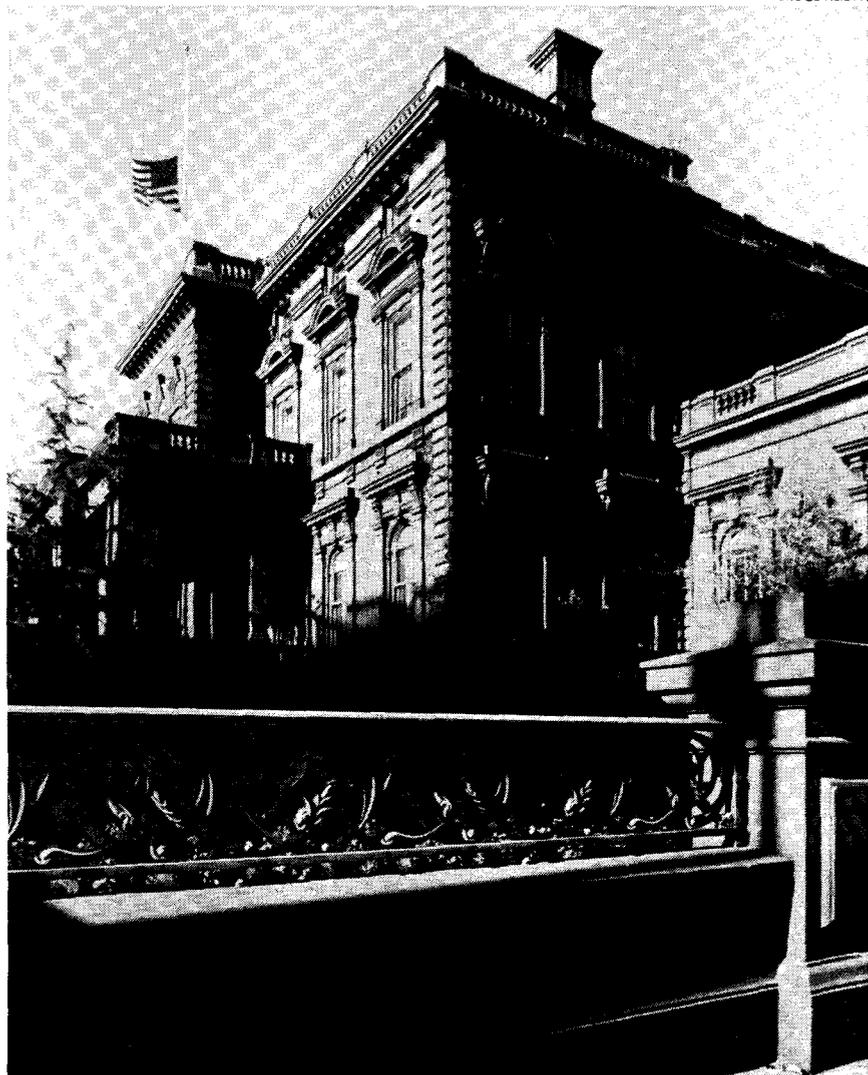


# BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

The Bayside Hillbillies

by Horace Sutton



BRUCE KLIEWE

The Pacific Union Club—Flood's great villa is now inhabited by modern tycoons.

THE SUMMITS OF San Francisco offer unparalleled vistas of the city's streets as they tumble down toward the new skyscrapers, and beyond to the Bay and the bridges that cross it. But for the hill people, the steep incline and the heights also provided a sanctuary in the fashion of those who sought protection in the perched villages of France, safe from marauders. It was that way for one Dr. Hayne, a San Franciscan, who achieved such a distinguished reputation that the sick and the injured came to the door of his Montgomery Street hotel room at all hours, leaving the doctor with time neither to sleep nor to read his medical journals.

He looked for the most inaccessible

site and found it on Nob Hill. There, on the land where the mass of the Fairmont Hotel stands today, Dr. Hayne built his house, and since the cable cars had not been strung to that remote eyrie as yet, the physician was able to find some serenity.

