

# INDIANA COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

HER PEOPLE, PAST AND PRESENT

Embracing a History of the County Compiled by

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And a Genealogical and Biographical Record of Representative Families

IN TWO VOLUMES  
ILLUSTRATED

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VOLUME I

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patrons seeking attention and relief. Not long after Dr. Mitchell's arrival Dr. French died of consumption, and Dr. Mitchell received his practice as well as his library and office fixtures. He then started a drug store in connection with his practice.

Dr. Mitchell was more than a successful physician. He was a man of strong conscience and an advanced thinker, and took an active part in the progressive movements of his time. He was a Whig in politics, was elected for five successive years to represent his district in the State Legislature, and was also appointed associate judge, but he preferred his practice and private life to making laws. In 1823 he purchased and secured by warrant 1,550 acres of beautiful pine timber land in Cherryhill township, on the top of Chestnut Ridge, laid out a village which he named Diamondville (as it was on the most desirable location of the tract), and started a saw and flour mill. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and being a good singer often acted as the precentor in the congregational singing. But he was probably best known as an ardent abolitionist, one of those who suffered for adherence to his convictions. He was an open advocate of abolition from early manhood. His boyhood was passed in Virginia, where slavery was then in its most flourishing state, and he had ample opportunity to judge of its merits and demerits. The horrors he witnessed in his youth made him vow then and there that if his life were spared he would do all in his power to accomplish the downfall of the institution. The spectacle of two men, slaves, working in the field with an ox yoke around their necks, fastened itself upon his memory, and other cruelties and unrighteous features of the system in its actual operations which he had seen in his early life led him to sympathize deeply with its victims and eventually to take an active part in behalf of those who attempted to flee from bondage. This was in 1845. Believing that we should obey God rather than man, that every yoke should be broken and the oppressed go free, he acted in accordance with his own ideas but in opposition to the Fugitive Slave law which existed at that time, and he was the only man ever prosecuted in Pennsylvania under the Fugitive Slave Act, passed by Congress in 1793. About 1847 he was summoned to appear before the Supreme court in Pittsburg, to answer for the crime of harboring and concealing fugitive slaves. He had three trials, gaining two and losing the third, before a packed Democratic jury. At

**DR. ROBERT MITCHELL**, the second physician to settle in Indiana county, Pa., was born in 1787 in Cumberland county, Pa., near Chambersburg. He was one of a family of six children, viz.: Gavin, Robert, Isabella, Jane, Matthew and George. The next we know of his early history is that when Robert was ten years old the family moved to Alexandria, Ohio Co., Va. (now W. Va.), settling on Short creek, and he made his home with a relative, Dr. Magehan, with whom he studied medicine. He was exceptionally well trained for his day, graduating from Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, under Dr. Benjamin Rush. Being prepared to practice he started out to hunt a location in 1815. Coming to Indiana, Pa., he called upon Dr. French, the pioneer physician of Indiana county, who invited him to stay and assist him in his work, as he was in declining health. The invitation was accepted, and the young doctor soon found the practice very arduous, being called to points throughout the county and frequently beyond its borders. There being no roads laid out, he was often obliged to ride horseback through mere bridle paths or follow the beds of the creeks, and he was sometimes several days or perhaps a week from the office. In those days the doctor's office was generally attached to the residence, and the doctor's wife had to perform the duties of clerk as well as hostess to the various

the first the jury disagreed. In those days abolition sentiments were very unpopular, and the United States marshal boasted that next time he would summon a jury that would put Mitchell through, and after his labors were completed renewed the boast, saying he had secured a jury to suit his purpose. When the case was called up a second time, the defense asked a postponement on the ground that the jury had been packed and produced evidence of the violent partisan character and expressed opinions of its members and the open boasts of the marshal that they had been selected to secure a conviction. Of the witnesses to these facts stout John Acheson, of Clearfield, was the principal. \* \* \* The defense claimed that Dr. Mitchell had not concealed the men; that they had come to Indiana in a most deplorable condition, i. e., barefooted, with torn and bleeding flesh, due to the long weary journey over hard frozen country in bitter weather, were ragged, hungry and altogether exhausted; that they inquired for his house one evening; had been directed to it and seen to enter; were sent to the office of the *Clarion of Freedom*, upon request, for Mr. James Moorhead, who was editor of said paper, and were given lodging in the office all that night. The following morning the men were breakfasted at Dr. Mitchell's house, and later he took them out and bought necessary articles for them, such as shoes, clothing etc.; that next day they had left town, and when captured, some weeks afterward, were in a waste cabin on Dr. Mitchell's land, eight miles from his residence; that the cabin was near and in sight of a public road in an open field, and was often used as a resting place by chance travelers without knowledge of the owner; that the men had been living openly in the cabin, and going out to work where they could find employment; that no one knew them to be fugitive slaves; that there was no evidence that Dr. Mitchell had any such knowledge, and common law would require that he should have notice that they were runaway slaves before he could be held responsible for harboring them as such; that a contrary ruling would make it dangerous to show any kindness to any unknown person, as he might be a fugitive, and any chance act of benevolence thus rendered the actor liable to heavy fines, imprisonment, and the payment of the money value of the object of his charity.

