to another with little feed for the livestock or people. The trail was littered with the carcasses of failed livestock, the shells of abandoned wagons and large piles of the once-prized possessions of the travelers.

Erkson does not state the specific date that his party crossed into California, but based on the schedule of Jefferson Hunt who was two weeks ahead of them, the Phillips family passed into California between present day Stump Springs, Nevada and Emigrant Pass, California around December 15, 1849. After passing through Cajon Pass, Erkson states that the party broke in two with one group going to San Bernardino and the other to Cucamonga and then finally to William's Ranch in Chino. It is not known which route the Phillip's families took, but since Erkson went to Chino, it is likely that the Phillips did as well.

Isaac Williams, owner of the Rancho del Chino, had come to California in the 1830's. He married Maria Lugo, daughter of prominent Mexican rancher Antonio Lugo, and was granted his ranch land by Governor Micheltorena in 1843. In 1849, Williams found himself in charge of a virtual hostelry that housed, fed and clothed hundreds of exhausted travelers coming to Southern California in the early years of the Gold Rush. His generosity was legend among the travelers. Unfortunately, the guest register at William's Ranch in Chino does not record the arrival of most of Hunt's train members in 1849.

Settlement in Mariposa, California

How the Phillips families got to Mariposa County from Southern California is unknown. The winter of 1849 was one of the wettest on record in California making travel difficult and many emigrants spent the time at southern California ranches—Rubidoux's, Lugo's San Bernardino, William's, and Rancho Cucamonga. Many others squatted at the Mission San Gabriel that was almost totally abandoned since the Mexican War of 1848. Whether the Phillips waited out the winter rains in the south or traveled to the gold fields has not been determined.

To reach the Southern Sierra gold fields, travelers exited the Tehachapi Mountains at Tejon Pass and went northwest up the central valley to where rivers like the Merced led into the foothills of the Sierra.

In his book, Death Valley in '49, Manley describes how he and Asa Bennett traveled along the San Joaquin River in the vicinity of the Merced River in the spring of 1850. He described the area as teeming with elk, antelope and the sign of many bears. He tried his luck at panning for gold in some of the tributary streams of the Merced, but noted that not much gold was found, at least not by him.

As mentioned earlier, how the Phillips families spent their time between their arrival in southern California in December of 1849 and the fall of 1850 is unknown. Despite losing most, if not all, of their material possessions on the trail to California, by the time of the 1850 census both John and William Phillips had established themselves in Mariposa County.

John Phillips had set up a hotel with a tavern adjacent to a ferry service he established on the Merced River near present day Merced Falls. On census day, October 23, 1850, listed as a

“Hotel Keeper,” John Phillips had set up a household that included his son Simon, daughter Lucretia, and two miners by the names of James Wills and William Billcock. In 1851, John Phillips returned to Mineral Point to bring back his wife and young children. They were settled back at the Merced Falls hotel by 1852.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	325	325	Wm Phillips	38	1/2	Trader		Eng		
2			Catherine Phillips	34	1/2	House Keeper		Eng		
3			Joseph Phillips	13	1/2			Wisconsin		
4			S J Phillips	10	1/2			Miss		
5			Sarah Jane Phillips	5	7/8			Wisconsin		
6			E W Phillips	1	7/8			Wisconsin		

1850 Census for Twp. No. 1, Mariposa Co., California, taken on 17 Nov 1850. Shown is William Phillips, his wife Catherine, and children Joseph, Sarah Jane, Caroline, and Elizabeth.

William Phillips and family settled closer to the Village of Mariposa and he was listed as a “Trader” in the census taken on November 17, 1850. All of William’s young children, including the 9-month-old baby Elizabeth, had survived the difficult trip from Mineral Point. Over all, the Phillips had traveled some 2,200 miles to get to their new Mariposa County home.



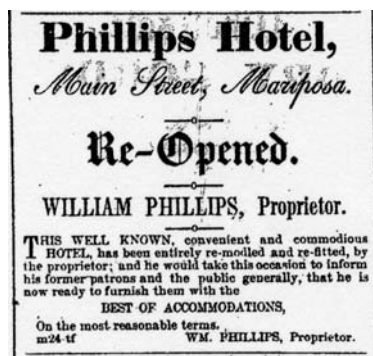
Mariposa, California in 1860 showing location of the Phillips Hotel on the west side of Charles St. between 4th and 5th Streets. William Phillip’s post 1857 home is shown on the west side of Mariposa Creek.

