

COMMEMORATIVE
BIOGRAPHICAL RECORD
— OF —
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA,

INCLUDING THE COUNTIES OF

Centre, Clinton, Union and Snyder,

CONTAINING

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF PROMINENT AND REPRESENTATIVE
CITIZENS, AND OF MANY OF THE EARLY SETTLED FAMILIES.

~ ILLUSTRATED ~

CHICAGO:
J. H. BEERS & CO.
1898.

union of the Walter family held in September, 1891, at Middleburg, we find such an interesting and accurate account that we venture to insert it in full:

In seeking to go back, by the traces of recollection, to the period when the first impressions of the pioneers which from the history of the Walter family were made on our minds, we are carried so completely into the scenes of our infancy, that we feel like a child such as old tales tell of, who being lost in a forest tries to find his way back again by the possibly preserved track of a few grains of corn that he chanced to scatter on the ground as he came. To wander in these memories has, however, a pleasure of its own, many pleasant places presenting themselves to stop at, from whence to review with a sweet sadness, through the long vale of past days, some distant, lovely scene, under the soul-hallowed twilight of time—such scenes are peopled with beloved forms, living there before our heart's-eye; but, in reality, long removed from us into an eternal paradise. History, time's great chronicler, breathes with ineffable delight the story of man's advent into the world. Prophecy declares that the seed of Abraham shall be as innumerable as the stars of the firmament, and the facts prove that the posterity of Jacob Walter, in the present census number hundreds of thousands, and constitute the largest kindred in the United States.

Amid the ice-clad mountains of the kingdom of Wurtemberg, Germany, diversified by the picturesque scenery of the beautiful Rhine, Jacob was born on the 15th day of January, 1729. Being of poor but sturdy parentage, the boy soon learned adversity's sternest lessons, and with a noble aim and honest face, as his only recommendation, we, in fancy, see him leave the humble home to launch out into the temptation and trials of an active life as a tailor's apprentice, content in his chosen occupation, unmindful of his privations, courageous in his conduct, prepossessing in his appearance, he calmly passes from his teens into the glorious morning of manhood's estate. And while no vain ambition racks his brain and destroys his future prospects, he honorably emulates the skill of his fellow-craftsmen, inspiring their confidence and esteem and winning their warmest friendship. Laboring patiently on, he forms new associations, greets new friends and while at some village gathering, or in some humble hamlet, Apollo gently strikes the golden Lyre, Cupid draws his bow, the arrow hits the heart and Jacob Walter is deeply in love with Maria Kauffman. I imagine a short courtship follows, visions of a home fill his thoughts

WALTER FAMILY, which is now numerously represented in this section, has an honorable reputation maintained through several generations of upright and useful citizenship. In the following address, read by Prof. F. C. Bowersox, of Middleburg, Snyder county, at a re-

by day and dreams of enduring happiness by night. Proposals are made and accepted, and on the 24th day of July, 1757, the happiest day in his life, Jacob Walter and Maria Kauffman are made one in wedded bliss. Continuing in his trade, he works faithfully to maintain himself and wife and to secure the long-desired home. But ere that happy end is attained, a welcome little visitor appears to gladden the heart of the father and grace the bosom of the mother. But how quickly the picture of earthly opulence is ruined, competition grows greater, the paltry wages earned will scarcely meet the necessary expenditures of his household. No open hand of relief stands ready to help. Great sacrifices must be made; poverty stares him in the face and all seems desolation, when at last, a report, properly authenticated, comes from England to Germany declaring that in America are millions of broad acres to be cultivated, and offering free passage to all families who will go there. Being suddenly seized with a burning desire to immigrate to the New World, Jacob soon secured his passports, agreed to pay his passage in a limited time, and with family and portable possessions, left the endearing scenes of childhood and youth and set sail on Ocean's turbulent waves; after a two-months' voyage they land at Philadelphia, homeless, friendless, penniless and grief-stricken, for far out in the depths of Atlantic's chilling billows, lay the remains of what once was a father's pride and a mother's comfort.

