

HISTORY OF
SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

CALIFORNIA

WITH

Biographical Sketches

OF

*The Leading Men and Women of the County Who Have Been
Identified with Its Growth and Development
from the Early Days to the Present*



HISTORY BY
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The marriage of Captain Weber united him, November 29, 1850, with Miss Helen Murphy, a member of the celebrated Murphy party of 1844. Three children were born to them, of whom Charles M., Jr., at one time represented Santa Clara County in the state legislature; both he and the younger son, Thomas J., are now deceased. The only daughter, Miss Julia H. Weber, of Stockton, makes her home near the city so indissolubly associated with the life-work of her father and is everywhere honored as a member of an interesting and celebrated pioneer family. Mrs. Weber, who died April 11, 1895, was a daughter of Martin and Mary (Foley) Murphy, the latter an aunt of Bishop John Foley of Detroit and the late Bishop Thomas Foley of Chicago. In temperament Captain Weber was impulsive, though forgiving and large-hearted, was liked by all with whom he came in contact in every walk of life, and he was also highly respected for the high moral principles which actuated him in all he undertook.

JOHN NEWTON WOODS.—Highly honored among the pioneers of San Joaquin County was John Newton Woods, extensive land owner, capitalist, prominent lodge and church member and public-spirited citizen, and his eventful life was one which in every respect commanded the most profound esteem and admiration of all with whom he came in contact. The family of which he was a member became established in America during the Colonial period. An ancestor, Henry Woods, who was born in Virginia, followed the tide of emigration that drifted toward the West, and settled in the wilds of Kentucky, where he was killed by the Indians in 1790. Later the family became pioneers of Ohio, where in Brown County, Johnson Woods, the father of our subject, was born in 1815. During early life he removed to Indiana, where in 1834 he married Miss Louisa M. Eastes. The American progenitor of the family on the paternal side was Rev. Robert Wooster, a native of London, England, born in 1727, who crossed the ocean to the New World and settled at Brownsville, Pa. Renouncing his allegiance to the King of England, he aided the colonies in the War of the Revolution. Afterwards he became one of the earliest settlers of Fayette County, Ind., and officiated as the first minister of the Methodist Church west of the Alleghanies.

It was characteristic of Johnson Woods that he should display in his life the love of pioneer scenes that had been inherited from his ancestors. During 1840 he removed from Indiana to what is now Savannah, Mo., where he built the first house in Andrew County and engaged in trading. When news came of the discovery of gold in California he determined to brave the perils of the unsettled West in an effort to find gold and started on the long journey, arriving at Hangtown on August 1, 1850. Soon after he began to prospect on Woods Creek, which was named for him, and was already meeting with success when he was killed on February 1, 1852, by a former friend whose enmity he had incurred by testimony given against this man in a fraudulent claim case. Surviving him were three sons and two daughters and his wife, who was born in Rush County, Ind., in 1820, and died in Tulare County, Cal., on June 12, 1906, at an advanced age.

John Newton Woods was born in Fayette County, Ind., June 7, 1837, and when fourteen years of age he

began to work as a clerk in a general merchandise store at Savannah, Mo., where he gained a practical business knowledge. Five years later he returned to his native state, Indiana, where he spent eighteen months at Knightstown, Henry County, and then came to California via Panama, landing at Stockton December 2, 1857. For a time he made his home with his uncle, Jeremiah H. Woods, the founder of Woodbridge, and in 1858 he bought 320 acres of land, on a portion of which the town of Acampo now stands, and was laid out by him. In 1859 he embarked in the mercantile business as Porch & Woods, but the following year he sold out and went to Virginia City, Nev., to try his luck at mining. On his return to Woodbridge he conducted a business from 1861 to 1863 under the firm name of Woods & Davis, then sold out his interest. In 1864 he sent for his mother and two brothers, Albert and the late E. W. S. Woods, who came hither from the old family homestead in Missouri. At this time he became actively engaged in farming on his ranch at Acampo, enlarging it to 640 acres, and continued there until 1877. With his brother, E. W. S. Woods, he became joint owner of about 8,000 acres in Tulare County, known as the Buzzard Roost ranch and after operating it for some years they sold it and purchased 8,700 acres on Roberts Island, so that they were among the largest landowners in Central California and did much to develop the rich Delta country, albeit suffering heavy losses at different times when the disastrous floods broke through their levees.

