

X
1830
*Woodbridge, Sylvester—b. Sharon, Ct., June 15, 1813; U. C., 1830; Aub.
Sem.; (2 grad.); ord. Pby. Long Island, Apr. 22, '36; s. s. Westhampton, L. I.,
N. Y., '35- p. '36-37; p. Hempstead, L. I., '38-48; s. s. Benicia, Cal., '49- p.
'50-70; ed. *Occident*, '69-76; p. Howard St. ch., San Francisco, '70-75; p.
Woodbridge ch., San Francisco, '76-83; d. San Francisco, Cal., Apr. 1, 1883.
D. D., L. C., '59. *Princeton Theol. Cat. 1894.*

class
1832

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*SYLVESTER WOODBRIDGE, D.D., b. Sharon, Conn., June 15, 1813;
Union Col., 1830; Aub., 1830-2; Princ. T. S., 1832-4; D.D., Lafayette Col.,
1859; m. Mary Foster Quogue, L. I., May 8, 1836; ord. p. Westhampton,
L. I., L. I. Presb., Apr. 22, 1836; Westhampton, L. I., 1835-7; Hemstead,
1838-48; Benicia, Cal., 1849-70; Howard St. Ch., San. Francisco, 1870-5;
Woodbridge Ch., San. Francisco, 1876-83; ed. of *Occident* from 1870; d.
do., Apr. 1, 1883. *Auburn Theol Sem. cat..*

class
1833.

52

SYLVESTER WOODBRIDGE, Jun., 1830, of Greenville, N.Y., was a member of the Philomathean
Society. (Died: 1883)
Philomathean Catalogue 1830

Rev. Sylvester Woodbridge had been appointed to California by the Missionary Board in the Fall of '48. He was from New York. He was instructed to proceed immediately to California, and started December, '48, reaching here in February, '49. p.8

The first Presbytery held in Stockton was in the spring of '50. It consisted of Rev. Sylvester Woodbridge, Rev. Albert Williams and Rev. James Woods--- sometimes denominated the three W's. The sessions of the Presbytery were held in my house (Rev. James Woods).

Of the three W's of that Presbytery, Dr. Woodbridge was the first to come to the coast. He was then thirty-six years old. As he was the first to come to the coast, so he has always stood in the front rank of all who have succeeded him. He has but very few peers, and no superiors. With native intellect of the highest order, he has, by study, and culture, achieved the most distinguished eminence in every department of ministerial erudition. When I have heard him on an argument, requiring sharp analysis, rigid logic, and keen acumen of thought, I have supposed that he had made logic and argumentation his chief study. Then when I have heard him on some theme requiring lofty imagination and ideal fancy for its elucidation, I have supposed that he had given his chief attention to the cultivation of his imaginative faculties. Then, when I have heard him on some subject requiring comprehensive knowledge and learning, I have supposed that for the attainment of these he had given his toil.

Almost the first remark I heard made of him when I landed on the coast was, that he was a wonderful man. And though when I heard the remark, I had some skepticism, it vanished long ago. He is now (1877) advanced in life, but has all the vigor and brilliancy of fresh young intellect. He can go into the abstractions of metaphysics, when necessary, with as cool, calm strength as the most gifted of younger men, and soar to as lofty heights of imagination as can be followed by those in the prime of their years. He can pursue an argument with logical precision to its unvarying sequence, and invent illustrations copious and convincing. He is one of the most distinguished ministers of the Presbyterian Church and one of its brightest ornaments. The greatest scholar on the coast once said of him, that the university at which he was educated, had done itself the honor of conferring upon him the honorary title of D.D. He is a man of remarkable simplicity and purity of character in all the walks of private life. He has more friends, and more ardently attached friends, probably, than any other man on the coast.

How manifest, then, the wisdom of that Providence which directed him to be the first standard bearer of the cross on this coast, to represent the staunch old Presbyterian Church. Like some staunch old Scotch covenanter---firm as the mountain rock by the side of which he was reared, his tenacity of purpose is as extraordinary as any other attribute of his character. He and another great man, perhaps, I ought to say the other great man of the coast, may be slow in coming to a purpose, but when they have reached the purpose and taken the position, you might as well attempt to roll Mt. Diablo over upon its apex as to move them.

