



# **A Pennsylvania Mennonite and the California Gold Rush: The Journal and Letters of David Baer Hackman**

*Lawrence Knorr*

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David Baer Hackman (1827-1896) a Mennonite from Millport, Lancaster County, PA, traveled west to California in 1850, seeking his fortune during the great Gold Rush. David wrote many letters home concerning his crossing of the plains by wagon and his many detailed experiences in and around the gold fields of California. A vivid writer for such a young man, David captures images of the mining communities, the boom towns of Sacramento, Hangtown, Mokelumne Hill, Columbia and Sonora and the lawlessness found there. He writes of early San Francisco, the local Indians, trouble with bears, and the great trees of Calaveras County. His journal then captures his return trip in 1854 by steam ship to Panama, across the Isthmus and then to New York City. Lawrence Knorr presents the journal and letters in sequence along with their historical context, providing corroborating accounts where available. In all, an excellent primary source and piece of social history from one of the most exciting times in American history.

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