

HISTORY
OF
ALLEGHENY COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA.

INCLUDING

ITS EARLY SETTLEMENT AND PROGRESS TO THE PRESENT TIME; A DESCRIPTION
OF ITS HISTORIC AND INTERESTING LOCALITIES; ITS CITIES, TOWNS AND
VILLAGES; RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND MILITARY HISTORY;
MINING, MANUFACTURING AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS;
IMPROVEMENTS, RESOURCES, STATISTICS, ETC.

ALSO

PORTRAITS OF SOME OF ITS PROMINENT MEN, AND BIOGRAPHIES OF MANY
OF ITS REPRESENTATIVE CITIZENS.

IN TWO PARTS.

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The subject of this sketch began his education at the age of six years in a school conducted by Mrs. Demars, on Third avenue, near the site of the Dollar Savings bank. A year later he was sent to the Second Ward school, conducted by Mr. J. B. Meeds. This was the first public school opened in Pittsburgh, and was in the old cotton-factory on the bank of the Monongahela river, on the site now occupied by the Monongahela House. At the age of thirteen the young pupil was placed in a school on Fourth avenue (where the front of the Dollar Savings bank now stands), the principal of which was Squire Thomas Steele, familiarly called "Tommie Steel"—a noted politician in his day, and quite a "character," under whose tuition he sat two years. He then entered upon the career in which he subsequently achieved both fame and fortune, as cabin-boy aboard the steamboat Bridgewater, commanded by Capt. Washington Ebbert. At the end of the season he engaged as cabin-boy with his uncle, John Vandergrift, who was a boat-builder and owner of the small steamer Pinta, which ran between Pittsburgh and Sunfish, Ohio. In 1844 he made several trips down the river on coalboats, which were floated like a raft, and in 1845 engaged on the steamboat Herald, running from Pittsburgh to St. Louis, Mo. He reached Pittsburgh on his return from this trip a few days after the disastrous fire of that year, and had great difficulty to find his people, who, as previously stated, had been driven from their home by the conflagration.

Jacob's next engagement was as mate of his uncle John Vandergrift's steamboat Prairie Bird, which was shortly afterward sold to Levi Miller, of Wheeling, W. Va., in whose employment he continued as her mate for about two years. From this vessel he went to the steamboat Rhode Island (under Capt. David Green), which he rebuilt and renamed Hail Columbia. After running this

boat for some time between Pittsburgh and Lafayette, on the Wabash river, he sold her for her owner, Capt. Green, and then accepted the position of mate on a large steamer commanded by Capt. Jabez Smith, plying between Pittsburgh and St. Louis. After leaving this boat he served in the same capacity on several others, and then went into the packet trade on the steamboat Allegheny, under Capt. C. W. Batchelor, who had married his cousin, a daughter of his uncle John Vandergrift. He left this vessel in 1853 to take command of the steamboat Black Diamond, a sidewheeler, 150 feet long, built at New Albany, Ind., the year previous, by Messrs. Daniel Bushnell and N. J. Bigley, exclusively to tow coal to Cincinnati, Ohio, being the first constructed solely for that purpose. This boat had been run by Capt. Bigley the first year, Mr. Bushnell attending to the mines; but the firm's business grew so large that Capt. Bigley was at length compelled to go to Cincinnati to live, in order to give it the attention it required. Until this time coal-barges in tow were placed only on both sides of the towboat, the space at the front not being utilized. Finally it occurred to Mr. Bushnell that this space could be advantageously occupied by coal-barges, with additional safety to the fleet and a decrease in the cost of transportation of coal. To test his theory he built six barges to be towed ahead of the boat exclusively. Although this method is common now—in fact the only one used in transporting coal down the river—it was unknown then, and when the idea was mentioned it was characterized as "absurd," "impossible," etc. There were not lacking mathematicians capable of demonstrating the utter impossibility of carrying out this plan, but then, as ever, pushing, practical men paid little heed to mere theorists, and the attempt was made, although not without opposition and delay. Many old steamboat captains, prudent and conservative, regarded the idea as a "crazy notion," and no one among them could be found to risk his reputation in attempting to put it into execution. At last Capt. Bigley recommended Mr. Bushnell to engage Vandergrift, assuring him that the young captain would carry out his orders to the letter even if it sunk the fleet. Barges at the present day generally hold about ten thousand bushels of coal, but at that time the usual load was from five to six thousand bushels. Capt. Vandergrift, being engaged for the service, assumed command of the Black Diamond, and on the initial trip took four barges of coal down the river. At first only a small amount of coal was taken, but afterward the quantity was increased to 150,000 bushels each trip. On the second trip an ugly smashup occurred at Beaver Shoals, and two barges were lost; but it is worthy of record that in the following seven years the firm lost only one more. This progressive method of transporting coal proved a complete success, and to Mr. Bushnell belongs the great credit of having con-

