

Dr. Benjamin Cory

*Pioneer and First Medical Physician
of San Jose, California*

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CONTENTS

Title page.....	i
Contents.....	ii
Preface.....	2
Images; Cory Coat of Arms & Cory gravestone in N.J.....	4
Family Roots in New Jersey.....	5
Education, Politics, & Religion.....	6
A Dream.....	9
Crossing the Plains.....	10
Arrival in California.....	14
The gold is very fine, like small fish scales.....	16
Good Government from the Doctor's Office.....	19
Brother Benjamin Cory.....	22
A Family Man—Sarah and the 'Tribe of Benjamin'.....	24
Medicine: 'Charity and Ability'.....	26
Conclusion.....	29
Photo Cory Family.....	31
Photos Dr. Ben Cory & young Sarah Braly.....	32
Epilogue—the 'Tribe of Benjamin'.....	33
References.....	37
Dedication.....	38

Preface

To be the first, and original, from a historical perspective is an opportunity to achieve lasting fame. Benjamin Cory was the first, and original, American-trained doctor to live and practice in San Jose California. He arrived December 1st, 1847. Fame was, however, surely the last thing on the mind. Survival was probably his foremost thought. In 1847 the El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe, nestled near to the crumbling Mission Santa Clara de Asís, was populated by only six to eight hundred individuals, consisting of a smattering of residents of mixed descent including Ohlone native Americans, Californios, Mexicans, trappers and traders. Would this be enough to support him? Would they like him? Would they trust him? The answer to all these questions turned out to be a resounding YES. Pioneer, beloved hymn-singing horse and buggy physician, family man, argonaut, state and civic leader, school trustee, active founder of the Santa Clara Valley Medical Clinic... Dr. Ben Cory left behind a monumental legacy in numerous ways; above all a deep, positive, and lasting imprint on life in the young American settlement in Santa Clara County.

Not many crossed the plains before the explosive moment when gold was first discovered in the summer of '48, thus Ben's pioneering journey at age 25 already provides ample evidence of his inspired dreams and bold spirit of adventurism, his strength, fortitude and resilience in the face of great challenge. To further understand this individual, his bountiful humanity, his devoted interest to family, politics, education, and last but not least his passion for medicine, a look back at the Cory family roots is also helpful. And last but not least the soaring praises

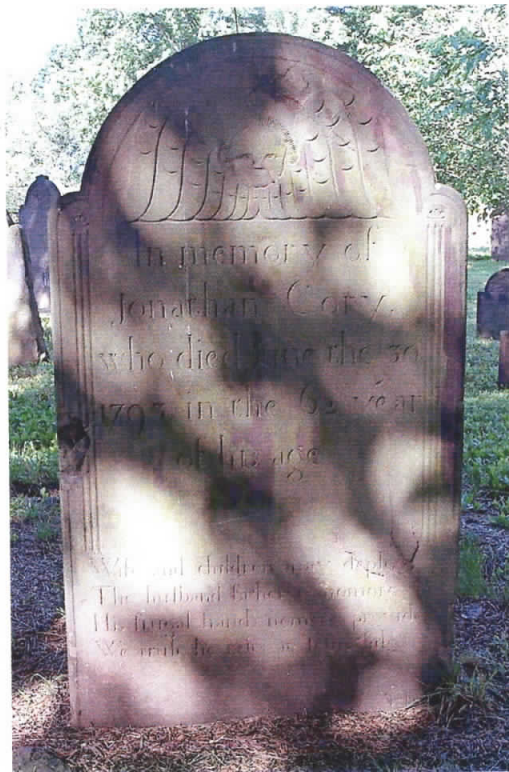
upon his death on January 16th, 1896 shed light on the esteem and admiration in which the Doctor was so widely held. A tribute by the Santa Clara Medical Society, published later in the public press, reads in part: "The discharge of his daily vocation was marked in manner and sentiment by a true courtesy, and he always displayed such patience, energy, and fidelity as to win for himself an enviable place in the hearts of the people. As a man he was absolutely honest. His moral integrity always commanded respect and admiration, and with him devotion to truth was a passion. From his broad and noble character there gleamed every cardinal virtue that could adorn a mature manhood. Constant intercourse with his associates served to brighten rather than dim these glowing attributes of mind and heart, which endeared him to us, and they now remain as cherished memories of an exalted human nature."¹

So although it would never have been his intention or desire to achieve lasting fame—by the example of his life, of his rich achievement in so many fields, his generosity, integrity, and consistent humble grace carried out in both private and professional spheres, surely it can be said that he has earned his place in the halls of fame.

¹ *Tribute from the Santa Clara Valley Medical Society*, by the S.C.V.M.S. February 11, 1896 upon the death of Dr. Benjamin Cory. (courtesy of History San Jose Research Library, San Jose, Ca.)



Cory Coat of Arms, from family papers; "*Forti Tene Manu*"



Gravestone of Jonathan Cory (1731–1793) great-grandfather of Dr. Benjamin Cory Presbyterian Church Westfields, New Jersey. Numerous (over 30) Corys are buried here.

"In memory of Jonathan Cory who died June the 30 1793 in the 62 year of his age."

(The dappling sunshine makes the gravestone a bit difficult to read.)

photo courtesy <http://www.westfieldnjhistory.com> * (<http://www.westfieldnjhistory.com/files/ColCemSect1.htm>)

Family Roots in New Jersey

As a youth Ben was surely aware of time-honored family traditions; the prominence of the name Cory known far and wide as a founding family of the Westfields region in New Jersey, the existence of the *Great Bible* passed down the generations and strong Presbyterian principles, the participation of numerous Cory males in the American Revolution... Ben Cory's branch of the family is traced back to John Cory I, born 1611 in England, who settled in Southold, Long Island, NY, and was known to be a weaver. John Cory's will from 1685 states: "I give to Son John, Iron Kettle, *Great Bible*, Chest and its contents, a Cloke and halfe a debt of 12 pounds, half my Weaving Takell, my Bell Mette Skillet, Beds Rugs and Bolsters...."² Early on in the eighteenth century, some Corys including John Cory III left Long Island and settled in New Jersey, and were among the first purchasers by allotment of town rights in the Westfields, about eight to ten miles west of Elizabeth. Generations of Corys settled and flourished here, becoming esteemed and important members of the community; the family furnished no less than seven elders of the Presbyterian Church and at least three ministers. Tradition says that John Cory was the "first to contribute one pound sterling for the erection of the original Presbyterian Church building in Westfield."³ Two brothers of Ben's grandfather Benjamin Cory (1769-1851), Samuel and Joseph, brought glory and honor to the family and community by serving in the Revolutionary War. They "were received in Westfield on their

² Cory Family Society- <http://coryfamsoc.com/john1/john1/b3.htm>. Ancestry of Doctor Benjamin Cory: John Cory I, John II, John III, Joseph Cory, Jonathan Cory (m. Martha Miller see photo), Benjamin Cory (m. Susanna Denman), James Manning Cory (m. Elizabeth Stagg), **Dr. Benjamin Cory** (m. Sarah Braly)

³ McKinney, Philhower, Kniffin. *Commemorative History of the Presbyterian Church in Westfield, New Jersey* 1728-1928.

return with great demonstrations of joy.”⁴ Ben would have been aware of the Cory family as dating back to the the thirteenth century in England’s Book of Genealogy; and bestowed with a Crest and Coat of Arms, used in England from 1239 and in this country by John I. The Latin motto inscribed on the shield, "Forti Tene Manu" (hold with a firm hand), perhaps provided a source of inspiration in Ben’s daily life; timidity in the face of challenge was not a trait that could be attributed to the Doctor.

