

Johnson's Masters of America Series
Biographies of Leading Men
of the Race

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Men of Mark in Maryland

Johnson's Makers of America Series
Biographies of Leading Men
of the State

VOLUME II

With an Introductory Chapter
on
The Growth of Maryland

By LYNN R. MEEKINS, A.M.

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JOHN EDWIN GREINER

IN THIS day of great industrial achievement, with wonderful railroad enterprises, mining ventures and gigantic bridges under way in all parts of the world, the profession of civil engineering has come to take rank as one of the most important in our modern civilization. One of the ablest and most widely known men in that great profession in our country is John Edwin Greiner, consulting engineer of Baltimore.

Mr. Greiner was born in Wilmington, Delaware, February 24, 1859, son of John and Annie (Steck) Greiner. He comes of that strong German stock which has contributed so much to the citizenship of our country. His family came from Wurtemberg in south Germany, in the early part of the last century, and first settled in Ohio. His father was a manufacturer and merchant. Young Greiner was a sturdy boy, fond of athletics, music and mechanical construction, a rather unusual combination, by the way. He was reared partly in the country and partly in the city, and rejoiced in having a good mother whose influence was strong in giving him moral stamina, which has been of greatest value to him in manhood.

He graduated from the Wilmington High School in 1877, entered Delaware College in that year, and graduated in 1880, with the degree of B.S. He also studied civil engineering and won the degree of C.E. He began active work at the bottom of his profession as a draughtsman in Edgemoor Bridge Works, in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1880. 1884 found him assistant engineer for the Keystone Bridge Works. In 1885 we find him in charge of the erection of the Seventh street bridge across the Allegheny river in Pittsburg. In 1886 he made a connection with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, first as draughtsman, in 1887 as inspector, in 1889 as chief draughtsman, in 1891 as assistant engineer. In 1892 and 1893 we see him as designing engineer of the Philadelphia Bridge Works; in 1894 he appears as engineer of bridges for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad; in 1900, engineer of bridges and buildings for the same road; in 1905, assistant chief engineer; and in 1908 he retires from that position to become consulting engineer for the public in general.



Yours Truly
J. E. Reimer

This brief outline tells but little of the man's work. From 1886 to 1908 his work was almost entirely confined to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and some of his achievements in engineering for that road have made for him a reputation as one of the expert engineers of our generation. "The Railway Age" is responsible for the statement that he personally designed or had charge of the designing and erection of every bridge constructed on that great system between 1885 and 1908. Among the interesting constructions upon which he was engaged or which were under his supervision, mention must be made of the Arthur Kill bridge, which, at the time of construction, with its span of 520 feet, was the largest drawbridge in the world. The Ohio river bridge at Benwood had the unusual feature of a 345-foot span erected without false work. This was another example of his ingenuity. He also designed the Ohio river bridge at Parkersburg and the big double-track bridge at Havre de Grace, Maryland, which cost two million dollars. From 1899 to 1908 he had the supervision of the designing of all the stations and buildings on the system. A great engineer, he has something that is even better than his engineering ability—that quality as a man which won the esteem of the department with which he was so long associated and led his co-laborers to present him with a handsome testimonial when he separated himself from them.

A very busy and hard-working man, Mr. Greiner has not stopped in his work to write books, though abundantly capable. He has, however, written some strong scientific and engineering papers and received from the American Society of Civil Engineers a gold medal for a scientific paper. He has also lectured at Delaware College and Cornell University on engineering subjects. In 1895 he designed and patented a new type of bridge. He holds membership in many societies and clubs, such as the Masonic fraternity, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association, the University Club, Engineers' Club, Baltimore Country Club of Baltimore, and Engineers' Club of New York, is chairman of the Committee on Iron and Steel Structures of the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association, and member of the Committee on Concrete and Reinforced Concrete of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Mr. Greiner's recreations consist chiefly of horseback riding and music. A broad-minded man, thoughtful and observing, he does not underrate any influence that goes to the make-up of a man. In his own

life he has found school, private study, contact with men in active life, home influences, early companionship, all to have been of pronounced value. He considers education, ingenuity and personality the essentials which contribute most to success in life, and lays down ten brief, concise and plain rules which his experience and observation have led him to believe will enable any young man to win that measure of true success that is commensurate with his ability. These rules are so pithily and strongly put that they cannot be improved upon, and are given just as they came from Mr. Greiner's pen:

1. Keep whatever is honest, true, just and pure in your mind, and be governed by it. If you do not, you do not deserve to succeed, and you will not.

2. Be loyal to yourself, to your superior officers and to those who pay for your service.

3. Support and encourage those subject to your orders. If you do not support your men in their just contentions, you cannot expect them to support you in yours.

4. Work energetically, think quickly, act promptly, and always do the best you can. There is no place for the sluggard or the trifling indifferent foister.

5. Avoid idiosyncrasies, whether in your appearance, actions or plans. There are plenty of cranks in the world without you.

6. Remember you cannot prove the superiority of your knowledge by ridiculing the knowledge and opinions of others.

7. Acquire decision and directness in speech and action. Vacillation or a display of ambiguity will not benefit you.

8. Be natural and at ease, whether with the President or a laborer. The President expects manliness—so does the laborer.

9. Treat a man as you would be treated by him should your positions be reversed.

10. Be a gentleman always.

On December 16, 1886, Mr. Greiner married Miss Lily F. Burchell, and of this marriage there are two daughters, Lillian Burchell and Gladys Houston Greiner.

Mrs. Greiner's father was John Foster Burchell, who married Martha Ann Sowers. The Burchells go back in Maryland to 1684. In the early part of the eighteenth century they moved to Virginia, and have always been planters and farmers, owning their own estates from the time of the first settler. The Burchells are of old English stock,

and there is a very ancient coat of arms in the family granted at a time when they spelled the name Birchell. Through her father, Mrs. Greiner is descended from the following distinguished Marylanders: Judge William Allnutt; Richard Talbot, a settler in Maryland in 1651, who was descended from the great Norman Talbot family, which, since 1066, has been one of the most famous families of England. This Richard Talbot was a member of the House of Burgesses. Others of her ancestors in Maryland were Major Richard Ewen, one of the commission appointed by Cromwell to govern Maryland from 1654 to 1657; Thomas Meeres, justice of Anne Arundel county in 1657, and also a member of the Cromwell commission; and another member of this Cromwell commission, Lieutenant-Colonel Philip Thomas. Her great-grandmother was Catherine Houston, a member of that family to which the celebrated Sam Houston belonged.

Since entering private practice as consulting engineer, Mr. Greiner has been retained in the capacity of consulting engineer by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, the Erie Railroad, the Norfolk & Southern Railroad in connection with a bridge five miles long across the Albemarle sound, the Peoria & Pekin Union Railroad in connection with a large double-track bridge across the Illinois river, the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railroad for a large number of bridges. He was appointed member of a commission of four expert engineers to report upon the strength of Blackwell's Island bridge across the East river in New York. Immediately after the great fire in Baltimore, he was appointed by Mayor McLane as member of a commission to examine into the safety of the large structures which had been damaged by the fire but which had not been totally destroyed; this commission worked with great expedition, and made their report in one month. He was also appointed by Mayor McLane as a member of the commission to revise the building laws.

Just a little past the fiftieth milestone, John E. Greiner has, by fidelity to every duty, combined with natural capacity, won a position high up in the front rank of his profession. In view of this fact, the simple rules which he lays down for the guidance of young Americans are worthy of profound study.



Yours Truly
J. E. Greiner