ceived it, while Capt. Vandergrift enjoys the distinction of being the first one with sufficient courage and address to put it in practice. After running one season as captain young Vandergrift, then but twenty-five years of age, added to his duties those of pilot, and in this double capacity served for several years. In 1858 he purchased one-third interest in the steamboat Red Fox, and shortly afterward one-quarter interest in the steamboat Conestoga, of which Mr. D. Bushnell was part owner. Placing Capt. Briggs in charge of the former, he himself took command of the latter, which until the opening of the civil war was engaged in towing coal from Pittsburgh to New Orleans.

At the close of about two years' service on the Conestoga, his interest in the oil business was awakened by the glowing newspaper accounts which fell under his notice, and, hiring a competent person to act as captain in his place, he went into West Virginia and began operations in the petroleum district. He had been thus engaged but a short time when his plant fell a prey to the military operations of the confederate forces, causing him to abandon the field. He then returned to Pittsburgh and sold the Conestoga and his barges to the national government. After its sale he took the steamboat to Cincinnati, Ohio, and superintended her transformation into a gunboat. He then took her to New Albany, Ind., where he put armor aboard of her and turned her over to Commodore Foote, U. S. navy. Returning again to Pittsburgh, he bought out the other owners of the Red Fox and put the vessel into the oil trade between that city and Oil City. This steamboat's first work in the oil trade was in November, 1861, towing two large coalboat bottoms from Pittsburgh to Oil City, with four thousand empty barrels in them as freight, consigned to various oil-operators. When delivering these barrels to the consignees Capt. Vandergrift bought five thousand barrels of crude oil from the Maple Grove Oil company, on Blood farm, to be delivered at buyer's option by July 1st following. The problem which presented itself was how to get the oil to Pittsburgh. Capt. Vandergrift returned home and formed a connection with Mr. Daniel Bushnell. While the two partners were figuring to get barrels to bring the oil to market, the first bulkboat ever run (owned by Richard Glyde) arrived from Oil City. Inspection at Allegheny City convinced the partners that this was the cheapest and most feasible method of transporting oil, as it had all to come by water at that time. Capt. Vandergrift then explained the plan to an intimate friend, a boatbuilder named John Redman, and the latter agreed to build for the partners twelve of the "flats" or "bulkboats," eighty feet long, fourteen feet wide and three feet deep, with an individual capacity of about four hundred barrels, at a cost approximating to two hundred dollars each. After construction, in the spring of 1861, these boats were taken up to Oil City, and by