As an illustration, Dr. Woodbridge was appointed by the Board of Missions to San Francisco. Soon after his arrival in February, '49, before the tide of emigration began to roll in very heavily, some large capitalists conceived the idea of making Benicia the great commercial emporium of the State. It was only twenty miles from the Golden Gate and would be a magnificent harbor. As a site for a city it was greatly superior to the rough, high, precipitous hills and sand banks of the site of San Francisco. These capitalists were personal friends of Dr. Woodbridge, and succeeded in impressing their views upon him. They promised city blocks for a great seat of learning, and by liberal promises of aid for his church, and aid for his university, they induced him to remove to Benicia soon after his arrival. Nor was Dr. Woodbridge alone as to his anticipations and disappointments of the future great metropolis. A friend of mine--Mr. Chauncey Wetmore---owned two blocks on Montgomery street, for which he paid twenty-seven dollars each in '47. -----

In less than a year after Dr. Woodbridge moved to Benicia, the bow of promise began to fade, the cloud of promised blessings dissolved into invisible vapor, and the great fact stood out clear as sunshine, that San Francisco was the great metropolis of the Pacific Coast, and destined to be the great commercial emporium of the world.

Dr. Woodbridge organized the Presbyterian Church in Benicia in April, '49. The organization was effected in a small building used for a school house. In this building, he preached on the Sabbath, taught school through the week, and lodged at night in a sailor's hammock hung in the rafters. Through the long Summer days and long gloomy Winter nights, this was his lone home for over a year, with no fire by day or night--Summer or Winter, his wiry frame and iron constitution suffered no apparent harm. For eighteen years his tenacity of will held with unyielding grasp to Benicia. When I left Stockton he

received a call there with the offer of twice the salary he was receiving at Benicia. But his grasp upon Benicia could not be relaxed.

But at length he came to San Francisco to engage in the enterprise of establishing the Occident--- the Presbyterian paper of the Pacific Coast. And whatever loss the church at large had sustained by his tenacity to Benicia, was now overbalanced four fold by the unyielding grasp and iron will with which he held to the Occident.

His labors for the Occident were herculean; his perseverance almost superhuman, and his success almost miraculous. The year previous, the Occident has exhausted two thousand dollars and could not continue.

Dr. Woodbridge undertook the editing and publishing of it without one cent of capital. Every department of labor was extravagantly high. Printing was expensive; rents exorbitant; church members fewer than now; and everything but an iron will and unfaltering trust, seemed to say--hopeless the task of attempting to keep up the Occident. But for seven long, laborious years, that wonderful man toiled on, breasting the whelming billows and scattering the foam of the opposing tides. Like a man mid ocean waves, holding above his head the some precious treasure and striking for the shore; finally uttering a shout of triumph as he throws the treasure high and safe upon the stable island. So did the editor of the Occident buffet the whelming tide, till he finally reached the shore and threw the sacred journal upon the high promontory of success. And all this, too, while pastor of a church, and doing faithful pulpit work on the Sabbath, and faithful pastoral work during the week. Such was the Pioneer whom God, in his Providence, sent to lay the first foundation stone of our Zion in California.

Recollections of Pioneer Work in California
pp. 31-37
Rev. James Woods
San Francisco, Calif.
1878

There were three Old School ministers who later were organized into the Old School Presbytery of California and who were known as the three W's. They were the Reverend Sylvester Woodbridge, the Reverend Albert Williams and the Reverend James Woods. They were all strong, effective men, able to express themselves with cogency and conviction.

