

California Biographies

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History of the state of California and biographical record of the San Joaquin Valley, California. An historical story of the state's marvelous growth from its earliest settlement to the present time.

Prof. James Miller Guinn , A. M.

The Chapman Publishing Co., Chicago 1905

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PAUL GALTES. Few residents of Bakersfield have been identified with the history of the town for a longer period than has Mr. Galtes. When he came here in 1871 there was no railroad. Travelers journeyed to and from in the old-fashioned stage coach. The desert village, with its dozen or more little shanties, presented an appearance far from attractive, yet with far-seeing discernment he believed that success awaited the efforts of those who had the fortitude and patience to endure hardships and surmount obstacles. The experiences that have since come to him prove his judgment to have been sagacious. In establishing himself in business in the town he was greatly aided by his thorough knowledge of the Spanish language, which enabled him to converse with the many Mexicans then resident in this locality.

A native of Spain, Mr. Galtes was born in the province of Catalonia, October 25, 1840, and there in boyhood he became familiar with the manufacture of irons for building purposes. At the expiration of four years' apprenticeship at this trade, when nineteen years of age, he began to work as a journeyman, and in that capacity traveled through many parts of Europe. In 1861 he crossed the ocean to Santiago de Cuba. On the day of his arrival he secured employment as clerk in a large dry goods store and continued for eight years with the same house. When the people in 1868 began to raise a war cry for independence he determined to leave, for he did not wish to take up arms against his native country. For this reason he left Cuba and sailed for Panama, thence proceeding by ship to San Francisco, where he landed December 23, 1868. The appearance of the country pleased him, but he found himself at great disadvantage on account of his lack of familiarity with the English language. On the advice of Archbishop Alamany of San Francisco, who had come from the same Spanish province as himself, he determined to devote some time to study, and accordingly entered St. Vincent's College in Los Angeles, where he devoted four months to language study. At the expiration of that time he secured employment in a bakery in Los Angeles. During the erection of the then leading hotel of the city he aided in the work and on its completion he was appointed steward, having charge of all the supplies. He went to work without asking what his salary was to be. After three months he was paid at the rate of \$75 per month. During the fourteen months he continued in the position he carefully hoarded his earnings and when he left there for Bakersfield he had a small sum as a nucleus of his business enterprises.

Immediately after his arrival, in 1871, Mr. Galtes bought one of the shanties that were then utilized for business purposes. By the payment of a small sum he was enabled to secure the privilege of paying the balance in installments. With \$600 worth of goods he began in business. Such was his success that by good management and having established a good credit in 1874 he had accumulated \$27,000 in general merchandise. In 1878 he erected, at a cost of \$18,000, the first brick block in Bakersfield, and there he conducted general mercantile pursuits until 1888, when he sold out and retired from business. Since then he has given his attention to the management of his numerous property interests and to the cultivation of his raisin vineyard of fifty-five acres. In all of his work he has received the co-operation of his wife, whom he married in 1874 and who was Mariana Laxague, a native of France near the Spanish border. Seven children were born of their union, but only four attained mature years. The eldest of these, Paul F., is studying in Santa Clara College, with a view to, entering the Jesuit priesthood. The younger son, Felix J., a graduate of Santa Clara College, is now a clerk in the Bank of Bakersfield. The daughters, Amelia and Lucy, are students in the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Oakland, Cal. On the incorporation of the city of Bakersfield Mr. Galtes was elected a trustee, receiving a larger number of votes than any other candidate on the ticket, and during his incumbency of the office he rendered valuable assistance in promoting movements for the benefit of

the town. Though loyal to the land of his adoption, he had never displayed a partisan spirit nor has he taken an active part in political affairs, his preference having been to devote himself wholly to his business enterprises. His greatest desire is to see the young men of the country build and own their own homes, realizing the importance and influence it will have upon the coming generations.