Dr. Benjamin Cory's parents James and Eliza left the Cory homestead in the Westfields New Jersey, joining the educated classes then migrating to the newly opening western region of Ohio. Ties to New Jersey remained strong over time, as evidenced by the Doctor’s second son Lewis who received his education in New York (L.L.B. 1883 Columbia Law School) and married Carrie Martin from the Westfields N.J., and his grandson and namesake, Benjamin Hyde Cory who returned to N.J. to attend Princeton and graduate from Harvard Law School.

Education, Politics, & Religion

Strong clues pointing to the importance of education, politics and religion as having important roles in the Cory value system may be found in the personal names of the Doctor’s immediate family. Ben’s father and younger brother were named James Manning Cory—the original James Manning, from Elizabeth NJ, was a minister and educator known for being the first president and most active founder of Brown University. Ben’s youngest brother was named after President Andrew Jackson. His son Lewis’ middle name was Lincoln, after the President.

⁴ McKinney, Philhower, Kniffin. *Commemorative History of the Presbyterian Church in Westfield, New Jersey 1728-1928*.

Noted San Jose historian Clyde Arbuckle† described the academic atmosphere that Ben grew up in; “In Oxford as a practicing physician, James and his wife moved in a stratum of society composed of doctors, lawyers, and educators from nearby Miami University. There were frequent gatherings of these people at the Cory home for the purpose of discussing everything from the nine Muses to national government. And when it came to the latter, there was a lot to discuss in the those days of embrionic Jacksonian democracy.”⁵ Such discussions clearly provided a rich, fertile environment where Ben learned and absorbed political philosophies as well as religious principles, later he would exercise this knowledge and these values in helping to plan and participate first in California’s, then San Jose’s, early political and social development.

Father Dr. James Manning Cory was one of nine children born to Benjamin and Susanna [Denman] Cory, married in the Westfields N.J. in the year 1790. When circumstances allowed, James left the homestead to follow the footsteps of several of his mother’s Denman relatives who had already migrated to Ohio; here he married wife Elizabeth in Cincinnati, and furthered his education at Oberlin College, just opened in Ohio in 1833, "where they would train teachers and other Christian leaders for the boundless most desolate fields in the West."⁶ The strong emphasis on temperance and religious virtues mirrored those values already important in the family, and explains some of those same characteristics later evinced so vigorously by Dr. Ben Cory. The Cory tradition of strong Christian values begun by John Cory I in the seventeenth century continued unabated down the generations. In a letter to his cousin Fanny, daughter of Uncle Christopher Cory dated Nov 30, 1846, Ben writes about his mother: “She

⁵Arbuckle, Clyde. *Benjamin Cory 1822-1896*, 10/16/1938. p. 1

⁶ <http://new.oberlin.edu/about/history.dot>

was a Christian—no person could possibly be a better.”⁷ Later during his medical practice in San Jose, the Doctor was famed for singing church hymns, particularly when he was in his saddle riding over hill and dale. His wife Sarah was the daughter of the first Cumberland Presbyterian minister.

James and Elizabeth bore seven children, four of which survived well into adulthood. Ben was born November 17, 1822 in Oxford, Butler county, Ohio. The importance of higher learning was surely stressed early on. James’ brother Jonathan Cory graduated from Princeton in 1838 and devoted 25 years to teaching. In addition to the scholarly atmosphere in the home, Ben gained insight into medicine from his father’s career before his own formal training. The field of medicine, aiding the poor and sick, would have fit Ben’s ideal visions and goals in life. Most likely Dr. Cory Sr. obtained his medical knowledge primarily from apprenticeship (and courses at Oberlin), and had opened his medical practice in the town of Oxford.

Ben attended the common schools in Oxford until age fifteen, subsequently entered Miami University and graduated in classical studies at age twenty, receiving the degree of Master of Arts. After entering the Medical College of Ohio in Cincinnati, he graduated with a M.D. in the spring of 1845, age 23. He practiced medicine in Oxford for two more years; he was busy and successful even at such a young age. He wrote; “There are seven doctors here, but I am confident that I do more practice than any of them, not excepting my Father...”⁸ But the thought of leaving had already seeded itself in the mind of the Doctor. Many considerations must have played a role in these plans; the death of his mother the year after he received his medical degree, his father’s feeble health, the sufficient number of doctors already in the area,

⁷ Letter to Fanny Cory, a first cousin, from Dr. Ben Cory dated Nov 30, 1846

⁸ Ibid.

and ...just possibly... the notion of being a participant from the ground-up in the new world of the far West.

A Dream

The first evidence we have of Ben expressing his dream of leaving Ohio is in the letter to Fanny; "... on account of the poor pay, changeable nature of the climate, small fees and a few other things, it is my intention to remove to Mississippi or Louisiana next spring."⁹ He felt that a move southward would help improve his father's health, "Father's health is rather poor every winter, and it would be well for him to reside in the South during the winter—at all events it is my intention of locating permanently..."¹⁰ Uncertainties did cause feelings of insecurity, yet his natural optimism would hold sway, "The future is mostly portentous to me: I frequently look into its misty vista with forboding. Occasionally however hope cheers me and I straitway build airy castles!"¹¹ Surely also contributing to a sense of doubt would be the loosening of the strong familial ties. The comfort and support of "family" would have to be set aside. Closeness to the extended family despite physical distance is also evident—he describes to Fanny a recent visit to his Cory relatives in the Westfields; "Grandfather looks and is quite feeble. Grandmother is quite robust. I read a letter a week ago from Uncle Joseph. They are all in usual health. Grandmother wove 20 yds of cloth, which proves that she is still robust. Aunt Abby looks very much like Fanny Cory of Lima [*recipient*], especially when she laughs. Father expects to visit Jersey next spring—I think he will go."¹²

In the spring of the following year the decision was made... to go West! To leave an upper-middle class environment, a well established profession, the comfort and security of friends

⁹ Letter to Fanny Cory, first cousin, from Dr. Ben Cory dated Nov 30, 1846

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

and family, to cross the plains with two companions James Smith and Joseph Wadleigh! Perhaps his departure would have been somewhat similar to that of his future wife Sarah Braly's, whose family crossed the plains in the same year. Sarah's brother described the scene; "The neighbors and kindred from far and near were there to see us off, for we were going, never to return; ...The hand shakings, the 'God's Blessings!' the kissing, the crying, and sobbing!"¹³

Crossing the Plains

Plans were well laid out for the journey. The three companions left Oxford and travelled by river when possible until they reached St. Joseph, Missouri. A wagon with regulation ox team, provisions, and arms were purchased; provisions included food items such as apples, twenty pounds of coffee at a cost of \$2.00, 1 ½ bushels of beans costing \$2.35. The stay at a Missouri hotel cost \$7.87.¹⁴ For self-defense and hunting, a double barreled shot gun, a belt with revolver, and a big knife were purchased. For most of the trip the young men would walk alongside the wagon to save the strength of the oxen, but exhibiting common sense, the wagon was packed with a 'smooth surface' to allow riding when good road conditions allowed. It was also built to be able to float across rivers. "Engaged all day in ferrying, had to take our wagons to pieces and floated..."[July 31] ¹⁵ The wagon was loaded with boxes containing the Doctor's medical books, medicines, and surgical instruments. At this time the Territory of Oregon was attracting considerable attention, and it was here that the Doctor aimed to settle and begin his medical practice.

