

CENTENNIAL BIOGRAPHY.

MEN OF MARK

OF

CUMBERLAND VALLEY, PA.

1776—1876.

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## MAJOR EBENEZER DENNY.



MAJOR EBENEZER DENNY, first Mayor of Pittsburgh, was born in Carlisle, Cumberland county, Pa., March 11th, 1761, and was the eldest child of William and Agnes (Parker) Denny.

His father and uncle, Walter Denny, removed from Chester county to Cumberland county in 1745, the latter settling near Carlisle, where he was the possessor of a large tract of land; subsequently he raised a company of volunteers for the Revolutionary conflict, and was killed at Crooked Billet. At this place also his son was taken prisoner. Another son, Rev. David Denny, was for many years pastor of the Presbyterian church at Chambersburg. William Denny resided in Carlisle, and was the first Coroner west of the Susquehanna, also a Commissary in the Revolutionary Army. His mother, a woman of unusual intelligence and energy, was the daughter of John Parker, and the grand-daughter of Richard Parker, who, as early as 1730, owned lands on the Conodoguinet, near Carlisle, which have remained in the possession of the family for three generations. Nearly all the male Parkers were participants in the struggle against the mother country, and throughout its progress were noted for their loyalty and heroism.

At the age of thirteen, Ebenezer was employed as a bearer of despatches to the commandant at Fort Pitt, and, though a mere lad, safely accomplished his journey over the Alleghenies, through a wilderness teeming with savage foes. He was afterwards employed in his father's store in Carlisle until he moved to Philadelphia, where he shipped as a volunteer in a vessel bearing a letter of marque and reprisal and bound for the West Indies. While acting in this capacity, for fidelity and valour, he was promoted to the command of the quarter-deck. Being tendered the position of supercargo for a second voyage, he decided to accept the offer, but, after crossing the Susquehanna en route to Philadelphia, received and accepted a commission of Ensign in the First Pennsylvania regiment. He participated in the action near Williamsburg, Virginia, where his captain and lieutenant having been disabled at the first fire, the command devolved upon him. On the night of October 14th, he was in the advance at the siege of York, and won such merited distinction that he was selected to plant the first American flag on the British parapet. He afterwards served in the Carolinas, under General St. Clair, and at Charleston during its

investment, and also after its evacuation. Later he became Adjutant to Harmer, and Aide-de-Camp to St. Clair, and was repeatedly selected as the bearer of important despatches where courage, shrewdness and daring were required.

After his resignation, Major Denny resided in Bedford county, which he represented in the Convention of 1777, which formed the first Constitution of Pennsylvania. In 1794, he was commissioned Captain, and commanded the expedition to Le Bœuf. In 1795-96, he resided at his farm and mill near Pittsburgh, and was there nominated for the State Legislature and defeated, but in the following year, and by an almost unanimous vote, was elected Commissioner of the county. In 1803, he was Treasurer of Allegheny county, his name appearing first on the list of County Treasurers, and again in 1808 filled that position. In 1804, he was appointed a Director of the Branch of the Bank of Pennsylvania, established in that year at Pittsburgh, and which was the first institution of that nature west of the mountains. When this was merged into the office of the Bank of the United States he retained his Directorship, and was one of the few solvent men during the panic of 1819. For several successive years he obtained from the War Department the contract for the supply of rations for the troops at Fort Fayette and Presque Isle, and filled them satisfactorily while prosecuting also his mercantile and commission business in Philadelphia, on Market street. During the war of 1812, he successfully met the extraordinary demands upon him, and was appointed to furnish supplies to the North Western Army in addition to his own posts in Pennsylvania. At the close of the war he received a complimentary letter from General Harrison, in which he was cordially thanked for his valuable promptness, energy and ability.

When Pittsburgh was incorporated by act of Legislature, March 18th, 1816, Major Denny was elected the first Mayor, and, at the expiration of his first term, declined a re-election. He was Director in the Branch of the Bank of the United States, and afterwards of the Bank of Pittsburgh, in which he was a large stockholder. While visiting Niagara Falls in the summer of 1822, he was attacked by a sudden illness, and with difficulty reached his home, where he died July 21st, in the sixty-first year of his age. He was married July 1st, 1793, to Nancy Williams, daughter of John Williams, Sr., formerly of Carlisle, who participated as a Captain in the battle of the Brandywine, sister of Quartermaster-General John Williams, Jr., Charles Williams, of Lexington, Kentucky, and Hon. William Williams, late of Homewood; she died May 1st, 1806, leaving three sons, Harmer, William and St. Clair, and also two daughters.