To this prosecution responded that there were no public roads in Indiana county, in so far as the court knew; that all that was

known to the court of that county was that it was a place which every year sent up a tremendous Whig majority, and was therefore a benighted region, fit for treason, stratagem and spoils. To show that Dr. Mitchell knew that the men were living in his cabin, they produced a note taken from the pocket of one of them who had been captured after a desperate resistance. It was directed to a man who lived on Dr. Mitchell's farm adjoining the cabin, and ran thus: "Kill a sheep and give Garriet half. [Signed] ROBERT MITCHELL."

It was readily admitted that this was no evidence that Robert Mitchell knew that Garriet Harris was a slave, nefariously intent on robbing his master of his divine rights; for defendant would have given a half sheep or whole one, wool and all, to any poor man whom he believed to stand greatly in need of it. But being known as an abolitionist, and living in a county which sent in Whig majorities, it was safe to say that he had known these men, his ragged compeers, to be slaves; the law now claimed that they had been—i. e., fugitive slaves; that he had harbored them as such, although only two of the seven had ever been in his house, and then with as much publicity as would have attended the visit of any pauper asking alms; that they occupied the waste cabin by his direction, and that he intended to conceal them. The judge in his charge sustained this assumption, the jury did their duty like Democrats, and Dr. Mitchell was fined \$5,000 and costs, which amounted to \$5,000 more, and his pine timber was sold to satisfy this judgment, "for feeding the hungry and clothing the naked." However, though the trial went against him, it had its good results. When the decision against him was rendered there was but one editor in Pittsburg who dared to criticize it unfavorably, and of that one an apology was demanded, on pain of prosecution. The apology was so cleverly worded that it courted suit, but the judge did not enter same, and when a similar case came up in his court several years later he charged the jury that the defendant was entitled to an acquittal inasmuch as the prosecution had not shown that he had notice that the man he had employed was a fugitive slave. The lawyer who defended the latter case may have been mistaken in thinking that fear of criticism in an obscure weekly paper, whose editor boldly proclaimed the power and purpose to publish during any legal term of imprisonment in the county jail, should reverse a legal de-

cision affecting the rights and duties of every citizen; but those most intimately acquainted with the case believed this to be the moving cause of the judicial repeal of the judicial enactment under which Dr. Mitchell's home in Indiana and hundreds of acres of his land were sold by the sheriff.

Dr. Mitchell continued to support the cause, and he always stood high in the estimation of his fellow citizens, not only in his own county but throughout the State, but he died nine months before the triumph of his views and the death of the institution he so abhorred, his life ending April 14, 1862, shortly before the hand of Abraham Lincoln had been stimulated to write the Emancipation Proclamation. His life closed with a calmness and serenity long to be remembered by his wife and six children, who witnessed the solemn change. He had a slight paralytic stroke, which had no bad effect on his mind, having no particular disease, but a gradual decline in strength. The great work which he saw begun he left with all other matters which pressed on his spirits in the hand of God. We read in the Scriptures of "the rest that remaineth for the people of God." Dr. Mitchell seemed to enter into that rest.

Although firm and unyielding in his adherence to right and duty, Dr. Mitchell was never stern or hard. Though strong in the Christian faith which endures to the end, and ready to do for the humblest of the race what he would have done for his Master, he was "as mild and merry as if unconscious of his danger" even when he stood between the bloodhound and his prey. He had his share of serious trials and troubles, losing his eldest twin son (Matthew) by death in his twenty-third year, and his third son, John, a young man of talent, who went to Kansas from love of liberty when that State was struggling for freedom, and came to his death through the hardships and exposures to which he was subjected; a non-resistant in principle, he never carried arms. While assisting John Brown in the siege of Lawrence he was captured, while driving a team and wagon to Atchison for food, and died from the exposure. But none of Dr. Mitchell's afflictions ever embittered him or served to quench the happy disposition which found its chief delight in administering to the physical and mental comfort of his fellow men. After the Presbyterian Presbytery had declared that slavery was no bar to Christian communion, Dr. Mitchell and his wife joined what is now the United Presbyterian Church, then the As-

sociate Presbyterian. He always loved the Psalms.

