

Old and New Westmoreland

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It was owing to the fact of his father, Edward Donohoe, through his generosity, having impoverished himself during the Black Famine of 1847, by opening his granaries and even his home to the starving peasants of the surrounding country, that Thomas came to America. At the age of nineteen years, having completed his studies at Carlow College, where all the members of his family were educated, and where at the present time his nephew, the Rev. Michael Donohoe, is professor of philosophy, Thomas Donohoe decided to come to the United States. Upon his arrival in this country, he went at once to the home of William Maher, the banker, at Blairsville, Pennsylvania, whose ancestors had been friends of the Donohoe family for many generations. Mr. Maher took the young man into partnership with him, in the mercantile and also contracting business, railroad construction being their specialty. Among the pieces of work which they accomplished at that time were the building of that portion of the C. B. & Q. running into Burlington, Iowa, and the Pennsylvania line into Butler, Pennsylvania. In 1854 Mr. Donohoe came to Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and in company with Mr. Maher established the mercantile house of Donohoe, Maher & Company, and the grain business under the same name. The latter business assumed immense proportions, as this firm controlled the entire production of Westmoreland and adjacent counties, at that time one of the richest agricultural districts in the State. Owing to lack of railroad facilities, this grain was all hauled to Greensburg and shipped from their warehouses in Ludwick. In the years in which they were in business the value of the grain which passed through their hands amounted to many millions of dollars. After a few years Mr. Donohoe purchased Mr. Maher's interests in both enterprises, and having been joined by his younger brother, Patrick Donohoe, from Ireland, these firms were then known as Donohoe, Brother & Company for many years. Later Mr. John Kuhns, one of Greensburg's most prominent citizens, became associated with Mr. Donohoe in the grain business and a partnership was formed, which lasted for more than thirty years, being terminated only by the death of Mr. Kuhns in 1893.

Born and reared on a farm, Mr. Donohoe always retained an intense love of country life, and though his business and the education of his children prevented him making his home in the country, he purchased a beautiful place, about seven miles from

Greensburg, and spared no expense in making it one of the noteworthy places in that section. This place, known as "Wheatland," on account of the wonderful crops of wheat raised there, afterwards became the property of the Alexandria Coal Company, being one of the first coal fields turned over to the company upon its organization by Mr. Donohoe and his associates. It was he who introduced into Westmoreland county the breeding of shorthorn cattle, draft horses and merino sheep; and many beautiful trophies, including an exquisite silver pitcher, won by his stock at different exhibitions, are now in the possession of his family. He was the founder of the Westmoreland Agricultural Society, an association of gentleman farmers, organized for the purpose of interchanging ideas, bringing to their highest development the products of the soil and the breeding of domestic animals, in a spirit of friendly competition, and the holding of the annual county fair, at which horse-racing was one of the leading features. Mr. Donohoe was elected the first president of the society, and reelected annually for many years, until he resigned from the board of directors, following which the association passed into other management.

About the year 1880, Mr. Donohoe, seeing the vast possibilities in the coal and coke industries, decided to extend his business activities and enter that field. The coal business up to that time had been of minor importance, consisting of only a few operations, but Mr. Donohoe, becoming associated with a few of Greensburg's most progressive citizens, the Alexandria Coal Company was formed and thus began the development of the surrounding territory on an extensive scale. Their first venture was the purchase of coal land and development of property with mines and ovens at Crabtree. Following this was the Mutual Coke Company, which was owned by Mr. Donohoe and one or two of his friends and later was sold to the H. C. Frick Coke Company. These were but the beginnings of an enormous coal and coke business, and were followed in rapid succession by the organization of the Madison Gas Coal Company, the Arona Gas Coal Company, Sewickley Gas Coal Company, Claridge Gas Coal Company, Mountain Coal Company, at Dunlo, Pennsylvania, most of which companies have since Mr. Donohoe's death been merged with others into what is now known as The Keystone Coal and Coke Company, and finally his last effort, The Donohoe Coke Company, when death called him from the scene of his activities. In addition to these operating plants, Mr. Donohoe was largely interested in valuable coal lands, among which were the Upper Crabtree field, now part of the Jamison Coke Company, and lands in Washington and Greene counties.

