

HISTORY

OF THE

COUNTY OF WESTMORELAND,

PENNSYLVANIA,

WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

OF MANY OF ITS

PIONEERS AND PROMINENT MEN.

EDITED BY

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DAVID WILSON SHRYOCK.

David W. Shryock, Esq., of Greensburg, is a native of Westmoreland County, and was born in 1816, eight miles north of that borough, upon a farm which his grandfather purchased in 1782, for "forty-five pounds, Pennsylvania currency," the deed of which is registered on page 55 of volume i. of Westmoreland County records of deeds. His ancestry on his paternal side were German. John Shryock, his great-grandfather, with two brothers of his, and with other German Palatines, landed in Philadelphia in 1733. He settled in York County, Pa., where he died in 1778.

On his maternal side Mr. Shryock is of English descent, his ancestors having been of the number who constituted one of William Penn's colonies. They settled in Bucks County, Pa. His grandfather, David Wilson, served several years in the Revolutionary war.

Mr. Shryock, being the oldest of four brothers and three sisters, like all in the days of his childhood born upon farms, was put down to hard work from boyhood. Until he attained his majority he had to content himself with such limited means of education as the very common schools this part of the State afforded sixty years ago. At the age of twenty-one years he struck out for himself in the world, and spent most of three years as a member of an engineer corps in the service of the State of Indiana, and which was engaged making preliminary surveys and locating lines which have since been utilized by corporations in building some of the railroads in that State.

At the age of twenty-seven years he married a Miss Dickie, daughter of a worthy farmer in the county, and to gratify the wishes of his parents he took up his residence at the old homestead, where he conducted the farming operations for several years. In the fall of 1850 he purchased the office of the *Westmoreland Intelligencer*, a weekly newspaper, published at Greensburg, and the organ of the old Whig party in the county. He moved to town, and on the 8th of November, 1850, the first issue under his editorial

conduct of that paper appeared. The construction of the Pennsylvania Railroad through the county was then in progress. The heavy work in the vicinity of Greensburg brought there a large increase of population, which gave a new impetus to its growth and enterprise, making dwellings and suitable business houses scarce. For several years Mr. Shryock, like all other new-comers, labored under inconveniences from this source, but in 1855 he purchased a lot on Main Street, adjoining the Methodist Episcopal Church, from which a previous owner had removed all the antiquated buildings. On this he erected that year the large two-storied brick now there, and which he designed for his dwelling and printing-office mainly, but had in it also a law-office and store-room to rent. At that time it was among the best and most modernly constructed houses in town,—the first dwelling with a metallic roof,—and has doubtless yielded the owner the largest revenue on the original cost of any building in the place.

Mr. Shryock subsequently changed the name of his paper to that of the *Greensburg Herald*, and from the time he entered upon his editorial career up till 1870, twenty years, his was the only organ in the county to antagonize the old Democratic party, which up to 1860 was in the majority from one to two thousand votes. Some of the gubernatorial and Presidential campaigns between 1850 and 1870 were very heated, and sometimes bitter and personal. During that period there were times very trying to those at the head of public journals, who realized the responsibilities of the position, and felt the necessity of moulding a right public sentiment on all the questions before the country. The editorial columns of the old *Herald* bear ample testimony to Mr. Shryock's faithfulness in the position he occupied, as well as fearlessness in the advocacy of the doctrines of the party with which he affiliated, and his true loyalty to his country during the four years of civil war. He seems to have had the confidence and respect of his party in an unusually high degree. He was made one of the delegates for the Twenty-first District to the National Republican Convention of 1860, where he voted for the nomination of Mr. Lincoln, after casting his first ballot for Mr. Cameron under instructions from the State Convention.