Hayne was the pioneer of Nob Hill, which came to be called the Hill of Golden Promise. It became, too, the nesting place for the freewheeling bonanza kings and railroaders of the 1870s in the salad days of San Francisco. Although the Great Fire in 1906 swept away many of the trappings of that era, there are vestiges of that flamboyant life that survive to this day. The cable-car motorman, making the stop on these heights, is liable to say, as one did as I

alighted there recently, "S-s-s-nob Hill."

Of the mansions that were built, by Leland Stanford, the onetime Sacramento grocer who became governor and railroader; Mark Hopkins; James Fair; Charles Crocker, the former dry-goods clerk; Collis Huntington, the Connecticut peddler turned tycoon; and James Clair Flood, who started as a bartender and became the nabob of Nob Hill, only Flood's home remains, and that had to be reconstructed.

The bonanza king of the Comstock Lode, Flood erected a 42-room brownstone surrounded by a brass fence that was painted black to discourage vandals who might steal the metal if they knew what it was. Flood's great villa is spread like an aging dowager plopped across an ample plot of hilltop. It is now the Pacific Union Club, inhabited by latter-day tycoons, and called, in a note of snide deliciousness, the P.U.

Leland Stanford's house, one of the first of the hilltop mansions, was done in refined good taste, reflected now in Stanford Court, which on my score-sheet vies strongly for the title of the best hotel in the nation. From the Tiffany-glass dome covering its entranceway to its new winter garden, it reflects a Victorian air. The elegant service matches the period. The Potpourri, on the lobby level, with its cross-hatchings of lattice, seems to have been lifted from Gigi—a fancy of *fin-de-siècle* Paris, where croissants and coffee are served in the morning, and a salad Niçoise—and the local version, salad Pacifica, with Bay shrimp, avocado, and crabmeat—are fare for lunch. Fournou's Ovens, in the lower reaches of the hotel, is a preserve of its own, where the great brick oven produces racks of lamb, sides of beef, and duckling that comes crisp to table.

Mark Hopkins's house, next door, was built by his wife Mary, who spared none of Mark's money to outdo the mansions of other Victorian wives. As he watched it rise, with all its turrets and towers, Mark called it, ruefully, the "Hotel de Hopkins." He died before it was finished, and although his widow moved east and the house succumbed to the holocaust of 1906, the hotel that rose on its site became the Mark Hopkins, now operated by Inter-Continental Hotels. When its rooftop opened in 1939, the Top of the Mark, as it was

called, became the romantic lookout of the West Coast, and orchestras broadcast across the country from its skytop perch, the announcer intoning those magic words, "And now from high atop the Mark Hopkins Hotel in beautiful

Hopkins, and Stanford in one swell swoop.

Huntington's spread actually occupied the greensward of what is now the pocket park named for him. Crocker's house, across the park,

only to repair to Alexis' where gypsy musicians work the cellar and a disco erupts on weekends. Le Club has all the airs of a polished preserve for well-endowed groupies. It is run rather like a private fief of Ed Fleishell, a local lawyer who also functions as overseas legman to Stanton Delaplane, the San Francisco syndicated columnist.

Fleishell brings in veal from Wisconsin, truffles from the Dordogne, Margaux from Bordeaux, and a chef from Lyons. But in culinary search he ventures afield of his dimly lit lair on occasion, for a spaghetti dish is named for him at the lusty North Beach Restaurant on Stockton which makes its own prosciutto, its own magnificent salami, and its own pasta—its tortellini the best, hands down, ever sampled in this country or in its nation of origin.

North Beach's newest extension, three blocks away, is open at all hours, serves omelets, salami and eggs, and fresh fish—sand dabs, petrali, and other natives of these latitudes. Since the menu offers neither spaghetti, fettucini, or their mutations, the place, with exquisite logic, is called Basta Pasta. Basta, need I tell you, means "enough."

Like many of San Francisco's prime places of congregation—Fisherman's Wharf, the Cannery, Ghirardelli Square, Chinatown, Embarcadero Center—Nob Hill and North Beach, that buzz center of beaneries and night life, are linked by cable car.

