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## MEMORIAL SKETCH OF COL. J. J. WARNER.

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BY H. D. BARROWS.

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[Read May 6, 1895.]

Since the last meeting of our Society, one of its founders and its first president, and also one of the American founders of this commonwealth, has passed away. It is fitting that the Society should preserve in its archives some record of his life and work.

The data on which the following brief sketch is based, are derived mainly, first, from a pamphlet of some fifty pages, printed in 1882, (a copy of which accompanies this sketch) entitled, "The Warner Family in America;" second, from a valuable manuscript, unfinished, "Reminiscence of Early California, from 1831 to 1846, by J. J. Warner of Los Angeles," (a copy of which is promised to our Society by his daughter); third, from a short biographical sketch in "The Golden Era" for October, 1890;" fourth, from Bancroft's Pioneer Register, vol. v. pp 767-8, and fifth, from the personal recollections of the writer hereof, whose acquaintance with Col. Warner extended over a period of forty years.

Jonathan Trumbull Warner, (or Juan José Warner, his middle name being changed to José, as Trumbull was not easily pronounced in Spanish—and it had no equivalent in that language) was born November 20, 1807, in Lyme, Conn. His father was Selden Warner, a graduate of Yale college in 1782, and several times a member of the Connecticut Legislature; and his mother was Dorothy Selden, daughter of Col. Samuel Selden.

The first American ancestor of the Warner family of Connecticut was Andrew Warner, a son of John Warner of Hatfield, Gloucestershire, England. He came from there to Cambridge, Mass., in 1630, and to Hartford, Conn., in 1635. His descendants of the same name and of other names by marriage, in Connecticut and other parts of the United States, are very numerous. Col. Warner's maternal grandfather, Samuel Selden, who was also the maternal great-grandfather of the late Chief Justice Waite of the U. S. Supreme Court, was a Colonel in the Revolutionary army; and being ill, he fell into the hands of the British in New York upon its evacuation by Gen. Washington, and died there.

It is believed that he was the Major Selden who led a force of Connecticut militia at the battle of Bunker Hill. The Warner and Selden

families at a very early period, purchased vast tracts of land from the Indians, twelve or fifteen miles above the mouth of the Connecticut river on which some of their descendants have lived ever since.

Col. Warner was the youngest of nine children, the eldest of whom was the father of Mrs. Waite, widow of Chief Justice Waite, now a resident, with her daughter, of Washington city. Before his death, Chief Justice Waite and daughter visited Col. Warner. Later Mrs. Waite came with her daughter to visit her uncle. She also assisted him in collating and correcting the history of "The Warner Family" referred to above. It was the pleasure of the writer to be invited to ride through the San Gabriel valley with Col. Warner and Judge Waite and daughter on the occasion of the visit of the latter, who seemed greatly to enjoy seeing their uncle, as well as this, to them, new and strange land.

Col. Warner left home an invalid in the fall of 1830, at the age of 23, in search of a milder climate in which to pass the ensuing winter. He had no set purpose at the outset, of coming to California, but, as he himself says, in his reminiscences, he "was swept westerly by the strong and uninterrupted current of humanity flowing in that direction until I arrived in St. Louis in November, with improved health." Smith, Jackson & Sublette, who constituted the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, had just arrived at St. Louis from the rendezvous of the company on the Yellowstone river with a wagon train of furs, which (because it was the first of that kind that had ever arrived there, and because of the great quantity and value of the furs brought down) caused quite a sensation. The next spring he joined a trading expedition bound for Santa Fè. He was impelled to do this partly from the novelty of going to the mountains, and partly from the hope of further improvement in health. The expedition, which consisted of 85 men and 23 wagons; hauled by mules or oxen, reached Santa Fè July 4, 1831. On the 6th of September he left the latter place with a small party of eleven men, under Jackson, Waldo and Young, bound for far-distant California, taking with them five pack mules laden with Mexican silver dollars to purchase mules for the Louisiana market. The party traveled down the Del Norte river, passing Albuquerque and the other towns along the Rioabajo and by the Santa Rita copper mines, the abandoned Mission of San Javier de Tubac, Tucson, then a military post and small town, the Pima villages, etc., crossing the river Colorado a few miles below the mouth of the Gila, reaching San Diego via San Luis Rey, in the early part of November, and Los Angeles, December 5, 1831. Here he remained with one other man, whilst Jackson, with the rest of the party, went north as far as the Missions on the southern shores of San Francisco bay for the purpose of purchasing mules and horses; Jackson returned in March with only 500 of the former and 100 of the lat-

ter, instead of 1500 or 2000 animals which he had expected to have secured. In May, the party which was to have returned East, embracing most of the men who came with Young and Jackson, left camp on the Santa Ana river with these animals, for the Colorado river, where they arrived in June and found the river, bank full. With great difficulty, and after twelve days of incessant toil in the burning sun of that locality and with considerable loss of animals from drowning and other casualties, the mules and horses were swum to the opposite shore; and Jackson, with about thirty men, proceeded East with them; whilst Young, Warner and three others of the party returned to Los Angeles.

