

# 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.

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IN TWO PARTS.

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E. M. HUKILL. If "history is philosophy teaching by example," then that branch of history which we call biography, which records the efforts and achievements of the individual, is the best teacher of the majority of young men who are mapping out their plans for the future. Our simple purpose in this brief sketch is not to eulogize one who, less than fifty years of age, is still making history, and who would shrink from mere personal adulation, but rather to encourage that large class of young men who, in the midst of apparently untoward circumstances, are longing to build characters and achieve results which will honor the communities in which they live, and benefit their fellows. Many of the best men of to-day—men richly endowed by nature and capable of grand achievements in almost any position—have never filled the chair of state, or occupied a seat in legislative halls. They have preferred less conspicuous but equally honorable positions. As scientists, or merchants, or manufacturers, or developers of the resources of the state, they have given evidence of both strength and grasp of intellect, and accomplished results of far greater benefit to the country at large than nineteen-twentieths of the men who have devoted their time to schemes for personal notoriety and the attainment of mere official position. One of the encouraging signs of the times is found in the fact that these real benefactors of their race are held in increasingly higher esteem, and are becoming more and more the models after which the most intelligent young men are seeking to pattern. With all the scramble for office and greed for gain that characterize too many to-day, there is a growing regard for those whose characters, acquirements and achievements would confer honor on official positions, rather than that other class who are honored by the office, and who sink out of sight the moment they are compelled to vacate and take their places in the ranks. Pennsylvania owes much of its proud position among the sisterhood of states to this better class to which we have referred. Among those who have done much to develop its resources is the subject of this sketch.

Mr. Hukill lacks a year of the time of celebrating his fiftieth birthday, and, owing to his active mental and physical life, both of which are essential to the greatest longevity, and his temperate habits, looks as though he had a fair lease of many years to come. He was born in New Castle county, Del., in 1840, and is one of a family of ten children, sons and daughters of Gideon E. and Susanna (McMurphy) Hukill. The first half of his life was spent on the paternal homestead, a large farm, where pure air and daily exercise aided in building up a vigorous constitution.

At the early age of sixteen, owing to the death of his father in 1856, there devolved on him, in conjunction with an older brother, who retired soon thereafter, the duty of overseeing the farm and caring for his mother and the other members of the household. Notwithstanding all these cares he found time for study and improvement, and began to long for wider fields of effort and emolument than those afforded by the quiet life of a farmer. In 1864, eight years after the death of his father, he removed his mother and her family to the neighboring village of Odessa, and then started out into the world to carve fame and fortune for himself. Philadelphia, the largest city in the neighboring state of Pennsylvania, naturally attracted his attention, and thither he went in search of employment. Not content to remain idle, and without the means to embark in business for himself, he accepted a position with a merchant largely engaged in the commission business. But the routine character of his new-found occupation was no more compatible with his active temperament and his laudable ambition than was the farm life so recently left behind. While faithfully meeting his daily duties he was on the alert for information which would open up a broader field and bring better financial results than were possible to one occupying a mere clerical position.

The existence of petroleum, or "rock oil," was known for many years in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and other localities, but, as in the case of many other articles of great commercial value, its real worth was for a long time hidden from the eyes of men. The history of the methods of its production in large quantities, its utilization, the fortunes often made in an hour and as quickly lost, and the important place it holds in the home and foreign trade of the country, reads more like pages from Aladdin and his lamp than a sober record of actual facts. For a time it was sold in bottles as a medicine, but late in the 50's Mr. Samuel M. Kier, of Pittsburgh, learned the art of refining it so that it could be used as an illuminant. About the same time Drake's patience and perseverance in boring for it were rewarded with success, and the result was an interest and excitement unequaled in the history of Pennsylvania. The "find" was on Oil creek, in Venango county. Thousands of men in every pursuit and position in life, young men and old men as well, capitalists and laborers, were attracted to the new and wonderful El Dorado. Young Hukill saw his opportunity, and with faith in himself and his future, though possessed of scarcely more than enough money to pay his way thither, resigned his position and turned his face toward the western part of the state. Early in November, 1864, we find him in Venango county, the then seat and center of the oil business. His scant capital of seven and a half dollars allowed no time for delay, and he first found and accepted a position as

