

PENNSYLVANIA

A HISTORY

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WILLIAM PATTERSON—When a book of American nobility is compiled it will tell of the great men whose commanding genius built towns and cities, harnessed the rivers, tunneled the mountains, and irrigated the vast plains. Many of them go back in ancestry to the feudal barons of England, the law givers of the Middle Ages, the dauntless hearts who protected human liberty and wrested their rights from the tyranny of medieval emperors and kings. Instead of war, their energy has found its outlet in trade, commerce and industry; but more than one of them of the type of the first Vanderbilts have shown the capacity to wage war if need be and marshal armies like the dictators of old Rome. Such men leave the story of their lives to others, knowing that their services are a sufficient title to the appreciation and gratitude of posterity. New Castle, Pennsylvania, is beginning to understand the career of such a man, the father of many of its industries, and the founder of most of her prosperity.

William Patterson was born in Beaver County, October 20, 1824. The territory where he first saw light has changed its name to Lawrence County in more recent years. His father was Samuel, and his mother, Esther (Dickson) Patterson. Samuel Patterson was of Scotch-Irish ancestry, and was ever mindful and proud of the fact. William Dickson, the maternal grandfather of Mr. Patterson, settled in Lawrence County in 1806, and was one of the earliest inhabitants. He became one of the foremost men of his day. The paternal grandfather of Mr. Patterson was equally prominent in Beaver County, where he supplemented farming with manufacturing interests of rather extensive scope. Samuel Patterson, father of William Patterson, was born in Beaver County, now a part of Lawrence, in 1802, and died before his son had reached maturity. His wife was Esther (Dickson) Paterson, who after the death of her husband, returned to her father's roof with the boy William, who was reared by his Uncle Isaac Dickson, until he attained the age of fourteen years.

William Patterson attended the district school in the winters and worked in a tannery summers, but he afterwards had the advantage of two years of

academic training in New Castle. In 1840 he became a clerk in the store of John B. Pearson, in New Castle. In 1845 Daniel Euwer, a large merchant of Pittsburgh, advanced him to the post of assistant. This brought the opportunity to accumulate money. He used this capital three years later to start a wholesale and retail drug store in New Castle. About this time the vast coal resources of Ohio were being revealed, and Mr. Patterson, keenly alive to the opportunity offered, investigated the fields along the Mahoning River on his own account. The results were so alluring he decided to sell all his interests in New Castle and devote his time and resources to developing the coal fields he had bought. He continued to be interested in coal in a large way, developing and managing extensive mines in the vicinity of New Castle. In 1854, Mr. Patterson opened a banking and exchange business with Dickson Watson, his brother-in-law, in New Castle, and disposed of part of his mining property in Illinois and Ohio. Stormy years in finance were ahead of the country, but through the panics and hard times which convulsed the country at intervals, the Patterson bank never failed to meet its obligations. Mr. Patterson continued his association with the enterprise until 1880, although in 1874 he had bought a large part of the National Bank of Lawrence County, and on January 13, 1874, was made president of same. In 1864, Mr. Patterson, with A. L. Crawford and others, became interested in opening a block coal field in Mercer County, building a railroad, sinking shafts and arranging all the details necessary to establish a large mining industry. This enterprise was carried on successfully for eleven years. He was the leading spirit, also, in the formation of the Aetna Iron Company, in 1868. It had a paid-up capital of \$163,000 and continued to do business until 1874. He was interested in other coal and iron enterprises, and was part-owner in furnaces at different points. His capital was invested in several States. By wise and careful management, and excellent business ability, Mr. Patterson realized his expectations of profit from each. In 1863, jointly with A. R. Lee, Mr. Patterson became part-owner of a large tract of coal land in Lawrence County, which was first worked under the name of Lee & Patterson, and later under the name of the Beaver Coal and Coke Company. He was one of the organizers of the Penn Coal Company. In 1883, again associated with Mr. Crawford and other capitalists, he bought the Neshannock Furnace property in New Castle, afterward operated under the corporate name of the Crawford Iron and Steel Company, with a capacity of 70,000 tons of Bessemer pig iron yearly. Again, Mr. Patterson, as one of a party of capitalists in 1885-86, R. W. Cunningham and John Stevenson, Jr., organized the New Castle Wire Nail Company, and built the plant. This was the second plant of the kind in the United States. They had to import the machinery from Germany, also the rods, which were not made here at that time. The business grew until it was the largest individual wire nail mill in the United States, with a capacity of 5,000 kegs of nails a day. Later they built one of the largest wire rod mills in the United States, which took the name of the New Castle Steel Company. The Bessemer steel plant it constructed had a capacity of a thousand tons a day, having taken over the furnaces of the Crawford Iron and Steel Company