From 1877 to 1882 Mr. Woods was manager and secretary of the Grangers Union of Stockton and in 1883-84 was deputy treasurer of San Joaquin County. He was made a Mason in 1858 in Woodbridge Lodge, No. 131, F. & A. M., being the first member initiated, later becoming a member of Stockton Chapter No. 28, R. A. M., and Stockton Commandery No. 8, K. T. He became a 32nd degree Scottish Rite Mason, was a member of the Shrine, the Eastern Star, and was one of the early members of the Stockton Elks. In recollection of his identification with early events in this locality he held membership with the San Joaquin County Pioneers and greatly enjoyed the reunions of these early settlers to whose energy and fortitude the present generation is so greatly indebted. Mr. Woods was prominent in the Democratic party and was an active political worker, representing the local organization in some of the most important conventions and for twenty years or more was a delegate to every state convention. For many years he was a member of the State Central Committee and represented his district as a delegate to the national Democratic convention held in Kansas City in 1900. For five years he was a member of the board of managers of the State Hospital at Stockton, and in this as in all things, he discharged his duties with efficiency and fidelity.

The marriage of Mr. Woods took place on December 22, 1864, and united him with Miss Annie Victoria Farmer, who was born in Greenfield, Mo., January 24, 1843, and came across the plains to California with her parents in 1859. They first settled at Sacramento but later moved to Amador County and it was there that the marriage was solemnized. Two daughters blessed this union: Jessie Lee married the late George E. Wilhoit and sketches of their lives appear elsewhere in this history. Mary L. was Mrs.



John N. Woods

McDonald Douglass, who was born on Washington's birthday, February 22, 1869, and passed away July 4, 1919, her birth and death being on patriotic days. She always showed a keen patriotic spirit and during the late war was an enthusiastic worker for the various Liberty loan and other war drives. During the first Liberty loan drive she sold one million eight hundred thousand dollars of Liberty bonds. The death of Mrs. John N. Woods occurred at Stockton April 7, 1900. Mr. Woods greatly mourned her passing and only survived her until December 4, 1906, when he passed away after a brief illness. A devout Methodist, he was one of the stewards and trustees of Grace Methodist Church at Stockton from 1872 and did much for the furtherance of Christianity. He willed this church its present site, 75x100 feet, on the northwest corner of Channel and Stanislaus streets, and with it a legacy of \$25,000 to build a new church as a memorial to his wife, a bond of unusual affection and devotion existing between them. This bequest was faithfully carried out by his two daughters, who followed their father's desires in every particular and also added another \$9,000 to complete and furnish the present beautiful church. His life was so clean, so devoted to those whom chance or circumstance drew near him, so benevolent, that it will ever remain worthy of emulation.

MRS. JOHN NEWTON WOODS.—An estimable and greatly loved woman whose long years of residence at Stockton had made her much endeared to a large circle there, was Mrs. John Newton Woods, the wife of one of San Joaquin County's honored pioneers, whose life history is given in a preceding sketch. Mrs. Woods, who was in maidenhood Miss Annie Victoria Farmer, was a native of Missouri, born at Greenfield on January 24, 1843. In 1859 she left her studies at the Moravian Academy, Salem-Winston, N. C., to accompany her parents across the plains to California and though but a young girl at the time she ever carried a vivid picture of that long, toilsome journey of over five months. The family settled at first in Sacramento County, then removed to Amador County, and later took up their residence at Woodbridge, San Joaquin County, where her father became a well-to-do stock raiser and farmer.

In 1864, while the family were residing in Amador County, Miss Farmer was united in marriage with John Newton Woods, and they took up their residence on the larger ranch he had purchased in 1858, the year after he came to California, and part of this place is now the site of Acampo. This remained the family home until 1877, when they took up their residence in Stockton, where Mrs. Woods resided until her death, on April 7, 1900, survived by her devoted husband and two daughters, Mrs. Jessie Lee Wilhoit and Mrs. Mary L. Douglass; the latter passed away on July 4, 1919. Mrs. Woods was one of Stockton's best known women, occupying a leading place in social circles, where she numbered her friends by the hundreds. She was a member of Homo Chapter O. E. S., Stockton. A prominent member of Grace Methodist Church, her many charitable acts and kindly deeds will ever make her memory revered.