Leaving the din and bustle of the city behind them, they pushed forward to the fertile acres of Lancaster county. Settling there for a time, they soon hear that richer fortunes lie to the northward, and rather liking the adventure promised in a prospecting journey, they accordingly leave Lancaster county; then the western civilization, plunge deeper and deeper still into the gloomy wilderness, never desponding, never complaining until the peaceful shades of a tall white oak tree, standing on the property now possessed by Isaac Swarm, was reached. Under its inviting foliage a small tent was erected, a home once more established, and thousands of acres of land secured under the homestead law then in force. With his gun and axe, Jacob Walter provides for his family. One giant after another kisses the breeze for the last time, then falls at the stroke of the axe, and is soon transformed into a rafter to complete his newly erected log house. The unerring aim of that trusty gun brings down the fleet-footed deer, and the odor of the sweet venison steaks prepared in that humble home render the air redolent with fragrance. Clearing acre after acre, sowing seed after seed, he labored

from early morning till the shadows of evening fell, and while vague yearnings of ambition may fail as he grows older in years, and dreamy fancies hang like cloud cities around him, yet the curtain of existence is slowing but surely rising in many-colored splendor and gloom, and the ethereal light of God's love is gilding his horizon, and the music of song is on his path as he walks in glory and in joy behind his plough upon the mountain side.

Time rolled on. Twelve sons and two daughters blessed his union with Maria Kauffman. And, with the additional aid thus raised, he erected the first linseed mill for the manufacture of oil in this section of Pennsylvania. By judicious management he was enabled to keep a small force engaged in cutting down the mighty forest, burning the timber, splitting rails, tilling the soil, manufacturing the oil, while he still found a few spare moments to follow his trade, that of making buckskin pantaloons.

With increased aid came greater wealth, and after harvesting the grain and converting it into cash, one autumn day he started for the village of Reading, perhaps to remove the last and only lien the government held on his thousands of acres. It appears to me, as he mounted the steed at the door of his humble home, while the anxious family gathered round to press their sad farewells, an earnest prayer went up to God to protect those loved ones from hostile hand and restore in safety to their sweet embrace their now departing father. Recognizing the providence of Almighty God in his signal delivery from Indians and wild beasts, he resolves to commemorate his safe return, and to enshrine his memory in the hearts of his children by the presentation of a large Bible, costing \$10, to each of his ten living sons, so that, notwithstanding the absence of schools, they may be taught the habit of well-directed reading, which, in time, would become a source of the greatest pleasure and self-improvement, and exercise a gentle coercion, with the most beneficial results, over the whole tenor of their character and nature.

With the destruction of the forests came the glimmering rays of civilization. The country began to be more thickly populated. Young people became more sociable, because of more frequent opportunities presenting themselves for friendly intercourse with their neighbors. Plans were laid, suggestions made, decisions determined, and the conclusion attained is, that younger shoulders must assume the cares and responsibilities of pioneer life. The storms and hurricanes of many winters are rapidly revealing their painful tale in the silver tresses of father's head.

That frame once so erect is now stooped and bent. That step once so firm and elastic is now feeble and tottering. Mother, too, has a few more furrows engraved on that calm and noble brow. Her cares and labors for so large a family are too distressing. She needs more aid to lighten her burdens in the kitchen, at the wash tub and in the garden. Father also desires to lay off the responsibilities of the farm, to cease from its active management, and to repose in his declining years in comparative comfort and ease.

The manly sons, perceiving the fast approaching inevitable, determine to hasten the relief by assuming the burdens and cares of the parents. David, accordingly, speaks more affectionately to Susanna Everhart; John and Joseph hasten with lighter step to the Misses Kern; Philip pays closer attention to Miss Bowersox; Henry gayly climbs the wood-covered hills to the home of Miss Mertz; Jeremiah finds the Pearl of the Price's; Christian walks in living faith by the side of Miss Swartz; Jacob follows the course of the setting sun to Miss Lauver; and Michael caressingly clings to Miss Varick. Not content with the inroads already made in the Walter family, affection led Daniel Hassinger to seek the blushing Elizabeth, and Mr. Stroub the timid Mary. With the greatest joy each wedding day is announced, the nuptials in succession tied, the parental blessing bestowed, the land divided, and each son and daughter leave the home of so many joys and sorrows to carry to a higher state of cultivation his farm, which was the well-appointed gift of the father, and there rear their families in the beneficent atmosphere of personal freedom.