Of these, Dr. Woodbridge was the first to arrive, landing in February, 1849. He was a staunch Presbyterian, of Covenanter build, slow in coming to a conclusion but immovable as a mountain when he believed that his position was right. If his grandfather had been a minister instead of being a physician he would have been of the eighth generation in the ministry. He was thirty-six years of age, tall of stature, splendid in physical strength, and possessing both imagination and logic. It will be interesting to some people to hear that in the winter of 1848-9 there were two opinions in California regarding the location of the city of future greatness, and a good many people, moved by the real estate propaganda of General Mariano G. Vallejo, thought Benicia would be the metropolis rather than San Francisco. It was only twenty miles from the Golden Gate, and on the main land, having direct access to the inland valleys and to the foothills where the claims were being located, whereas San Francisco's only outlet was to the south. Moreover, Benicia was immediately surrounded by fertile country, while San Francisco was chiefly a collection of sand lots. Thus, early in 1849, a good many ships went sailing past the sand dunes and cliffs of Yerba Buena, with its marshy water front, to the fine, clear anchorage of the harbor of Benicia. And there were San Francisco capitalists who sold out their holdings and moved to Benicia, convinced that there lay the future city. Dr. Woods tells us of one gentleman of his acquaintance, Chauncey Wetmore by name, who, in 1847, bought two blocks on Montgomery Street for twenty-seven dollars each, sold them in 1848 for four hundred dollars each, and moved to Benicia. Two years later the same blocks were worth two hundred thousand dollars. The capitalists who transferred their interests to Benicia persuaded Dr. Woodbridge to accompany them, promising him land for a college and many other advantages. On April 15, 1849, he organized the Presbyterian Church in Benicia, the first church of our denomination within the State. He organized it in the school-house building. And here he preached on the Lord's Day, taught the children on the weekdays, and at night, when the house was empty of the voices which hummed through it in the day, he slept in a sailor's hammock which he swung from the rafters. The vision of the coming greatness of Benicia vanished within a year. But despite all

the discouragements of adverse circumstances Dr. Woodbridge stayed at his post for eighteen years. Then he left Benicia to come to San Francisco and undertake the publication of The Occident. Dr. Woodbridge was a man of the temper of martyrs. His abilities were of the finest, and his labors untiring; but he never became connected with any enterprise destined to permanence. The church in Benicia for which he labored so unselfishly finally ceased to be. The memory of it is preserved in the name of Benicia Presbytery, but there is to-day no Presbyterian Church in Benicia. The final failure of this early hope can be briefly told. In the minutes of the Presbytery of April 10, 1875, there is this report of a special committee on the Benicia Church:

"The house of worship and the lot have been sold. The church has been torn down, and the lot on which it stood with adjacent land has been converted into a public park in the city of Benicia.

"The trustees of the church were largely in debt to Dr. Woodbridge, and they assigned the property to him in part payment of their debt. Subsequently he transferred the same to his creditor Dr. Peabody.

"Of the membership of this church there are only five now remaining. We recommend that the figures in our Statistical Report be corrected in accordance with the facts."

The report was adopted.

And The Occident, after a career of more than twenty years, finally ^{ceased} to exist. While Dr. Woodbridge was at the height of his powers he declined several openings to go to more promising fields of labor. But he filled his small place with a great spirit, and wielded a personal influence that extended throughout the western church. Other communities were largely indebted to him for his spiritual ministrations. The church at Vallejo owes to him primarily its existence. pp.39-42

The Vallejo Church was founded on November 22, 1862, but earlier than this date the town had received service from Dr. Woodbridge of Benicia. p.117

In the summer of 1868 religious services were begun at the corner of Folsom and Twenty-second Streets, also a Sabbath School. In December a church was organized with seventeen members, under the pastoral care of the Reverend James H. Marr. Dr. Woodbridge succeeded to this pastorate in 1870 and remained until 1875, when the church divided, a group going out to form the Woodbridge Church. But the church thus formed did not continue in existence. p.125

Woodbridge Church was organized in San Francisco in 1876, to minister to the Mission District, under the pastorate of the Reverend Sylvester Woodbridge, D. D., of whom we have already read. The church promised well at the outset, but Dr. Woodbridge died on April 1, 1883, and the congregation, badly harassed by debt, and discouraged by the loss of several pastors, sold its building in February, 1893, to the Second Unitarian Church, and was dissolved by Presbytery in the following April. p.174

Prior also to the establishment of Mr. Pelton's School the Reverend Sylvester Woodbridge had taught a school in Benicia p.248

(Portrait facing p. 6)

The Presbyterian Church in California
Edward Arthur Wicher
Frederick H. Hitchcock
New York 1927

Jan. 1836

1836

To *S Woodbridge* Jr., of the Class that graduated at Union College, in the year 1830
(or, if deceased, to the friend or relative who knew him best :)

SIR,—

It is the aim of the subscriber, in collecting the information asked for by the following questions, to obtain materials for a concise Biographical Catalogue of the Trustees, Presidents, Professors and Tutors of Union College ;—of those who have received Honorary Degrees from it, and of all who have ever entered that Institution, whether Graduates or not.