ALEXANDER C. OULLAHAN.—A splendid example of what a man may accomplish who follows an intelligent, honorable and persistent course is shown in the career of Alexander C. Oullahan, managing secretary of the Stockton Chamber of Commerce and ex-mayor of the city. A native son, he was born in San Francisco, December 17, 1871, a son of the late pioneer couple, Denis J. and Julia (Baine) Oullahan. The former was a pioneer of the state and served as state treasurer under Governor Stoneman. He became prominent in business circles in the state and died in San Francisco in 1889. The grandfather, Robert Oullahan, was a civil engineer and was attached to the Royal Engineers Corps of the British Army.

Alexander C. was educated in the public schools of Stockton, whither his parents had moved in 1873, and at St. Mary's school of this city; then he took up the study of law and after mastering the rudiments of the profession, became associated with J. D. Peters and thereafter devoted his time and attention to water transportation and the grain industry in this county. Later he represented G. W. McNear, the well-known grain exporter.

On February 1, 1916, Mr. Oullahan was appointed to the office of mayor of Stockton, by the city council, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mayor R. R. Reibenstein. So well did Mr. Oullahan administer the city's affairs that the following October he was unanimously elected to the responsible position, serving under the charter which he helped to prepare. During his administration the city of Stockton enjoyed the greatest period of growth in its history and many of the big movements looking towards greater prosperity and progress were started. One of the achievements of his administration was the acquisition of Oak Park by the city, consisting of 30.6 acres and formerly known as Goodwater Grove by the old settlers. In 1905, Mr. Oullahan had been elected to serve as a member of the city council and was thus well prepared to discharge the duties of the office of mayor, and it has been repeatedly said that he was one of the best-liked and most popular mayors that Stockton has ever had. He was mayor during the War period and named the exemption board, and was active in all war service.

When the Chamber of Commerce was organized Mr. Oullahan was among the most ardent supporters of the movement and has ever taken a keen interest in all public activities since reaching early manhood. His appointment as managing secretary of this important body was a most wise choice, as he is undoubtedly the right man for the position, both by training and education. His foremost positions in the city places him in the front rank of the upbuilders and builders up of city and county, and Stockton recognizes in him a worthy and honorable citizen. Politically he is a Democrat in national affairs but is so broad-minded that in local matters he considers men before party. Wherever he has been most needed there he is to be found at all times and as managing secretary of the most important body of citizens of Stockton he has continued the good work and been the means of making the city of Stockton known all over the United States. During his busy years Mr. Oullahan has been a contributor to the press of California, and while in the employ of J. D. Peters he published a monthly magazine called the Buzz. Besides his ability as a writer he has distinguished

himself as a public speaker. He served seven years as a member of the library board, resigning after being appointed mayor.

When Mr. Oullahan married in San Francisco on Nov. 23, 1897, he chose for his wife Miss Catherine V. River of San Francisco, a lady well qualified to be the helpmate of just such a public man and who shares with him the good will and confidence of their host of friends. They have three children: Leanore J., Alexander C. J., and Catherine M.

EZEKIEL WILLIAMSON SMITH WOODS.—

A model citizen whose life work was direct, straightforward and highly constructive, the late Ezekiel Williamson Smith Woods stood among his fellowmen as one of the biggest and most thorough builders of Central California and whose work added inestimably to the wealth of the community. The development of his lands, which were uncultivated acres when he took hold of them, has thrown many thousands of dollars into this locality, benefiting this section of California generally, in that a tract of its richest land was brought to its generous yield under Mr. Woods' able management. When he passed away on June 22, 1922, he had amassed a fortune appraised at considerably more than a million dollars, the largest estate ever filed in this county.

Mr. Woods, popularly known as "Smithy" Woods, was born in Missouri in May, 1849, in the humble home of his parents who had journeyed from their childhood homes in Indiana to pioneer in the new west. His father was engaged in selling Missouri mules to Southern planters, and his partner, Ezekiel Williamson Smith, asked that his name be given to the new arrival in the Woods family. Mr. Woods always felt that it was an honor to have borne the name of this sturdy frontiersman, who was an uncle of the late James C. Smith, father of Charles B. and Dow Smith, well-known farmers here. Mr. Woods' father came to California in 1850, lured to the land of gold by the stories that reached even the backwoods hamlets, leaving his little family at the home place and planning to have them join him at the mines. He landed in Placerville and went on to Mariposa, where he was killed in a mining trouble. His brother, Jerry Woods, came to California the next year to look up the pioneer, and settled on the land where Woodbridge is located, the village being given his name. He conducted the first ferry over the Mokelumne at that point and was killed there in June, 1864.

