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*Biographical and portrait
cyclopedia of Montgomery ...*

BIOGRAPHICAL AND PORTRAIT
CYCLOPEDIA
OF
MONTGOMERY COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA,

CONTAINING BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF PROMINENT AND
REPRESENTATIVE CITIZENS OF THE COUNTY,

TOGETHER WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY HISTORICAL SKETCH

EDITED BY
SAMUEL T. WILEY,

Author of Histories of Niagara and Washington Counties, New York; Preston and Mongalia
Counties, West Virginia; Fayette, Westmoreland, Blair, Indiana, Armstrong,
Schuylkill, Chester and Delaware Counties, Pennsylvania.

PHILADELPHIA:
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1895.

utterance to them in vigorous and expressive English. Few papers in the country are more widely quoted.

Mr. Wills is one of the most progressive and public spirited citizens of Norristown. Liberal in his views, he has aimed constantly, in the management of his paper, and in every other way, to advance the interests of Norristown, and of Montgomery county.

An active Republican, he has rendered the most efficient support to the principles of that party, the *Herald* having been a potent factor in the political revolution which redeemed the town and county from Democratic rule. In the discussion of every public topic of importance, national, state and local, Mr. Wills takes an active part, which the columns of his paper, local and editorial, reflect from day to day. It is his aim to make the paper, as far as it is possible, an accurate history of the time.

He believes it to be the province of a daily newspaper to serve the interests of the community in which it is published, and he has faithfully adhered to that idea throughout the whole of his journalistic career.

In his domestic relations, Mr. Wills was equally fortunate. September 6, 1860, he married Mary H., daughter of Daniel H. and Mary W. Dager, of Whitemarsh township. They had two children, Mary D., wife of Harrington Fitzgerald, of the Philadelphia *Item*, and Helen W., wife of J. Leedom Jones, of Norristown. The family mansion, at the corner of DeKalb and Jacoby streets, has long been one of the centers of social enjoyment and kindly hospitality in Norristown.

Mrs. Wills was a woman of rare literary ability, who found time, in the intervals of devotion to household interests, which always claimed her attention, to be of much

assistance to her husband in his profession of journalist. A charming and versatile writer, her many contributions to the *Herald*, as well as her two published volumes, "A Summer in Europe," and "A Winter in California," bear ample testimony to her industry and her fondness for literary pursuits.

She was well educated. A ready and brilliant talker, as well as an incisive writer, she was at home in the social as fully as in the literary world. She was an excellent judge of books and in her capacity as reviewer accumulated a large and valuable library. Possessed of a vivid imagination and a cultivated mind, she wrote with equal facility letters of travel, book notices, social and descriptive articles, short stories and editorials.

Mr. and Mrs. Wills have traveled much in this country and abroad, a number of trips, including a second tour of Europe in 1892 (the first had been taken in 1875), being undertaken for the purpose of benefiting her impaired health. She died June 7, 1895.

THOMAS J. RAMBO, retired, who for several years was an extensive limestone operator, is a native of Swedesburg, this county, where he was born July 24, 1849. His parents were Nathan and Ann (Broades) Rambo, both descended from old Pennsylvania families. The subject of this sketch, their youngest son, was reared principally at Swedesburg, where he attended the public schools until fifteen years of age. He then entered William F. Wyer's Military school at West Chester, this State, where he took a full course of training, and after being graduated he went into the limestone business at Swedesburg. Inher-

iting considerable property, he operated on an extensive scale, and having executive ability, he rapidly accumulated wealth and added to his holdings in various directions. He followed the business energetically until 1890, when he disposed of his limestone property to the Pennsylvania Railroad company and retired from all active business. At that time he removed to Bridgeport, Pa., where he has ever since resided.

Politically he is a staunch Republican, and in religion a member and vestryman of the Swedes Episcopal church, at Swedesburg. He is also a member of Bridgeport Lodge No. 51, Patriotic Order Sons of America.