¹³ Braly, John Hyde. *Memory Pictures*. The Neuner Company Los Angeles, 1912. p. 50

¹⁴ From the Diary of Dr. Benjamin Cory "Crossing the Plains" spring 1847

¹⁵ All further quotes from the Diary of Dr. Benjamin Cory "Crossing the Plains" are listed by the date of entry in the diary. [personal copy]

The official start on May 1, 1847 could not be described as inspiring confidence. Crossing the Missouri River was slow and treacherous, and the young men were not used to handling oxen. Yet the first entry in Ben's diary showed that the day's challenges were ultimately dismissed with patience and humor. "Today we crossed the Missouri River at St. Joseph. The troubles and perplexities of crossing the river were enough to have wearied the patience of Job. Was dark when we landed in the Indian Territory. Fastened our oxen to the wagon wheels which usage they were not accustomed to. We had to watch them half the night, came near pulling wagon over and had the temerity to chew one corner of the cover up. But we had a good fire in the stove and cooked a good bachelor supper. So that we soon regained our original security." [May 1] By day two, swiftly adjusting to his new circumstances and responsibilities, and appreciating the simple beauties of open nature, the young pioneer wrote with genuine excitement; "Today we travelled about five miles from the Missouri Shore and encamped on a small stream which runs through a delightful prairie. We find the grass sufficiently advanced to keep the cattle in good condition but it is not far enough to permit long drives. We have seventeen wagons in company and will advance only a short distance each day until we have sixty or seventy strong. Today I gazed upon a landscape most ravishing. ... I could scarcely draw myself away from it. Prairie stretches out before me in every direction. Undulating plains, sweeping valleys studded with clumps of trees in every direction. Hills, plains, and valleys all fresh with the garments of spring. The painter's pencil could not approximate such a picture." [May 2]

Within three days the train had increased to fifty wagons, a 'company' organized with a designated captain and pilot, bound for Oregon City. Soon the first division in the wagon train occurred after the pilot's brother became sick and the wagons slowed, at which point half the

company determined to push on without the others. The 'bachelor group' chose to be with the faster train. Soon two other events caused the Doctor dismay, his "double barreled shot gun fell out of the wagon and a wheel ran over it and ruined it. Broke my watch crystal while unyoking oxen." [May 13]

Ben practiced medicine on the journey. Shooting accidents occurred; "There was a good deal of shooting going on and quite an accident occurred. A young man ... discharged a ramrod and bullet from a pistol through his right hand which fractured the bones a good deal. His hand will be useless for months...." [May 3] "I have a perscription or two to make every day. It is not at all sickly however in camp....I am so unfortunate as to have all the accidents and sickness to attend to." [May 6] He pulled teeth, and on occasion to oblige the ladies who would send over milk or other items, he would "deal out a pill ocasionaly free." [May 19] He delivered a baby girl. [June 3] He aided an individual from another company, "Had a call to a company behind ours to see Mr. Cook of Missouri. Prostration from fever, hardly think he will get well." [June 8] and "A little girl fell out of the wagon in which she was, wheel ran over her right arm and foot, no bones broken." [June 24] In July a young girl was sick with typhus, the sick totalled twelve including Ben and companions. But the exercise and fresh air had improved the health of the young men and the same day they were 'knocking about'. [July 5]

A successful hunt for food gave the Doctor satisfaction, antelope often provided the occasion for a big feast. He felt very proud when one day he killed a black tailed deer when no one else caught anything, and carried it on his shoulders eight miles to camp. [May 26] Soon enough buffalo were spotted. "Our captain killed a buffalo today near the road. All turned out to see the far famed animal." [May 27] Antelope was plentiful, fish were caught, supplies were replenished at Fort Laramie where the Doctor judged most of the men there to be

‘scamps’.[June 8] Food and provisions were obtained by trading with the natives along the way ... “plenty of roasting ears, new potatoes and dry beans.”[Aug 25]

Ben’s spirits did not dampen with time and increasing hardship, his health was good and his strength building. “Glad I did not bring a horse. My muscles are strengthening every day.”[June 1] They passed Indian villages. “An Indian town, three or four hundred Indians, dressed fine, good looking, quite friendly.”[June 2] There were ‘traffic jams’. “Three companys got together one hundred wagons, long string.”[June 2] “Today at one time the road was lined with wagons for six miles. Only two companies ahead of us. One of them the Mormons. ... We have gained two weeks on some companies.”[July 13] Hurrying the pace of the wagon train had paid dividends.“A company on horses overtook us and gave distsressing accounts of the companies behind us. Their cattle giving out, much discouraged. Are one hundred and twelve wagons ahead of us and about eight hundred and seventy-five behind us. All will not get through safely.”[Aug 5] He took time to leave the wagons for sightseeing however, painting his name on Independence Rock, ‘along with hundreds of other names.’[June 23]

The wagon train was troubled by breakdowns, theft, dust, mosquitoes and horseflies, bad weather, illness, accidents of all kinds, etc. Steep and rocky paths caused wagons to fall and break. “A wagon of Mr. Granfield came loose from the oxen and ran down the hill and upset. Broke all the bows and the wagon bed somewhat. Had three children in it, did not injure them much.”[July 26] Yet Ben rarely lost his optimism and good spirits, his sense of wonder when confronted with lovely scenes of nature, his pleasure in such things as the soda waters at Soda Springs. The Doctor and “Mr Devendorf” were designated to give ‘orations’ on the 4th of July.[June 24] His company passed Gen. Kearney and Col. Fremont in camp on their return to

the States.[July 16] Encountering native Indians was treated most often as an opportunity to trade; “Are among the Cayouse Indians. Since we came to Grand Round good looking well disposed. ...Charge a blanket, six or eight shirts, a handkerchief or more for one horse.” Here he also gave medical treatment to a chief; “Visited a sick chief, has ague a year.”[Aug 24] The party was now at the Umatilla River, Oregon and within a few days it reached the Deschutes; “Indians ferried us over for two shirts to a wagon.”[Sept 4] The rains began, soaking all to the bone and rendering the trip miserable, “Rained all day, had to sleep under ax tree soaked with water as I was”[Sept 12] and the oxen were weak with fatigue and starvation. “Have but five oxen that have not given out and they are so jaded that we cannot get up the hill... Wadleigh has gone to the valley for fresh cattle.”[Sept 16] Finally, Oregon City! But after only a month of practice in the tiny town, the non-stop cold and wet weather persuaded Ben to leave the Northwest for California.