In August, 1862, after the passage by Congress of the first internal revenue act, Mr. Shryock was commissioned by the President assessor of internal revenue for the Twenty-first District of Pennsylvania, then embracing the counties of Fayette, Westmoreland, and Indiana. This office imposed upon its incumbent duties of the most laborious, responsible, and perplexing character. Here was a new law to execute, the provisions of which were new to everybody. It taxed for war purposes every branch of business in the country. In its execution the assessor and his assistants were the first officers to come in contact face to face with the people, allay their prejudices, and try to re-

concile to and secure their prompt compliance with the law. Nor was this all: there were no decisions, explanations, or instructions, based upon the law to guide them in determining the true meaning of its elaborate and multifarious requirements. And yet justice and uniformity in its interpretation were expected at their hands. For over four years he discharged the duties of that office, and at the same time edited and published the *Herald*. But his loyalty to the Republican party and its pronounced doctrines, and his refusal to indorse Andrew Johnson and those who became his special exponents and had practically left the party, among them Senator Cowan (in aid of whose election as senator Mr. Shryock had given his best endeavors), procured the latter's removal from office. Soon thereafter Mr. Shryock associated with him in the publication of the *Herald* his son, John D. Shryock, who was then chief clerk in the Soldiers' Orphans' School Department at Harrisburg, under the administration of Governor Geary. His son's health, however, failed, and he died in October, 1871. Soon thereafter the health of Mrs. Shryock, the mother of his six children, gave way also and she died. Under these afflictions Mr. Shryock disposed of his newspaper to two gentlemen, who immediately united it with the *Tribune*, which had been started eighteen months previously by J. R. McAfee, Esq., and since the early part of the year 1872 the *Tribune and Herald* has been a weekly organ of the Republican party in the county.

Then for the first time in his life Mr. Shryock was practically out of business for four months. However, in May, 1872, he was appointed and confirmed collector of internal revenue for the old Twenty-first District, and entered upon the duties of that office on the 21st of that month. This position he filled till Oct. 1, 1876, when the district was divided, and the counties composing it were consolidated with the Twenty-second and Twenty-third Districts. Meantime he had again married, in March, 1874, Miss Martin, of Northumberland, and the fell destroyer had carried away his second daughter at the age of twenty-three, his only remaining son at the age of twenty-one, leaving him but two daughters, the eldest married, and the youngest, the latter also passing away at the age of sixteen years in November, 1877. He was now just where he was as to family thirty-four years previously. In January, 1878, he and his wife removed to Mount Pleasant, an old town, twelve miles south of Greensburg, in the coking coal region, where, associated with two other gentlemen, a private banking-house was opened, he taking charge of it as cashier. In the three and a half years he remained connected with that enterprise they built up a nice and remunerative business, the house gaining the confidence of the public to as large an extent as he could possibly have hoped.

For several reasons, among them the fact that the location and surroundings were not deemed comfort-

able and healthful, on account of the sooty atmosphere, produced by the vast and constantly-increasing quantity of coal being converted into coke, Mr. Shryock resolved to change his base. In September, 1881, he, with a number of other gentleman of large means in the county, subscribed the stock and organized "The Merchants' and Farmers' National Bank of Greensburg." Selling all his interest in the "Mount Pleasant Bank," Mr. Shryock returned to Greensburg, and was made cashier of the new bank, which opened for business Oct. 24, 1881, with a paid-up capital of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, to the interests of which he is now giving his undivided attention.

An earnest man, he is conscientious and zealous in all he undertakes. And although while he was engaged in politics his antagonisms with his fellow-citizens of the Democratic party were at times sharp, yet he has in that party some of his warmest personal friends, who esteem him highly for his integrity and generous social qualities. In religious faith Mr. Shryock is a Presbyterian, having united with that church in early life. At the age of thirty-three years, in 1849, he was chosen and ordained a ruling elder, and has exercised that office in his church ever since. In 1857 and in 1866 he was honored with a seat in the General Assembly as one of the commissioners from his Presbytery. He inherited a robust constitution from an ancestry of strong mental and physical development, and long-lived, some of them reaching the age of ninety-five years. Now in his sixty-sixth year, weighing over two hundred pounds, he is as strong and active on his feet as many men at forty. He and his most estimable wife have a very comfortable and attractive home, in a pleasant part of the town, where, by their cheerfulness and proverbial hospitality, they make the many friends who visit them full welcome and happy.