July of the same year they had more than paid for themselves, and proved to be the beginning of a very profitable business. As an example, one fleet of oil purchased at point of production in 1863 at one dollar per barrel was sold a little later in the same year at Pittsburgh for twelve dollars per barrel, at a profit of seventy thousand dollars. After running the Red Fox to Oil City for a year Capt. Vandergrift put his brother Benjamin aboard of her as captain, and sent him with a tow of coal to Nashville, Tenn. As the Red Fox was returning to Pittsburgh the United States quartermaster at Smithland pressed the vessel into the government service, and directed her commander to report with boat and crew to the quartermaster at Paducah, Ky., for orders. Arriving at this point, the vessel was placed at work for two months towing forage and provisions to Pittsburgh Landing, and was then ordered to Cairo, where the post quartermaster employed her in towing coal to the fleet of gunboats at Island No. 10. After making several trips to the fleet, the boat was ordered back to Cairo, and Capt. Benjamin Vandergrift and his crew, being mustered out of the service, returned to Pittsburgh. Shortly after this the government authorities again took possession of the Red Fox, and manned her with an independent crew. On her second trip, while making a landing, the vessel struck a sunken barge in the river at Cairo, and sank, becoming a total loss. Up to this writing no indemnity has been awarded the owners for her loss. About this time Capt. Vandergrift began to acquire interests in oil-producing "up Oil Creek." As his partner, Mr. Bushnell, preferred to confine his operations to the less hazardous business of transportation, the two separated, Mr. Bushnell then taking as associate his son Joseph. Capt. Vandergrift now took up his residence at Oil City, and threw himself with vigor into the work of producing oil, and developing the oil country. Associated with Mr. W. H. Ewing, of Pittsburgh, in 1863 and 1864 he formed one or two companies for producing oil, which met with moderate success. His next important enterprises were in connection with a railroad and a pipe-line. The first pipe-line for oil transportation was laid in 1865 by an operator named Van Sickle, and extended between Pithole and Shafer farm, a distance of about six miles. The Oil City & Pithole railroad, organized in 1869 by a number of capitalists in Oil City and Pittsburgh, proved unsuccessful by the Pennsylvania railroad taking possession of the roadbed from Oil City to Oleopolis, and was placed in the hands of Mr. George V. Forman, as receiver. In partnership with this gentleman Capt. Vandergrift equipped and ran a line of tank-cars, called the Star Tank-line, carrying oil from Pithole to Oil City. In order to secure business for the road, in which Capt. Vandergrift was a heavy stockholder, the firm of Vandergrift & Forman laid a pipe-line from West Pithole to Pithole, a distance

of about four miles. This line, which was named the Star Pipe-line, was the real commencement of the gigantic system which now prevails under the name of the National Transit company. In 1871 the firm of Vandergrift & Forman, of which Mr. John Pitcairn, Jr., of Philadelphia, had recently become a member, laid another pipe-line, four miles in length, from Fagundas to the Warren & Franklin railroad, on Allegheny river, at a point named Trunkeyville. This line, first known as the Trunkeyville, was afterward named the Commonwealth Pipe-line. The firm next laid the Sandy Pipe-line, twelve miles in length, from Oil City to East Sandy, and followed it by the Milton Pipe-line, four miles long, from the Milton farm, or Bredensburg, to Oil City. Later constructions by the firm were the Western Pipe-line, from Shaw farm to the new Imperial refinery above Oil City about three miles; and also the Franklin Pipe-line, for collecting oil from the district around Franklin. The Imperial refinery, having a capacity of two thousand barrels per day, and considered a huge enterprise at that time, was built by Capt. Vandergrift and his partners. Another enterprise which Capt. Vandergrift was prominent in organizing was the Oil City Trust company, the capital of which was \$120,000. Mr. Forman was president of this company, which had its bank and offices in Love's block, Centre street, Oil City, and Mr. Vandergrift and a number of other leading oil-men and merchants were directors and stockholders. The next enterprise of Capt. Vandergrift was the organization of pipe-line systems in Butler and Venango counties, severally named the Fairview Pipe-line, Raymilton Pipe-line, Cleveland Pipe-line and Millers-town Pipe-line, all controlled by Vandergrift, Forman & Co. When perfected these lines were united as one general system under the name of the "United Pipe-Lines of Vandergrift, Forman & Co.," and this system was, in April, 1887, consolidated with sundry other pipe-lines, and incorporated under the title of the United Pipe-lines. This company gradually absorbed all the remaining competing lines in the lower oil-regions, and shortly after the first development of oil at Bradford entered that district also, and became its great system. A recent writer on the subject refers to Capt. Vandergrift's connection with this company in the following words:

Of the United Pipe-lines Capt. Vandergrift has always been president, and to him, therefore, is attributable a very large share of the unbounded and well-merited confidence the company has always possessed, from not only the producers and holders of oil, but also the banking institutions of the country. The latter are accustomed to accept its certificates for petroleum for collateral as readily as government bonds. In fact, the United Pipe-lines have been considered as "above suspicion." In compliance with the demands of some dissatisfied producers, on two occasions, "the doors were flung wide open" for investigation; the affairs and every tank of the company were most thoroughly examined by these opponents and their agents, without restriction of any kind, and from the inquiry the reputation of the company came, if possible, even more untarnished than ever. To illustrate the unsullied in-

tegrity of this company in its trust as storers of oil it is sufficient to add that at its own original suggestion, in order that the storing of oil should always be set about with the utmost safeguards to the public, and to prevent unscrupulous people engaging in the business, there is an act of assembly in Pennsylvania, that at the instance of any holder of certificates for ten thousand barrels of oil, any pipe-line company's affairs can be at any time thoroughly investigated and every tank of oil gauged, to ascertain the exact quantity on hand.