a day-laborer, and later on as an attaché of a surveyor's corps, but employing his spare time and every available dollar in outside ventures, so that within a month of his arrival in the new country he had established himself as a dealer in lumber and oil in a small way. He gradually but steadily increased his ventures, and soon became known as one of the largest and boldest operators in the region. From dealing to production was but a short step for a man possessing the nerve, enterprise and energy of Mr. Hukill; and, the transition completed, it was not long before he ranked as one of the most adventurous and successful producers of the entire region, which reputation he has always maintained, and does to-day in all his operations. The year 1869 marked an important epoch in his history. During that year he was married to Mattie E. Lyday, a native of Washington county, Md., but at the time of her marriage a resident of Jasper county, Iowa. Four children—Edwin M., Jr., Lyday May, Ralph Vincent and Grace Watkins—blessed their union, and still live to share the comforts and pleasures of a Christian home.

During 1870 and 1871 Mr. Hukill continued his producing operations, but in the latter year removed to Oil City, and, with J. B. Reynolds and S. H. Lamberton as partners, established the banking-house of Reynolds, Hukill & Co. Banking business, always more or less hazardous, was especially so at that time, owing to the downward tendency in the price of oil, the depression in all branches of business—and which finally culminated in the terrible panic of 1873—and the large risks so common among men in the oil business. To bank successfully required keen insight, prompt decision, a knowledge of men and a knowledge of "affairs in general" as well. Mr. Hukill's versatility made him equally at home in the role of a banker as in that of a farmer, a clerk, a day-laborer, or a producer of oil and general dealer, and he continued an active partner until 1876. Though successful as a banker, the duties and requirements of the position were of such a nature as to repress and hold in subjection his innate spirit of activity, and he accordingly abandoned banking for the more congenial and active life of a prospector for and producer of oil. Five years more were spent in this way, 1877 and 1878 in the neighborhood of Oil City, and 1879, 1880 and 1881 in the Bradford field, which had attracted wide attention.

One of Mr. Hukill's marked characteristics is his keen perception of the "utilities" of everything with which he is brought into contact, and his independence in making investigations and marking out lines of action. While not rash, he is progressive. With him to determine is to act. Once convinced that a given course will bring good results to himself and others, he throws into it the ardor of his whole being, and spares neither time nor effort nor expense until a

demonstration is reached on the one side or the other. And this remark suggests another field of operation in which Mr. Hukill has figured very prominently. Natural gas had been found in larger or smaller amount in nearly every oil-field, and as a matter of curiosity or a necessary economy, owing to the decreasing price of oil, had been utilized as a fuel for pumping the wells, and, to a limited extent, for household purposes. Could it not be found in larger quantities and be more widely introduced? Was it not pre-eminently the fuel for the manufacture of iron, steel and glass? Mr. Hukill answered these questions to himself affirmatively, and with the conviction that all this was possible came schemes for its production and utilization on a large scale. As the solving of this problem has had so much to do with the industries in which natural gas is now used as a fuel, and has added so much to the wealth of Pittsburgh and other localities, Mr. Hukill's part in solving the problem can not well be omitted. This part of his history is so well told by another\* that we incorporate it in this sketch.