Mr. Donohoe belonged to that little *coterie* of men responsible for every industry of any magnitude in Westmoreland county. He was always ready to encourage, both financially and with his influence, any business wishing to become established in Greensburg. He assisted largely in bringing the Kelly and Jones Company here, the Greensburg Steel Company, the Greensburg Glass Company, Westmoreland Water Company, was one of the organizers of the Greensburg Street Railway Company, and the Manufacturers Gas Company.

It was due to Mr. Donohoe more than to any other person that the Westmoreland Hospital was established. Seeing the great need of such an institution, after years of unceasing effort, he succeeded in interesting a number of public-spirited friends; an association was formed, a charter secured and the Westmoreland Hospital became a fact, with Dr. R. B. Hammer as president. Mr. Donohoe, who was a member of the board of directors, was elected treasurer, to which position he was reelected annually until his death. When it was decided to erect the present splendid structure, Mr. Donohoe was appointed a member of the building committee, which position he filled with untiring energy and great devotion to the work. Mr. Donohoe was interested in developing the water system of Greensburg and surrounding towns and was a director of the company continuously during his life. He was a leader in the development of the natural gas, and president of the company for many years until the time of his death.

Through his extensive business interests, Mr. Donohoe was brought into close contact with the officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and whenever a bond was required of them in the county he was the first asked to sign it. As a mark of personal regard for him, the railroad station "Donohoe," a few miles east of Greensburg on the main line, was named in his honor.

Politically, he was affiliated with the Democratic party, and though he controlled an immense personal following, he never could be persuaded to enter the political field himself. Twice he was urged to allow his name to be used for the Congressional nomination, and promised the support of the party leaders, which, with his own popularity, seemed to assure success, but though Mr. Donohoe had all an Irishman's love for the game of politics, he felt he could not give to it his undivided attention, as his wide business interests claimed so much of his time. Mr. Donohoe was a devotee of all clean sports, a patron of baseball and football. He was a magnificent horseman, without a doubt the finest in Western Pennsylvania in his day. He always kept a stable of high-bred saddle and driving horses, and up to the time of his death, at the age of sixty-nine years, rode with the dash and grace of a youth of twenty. In the social world Mr. Donohoe was the most delightful companion, always the center of an admiring group. A man of gigantic intellect, courageous in action, yet gentle and kindly as a child, a delightful appreciation of humor, a keen wit, and with all the optimism of the Irish race, his presence was greatly sought by his friends and acquaintances. He was wise in counsel, with always the courage of his convictions. He worked, not for wealth or for fame, but for the glory of achievement and the sincere love and pleasure of doing good. He possessed the confidence and esteem, not only of the community in which he lived, but of every place where the name of "Thomas Donohoe" was known. He was a devout member of the Roman Catholic church, and the leading and most influential spirit in the management of its temporal affairs, to which he constantly gave his unselfish service. And here may we quote from the address delivered by Rev. William Graham at his funeral:

He, who in his family, knew so well how to love, knew also how to rule; his precepts were enforced by the best of all arguments—good example; his word was his bond, his honor and integrity beyond question. Edifying in every relation in life, the domestic, the social, the business life, and the religious life, faithful, exemplary, in every one, a grand, grand man.

At the time of his death, Mr. Donohoe held the following positions: President and director of the Donohoe Coke Company, president and director of the Claridge Gas Coal Company, president and director of the Manufacturers Gas Company, director in the Alexandria Coal Company, Madison Gas Coal Company, Arona Gas Coal Company, Sewickley Gas Coal Company, Mountain Coal Company, First National Bank, Westmoreland Water Company, Greensburg Street Railway Company, Greensburg Building and Loan Association, South Greensburg Land Company, the Irwin Land Company, Jeannette Land Company, and director and treasurer of the Westmoreland Hospital Association, and was a member of the firms of Donohoe, Kuhns & Barnhart, Donohoe, Hudson & Kuhns, Madison Supply Company, Alexandria Supply Company, Mountain Supply Company, and the John P. Donohoe & Company, Ltd.