

HISTORY
OF THE
COUNTIES
OF
McKEAN, ELK AND FOREST,
PENNSYLVANIA,
WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SELECTIONS,
INCLUDING
THEIR EARLY SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT; A DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTORIC AND
INTERESTING LOCALITIES; SKETCHES OF THEIR CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES;
PORTRAITS OF PROMINENT MEN; BIOGRAPHIES OF REPRESENTATIVE
CITIZENS; OUTLINE HISTORY OF PENNSYLVANIA; STATISTICS, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

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RASSELAS WILCOX BROWN. Among the early settlers of Elk county, probably no man was better known or more highly esteemed than Rasselas Wilcox Brown.

Mr. Brown was born at German Flats, Herkimer Co., N. Y., September 30, 1809, and was one of three children born to Isaac and Polly (Wilcox) Brown. When Rasselas was sixteen years old, his father moved to Onondaga county, N. Y., and located upon a tract in the town of Cicero, which Rasselas helped to transform into a productive farm. Upon this farm is located the cemetery, where at his own request Mr. Brown was buried. It is a beautiful spot overlooking the village of Cicero and the surrounding level, prairie-like country, and contains the remains of several generations of the Brown family. Mr. Brown united with the Baptist Church, of Cicero, when eighteen years of age, and adhered to that faith throughout his life. He was married September 25, 1832, at Fort Brewerton, N. Y., to Mary P. Brownell, the only daughter of Jedediah and Eunice (Watkins) Brownell. She was born at Trenton, Oneida Co., N. Y., September 23, 1815. Like her husband she early united with the Baptist Church, and has adhered to that faith ever since. At the present time (1890) she is in good health, and her mind is as vigorous as that of most women at fifty. She has been, and still is, a woman of wonderful energy and unconquerable ambition. No matter in what society she might live, she could be nothing less than the acknowledged peer of the truest and best. No sacrifice was ever demanded, or ever could be demanded, which she would not cheerfully make for her husband and children. She enjoys the esteem of all who know her, and she glories in the unquestioned affection of all her children and children's children.

Immediately after their marriage this couple settled at Fort Brewerton, N. Y., where they lived two years, and then moved to Summer Hill, Cayuga county, where they lived for about three years. In 1837 Mr. Brown, in company with his brother-in-law, Judge Brownell, now of Smethport, McKean

county, started on foot from Cayuga county to seek his fortune in the then western wilds of Michigan. On their journey thither they passed through the wilderness of Jones township, Elk county. Here Col. W. P. Wilcox, his uncle, had a few years before located, and he became exceedingly anxious that Ras-selas should settle near him. After two or three months passed in the journey to Michigan, the two travelers returned and decided to cast their lot in the wilds of Pennsylvania. It was late in the fall when they returned, and after employing a man to hew the timber, and leaving with him the means to prepare for the erection of a house early in the spring, Mr. Brown returned for his family. So poor were the mail facilities at that time that the letters from his friends in Pennsylvania advising him of the absconding of his hired man did not reach their destination until he had started with his wife and two little boys for their new home, which they reached on March 16, 1838.

