

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF

NAPA COUNTY

Incidents of Travel, Adventures, Etc.

NAPA COUNTY is bounded as follows : On the north by Lake County; on the west by Sonoma; on the south by Solano, and on the east by Solano and Yolo. At the time of the acquisition of California by the United States, it formed part of the Northern Military Department of Mexico, the Headquarters of which were at Sonoma. It was first organized April 25th, 1851; since then its boundaries have been somewhat changed by the Legislature of the State, and it now covers an area of 828 square miles approximately, and contains a population of about 12,000—including 1,600 Chinamen. The principal towns are Napa, St. Helena, Yountville and Calistoga; we shall have occasion to allude to them separately in the course of our description.

The important resources of the County are farming and mining. In the valleys the soil is very fertile, yielding large crops of wheat, barley, oats, Indian corn, etc.; the side-hill lands are suitable for vineyards, and adapted to fig and orange culture; the mountain land, of which there is a considerable area, is not fit for cultivation, but furnishes excellent pasturage, and as such, is very valuable.

There is but little wood-land in the valleys, but plenty of timber in the mountains; sugar-pines and laurel trees are abundant, and among them some of unusual size. The oak trees are of the so-called "scrub" species, and only available for fuel.

The principal valleys are the Napa, Suscol, Pope, Berryessa, Capel, Chiles, and Wooden valleys, of which more will be said as we carry our reader on a flying trip through the whole County.

The climate is semi-tropical, similar to that of the southern part of France. In some portions of the County, sheltered by the mountains, the thermometer, during the months of July and August, occasionally reaches 105 deg. Fahrenheit, but this is seldom; generally the heat is not oppressive, and the mornings and evenings are cool and refreshing. In winter, ice is sometimes formed, but the "cold spell," as it is termed, rarely continues longer than a few days; snow very seldom falls, except in the mountains. The rainy season here, as in other portions of the State, begins about November and ends in May, but during this period there are many beautiful, clear days, especially in the months of January and February. April and May are the most agreeable; then, Nature has assumed her dress of spring, the temperature is delightful, and the atmosphere of remarkable purity. The picturesque mountain scenery, the beautiful orchards, vineyards and grain fields on all sides, with numerous neat and tasty country residences, nestled among trees and shrubbery and surrounded by flower gardens, are very attractive and astonish the tourist. The Eastern people, who cross the Atlantic in search of a mild climate during winter, little dream that with much less expense and without any of the very disagreeable features of a sea voyage, they can attain their object, for California offers all the advantages of climate, and the traveler can dispense with the services of an interpreter, usually necessary in Continental Europe, and spend the winter among his own countrymen. For persons of delicate constitution, especially consumptives, the climate of Napa County is unsurpassed. An Eastern tourist, who some time ago visited Napa Valley, speaks of his trip in the following terms :

"I could not forego the pleasure of visiting Napa Valley, as I had heard so much of it. It was in the month of April, and spring had fairly set in—the trees and wild flowers were in full bloom—Nature was in her splendor. Early one morning I sauntered forth to breathe the fresh air—it was before daybreak and all was silent. I followed a path leading up a high hill, hoping to reach the top in time to see the sun rise. After considerable climbing and losing myself in the bushes several times, I finally attained the summit, and seated myself upon the utmost point of a projecting rock, which commands a view of many miles