That such a work would be interesting and useful to the Alumni, will not be denied ; but whether it be practicable, will depend chiefly upon the ready aid which they shall impart. This circular will be sent to every Graduate whose residence is known, (or, if deceased, to some near connection,) and it is confidently expected that no one will neglect to return it in due time, with as full information as circumstances will allow :—some of the questions, indeed, it may not be possible to answer with certainty ; others not at all : still, it is hoped that no important facts will be withheld because of their fewness.

Death has removed the twenty-four original Trustees, the first three Presidents, the early Professors and Tutors, and from eight hundred to one thousand of the Alumni of the College. Doubtless their friends and descendants will cheerfully contribute such information as may be necessary to illustrate the lives and services of the departed.

The subscriber desires every aid that may help to throw light upon the personal history of those concerned :—Obituary Notices ; Biographical Sketches, Epitaphs, Funeral Sermons, Newspaper Notices of election to important offices or stations, Business Cards and Advertisements ; also, copies of their Literary Works, Addresses, Sermons, Essays, Newspapers, engraved Portraits, &c. ; all of which will be deposited and preserved in an Alcove of the College Library, to be set apart for “ Graduates’ Works.”

He also requests that all future changes affecting the answers which shall be given, be made known to him from time to time :—especially the deaths of Graduates, and that the usual obituary notices or funeral sermons published on such occasions, be sent with the announcements, as it is his purpose to publish these deaths hereafter once a year.

JONATHAN PEARSON, *Librarian.*

UNION COLLEGE,
SCHENECTADY, N. Y. }

SPECIMENS OF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES FOR THE PROPOSED CATALOGUE.

John Glidden Brown was born in Quinipeck, N. Y., May 2, 1800 ; parents, James and Elizabeth (Glidden) Brown, who moved to Epsom, N. Y., in 1806. He was prepared for College at Helderbergh High School, under the instruction of Rev. Moses Johnson, and entered Union College Jan. 1817. He studied law with Hon. Septimus H. Smith, of Great Falls ; was admitted to the bar in 1821 ; and commenced the practice of law in Albany, with James S. Van Hoesen, Esq. In 1830 he moved to New-York City, which, thereafter, became his residence. He was Member of N. Y. Assembly 1832-5 ; State Senator 1836-8 ; Member of Congress 1839-41 ; and Judge of the Superior Court 1842-6. He died June 30, 1849, of cholera, aged 49 years. Besides occasional speeches, orations and opinions. he wrote a work on constitutional law, and edited the N. Y. State Papers. He received the Degree of L. L. D. from Hamilton College in 1846.

Joseph Henshaw Luther was born in Hanover, Mass., June 1, 1798 ; parents, Joseph and Madeline (Henshaw) Luther ; prepared for College at Yorkville Academy, John Almy, Esq., Principal ; and entered Union College Sept. 1814. He taught, 1818-20, in East Philadelphia, (Penn.) High School ; graduated at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1823 ; and was ordained Sept. 25, 1823, at Marbletown, N. Y. ; and was Pastor of the Presbyterian Church till 1825. He was Pastor of the 1st Congregational Church of Haselton, Conn., 1825-30 ; Professor of Rhetoric in Erie College 1831-40 ; retired on account of ill health, and now resides in Philadelphia, Pa. He has published six sermons on various occasions ; a series of lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, and the “ Communicant’s Companion.” He received the Degree of D. D. from the Hudson University in 1842.