With a will and energy that would not brook defeat, he went to work, and on April 21, a little more than a month after his arrival, he was able to move into his new house. The desperate effort and great anxiety required to get his family under roof, resulted in his prostration on a bed of sickness, to which he was confined more than six months. Slowly recovering from his illness, the terrible truth forced itself, day by day, upon him that his eyesight was seriously impaired, and that the injury to his eyes would be permanent. Now came the time for his young and hopeful wife to show her worth and her ability. Would she prove equal to the occasion? It was evident that her husband could not for a long time, at least, perform the manual labor necessary to clear and cultivate a farm, and they must, therefore, seek some temporary employment where her skill and energy would count for the support of the little ones. The Williamsville Hotel offered such a place, and thither without delay they moved. They remained at the hotel until the spring of 1841. During a good share of the time the two did the entire work required to care for their guests and the traveling public—the provisions and supplies for whom had to be hauled from Smethport or Olean, and sometimes from Buffalo. This, of course, demanded the frequent absence of Mr. Brown, and threw upon his wife burdens that none but the most heroic of women could or would have endured. No wonder that both felt relieved when the spring of 1841 came, and they again assumed the sometimes more exhausting, but always more agreeable, toil upon the farm. Here they lived together until the death of Mr. Brown, which occurred on June 27, 1887. At the time they moved onto the farm the children had grown to four in number, and there was, if the wolf were to be kept from the door, to be no rest from labor and anxiety. The tract of land, out of which it was proposed to make a farm, was located mainly in the midst of a dense growth of pine and hemlock. To be sure the land was cheap, costing only \$1.25 an acre, but the labor necessary to fit it for cultivation was enormous. There was no mill near to cut logs into lumber, and no market for the lumber if it could have been cut. In those early days there was, therefore, no alternative—both pine and hemlock must be burned to ashes. The struggle was constant and sometimes desperate, but never a failure. If the farm failed by ordinary means to make both ends meet, they always found some effective plan to supply the need. Sometimes the scheme had little profit in it, but if it availed to tide over a present difficulty, it was resorted to with cheerfulness and satisfaction. At times the plan hit upon was to manufacture by hand the pine trees into shingles; at others, to dig coal from a mine opened on the farm, and then to market these wherever a purchaser could be found—often fifty, and sometimes one hundred miles away. That the purchaser would only pay in goods, and at exorbitant profits, was little reason for breaking off the trade. The waiting

ones at home must be supplied, and therefore the product must go for what it would bring. Many times during the first years upon the farm at Rasselas [this name was given to the place in honor of its owner by Gen. Thomas L. Kane, president of the N. Y., L. E. & W. R. R. extension, when it was built through the farm and a station located thereon], butter as good as housewife ever made was taken on horseback to Ridgway, sixteen miles distant, and sold for 10 and 12 cents a pound, store pay, the whole proceeds amounting to less than would be the expense of such a trip in our time.

Isolated as was the home reared by this couple, it was in many respects a model one. The children, six in number, three boys and three girls, were taught not only obedience and respect for their parents, but kindness and love for each other. Self-sacrifice was the paramount law of the household. Nothing within the range of a possibility was ever left undone in behalf of the children, whether it pertained to their present needs or education and proper development; and in return the parents received homage as abiding as life itself. All alone in the wilderness, the family altar was kept burning, conspicuous by contrast, and yet its influence all the more enduring, because it was unique. The entire number of children born to Rasselas W. and Mary P. Brown are still living. The daughters are Olive J. Moyer and Eunice A. Hewitt, of Elk county, and Mary A. Allen, of Cicero, N. Y. The sons are Jefferson L., William Wallace and Isaac B. Sketches of the three sons will be found in this volume as follows: those of Jefferson L. and Isaac B., immediately after this of their father, and that of William Wallace, among the biographical sketches of Bradford, McKean county.

Mr. Brown, notwithstanding the loss of his eyesight, was a leading mind in the county. In politics he was a Whig, and all alone in his neighborhood he cherished, as only a Whig could cherish, the names of Washington, the Adamsses, Clay and Webster, until the new era added to the immortals the names of Grant and Lincoln. There was but a single supporter of his political views in Jones township, and yet during the larger part of his active life at Rasselas, he held the office of magistrate, often by the almost unanimous voice of his neighbors. As a partisan he was never offensive, but he was as firm and unyielding in his political convictions as any man ever was with Scotch blood in his veins.