He booked passage on the Brig Henry which anchored in Yerba Buena [San Francisco] on November 17, 1847, the anniversary of his twenty-fifth birthday. But only two weeks later he again embarked on a smaller sailboat taking him south down the San Francisco bay, for he had heard of a small pueblo called San José, and thought there might be a need for a doctor.

Arrival in California

Arriving in San Francisco and discovering two doctors had already *hung their shingles* in the hamlet, the Doctor considered the field ‘too crowded’ and scrapped his plans to remain there. (Dr. Victor Fourgeaud had arrived a month previous, Dr. John Townsend in 1844.) He booked passage on a small hide-collecting boat sailing between SF and Alviso. Arriving too late to take the last stage into town (a crude log-wheeled vehicle) and finding no horses, he

passed an uncomfortable night on the boat. The following day he found a local Mexican with an oxcart who was willing to load the Doctor's trunks for the 10 mi to the pueblo, and Ben rented the horse for himself for an astronomical \$1.50 extra! Down to his last pennies, the Doctor must have felt that a treat was due, after the trials of the last months! Finding the community free of physicians, Dr. Cory settled in and began his practice. His first residence was "Peter Davidson's" but the price of one dollar per day was too much, and he changed to The Half Moon, San Jose's first hotel kept by Mr. Zachariah (Buffalo) Jones, where the necessities of life were obtained at a much reduced rate."¹⁶ Shortly afterwards with the discovery of gold, the Doctor was one of the first to leave for the mines with this same Mr. Jones. He would have viewed this as a quick (and dirty) path to propping up his badly depleted finances¹⁷, for he quickly found out how bills were commonly paid—the Californios' method of payment was *very* different from that of his patients in Ohio. In the pueblo the patient thanked the doctor in the most courteous manner, slowly backing towards the door, bowing while thanking the Doctor profusely, "Thank you doctor, thank you, a thousands times! God will pay you!" before exiting! Later payment could be in gold dust, but more often than not it consisted of some type of food; eggs, vegetables, or a chicken...¹⁸ With his generous heart, many deliveries were followed by handing the impoverished mother a gold coin. In the early

¹⁶ The Pioneer, published in San Jose, Ca. Jan 28, 1882

¹⁷ In addition to substantial expenditures incurred during the crossing of the plains to replace oxen, supplies and provisions, the Doctor writes "...received a short note from my father by Mr. Palmer stating that two letters were sent to me from home to St. Jo with money in them which I have not received." [Oct 21]

¹⁸ A well known story, concerning payment & the Doctor's singing, begins with his trip back from treating an ailing farmer in Alviso. It was nighttime and his satchel and saddle bags being full, he held the reigns in one hand and a large sweet potato given to him by the grateful farmer in the other. It was a beautiful moonlit night and he was singing "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear". Just as he entered the outskirts of San Jose a highwayman stepped out of the bushes, planning to rob the doctor. His song stopped mid sentence. To Dr. Cory's amazement, the thief suddenly turned and ran. The reason became clear as Dr. Cory looked down at his right hand, he was still holding the sweet potato, and it looked like a gun! He reportedly rode the rest of the way home singing "Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow".

days of his practice he did not charge widows or orphans.¹⁹ But non-payment for services did not stop him from treating the native peoples until the end of his days. (Anna Bascom described severely high prices in those early years but a doctor's wages were good; "...an ounce of onion seed cost an ounce of gold! But Doctor's services were just as high-priced, so we kept even.")²⁰ To communicate with his new patients, the Doctor quickly learned Spanish by recording all new words in a little notebook that he always carried about.

The gold is very fine, like small fish scales...

Soon after the Doctor's arrival in San Jose on December 1, 1847, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill. The town quickly emptied as residents flooded away to find gold. The Doctor and Buffalo Jones were "the first to leave for the mines".²¹ They purchased a small sack of the gold dust, and returned to San Jose in eight days.²² That summer '48 the Doctor went again to the mines with partner Robert Neligh, where he remained for at least five months. After the pair split up, while attending a rancher near the gold diggings, the Doctor found time to write his brother Andrew Jackson (Jack) on November 6, 1848, "...This is the richest gold country on the face of the globe. Gold almost looks to me like a worthless toy – I have seen such vast quantities of it. A man here in the mountains, who has not 10 or 20 pounds of it, is looked upon as a poverty-stricken man. ... The first month I was in the mines, myself and partner dug out three thousand dollars apiece, calling each ounce sixteen dollars. The diggings then became

¹⁹ "When San Jose was Young; A series of articles of an historical nature prepared especially for the news by a well known author and journalist" *The Evening News*, # 319 Early Physicians May 11, 1917.

²⁰ Field, M.H. *Grandma Bascom's Story of San Jose in '49*, Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine, Vol. 9, No. 53, May 1887, p.551

²¹ Munro-Fraser J. P. *History of Santa Clara County, California*. San Francisco, Ca: Alley, Bowen & Co., 1881. p. 704

²² Ibid. p. 705

poor; a man had to work hard all day, for only an ounce or two. So hundreds of people left and went to exploring, and I among the rest. I spent about two months exploring through the mountains—found gold everywhere; but we did not stop to work, we wanted to find places where we could pick up, without much labor, two or three hundred dollars per day. But we were not fortunate enough to find such a place. ... Several men got into a ravine where they got from fifteen to twenty thousand dollars in two or three weeks—most beautiful gold, in round and flat polished masses, weighing from one dollar to two hundred dollars each piece. I have seen several pieces weighing two, three, eight pounds. The gold on the rivers is very fine, like small fish scales. I have never worked on a river; I like to see the gold as I dig. I have worked in dry gullies or ravines. The first month I worked, my partner and myself hauled our dirt three miles to water, where we washed it in a trough made of boards; we could wash out five wagon loads in a day...” The letter portrays the Doctor’s dreams of discovering a mountain of gold, to be used for the pleasure of ‘giving back.’ “...If I ever was generous, I still am the same. It gives me more real pleasure to confer a favor than to receive one. I know that a man can live in Ohio quite comfortably on ten thousand dollars, judiciously managed, all his life time. But that amount looks to me now-a-days quite paltry! I shall not leave this country with less than one hundred thousand dollars. And before three years, I shall have that amount, if my health is spared—I feel quite sure of it. And then I shall spend my days in comfort, and in dispensing blessings upon those poor mortals, who I have often wished to assist, but could not for want of means.” He describes how the open air has become his home; “I have lived somewhat roughly here in the mountains. I have slept upon the ground, in the open air every night for five months. I have frequently had to cook my bread and meat upon a stick or in the ashes. I have lived as much as four or five days together upon dried meat and coffee without sugar or cream. I have

gotton so that wherever night overtakes me, I feel as if I were in my house. I sleep as well on the hard ground with perhaps a root or stone under my ribs, as on the softest bed. And I am quite well also.” After crossing the plains, the mining lifestyle seemed to pose no problem!