Thomas Pennington Radway was born Feb. 23, 1778, in Benton, N. Y ; parents, John Harmony and Mary (Pennington) Radway ; was prepared for College at High Holme School, Rev. Hanover Kelton, Principal ; entered Union College Sept. 1795 ; taught a few months in Suncook, Mass., in 1799 ; studied medicine with Dr. Jonas Physic and Dr. Abram Potecar, of Camermile ; attended medical lectures at the College of Surgeons and Physicians, and was admitted to, and commenced the practice of medicine in La Rhine, in 1806. He was Surgeon in the Army 1813-15, and returned to practice at Oldbury in 1815, where he has since resided. He lectured in the Fairhaven Medical School on Anatomy and Physiology, 1830-5, and has published several articles in the New-York Medical Review, and two larger works on the “ Functions of the Brain,” and on “ Gunshot Wounds.”

- N. B. 1. Let the answers to the following questions be as full and *authentic* as possible ; but when doubtful let them be marked thus (?).
- 2. When the person is deceased let some near relative or friend fill out the blanks to the best of his knowledge ; if he have but *one fact*, let that be sent.
- 3. Let as much time be taken as may be found necessary for this purpose, and no more.
- 4. In case this sheet be not sufficient to contain all the facts to be sent, add another of the *same size*, if possible, leaving an inner margin of not less than one inch for binding.
- 5. In cases where no answers to this circular shall be returned, the editor will be obliged to publish such names without any biographical notices, or to rely upon information, gathered from other sources, and, therefore, not always authentic.

ucslaf830woodbridge-S-0008

INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THE FOREGOING SKETCHES.

I. Name.

[Let this be written plainly and the *middle* names in full.]

Sylvester Woodbridge jr.

II. Names of both Parents; thus:—

[John and Elizabeth (Smith) Johnson.]

Rev^d Sylvester Woodbridge L. L. D. New Orleans, La.
 Elisabeth Gould of Sharon Ct.

III. Birth Place.

Sharon Ct.

Birth Day and Year.

June 15, 1813.

IV. Various residences and dates; thus:—

[Pittsfield, Mass., 1814-24; Albany, N. Y., 1824-30; New-York City, 1830-54.]

Greenfield Mass. 1815-20; Greenville N.Y. 1820-28;
 Westhampton N.Y. 1834-37; Hempstead N.Y. 1837-48;
 Benicia Cal. 1849-56

V. At what Academy or Academies prepared for College, with Principals and dates; thus:—

[Albany Academy, Benjamin Allen, L. L. D., 1815-17.]

Greenville Academy Wheeler
 New York High School John Griscom L. L. D.

VI. At what College he graduated, and when.

Union College N.Y. 1830.

VII. The occupation he followed after leaving college, before studying his profession; thus:—

[Teaching, Washington, D. C., 1847-48, or Merchant's Clerk, New-York City, 1849-51.]

VIII. The profession he studied; where; with whom; when; thus:—

[Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, 1822-5 or Law in Albany, N. Y., with Hon. Harmanus Bleecker, 1840-2.]

Theology at Auburn Theological Seminary 1830-32.
 Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary 1832-34.

IX. Where he has practised his profession, with dates; and in case he be a clergyman, mention the denomination to which he belongs; thus:—

[Epis., Somerville, N. J., 1827-30; Pres., Albany, N. Y., 1830-5; New-York City, 1835-54.]

Presbyterian, Westhampton Long Island N.Y. 1834-37
 Hempstead Long Island N.Y. 1837-48
 Benicia California - 1849-56

X. The other occupations he has followed; when and where; thus:—

[Merchant, Rochester, N. Y., 1829-35; or Farmer, Genesee, N. Y., 1835-54; or Manufacturer, Schoharie, N. Y., 1841-48; or Professor, teacher, banker, editor, &c.]

XI. The ~~important~~ offices he has held, with dates; thus:—

[Surrogate of Jefferson Co., N. Y., 1839-41 and 1845-7; Member of Congress, 21st district, N. Y., 1841-43; Member of Assembly, of N. Y., 1821-4, &c., &c.]

Chaplain of the Senate of California 1857-1859.

XII. The Literary or Scientific Works he has written or edited.

[Copies are solicited for the "Graduates Alcove" in College Library.]