Of his affliction he seldom made mention, and he was never known to complain, save, when in the days of his country's peril, the loss of his sight precluded the possibility of his enlisting in her defense. It was his inability to serve as a soldier that induced him to yield to the persuasions of his youngest son, and allow him to enter the army at the early age of sixteen years, although his two other sons and two of his sons-in-law had already entered the service. To him the Republic was "a thing of beauty and a joy forever," and there was nothing in the earth so good or so sacred that he would not have freely sacrificed for her glory and her defense. With the close of the war and with his declining years came more rest and contentment. Though from choice he labored constantly until the last year of his life, the railroad, long looked for, had come, and with it a market for the forest still preserved, and this brought the means for such comfortable support as dispensed with the necessity of further toil or anxiety. Idleness had no place in his life. Every hour not given to labor was devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. Unable, from loss of his eyesight, to read, he invoked the aid of others to read for him, and in this way was able to keep abreast of current events, and to live in the history of the past. He had a very retentive memory, and possessed a fund of information, especially concerning the geography, political history and development of his country, truly wonderful.

As the end of life approached, he gave most abundant assurance to those about him, that long ago complete preparations had been made for the voyage to the country beyond. There was a brief, but comprehensive direction for the care of his surviving widow, a "share and share alike" to his children, a request that he might be permitted to sleep with his fathers in the land of his boyhood, and then a calm, majestic waiting for the final summons. Just fifty years to a day from the time the subject of this sketch, weary and foot-sore, came into the wilderness of Pennsylvania, he was borne in solemn triumph back to the burial place of his fathers. It is the mighty power of steam that carries the train as on wings of the wind! During the fifty years of Mr. Brown's sojourn in Elk county, that power had revolutionized the world! Henceforth the pioneer shall not go forth into the wilderness alone. Steam shall go before, and shall prepare the way for him. And yet, with all the aids to success which modern thought can bring, none who triumph in coming time will leave more honored heritage, or fall asleep amid the incense of love more sincere or more adding than did Rasselas Wilcox Brown.

JEFFERSON L. BROWN, eldest son of Rasselas W. and Mary P. (Brownell) Brown, was born at Fort Brewerton, Onondaga Co., N. Y., June 25, 1834, and came with his parents into McKean (now Elk) county in March, 1838. His early life was spent on his father's farm, in Jones township, upon which Rasselas, a station on the New York, Lake Erie & Western, and the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburg Railroads, is located. Mr. Brown was educated at the public schools near his home, and at the Smethport academy. At eighteen years of age he commenced the work of his profession—surveying—which he has followed more or less up to the present time, and has been engaged in several engineering enterprises. In the summer of 1855 Mr. Brown purchased the *Elk County Advocate* establishment, and published the paper about one year. Not finding the business either suited to his nature or profitable, he disposed of the plant in July, 1856, and returned to the work of his profession. In the autumn of 1860 he moved to Onondaga county, N. Y., and engaged in the pursuit of farming. He taught school at Cicero in the winter of 1860–61, and at Centreville in the winter of 1861–62. After selling his interest in the farm, Mr. Brown enlisted in Company C, One Hundred and Eighty-fifth Regiment, New York Infantry, and served until the close of the Civil war. He took part in the movements of the Army of the Potomac, which began March 31, 1865, and closed with the surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, April 9, the same year; and had the pleasure of seeing Genls. Grant and Lee riding in a carriage (of old Virginia style) together, on their way to Burkeville, Va., after the surrender. At the close of the war Mr. Brown returned to Elk county, where he has resided ever since, having his home at Wilcox. In the autumn of 1868 he went into the employ of the Wilcox Tanning Company, and after April, 1870, had charge of, and an interest in, the large mercantile business of the tanning and lumber company, for ten years. In the political campaign of 1880 Mr. Brown was nominated a candidate for member of the assembly by the Democratic convention of Elk county, and, after a hotly-contested struggle, in which the disaffected Democrats united with the Republican and Greenback parties in a combination against him, he was elected by a good majority. He was re-elected in 1882, and served through the extra session of 1883. Since retiring from the political field, Mr. Brown has been engaged in the lumbering, and later in the banking business. He is a member of the Rasselas Lumber Company (whose plant is located on the old homestead), and at the head of the banking house in Wilcox, bearing his name. Mr. Brown was united in marriage with Miss