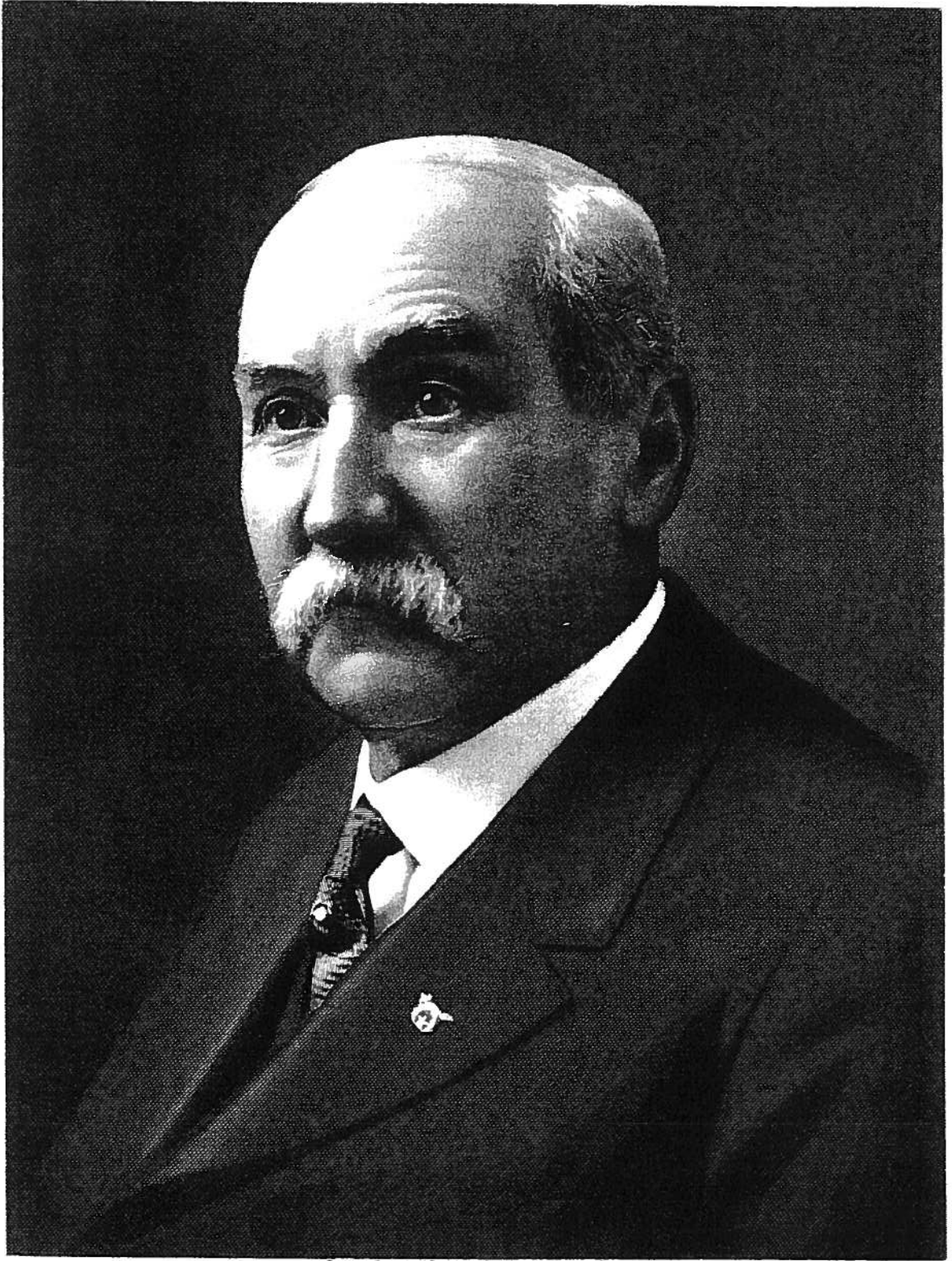
Here the interesting California careers of the Woods brothers, John N., and E. W. S., start. John N., who became one of the best-known citizens of San Joaquin County, and a trusted public official, came out from Missouri in 1857 to join his uncle, Jerry Woods, at Woodbridge, and his first letter, sent to his mother urging her to come to California, was one of the first carried east by the pony express. The Civil War came on and in January, 1863, the mother and her boys, one of them the subject of this sketch, left for California, sailing on the steamer Northern Light from New York in February. The steamer made a long detour to avoid the privateer Alabama, then feared on the high seas, and reached the Isthmus safely. They came up to San Francisco on the Sonora, arriving in Stockton March 14, 1863. They went direct to Woodbridge, near where John N. had taken up homesteads for himself and his mother