XIII. The names of his relatives who graduated at Union College.

Brothers { Rev^d Jahleel Woodbridge Henderson, Ky
 Rev^d John Woodbridge Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

XIV. The literary, professional, or honorary titles he received; from whence, with dates; thus:—

[M. D., from Albany Medical College 1845; or L. L. D., Amherst College, 1850, &c.]

XV. Is there an engraved portrait of him?

[One or two copies, together with his autograph, are solicited for College Library.]

XVI. The date, circumstances, and place of his death.

[Send any printed notice, biographical sketch, funeral sermon, &c. In many instances more space will be required to answer this and the three following questions, in which case add an additional sheet.]

XVII. General information respecting character, services, success, interesting passages and events in his life, &c.

Organised the first Protestant Church
in California at Benicia April 11. 1849.

XVIII. Some account of his pedigree and family; its original seat in this or the old country, &c., &c.

Family Clerical since Reformation. Original seat believed to be Woodbridge in Suffolk Eng. John Woodbridge 3^d Rector in Stanton Wiltshire Eng. 1606 - 32. John Woodbridge 4th Pastor in Andover Mass Sept 16. 1644 to 47; Newbury Magistrate till death March 17. 1695. aet. 82. - John Woodbridge 5th Pastor in Wrenthamfield Ct. 1679-90. John Woodbridge 6th Pastor in West Springfield Mass. 1699-1718. John Woodbridge 7th Pastor in South Hadley Mass. 1726 - 1783. His son Sylvester Woodbridge M.D. lived in Southhampton Mass. ob. 1826; aet. 70. His son Sylvester is Pastor of the 2^d Pres. Church New Orleans La. His son Sylvester is the subject of this minute.

XIX. List of such graduates as may not be widely known; their residences, professions, dates of deaths, &c.; the name and residence, also, of some near friend of the deceased, that further information may be sought for; thus:—

[John Orton Smith, Banker, Chicopee, Mass., died 1848. His brother, Joseph H. Smith, resides in Springfield, Mass.]

Rev. Sylvester Woodbridge D D, died at San Francisco Cal, January 1 1883 in his 70th year. Was born in Sharon, Conn June 15 1813 and graduated at Union College in 1830. He then completed his course in Auburn Theological Seminary in two years and graduated from Princeton Seminary in 1833. Preaching on Long Island, in West Hampton and in Hempstead in 1849, at the time of the great exodus he went to California and there organized the Presbyterian church in Bernicia and ministered for some years until he became editor of the Occident in San Francisco. Dr. Woodbridge filled the vacant pulpit of Calvary Church with great success.

In 1876 he organized the church bearing his name and erected a neat edifice on the corner of Twentieth Street where he continued as pastor until his death.

CHRIST'S FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
HEMPSTEAD, N. Y.
FRANK MELVILLE KERR, Minister

February 22, 1946

Secretary of
The Alumni, Union College,
Schenectady, N.Y.,

Dear Sir:

Please let me know, if convenient for you, the class of Rev. Sylvester Woodbridge, Jr., who was Minister of Christ's First Presbyterian Church, Hempstead, Long Island, N.Y., from 1837 to 1847. I have been informed that he graduated at Union College and wish to have the year and also his home address.

I thank you for your attention to this request.

Yours sincerely,

Frank M Kerr

February 28, 1946

My dear Mr. Kerr:

Sylvester Woodbridge was graduated from Union College in 1830 with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Phi Beta Kappa.

According to a record sheet apparently in his own hand, he was pastor at Westhampton, 1834-37; and at Hempstead, 1837-48.

As you may know, he was sent to California by the Missionary Board and preached at Benicia. In 1876 he organized a church in San Francisco which was called by his name. He was also editor of The Occident, - then the Presbyterian paper of the Pacific Coast.

Detailed accounts of his work are to be found in "The Presbyterian Church in California" by Edward Arthur Wicher; and in "Recollections of Pioneer Work in California" by James Woods.

I hope that this information will be of service to you.

Sincerely yours,

C. N. Waldron

The Rev. Frank M. Kerr
353 Fulton Avenue
Hempstead, N. Y.

Woodbridge Sylvester
Editor "The Occident" 1869-76

1830

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Sylvester Woodbridge AB. 1830

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Sylvester Woodbridge F. B.