

HISTORY
OF
CENTRE AND CLINTON
COUNTIES,
PENNSYLVANIA.

BY
JOHN BLAIR LINN.

ILLUSTRATED.

PHILADELPHIA:
LOUIS H. EVERTS.
1883.

PRESS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO., PHILADELPHIA.

LEONARD RHONE, ESQ.

Leonard Rhone, Esq., was born on the farm on which he now resides, part of the old manor of Nottingham, once owned by the Penns, on the 21st of July, 1838. The farm is a part of No. 1 of the divisions of the manor sold by the Penns to Jacob Straub by deed of June 24, 1794. Michael Rhone, Leonard's grandfather, purchased it Sept. 15, 1794, removing thither from the eastern end of Penn's valley, and it has been in possession of the family ever since.

Leonard was one of the sons of Jacob and Sarah Rhone, and during his early life worked upon his father's place during the summer and attended a public school in the winter, thus acquiring a taste for farm-life, to which he is devotedly attached, and at the same time obtaining the rudiments of an education which he has not failed to vastly improve.

His father died in 1853, and Leonard remained on the farm with his mother, who with true womanly courage continued to carry on its operations, keeping the family together, and securing for them all the educational advantages the neighborhood afforded until its members arrived at a proper age to enter upon higher courses of study at seminaries and colleges.

In 1857, Mr. Rhone served a voluntary apprenticeship of some months in a coach-maker's shop, in order to acquire a knowledge of the use of tools, with a view to enable him to make ordinary farm repairs. He readily acquired a knowledge competent for all such purposes. Deeming a better education in the sciences and learning of the schools of great importance, in November, 1857, he entered Kishacoquillas Academy as a student. When asked by Mr. Alexander, the principal, what pursuit or profession he proposed to select for life, he promptly responded, "that of a farmer."

After pursuing his studies (in which he made great progress) for a year, he was again approached with the question of his intended pursuit, with the suggestion that greater opportunities for distinction awaited professional men. But firm to his resolution, he refused to give up his choice of a calling. His bent was shown in his essays, which were upon agricultural subjects, and his exhibition oration had for its topic "Agriculture."

During the winter of 1858-59 he taught school, thus firmly grounding his knowledge in efforts to instruct others, and at the close of his school returned to his home and assisted his mother on the farm.

In 1864, Mr. Rhone was married to Miss Maggie Sankey, daughter of James Sankey, Esq., of Potter's Mills, a lady of extraordinary energy of character and rare mental worth. His mother relinquishing charge of the farm, he became lessee of the old homestead, and in May, 1865, upon a sale of the place on mutual agreement of the family, he became sole proprietor of his father's property.

During these years of farm-life, while actively engaged in his favorite pursuit, he began to feel the importance and necessity of some organization among

farmers of a social and educational character, for the purpose of breaking up the monotony of rural life and cementing the tillers of the soil together in one fraternal brotherhood. This was not only a theory with him, but a real principle. He felt it, and as he pondered over the situation the idea burned itself into his very soul, and he longed for the day when the isolation of the farmer and his family should be broken up, and they could meet upon a fraternal platform for mutual benefit and protection. He saw other pursuits and professions banding together for like purposes, realized the benefits of combined efforts to their respective classes, and earnestly desired to see the same principles introduced among the farmers. Whilst absorbed with this thought the Patrons of Husbandry began to formulate their ideas in the same direction. As their work unfolded he discerned the wisdom of the new organization, and he watched its rise and progress with the most intense interest. As it expanded, and like a tidal wave rolled on, he saw its adaptation to the situation, and determined to enter into the work. In connection with a few of his neighbors, application was made for a charter, and on the 3d day of February, 1874, Progress Grange, No. 96, was duly organized at Centre Hall, he being a charter member of the first subordinate grange instituted in Centre County.

Once inside the gate, he saw still more clearly the power of the organization for good. He applied himself with great zeal and energy in the new field. So faithful and earnest were his efforts that on the 9th of April following he was commissioned by D. B. Waugen, Master of the Pennsylvania State Grange, deputy for Centre County, which position he continued to hold by consecutive annual appointment for seven years, during which time he displayed most untiring activity and performed an immense amount of labor in behalf of the organization. And so successful were his labors that the organization in Centre County to-day is admitted to be more complete than in any other county in the State.

At the organization of Centre County Pomona Grange, No. 13, Sept. 15, 1875, he was elected Master for one year, and re-elected five consecutive terms. In December, 1877, he was chosen Master of his own grange, No. 96, and served his term with great acceptability.

In December, 1878, he was elected Overseer of the Pennsylvania State Grange, which position he held for two years, and at the close of his term, at the session of the State Grange held in Greensburg in December, 1880, was unanimously chosen Master, to succeed Col. Piolet.

In June, 1880, he was elected a trustee of the Pennsylvania State College, located in Centre County, which position he has filled with marked ability and faithfulness, and impressed his ideas to some extent upon the workings of the institution.

In September, 1880, the National Greenback-Labor

party nominated him for the State Legislature, but having no proclivities for political life he declined on account of private business and other pressing engagements in connection with his position as an officer of the State Grange.

Some time prior to the assembling of the National Agricultural Convention, which met in the city of New York in January, 1882, Governor Hoyt, unsolicited, appointed him a delegate to that body. Previous engagements, however, prevented him from attending.

In stature Mr. Rhone is five feet eight inches high, erect, compactly built, and capable of great endurance. The immense amount of labor he performs as Master of the State Grange, in correspondence, public addresses, etc., in connection with his own private business, is sufficient to break down an ordinary man, but he bears it well, and seems to improve under the severe tension to which his physical ability is subjected.

Intellectually, Mr. Rhone is a plain, practical thinker. He only arrives at conclusions after mature consideration. He may justly be considered a safe counselor. His administration of the State Grange has been eminently successful. As a presiding officer he is calm, courteous, and firm, and wields the gavel with grace. As a speaker he is diffident, but only appears before an audience after mature preparation. Some idea of his style may be obtained by a short quotation from one of his addresses:

“Agricultural success is pre-eminently essential to national prosperity. It affords employment to over six hundred millions of the human race, and subsistence to all the multiplied millions that dwell upon the earth. Should Heaven for a single season frown upon the efforts of the farmer, by withholding its rain and sunshine, or by sending mildew and blight, the general round of prosperity in every department of government and trade would be silent as death; machinery would become motionless; vessels would be tied in their moorings; the efforts of genius would be paralyzed; the distortions of want and despair would fill the places of departed plenty and gladness. Yet, notwithstanding all these facts, the importance of agriculture is not properly appreciated. Our government is slow to recognize its real magnitude and worth. Appropriations of money for its promotion and development are small and insignificant compared with the fostering care and protection afforded to other and minor interests.”

Personally, Leonard Rhone is a warm-hearted, generous, and true man. Never forgets a favor or forsakes a friend. Appeals to his generosity are never made in vain. His moral character is unsullied and his Christian conduct above reproach. In a word, he is one of Nature's noblemen.