

Less-Known San Francisco Origin Story Highlighted in New History Book

The Star, The Saint and The City. How Sam Brannan's Newspaper Heralded the Gold Rush and Created San Francisco. By William Briggs. Bookstand Publishing (2023), 228 pages.

The origins of San Francisco and early California journalism are the focus of a new book by regional historian-author William Briggs. From the discovery of the great bay to the arrival of a shipload of the first Yerba Buena immigrants and the subsequent transformation into the City of San Francisco, the book traces this history through the first San Francisco newspaper, *The California Star* and the dramatic life of its publisher Samuel Brannan.

According to Briggs, a California State University emeritus dean and retired journalism professor, history has marginalized the importance of Sam Brannan, and the enormous role played by the original Mormon religious refugees he led to California in 1846. Not only did they colonize Yerba Buena, but his fledgling newspaper renamed it San Francisco and two years later broke the news about the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, launching the Gold Rush and transforming California.

"Brannan was the City's biggest promoter, its first entrepreneur and California's first millionaire, but many people are less familiar with that part of the story for any number of reasons," says Briggs. Brannan argued that California should become the Mormon capital instead of Salt Lake, and he traded his religion for everything else California had to offer. "He's an extraordinary historical figure who deserves more attention."

Set against the tapestry of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny leading up to the Gold Rush, *The Star, the Saint and The City* follows Brannan's epic sea pilgrimage from New York around Cape Horn to escape religious persecution in the east, only to arrive mere weeks after California had already been annexed by the United States from Mexico. The book chronicles the contentious relationship between Brannan and Mormon leader Brigham Young, and studies Brannan's conflicting nature which ultimately resulted in his split from the Latter-Day Saints but freed him to pursue his great dreams. And the book provides a fresh look at the evolution of California journalism through the pages of *The California Star* and the role of its boy-editor, Edward Kemble, Brannan's young assistant.

With its publication, the book completes what author Briggs calls his Golden State trilogy of lesser-known history stories. Previous books include *Badass Lawman*, and *That Pirate, Bouchard*. The author will hold a booktalk and signing Thursday, Feb. 15 at 6 p.m. at Booksmart, Vineyard Town Center, Morgan Hill. All three titles are available in hard copy or electronic edition through Booksmart at www.mybooksmart.com or online through Amazon or Barnes & Noble.