

HISTORY
OF
FRANKLIN COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA,

CONTAINING A HISTORY OF THE COUNTY, ITS TOWNSHIPS, TOWNS,
VILLAGES, SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, INDUSTRIES, ETC.; PORTRAITS OF
EARLY SETTLERS AND PROMINENT MEN; BIOGRAPHIES;
HISTORY OF PENNSYLVANIA, STATISTICAL AND
MISCELLANEOUS MATTER, ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

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JAMES OLIVER CARSON, third son of David and Jean (Oliver) Carson, was born at Greencastle, Penn., on February 4, 1796, and died at Mercersburg, Penn., on June 14, 1870. During a long and active life he was prominent in the business and industrial life and development of southern Pennsylvania. He was for many years an associate judge of Franklin County, and a man of influence and power in the section of the county in which he resided. He was a man of stern but sterling qualities of character, of strong convictions and decided opinions, of unflinching moral courage, of excellent executive ability, and as a disciplinarian in the family and in business he had few superiors. His education was such as the schools of his native town afforded. At about the age of seventeen or eighteen he left his home and entered the service of John and Hugh Kennedy, at Hagerstown, Md., as a clerk. This firm's business operations, which included mercantile, milling and other interests were the most extensive in the State of Maryland, at that time outside the city of Baltimore. The Messrs. Kennedy were not only enterprising business men of marked ability, but were highly cultured Christian gentlemen, one of them, John, being an accomplished Latin, Greek and Hebrew scholar. It was in this school, with such men as instructors, that Mr. Carson received his business training. He always esteemed it a kind providence which cast his lot with them upon leaving the parental home. Until married, his home at Hagerstown was in the family of Mr. John Kennedy, by whom he was taught to speak Pennsylvania German with fluency, as if "to the manor born," an acquirement which through life proved to be of great value to him in his business. Soon after reaching his majority he was admitted to an interest in the mercantile branch of the business of John & Hugh Kennedy, and continued in business with them until 1826, when he moved to Mercersburg, where he resided the remaining forty-four years of his life.

The considerations which suggested and induced his leaving Hagerstown at that time, may at this period be regarded as unique. His business was prosperous, his social relations satisfactory, but his church connection (Associate Reformed Presbyterian) did not satisfy his mind and conscience. He believed that church was growing lax in doctrine, not "contending for the truth once delivered to the saints," and for that reason decided to remove from Hagerstown and locate where he could enjoy church privileges in connection with a communion whose testimony for the truth accorded with his own views. In these days of rationalism and the "new religion," he will be regarded by

many as a very narrow minded man upon questions of religious doctrine, but there can be no doubt of the conscientious sincerity of his belief. Since he always had the courage of his convictions upon issues both secular and religious, his decision to leave Hagerstown and the reasons therefore, were entirely consistent with his character. After deciding to make a change, he for some time balanced in his mind between making Baltimore City or Mercersburg his future home. The scale was turned in favor of the latter by the fact that an Associate Presbyterian Church was established there, and that he would be within easy reach of his widowed mother, then still living, at Greencastle. On the 2d of January, 1821, he was married to Rosanna Marshall White, by the Rev. John Lind, at Hagerstown. Her great-grandfather, John White, who was an Englishman, came to this country about 1725 and settled in New Jersey. Her grandfather, Peter White, in early manhood settled in Washington (then Frederick) County, Md., and took up a large body of land then known by the names of "End the Strife," "Whiskee," and "Toddy," and situated on both banks of the now historic Antietam Creek.