About the time the moguls began to congregate on the top of Nob Hill, a London-born inventor named Andrew Hallidie beheld a team of four horses struggling to get a horse-car up a hill. The pitch, after all, where Nob falls into California Street is 18 percent and between Chestnut and Lombard 22 percent. Hallidie produced a trolley, four years later, powered by a moving underground cable. The gripman on the car could pull hard on the handle and indeed "grip" the cable, thus moving the car. By 1880 eight lines crisscrossed San Francisco running on 112 miles of cable.

Just a dozen years ago they dusted off the old car barn at Washington and Mason Streets, on the side of Nob Hill, and opened it as a working museum. The great steel cables, the huge wheels, and the gears are on public view. So, too, is the first cable car and many of the trams that were climbing hills when the nabobs were in flower atop of Nob.

Standing and hanging on the cars is a Bayside experience. The California Street cars seat 34, but they hold 100. The alternative, to quote a popular T-shirt for sale in the car-barn museum, is to "Go climb a street." ●



Stanford Court—this Nob Hill hotel is a strong candidate for best in the nation.

San Francisco...." All of that led the owner of the modest Mark Twain Hotel, in town, to open a saloon in the basement called the Bottom of the Mark.

The Fairmont Hotel across the street grew out of the estate of James G. Fair, the miner and later senator, whose home stood on the edge of the hill. The house didn't bring bliss, for Fair became the first senator to be sued for adultery. He gave society two daughters, however, Mrs. Herman Oelrichs and Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt. Mrs. Oelrichs built a great hotel which, alas, burned in the fire before it could open, was rebuilt, and opened a year later. Dorothy Draper, so fond of cabbage roses, redid the lobby in the late Forties.

Collis Huntington has a hotel named for him, too (as well as a Nob Hill park), which is a favorite roost of royalty, movie people, and concert artists. Lee Radziwill has been hired to redecorate it. The Huntington's restaurant is called the Big Four, a quadripartite honor that tips the hat to Crocker, Huntington,

burned in the fire, too, but the family chose not to rebuild, giving the land to the Episcopal Church, which produced Grace Cathedral, once the home turf of the late Bishop Pike. With its Ghiberti portals, copied from those in Florence, its frescoes of early California days, and its stained glass, it is grand enough to need organized tours. Hours vary depending upon the day, and a phone call would be in order.

George and Phoebe Hearst, mother and father of William Randolph, lived on the hill, and during the ordeal following Patty Hearst's kidnapping, their grandson, Randolph, and his wife Catherine, Patty's parents, were sequestered in a Nob Hill apartment house called the Gramercy.

A favored bide-a-wee in this corner of the Hill is the Bay-styled outpost called Mama's which, amid a mass of brass, flowers, and lattice, dishes out trick omelets and off-the-wall sandwiches day and night.

To run up a bigger check one need

# Friends, Lovers, and Countrymen

**E. M. Forster: A Life**

by P.N. Furbank

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 359 pp., \$19.95

Reviewed by Derwent May

EARLY IN his brilliant new biography, P.N. Furbank tells us how E.M. Forster would cope with the problem of being bullied when he was at school in the 1890s. A gang of boys used to pelt him with chestnuts, and he would calm himself down after the attack "by mentally resolving the gang back into individuals." In some ways, that is what Forster was doing all his life. In his famous essay, "Two Cheers for Democracy," published in the *Nation* just before World War II, he declared: "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friends, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." The statement shocked, as it was meant to. But it was part of a larger purpose: to assert that democracy was "less hateful than other forms of government" and that it had to be defended precisely because it started from the assumption that "the individual is important, and that all types are needed to make a civilization."

The early novels with which Forster won his fame were all, in a delicate, unbullying manner, attacks on people who try to force their ideas on others. The villains of these books are the respectable citizens of suburban England. In *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), Forster's first novel, Mrs. Herriton sends her son, Philip, to Italy to bring back Lilia, a relative who has insulted the family by falling in love with an Italian dentist's son. Philip is too late: Lilia is already married. But she dies in childbirth, and in due course a whole posse of suburbanites sets out for Italy to bring back the child. They succeed only in killing it.