Since the discovery of petroleum the oil-men had not failed to appreciate the value of natural gas as a fuel, and it was continually utilized by them in their developing and production of oil, as also for domestic and general use in the towns and sections of country where it was produced; but as gas-wells obtained contiguous to oil-wells were subject to the same law of rapid decline and short life as the oil-wells, it deterred capital from any attempt to pipe it to larger markets. The Hay-maker brothers, with the aid of others, after an arduous task drilling in search of oil at Murrysville, in Franklin township, Westmoreland county, obtained instead of oil, a monstrous gas-well, in November, 1878; this well was allowed to flow into the air and waste for years, until the public became impressed that that was peculiarly a gas district, and of permanence to warrant piping it a distance of eighteen miles to the great fuel mart of Pittsburgh; but it required the adventurous oil-man to carry the belief into practice. In November, 1881, while sitting in the office of a friend in the city of Bradford perusing the report of the late geological survey of Pennsylvania, Mr. Hukill discovered a chart representing Pittsburgh as the center of a series of anticlinals. Coupling the theory then slightly prevalent among oil-producers, that territory covering anticlinals was more likely to produce gas than oil, with the fact that gas existed in immense quantities eighteen miles from Pittsburgh, the result was a faith in the possibility of finding gas nearer the city, and the conception of a scheme to prospect by drilling these anticlinals with such purpose in view. Pursuantly he, with others, made publication in December of that year of their intention to apply to the governor (Hoyt) on the twenty-first day of January, 1882, or as soon thereafter as the department would hear them, for a charter to engage in the business of supplying gas—either manufactured or natural—for fuel in the city of Pittsburgh, the first regularly legal publication for such a purpose made by anyone, a copy of which was sent to the department of state. But Mr. Hukill was surprised by an announcement in the Pittsburgh papers of the twenty-second of January that a charter had been granted the day previous to other parties for the purpose of supplying natural gas for fuel in the city of Pittsburgh; how a rusty publication made for another purpose some six months anterior could be modified and polished up to meet the requirements of the granting power has never been explained to Mr. Hukill, but remains the patent of shrewd manipulators.

Evidently the move on the part of Mr. Hukill and his associates had aroused the dormant spirits of Pittsburgh, for notwithstanding the intense desire for nat-

\* F. A. Layman.

ural-gas fuel and the immense waste from the Haymaker well, Pittsburgh capital could not be induced to aid in bringing it in; and with the exception of a small pipe-line—for gas—laid by several manufacturers in 1874, from the Saxonburg gas-well, in Butler county, to the Spang, Chalfant & Company Iron-works at Sharpshurg, nothing had been done in all these years to forward the great enterprise which has since become the boom and boast of the great manufacturing city. Howbeit, the sequel proved the folly of the strategy which resulted in the grant at Harrisburg on January 21, and the charter found its level with similar grants subsequently obtained, for the doctrine then held by some leading lawyers, of exclusive rights under priority of grant, was exploded by the higher courts. The charter applied for by Mr. Hukill and his associates was obtained within reasonable time, but was never used by them, and expired by limitation, owing to the indisposition on the part of the associates to cooperate in carrying out the proposed scheme. Most of the year 1882 was consumed by Mr. Hukill in an effort to introduce the "Strong process" of manufacturing gas for fuel into the iron manufactories of Pittsburgh, on the proposition that the capital requisite for piping the gas from a distance would much more than build the Strong plants, locating them wherever needed and rendering the supply of gas for fuel cheap and reliably independent; but the result of this year's labor was to discover that manufacturers were very loth to give up the use of coal and accept a process of manufacturing fuel not yet demonstrated beyond a question. But their faith was easy in the economy and utility of natural gas, and he became convinced that a manufactured gas for fuel might ultimately prevail, but not when and where natural gas abounded. Hence the abandonment by him of further effort in that direction, and the turning of attention to development for natural gas. In the meantime, and by the end of the year 1883, others, to wit, Pew and Emerson, had entered this promising field, had drilled a gas-well in the vicinity of Murrysville, from which they had laid a pipe-line to Pittsburgh, and the natural-gas fuel business was now an accomplished fact in the Smoky City. Once inaugurated, it had but to yield to the universal eager demand, and King Coal must seek another market.

In March, 1883, Mr. Hukill took up his abode in Pittsburgh, and through the services of Prof. John F. Carrl, of the geological survey of the state, began the work of ascertaining for his own guide the definite location of the anticlinals on either side of the city. There is but little reason to doubt that this was the first enterprise conducted on the anticlinal theory, though such a mode of search for gas was popular for a year or two following, and more stress was laid upon it than then in recent years. Owing to Mr. Hukill's reticence, however, his plan of procedure was advertised but little, yet what follows will show that his action supported his belief. He located three test-wells, the first upon the Brady's Bend anticlinal in Shaler township, Allegheny county, west of the city; the second on the Waynesburg anticlinal, east of the city, on the line of the Pennsylvania railroad at Carpenter (now Adarra) Station; the third on the same anticlinal about two miles north of No. 2 well. The first and second wells proved to be, instead of gas, large water-wells in the stratum that should have produced gas, owing to the rapid dip of the rock toward the south, which placed it below the gas horizon and into the water-vein. The third well was far enough north to find the gas strata above the water-level and was a good gasser. This and other gas-wells drilled near it by him fixed the south limit of the now famous Murrysville gas-belt. Meanwhile he assumed the probable course of the gas-belt yet to be developed, sympathizing with the course of the anticlinal. He located and drilled a well on land leased for the purpose, about ten miles north and thirty degrees east of north from the original Haymaker well, which resulted in a good gasser, and fixed the north limit of said Murrysville belt, in length about fifteen miles, and at the time of this writing contains over one hundred wells, supplying gas for Pittsburgh and adjacent markets.

