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WILLIAM A. HERRON.

WILLIAM ANDERSON HERRON, an honored and public-spirited citizen, and one of the leading business men of Pittsburgh, was born August 7, 1821, at Pittsburgh, in the house which is still standing at the corner of Penn Avenue and Eighth Street. Mr. Herron comes of Revolutionary stock, his ancestry being Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. His paternal great-grandfather, Francis Herron, was born in County Antrim, Ireland, came to America in 1734, and with his younger brothers David, William and James and his two sisters Mary and Elizabeth, settled on what is known as Herron's Branch (named after him) in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, in 1745. Francis Herron married Mary McNutt, also of a Scotch Presbyterian family, and had issue three sons and two daughters, viz.: John, James and William, and Mary and Sarah. He was a farmer by occupation and died in 1755. James, the second son of Francis, and grandfather of William A. Herron, was born in 1754. He married Nancy Davidson, and had issue four sons and two daughters, viz.: John, (William A. Herron's father), William, Davidson and James, and Nancy and Sarah. He was an ardent patriot and brave soldier, and was made Major in the American army during the Revolutionary War. He died in 1829, leaving behind him an excellent record as a Christian gentleman and a soldier. John, his eldest son and father of our subject, was born at Herron's Branch, April 3, 1792. In 1812 he went to Pittsburgh, where he engaged in the lumber business. Having a fair education and being industrious, energetic and sagacious, he prospered, and in a few years became owner of a large saw and grist mill on what is now Eighth Street, below Penn Avenue, besides acquiring other property. He was always fully abreast of the times, as is evidenced by the fact that he was among the first to utilize steam power, having put the second steam engine in use west of the Allegheny Mountains, in his mill on Eighth Street. He also owned a farm, coal lands, and other properties of value, at Minersville, now the Thirteenth Ward of Pittsburgh, and was largely engaged in contract-

ing and building, making brick, coal mining and farming. He superintended all his enterprises and kept almost constantly employed a number of clerks and a small army of men, in whom he took a friendly interest. He was generous and charitable and always stood ready to succor the needy and unfortunate. He was kind and considerate and it was said of him that he knew most of the children in Minersville by name. Indeed, he was generally loved and respected by all. He married, in 1817, Miss Clarissa Anderson, daughter of Major William and Nancy (Cann) Anderson. Major Anderson, the maternal grandfather of the subject of this sketch, was one of the pioneers of the notable Pittsburgh family of that name. In the History of Allegheny County reference is made to him as follows:

"He came to America when the cry of liberty had lately arisen among the colonists, and with all a young man's ardor he entered heartily into the revolutionary spirit of the age. It was between 1775-'80, when he first put his foot upon the soil of the country that was so soon to shake off the thrall of the tyrant of the old world. He first settled in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, but soon joined the army under General Washington, taking the rank of Major, and serving with distinction throughout the war."

At the close of the war he resumed the building business and in competition with others was awarded the contract for building the Executive Mansion (the "White House") at Washington, D. C., the excellent condition of which at this day, more than a century later, is a splendid testimonial to his honesty and judgment. "Stout, hearty and vigorous, he possessed remarkable executive ability and was honored with the friendship of some of the greatest men of his time, including Washington himself. As an instance of his physical strength as well as his determined will, it is related that at one time, on account of sickness in his family, he walked from Washington to Carlisle in twenty-four hours." Major Anderson removed from Carlisle in 1795, going first to Huntingdon and afterwards to Bedford, Pennsylvania, in each of which places he erected public buildings. In 1797 he took up his residence in Pittsburgh, on Penn Street near Pitt (now Fourth) Street, in a house built of logs. He built the second grist mill put up in Pittsburgh, and the first steam saw-mill west of the Allegheny Mountains. Buying logs from the Indians round about he did a large business in lumber, his mill often running day and night to supply the demand. He was an intimate friend of Colonel James O'Hara, and with him took an active part in all public enterprises. He built a number of the principal edifices of Pittsburgh, including the First Presbyterian Church on Wood Street, which was built over the old log structure "the logs being taken out of the

