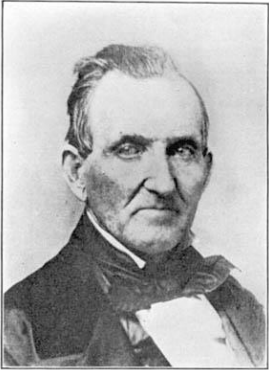


James W. Robinson



b 1790, Ohio (now Hamilton Co. IN)
d 27 Oct 1857, San Diego, CA
Estate wasn't settled until 1903,
after all his children had died

1850 census, San Diego County,
Dwelling 82/Family 82

John W. Robinson, 52, Lawyer, Ohio
Sarah K., 40, Ohio
William N., 10, Texas

KIS – July 2022

James W. Robinson received his education in Ohio by 1810. He was a law partner of William Henry Harrison. He married Mary Isdell in 1820 in Ohio and children were born from 1821 to 1828. In 1828 he abandoned his family and moved to Arkansas or Kentucky, leaving Mary and children on their heavily mortgaged 221-acre farm which was sold under foreclosure. Mary divorced Robinson and married John Pollock. They moved to Loveland, Ohio. Robinson never returned to Ohio but did correspond with his brother William.

In early 1830 Robinson married Sarah Snider (b. 1810 Ohio) in Pope County, Arkansas. By 1833, Robinson went to Texas with a letter of recommendation addressed to Stephen F. Austin, settled at Nacogdoches, and on October 6, 1835, received a league of land. He served as a Private in Texas Army March 12 through September 15, 1836 and fought at the battle of San Jacinto. On December 16, 1836, he was elected Judge of the 4th judicial district in Gonzales County, Texas. In January 1840 he resigned and opened a law practice in Austin. His son, William N., was born in Texas in 1840. He was in San Antonio when it was captured in 1842 and he was carried to Mexico. He opened a clandestine correspondence with Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and reached agreement by which he was allowed to return to Texas. On March 27, 1843, Robinson conferred with President Sam Houston at Washington-on-the-Brazos and may have been responsible for the negotiations that resulted in an armistice of several months between the two nations.

Robinson moved his family to San Diego in the Spring of 1850 and was one of the few lawyers there. He was fluent in Spanish, so specialized in land law. He expressed frustration with the Spanish and Mexican land grant system and the large size of the land grants. Robinson was one of the few Americans to speak out against U.S. recognition of Mexican land grants in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Robinson was City Treasurer in 1851, School Commissioner in 1854, District Attorney in 1852-1855, and President of the Board of Trustees for San Diego during 1853-1855. Robinson helped establish the Democratic Party in San Diego and was its early leader.

Robinson was a Mason and member of San Diego Lodge #35. He served as the Lodge's first Secretary and later served as Master in 1856.

Robinson built an adobe house in Old Town San Diego. The first floor was leased out as a store. At various times, the adobe also served as a schoolroom, office building, Railroad Building. In 1856, Robinson built porches around the first and second floors, causing the local newspaper to call it "the most pleasant in the city." This adobe has been reconstructed and serves as Old Town State Historic Park headquarters and is open to the public.

Around 1855 Robinson began to have serious health problems. He died in 1857 in San Diego. His obituary in the San Diego *Herald* said that he was: "the most prominent man during the last six years, in every enterprise which relate to our prosperity and advancement."

Robinson's estate wasn't settled until 1903, after all his children died. By that time, he had several descendants. Seventy-one legatees, chiefly grandchildren, shared in the property settlement.

Sources for the Bio James W. Robinson

James W. Robinson and the Development of Old Town, San Diego, by Ronald Quinn, The Journal of San Diego History, Summer 1985, Vol 31, Number 3. NOTE: Includes additional information regarding first marriage and estate settlement.

Biography in Handbook of Texas Online <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/robinson-james-2> biography by L. W. Kemp published in 1952 and updated 19 Jan 2019.

The Story of San Diego Lodge No. 35, F.&A.M. by Orion M. Zink, Lodge Historian, 1976

Wikipedia – [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_W._Robinson_\(Texas_and_California\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_W._Robinson_(Texas_and_California))

1850 Census, San Diego, California, p. 278B

Obituary, San Diego Herald October 31, 1857. Says he died the 27th age 65.