

Josiah Bio.

Josiah Earl, originally from Indiana, came to California in 1849 from New Orleans, following the route along the Rio Grande river. Previously, he had been operating a line of barges on the Wabash river in Indiana, and carried freight as far south as New Orleans. In his business trips up and down the Wabash and the Mississippi he had formed many acquaintances, and they organized a band of one hundred men to make the trip to California. Josiah Earl was chosen captain of the caravan. He sold his boats and, with his men, most of whom were sons of southern growers and quite impractical, started the journey. Their route along the Rio Grande took them through old Mexico, and they experienced many hardships such as storms, hail, and drought. Much live stock was lost and also equipment. They finally reached Chihuahua, Mexico, without funds, their clothing in tatters, and face to face with a difficult situation. Wages in Chihuahua were then five cents a day. However, in their outfit was a doctor named Smith. Mr. Earl had acquired some medical knowledge and he persuaded the doctor to join him under the title of Drs. Earl & Smith to practice medicine among the inhabitants. Three months later, they had acquired sufficient funds to provide for their companions. Five of them employed the five best Texas rangers they could find, and equipped themselves to push on to California. They were constantly harassed by hostile Indian bands. They fought their attackers, and traveled by night, until they finally reached Yuma, Arizona, in safety. The other members of the party then started for the gold diggings, but Mr. Earl purchased their horses and freighting outfits, and settled in Los Angeles. He engaged in freighting from this settlement to Wilmington, to Yuma, and to Stockton, and he was very successful. After two years, he sold his freighting outfit for the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and then moved to Stockton. About this time some rich discoveries were made in Sonoma county, and Mr. Earl resumed the freighting business. Then mines, however, played out, his customers owed him, and he found himself left with only a few horses and a wagon. He loaded the wagon with flour and drove to Red Bluff, California, which was then the navigation terminal of the Sacramento river. He was much impressed with the appearance of this mammoth valley and believed that in the future it would be the great empire it proved to be. He sold the flour for one dollar a pound or fifty dollars a sack, bought a Mexican land grant, fenced three hundred acres, planted it, and taught the Indians how to care for it. He then rode horseback to Yreka and engaged in placer mining, in which he met with phenomenal success, taking out over five hundred thousand dollars in gold dust. Next he formed the Sierra Lumber and Flume Company and engaged in lumbering on a wide scale. Again disaster was to come to him, however, as the great floods of 1860-61 caused him a loss of over six hundred thousand dollars. His courage undaunted, he then went to Virginia City and there engaged in the lumber business until the mines in that vicinity were abandoned, at which time he removed to Inyo county, California, and was there active in agriculture and mining until 1884. In that year, he went to Australia on a business mission and there died soon after his arrival.