windows of the new church." He died in 1821, being then a resident of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, where he owned a large tract of land and whither he had removed in the preceding year, having retired from business. His remains were buried in the churchyard of the First Presbyterian Church at Pittsburgh, beside those of his wife, a native of Carlisle, and whose maiden name was Mary Ann Cann. From the foregoing brief account of his family, it will be perceived that Colonel William A. Herron, the subject of this sketch, springs from ancestors distinguished for their love of God, love of country and love of work. From their advent in the New World they enjoyed a high degree of prosperity and the respect and favor of their neighbors and fellow-citizens. The patriotic instincts of the family are remarkable and have continued unabated from the Revolution down to recent times. Three of Mr. Herron's uncles served in the War of 1812, under General Harrison. Three of his brothers and one of his sons served in the Union Army. One of the former, Francis J. Herron, now of New York City, rose to the rank of Major-General, when but twenty-six years old, and enjoyed the distinction of being the youngest General officer in the Union army. William A. Herron started his business career with a good education, beginning early in life as a clerk for A. Way & Company, dry goods merchants, at Pittsburgh, but finding indoor life too confining and not agreeing with his health, he gave up his position and went into the coal business to assist his father, who was then operating a large number of mines in Minersville, now the Thirteenth Ward of Pittsburgh. In 1846 he became a member of the coal firm of Herron, Brown & Company, of which his father was the senior member. The firm owned an extensive tract of land on the Monongahela River near Turtle Creek, and filled large contracts for iron mills, factories and gas works in Pittsburgh, besides shipping large quantities of coal to Cincinnati, Louisville, Cairo and New Orleans, in flat boats. Owing to failing health Mr. Herron was compelled to discontinue business for a time, and he then devoted two years to general travel and rest to recuperate, after which, with his brother-in-law Richard Sill, he engaged in the lumber business. He shortly afterwards had partnership interests in a brass foundry, the manufacture of glass and cotton batting, besides being part owner of a large tract of coal land near Pine Run, on the Monongahela River, which was operated under the firm name of Herron, Blackburn & Company. This firm did an extensive business, building a coal railroad to supply the trade. Mr. Herron also formed a partnership with Mr. Hercules O'Connor, and together

they purchased the steamboat "George Albee" and some model barges and took contracts to supply the gas works at St. Louis with coal, running the cargoes to Cairo in flat boats and reloading there in model barges to tow to St. Louis. In 1855 Mr. Herron engaged in the banking business at the corner of Wood Street and Sixth Avenue, where the Germania National Bank is now erecting its fine new building. In 1860, perceiving the need of greater banking facilities in Pittsburgh, he took an active part in founding the German Bank, (now the German National) and later on he helped to organize the Iron City Trust Company, which subsequently became the Second National Bank. He also co-operated in the formation of the Third National Bank and the Mechanics' Bank, which, like the others named, are to-day among the strongest financial institutions of the city. In 1863 he, with two other well-known citizens, secured a charter and organized the People's Saving Bank, of which he became the first President, and which has become one of the most successful institutions of its kind in the city. In 1860 Mr. Herron was induced to accept the nomination of Clerk of the Courts of Allegheny County. He was elected by a flattering majority and served with eminent satisfaction to his fellow-citizens until 1866 (being re-elected in 1863) when he retired, owing to the condition of his health, although he could have been again re-elected had he cared to continue in office. Freed from the cares of office he next engaged in buying and selling real estate, and so continued for a number of years. In 1877 he took his youngest son John W. Herron in as partner, and still later, in 1883, his son, Rufus H. Herron, the business being carried on under the name of William A. Herron & Sons. The firm does a large business, second to none in the city, and holds a high rank. Rufus H. Herron and John W. Herron have since risen to prominence in Pittsburgh business circles, and the latter is Vice-President of the Commercial National Bank, in that city. During the progress of the Civil War Mr. Herron was active and indefatigable in his services to the Union cause. Although prevented by ill health from taking the field, he accomplished a great deal of good work at home and aided liberally with his means and influence in upholding the supremacy of the National government. At several crises during the war his services proved of the utmost value. He was appointed a Colonel on the staff of Governor Pollock and an aide-de-camp to Major-General J. G. Barnard, U. S. A. Some years after the war General Barnard wrote as follows of Colonel Herron's service, the letter being intended for historical purposes:

"WASHINGTON, March 26, 1879.

Colonel W. A. Herron.—At the time of the invasion of Pennsylvania by the Confederate army under General Lee in June, 1863, great anxiety was felt as to the safety of Pittsburgh, whose manufacturing establishments in iron, machinery and other objects of great importance to the country, not only in a commercial sense but as supplying the material of war, offered a strong inducement to a powerful raid, if not as a direct object of the enemy's campaign. At the solicitations of leading citizens of Pittsburgh and her representative in Congress, General Moorhead, I was sent to Pittsburgh by Mr. Stanton, Secretary of War, to direct the efforts of her citizens in fortifying the place. The great manufactories were, for the time, mostly closed, and nearly all the working forces of able-bodied men—several thousand—were, the very first day of my arrival placed at my disposal. Without previous knowledge of the surrounding country and with but a single engineer officer (Major Craighill) to assist me, the reconnoissances and the putting intelligently at work such a large body of men, with no previous organization, was an arduous and embarrassing task. The intelligent aid of many of the citizens, especially of the proprietors of the large iron works, enabled me to surmount the difficulty. But to yourself I was more particularly indebted. Placing your services entirely at my disposal, you constituted yourself virtually an aide-de-camp and an adjutant—guiding me with your intimate knowledge of the localities, in my reconnoissances—pointing out before hand the salient features of the surrounding country, thus furnishing the indispensable clues to a proper location of field works and enabling me to send out my working parties to proper points, before I, myself, had been able properly to reconnoitre them. I cannot too highly speak of the value and importance of your services in those critical days. I am very respectfully,