Mr. Warner, with Young and a small party went on a hunting expedition on the Coast in the summer of 1832; and during the succeeding fall and winter, he was one of a party of fourteen who hunted beaver in Central and Northern California and Oregon. He finally settled down in Los Angeles in 1834, where for some time he engaged in merchandizing. His store was on Main street, between the present site of the St. Elmo hotel and Downey block.

It was here that an exciting episode occurred in 1838. A force of some fifteen Californians were sent down from Monterey to arrest and take north the Pico brothers and José Antonio Carrillo. These soldiers came to Mr. Warner's store and demanded to know where the Picos were, to which he replied that he knew nothing of their whereabouts; but they apparently suspected, but without cause, that one or both of the brothers were about his premises, one of the soldiers remarking that he, Warner, ought to be arrested and put in the guard-house. Warner immediately stepped back to an adjoining room and brought to the front a double-barreled shot-gun and asked the crowd where the man was who wanted to take him to the guard-house. No further attempt was then made to molest him; but shortly afterward, several of the soldiers gained entrance to his store and seized him unawares, and in his attempt to break away, he dropped his gun, thus leaving him unarmed. After further struggles to free himself, and an attempt by another man to shoot him with a pistol, he wrenched the pistol from his assailant, when he was struck with a broadsword across the arm, breaking the bone, whereupon William and John Wolfskill, who were working near by, rushed to Warner's rescue, William seizing his rifle and snapping it at one of the ruffians, but it did not go off. This demonstration caused the soldiers to desist from further attack, and Warner begged Wolfskill not to shoot, and so the incident ended.

In 1837 Mr. Warner married Anita Gale at the Mission San Luis Rey. Miss Gale was the daughter of Capt. Wm. A. Gale of Boston, who brought her to California when five years old and placed her in the family of Doña

Eustaquia Pico, widowed mother of Gov. Pio Pico, where she remained as a daughter and sister till her marriage. She died in Los Angeles April 22, 1859. There are three children living from this union.

In 1840 41 Col. Warner visited the Atlantic States, going and returning by way of Mexico. He delivered a lecture at Rochester, N. Y., in which he urged the building of a railroad to the Pacific, he being the pioneer advocate of this great national enterprise, though Stephen Whitney laid claim in after years, to that honor.

In 1843 he moved to San Diego, and, in 1844, having been previously naturalized as a Mexican citizen, he was grantee of *Agua Caliente*—widely known as "Warner's Ranch," where he lived with his family some thirteen years, or until he was driven off by an uprising of the Indians. In 1846 Col. Warner was the confidential agent of Consul Larkin for the United States. He was a State Senator from San Diego county in 1851-2, and a member of the Assembly from Los Angeles county in 1860. He settled in Los Angeles in 1857, where he resided permanently the remainder of his life. In 1858 he commenced the publication of the "Southern Vineyard" newspaper, at first as a weekly, and afterwards as a semi-weekly. Our co-member, Mr. Oscar Macy, was the foreman of his printing office, which was located in the adobe building that formerly stood on the site of the present Phillips block on Main street. Col. Warner was a warm supporter in his paper of Douglas for the Presidency. Till the breaking out of the civil war, he had always been a democrat. In this county, at that time, the democratic party, which was largely in the majority, was divided into two factions, the "Rosewater" party, led by J. Lancaster Brent, a very astute lawyer and politician, who afterwards went south and joined the Confederate army; and the "Plug Uglies" or "Short Hairs," the leader of which was the late Gov. Downey, who, though his faction was in the minority, in the local convention, secured in the State convention, the nomination as lieutenant-governor, to which office he was elected in 1859, and, as Milton S. Latham the governor, immediately on assuming office was elected United States Senator, Downey became governor. Col. Warner, both personally and in his paper, very efficiently supported Downey in his canvass. The contest in that political campaign, was extremely bitter. The county convention met in the United States court room, north of the Plaza, since demolished, which belonged to Downey; but it split wide open, or into two conventions, on organization. E. C. Parrish, still a resident of this county, was chairman of the "Brent convention," which claimed to have a majority of the regular delegates; and Wm. G. Ross, afterwards shot by Charley Duane in San Francisco, was chairman of the "Downey convention."

I remember as an independent outsider, I gave the San Francisco *Bulle-*

in a sort of free lance, and I suppose somewhat ribald account of the convention which made both Col. Warner and Gov. Downey very angry and the former pitched into me in his paper, somewhat rancorously, and for some time after, neither of them liked me ; but they both got over it, and we became, and remained till their death, good friends.

