



PHOTOGRAPHER: Unidentified

SITTER: **CHARLES MINTURN** (1815-1873)

DATE: c. 1870

FORMAT: enlarged reprint of a photographic copy, original format unknown

SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY

Charles Minturn was an infamous, 19th century capitalist, and the exhibit's portrait depicts him at the height of his power and prestige. In a casual seated pose, he exudes an alluring charm with his steely eyes and confident gaze. Dressed in the height of fashion, he wears a black felt hat with a short crown, flat top and upturned brim. His sack coat has a very large lapel, created to reveal the contrasting vest beneath. Under his vest is a starched, white shirt with a small winged collar. His large silk tie is casually knotted and spread wide under the vest lapel.

As a representative of his family business, Charles Minturn traveled from New York City to San Francisco in 1848. Aware of the need to transport the gold rush miners, he was determined to establish steamboat transportation throughout the San Francisco Bay and its tributaries. With cunning business strategies and questionable methods, he quickly earned himself the title, "Ferryboat King."



Minturn, San Francisco Bay, c. 1852. Photo courtesy of the Sonoma County Library

In 1854 Minturn established a monopoly on Petaluma Creek, docking his steamers at Haystack Landing, and for many years feuded over river trade with Captain Thomas Flusher Baylis, a popular and civic-minded Petaluman. To the chagrin of many traveling Petalumans, Minturn was able to charge exorbitant fees and run dilapidated and dangerous vessels, a practice that resulted in an explosion, which killed and wounded many Petalumans in 1866.