At the incorporation of the company, Mr. John R. Campbell, of Oil City, became its treasurer, and in that capacity has continued to the present time, proving a most efficient assistant to the president in the company's affairs. To his remarkable skill as an accountant the company owes its present admirable system of records, checks and counter-checks, which may be said to render fraud impossible. The vice-president of the company is Mr. Daniel O'Day, of Buffalo, N. Y., a gentleman whose wonderful administrative and executive abilities have been exerted in its service with the most brilliant results. Although still maintaining its own organization, the United Pipe-line company was, in 1884, merged into and made a division of the enormous system represented by the National Transit company, the capital of which is \$30,000,000. At the time this union was effected the reasons for it were fully and satisfactorily explained. In the producing of petroleum, "now the third staple of the world," Capt. Vandergrift has for many years been specially prominent. In 1872 he was one of several capitalists organizing the firm of H. L. Taylor & Co., for the development of oil-lands in Butler and Armstrong counties, Pa., and also the Argyle Savings bank, at Petrolia, Butler county. Both these enterprises were highly successful. The first named eventually gave birth to the Union Oil company, with its immense business interests. The bank, during its existence, was honored by the public confidence to an extent which was truly remarkable, at the same time extremely complimentary to its incorporators, for notwithstanding that its capital was but \$50,000 its deposits at times reached the enormous aggregate of a million and a half. In 1876 the firm of Vandergrift, Forman & Co. was dissolved, Mr. Forman withdrawing. Its successor, organized at once, was the firm of Vandergrift, Pitcairn & Co., of which Messrs. Edward Hopkins, J. R. Campbell and W. J. Young (the last named now president of the Oil City Trust Co.) constituted the "company." Mr. Pitcairn withdrew subsequently, and the remaining members of the firm re-organized under the style of Vandergrift, Young & Co. Capt. Vandergrift was the prime mover in the organization of the Forest Oil company (capital \$1,200,000), of which he has been president since its incorporation. His associates in the management of this great oil-producing corporation are Mr. W. J. Young, vice-president, Mr. J. R. Campbell, treasurer, who, with Mr. Joseph Bushnell, compose the executive committee. Prominent among other companies in which he is heavily inter-

ested are the Anchor Oil company and the Associated Producers' company, each with a capital of one million dollars. He is also a large individual producer of oil.

In 1881 Capt. Vandergrift removed from Oil City, where he had lived many years, to his present large and beautiful property on the bluff skirting Fifth avenue extension, East Liberty, about five miles from the business portion of Pittsburgh. This removal was the result of his growing manufacturing interests. In the development of natural gas, fraught with such astounding changes and benefits to the industrial world of Pittsburgh, Capt. Vandergrift is entitled to rank as a pioneer and arch promoter. As early as 1875, in association with John Pitcairn, Jr., and Capt. C. W. Batchelor, of Pittsburgh, and others, under the name of the Natural Gas company, limited, he laid the first natural-gas line of any importance, connecting, by a six-inch pipe, gas-wells near Saxonburg with the great iron-mills of Spang, Chalfant & Co. and Graff, Bennett & Co., thus practically demonstrating to the manufacturing world the great value of this wonderful natural product. About the same time, in association with Mr. Pitcairn and Mr. A. C. Beeson, he constructed and operated successfully the Butler Gas-lines. With his removal to Pittsburgh his interest in natural gas received additional impetus, for, perceiving at once the magnificent possibilities of this wonderful product, he then became one of the foremost advocates of its general employment for industrial and fuel purposes, and proceeded in a more effective manner to place it conveniently at the disposal of the public. Through his active initiative or co-operation were formed the Penn Fuel company, the Fuel Gas company, the Bridge-water Gas company, the Natural Gas company of West Virginia, and the Chartiers Natural Gas company, all corporations of large capital and extensive connections, and in each of which he became a leading director. Had he rendered no other service to the business interests of the state of Pennsylvania, his activity and enterprise in this direction alone would entitle him to distinguished consideration. Of his multitudinous business enterprises in Oil City and Pittsburgh, a volume might be written. In both places he has the reputation of being one of the most alert and active of businessmen. He was among the projectors of the Oil City and Petroleum bridge and the Venango bridge, both of which span the Allegheny river, the former connecting North and South Oil City, and the latter West and South Oil City. He was for some time president of both companies. Another of his enterprises, in which his partners were Mr. O'Day and Mr. M. Geary, was the Oil City Boiler-works, probably the largest industrial institution in the oil country. These works have already constructed iron tankage to a capacity of nearly thirteen million barrels, and also an enormous number of engines and