It appears that shortly after the 1850 census, William Phillips established the Phillips Hotel in the Village of Mariposa. It was located “on that parcel of land fronting the Main street lying between the trading tent of McNamara & Co. and the small clothing store which is next door South of Reynolds & Co.” according to the deed description. According to later records the hotel fronted on the East side of Charles St. between 4th St. and 5th St. and stood about in the middle of Block 17. The frontage on Charles St. was about 30 feet and the property extended

100 ft. west over Mariposa Creek where the Phillips had a home behind the hotel.

Shortly after establishing the hotel business, William Phillips suffered the premature loss of the first of many loved ones. Sometime after the birth of her son, William, in August 1851, Catherine Lean Phillips died. No record has been located to describe the cause of death or where she is buried. It appears that Catherine's death may have prompted the sale of the Phillips Hotel in Mariposa to a partnership made up of George Brush, George Halme, and Thomas Allen Long on July 24, 1852. Phillips held a mortgage note for \$1,500 for the three new owners.

There is no record of what William Phillips did for the next two years, but many must have been surprised and pleased to read the announcement in the March 24, 1854 edition of the Mariposa Chronicle that William Phillips had reopened an "entirely re-modeled and re-fitted" Phillips Hotel. It is possible the original note for the sale of the hotel in 1852 was foreclosed and Phillips re-possessed the property. In an advertisement from September 1854, Manuel Allen & Co. announced they had taken over the boarding department of the Phillips Hotel, so it appears that William Phillips had taken on a partner to run the boarding operation of his hotel business in Mariposa.



Phillips Hotel Ad—June 1854

With four young children to care for, William Phillips sought out a new wife and on January 23, 1855 at Sacramento, he married Mrs. Amelia Hosking Harris, a widow with six children. Amelia Hosking was born in 1820 in Cornwall and had moved to Mineral Point, Wisconsin as a youth. On July 3, 1837 she married Matthew Harris at Mineral Point. Around 1845, the couple moved to Galena, Illinois where they ran a hotel. In 1851, Harris took his family to California where they arrived by ship at San Francisco in January 1852. Shortly afterwards, the family moved to Sacramento, where Matthew Harris subsequently died.

It is quite possible that William Phillips knew the Harris family when they both lived in Wisconsin.

Amelia Phillips was no stranger to running a hotel and her addition to the management of the Phillips Hotel was heralded in newspaper advertising in the March, 1856 editions of the Mariposa Gazette. The announcements told that the hotel had once again been remodeled by the "proprietor of one of the first Hotels in Mariposa," and the dining service put under the control of "his Lady."

However, curious incidents were occurring that may indicate that all was not well. In an advertisement in the November 26, 1856.



Phillips Hotel Ad—Mar, 1856

Edition of the Mariposa Gazette, Mariposa Sheriff Thomas Early advertised the sale of the Phillips Hotel to satisfy debts owed to Antonio Grandvoinet. Evidently William Phillips was able to satisfy the creditor before the hotel was actually sold.

To Whom it may Concern.
AMELIA PHILLIPS, the wife of William Phillips, of the County of Mariposa, in the State of California, hereby declare, that it is my intention to avail myself of the provisions of an Act of the Legislature of said State, entitled "An Act to authorize married women to transact business in their own names as Sole Traders," passed April 12, 1852. And that I intend to carry on the business of keeping a Boarding House, in its various branches, in my own name and on my own account, as a sole Trader—and in the town of Mariposa, in the aforesaid county. And I intend to lease the house, with the furniture therein, now owned by John Barnett, situate in the said town of Mariposa, and formerly occupied by George Kraft. And I shall from this date be individually responsible, in my own name, for all debts contracted by me on account of said business above mentioned. And I further declare that the amount invested in said business is less than five thousand dollars.
 AMELIA PHILLIPS.
 Mariposa, January 20, 1857.
 State of California, County of Mariposa, SS.
 This 20th day of January, A. D. 1857, before me, Alex. Deering, a Notary Public, within and for the said County, personally appeared AMELIA PHILLIPS, who is to me personally known to be the person described in, and who executed the foregoing declaration—and made and signed the same in my presence, and declared that she did the same for the object and purpose therein mentioned—and that the facts therein were true and correct.
 In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and official Seal, the day and year above mentioned.
 ALEX. DEERING, Notary Public.
 Mariposa January 23, 1857. ja23-5m