The Doctor did not stay much longer. Expenses were high; “My expenses have been great—horses from one hundred to two-hundred dollars each, and everything else accordingly.”²³ Even more discouraging, as soon as the miners found out that he was a physician, he felt obliged to attend them (blazing sun, damp mining conditions, and bad diet sickened many prospectors.²⁴) “I am sorry, dear brother, that I ever had Dr. stuck to my name. It is more trouble than profit. I am vexed to death. I tell people that I can get more gold in the mountains by digging and trading, than my conscience will permit me to charge my patients. I tell them that I have quit the practice of medicine; I am occupied with other pursuits more congenial to my feelings. But it all does no good; when a man begs of me to go and see his friends, I cannot but go.”²⁵ By December the Doctor traded his gold pans, shovel and pickax for the scapel, medical books, and... ..politics.

In this same letter there is an update on Joe Wadleigh, who accompanied the Doctor on the trip west. He had also left Oregon for San Francisco on the news of gold, and was by the Doctor’s estimation making ‘twenty to fifty dollars a day’ by selling mining supplies; “I have seen repeatedly a common tin pan (which is used to wash gold) sell, in the hills, for sixteen dollars; I sold two of them for thirty-two dollars. Of course he will do well.”²⁶

The letter ends by encouraging Jack to come to California. “You can get here in thirty or forty days and what is that? Come and I will be a good brother to you. You need not have a

²³ letter to Andrew Jackson Cory in Ohio written from Gold Placero, Ca Nov. 6, 1848

²⁴ Hruby, Daniel D. *Mines to Medicine*, San Jose, Ca 1965, p.25

²⁵ letter to Andrew Jackson Cory in Ohio written from Gold Placero, Ca Nov. 6, 1848

²⁶ Ibid.

cent of money when you land, for I will divide generously with you, and take you as a full partner in my business.” After attaining his MD from the Ohio Medical College in 1860, Dr. Andrew Jackson Cory came west; he lived, worked and raised a family alongside Ben in San Jose. He was the San Jose county coroner for many years, and was first director and physician at the Santa Clara Valley Infirmary (present location of Santa Clara Valley Medical Center on Bascom).

The Doctor continued to be fascinated with mining, and pursued it periodically alongside his other interests and lifelong devotion to medicine. He joined his brother James Manning Cory (also emigrated to San Jose—he married Ben’s sister-in-law Lizzie Braly) in staking a claim to the Esmeralda silver and gold mine in Western Nevada, and made various lengthy excursions into Durango Mexico. Although he gained financially from the Esmeralda mine, the Durango venture flopped.

Good Government from the Doctor’s Office

The American flag was hoisted in San Jose on July 14, 1846. New political forces were unleashed. Cory, in addition to medicine and mining, now turned to another inclination... politics. On Dec 11, 1848 Cory attended the first in a series of meetings conducted to establish a civil government in California. He was immediately placed on the resolutions committee, and subsequently elected one of San Jose’s three delegates to a constitutional convention scheduled to take place in San Jose in January—this convention failed to materialize.²⁷ After more postponements, Monterey was chosen by Governor Riley to host the convention. The Monterey convention gave rise to California’s first civil government—and San Jose was

²⁷ Arbuckle, Clyde. *Benjamin Cory 1822-1896*, 10/16/1938, p. 10

named the first capital of the new state. One of the factors in this decision was that San Jose offered a building suitable to house the first Legislature (at this time the town was described as "...a city of wood and canvas, streets were piled with building material..."²⁸). Nineteen citizens, one being Benjamin Cory, "executed a note for the price asked, \$34,000."²⁹ to purchase the large adobe structure in the Market square for the first State House.

Ben was elected first assemblyman from the San Jose District, extending from Monterey to Martinez. (At this time Cory entered into partnership with Dr. Bascom, to alleviate his medical obligations.) Assemblyman Cory was appointed member to two standing committees; Public Buildings and Education. When the first Legislature met, Dec 15 1849, the Assembly met on the second floor of the State House, but the bottom floor meant for the Senate was not yet ready. Private residences/offices were rented to various committees (Munro-Fraser mentions the 'house of Isaac Branhan'). Arbuckle writes "there is reason to believe that his [Cory's] office WAS the first capitol".³⁰ Ben's office was offered as a place for senators, assemblymen and other public officials to gather before the Statehouse was completed³¹, and it was said that "more good government came out of Doctor Cory's office than out of both houses of the State Legislature and the City Hall put together." (The San Jose Mercury Jan 17, 1896, referred to Ben's house, where his office was located: "This house, it is said, was rented at \$200. a day for the meeting of the first California Legislature, of which Dr. Cory was a member.")³² Although the first lawmaking body was notably productive, it found itself later named the "Legislature of

²⁸ "When San Jose was Young; A series of articles of an historical nature prepared especially for the news by a well known author and journalist". The Evening News, 1916. #105 San Jose, the Capital

²⁹ Munro-Fraser J. P. *History of Santa Clara County, California*. San Francisco, Ca: Alley, Bowen & Co., 1881. p. 152

³⁰ Arbuckle, Clyde. *Benjamin Cory 1822-1896*, 10/16/1938, p.13

³¹ Ibid. p.14

³² Ibid.

One Thousand Drinks.” There are many accounts of the title’s origin, but one fact weaves through them all—the lawmakers were not teetotalers.³³ (It can be sure that being a good Presbyterian however, Dr. Cory was one of the abstainers.) Anna Bascom wrote; “I used to go up to the legislature, and enjoy the fun there as much as they* enjoyed my housekeeping”³⁴ [*referring to 13 boarders in her house, including senators and representatives.] From day one, Cory was a proponent for efficient government, and was always concerned for the public welfare. He helped abolish bull fighting and bear baiting in California and was directly responsible for prohibiting it in San Jose. In the field of education, his efforts to establish this state’s system of public education were unceasing and continued long after he left the legislature. Just as in his medical practice, Cory was a beloved and respected member of the first Legislature. “His good humor and horse sense always reduced the temperature of a heated discussion.”³⁵

Lasting only a year and a half, the Capital was lost to Vallejo, and Cory vacated his Assembly seat in order to remain in his beloved hometown of San Jose; local problems had to be addressed. Before his term as Assemblyman even ended, on April 11 Cory was elected to the San Jose Common Council (the city council). His abiding concern was, and would remain, the well-being of San Jose. Of all the candidates for the council, Dr. Cory received the highest number of votes.

Cory continued his campaign to improve sanitation, and establish some type of health service for the poor. Other ordinances initiated by Dr. Cory: 1) The lower floor of City Hall was to be available at no charge for any religious denomination on the Sabbath. 2) The upper

³³ Hruby, Daniel D. *Mines to Medicine*, San Jose, Ca 1965. p. 55

³⁴ Field, M.H. *Grandma Bascom’s Story of San Jose in ’49*, Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine, 1887.

