



# Scoundrels Tale: The Samuel Brannan Papers (Kingdom in the West)

*Sam Brannan*

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## **Scoundrels Tale: The Samuel Brannan Papers (Kingdom in the West) Sam Brannan**

Through letters and other documents by Samuel Brannan and his contemporaries, Will Bagley offers the first honest and accurate portrait of one of the most colorful and important figures in California and Mormon history. An early convert to Mormonism, a protege of Joseph Smith, and an early leader of the Mormon Church in New York, Brannan led eastern church members to Yerba Buena (San Francisco) aboard the ship Brooklyn in 1846. They were the first group of American emigrants to reach California by sea. Brannan's dreams of empire, nurtured in contacts with national Democratic leaders, were undercut by the United States conquest of California and Mormon settlement in Utah, but the discovery of gold in 1848, which he played a key role in publicizing, soon made him rich supplying the miners. For a while he was reputedly the richest man, and certainly one of the most powerful, in California. Having broken with Brigham Young and the Mormons, Brannan pursued other interests, from mines and railroads to vineyards and a recreational spa, from San Francisco's Vigilance Committee to filibustering in Hawaii and Mexico. Drink, womanizing, divorce, and bad investments brought him down. He died having spent his last impoverished years pursuing another dream of empire, involving mining and colonization in Sonora.

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