

VENANGO COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

HER PIONEERS AND PEOPLE

Embracing a General History of the County

PREPARED BY

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*A Genealogical and Biographical Record of
Representative Families*

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GEN. CHARLES MILLER during his fifty years' residence in Franklin has probably left a deeper impression of his personality and initiative upon the city than has any other resident. Born in Alsace, France, he came to America when a child and spent his boyhood near Boston, N. Y., and when a young man moved to Franklin, Pennsylvania, where he engaged in the dry goods business. He was one of the first to realize the possibilities of the oil industry, and purchasing a refinery entered into a partnership to manufacture railway lubricating oils by a secret process. The little company met with heart-breaking reverses, their plant was destroyed by fire, and

the business seemed on the brink of dissolution. With the indomitable spirit that has characterized all his actions, General Miller rebuilt the plant and personally took charge of the marketing and all the affairs of the company. So aggressive was he that the business grew rapidly, and in a short time Galena oils and service were known and recognized as the standard for lubrication on every railroad in the United States and Canada. So confident was he of the quality of Galena materials that he evolved and put into practice the idea of guaranteeing the net cost of lubrication, which has saved the railroads millions of dollars. Not satisfied with having practically all the steam and electric railroads of the country under contract, he looked to an extension of the business in foreign fields. Undismayed by the fact that he was confronted by well-established, strong competitors, he proceeded with his exploitation, and to-day has a large and growing business in South America and European countries—in fact, it was Galena oils that furnished the lubrication to the French railroads for twenty-two years and during the great war.

From his home in Miller Park, which spot he transformed from a rough hillside pasture into one of the show places of Franklin, he can look across the city and see the smoke from half a dozen thriving industries that owe their existence to his initiative and foresight and that have been the principal factors in the development of Franklin. At the top of the hill back of his home is his farm, situated on a rolling plateau overlooking the city and affording a view for miles up the French Creek valley. His farm is his hobby, but not a plaything. It represents a material investment and is making material returns. It is a mecca for sightseers and farmers, who come to see the blooded cattle and hogs and the hundreds of fowls, in the most modern quarters, cared for according to the most advanced methods and practices, and to study the application of scientific farming to what was but a few years ago a waste of barren pastures. Besides its personal gratification to its owner, the farm is an educational institution to the farmers of the surrounding country and has contributed much to an improvement of the farming methods and production of the county.

General Miller has been commander of Mays Post, G. A. R., Franklin, Pa., for twenty-five years. Had business not claimed him, he would probably have been a soldier. Military affairs always possessed for him a fascination, and his talent for organization and

command secure for him the admiration and obedience of men. For many years he was connected with the National Guard of Pennsylvania, rising from one grade to another until he secured the rank of major-general, which position he held for six consecutive years, under two different governors. Then his pressing private affairs necessitated his resignation.

When head of the National Guard of Pennsylvania, while studying a military map, his attention was attracted to the possibility of a short line railroad connecting the northwestern part of the State with the large cities of the southwest, and that would afford a shorter route between New York and Philadelphia and Chicago than any of the established lines. He immediately engaged engineers to make the necessary surveys, which he finally turned over to the New York Central Railroad Company, who built the Jamestown, Franklin & Clearfield railroad.

In securing the rights of way for the railroad, General Miller saw the possibility of large coal development in the territory traversed and purchased and leased coal rights and organized the Pennsy Coal Company, which under his management has grown into a very profitable concern with great future possibilities. He also purchased the Lake Erie, Franklin & Clarion railroad and made it the best equipped road in western Pennsylvania, and increased its earnings over five hundred per cent.

In addition to being president of the Galena-Signal Oil Company, General Miller is president of the Colburn Machine Tool Company, president of the General Manifold & Printing Company, president of the Evening News Printing Company, chairman and acting president of the Franklin Manufacturing Company, president of the First National Bank of Franklin, chairman of the board of the American Steel Foundries Company, and president of the Lake Erie, Franklin & Clarion Railroad Company.

General Miller received only a common school education, but all his life has been a student, and his retentive memory has enabled him to accumulate a fund of knowledge on all subjects that is surpassed by few college men. He holds the degree of A. M. from Bucknell University, and has also been decorated by the French government as Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in recognition of his eminent services to industry and commerce.

General Miller is strongly attached to the city of Franklin, to which he has contributed

so liberally of his time and means, and is prouder of what he has done toward the civic and social betterment of the city than of his contribution to its material advancement. He built at his own expense a Sunday school room for the Baptist Church and contributed liberally to the rebuilding of the church itself, of which he has been one of the largest supporters. For forty-five years he has been superintendent of the Sunday school and president of the Miller Bible Class, with a membership of over one thousand. For nearly thirty years he has maintained at his own expense a night school, which has helped hundreds of young men and women to fit themselves for business life. For many years he was president of the Young Men's Christian Association, and assisted it liberally by his time and means. Under his leadership the present Y. M. C. A. building, costing over fifty thousand dollars, was built by public subscription. Although the city of Franklin abounds in many memorials to his generosity, enterprise and public spirit during more than fifty years of residence there, his greatest monument is the respect and affection in which he is held by his fellow citizens.