

# San Francisco County

## Biographies

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### GUY CHAFFEE EARL

No lawyer now practicing his profession in San Francisco deserves greater credit for success achieved than Guy Chaffee Earl, now one of the most accomplished and popular attorneys of this city, with offices at 225 Bush street.

Mr. Earl was born in Red Bluff, California, May 7, 1861, and is a son of the late Josiah and Adelia T. (Chaffee) Earl. 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. His wife, and the mother of Guy C. Earl, came from Sandusky, Ohio, to San Francisco in 1852, making the journey by way of the Isthmus of

Panama. Here she had a brother associated with Josiah Earl, and her marriage to the latter occurred in San Francisco. Mrs. Earl died in the year 1892. By her marriage she was the mother of two sons, Guy C. and Edwin T. The latter was the founder of the Earl Fruit Company of California, had many interests, and was considered a wealthy man when he died in 1919.

Guy C. and Edwin T. Earl were reared in pioneer surroundings, and had only the early advantage of the rural schools. Misfortune came in 1872, when everything the family possessed was destroyed by earthquake. Following this, they moved to Oakland, California, where Edwin T. Earl attended high school. Guy C. took up his studies at the University of California, and in 1883 received the Bachelor of Arts degree from this institution. The father's death in the next year further increased the hardships of this courageous California family, but with characteristic courage and energy they carried on.

The trying situation of this time has been graphically described by Guy C. Earl in an interview published in a San Francisco newspaper, as follows: "I was born and spent my early years down in the land of little rain, in the cow country. My parents were that grand type whose education is acquired from the soil and the elements. They knew how to work, to meet the demands of nature and to overcome difficulties that would lick the man of today. In 1872 an earthquake came that destroyed our home. I can remember counting eighty-seven tremors. The whole community was wiped out. My parents were already planning for the education of their children. They deliberated carefully and finally decided that now was the time to begin their project. We moved to Oakland. We were poor. I was a rough specimen of youngster. I had to work to make my way and to help provide for the family. Then my father died and the problems were doubled. I can remember the fear and the stubborn determination in my heart those days after my graduation from the university. I walked up and down the streets of San Francisco with my fists doubled up, saying over and over to myself, 'I will be a lawyer. I will find a place for myself.'

"At last I had luck. I found a place where they would allow me to work for nothing while I studied. Soon I was earning a little. I began paying off the family debts and saving some. My mother's keen intellect helped me at this time. She figured that I might advance more quickly if I had more time to study and if I were in a place where I could observe court procedure. Together, we found it. I went into the district attorney's office at Alameda. From then on, I moved up. When I was admitted to the bar I became associated with S. P. Hall, who had also been in the district attorney's office. We set up for ourselves as Hall & Earl."

Mr. Earl's admission to the bar, mentioned above, was in 1887, and he remained in association with S. P. Hall, who was later an appellate judge, until 1895. He was elected to the state senate for the 1893 session and served in this lawmaking body until 1898. In 1895, Mr. Earl formed a law partnership with Thomas B. Bishop and Charles S. Wheeler in San Francisco, and this association continued until 1900, since which time he has practiced alone, with outstanding success and with a steadily growing clientage. He is president and general counsel of the Great Western Power Company and the California Electric Generating Company.

On November 15, 1888, Mr. Earl was married to Miss Ella J. Ford of Oakland, California, and they are the parents of the following children: Mrs. Alice Wilder; Mrs. Martha Graham; Mrs. Elinore Henshaw; and Guy Chaffee, Jr. The Earl family home is at 2914 McClure street in Oakland.

Mr. Earl served as a regent of the University of California in the terms of 1902-03-04. His church is the Congregational, and in politics his support has been given to the republican party. During his university career, he became a member of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity, and he now belongs to the Berkeley Club (literary), the Bohemian Club, the Union League Club, the Commonwealth Club, the Claremont Country Club, the Sequoyah Country Club, and the San Francisco Golf and Country Club. Mr. Earl is known as an interesting authority on Indian lore, particularly of Inyo county. He speaks fluently the dialect of the Piute Indian, and has written entertainingly of the red men. In social and civic affairs of his residence city and in San Francisco he has ever been a sincere participant, and has won many friends wherever his activities have taken him.

**Transcribed by: Jeanne Sturgis Taylor.**

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