Apropos, let us remark that as some may chauce to read this who are unfamiliar with oil and gas phraseology, it may be well to add that where development has fixed the limit and dimensions of oil and gas districts they are found to lie in a northeast and southwest direction, varying from a north and south line, from

twenty degrees to forty-seven degrees, and in the great majority of cases the length is several times the width, so that the term belt is usually applied to a producing district. In the case of the Murrysville gas-belt, developments have proved it to be about fifteen miles in length and varying in width from perhaps two thousand feet to two miles, while the general direction of its length is about thirty degrees east of north and west of south from a north and south line. The limits and bearings of these belts can only be determined by drilling of wells, and the first prospectors—who are commonly called "wild-catters"—in any section taking up land and opening up a line of developments must assume a bearing and venture upon it until they can be guided by the results of drilling.

As the subject of this sketch has figured prominently as a pioneer or "wild-catter," his mode of procedure has been to assume a bearing upon conclusions arrived at in various ways, survey an air line for a distance across the country, and lease land on either side of that line and follow with the drill. Several thousand acres of land thus acquired and tested by Mr. Hukill on the Murrysville belt, passed, in October, 1884, into the possession of the Carpenter Natural-Gas company, the organization of which company was at that time consummated under a charter granted January, 1884, Mr. Hukill becoming its president and general manager, and its capital of \$250,000 was a few months later increased to \$450,000. This company in the fall of 1884 laid a pipe-line from the Murrysville field to the city of Pittsburgh, with a branch line running into McKeesport, on the Monongahela river. The enterprise was a prosperous and successful one up to Sept. 1, 1885, when it passed into the possession of George Westinghouse, Jr., Robert Pitcairn *et al.*, and Mr. Hukill retired from the company. The next enterprise which engaged the attention and services of Mr. Hukill exceeds, in many respects, anything in the history of petroleum developments, and is notorious as "Hukill's Greene county scheme." In the early part of 1885 he discovered that one of his subordinates in the Carpenter Natural-Gas company, Mr. J. F. Thompson, was a pioneer in early days in Greene county, Pa., a field that had never given much return for the labor and money expended, and at this time had been abandoned by all operators. Sundry consultations about the inducements this now neglected field offered resulted in the forming of a trio of E. M. and George P. Hukill and W. H. Schackleton, and assigning Mr. Thompson the duty of taking up a considerable body of land there, and putting down one or more wells a little outside of former developments.

Accordingly, Mr. Thompson within a month or two reported to his employers the successful completion of a good well. This well caused a ripple of excitement and brought into the field a number of other operators. Several wells were started, and Greene county was once more the point of attraction for two or three months; but by this time operators became impressed with the belief that good wells were scarce in that delusive region, and they were reshipping their machinery to other and more promising fields, while Mr. Hukill had bought the interests of both his partners that they might escape the hazard of further venture. Up to this time the only oil-producing rock in Greene county was known as the Dunkard sand, owing to the fact, doubtless, that the first discovery of this stratum was in a well drilled near Dunkard creek, a stream that flows through that county and empties into the Monongahela river. This stratum lies about seven hundred feet below the surface, varies greatly in thickness and quality of sand, and is very unreliable as an oil-producer; so much so that it does not justify operators in drilling it. After the stampede of operators in 1885, and Mr. Hukill was left to hoe the row alone, he resolved upon deeper drilling to ascertain what producing strata there might be below, and upon a wider range of development. Accordingly, he had a line surveyed south, varying something like thirty degrees west of south, through Greene county, crossing the state line into West Virginia, across Monongalia county, thence across Marion county, and to the border of Harrison county in West Virginia, nominally forty-five miles, and leased land on either side of this line until forty or fifty thousand acres had been acquired. Upon these lands four or five wells were drilled, some distance apart, to the depths of twenty-five hundred, twenty-six hundred and twenty-eight hundred feet, to prove what sand-rocks existed,

