

1770.

HISTORY  
OF  
LAWRENCE COUNTY,

PENNSYLVANIA;

With Illustrations

DESCRIPTIVE OF ITS SCENERY,

*Palatial Residences,*

Public Buildings, Fine Blocks, and Important Manufactories,

FROM ORIGINAL SKETCHES BY ARTISTS OF THE HIGHEST ABILITY.

PHILADELPHIA:

L. H. EVERTS & CO.,  
716 FILBERT STREET.

1877.

## HON. DAVID SANKEY.

This gentleman is the youngest son of Ezekiel Sankey, one of the earliest pioneers to this section of the State, and was born in what is now Lawrence county, on the 10th of January, 1809. He was deprived of his father, by death, when he was only four years of age. At the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to Thomas Falls, in the tanning and currying trade, which he followed for some six years, a part of which time he was in business for himself. In 1829, he embraced the Christian religion, and publicly consecrated himself to the cause of Christ, by uniting with the Methodist Episcopal church, in which he has long held a prominent membership.

On September 2, 1830, he was united in marriage with Miss Mary Leeper, daughter of John Leeper, of Lawrence county. Miss Leeper was born in this county July 17, 1811. This union has been blessed with the birth of seven sons and four daughters:

AN UNNAMED SON, born July 7, 1831; died July 14, 1831.

ROSANNA AMELIA, born August 29, 1832; married her cousin, Joseph D. Sankey; died April 4, 1859, leaving one daughter, Eva May.

ANTHA ADALINE, born October 31, 1834.

RICHARD WATSON, born March 9, 1837; died of congestion of the brain June 22, 1846, aged nine years three months and thirteen days.

IRA DAVID, born August 28, 1840.

THERESA MEHALIA, born April 13, 1843; died May 31, 1868, aged twenty-five years one month and eighteen days.

RICHARD WATSON, JR. (with a twin brother), born February 4, 1845; (the twin brother died the same day.)

HORACE GREELEY, born July 27, 1847.

LEATHY JANE MARY, born June 19, 1849; died November 1, 1873, aged twenty-four years four months and twelve days.

EDWIN, born August 11, 1855; died November 11, 1864, aged nine years and three months.

Theresa M. married Dr. W. P. Book, of Lawrence county, and had two children:

JAMES EDWIN, born November 15, 1864; died June 22, 1867; and

THERESA MEHALIA, born May 31, 1868.

In 1833, Mr. Sankey's health failing, he discontinued business, and tried the experiment of teaching school on the stock of knowledge that he had gained from his own unaided efforts. The confinement of the school room, however, also proved injurious to his health, which was at that time quite feeble. He therefore withdrew himself from that work, and, after a year's rest, engaged in the carrying, forwarding and commission business on the Public Works of the State, in which, with the exception of some two years in the mercantile trade, he was employed till 1840. In the spring of this year, he was elected Justice of the Peace, and served nearly four years. He was also, at a later date, elected to the same office, and during his whole service as magistrate, he returned but two recognizances to court. It was his great aim to induce parties entering upon litigation to settle their disputes by an amicable compromise, and in most cases he was successful.

In the autumn of 1843, he was elected to a seat in the House of Representatives of the Pennsylvania Legislature, as a member from Mercer county. The Whig party, to which he belonged, was at that time in a minority of about two hundred and fifty, and there seemed to be no one of the party who was willing to enter the lists. Mr. Sankey was taken from his business and brought forward, without any solicitation of his own, and, notwithstanding his party's minority, carried the county by a respectable majority.

In the fall of 1844 he was returned, being the only whig nominee elected in the county.

In the autumn of 1847, he was elected to represent Mercer and Beaver counties in the State Senate, and served three years.

From Mr. Sankey's well known character as a temperance man and a Christian gentleman, it is needless to say that his elections to these positions

of public trust never cost him a gill of whiskey, or any other instrumentality of doubtful morality. While serving his constituents, both as Representative and Senator, his course was marked by an impartiality and independence too seldom found in legislative halls. He yielded to no party dictation, when in his judgment the measures proposed would involve a compromise of right, or militate against the public good.

In the Senate session of 1850, for instance, as the journal of that year will show, he stood forth, singly and alone of all his party, in his opposition to the loose and corrupt system of State banking of that day; a system which all business men deplored, and which no man now defends, but which the whig party at that time advocated.

While a member of the Senate in 1849, Mr. Sankey was instrumental in securing the passage of the bill for the organization of Lawrence county. This measure met with strenuous opposition from members representing the local interests of what are now the adjoining counties of Mercer and Beaver. The territory now comprising Lawrence county, however, possessed (as the result has fully demonstrated), both resources and population, as well as facilities for trade and manufacture, sufficient not only to justify, but imperatively to demand such a measure. This fact Mr. Sankey plainly foresaw; and to his earnest efforts in this direction, the citizens of New Castle, as also those of the entire county, are largely indebted for that measure of prosperity which, in the past twenty-five years, they have been permitted to enjoy. At that time, the line separating Mercer and Beaver counties passed through the town of New Castle, and the erection of Lawrence county, with New Castle as the seat of justice, very materially contributed to the convenience of the people of the place in the transaction of their business. This measure had been agitated before Mr. Sankey was born, and had been urged at intervals, with more or less earnestness, for nearly fifty years; but it was reserved for the subject of this sketch, by his untiring and persevering efforts, to bring it to a victorious consummation.

