

California Biographies, Santa Cruz County

STEPHEN MARTINELLI.

Transcribed by Peggy Hooper

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STEPHEN MARTINELLI.

Far removed from his old home and birthplace in Switzerland Mr. Martinelli finds in Santa Cruz county, Cal., a climate not unlike that with which he was familiar during his childhood and youth, and here he finds an opportunity for progress in business unknown in his native country. When he came to the new world over fifty years ago he was a young man of about seventeen years, full of enthusiasm and courage not easily daunted by adverse conditions, and with the passing of years he has accumulated a competency and become an important factor in the business community of Watsonville.

Born in the canton of Ticino, Switzerland, January 5, 1843, Stephen Martinelli is a son of parents who passed their entire lives in sight of the mountains of Switzerland, where as farmers they made a modest living and reared their children.

When Stephen was seventeen years of age he had reached the conclusion that the business outlook in his own country was limited and circumscribed, as completely indeed as the country was hedged in by the mountains. Many of his countrymen had realized this condition before him and found an outlet for their ambitions and a field of labor in the United States, and hither he came in 1859. The vessel on which he made the voyage landed him in the harbor of San Francisco June 5 of that year and from the metropolis he came direct to the Pajaro valley, where for over half a century he has made his home uninterruptedly. His first experience was as a farm hand in the valley and during the two years he remained with this employer he gained a fund of experience along agricultural lines that has stood him in good stead throughout the remaining years of his life. Finally he undertook the maintenance of a ranch of his own, carrying this on until 1866, when he gave it up and entered upon a widely different venture. This was the manufacture of soda water and other soft drinks, a line of endeavor which he has ever since followed with unqualified success. After a few years, however, he became convinced that by specializing on one product of unexcelled quality he could get better results than by scattering his efforts and it was at that time that he began the manufacture of apple cider, the superior quality of which has made his name a household word throughout this part of the state. At all state fairs his product is entered for competition and invariably it receives the highest awards, this being especially true of the Mid-winter fair in San Francisco, where he received a special

gold medal for the best apple cider. At the state fair at Sacramento he was awarded a silver medal and at the exposition at Atlanta, Ga., he received the same recognition for the excellence of his product, besides seven diplomas of honor from various expositions throughout the United States where his special brand of cider has been exhibited. He takes a commendable pride in the fact that his cider is the only brand that has been awarded a medal in the United States.

In connection with his cider mill Mr. Martinelli maintains an orchard of forty acres all in Bellflower apples. Without doubt this is the most highly developed orchard of its age in the county, and the fact that Mr. Martinelli has offered a prize of \$100 to anyone in the vicinity or elsewhere who can show trees more highly developed than his own has stimulated an interest in this branch of agriculture which is highly commendable. He is strongly opposed to the one-time practice of cutting back fruit trees, which practice injures the tree, causes it to become forked as well as developing a lot of suckers that have to be cut back the next season. He is also opposed to winter pruning, for when the tree is dormant it causes the bark to split and peel off and the tree to decay. To do so when the tree is growing heals over the wound at once and no suckers will grow from the place where cut. Dating from about the year 1900 Mr. Martinelli has been the means of practically changing the method of the fruit-growers in the valley. He believes in assisting nature, not in destroying it.

A marriage ceremony performed in Watsonville July 3, 1890, united the lives of Stephen Martinelli and Jennie Leask, the latter a sister of Samuel Leask of Santa Cruz. Three children, two sons and one daughter, Stephen, Annie C. and Leask, have been born to Mr. and Mrs. Martinelli, all of whom are pupils in the public schools of Watsonville. Outside of his business as an orchardist and manufacturer of cider Mr. Martinelli found pleasure as well as profit in instructing and leading what was known as Martinelli 's Band and later the Swiss Band of Watsonville being connected with them for about thirty years. Fraternally he is affiliated with a number of orders, being a member of Pajaro Lodge No. 9, L O. O. F., of Watsonville ; Santa Cruz Lodge, K. P. ; and the Rebekahs of Watsonville. Mr. Martinelli is counted among the live, enterprising citizens of his home city, and as a member of the Watsonville Board of Trade he contributed immeasurably to her standing as a progressive business center of the state.