The war made Col. Warner a strong Union man ; loyal democrats and republicans formed the "Union party," which included all voters who were not "secessionists." When the war closed Downey and others returned to the democratic party, whilst Warner and other northern democrats thereafter affiliated with the republican party. At one period of the war Col. Warner was appointed Provost Marshal. He was a notary public in this city some fifteen years until his resignation in 1835 on account of failure of eyesight. He was joint author with Judge Benj. Hayes and Dr. J. P. Widney of the (1876) Centennial "Historical Sketch of Los Angeles county," a valuable publication, but now out of print ; his contribution covering the period from 1771 to 1847. He is recognized as one of the best authorities on early California history, and especially of the trading and trapping expeditions which entered the Territory whilst it was yet a province of Mexico. The unfinished manuscript reminiscences referred to above, contain much reliable and valuable data concerning these expeditions.

With a clear memory and a remarkable capacity for straight, logical thinking to the last, he was a veritable cyclopedia of early local annals, as well as of information on most subjects of human interest. Although modest and undemonstrative in his demeanor, he was a man of many sterling qualities and of a high order of intelligence. He made no claim or pretense to prominence, historically or otherwise, because, as he has himself said, "he had not figured in any great event upon which important changes in the government or geography of the country had hinged."

In person Col. Warner was tall and, till the infirmities of age caused him to stoop, erect, being six feet and three inches high, from which fact he was known as "Don Juan Largo" by many of the native Californians. The title of Colonel by which he was familiarly called for so many years, was not an official one, but was popularly bestowed on him partly as a compliment, and partly, it has been said, because of his prowess on a memorable occasion when his ranch was raided by a band of hostile Cahuilla Indians, numbering nearly three hundred. He had received warning and removed his family, and when attacked, demoralized his immediate assailants by killing four of the leaders, and effecting his escape on horseback during the panic which ensued.

When the Indians approached, there were several horses saddled and ready for instant mounting, and there were loaded weapons in readiness for

the attack, which was expected. When Col Warner went to the rear door of his house to look for his horses, he was greeted with a shower of arrows from two hundred Indians; only one horse was left and an Indian was untying that. A shot from Warner's unerring rifle put a stop to his movements. Two other Indians renewed the attempt to get away with the horse. They both fell beside the first. This so demoralized the Indians that Col. Warner was enabled to untie the horse, and strap two rifles and his pistols to the saddle preparatory to his escape. Tying a crippled Mulatto boy, servant of an army officer in San Diego, who had been sent to him for the benefit of the hot springs on his rancho, to the horse behind the saddle, Col. Warner mounted and rode away before the Indians had recovered sufficiently to again assume the aggressive. On reaching a village of friendly Indians, where his vaqueros (herdsmen) were quartered, he sent the boy on to San Diego, and gathering a band of his own men, he rode back to the rancho, where he met a stout resistance from the Indians, who, in overwhelming numbers, were luxuriating in the spoil of six thousand dollars worth of merchandise which he had in his store; and, as his own men could not be depended upon to keep up the fight he was compelled to ride away to San Diego and abandon his property to the hostile savages.

In looking back, from the standpoint of the present generation, one cannot help but admire that heroic first group of Argonauts who "blazed the way," as it were, to those far distant, and then almost unknown land bordering on that Pacific Ocean, or, as it was known to early English navigators, the "South Seas." This earliest group of pioneers, mostly Americans, who came about, (that is before or a little after) the year 1830, have, I believe, every one passed away, except Alfred Robinson, leaving very few indeed of the second group, who came a little before or a little after 1840. Of the former, I personally knew William Wolfskill, John Temple, Abel Sterns, Samuel Prentice, Michael White, Louis Vignes, John Domingo, J. J. Warner, Capt. Cooper, David Spence, J. P. Leese, Samuel Carpenter, John Ward, etc., and of the latter, William Workman, John Rowland, Francisco Temple, John R. Wolfskill, (still living,) Dr. Richard S. Den, Stephen Smith (of Bodega,) Jos. P. Thompson (living in San Francisco,) John Reed, B. D. Wilson, Henry and Francis Mellus, D. W. Alexander, Alexander Bell, etc.

Some of these I knew very well; and I have thought of contributing to the records of this society, brief sketches of each one of them including some personal recollections of each. For, as may be readily imagined, men who could traverse an untraversed continent, or come 15,000 miles or more by water to find a home and help found a State, must have been strong characters, whose lives were worth recording, whose memories are worth preserving. How few of the present generation have the standing to endure all the appall-

ing hardships which were endured by the earliest settlers of California, whether Americans or Spaniards.

During the latter part of Col. Warner's life, his sight failed till he became totally blind with this exception he enjoyed good health, both physical and mental, till the last. His home in this city for many years was located where the Burbank Theater now stands. In 1887 he moved to the University district, just outside of and south west of the city. Here, with his daughter Mrs. Rubio, and with his grandchildren, he lived till his death, which occurred April 11, 1895. Here, near his friend and "Padrino," Gov. Pio Pico to whom he gave shelter and asylum in his old age and misfortunes, his last years were cheered by the memories which each could recall of a friendship that had existed for more than sixty years, and of a history of California, covering that period, which they themselves had helped to make.