



THE SHIRLEY LETTERS FROM CALIFORNIA MINES

***The Shirley Letters*
from California Mines in 1851-52**

by Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe (1819 - 1906)

Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe moved to California from Massachusetts during the Gold Rush of the mid-1800's. During her travels, Louise was offered the opportunity to write for The Herald about her travel adventures. It was at this point that Louise chose the name "Shirley" as her pen name. Dame Shirley wrote a series of 23 letters to her sister in Massachusetts in 1851 and 1852. The "Shirley Letters", as the collected whole later became known, gave true accounts of life in two gold mining camps on the Feather River in the 1850s. She described these camps in northern California with vividness in portraying the wildness of Gold Rush life. The letters give detailed accounts of the vast and beautiful landscape that was the background to the hustle and bustle of mining life. Louise's perspective as a woman provided a contrast to the typically all-male mining camps that she occupied. The letters were later published in the *Pioneer*, a California literary magazine based out of San Francisco. (Wikipedia)

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