

**J. S. Swank**, Justice of the Peace and a Notary Public, Watsonville, California, was born in Richland county, Ohio, March 25, 1835. His father, Henry Swank, was a schoolmate of President Buchanan, and for many years was a successful farmer in Franklin county, Pennsylvania. He went to Ohio in 1817, and built a log cabin, going ten miles to get help. He died in 1876, at the advanced age of eighty-six years. He had twelve children, eleven of whom lived to be grown. The subject of this sketch was next to the youngest. He was educated at Marietta College, and taught school when seventeen years old. At the age of twenty he started out in life for himself; teaching school at Winchester, Van Buren county, Iowa. In 1856 he cast his first vote, for James Buchanan for President. While in Iowa he spent some time working at the carpenter's trade. In 1858 he started for California. He left New York city on board the North Star, September 20, 1858, and from Panama he sailed on the John L. Stephens, landing in San Francisco, October 17, 1858. Then, in company with J. C. Lee and his younger brother, he went on foot to San José. He slept in a straw stack to save the little money he had. From San José he continued his way on foot to the mines, 200 miles from San José. Mr. Swank followed mining and prospecting with varying success, till 1863, when he started back east, via Nicaragua. He first paid a visit to his old home in Ohio, and then went to Iowa, where he remained a year with his wife and two children. In 1864 he brought them to California, coming across the plains with mule teams.

They left Omaha April 27, and reached Virginia City June 26, after fifty-nine days of travel, which was a remarkably quick trip. Two months later they came across the mountains to Railroad Flat, Calaveras county, where he mined till 1866. Then he and his brother discovered the Petticoat quartz mine, and a year afterward they sold it for \$10,000. Then he invested in the sheep business, taught school for some time, and for four years was boss carpenter. At Railroad Flat he was Justice of the Peace two terms, and in Murphy's township three terms; was also Deputy Assessor and a Notary Public. In 1888 he resigned, came to Watsonville, and went to carpentering. In May, 1890, he was appointed Justice of the Peace, and in November was elected for a term of two years, which office he now fills.

Mr. Swank was married September 6, 1856, to Miss Mary Calhoun. They have seven children, namely: Willard B; Elizabeth E., wife of Dr. C. L. Butterfield, of Gilroy; John F; George E., deceased; Nellie and Henry.

Socially, he is an I. O. O. F. and an A. O. U. W. He still is largely interested in the mines. His residence is on Fourth and Rodríguez streets, Watsonville.

---

Digitized by



*If you found this page useful, then  
please consider making a small  
donation to  
<http://www.3rocks.org>.*

---