their position, their character and which was the probable oil-sand. This was the work of something like two and a half years, and ordinarily a work of six months, an exceedingly difficult task, attended with innumerable mishaps and delays, and aggregating a very heavy expenditure, all before there was any return in the way of production. But the nut was finally cracked, and he was permitted to taste the sweets of the kernel, finding the oil in a lower stratum. A victory had now been achieved in solving the difficult problem of how many strata of sand-rock there are, and which one produces oil. And this, the most extensive individual enterprise in the long list of oil operations, bids fair to be a very prolific one. The perseverance and tenacity of purpose displayed in this scheme of prospecting astonishes the boldest operator, for the faith that has prompted this untrusting and unyielding effort has received no sympathy or encouragement whatever during the tedious ordeal, from either the scientific or practical observer.\*

The latest enterprise undertaken by Mr. Hukill has proven equally successful and profitable with his previous undertakings. Early in the year 1886 Mr. Hukill secured several thousand acres of land in Washington township, Westmoreland county, Pa., on the north portion of the Murrysville gas-belt, and organized the Pine Run Gas company, Mr. Hukill becoming its president, for the purpose of supplying with fuel-gas the boroughs of Apollo and Leechburg, on the Kiskiminetas river, and Freeport, on the Allegheny river, including four large iron-works and numerous small manufactories at these places. The apparent prospects for the company did not attract investors, and as a consequence Mr. Hukill and his associates were obliged to assume nearly all of the stock, the former taking over three-fourths of it; but the success of the enterprise has exceeded their highest calculations. The capital was subsequently increased, and the pipe-line extended from Freeport to Natrona, on the Allegheny river, to supply the very extensive plant of the Pennsylvania Salt-Manufacturing company—chemical and acid works—and the Pine Run Gas company is now a prosperous and growing institution, yielding large dividends to its stockholders.

Though the limits allowed to this sketch will not permit fuller details, the sketch itself would be incomplete without at least a brief reference to those high moral traits which have marked Mr. Hukill's personal life, his home, and all his business transactions with his fellow-men. Carrying with him through all the years of his life, and in all his dealings with others, the wholesome lessons instilled in his childhood, his record has been one of great pride to his many friends. Physically he would be a man of mark in any assembly. Tall, well formed, graceful in all his movements, affable and courteous, he makes friends wherever he goes, and holds them as with hooks of steel. Ingenuous, large-hearted and tender, men are naturally attracted to him. The soul of honor and uprightness in his dealings, those who know him best trust him most implicitly. "The governing law throughout his entire career has been a deep religious principle, a firm belief in an all-wise, directing Providence, to which he ascribes all his success." Though never parading his religious principles and convictions before the public, they are never hidden away to secure some end,

or for some time-serving purpose. These deep religious principles, supplemented by a strong will, great physical vitality, thorough system and marked punctuality in meeting all engagements, account for the success that has crowned his efforts in all his undertakings. Apropos, we may add that while Mr. Hukill is an adept in originating broad plans, and has the ability to execute rapidly, he has a dislike for the small economics of everyday life. To use his own words—"they seem to dwarf every element of his nature." All benevolent objects, and all the interests of the M. E. Church, of which for many years he has been an honored member, lie near his heart, and the open hand which has so often laid large offerings upon the altar, testifies that the interests of the Master's kingdom lie not only near to his heart but deep down in its very core.—I. C. Pershing.

\*Definite information just received, April 27, 1889, confirms Mr. Hukill's theories with regard to this field. A new well, five miles in advance of present production, has just been struck, establishing it beyond question as territory seldom excelled, and makes Mr. Hukill the controller of the largest amount of lucrative territory in the entire oil and gas business, whether in the past or at present; nor is this one of those "happy accidents," as men call them, but the result of thought, pluck, patience and unconquerable purpose.