Amanda H. Merriam, the accomplished daughter of Noah and Mary Ann Merriam, of Cicero, Onondaga Co., N. Y. Mr. and Mrs. Brown are the parents of three children—two daughters and one son. The eldest is the wife of Emmet G. Latta, of Friendship, N. Y., and has two sons, Jefferson B. and Raymond F. The second daughter, Miss Emma G., has been for some time cashier in her father's bank. The son, Frank Rasselas, graduated with honors at the Pennsylvania Military Academy, at Chester, in 1889, and is now instructor in mathematics, engineering and military science at his *alma mater*. Mr. Brown is master of Wilcox Lodge, No. 571, F. & A. M., of which he is a charter member. He is one of the elders of the Presbyterian Church at Wilcox, a member of the Hiram Warner Post, G. A. R., and of the Wilcox Division of the Sons of Temperance.

ISAAC B. BROWN was born in Jones township, Elk Co., Penn., at the place now known as Rasselas, on the 20th of February, 1848. He lived at home with his parents, Rasselas W. and Mary (Brownell) Brown, working upon the farm until fifteen years of age, when he went to Syracuse, N. Y., to attend school. He remained at school, working for his board and maintenance, until the summer of 1864, when he returned home and enlisted in Company C, Two Hundred and Eleventh Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. He served in the Army of the James during the fall of 1864, and subsequently in Hartranft's Division of the Ninth Army Corps, Army of the Potomac. He was present with his command in the engagements at Bermuda Hundred, Hatcher's Run, in the Weldon raid, the assault at Fort Steadman, and at the battle of Petersburg. Returning home at the close of the war, Mr. Brown attended school for four years, spending one year at the Smethport Academy and three years at Alfred University, from which he was graduated in 1869. During his school vacations he assisted his father on the farm. In the fall of 1869 he taught at the Ridgway (Penn.) Academy, and in December of that year commenced the study of law at Corry, Penn., with Messrs. Crosby & Brown. During the years of 1870 and 1871 he was engaged in surveying the wild lands in Elk county for the Wilcox Tanning Company. In the winter of 1870-71 he taught school again, and in the fall of 1871 removed permanently to Corry, where he found it necessary to engage in some business in order to support himself while prosecuting his studies. He therefore formed a partnership with Mr. C. S. Tinker, and embarked in the insurance business. He soon became active in the politics of Erie county, and was elected clerk of the city of Corry in 1873. He then renewed the study of law, which he had discontinued for some time, and in 1876 was admitted to the bar. In 1878 he was a candidate for the assembly, and received the Republican nomination, but was defeated at the polls by Hon. Alfred Short, through a combination of Democrats and Greenbackers. In 1880 he was again nominated, and was then elected by about 3,000 majority. In 1882 he was re-elected, and again in 1884, the last time by the largest majority ever given to a candidate for assembly in that district. Mr. Brown enjoys the distinction of being the only person from Erie county who has ever received the nomination and election for a third term. During his six years of service as a legislator, he secured the passage of a large number of measures of a public nature, among which may be mentioned that for the establishment of State White Fish Hatchery at Erie. He prepared, introduced and secured the passage of the bill to establish the Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Erie, and now is a member of the Board of Trustees of that institution. In 1886 he was a candidate for the Republican nomination for Congress in the Twenty-seventh District, but was defeated by Hon. C. W. Mackey, of Venango.

county. He continued the practice of law in Erie county until 1887, when he was tendered and accepted the position of deputy secretary of internal affairs of Pennsylvania, which office he now holds at the State Capital. He has been an active member of the Grand Army of the Republic ever since its organization, and has held many prominent positions in that order. He served in the National Guard of Pennsylvania from 1874 to 1887; eleven years as captain of Company A, Sixteenth Regiment, and two years as judge advocate with the rank of major, on the staff of Gen. James A. Beaver, commanding the Second Brigade. He commanded a company during its service in the riots of 1877. Mr. Brown was married, on the 25th of June, 1870, to Miss Hannah Partington, of Providence, R. I., and he has now a family of three children—two daughters and one son.