³⁵ Arbuckle, Clyde. *Benjamin Cory 1822-1896*, 10/16/1938. p. 13

room of City Hall was reserved for any school purposes. 3) Prohibition of gambling (billiards excepted) on the Sabbath. 4) Election of three overseers to render care for the poor. 5) A committee of three to select a suitable building to be rented or purchased for use as a public hospital. This last proposal was abandoned shortly thereafter as being too expensive. Cory conscientiously filled his office as a council member until 1855, when he was elected to the Board of Education, a position which he held for four years. In 1872 he was appointed Trustee of the California State Normal School by Governor Booth which he held for ten years. This college evolved into San Jose State University.

Brother Benjamin Cory

In the early period of California Masons were instrumental in establishing law and order in their respective Californian communities, and building hospitals, schools, as well as participating in local and state government. The definition of Freemasonry is “an organized society of men, symbolically applying the principles of Operative Masonry and architecture to the science and art of character building” where the purpose is to make “better men out of good men”.³⁶ Clues to the Doctor’s character can be found within the tenets of the American Freemasonry organization, with its emblem of a letter G surrounded by the Square and Compass. The square teaches Masons to be honest and true in their actions, the compass teaches circumscribing of desire and moderation in action, and the G represents geometry and is the initial for the name of Deity. As geometry is central to understanding of the physical

³⁶ BASIC MASONIC EDUCATION COURSE
<http://www.fraternal37.org/Pages/FraternalMasonicEducationEA.htm>

world, so is God central to Mason's lives.³⁷ After attaining his MD and returning to Oxford, Cory successfully petitioned Oxford Lodge No. 67 F&AM for the degree in Masonry.

The many values promulgated by the Freemasons, such as the emphasis on "man's internal qualifications, rather than his worldly wealth and honor", the tradition of giving back to society, and the role of God in daily life, would fit Cory's personality perfectly.

On July 11, 1850 Cory and fourteen other Masons petitioned the Grand Master Jonathan Stevenson for dispensation to open a Lodge of Master Masons in San Jose. The petition was granted. The San Jose Masonic Lodge Number 10 included some of the earliest and most famous names in California history; two other petitioners alongside Cory were Dr. Townsend (the doctor in Yerba Buena) and James F. Reed, member and subsequent rescuer of the Donner Party of 1846.

Cory was active in the affairs of his lodge, serving on committees and filling the various chairs pro tem when necessary. The minutes of the formative years, '50, '51, and '52 show him serving as Senior Warden and Marshal most of the time. In '53 he was elected Worshipful Master, and in '54 he again served as Marshal, turning the gavel over to William Howard. His activities, however, did not cease with his passing through the chairs. He continued for many years thereafter to aid his lodge by serving on committees, conferring degrees, or performing any duties necessary to promote its welfare.

The Masonic friends took charge of his funeral.

³⁷ Tabbert, Mark A. *American Freemasons, Three Centuries of Building Communities*. New York and London: Introduction

A Family Man— Sarah and the ‘Tribe of Benjamin’

According to Sarah Braly Cory’s own notes dictated to youngest daughter Sarah in 1905, she and the Doctor met in 1850 at Mrs. Hester’s, where the Doctor had come “to tell her of the death of Mrs. Townsend from cholera.”³⁸ [In this epidemic the Drs. Cory and Townsend were called to take charge of the fight, both worked night and day to save as many lives as possible. Tragically Dr. Townsend and his wife died of the disease within twenty-four hours of each other.] To continue with Sarah’s notes: “On March 16, 1853 we were married and came to San Jose on the wedding trip [from Lawrence Station], via Alviso, as the roads were very muddy. We lived on the corner of Santa Clara and Second for about six years, and then moved out to the vineyard on South Second. John, Lizzie, and Mamie were born at the first home and Lewis and Benjamin were born at the vineyard. Benjamin died when he was only three months old, of erysipelas... In about ’64 the new house³⁹ was built on Second St. between William and San Salvador. Here Susan, Harriet, Edith, and Sarah were born.”⁴⁰

The Doctor referred to his beloved eight children as his ‘Tribe of Benjamin’. As all grew into adulthood, this next generation reflected without exception the ethical, hardworking, compassionate, and civic-oriented spirit as embodied by their parents, Ben and Sarah.

Sarah was sixteen when the Braly family (parents, grandparents, six siblings), due to their father’s ill health, left Missouri to set out on the long pilgrimage overland headed for Oregon in the same year as the Doctor, 1847. With dark brown hair and blue eyes, the young Sarah

³⁸ Notes dictated by Sarah Braly Cory to her daughter 1905

³⁹ #435 S. Second St., The house was honored in ceremonies and a plaque on June 8, 1947 as the home of Santa Clara Valley’s first physician and founder of the County Hospital. The date in June was chosen in particular to mark the 100th anniversary of organized medicine in the United States. Clyde Arbuckle, at the time historian and secretary of the Historic Landmarks Commission, gave a talk. The plaque was presented to the Commission by Dr. J.B. Josephson, president of the Medical Society. [From an article S.J. News 5/7/1947] The home was torn down in the 1990s. The plaque remains.

⁴⁰ Notes dictated by Sarah Braly Cory to her daughter 1905.

attracted the attention of a young native Chief during the crossing; the incident in fact led to true hardship. When father Braly did not allow the Chief to purchase Sarah, the next night most all their horses were stolen. Brother John Braly writes: “At one point, where we had to cross a branch of the river, there were several young Indian bucks who gave us much trouble. The young Chief, whom I afterward learned was a young Cayuse Chief named ‘Five Crows’ ... was very desirous of possessing her. He offered ‘a pony—two ponies—five ponies.’ ‘How many ponies you want?’ We thought we were going to have a fight. The men caught up their guns, a council of war was held, but after a short parley peace was declared. The night after, seven of our eight horses were stolen. We hitched a pair of steers to the family carriage, putting another yoke of cows in place of the ox-team, and started on.”⁴¹

The family stayed briefly at the Whitman mission just weeks before the “Whitman massacre”. Sarah described it: “Three weeks after we left Whitman Mission, Dr. and Mrs. Whitman were massacred, Mr. Rogers, a young teacher and all the American men. The women and children were taken captives. A month later they were bought by the Oregon government with blankets and ponies. After they were rescued the government called for volunteers and the soldiers killed many of these same Indians. ...It is thought that one of the reasons the massacre took place was the death of so many Indians from measles.”⁴²

Sarah was raised in a pioneering family in Missouri, crops such as corn, wheat and potatoes were grown, sheep were raised for food and wool, cotton and flax spun for clothing. With her strong religious background [father Rev. John E. Braly organized the Presbyterian Mountain-View Church], family values steeped in the importance of education and ethics,

⁴¹ Braly, John Hyde. *Memory Pictures*. The Neuner Company Los Angeles, 1912. p. 69

⁴² Notes dictated by Sarah Braly Cory to her daughter 1905

resourcefulness and practicality bred from those challenging years in Missouri, and last but not least her beauty and a love of singing, the Doctor surely knew instantly that she would be his bride. It is said that shortly after the wedding the Doctor remarked with a twinkle in his eye; “I have the most beautiful wife and the finest horse in all California.”

