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# Olive Mann Isbell

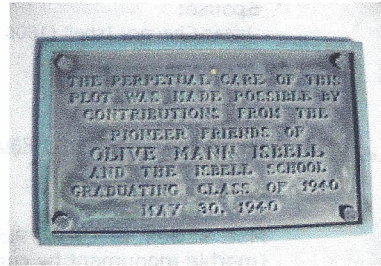
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**Birth:** 1824  
Plymouth  
Plymouth County  
Massachusetts, USA

**Death:** Mar. 26, 1899  
Santa Paula  
Ventura County  
California, USA

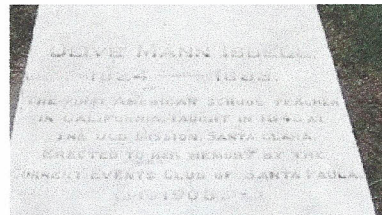
Noted School Teacher, Educator. The first American school teacher in the State of California. A niece of educator Horace Mann. In April 1846, she and her husband departed from Springfield, Illinois and accompanied a group of American immigrants who made a rugged, tedious and hazardous journey across the plainlands to Santa Clara County in central coastal California, arriving in October. In the midst of the war between the United States and Mexico, about 130 of these Americans barricaded themselves in the old Santa Clara Mission. In December, while most of the able bodied men--including Mr. Isbell--were fighting alongside Col. John C. Fremont, Mrs. Isbell, amidst the activity and the climate of fear, saw that the 20 children at the mission needed attention and a haven. With help from the children and others, she cleaned up an old 15-foot square adobe stable, a dilapidated structure. The tile roof leaked and the earthen floor was often damp and wet. When heat was needed, a fire was made on a stone platform stationed in the center of the room. A hole in the roof sometimes provided for the smoke's escape. A rickety table and a few benches were made from the scraps of wood and boxes that remained in the compound. Textbooks were few and of little variety. Lacking pencils, paper, slate and a blackboard, she scratched lessons on the dirt floor with a long pointed stick and wrote the youngsters' A-B-Cs on the palms of their hands with charcoal. She soon became Aunt Olive to the children, who tried imitating her courage. As a result, she began the first school in California taught by an American. The first session lasted two months. When the treaty with Mexico was signed in January, the Isbell's moved to Monterey. Her husband, a doctor, set up his medical practice and Mrs. Isbell, now in popular demand, opened a school. The classroom was in a large room above the jail and customhouse. The initial enrollment of 25 students quickly jumped to 56. Their tuition was \$6 each for six months. Each term consisted of three months. Later she became a pensioner of the Mexican Government. After the death of her husband she spent the last years of her life in Santa Paula in the Santa Clara River Valley of



Added by: [Valarie Vine](#)



Added by: [Tom Denardo](#)



Added by: [Tom Denardo](#)

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Rest in Peace Dear Cousin You have earned it in your dedication to County and Children. Served as

Ventura County in Southern California. She passed away in 1899. In 1926, Isbell Middle School in Santa Paula was built and named in her honor. Says Audrey Youngs, who has researched her life, "Mrs. Isbell not only nurtured education in California, she exemplified the courage, persistence and zeal of the pioneer woman." (bio by: [Theologianthespian](#))

**Family links:**

**Spouse:**  
Isaac Chauncy Isbell (1800 - 1886)\*

\*[Calculated relationship](#)

**Burial:**  
[Pierce Brothers Santa Paula Cemetery](#)  
Santa Paula  
Ventura County  
California, USA  
Plot: Sewell, Block 12, Plot 3, Lot Middle  
(marble monument by curb)

Created by: [Theologianthespian](#)  
Record added: Aug 18, 2003  
Find A Grave Memorial# 7775314



a Nurse with her husband under General Fremont in the Mexican War.

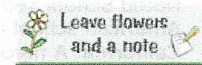
- [Chaun Owens-Mortier](#)  
Added: Oct. 10, 2012



- [June Rickman Butler](#)  
Added: Jun. 6, 2011



REPOSE EN PAIX!  
- [quebecoise](#)  
Added: Jun. 29, 2006



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**Vital Records Found For Olive Isbell in California**



**1 Death Certificates**  
found for **Olive Isbell**



**17 Marriage Certificates**  
found for **Olive Isbell**



**23 Birth Certificates**  
found for **Olive Isbell**



**2 Divorce Certificates**  
found for **Olive Isbell**

**43 Vital Records for Olive Isbell**

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## Olive Mann Isbell

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Birth: 1824, USA  
 Death: 1899  
 Santa Paula  
 Ventura County  
 California, USA

First American school teacher in California. Creating a classroom from an old adobe stable at the Mission Santa Clara de Asis, she had no paper or pencils - she drew lessons in the dirt with a stick. After nursing her physician husband back to health upon his return from the army, the Isbells relocated to Monterey. There, she opened another school - this one with a few books... and pencils and paper!

Later, the Isbells relocated to French Camp, near present-day Stockton. When gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill, Dr. Isbell headed to the gold fields while Olive stayed behind to tend to their ranch. By 1850, the Isbells had become quite wealthy. They sold their property at French Camp and settled in Santa Paula, where Olive Isbell died in 1899. The Isbell School, known for having houses floating about it's grounds during the St. Francis Dam Disaster, is named for her.

## Family links:

Spouse:  
 Isaac Chauncy Isbell (1800 - 1886)\*

\*Calculated relationship

Burial:  
[Pierce Brothers Santa Paula Cemetery](#)  
 Santa Paula  
 Ventura County  
 California, USA

Created by: [Dave H](#)  
 Record added: Jul 25, 2009  
 Find A Grave Memorial# 39884692



Added by: [Brad Reinhardt](#)



Added by: [Dave H](#)



Added by: [Dave H](#)

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