Amelia Phillip's Legal Notice-1857

In a surprising turn of events, a legal notice was published by Amelia Phillips in the January 23, 1857 edition of the Mariposa Gazette announcing her intention to open and operate a boarding house, separate from her husband, in her own name. This was possible due to the provisions of a law passed in 1852 that allowed married women to transact business in their own names as "sole traders." She stated her intention was to lease a house and furnishings from John Barnett, assume responsibility for all debts, and that the amount invested was "less than five thousand dollars." Why Amelia Phillips took this action is unknown, but it is likely her husband found the hotel business less profitable as the Gold Rush slowed down and the need for hotel rooms diminished.

The final blow occurred in the spring of 1857 when once again Sheriff Early advertised the sale of the Phillips Hotel to satisfy a creditor, this time James Neill & Co. The

Phillips Hotel in downtown Mariposa was sold to a B.F. Clark in March of 1857. The ultimate success of Amelia's new enterprise is unknown, but she advertised the business for several months. Perhaps the burden of a much-enlarged family forced William and Amelia to look for additional sources of income, but certainly the decline of the mining industry contributed to the failure of the Phillips Hotel. With the hotel sale, the Phillips family had to move to another property William owned located on the west side of Mariposa Creek between 2nd and 3rd Streets.

By the time of the 1860 census, William had switched to the occupation of miner, but no occupation was listed for Amelia. Living with them were William's step-children Emily, John, Matthew, Thomas, James and Charles Harris plus Elizabeth and William Phillips from his marriage to Catherine Lean. In addition, there were two new children from his marriage to Amelia: George, age 4, and Lavinia, age 1.

Sheriff's Sale of Phillips Hotel—April 1857>

Legal Notices, etc.
Sheriff's Sale.
BY virtue of an order of sale, issued out of the District Court of the Thirteenth Judicial District, held for the County of Mariposa, and to me directed, against Wm. Phillips, and in favor of James Neill & Co., I am commanded to sell the following property, to wit: All that certain village Lot, situated, lying and being in the village of Mariposa, on the West side of Charles street, in said village, nearly opposite the cigar store of N. Cohn & Co., the said lot fronts thirty feet more or less on Charles street, and extends West over Mariposa creek, one hundred feet, and includes the building known as "Phillip's Hotel," together with all and singular, the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging, or in any wise appertaining.
 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that I shall proceed to sell at Public Auction, at the front door of the Court House, in the town of Mariposa, on Saturday, the Second day of May, A. D. 1857, the above described property, or so much thereof as will satisfy the Plaintiffs in their demand, for the sum of one thousand, two hundred and six dollars, and twenty-one cents, with interest thereon at the rate of two per cent per month, from the 23d day of May, 1856 until paid, and also for twenty-one dollars cost of suit, docketed in said County on the 16th day of February, 1857. Terms of Sale—CASH.
 THOMAS EARLY, Sheriff
 of Mariposa County.
 By JOHN N. MOORE, Under Sheriff.
 Mariposa, April 10, 1857. 10-td

Meanwhile in 1857, John Phillips retired from the ferrying and hotel business on the Merced

River and moved to Hornitos to start a cattle ranch. He died at Hornitos on October 20, 1862. His widow Eliza Trewarthe Phillips moved to Merced where she died at the home of her daughter in 1898 at the age of 86.

The 1860 Mariposa census indicates that one of the Harris children, John, worked as a printer. This was at the Mariposa Gazette and marked the beginning of a long association of the Harris brothers with the newspaper industry. It culminated with Charles Harris and his brother Thomas establishing the Merced Star in 1880, a newspaper published to this day.

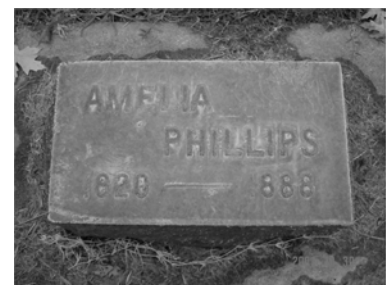
By the time of the 1870 census, the Phillips household, still in Mariposa, had been much reduced in size with the moving out of most of the children. However, besides George and Lavinia, there was another child born to William and Amelia: Frederick, who had been born in September 1862. William was still listed as a miner and owned real estate valued at \$250. At the 1872 California Great Register, the family had moved to Hites Cove, where William was employed as a miner.

