

Biographical & Historical Memoirs of North East Arkansas  
Goodspeed's

## Rooks

**John W. Rooks**, real estate agent and hotelkeeper, Harrisburg, Ark. This prominent and successful citizen is a native of Tennessee, whose birth occurred in Shelby County, December 5, 1848, and is the son of **Joseph Rooks**, a native of Middle Tennessee, who was married in his native State to **Miss Melinda Montgomery**, also a native of Middle Tennessee. They moved to Arkansas about 1856, settled on the Bay Road, five miles east of Harrisburg, in Bolivar Township, and there the father opened up 160 acres of wild land, clearing about fifty acres, and erecting buildings, etc. Later he moved to the west side of Crowley's Ridge, in Scott Township, and there purchased 240 acres of land, of which he cleared 100 acres. He was a farmer and brick mason, and a very industrious, enterprising man. He was a member of the Masonic fraternity, and he and his family were consistent members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He died in 1860. The mother **Mrs. Melinda (Montgomery) Rooks**, was born in Bedford (now Crawford) County, Tenn., in the year 1807, and is still living. She is the daughter of **William and Mary (Lyons) Montgomery**, natives of North Carolina, and early settlers of the State of Arkansas. Her father was a farmer, and removed to Middle Tennessee about 1800. When a very old man, he returned to his native State to settle up a legacy, and was never afterward heard from. Her mother died in Middle Tennessee, when about fifty years of age. **Mrs. Rooks** was one of five children born to her parents, and is the only one living. She was married at the age of seventeen years to **Mr. Rooks**, a son of one of the oldest families of North Carolina, and in 1856 removed to Arkansas. To their union were born twelve children, ten of whom lived to be grown, became married and had families. The children were as follows: **Mrs. N. E. Flowers**, died in 1870 and left two children; Eli, who was engaged in merchandising at Bay Village, and who died December 15, 1878; James W., died in 1864 at the age of forty years; Martha A., widow of **Henry Gilbert**;

Sarah J., wife of **T. C. Broadster**; Eliza, wife of **J. W. Killough**; James K., died about 1867; Michael K. died in his tenth year; Mary E., died in infancy; Evalyn, wife of **Rev. A. C. Griffith**, an elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church, at Harrisburg; John W. (subject of this sketch), and one who died unnamed. **Mrs. Rooks** furnished three sons for the late war, and one son-in-law. William, one of the sons, died during that struggle, but the others served the entire time without harm. As before stated, **Mrs. Rooks** was left a widow in 1860, just at the outbreak of the late war, and she bravely struggled to support her family, but lost all her property during the conflict. She was left in debt to the amount of \$2,500, but this, by skillful management, she contrived to pay off. She has long been a Christian, and a consistent member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of which her children are also members. In 1868 she gave up housekeeping, and has since made the homes of her children happy by her presence. Her son, **John W. Rooks**, was taught the principles of farm life when young, and received his education in the common country schools, and supplementing the same by a course in the high school, at Harrisburg, under the tutorship of **Prof. C. O. Turbeville**. In 1871, when twenty-one years of age, he began clerking in the store of **Kellough, Mitchell & Co.**, at a place called Lick Skillet, five miles south of Harrisburg, and worked one year. In 1871 he began clerking in Wittsburg, and continued in that work until 1875, when he opened a general store under the firm name of **J. W. Rooks & Co.** This business he continued with success until 1882, when he sold out and built a store at Cherry Valley, in Cross County, Ark. In 1885 he sold out and returned to Harrisburg, where he built the **Rooks** House and opened that hotel to the public. This he built in 1878, and it was destroyed by fire, with all its contents, in 1882. The same year the present hotel was built, and this he still conducts. In the year 1887 **Mr. Rooks** originated the real estate firm of **Rooks & Ainsworth**, it being the only recognized real estate firm in Poinsett County, and they do a very successful business. **Mr. Rooks** has always taken a decided interest in politics, and has twice been defeated for county treasurer by a small majority. He served one term as deputy clerk for **T. B. Sparks**. He votes with the Democratic party, and is an earnest temperance worker.

On the 18th of April, 1877, he was united in marriage to **Miss Julia E. Gant**, daughter of **J. W. and S. S. (Keller) Gant**, natives of North Carolina, who settled in Craighead County, Ark., in 1860. To **Mr. and Mrs. Rooks** were born the following children: Mary B., Joseph W., and Harry G. **Mr. Rooks** is a member of the Masonic fraternity, also the K. of H., and he and wife are active members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

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