But not only Lawrence county, but also the State of Pennsylvania has been laid under obligations to Mr. Sankey for his efficient and valuable services while in the Legislature. Of these may be instanced the course he pursued while a member of the "Senate Committee on Claims." These claims were at that time very numerous, and resulted from the construction of the various public works of the State. By an industrious and faithful examination of the records in the Auditor General's office, he discovered that many of the claims advanced had long since been fully settled; and by the unearthing of these facts, which, had it not been for his painstaking research, would probably never have been brought to light, he saved the Commonwealth from being defrauded of large sums of money. In most striking, but honorable contrast was this course, compared with that pursued by hundreds of other statesmen who have sought to increase their own pecuniary gains by means of bribery and fraud.

In 1851, he was a delegate from Mercer and Beaver counties on the State Board of Equalization, and succeeded in satisfying the board that the assessments of said counties were honestly made, and exhibited a gradual increase proportional to their respective increase in wealth and population.

In 1856, he was elected Treasurer of the Northwestern Railroad Company (of which he was for several years a Director), and served one year.

In 1857, he was made President of the "Bank of New Castle," which position he filled for two years.

In 1862, Mr. Sankey was appointed United States Collector of Internal Revenue for the 24th Congressional District of Pennsylvania, composed of the counties of Lawrence, Beaver, Washington and Green. The duties of this position he ably and satisfactorily discharged till September, 1866, when he was relieved from further service in that department, for the reason that he declined to support "My Policy"—Andrew Johnson being President.

In 1867, he purchased the "Lawrence Journal," and conducted it with great independence and ability until June 6, 1874. He then repaired to London, for the purpose of taking to their father two little boys of his son, Ira D. Sankey, who, upon his departure from America, in 1873, had left them in care of their friends. While in Europe, Mr. David Sankey visited the prominent places of interest in England, Scotland and Ireland. He was especially gratified in his visit to the home of Sir Walter Scott.

He returned to America in the following October, with his feeble health materially improved. Mr. Sankey never had the benefit of a collegiate course of study. The advantages of learning were in his early life exceedingly meagre, and like thousands of other self-made men, he was compelled to seek his education by means of such appliances as he could bring to his aid by his own industry and perseverance. His was a matter-of-fact education, gathered from close observation and personal experience, coupled with his own study and reflection. The grand and comparatively perfected

system of instruction enjoyed by the youth of the present day, is an inestimable blessing, but our finest schools and universities, with their convenient and extensive furnishings, can never impart to the mind that practicable discipline and power that is furnished by a contact of the world within us with the world without us. There is no royal road to knowledge, and necessity is the mother of invention. The self-made men of the world rule it. Mr. Sankey is a prominent example of this class. Endowed by nature with sound judgment, great caution, and remarkable shrewdness, as well as with great energy and perseverance, he has made a practical application of the maxim of HORACE: "*Viam, aut inventiam, aut faciam;*" "I will either find a way, or make one." Inspired with such a principle as this, no man, whatever be his sphere of life, can ever make a failure. In the position of teacher, and in that of a business man, as well as in numerous offices of public trust, Mr. Sankey has achieved a signal success. His influence and labors in the promotion of the cause of education have been very considerable. For quite a number of years he rendered valuable service as a Director of the public schools, and was prominently active in the introduction of the present admirable system of education in his immediate community.

In politics, Mr. Sankey adheres to the principles of republicanism; as understood and practiced by the immortal Lincoln. His position in this regard cannot, perhaps, be better defined than that of an American citizen and of a *genuine philanthropist*. It has ever been his aim to act upon *principle*, rather than in accordance with the claims of any party. The sublime and eternal principles of truth and justice, and the promotion of the public good, are the only points to which he gives a moment's consideration. Beside these, all party names and platforms sink into utter insignificance. It has long been his belief that the sooner the existing political parties are broken up, and a new departure in the path of genuine and moral reform inaugurated, the better for the country and the cause of universal progress. It is his profound conviction that the "*moral element*," as a controlling power in State and National legislation, is the only guaranty of the perpetuity of our free and republican institutions. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance;" and equally true is it, that a regard for the laws of God and the rights of man, is the only basis upon which any nation can realize a permanent existence.

As a politician, Mr. Sankey's career has been an exceptionably creditable one, and has been characterized by high-toned honor and sterling integrity, while the ability and fidelity with which he has represented the various interests of his constituents, as well as those of the general public, have placed him in the front rank of patriots and philanthropists. But not alone in legislative halls, but also in the Christian church, he has been a bright and shining light, while his courteous dignity, urbane bearing, and generous sympathies characterize him as a thorough Christian gentleman.

Mrs. Sankey is a lady of many estimable qualities; quite domestic in her habits, and strong in her attachments to home. She has filled with signal efficiency and affection the sacred and responsible offices of wife and mother. "The mother moulds the man," and she is the mother of that "sweet singer of sacred songs," whose zealous, Christian labors have made the name of Sankey famous throughout the world; and in perfect keeping with a spirit of the most devout gratitude and holy pride, Mr. Sankey may say: "I would rather be the father of that boy, than the father of a President!"