In 1878 the couple celebrated their silver wedding anniversary which was reported on in the local paper. “...Since then their lives have been such that each acted as if it was their duty to pluck the flowers that around them grew and spread their fragrance for the other....During the period a handsome family has grown up around them, adding a perpetual fountain to their domestic sweets.”⁴³

Medicine: ‘Charity and Ability’

Mining, politics, education...all were important to the Doctor. But his biggest passion, the sustaining role beginning at age 23 and practiced for over five decades, in San Jose, was that of medicine and this for the remainder of his life, was the goal unto itself. He complained about it at times, was frustrated about it getting in the way (ie. during the ‘diggings’), but it can be said that his fondest wish had been granted. When digging for gold, it was not what gold could bring him, but what it might allow him to achieve in his lifetime. Writing from the cold mountains to his brother in ’48; “*I shall spend my days in comfort and in dispensing blessings upon these poor mortals whom I have often wished to assist.*”

In October 1849 Dr. L. H. Bascom and his wife arrived in the Santa Clara Valley after an overland trip from Kentucky (according to Mrs. Anna Maria Bascom “the Doctor [her husband] said wherever the Catholic Fathers had picked out a site must be a good location!”—

⁴³ Newspaper article from 1878; San Jose News? a copy of this article was simply sent to me

she became a famed hostess, “a woman of great humor and wit”.⁴⁴) Dr. Bascom and Dr. Cory worked together and continued their partnership for a short time after the cholera epidemic, but in '52 Bascom bought 135 acres of land for farming. The County of Santa Clara bought a strip of this land, now known as Bascom Ave.

Dr. Townsend was active alongside Dr. Cory until his death in the '50 cholera epidemic. Dr. Cory's second partner was Dr. Spencer, who arrived in San Jose in 1854. The two were responsible also for the care of prisoners at the County jail; invoices show that Dr. Cory continued this work until as late as 1875. In the '80s Cory worked with Dr. W. D. McDougall.

The *San José Weekly Visitor* of March 5, 1852 provides the following information: “The only Doctor's card [in San Jose] is that of “Dr. Ben Cory, office east side of Market Square.”⁴⁵ In these early days Cory was the ‘unofficial’ city health officer. Yet the population had exploded and the medical needs of the populace remained unmet; finally in 1855 the situation improved somewhat when the County appointed its first full-time ‘contract’ physician (Dr. Crane who “furnished medical and surgical attendance for ‘no more than seven patients per day’”⁴⁶ and by 1860 the need for more health care and the deplorable conditions combined to necessitate a ‘real hospital’. That year, the Doctor's younger brother Jack Cory arrived fresh from Oxford with a M.D. from Ohio Medical College. The ‘real hospital’ was in fact however only a repaired farm structure on a 12 acre piece of land and the medical situation continued to remain miserable. The pest house, in the middle of the city, was an eyesore. Finally in 1871 land was bought on “Infirmity Road” (now Bascom Avenue). Ben and Jack combined efforts, and were the leaders in the push for construction of the Santa Clara County Infirmary, finished

⁴⁴ Arbuckle, Helen. *San Jose's Women*. San Jose, Ca: 2002. p17

⁴⁵ Munro-Fraser J. P. *History of Santa Clara County, California*. San Francisco, Ca: Alley, Bowen & Co., 1881. p 381

⁴⁶ Information provided by the SCVMC

in 1875. This beautiful Gothic-style hospital was the pride of the community. Dr. Andrew J. Cory was first appointed physician and surgeon of Santa Clara county, and was the Director of the infirmary from April 1861 to Jan 1862, holding the position at various times for over nine years. Dr. Ben Cory also held the Director position for two years in the early 1880s. He was the 'official' County Physican for ten years.

It is clear that Dr. Cory took advantage of being a member of the San Jose Common Council in those first four years 1850-54 to push through ordinances to increase the health, sanitation, and safety conditions in the city. Some of the measures passed early on included: 1) banning horses from running through the streets 2) prohibiting cattle from being slaughtered in residential areas and 3) requiring all those who lived on lands though which the *Acequia* ran [a ditch that conveyed the town's water for domestic use] to maintain the cleanliness of the water, ie no washing clothes, throwing junk in it, riding animals through it etc. These changes helped to decrease further outbreaks of cholera in the years ahead.

The Santa Clara County Medical Association began in 1870 when Dr. Benjamin Cory and a group of his colleagues met to discuss means of providing better care for the citizens of Santa Clara County. It was officially founded in 1876.

Dr. Cory's efforts to aid the poor and sick and improve medical services in Santa Clara was noted early on. Munro-Fraser wrote in 1881, "The present county physician is Dr. Benjamin Cory A.M.M.D., a man who has exercised more charity and ability towards the poor of this country than any whom we know of. He is one of the oldest of the pioneers, and this work gives him credit for the progress made in Santa Clara county since 1847. In conclusion, we

will say that if every county in each State should have such accommodations for indigent sick then should the tax-payers rejoice and charity be satisfied.”⁴⁷

Conclusion

The Doctor passed away at age 76, from a ‘severe attack of the grippe’ and complications which followed necessitating two operations. Always strong and healthy, now his health began to ebb, and he passed away January 16, 1896, with his Sarah and ‘Tribe of Benjamin’ surrounding him. On the afternoon of the 19th over a hundred of the Doctor’s Freemason Brethren joined the members of the County Medical Society to form a double column from his home to the Second Presbyterian Church several doors down the street. In the words of Clyde Arbuckle; “In spite of threatening weather a great crowd had gathered. Mourners from all walks of life, and of every race and creed were there. The church was filled to overflowing; people had to stand on the steps, and wait outside....Among floral offerings piled almost to the ceiling, the small, half-crushed handful of violets from some little muchacha shared prominence with the magnificent offerings of dignified state officials. All mourned Ben alike; his humanitarianism had not been lost on anyone who knew him.”⁴⁸ The Doctor and his beloved wife Sarah, who passed away twenty years after her husband, lie together for eternity in the Pioneer Section of Oak Hill Memorial Park, San Jose, California.

Doctor Benjamin Cory was a man of many hats, but perhaps the most vivid image left imprinted on posterity will be that of the doctor in top hat, the lone physician crisscrossing the countryside by horse and buggy... day and night, from Santa Cruz to Contra Costa County,

⁴⁷ Munro-Fraser J. P. *History of Santa Clara County, California*. San Francisco, Ca: Alley, Bowen & Co., 1881. p. 149

⁴⁸ Arbuckle, Clyde. *Benjamin Cory 1822-1896*, 10/16/1938. p.22

singing hymns for comfort such as “*In the Sweet Bye and Bye*” even while practicing, often accepting meager to no pay for his services. This surely presents an archaic image, as today small medical practices are being squeezed out of existence due to soaring medical costs and insurance, while federal health care legislation remains controversial and divides the nation; but it is an important one for all to know, and to remember.

