

Fitz Henry Lane: Family and Friends – Leonidas Haskell
Note & Addition No. 2 by Stephanie Buck

In the summer of 1862, Fitz Henry Lane visited Major General John C. Fremont's camp at Coffin's Beach, Gloucester, and sketched *Fremont's Encampment at the Loaf*. Fremont was supposedly recuperating there after his run-in with Stonewall Jackson at Cross Keys, and whatever the speculation about the impact the Civil War had on Lane, here was his chance to talk with someone with first-hand experience. Visitors from town were presented to Fremont by his aide-de-camp Major Leonidas Haskell, who having been born and reared in West Gloucester was acquainted with many of them. Lane may well have had an extra "in" as he and Leonidas were distantly related, had a mutual "intimate friend" in Joseph L. Stevens Jr., and Lane's housekeeper (since his schism with the Winters), was Elizabeth (Haskell) Galacar, Leonidas' wife's aunt. Elizabeth Galacar had also spent the previous ten years with Leonidas and his family in California.

It is almost impossible not to imagine that the soldiers' exploits were not imparted to eager listeners around the campfire on those warm August evenings. And what stories of adventure, bravery, intrigue and skullduggery Leonidas could have told.

In his youth Leonidas was a farmer, shoe maker and mariner. He was 5'8" with a stocky build and dark complexion. In 1846, at the age of twenty-five, he married Elizabeth Galacar's niece, Sarah Elizabeth Haskell, and three years later went to California with thousands of others to seek his fortune. He did not, however, go prospecting for gold but instead put his ship the *Ganges* up for sale and began trading in what he called "general merchandise." He prospered, bought thirteen acres at Black Point¹ in San Francisco, and built a "compound" there which was soon filled with his East Coast relatives. First came Elizabeth Galacar, joining her husband Charles who had probably gone out with Leonidas. In the summer of 1853, Elizabeth's sister Susanna (Haskell) Burnham arrived with her family, followed a few months later by Leonidas' wife Sarah and their two daughters. Maj. Gen. Fremont became a close friend and neighbor and his wife, Jesse Benton Fremont, was later to write that the Haskells had great wealth and very "English" tastes; enjoying fine horses, dogs, and sailing.

In the next decade Leonidas continued his merchant-trader business but also dabbled in various get-rich-quick schemes. He was part owner of a passenger ship running to Vancouver and back. He was a incorporator of a company granted land to construct a railroad and telegraph line from Missouri and Arkansas to the Pacific Coast, and later obtained the right to build and operate a telegraph line from San Francisco to Fort Yuma. He was also politically active during this period, especially in the anti-slavery movement, having learnt about emancipation at the knee of his aunt Mehitable Haskell. (Aunt Hitty, who lived in West Gloucester, was a preacher, lecturer, advocate for women's suffrage, and an abolitionist, who numbered among her friends Lucy Stone and Wendell Phillips.) Leonidas, like his friend Joseph L. Stevens Jr., became a Free Soiler,² and while Stevens went to Kansas to gauge the situation there, Leonidas got elected to the California senate on the Anti-Lecompton ticket.³

¹ Black Point became Fort Mason, a branch of the Presidio, and the Leonidas Haskell house is now part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

² The Free Soil Party (1848-1854) opposed the expansion of slavery into the western territories, but did not call for the abolition of slavery in states where it already existed. Some famous Free Soilers were: poet Walt Whitman, Vice President Henry Wilson and education reformer Horace Mann.

³ The Kansas territory's proposal for acceptance by the Union included the Lecompton Constitution which allowed slavery within the state, but banned importing new slaves. The Anti-Lecompton ticket advocated that Kansas be admitted as a free state.

Being an abolitionist was not the safest pursuit and Leonidas lost two good friends to the cause, the Hon. William I. Ferguson and Senator David C. Broderick. In 1858, Leonidas was a pall bearer at the funeral of Ferguson who had been slain in a duel with George Pen Johnston, Clerk of the U.S. Circuit Court. Ferguson, who was a member of the California Assembly, had voted pro-choice on the question of whether the Kansas settlers should decide the slavery issue for themselves. Many believed this signed his death warrant and that the quarrel with Johnston, a pro-slavery advocate and experienced duelist, was contrived. The following year Leonidas acted as second for fellow Free Soiler Broderick in his duel with David S. Terry. Broderick was mortally wounded by Terry and carried to Leonidas' house where he died three days later. Terry, a former Chief Justice of the California State Supreme Court and a pro-slavery Democrat, had failed to be reelected to his seat and blamed Broderick.

In 1860, Leonidas bought the house of his Black Point neighbor, the marine artist J. Edwin Moody, and mortgaged his old house to John C. Fremont. Leonidas and Moody had arrived in San Francisco at about the same time and were probably old acquaintances as Moody and Lane had become friends while both worked at Pendleton's, and Moody was a frequent visitor to Gloucester. Moody was also related by marriage to Joseph L. Stevens Jr., both their wives being Fosters.⁴ On the other hand Leonidas and Fremont had perhaps not met until 1856, when Fremont became the first presidential candidate (Republican) to run on an anti-slavery ticket. Nonetheless the two men quickly became close friends and business partners.

