

# Capt. John Grigsby

## Pioneer of 1845

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**Capt. John Grigsby** was born on 3 March 1806 in Blount County, Tennessee. He was the son of George Grigsby and Rebecca James. Capt. John Grigsby married Nancy Wilson before 1828 in Tennessee. Capt. John Grigsby lived in 1837 at Polk County, Missouri. He married Mahala Shields on 14 July 1842 in Missouri.



The Grigsby's were farmers, stockmen, and frontiersmen--from Aaron Grigsby's arrival in Virginia from England in 1660. By 1808, they were moving into Tennessee, and later, ever 'westering', they were in Missouri.

In what was one of the first major wagon crossings From Missouri, John Grigsby, a thirty-six-year-old native of Maryville, Tennessee led the 'Grigsby-Ide' party to California in 1845. With him were his younger brother Franklin T. Grigsby and Jesse F. Grigsby plus Tennesseans Harvey Porterfield, John York. and the latter's wife and two sons, one born en route. Most of their party was made up of families that included fifty-nine children, but identities are lacking. Leaving Missouri with a train of forty wagons, Captain Grigsby led them over the plains to Fort Hall in what is now Idaho. There a caravan of sixty wagons pooled their resources with his, and members of the newly merged procession of one hundred wagons elected Grigsby wagon master for the remaining and most difficult part of the journey to California.

But when they got to Fort Hall, they encountered mountain man Caleb Greenwood. "Old Greenwood," as he was called, and indeed, he was 82 years old at the time, had been sent out as a 'roving agent' by John Sutter to recruit settlers to New Helvetia (Sacramento) with the free offer of, as party member B. F. Bonney recorded, "six sections of land of his Spanish land grant." A party, called "The Grigsby-Ide Party", was formed to follow Greenwood to California. Late that year, they crossed Truckee Pass (called Donner Pass after the 1846 tragedy) and arrived at Sutter's Fort in October, 1845.

But when they arrived they were advised that all foreigners had been ordered by General Jose Castro to leave California within forty days. With their animals worn out from the long journey, and without money or supplies, they decided to remain. John Grigsby moved his family to the Napa Valley, and obtained land from George Yount, and later, from Salvadore Vallejo.

John Grigsby, rather than leave California, chose to become a member of what became known as The Bear Flag Party. Thirty of them captured the Military Garrison at Sonoma one morning and declared California an Independent Republic. They didn't know it yet, but war had broken out with Mexico. Frémont soon became active in the Bear Flag Revolt, and commissioned John to be Captain of the Garrison. Some months later, under a commission by Commodore Robert S. "Fighting Bob" Stockton, he served as Captain of 'E' Company in Frémont's California Battalion of Mounted Riflemen on the march to Los Angeles and The Capitulation of Cahuenga, which ended the hostilities in California.

William "Uncle Billy" Edgington, who came overland in 1846 and married John Grigsby's daughter Teresa, also served in the California Battalion in Captain Lansford Hastings' 'F' Company. Capt. Grigsby's brothers Jesse and Franklin, and his son Granville, served in John's 'E' Company.

In the spring of 1849, John and his son-in-law, William Edgington, went to the middle fork of the Yuba River and struck gold. They mined for two months and returned home with "lots of coin".

According to his obituary in the file, John was a charter member of the Yountville Lodge of Masons.

**Jesse Foster Grigsby** was born 23 Feb 1819 in Roane County, Tennessee. He was the son of George Grigsby and Rebecca James. He married Margaret R. Alexander on 27 June 1837 in Monroe County, Tennessee. They had eight children. He lived between 1837 and 1840 in Pulaski County, Missouri. Jesse Grigsby lived between 1840 and 1850 in Greene County, Missouri. In the 'Bear Flag Revolt' he served in 'E' Company in Fremont's California Battalion of Mounted Riflemen under his brother Capt. John Grigsby. He was listed in 'The Great Register' of Napa Valley on 1 October 1888 as a 'farmer' in West Napa, Napa County, California.

**Franklin Temple Grigsby** was born 15 Aug 1829 in Tennessee. He was the son of George Grigsby and Rebecca James. He married Martha Letitia Alexander in Greene County, Missouri. In the 'Bear Flag Revolt' he served in 'E' Company in Fremont's California Battalion of Mounted Riflemen under his brother Capt. John Grigsby. Franklin T Grigsby was listed in 'The Great Register' of Napa Valley on 1 October 1888 as 'fruit raiser' living in Chilmiles, Napa County, California. He died 7 July 1893 in Napa County, California.

**Capt. Granville White Grigsby** was born circa 1829 Tennessee. He was the son of Capt. John. Grigsby and Nancy Wilson. Capt. Granville White Grigsby married Sarah Ann 'Sadie' Rector on 31 March 1853 Napa County, California. Capt. Granville White Grigsby died on 13 March 1880 in San Luis Obispo County, California.

**Theresa Angeline Grigsby** was born on 21 November 1830 in Monroe County, Tennessee. She was the daughter of Capt. John. Grigsby and Nancy Wilson. Theresa Angeline Grigsby in 1845 "crossed the plains to California". She lived after in 1848 Napa County, California. She married William Edgington on 12 January 1848 in Chiles Valley, Napa County, California. They had 10 children. Theresa Angeline Grigsby and her husband William and her father, Capt. John Grigsby went to the middle fork of the Yuba River and struck gold. They mined for two months and returned home. She died on 24 January 1893 in Napa Valley, California at age 62.

**Calvin S. 'Calebis' Grigsby** was born circa 1833 in Tennessee. He was the son of Capt. John. Grigsby and Nancy Wilson. Calvin Grigsby married Elizabeth F. Rector on 28 Jun 1852 in Napa Valley, California. Calvin Grigsby died on 24 January 1893 in Napa County, California.

**Mary Jane Grigsby** was born on 13 September 1836 Tennessee. She was the daughter of Capt. John. Grigsby and Nancy Wilson. She married Marion Newton Hale on 03 Aug 1857 in Napa Valley, California. Mary Jane Grigsby died on 6 October 1905 in Cloverdale, Sonoma County, California, at age 69.

**Jefferson Sylvester 'Jef' Grigsby** was born on 8 April 1838 in Laclede County, Missouri. He was the son of Capt. John. Grigsby and Nancy Wilson. He married Mary Ann 'Polly' Bray on 21 May 1857 in Yountville, Napa County, California. They had 12 children. Jefferson Sylvester Grigsby died on 14 July 1912 in Berryessa Valley, Napa County, California, at age 74.

**Wiley Grigsby** was born circa 1839 Missouri. He was the son of Capt. John. Grigsby and Nancy Wilson.

**Nancy Ann Grigsby** was born on 28 August 1843 in Wright County, Missouri. She was the daughter of Capt. John. Grigsby and Mahala Shields. She married Thomas Arthur Wyatt on 15 April 1860 in Napa

County, California. Nancy Ann Grigsby died on 3 March 1865 in Berryessa Valley, Napa County, California, at age 21.

**John Tyler Grigsby** was born on 24 July 1845 "On the Trail West" to California, most likely in Wyoming. He was the son of Capt. John Grigsby and Mahala Shields. He was in 'The Great Register of Napa Valley' on 1 October 1888 listed as a 'farmer, residing in Salvador, Napa County, California'. He died on 11 December 1925 Napa County, California, at age 80.