

CONLEY, WILLIAM MAXWELL, Judge of Superior Court, Madera, California, was born near Coulterville, Mariposa County, Cal., July 17, 1866, the son of Matthew and Margaret A. (Ryan) Conley. Judge Conley's father was a California pioneer who crossed the plains in the early days and settled in Mariposa County. Judge Conley married Miss Emma Bedesen July 19, 1893, at Merced, California. They have two sons, Phillip R. Conley and Matthew M. Conley.

Judge Conley attended the public schools of Merced until December, 1882. He then entered Stockton College, from which he was graduated in 1884. For four years, from 1885 to 1889, he was a school teacher in Merced and Butte Counties, Cal. In the latter year, though but twenty-three years of age, he was appointed chief deputy assessor of Merced County, an office that entailed many important and responsible duties involving the valuation of property in the county. He remained in this office until January 1, 1891. Early in 1891 Judge Conley was admitted to practice law in the courts of the State, having prepared himself for the legal profession while in the office of the assessor. In January, 1891, he opened an office for the practice of law at Merced. His success was notable from the first and he attained a prominent place in the political and civic affairs of the community. In 1892 Mr. Conley made his first run for public office, being nominated in that year for District Attorney of Merced County on the Democratic ticket. His popularity in the county may be garnered from the fact that, although but twenty-six years old at the time he made this campaign for the office of public prosecutor, he was defeated by only ninety-one votes.

Judge Conley removed to Fresno County in December, 1892, and assisted in the organization of Madera County. On May 16, 1893, he was elected as the first Superior Court Judge of the county. He was twenty-six years old when elevated to the bench, becoming the youngest man ever elected to sit in a court of record in California. November 6, 1894, he was re-elected to this office. In August, 1898, he was nominated by the Democratic State Convention of California for Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of that State. After a strenuous campaign, in which there were nine candidates

supported by the Silver Republicans and the People's Party conventions, Judge Conley was defeated by a small majority by his Republican opponent, that party carrying the State by an overwhelming majority. In 1900 he was re-elected Judge of the Superior Court of Madera County. In 1904 Judge Conley was chosen as the Democratic nominee for Congress from the Sixth California District. This was the year Roosevelt so overwhelmingly swept the country on the Republican ticket.

Despite the heavy vote for that party in California, Judge Conley ran 4000 votes ahead of his ticket. In 1899 Judge Conley received the complimentary vote of the Democratic minority in the California Legislature for the office of U. S. Senator.

In 1906 Judge Conley was again re-elected Judge of the Superior Court of Madera County. One of the highest men in the councils of the Democratic party in the State, Judge Conley took a leading part, as far as the judicial dignity of his office would allow, in directing the affairs of the organization and in gathering to the fold the best men in the State. In 1908 he was elected delegate at large from California to the National Democratic Convention at Denver, and took a leading part in the deliberations of that body. In 1912 he was once more chosen

to fill the post he has for years so creditably held.

During his career on the bench Judge Conley has decided numerous cases of great importance involving large sums of money or property rights. Many of his decisions and opinions have become a part of the juridic system of the State. His rulings have been invariably upheld by the appellate courts. Judge Conley has held court in more counties in the State than any other judge on the Superior bench, upon the invitation of his colleagues in other counties or on the designation of the Governor.

Judge Conley was prominently mentioned in 1914 as the candidate of his party for the Chief Justiceship of the California Supreme Court. Friends and supporters, leading citizens of the State, urged the candidacy upon him. He was considered to be the strongest man in his party for that post, but failed to attain the victory.

He is Past Grand President of the Native Sons of the Golden West. He is an active member of the Elks, Eagles, Knights of Pythias, Woodmen of the World and the Madera County Club.



HON. W. M. CONLEY