



# Shadowing Fame

*Robert Keith*

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OVER 120 GRAYSCALE IMAGES! Few names in American history gained more attention in the second half of the 19th century than Abraham Lincoln, Stephen Douglas, Robert E. Lee, Horace Greeley, Joseph Smith, Jr, the Mormon leader, and Samuel Clemens, better known as MarkTwain. These men were all acquainted with James H. Ralston, a man who who never gained the same notoriety as his friends. His life was spent shadowing fame. Read about J. H. Ralston's political years in Illinois, a private in the Black Hawk Indian War, the first love of his life and her tragic death. Restoring the Alamo Mission in Texas during his years as captain in the Mexican-American War. His overland journey to the gold fields of California in 1850. His intriguing rise to success in Sacramento and marriage to his second love at the New York World's Fair. The Comstock Lode silver boom in Nevada's Virginia City, and a lonely mysterious death in the vast Nevada high desert. A truly riveting biography, part and parcel of America's early frontiers. A rare biography of Judge Ralston characterizes him using the word, forgotten, meaning that at one time a subject was well in mind, and now it is unremembered. It is almost a certainty that the name James H. Ralston was never the correct response to a history question. Therefore, rather than forgotten, I believe unknown is the better word. However, unknown does not in the least equate with a lack of success. The central theme of this book is to entertainingly create and preserve a memory of the judge's significant contributions to the history of his time. Ralston was only 29 years of age when he was appointed to the judgeship of the Illinois 5th Judicial Circuit in 1837. A young man of striking personality, a little over six feet tall, straight, and thinly formed. With auburn hair, blue eyes, and faultless features. He was polite, agreeable, and as courtly and dignified in bearing as a Virginia gentleman of the colonial days. He had a sociable, kind, and generous disposition, though impulsive-spirited and extraordinarily ambitious. The judge was driven in life by a high sense of honor and strictly honest in personal affairs and the discharge of his public duties. In some instances his judgment was no doubt at fault. Though in the main his motives were pure and he never willfully violated his conception of right and justice. One of his favorite quotations was from Sheridan's adaption of Pizarro ; Should the scales of justice poise doubtfully, let mercy touch the beam and turn the balance to the gentler side. The judge was persuasive and showy in public, entertaining in conversation, and an impressive impromptu speaker though his rudimentary schooling in his formative Kentucky years was occasionally evident in his grammar. A prominent characteristic of James Ralston was his firmness and determination of purpose with the explicit exclusion of his children, who wanted for nothing. Yet, he was weak in resisting flattery and was easily influenced by those in whom he had implicit confidence. To an unrecognizable fault, he was politically an ardent Jacksonian democrat. He was a member and four-time lodge founder in the Masonic Order, though not attached to any religious denomination. He liberal views on the subject of a man's spiritual nature. James was fond of music, of gay and lively society, enjoyed the occasional use of tobacco, and he had quite a self-taught interest in literature and poetry. Enjoy reading about a life filled with accomplishments, rubbing elbows with the rich and famous, experiencing unbounded joy, and deep sadness, a man who lived his life shadowing fame.

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