Yours most obediently,

J. G. BARNARD,

*Colonel of Engineers, and Brevet Major-General,
U. S. A."*

Mr. Herron was never a politician, but in 1879 he was appointed Pension Agent for Pittsburgh by President Hayes, who was his warm friend, and he held that office four years. His health failed him during his term as Pension Agent, and since leaving that office he has not taken any very active part in business outside of a general oversight and interest in the purchase and sale of real estate. It is proper to state here that at the end of his term of office as Pension Agent he was warmly complimented by the authorities at Washington for the careful and prompt manner in which he conducted the business of the office. Within a few months after his retirement the Government was able to close his account and sent him a certificate in full to that effect; a fact all the more remarkable when it is understood that it usually requires several years to settle the accounts of a retiring Pension Agent. Mr. Herron is an influential member of the Pittsburgh Chamber of

Commerce, with which he has been connected a number of years, and also a member of Select Council of the city for several years. In religious and charitable work he has always taken a leading part. Since his fifteenth year he has been a professing member and active worker in the Presbyterian Church, has held the office of Elder and Trustee for many years, and has done excellent work in the Sabbath-school at Minersville, of which he was Superintendent for a long period. In 1888 he was a delegate to the Centennial General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, held at Philadelphia. He has also at various times been a delegate to the Synod and Presbytery, representing the Third Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh. In charitable matters he has likewise taken a warm interest. Since 1863 he has been an active member of the Board of Directors of the Western Pennsylvania Hospital. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of Dixmont Asylum for the Insane, Vice-President of the Homeopathic Hospital, Vice-President of the Blind Asylum of Western Pennsylvania, and a Director in the Young Men's Home, and also in the Young Men's Christian Association. In educational work he has always taken a deep interest and for many years held the office of Director of the Public Schools. Mr. Herron is still one of the active and busy men of Pittsburgh, interested in its welfare and development and prominent in all movements of a public charitable character. Although annoyed by ill health in early life, he is to-day a vigorous specimen of manhood, erect and sturdy, and capable of no end of hard work. His family have long been noted for their kindly natures, and he is no exception to the rule. Indeed, it has been asserted of him that "he has probably more friends to the square mile than any other man in Western Pennsylvania." His wife, formerly Miss Louisa J. Hills, daughter of the late Dr. Rufus Hills, a physician of note of Erie, Pennsylvania, and a native of Amesbury, Massachusetts, is one of the most estimable and respected women in Pittsburgh, where she has been active for many years in religious, charitable and philanthropic work. Her splendid executive ability was recognized by her election, in 1865, as the first President of the Woman's Christian Association of Pittsburgh, of which she was one of the principal organizers. She has been President since 1875 of the Association for the Improvement of the Poor, one of the most beneficial organizations in Pittsburgh, which she was the means of organizing, and which relieves and assists thousands of the worthy poor annually, without regard to color, nationality or sect. She likewise renders valuable assistance in almost all the other charitable work of the

city. Of her it has been written that "she is the personal friend of every needy family in the city." Mr. and Mrs. Herron were married October 23, 1843. They have had seven children, of whom three survive, viz.: Rufus H. Herron, Sarah (now Mrs. Ogden M. Edwards) and John W. Herron. In speaking of Mr. William A. Herron, one who has been intimately connected with him for many years remarked:

"Mr. Herron is an exemplary man, a Christian gentleman of the highest type; always kind to and thoughtful of those around him, never forgetting a friend but always ready to forgive an enemy; strictly temperate, scrupulously honest and of such superior ability that had nature given him health and strength he must have risen to distinction among the chief men of his day, for he is a man of great natural parts."

He loves nothing so well as to talk about the city that he has seen grow, almost from a village, to the most important manufacturing centre in the Republic. As it is, even with the great drawback of delicate health in earlier life, Mr. Herron has carved a name for himself among the most active and energetic men of Pittsburgh, which will long endure.