In August 1861 Fremont, who was then commander of the Western Army, asked Leonidas to join his staff in St. Louis, Missouri, appointing him Director of Police and giving him the rank of captain. When Fremont moved on to Virginia, Leonidas accompanied him as Assistant Chief of Cavalry. At the Battle of Cross Keys in June 1862 Leonidas behaved so capably that he was commissioned a major and aide-de-camp by President Lincoln. Fremont then ordered him to take command of a company of scouts and "under cover of night break through the enemy lines and if possible open communications with General Shield." Leonidas crossed and recrossed the Shenandoah, skirmished with Jackson's troops, and was in the saddle for fourteen hours straight. Eleven days later, in protest over Major General Pope's appointment as supreme commander in Virginia, Fremont resigned and departed for New York and points east. Leonidas accompanied him.

By June 1863 Leonidas' California coterie had broken apart. His wife and children joined him in New York while Elizabeth Galacar may have gone to Salem, where her husband enlisted in the 22nd Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (and died on the battlefield five months later). Leonidas may well have intended to return to San Francisco but in October 1863, the commanding general there received the following order: "The Secretary of War directs that you take military possession of Point San Jose [Black Point], and erect the battery proposed for its defense; the question of ownership will be determined hereafter." The ensuing arguments over title and compensation dragged on in the courts for years depleting both Leonidas' wallet and health.

After their return to the east coast Leonidas did not engage in any further active duty and resigned his commission June 4, 1864. He did, however, join with Fremont in various business ventures, most of which were abysmal failures.

⁴ John Edwin Moody of Boston and Emma Foster were married in Gloucester September 4, 1841. In 1860 he was living in San Francisco, CA, as Edwin Moody, artist, with two children Emma, 11 & Alice, 6. Daughter Emma was born Jan 22, 1849 in Shirley, MA, to John E. Moody, engraver, (b. Portland, ME) & Emma Moody (b. Bristol, ME) who were living at 1 Franklin, Boston.

He provided financial backing to Fremont and a young New York investment banker, Samuel Hallett, when they bought stock in the Kansas Pacific Railway (then called the L.P. & W.). They changed the name to the Union Pacific, Eastern Division, Railroad and took out a government mortgage. Unfortunately the original shareholders had already taken out an identical mortgage and therefore had first lien on the franchise. This led to interminable lawsuits, and the death of Hallett who was shot by a disgruntled employee.

In 1866 Leonidas, Fremont and three others drew up a contract with the Costa Rican government to build a railroad from Caldera to Limon to facilitate the exportation of coffee. Their confident title - the Costa Rica Railroad Company (CRRC) – temporarily concealed the fact that they actually had no money whatsoever to invest in the project. The Costa Rican representative was an expatriate Prussian and the CRRC group used his name to entice the Prussian government to invest in the enterprise. Prussia was a relatively new country at the time and eager to get a toehold in the Caribbean. Contracts were signed and monies agreed, but when a suspicious Count von Bismarck sent a ship to investigate he found that the CRRC existed only on paper. They did not even have an office in Limon.

Leonidas was no stranger to questionable business ventures. When his wool trade broke up in 1858 his freighters sued him claiming he owed them \$37,000. In 1859 he was accused of obtaining the original deed to the New Almaden cinnabar mines by “trickery.” In 1861 he was implicated in a war profiteering scheme involving the St. Louis Quartermaster Justus McKinstry. McKinstry, ordered to purchase upwards of four thousand mules, refused to deal with anyone but Leonidas who bought the animals from local dealers and sold them on to the army at inflated prices. The accusation was that McKinstry and Leonidas planned to split the difference, although the ploy was so quickly discovered that Leonidas apparently never received any payment. In 1864 Leonidas was in Washington, D.C. appearing as a witness in a cotton scam being investigated by the Secret Service. He had acted as a broker for a group of northern speculators who had been engaged in circumventing the law regarding trade with the confederate South. He was also implicated in a scheme to smuggle the rebel spy Beverley Tucker (who was later a conspirator in Lincoln’s assassination) through the lines. When asked why, Leonidas replied, “I had been in the army a long time and made no money . . . a person gets into these things without really understanding how.” There was no proof that he had made any money on the cotton deals either, and he appears to have turned State’s evidence, thereby avoiding prosecution.

In these later years Leonidas’ health was deteriorating. After his experience at Cross Keys, where he claimed “for six weeks I wore the same suit of clothes and they only drying in occasional dry days on my person,” he was treated for malaria and spinal meningitis. By August of 1867 he had lost the use of his hands and right eye. Unable to work he, his wife, and their eight children, returned to their West Gloucester homestead where he was attended by Dr. William H. Hull and Joseph L. Stevens Jr.’s brother, Dr. George B. Stevens. Diagnosed as suffering from “Progressive Locomotor Ataxia” his decline continued so that he needed constant care, and the pain was such that he often resorted “to the inhalation of Sulphuric ether.”

Despite his handicaps Leonidas traveled to Washington, DC, to attend the hearings on compensation for his losses in both the army mule fiasco and the Black Point property seizure.

On January 17, 1873, a Bill for the relief of the Black Point claimants was accepted. Two weeks later the United States Senate passed “An Act for the relief of the heirs and legal representatives of Leonidas Haskell” which allowed them to adjudicate for the losses suffered over the mules. Sadly both rulings

came too late for Leonidas who had passed away at the age of forty nine on January 15. Three of his children were very sick with measles at the time so his wife had left him in the care of a “devoted friend,” undoubtedly Elizabeth Galacar, who also died in Washington DC, just a month later. Joseph L. Stevens Jr. who had provided Lane with a grave and brought Elizabeth’s husband’s body back for burial, now did the same for both Elizabeth and Leonidas.