and the blast furnaces of Raney & Berger. William E. Rice, of the Crawford Iron and Steel Company, and prominent in the industry, became an important official of the new organization. This was followed by the erection of a tin-plate bar mill; and a tin-plate plant of thirty mills, which, for a long period of years, was the largest single tin-plate mill in the world. The wire nail mill and the wire rod mill were likewise taken over by the Shenango Valley Steel Company, thus completing a continuous chain from the ore to the finished tin-plate product, wire and wire nails.

This series of conversions placed Mr. Patterson in a strong position in the trade, a position second to no other, and it gave New Castle a commanding prominence in the iron and steel circles of the United States. All these properties were merged finally into the United States Steel Corporation. The rapid growth of manufacturing plants of vast capacity created the necessity for a hospital where the employees could be treated. In 1894, Mr. Patterson was instrumental in founding the Shenango Valley Hospital with a hundred beds, and equipped with every modern facility for treating the injured and the infirm. He gave this institution his daily personal attention as its president as long as he lived. He continued to manage and direct the two banks in which he was interested until 1880, after which he gave his attention to building up the National Bank of Lawrence County, and his efforts were attended by such success that it came to be recognized as the third or fourth institution of its kind in stability and assets in the United States. This remarkable achievement was accomplished in a comparatively brief space of time. It placed Mr. Patterson high among the bankers and financial managers of the country. He was one of the organizers of the Beaver Valley Railroad, the first to enter New Castle.

Mr. Patterson, the promoter and founder of so many of the greatest industries of the neighborhood where he was most active, was essentially a big man, a great man, indeed, a man of large capacity and great bodily and mental vigor. His mental powers were unimpaired until his death on August 31, 1905.

Mr. Patterson married (first), January 6, 1852, Anna M. Mills, born May 31, 1832, who died on March 23, 1863, leaving two daughters and a son: 1. Mary L., born October 30, 1852; she married Edward King, who succeeded Mr. Patterson at his death as president of the National Bank of Lawrence County, and also was president and treasurer of the Pennsylvania Engineering Works. 2. Anna Mills, born September 22, 1854, died January 13, 1909, unmarried. 3. Rufus C., a review of whom follows. Mr. Patterson married (second), January 17, 1866, Harriet E. Woodward, daughter of Solomon Woodward, a leading citizen of Taunton, Massachusetts. They were the parents of the following children: Julia H., William Lee, and George Lewis, a review of whom follows. Mrs. Patterson survived her husband and died in July, 1910.

While he was keen and aggressive in business, Mr. Patterson possessed a foresight and caution which guarded him against disaster, for his methods, while full of vigorous action and dauntless courage in entering new fields, where others without his

vision paused and were lost, he guided everything he undertook with a firm and steady hand, and wielded a conservatism that preserved the properties he controlled with expert mastery of every new situation, through hard times and panics and other obstacles that swept many competitors from the field. Personally he was a man of high aims, who saw beyond the immediate present the outspread opportunity of the future and was of unspotted character. Mr. Patterson, throughout his long career in the banking business, pulled many a friend and neighbor through the "tight places," and is gratefully remembered to this day by sons and grandsons who are receiving benefits from his kindness.