There he married Margaret Stull, by whom he had eight children. The oldest, Sarah, married John Wagoner, and was the mother of Mrs. John Kennedy. Another daughter was the mother of Rev. Edward Geary—a Presbyterian divine, who for many years lived and recently died in Oregon—and of John White Geary, a soldier in the war with Mexico, the first mayor of San Francisco, a general in the Union Army in the war of the Rebellion, and for two terms governor of Pennsylvania. Another daughter was Mrs. Dursilla Holt, for many years a bed-ridden cripple, who made her home with Mrs. Wagoner at "End the Strife." And still another was Mrs. Watts, who moved "west to Pittsburgh." The sons of Peter White were Isaac Stull—who married Miss Rench of Washington County, Md., and was for two terms high sheriff of that county; two other sons who died single after "sowing a crop of wild oats," and John White. The latter was a soldier in the war of the Revolution, and the father of Mrs. James O. Carson. He married Ellen Williams, who was of Welsh ancestry, and settled in the Ligonier Valley, Westmoreland County, Penn., where Mrs. Carson was born on May 2, 1791. She died at Mercersburg on September 24, 1879. About 1805 or 1806 she traveled on horseback from Westmoreland County to Hagerstown to make her home with her aunt, Mrs. Sarah White, widow of John Wagoner, who lived at the old homestead of Peter White ("End the Strife"). She lived with this aunt until May, 1818, when upon the death of her cousin, Mrs. Margaret Wagner, wife of John Kennedy, she entered his family and took charge of his house. Thus she and Mr. Carson became members of the same household.

On the 15th of November, 1817, an Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was organized at Hagerstown under the pastorate of Rev. John Lind. On the roll of those joining that organization and uniting with the church upon profession of their faith, are the names of Rosanna Marshall White and James O. Carson. Of the communion service the next day, November 16, it is recorded that it was the first ever held and celebrated there in the English language. Mrs. Carson was equally a friend to the rich and the poor. To know that others were in distress or need quickened her pulse and gave outward action to her sympathy. She was a Christian wife and mother in the most comprehensive meaning of those endearing titles. In her eighty-ninth year she was gathered to her fathers, and until within two hours of her entrance into heavenly rest her intellect was clear and bright as in the prime of womanhood.

The field of Mr. Carson's business operations was not one that offered oppor-

tunity for colossal transactions, yet his energy and sagacity created business of no mean proportions, when his surroundings and the period of his activity are considered. After leaving Hagerstown, in 1826, the center of his business operations was his country store at Mercersburg, the stock of which embraced everything from needles and grindstones to silks and satins, from jews-harps and fiddle-strings to fine laces and broadcloth. This business, multiform in its details, and probably as extensive as any of a mercantile character in the county at that period, was the center but not the limit of his operations. While managing it he owned and conducted a paper-mill at Cove Gap, established a branch store, owned farms, built and operated a flour-mill in Well's Valley, Fulton County; was a large dealer in agricultural real estate, buying, improving and selling many farms; was executor and administrator of numerous estates, and later owned and, in connection with his son David, operated a steam flour-mill at Mercersburg. In the midst of his enterprising, earnest business life he did not forget or neglect his duty to his family, to his church, or to the community in which he lived. In his family, in the training of his children during their earlier years, he practiced the same exacting discipline which characterized his business methods. He was especially diligent in personally instructing them in that system of worship and faith set forth in the "Westminster Confession and Catechism," which, with his whole soul and mind, he believed to be the very essence of divine, infallible truth. Under such discipline his children during childhood and youth respected and loved him, but experienced restraint in his presence. When they reached years of discretion he became their congenial companion and confidant. The rigid rules of his household relaxed and the sterner features of his character softened as he grew cheerfully and gracefully old. These changes were manifest to the outside world, but were most marked in his own home. His devotion and liberality to the church of his choice, his sincere belief in divine authority for her doctrine, and his love for her ordinances, may be inferred from the considerations already noticed, which prompted and induced him to change his home and business from Hagerstown to Mercersburg.