The pioneer fathers, perceiving the necessity of greater educational facilities than those afforded by the hearth and fireside, endeavored to establish a school. I imagine the undertaking to be no little difficulty since the children would be compelled to travel several miles to any central point among the few settlers. The idea was abandoned for awhile, and an improvised school held at a neighbor's house, but at last through the generosity of one Simmons, a tract of land, now owned by the Lutheran Church of the General Council, commonly known as Hassinger's Church, was devised for the erection thereon of school and church buildings as well as for the maintenance of the same. Probably, a good school having been established for the following season in some neighbor's house, the church building was the first to materialize on the devised lands. Jacob Walter, Mr. Hassinger and Mr. Maurer constituted a committee to superintend building of the log church situated on the

exact site where the third (present) church now stands. Mr. Walter, living with Christian, to whose lot the old homestead fell, became oblivious to the duties of the farm and devoted the whole of his attention to the Church enterprise. Through unrelenting industry, the corner stone was laid. One log after another finds its appointed place upon the foundation. The sides gradually rise toward the heavens. The Church is completed, dedication day appointed, and one fine autumnal day, gathering in from many miles around, came a happy people, to dedicate to the worship of the Triune God the noblest monument of Christian evidence from Christian people.

A few more years, and time, youth's great spoiler, wreaks its vengeance into the emaciated form of Father Walter. Standing on the outside of his simple, unpretentious home, encircled with meadow and field pure with the white mantle of winter, he admiringly gazes for the last time at the beautiful pine tree in the front yard, laden with the fleecy flakes of snow and glistening like a diamond as the rays of sunshine fall upon it. Inside, was quiet, cleanliness, thrift and comfort. I imagine there was the old clock that had welcomed in steady measure every newcomer to the family, that had ticked the solemn requiem of the dead, and had kept company with the watchers at the bedside. There were the big restful beds, and the old open fireplace, and the old family Bible, thumbed with the fingers of hands soon to be still and stained with the tears of eyes soon to be closed, holding the simple annals of the family, and the heart and the conscience of the home. Christian, the master of the home, now comes from the woods to his loved ones, the aged and perhaps trembling father, happy in the heart and home of his son, lays his hand down on the young man's shoulder, as they start to the house. And as they got to the door, the old mother came with the sunset falling fair on her face and lighting up her deep patient eyes, while with lips trembling with the rich music of her heart, she bade her husband and her son welcome to their home. Beyond was the house-wife busy with her household cares clean of heart and conscience, the buckler and helpmeet of her husband, trooping home after the cows, seeking, as truant birds do, the quiet of their home nest. And as we look on that picture, we see the night come down on that house, falling gently as from the wings of the unseen dove, and the old man, while a startled bird called from the forest, and the trees were shrill with the cricket's cry, and the stars were swarming in the sky, gathered the family around him, and taking the old Bible from

the table called them to their knees, while he closed the record of that simple day by calling down God's benediction on his absent sons and daughters, on that family and that home. That night the rider on the "Pale Horse," and in the stillness of the morning hour, death broke the thread of life, and on the 23rd day of January, 1803, the spirit of Jacob Walter left the tenement of earthly clay. His age was seventy-four years and eighteen days. Weeping relatives and friends gathered round. Preparations for the funeral obsequies were made, and in a few days all that was earthly of Jacob Walter was laid to rest in Hassinger's cemetery. At the head of that sacred tomb, loved ones soon raised the first marble tablet in the cemetery, to perpetuate his memory. At the foot, some kindly hand planted an apple tree, whose spreading branches bending with the load of golden fruit continue to magnify the generous gifts of him who slumbers beneath their peaceful shade.

The character of Jacob Walter was that of a typical Christian German. His usefulness, though confined to the humble spheres of life, made bright the path of those who surrounded him. His courage was as firm and steadfast as the everlasting hills, and while his neighbors fled for safety from savage attack, Mr. Walter trusting in Divine aid, manfully stood his ground. At one time an alarm was circulated that the Indians would massacre the whites in this section. All the other settlers immediately left for the fort at Northumberland, but Mr. Walter being without a proper conveyance, and it being in harvest time, was unable to go. At this time he had four grown sons. After the settlers left, two of the boys were stationed to watch for Indians and sound the alarm if necessary, while the father and other two cut the grain. Upon the return of the settlers, Mr. Walter and sons were threatened a second time with a more certain death, since having escaped the tomahawk of the Indian, they were open to the suspicion of the settlers, who seeing they had escaped from savage brutality, believed that Mr. Walter had conspired with the Indians, who permitted them to harvest their grain while the neighbors were left destitute. Similar perils attended him for years, but with fearless tread, he kept boldly on, surmounting every obstacle until, at the end of life, he was able to write in glittering characters, "I have fought the fight, I have kept the faith and I have won the crown."