on the present site of Acampo. That section was heavily timbered and covered with chaparral, but the boys soon cleared the land. The next year, 1864, was dry and cattle died on every hand, food becoming scarce and very high. In 1859 the railroad was built through that section and the boys sold their wood to the company. They also chopped out the right of way for two and a half miles north of the river, for which they were paid \$125, which to them was big money. In 1869 the boys started with their four-horse team over the Sierras to the White Pine mining section in Nevada, and here they made as much as fifty dollars a day, hauling rich ore to mills or shipping points, but the life was not to their liking, so after a few months they returned to California.

E. W. S. Woods later went to Butte County, hearing that the lands there offered good chances, and there his honesty and integrity won for him the backing of a bank president in Chico, who advanced him money for his farming operations, trusting him because he was known to be honest and capable. "He's honest and will make his way in the world," this far-seeing banker declared, and he later made Mr. Woods his confidential agent to handle big business. The year 1876 brought bumper crops and Mr. Woods prospered, selling a section of good land for fifty dollars an acre. He then returned to Stockton, where his brother, John N. Woods, was well started on his way to wealth, being connected with the Farmers' Union there. The brothers then started their investments in lands. Among their purchases they bought a section of the Mitchell ranch near Modesto, picked up a half section east of Farmington, and were directed to Tulare County by George Crossmore, a wealthy local capitalist, who financed them in their purchase of 9,000 acres near the present city of Tulare, for \$45,000.

In 1880 Mr. Woods moved to the Tulare lands with his family and there began the hard struggle that brought the brothers great wealth. There was then but one house between their place and Tulare Lake, but the plucky young farmer and his helpful wife made the best of their surroundings and brought the tract into marketable condition by the introduction of water, drilling some of the first artesian flowing wells in that county and used for irrigation. Six years later they had 1,000 acres in alfalfa, a large herd of cattle and had enlarged their acreage to 14,000. Selling out to a Los Angeles syndicate, they paid back Mr. Crossmore his \$45,000 and cleaned up \$375,000, also selling their Modesto ranch for forty dollars an acre, just double what it had cost them.

In 1887 the Glasgow California Company owned the upper and middle divisions of Roberts Island, and after it was leveed Easton & Eldridge got an option on the 20,000 acres for thirty dollars an acre. The Woods brothers were promised a third of it, but were crowded out and finally had to buy separate tracts, securing 12,000 acres at forty-five dollars an acre. Later they bought the Gersbacher tract of 1,100 acres with the growing crops, and when harvested, the land cost them twenty-seven dollars an acre; they also then got 3,000 acres from the option holders, which, after the crops were sold, cost them eighteen dollars an acre, now easily worth \$500 an acre. On March 22, 1893, the levees broke and the Woods brothers were broke but not discouraged, though they owed \$120,000 on the property. When some bankers wanted to close them out, J. D. Peters of Stockton stood up in a



Engraving by J. H. Russell & Co. for the Standard Oil Co.

E. W. S. Moody

bankers' conference and announced that he would give his check for any amount needed to carry John and "Smithy" Woods, and their credit was again established. Balfour Guthrie advanced them \$40,000 and they bought the dredger Roberts Island and rebuilt the levees. They got no crops in 1893 nor in 1894, but in 1896 they sold their crops to Balfour Guthrie for \$165,000 and the next year they received \$130,000, thus making money fast, though they were paying \$18,000 a year interest. That their judgment was well founded was shown by the fact that when Mr. Woods' will was filed, one tract of land on Roberts Island was appraised at \$912,027.

After this life ran along smoothly for the plucky farmers, who were undaunted by disaster, and they amassed large fortunes through their foresight and industry. In December, 1900, when John N. Woods died, the brothers owned over 8,000 acres of farming lands in fine shape, a vineyard of 800 acres at Acampo, worth at least \$500 an acre, besides other valuable properties, which were amicably divided between the heirs of John N. Woods and the surviving brother, E. W. S. Woods.