1875 brought a number of changes to the Phillips family. In the first half of the year William and Amelia moved to Merced, although they retained ownership of the home and lot in the Village of Mariposa. Coming with them were most of the Harris step-children plus the youngsters Lavinia and Frederick Phillips. In June, a double tragedy struck the family. On June 20, William and Amelia's son, George Phillips, died of typhoid at Merced. He was a strapping 18-year-old youth who was a blacksmith apprentice, but died within hours of contracting the disease. Just four days later, William's oldest son by Catherine Lean, Joseph L. Phillips, died of cholera at Visalia, Tulare County. He was 37 years old and left behind a wife and six children.

After these events, the chronicle of William Phillip's life goes essentially blank. For some reason, he is not listed with the rest of his family in the 1880 Merced County census although he was certainly still living and he still owned property in the Village of Mariposa as late as 1883. Nor is he listed in any of the Merced County Great Registers. When Amelia Phillips died on December 30, 1888, there is no mention of William in her obituary.



Grave Markers for William Bowden Phillips and Amelia Harris Phillips. Masonic Cemetery, Merced, California. The simplicity of the markers is striking.



It is known that William Bowden Phillips died at San Jose on March 24, 1888. Why he was in San Jose at the time of his death is a matter of conjecture, but his widowed daughter, Caroline (Grussenmeyer), lived there and perhaps he was visiting or living with her at the time of his death. William Bowden Phillips was brought home from San Jose and is buried next to his wife Amelia in the Masonic Cemetery in Merced. Their markers are noted for their stark simplicity.

While engaged in the research for this paper, it was inspiring for the writer, a ggg-grandson of William Phillips, to see how the values he and his family possessed allowed them to successfully deal with adversity and muster the courage needed to face the unknown in their search for a better life. Perhaps the final chapter of William Phillip's eventful life can be written when more facts are uncovered, but it is clear, now, that he left a lasting legacy that contributed to the growth of his adopted country, the maturity of the State of California, and the success of his posterity.

Appendix

I. Children of William Bowden Phillips (1809-1888)

By Catherine Lean (1814-ca. 1852)

Joseph Lean Phillips, b. 23 Jul 1838--Mineral Point, WI; d. 24 Jun 1875--Visalia, CA; Spouse: Mary Bacon
Sarah Jane Phillips, b. abt. 1839--Mineral Pt, WI; d. 27 May 1896--Tuolumne, CA; Spouse: Thomas W. Marshall
Caroline Phillips, b. abt 1842--Mineral Point, WI; Spouse: Joseph F. Grussenmeyer
Elizabeth M. Phillips, b. abt. Mar. 1849--Mineral Point, WI; d. aft. 1916--Berkeley, CA; Spouse: Joseph A. Sterne
William L. Phillips, b. Aug. 1851--Mariposa, CA; d. 14 Jan 1914--Oakland, CA; Spouse: Mary S. McCreary

By Amelia Hosking Harris (1820-1888)

George Phillips, b. 4 Jul 1856--Mariposa, CA; d. 20 Jun 1875--Merced, CA; Never Married
Lavinia Phillips, b. Oct 1858--Mariposa, CA; d. 9 Nov 1931--San Francisco, CA; Never Married
Frederick H. Phillips, b. Sep 1862--Mariposa, CA; d. 23 Jan 1922--San Francisco, CA; Spouse: Julia McClenahan

Stepchildren (by Matthew Harris and Amelia Hosking)

Emily Harris, b. 1839--Wisconsin; d. bet. 1911-1922--California; Never Married
John F. Harris, b. abt. 1840--Wisconsin; d. aft Aug 1911--California
Matthew Harris, Jr., b. abt 1842--Wisconsin; d. 16 Aug 1911--San Francisco, CA; Spouse: Amanda Moore
Thomas Harris, b. abt. 1844--Wisconsin; d. 1897--Merced, CA
James A. Harris, b. abt. 1845--Galena, IL; d. bet. 1911-1931--California
Charles Harris, b. Jun 1850--Galena, IL; d. 17 Mar 1932--San Francisco, CA; Spouse: Alice Slater

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