From *When San Jose was Young* (1916) ;“Dr. Cory was most generous in treating patients. From Gilroy to the Mission San Jose he was beloved. He used to ride horseback, singing along the road, fording streams, taking pleasantly good and evil, sunshine, storms and robbers. His patients made him the custodian of their secrets, and their counsellor.....”⁴⁹



The words of the Doctor as told to *The Santa Clara County Medical Society* on Sept 3, 1878 speak loudly of the importance and role of medicine in society, and are as timely today as they were 133 years ago: “I believe sincerely that the medical profession is the noblest of professions..... Medicine in the amplitude of its researches stretches out its manifold hands and embraces all sciences which tend to the honor of the Great Creator, or the preservation, dignity or advancement of our race. Neither theology nor law nor any other profession can justly claim as much as this. Theology can give hope and consolation to a dying man who believes its tenets. Our profession gives ease to bodily pains, and consoling words of hope and comfort to all mankind, believe as they may.....”

⁴⁹ “*When San Jose was Young; A series of articles of an historical nature prepared especially for the news by a well known author and journalist*”. The Evening News, 1916. # 319 Early Physicians.

Cory family photo

Nov. 17, 1892

Center top—"C" Dr. Benjamin Cory and wife Sarah, & just below "D" is the matriarch Susan [nee Hyde] Braly (mother of Sarah)

"A" John Hyde Cory and wife Nellie [nee Buck] Cory

"B" Mary [Cory] Ledyard & Francis Ledyard

"E" Elizabeth [Cory] (Dr. Henry Childs Ledyard is deceased)

"F" Lewis Lincoln Cory & wife Carrie [nee Martin] Cory

"G" Edith [Cory] Alexander and husband William Alexander

"H" Daughters Susan, Harriet, and Sarah



On the front stairs of 435 South Second St. San Jose, California.

The Doctor's office was located at 97 South First St. San Jose.

Dr. Cory passed away in 1896, aged 74.

Dr. Benjamin Cory



Sarah Braly as a young girl.



Epilogue—the ‘Tribe of Benjamin’

John Braly Cory (1854-1930)

John studied in public schools in Santa Clara County and graduated from the College of the Pacific at San Jose. After first working as a stock breeder, John moved to Vacaville to begin a career in fruit farming, and later banking, becoming president. He married Nellie Buck, daughter of the state Senator L. W. Buck who was one of the leading fruit growers in California. Both were involved in numerous social and civic organizations in Lodi, Ca. By the early 1920s, John and Nellie Cory’s large ranch with tropical gardens and a complete irrigation system was known as “one of the show places of the Valley.”

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Cory Ledyard (1856-1935)

Lizzie married Dr. Henry Childs Ledyard. Dr. Ledyard completed dentistry studies at Columbia University and began working his way to California while practicing his profession. After the marriage the couple trekked around the Orient for ten years. Working out of a base at Shanghai, the two traveled extensively, stopping to allow Dr. Ledyard to advertise in local newspapers announcing the presence of an American dentist. They journeyed by sleigh from Shanghai to Irkutsk in Siberia with their new baby son, Harry (later wholesale grocer in Santa Cruz, he started the Ledyard company).

The couple remained in Constantinople for another eight years, and returned to California when the three children reached school age. Dr. Ledyard set up practice in Los Angeles but after only one year, he passed away and Lizzie at age 35 returned to San Jose. She taught

school for a living, having been an early graduate of Mills College and the State Normal School (San Jose State), and received several commendations for her teaching skills.

Mary (Mamie) Cory Ledyard (1857-1950)

Mary married her brother-in-law Dr. Francis Ledyard. Frank built homes and practiced dentistry in San Jose until the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which demolished his office. After this the family moved to Pasadena. Mary was listed among the “Whos Who among the Women in California” in Pasadena in 1922—an annual list of women noted for their activities in civic, social, athletic, philanthropic, art and music, literary and dramatic circles.

Benjamin Cory (1860) survived only three months. When mother Sarah was recounting memories to her daughter in 1905, she did not neglect to mention the birth and death of Benjamin.

Lewis Lincoln Cory (1861-1929)

Lewis graduated from Princeton in 1881, and with honors from Columbia Law School; married Carrie Martin (from the Westfields, NJ) in New York City and practiced there for two years before returning to California. Establishing himself in Fresno California, he was for many years the attorney for the Southern Pacific company, the First National bank, and the Fresno Water company. His legal responsibilities involved appearances before the Ca Supreme court in days when legal precedents were being established in California. Lewis and Carrie had five children; the second son received the precious & traditional name Benjamin Hyde Cory.

This Ben graduated from Princeton and Harvard Law School, and was a great favorite of his aunts (the daughters of Dr. Benjamin Cory).

Susan (Susie) Cory Hablutzel (1864-1954)

Susan was involved in the expansion of the San Jose Day Nursery, which was founded in the basement of a downtown church in 1916 to provide affordable childcare for local children of working families. The child development center still exists today. Susan, who married the physician Dr. Charles Hablutzel, was President of the nursery board of Directors and presided over ceremonies celebrating the \$35,000 expansion of this institution in 1936.

Harriet (Hattie) Cory Hummel (1867-1957)

Harriet was a schoolteacher by profession. She and her husband were Presbyterian missionaries in Cameroon in the early 1900s at a place where there is still a Presbyterian seminary. Later they lived a quiet life in the country near Los Gatos, her husband Rudolph Hummel was the Presbyterian pastor in Ben Lomond.

Edith (Edie) Cory Alexander (1871-1959)

Edith attended the San Jose public schools and the College of the Pacific. She married William G. Alexander at age 19 in 1890 at the famed 435 S. Second St home. William was a successful wholesale grocer/banker/real estate developer in San Jose, director and general sales manager of the Sperry Flour Company 1906; he expanded the company operations throughout the state, and was acknowledged as a business leader. Edith was active in civic affairs, was chairman of the building committee for the aforementioned San Jose Day Nursery and with her

sister Susan as well as her husband, was instrumental in the expansion of this child development center. Both Edith and William were deeply interested in the welfare of young people, and were leaders of the Intermediate Christian Endeavor Society of the Presbyterian Church for several years.

Sarah (Sallie) (1873-1958)

Sarah graduated from Stanford University in 1899, and was an instructor in Latin for many years at San Jose High School until retiring in 1936. Upon her retirement, the principle Forrest Murdock praised her as having been a “very fine” teacher and expressed regret at her departure. She was memorialized in last rites at the Oak Hill Memorial Park as a member of a pioneer San Jose family, a member of the First Presbyterian Church, and identified as “the daughter of the first physician in Santa Clara County and founder of the County Hospital”. Sarah passed much of the information on the Doctor to San Jose historian Clyde Arbuckle.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents Carolyn Cory Ahrens & John Malcolm Ahrens
My grandparents Benjamin Hyde Cory and Susie [Leavitt] Cory
My great grandparents Lewis Lincoln Cory and Carrie [Martin] Cory

&

to my great great grandparents Dr. Benjamin Cory and Sarah Braly Cory

For questions, comments, please contact Beth bethjena@yahoo.com