On April 6, 1823, Dr. Mitchell was married, in Pittsburg, Pa., by Rev. Dr. Joseph McElroy, to Jane Clark. Rev. David Blair, pastor of the Associate Presbyterian Church of Indiana, Pa., their life-long friend, was permitted to witness their union, and also, forty years later, their solemn separation. The Doctor brought his young bride on horseback some seventy miles to the home already furnished in Indiana. Many were the trials they were called upon to meet in the forty years they were permitted to live together, but all was overcome by a sense of duty. Mrs. Mitchell proved a helpmate indeed, and a kind and affectionate mother, her remarkably bright and happy disposition remaining unchanged to the very last of her life, which covered eighty-seven years. Even at that advanced age she took a deep and active interest in all reforms. She shared her husband's trials and troubles in the antislavery cause, believing in the Golden Rule of Christ, and taking pride in his brave stand for the right. She was at all times considerate and hospitable. Her last thoughts were for the comfort of others. Her last words were a prayer for God's blessing upon her children. In the latter part of her life her beautiful brow wore a crown of suffering. It is a comfort to know that she is now wearing the golden crown of the redeemed. Dr. and Mrs. Mitchell were blessed with eleven children, viz.: Mary Ann, who died young; Robert and Matthew, twins, the former now living retired in the borough of Indiana; Isabella, who married Simeon Mitchell, and they settled in Fond du Lac, Wis., where they died; John; Anna Mary, who lived in Indiana borough and died Nov. 7, 1912; James and Jennie, living in the borough of Indiana; Benjamin, deceased; William, a resident of Indiana; and Caroline, deceased.

Matthew Clark, father of Mrs. Jane (Clark) Mitchell, was born in Coleraine, Ireland, in 1762, son of Francis and Mary Clark. In 1787, at the age of twenty-five, he married Mary Moore, the daughter of William and Mary Moore of Coleraine. By occupation he was a glazier and reedmaker. Dr. Adam Clark, the celebrated author of the commentary on the Bible, was a cousin and contemporary. Rev. James Hunter was pastor of the Associate Presbyterian Church. The church building, still standing, at the east end of the town, is well preserved, though part of its foundation was laid in the fifteenth

century. It is a one-story red brick building. Mr. Clark was a ruling elder of this church. When James and Anna Mary Mitchell, his grandchildren, brother and sister of Miss Jennie Mitchell, visited the old world they saw his name recorded on the church book and those of his eight children as receiving the baptism. They were presented a cup that was used at the tea drinkings of the Women's Aid Society of that church about the first of the century.

Jane Clark first saw the light of day in 1805, in a story and a half stone house on Meetinghouse street, Coleraine. The home had two front windows set lengthways and a door. The back lot slanted gradually to the foot, where flowed the beautiful river Bann, which just three miles below empties into the sea. The town is entered by means of a substantial stone bridge built in 1743, which crosses the Bann. Above the bridge one and a half miles are the beautiful Salmon Falls. On account of a continuous struggle for civic and religious freedom and a desire to be separated from British rule Mr. Clark longed to emigrate to the land of the free. His family consisted of eight children: William, Mary, Margaret, James and John (twins), Elizabeth, Samuel and Jane. In the spring of 1811 they bade farewell to their old home in Coleraine and set sail for the New World, and some one commemorated the occasion thus:

On the nineteenth of May  
From Lough Swillee we sailed away.  
The day being fine, the sky being clear,  
Down the channel we did steer.

After being out to sea about two weeks the vessel was boarded by a British man-of-war and turned back to Ireland. The offense was that the vessel had too many passengers aboard, according to British law. The owner of the vessel was an American, was tried in Dublin, found guilty and fined £3,000. While they lay at anchor there Elizabeth, who had been ill when sailing, died, and was buried on her native soil. The trial ended, they again set sail, heading for New York. When almost within sight of that harbor they were overtaken by a storm, and after being tossed about for seventy-one days entered Hampton Roads, Va., in distress, on Oct. 29th, five months, ten days after leaving Ireland the first time. Mr. Clark having friends in Norfolk, Va., dry goods merchants, Nelson & Neal, went ashore to call on them. They visited his family and were so attracted by the twin boys James and John that they persuaded their

father to let them remain and learn the business.