All public enterprises, especially educational, which aimed to promote the general welfare of the community in which he lived, he advocated with characteristic energy, and contributed largely to their success. One of the helpful ways in which he served that community was by promptly recognizing the industry, energy and honesty of worthy young men outside of his own family connection, and aiding them with money and by counsel to establish themselves in business. One of those thus helped thirty-five years ago, when interrogated sixteen years after the death of Mr. Carson with a view to learning some facts for this sketch, closed the interview, the tears trickling down his cheeks, with this expression: "I just tell you, you can't say too much that is good about Mr. Jimmie O. Carson. He took hold of me and made a man of me. When I wasn't worth 50 cents he loaned me \$300, and gave me a letter of credit to Philadelphia, that got me all the iron and other material to start my little machine shop." This is but one of many instances in which it was Mr. Carson's delight to make the rough places smooth for those who were honest and industrious but needing help. He aimed to aid such, not by that charity which begets dependency and beggary, but to aid them to help themselves, and thus develop in them self-reliance and true manhood.

Mr. Carson had little taste for public life or ambition for political preferment. He, however, took an active interest in all political and other issues whether to be settled by the ballot or otherwise. When such issues had a moral phase he became especially active and earnest. He was an ardent anti-Mason;

and exerted all his powers in opposition to Masonry during the years this question played so large a part in Pennsylvania politics. This was the period commencing about 1829, and continuing until after the election of Ritner as governor and the legislative investigation of Masonry. He was equally as ardent an anti-slavery man, taking a most active and decided part in opposition thereto. As an instance of this, about the year 1838, an anti-slavery lecturer named Blanchard came to Mercersburg, but failed to secure a room in which to speak. Upon coming out of one of the churches he was mobbed by a crowd composed largely of Southern students of Marshall College, then located at Mercersburg. Mr. Carson, with others, without weapons, faced the mob, and by force of character and moral courage quelled it and rescued its victim. The community was for some time afterward much excited over this occurrence, and much bitter feeling was engendered by it. Mr. Carson lost no opportunity of denouncing the mob and those who sympathized with it. He continued a Whig until that party ceased to exist, and then became a Republican. During the Rebellion he was active in raising troops and furnishing supplies for the Union Army. When the rebels were in southern Pennsylvania three of their pickets rode one day into Mercersburg. They were fired upon by three Union soldiers, who were concealed in the Diamond of the town. One of the rebels was killed, and the horse of another was shot from under him. The dismounted rebel ran and turned the corner at which Mr. Carson's house was situated. Mr. Carson at once gave chase, calling lustily "surrender, surrender!" The rebel finding himself hotly and closely pursued, stopped, threw up his hands and surrendered himself, his carbine and sword to the old gentleman whose only weapon was a walking stick.

In 1856 Mr. Carson was nominated by the Republican party for associate judge. The election resulting in a tie vote in the county, he was appointed to that position by Gov. Pollock. He was afterward elected to it in 1861, serving until 1866. He was offered the nomination as candidate of the Republican party for the State Legislature, but he declined it on the ground that he could spend his time more pleasantly and profitably with his family, and that there were others quite as well qualified to serve the public.

The record of the children of James O. and Rosanna M. Carson is as follows: Ebenezer Erskin, born at Hagerstown, Md., November 4, 1822; died at Hagerstown, Md., February 1, 1823. . . . David, born at Hagerstown, Md., March 23, 1824; married Mary E. Patterson in September, 1845; died at Baltimore, Md., September 13, 1862; at the time of his death he was a soldier in the Union Army, Company C, One Hundred and Twenty-sixth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. . . . Ellen Jane, born at Hagerstown, Md., April 12, 1826; married Duncan James McNaughton in September, 1845; died at Mercersburg, October 1, 1881. . . . Elizabeth Erskin, born at Mercersburg, Penn., March 18, 1828; married Thomas Clarkson Grove in 1852; died at Mercersburg, July 1, 1869. . . . James White, born at Mercersburg, Penn., February 12, 1830; married Rebecca M. Darrah, December 15, 1857; settled in Philadelphia in 1849, where he has since resided, engaged in mercantile and manufacturing pursuits. . . . John Lind, born at Mercersburg, August 30, 1832; married Mary Masters Ruely; settled in Nebraska in 1856, where he established the first banking house in that (then Territory) State, and has since resided and been engaged at banking there.