In *The Longest Journey* (1907), Rickie, a generous-hearted Cambridge graduate, is crushed in spirit by his selfish young wife and by the conventional private school in which he is obliged to take work as a teacher: His life becomes a perpetual "turning of diplomatic corners." There is not much happiness in these books, although there is plenty of

humor. However, Philip and Rickie are each granted a vision of elusive joy: Philip by the "silver stars in a purple sky" of an Italian night, Rickie by his friendship, forged on the Wiltshire downs, with a strange, gypsylike half brother whom he discovers before he dies. Forster's third book, *A Room With a View* (1908), returns to Italy—to Florence, where another suburban girl, Lucy Honeychurch, is kissed on a mountainside by an unconventional young Englishman, George Emerson. She flees with her chaperone to Rome. Yet something has been awoken in her. Her fiancé from Surrey increasingly seems to her like "a room without a view"—and so she returns to marry her George, who will perhaps be stronger than Rickie as a husband.

All these are delightful novels, their satire on the red-brick villas as biting as a "strong, wholesome insect," as the *London Times* said of *The Longest Journey* when it was published. Yet one feels now, as was felt at the time, that there is something wistful about them. There are no heroes in the books—no character with more than an intimation of what might be a better life. In *E.M. Forster: A Life*, Furbank shows us that Forster's own life was far more striking than that of any of his early characters. It is that rare story of a heroic inner life.

Forster was born into the genteel suburbs. His mother was a governess who married slightly above her; his father, an architect, died of consumption, after designing only one house, when Forster was only one year old. Forster was brought up, as he said later, "in a haze of elderly ladies." He went to Tonbridge School, a public (in American terms, private) school like Rickie's, which, in his own words, only "hindered me from discovering how lovely and delightful and kind the world can be." In fact, he might have become as conventional a young man as any he later created in his books.

A remarkable intelligence, and a remarkable determination, saved him—along with his luck in going to Cambridge. It was there that the revelations that were to make a great artist of him began. Cambridge itself gave him, in one breath, the revelations of friendship and of intellectual freedom. At 21, he was elected to the Apostles, a society to

which such illustrious 19th-century figures as Tennyson had belonged as undergraduates. It was out of Forster's generation of Apostles that the male wing of Bloomsbury was later to grow.

Almost as important, in the same year, was Forster's first visit to Italy, where he went with his mother. At Ravenna, he wrote one of his first short stories, "The Story of a Panic," about a boy liberated by Pan who finds he is able to recreate the stars, sun, and moon out of his own consciousness. Writing the tale was another overwhelming experience for Forster. It seemed to say that he could depend now on his own imagination, and could achieve all he wanted if allowed to follow his own bent. Forever afterward he would think of Italy as "the beautiful country where they say 'Yes'... the place 'where things happen.'"

Forster's great-aunt Marianne had left him just enough money to live on—another major stroke of good fortune—and he now began to work on his first novels. By this point, it can be seen that the dull or half-hearted men who figure in the early books convey nothing of the force of character that Forster himself had had to show in order to get to the point where he was able to create them. These books dwell on the milieu from which he had had to liberate himself, rather than on his own act of liberation.

With his fourth novel, *Howards End* (1910), Forster became far more ambitious. *Howards End* is as ironical and witty, and as full of foolish characters, as any of his books, yet it offers a vision of England in which the opposing parties of his earlier novels might achieve, through love, some understanding of, and reconciliation with, each other. It tries to show how the small-minded but businesslike Wilcox family could join its gifts to those of the more deeply civilized Schlegels in a marriage that would bless them both.

After *Howards End* was published, Forster found himself a celebrity. Yet he was only to publish one more novel in his lifetime: *A Passage to India*, which appeared 14 years later, after he had been in Egypt doing Red Cross work in the war, and after a long stay in India as secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas. Few critics doubt that *A Passage to India*