As the war with Great Britain was threatening, Mr. Clark decided to settle in Baltimore. Although Jane was but six years old she remembered the siege of the city, the burying of their valuables, the landing of General Ross, and often told her children of these things and of the evils of slavery which she witnessed while there. At the close of the war of 1812 the family moved to Pittsburg, making the trip over the mountains in a Conestoga wagon. Here the Clarks associated themselves with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, now known as the Second United Presbyterian, on Sixth street, and Matthew Clark was chosen elder. Mrs. Clark died in 1817 in her forty-ninth year, and was buried in that churchyard. On Sept. 14, 1818, Matthew married Elizabeth Wallace, of Allegheny county, Pa., and by her had five children: James, Elizabeth, Matthew, Nancy and Catherine. The last named daughter was married May 24, 1853, to Rev. John Comin, D. D., of Muskingum county, Ohio, and they had nine children, three sons and six daughters; they all graduated at Muskingum College, the three sons studied for the ministry, and the six daughters married United Presbyterian ministers.

In Rayne township, Indiana county, there resided on a fine farm Mr. James Getty. Having relatives by the same name living in Pittsburg, near neighbors of Matthew Clark, he made them a visit. He soon became enamored of Margaret Clark, and in April, 1819, they were married, and he brought her to his country home. Towards fall Margaret, becoming very homesick and lonely, succeeded in persuading her youngest sister, Jane, to make her a visit. Accompanied by Mr. Getty they set out in the late fall, on horseback. Being handsome and affable, she no doubt attracted some attention in the country.

On alternate Sabbaths it was customary for the Presbyterians and Associate Presbyterians to worship in the courthouse. One Sabbath morning, it being fine sleighing, James Getty brought his wife and Jane Clark to town to church in the courthouse. The services having begun when they entered, Dr. Mitchell was standing in front of the judge's bench, leading the congregational singing. As they entered the door, his eyes met Jane Clark's for the first time. It was love at first sight. It did not take the Doctor long to find an occasion to glide over the snow to call on the city girl. He rather informally invited

her to take a long sleighride, which she immediately declined to do on such short acquaintance. When this became known among the country girls it caused considerable amusement. But the Doctor was not discouraged, believing that faint heart ne'er won fair lady, continued his suit, and told her afterward that he respected her more than ever after the setback. Dr. Mitchell died April 14, 1862, his wife Sept. 7, 1890.

ROBERT MITCHELL, a venerable citizen of Indiana borough, now living retired, is one of its oldest native-born residents, having been born there Nov. 10, 1826. He is a son of Dr. Robert Mitchell, who was the second physician to settle in Indiana county. (See above.)

Mr. Mitchell obtained his education in the common schools and academy of Indiana. Acquiring an interest in a pine timber sawmill and country store at what is now the site of Mitchells Mills, Indiana county, he moved to that location with his family in the fall of 1849, taking charge of the business, to which he devoted the principal part of his attention for the next thirty-five years. For years during that period he also served as postmaster. In the year 1884 Mr. Mitchell returned to Indiana, where he became engaged in farming and banking, and he is now the only survivor of the band of men who organized the Farmers' Bank of Indiana; he is still serving as a director of that institution. He is also largely interested in timber and coal lands, and continues to manage his affairs with the same ability and acumen which have always characterized his business transactions. Like his father, he has always taken the interest of a highly public-spirited citizen in matters affecting the general welfare. He was one of the spectators at LaFayette Hall, Pittsburg, when the Republican party was organized, having attended with his father, who was a delegate to the convention. Originally he was a Free-soiler in his political opinions, joining the Republican party upon its formation. He is a member of the United Presbyterian Church. Mr. Mitchell was one of the first men at Indiana to subscribe to the Y. M. C. A., whose building was erected in 1912, and with one exception has been the most liberal contributor to its work at that point. In fact it was due to his generosity that the committee in charge of the campaign was encouraged to go ahead with the undertaking. When the directors were planning for the laying of the cornerstone it was the unanimous opinion of the board that Mr. Mitchell should have the honor, because of his age, long residence in

the town and honorable standing, to say nothing of his special interest in the work, and he took great pride in accepting. He is now serving as one of the trustees.

On Feb. 11, 1862, Mr. Mitchell was married, near Corsica, Jefferson Co., Pa., to Margaret Burnham, of that county, daughter of Charles C. and Susan (Stearn) Burnham; Mr. Burnham served in the war of 1812 in the company of which his father-in-law was captain. To Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell was born one child, Flora Jane, who is at home with her parents.