Mr. Woods' first marriage united with him Miss Lydia Downing, who passed away in Acampo, and in Elliott, Cal., May 8, 1878, he was married to Alice M. Markle, born in Fairfield, Jefferson County, Iowa, a daughter of George and Sophronia (Springer) Markle, who were born respectively in Holland and Indiana. Coming to Pennsylvania as a young man the father later moved to Iowa where he met and married Miss Springer and engaged in the mercantile business in Keokuk until his death. Afterwards the mother and the children came to California via Panama, arriving in San Francisco in July, 1867. Mrs. Woods survives her husband making her home at 1109 North El Dorado Street, Stockton, surrounded by a large circle of friends, who hold her in high esteem for her many gracious qualities and her generous spirit. Mr. Woods was also survived by a brother, A. J. Woods, of Stockton, and three sons, Lloyd H., Armand and Marcy Woods, the two former of Stockton, and the latter at Monterey. He also left two granddaughters, Mrs. Maria Park Grunsky and Alice Armand Woods, and a grandson, Lloyd Henry Woods.

Mr. Woods was a Knight Templar and 32nd degree Scottish Rite Mason as well as a member of Islam Temple, A. A. O. N. M. S., in San Francisco, and a member of Stockton Lodge No. 218, B. P. O. E. He was deeply interested in the cause of education and served as a member of the board of education for twelve years, being president of the board for six years of the time. He was president of the board of trustees of the Stockton high school while the building was being built and took a strong stand for the present location of the high school instead of close in where they would soon be crowded for room. Looking into the future they now have by his foresight four blocks of ground for the high school site. Mr. Woods, with his brother John N. Woods, was also largely interested in mining. Since his death Mrs. Woods, ably assisted by her sons, is looking after their large interests, the sons having the management of the large ranches and vineyards. Through all the varied experiences of his interesting career, Mr. Woods had the confidence and respect of every one with whom he dealt and the universal commendation as a man who had never done any one injury

nor ever taken advantage of a man in a trade, rather taking the worst in any deal in which he was concerned. Never sacrificing principle to personal expediency, he ever showed signal integrity of purpose, placing true valuations on men and affairs, and well deserving the high place he held in the community's esteem.

DENNIS BURNS.—The enviable distinction of being the oldest building contractor in point of service in Stockton is due Dennis Burns of 921 South California Street, who was born in County Wicklow, Ireland, on May 4, 1854, and came to this country in 1859 when his father brought his family, including the mother and two sons, to America. He was thus reared and educated in Greenwich, Conn., and in that town was apprenticed to the carpenter trade. He served under an experienced contractor, and he himself became an expert carpenter. In 1873, at the age of nineteen, he left home, and for two years he worked at his trade in Erie, Penn. Late in 1874, however, he pushed on West to San Francisco, and in the Bay city found work on the Grand Opera House, and later he was given employment in a planing mill there. After that he did contracting for himself, beginning in a small way; but finding things rather dull in San Francisco during the Centennial Year, he went inland to Stockton and took charge of the building of a house for L. Henderson, near Acampo; and since that time, he has been continuously active hereabouts, operating, always more and more extensively, not only in San Joaquin County, but erecting many buildings in Amador, Stanislaus, and Contra Costa counties.

In Stockton, Mr. Burns built the United States Hotel, the El Dorado School, the Weber Hall, St. Joseph's Home, (all save the last hospital) and remodeled St. Mary's Church and added to it the spire. He also put up Dr. Asa Clark's residence in the State Hospital grounds, the Jackson school, the first City Pavilion, the Hickinbotham Block on East Market Street, and also the Hickinbotham residence, and many fine homes in the northern part of the city. He constructed the buildings for the Tesla Mines in Contra Costa County. He laid the timber in the Court House erected in 1890, and erected the County Jail on North San Joaquin Street, and was for two years superintendent of building of the San Joaquin County Jail, and built the San Joaquin County Pavilion. His work has always been first class, and it is not surprising that such has been his prosperity here that he now owns valuable real estate in Stockton, including four houses on the South side, which he himself built. He put up one of the finest residences erected on the South side, having bought the lot from the late Captain Weber.

Mr. Burns was married at San Francisco in 1880 to Miss Mary Elizabeth Kelly, a native of Maine, and they have had ten children, seven of whom are still living. Catherine has become Mrs. Kerblow, and the mother of four children. Ana is Mrs. Murl and the mother of two children. Maude is Mrs. Richmond, and she has one child. Georgie is Mrs. Springer, and she has one child, a son Sydney. The sons are: Edward; Robert, who was in the World War serving as a member of the Ninety-first Division, and he saw active service on the battlefields of France; Harry married Miss Clara Anderson, of San Francisco.