boilers. Soon after arriving in Pittsburgh he was associated with Mr. Joshua Rhodes and others in establishing the Pennsylvania Tube-works, capital \$1,200,000. Having been a member of the oil exchanges at Oil City and Titusville, he quite naturally joined that at Pittsburgh. With rare business perception he saw that this organization was weak, and therefore resolved to strengthen it. Meeting with no assistance from the members, he concluded to found a new exchange, and in 1883 he obtained a charter for one from the local court. He then selected a site on Fourth avenue, opposite the Dollar Savings bank, and erected thereon a magnificent building, which cost, together with the site, \$150,000. While it was being constructed he organized the Pittsburgh Petroleum Exchange, and in spite of the most virulent opposition and abuse from interested members of the old exchange, he finally perfected it. In April, 1884, the new exchange went into operation, by purchasing the new building, paying Mr. Vandergrift for it in cash. Besides the banking institutions already named, Capt. Vandergrift has aided in founding and organizing others, including the Seaboard National Bank of New York and the Keystone Bank of Pittsburgh. He is president of the last named. In the Allegheny National Bank of Pittsburgh, also, he was at one time a director. His name is likewise connected with various iron enterprises in Pittsburgh, and of course is intimately associated with the Standard Oil company, of which he early became a member by taking stock in the company for his Imperial refinery near Oil City, and for several years was a director. In natural gas, in addition to companies named, he has been the promoting spirit in organizing the United Oil and Gas trust, of which he is president; the Toledo Natural Gas company, capital \$2,000,000, and the Washington Oil company, and in extending the Pennsylvania Tube-works and the Apollo Iron and Steel company, equipping the latter with open-hearth furnaces and extensive galvanizing-works, and increasing the general capacity to rank with the largest sheet-iron manufacturers in the United States. As may be inferred from this account, Capt. Vandergrift is a man of extraordinary vigor and energy. In physique being rather short and stout, he shows his capacity for hard work and concentrated thought. He may be said to have grappled successfully with nearly every problem that has confronted him. His shrewdness and good judgment in business transactions are exceptionally excellent, and they have been so carefully and efficiently called into play that almost every enterprise their possessor has entered upon seems to have yielded golden returns.

In all his business relations Capt. Vandergrift is a model of uprightness and honor. His kindness of heart is something remarkable, and to those who know him intimately it seems as if he would never weary of doing

good, although the greater number of his philanthropic and kindly acts have, through his natural modesty, never been heralded to the public. It may be said that no really deserving applicants for assistance have ever been dismissed unaided. The claims of strangers as well as friends are deemed valid, and neither race nor creed debars from his sympathy. In the cause of religion he is and always has been generous to a fault. Some of his acts in aid of the church have been princely. One, the gift of a number of thousand dollars (over half its cost) to the First Presbyterian Church of Oil City, toward the construction of the edifice in which it now worships, was of this character. Through Mr. Vandergrift's munificence the congregation is out of debt, and worships God in a free church, to which all, rich and poor alike, are welcome. Capt. Vandergrift is generally somewhat reserved in manner, but in the company of friends or in society he is most agreeable and entertaining, more especially when interested, and at times "jovial and the life of the party." He is a good friend, but, like most men of positive character, is strong in his dislikes.