

**PERSONAL HISTORY AND  
REMINISCENCES WITH PERSONAL  
OPINIONS ON CONTEMPORARY  
EVENTS 1845-1921; PP. 1-132**

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Personal History and Reminiscences with Personal Opinions on Contemporary Events 1845-1921; pp. 1-132 by Henry Root

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**HENRY ROOT**

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**Personal History  
and  
Reminiscences**



HENRY ROOT  
San Francisco  
1920

**HENRY ROOT**

Surveyor, Engineer and Inventor

Personal History  
and  
Reminiscences  
with  
Personal Opinions on Contemporary  
Events  
1845 - 1921.

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CHAPTER 1.

VERMONT HISTORY AND THE START OF  
WORK IN SACRAMENTO.

I, Henry Root, of San Francisco, California, was born on a farm in the town of Williston, Chittenden County, Vermont, November 27, 1845. My father was Zimri Root and my mother Amelia, née Atwater.

The title to this farm was derived from the New Hampshire grants. The foundation of title to land in the town of Williston, like other Vermont towns, is in grants made by the Royal Governors of New Hampshire (largely by Benning Wentworth), under King George the Second of England, to share holding companies, or groups of proprietors, generally reserving to the King the ownership of the pine timber on the land suitable for masts and spars for his majesty's ships. Notwithstanding the separation of the country from the British dominion by the war of the Revolution that land was later stripped of its largest and finest pine timber which was exported through the port of Quebec to the English market.

Bennington was the first town granted and it took the first name of Governor Benning Wentworth. It was made memorable by the victory over the British forces



in the war of the Revolution. The grants of land in what is now the state of Vermont are to the westward of the Connecticut River and were made notwithstanding the fact that, while New York was still in possession of the Dutch, King Charles the Second of England had made a grant of that whole country extending eastward to the Connecticut River to his brother, James, Duke of York, afterwards King James the Second; but the great majority of the settlers of the country, known as the "Green Mountain boys," held some kind of title derived from the Royal Governor of New Hampshire and were jealous of and hostile to "Yorkers" as they called the officials around Albany.

My great-grandfather, Elisha Root of Montague, Hampshire County, Massachusetts, held the shares of stock reserved to Benning Wentworth in the grant to Willis and others of six miles square on the French or Onion, now the Winooski, River, now the town of Williston, Vermont. His father was Joseph Root who died at Montague, October 1, 1786, and his gravestone in the cemetery near the village there is well preserved.

Just before the year 1800 Elisha Root with his three sons, Arad, Chester and Elisha, went to Vermont to find the land to which he had title under the New Hampshire grant, and he was awarded lot No. 1 of the town as it had then been surveyed and divided in satisfaction of his claims for the shares derived from Benning Wentworth. The three sons remained and became citizens of Vermont; but the father returned to Massachusetts and died there in 1812. Arad, my grandfather, first built a log

house and later one of sawed lumber, afterward owned by my father where I was born. Through a long term of years up to the close of the American Revolution this country had been overrun by war parties of the claimants of the country. The river forming the northern boundary of Williston had been in early years the winter trail of French and Indian war parties travelling from Canada on the ice to attack the settlers of the frontier settlements of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut.

In 1854 my father's family moved to Williston village for better school accommodations. On September 1, 1858, I entered the Williston Academy, a private school of which J. S. Cilley was principal and manager, where I continued until November, 1860. This was the last of my attendance at school but I studied at home between working times another year.

In the year 1862 I was at Daniel Patrick's house in Hinesburg, an adjoining town, studying surveying and working with him when he had outside jobs. He let me run the compass, an old fashioned sight-vane instrument. The next year I bought a compass and surveyor's chain and did a few little jobs myself; one for Chas. S. Seymour and one for my old friend Homer Beach (who was a pensioner of the war of 1812), both in Williston.

In April, 1864, together with several others including Lemuel T. Murray and wife, just married, I left Williston for California. Others in the party could not get tickets out of New York, but I sailed from there on the Vanderbilt steamer "Ariel," April 23, 1864, for Aspin-

wall, now Colon. We crossed the Isthmus on the Panama Railroad and sailed from Panama May 2, 1864, on the steamer "Golden City" of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Outside of Acapulco, Mexico, we were stopped by a shot from one of the French warships blockading the port, but they let us go in for coal. We reached San Francisco on the night of May 15, 1864, at about 11 o'clock p. m., docking at the foot of Folsom Street. It was dark so I took the first hotel bus I came to and went to the "Original House" on the south side of Sacramento Street below Kearny Street, just above the well known "What Cheer House."

At that time my sister, Mrs. Lewis H. Talcott, was living on a milk ranch beyond the Mission out the San José road and up Berkshire Street to about where 32nd Street would cross the Rock Creek Valley. The place where they lived then was called the Gardner Ranch and the land was rented from the owner of the San Miguel Rancho. Lewis sold milk in the city and came around once a day to Wilson's saloon at the corner of Kearny and Clay Streets so I found him easily and went home with him on the milk wagon. I stayed there with my sister, until July 5, 1864, when I went to Sacramento to look for a job in the surveying business. My brother-in-law did not think I could find such a job in San Francisco and thought I had better take anything I could find, but I was after a surveying job. My sister had friends in and around Sacramento, so I asked her to go up there on a visit and inquire about surveying jobs. She made a visit to Silas Whitecomb's ranch on the