

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
PUBLICATIONS IN HISTORY.
OFFICIAL EXPLORATIONS FOR
PACIFIC RAILROADS, 1853-1855,
VOLUME XI**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649153091

University of California publications in history. Official explorations for pacific railroads, 1853-1855, volume XI by George Leslie Albright

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GEORGE LESLIE ALBRIGHT

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HERBERT E. BOLTON
EDITOR

VOLUME XI



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OFFICIAL EXPLORATIONS FOR PACIFIC RAILROADS 1853-1855

BY
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Native Sons Fellow in Pacific Coast History



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29/11/22

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
1921

EDITOR'S NOTE

Soon after the completion of the present monograph Mr. Albright went to Spain to engage in research as Native Sons' Fellow in Pacific Coast History. A few weeks after his arrival in Seville he contracted typhoid fever, to which he succumbed in November, 1916, at the age of twenty-four. In his death the University of California lost one of her most brilliant alumni, and the State one of her best and most promising young citizens. Through the demise of the author, the editing of his book fell entirely into other hands.

The immense value of the work being supported by the Native Sons is well attested by such results as those set forth in this book by Mr. Albright. The desirability of promoting here in the West a study of the part played by the West in our nation's history is illustrated by a single sentence in Mr. Albright's monograph (p. 29): "The men who dominated this session [of Congress], and who placed the necessity of a Pacific railroad above sectional feelings and party creeds, were Senators Gwin of California, Rusk of Texas, Borland of Arkansas, and Bell of Tennessee"—all but one being men from this side of the Mississippi. Besides setting forth for the first time a systematic history of an important episode in the process of welding the nation and linking it with the Orient, Mr. Albright's study adds to the list of notable American explorers such names as Stevens, Gunnison, Beckwith, Whipple, Parke, Pope, Emory, Williamson, and Abbot.

For funds to supplement those of the University and thereby make possible the suitable publication of this book, thanks are due to Mr. Edward E. Ayer, of Chicago, and to Mr. Horace M. Albright, of Yellowstone National Park.

PREFACE

An episode in the development of the trans-Mississippi West to which but scant attention has been given in any history is the Pacific railroad survey of 1853-1855. This great reconnaissance deserves attention as the first attempt of the government at a comprehensive, systematic examination of the vast region lying between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean. It is not intended to minimize in any way the labors of the fur-traders, the travelers, and the earlier government explorers, of whom Emory, Stansbury, and Sitgreaves must stand side by side with Fremont. Through their efforts there existed a good general knowledge of the West; but when it was proposed to locate a transcontinental railroad, the dearth of accurate scientific information was well recognized. All preëxisting knowledge was brought to bear upon a few routes which were advocated in definite plans. For that reason I have seen fit to discuss rather fully the different plans in order to show their intimate connection with the railroad explorations. My study has been based almost entirely upon the government documents, and an attempt has been made to study every document bearing upon the subject. The orthography of place names is usually that of the documents.