On the 30th of October, 1890, Mr. Rambo was united in marriage to Ida M., a daughter of John and Charlotte Bickings, of Norristown. The Rambo family is of Swedish descent, but have resided in eastern Pennsylvania for many generations. Jonas Rambo (paternal grandfather) was a life long resident of Upper Merion township, this county, and owned large tracts of valuable land underlaid with fine veins of superior limestone. This property passed into the hands of the descendant's children, who operated limestone quarries at Swedesburg for many years. These operations were carried on largely by Nathan Rambo, father of Thomas J. The former, in addition to being a wealthy and influential citizen, was a man who took a deep interest in political and public affairs. He was an old line Whig in politics and a member of Swedes Episcopal church, in which latter he served as vestryman and trustee for many years. He died in 1858, at the age of forty-seven, having been born on June 27, 1810. He married Ann Broades, by whom he had a family of seven children, five of whom still survive. The two eldest were daughters,

Eliza and Mary Jane, both now deceased. Those living are Rebecca, widow of J. P. H. Jones; Emma P., wife of P. P. Merritt; William B., engaged in the lime business; Nathan, retired, a sketch of whom will be found on another page of this work; and Thomas J., the subject of the foregoing sketch. Mrs. Ann Rambo was born August 12, 1809, and died July 23, 1889, having survived her husband for more than thirty years. Their remains sleep side by side in the cemetery at old Swedes church.

J. FRANK BOYER, an enterprising and progressive business man of Norristown, is a son of Michael C. and Mary A. (Ziegler) Boyer, and was born March 2, 1867, at Norristown, this county. Philip Boyer, paternal grandfather, was born in Frederick township, Montgomery county. Schooled to the arts of agriculture, he took up and pursued that vocation all his life, most of which was spent near Salfordville, this county. He was a pious Christian gentleman and a member of the Reformed church. He died at the age of seventy-six years and his remains now peacefully repose in the old Goshenhoppen church yard.

Michael C. Boyer, father, was born in Upper Salford township, this county, on May 28, 1821. He attended Washington Hall Collegiate Institute, obtaining a good education and then for a time followed the profession of teaching. He was a Democrat politically and after leaving the profession of teaching, was elected sheriff of Montgomery county, a position he filled with credit and entire satisfaction to his constituents for one full term of three years. After his term of office had expired, Sheriff

much danger and hardship, never saw a white man for six years, and in 1883 left the service of the company to assist his father in the management of the Erdenheim stock farm, referred to previously in this sketch. After the death of his father, in 1888, he and his brother James E., operated the farm until 1893, when he purchased his brother's interest, and since then has continued in the raising of thorough-bred horses for trotting and running. The Erdenheim stock farm cannot be surpassed for situation or excelled for splendid and beautiful horses in the United States, while it is known from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean, and horses from its stables have successfully competed with the swiftest steeds of Europe and Arabia. Louis Kittson is doing much to improve the fine blooded horses of the United States, and his efforts, while now receiving recognition, yet will be most fully appreciated in the future, when their benefits will be more fully perceived. He is a Democrat in political opinion, but no extremist or politician, for his life-work lies in the business world, and there all his energies and efforts are directed.

In 1889 Mr. Kittson wedded Caroline D. Gordon, a daughter of Robert Gordon, of Springfield. To their union have been born two children: Louis G., who died in infancy; and Frederick Stevens, now in the fifth year of his age, being born March 3, 1890.

NATHAN RAMBO, who for many years was a prominent limestone operator at Swedesburg, this county, is a son of Nathan and Ann (Brodes) Rambo, and was born in the year 1847, in Upper Merion, Montgomery county, Pennsylvania. The Rambos are of Swedish extraction, but have been

settled in Pennsylvania since colonial times. Jonas Rambo, paternal grandfather of the subject of this sketch, was a life-long resident of Upper Merion township, where he owned large tracts of land. He was a farmer and stockman by occupation, an old line Whig in politics, and by his marriage the father of a family of several children. His remains rest in the cemetery connected with the old Swedes' Episcopalian church at Swedesburg, of which he was a member. One of his sons was Nathan Rambo (father), who was born and reared at Swedesburg, where after attaining manhood he engaged in the limestone business and accumulated considerable wealth. He owned extensive limestone quarries, which he operated for many years, besides engaging in various other lines of industry, chief of which was the hotel business. For a number of years he was proprietor of a hostlery known as the Rambo house, and became quite prominent in the community. In religion he was an Episcopalian, and served for many years as vestryman of his church at Swedesburg. Politically he was a Whig until 1856, when he became a Republican. He was also a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. He married Ann Brodes, and they had a family of seven children: Eliza, deceased; Mary Jane, also dead; Rebecca, widow of J. P. H. Jones; Emma P., wife of T. P. Merritt; William B., engaged in the lime business at Swedesburg; Nathan, the subject of this sketch; and Thomas J., a sketch of whom appears elsewhere in this volume. The father died in 1858, aged forty-seven years, and the mother passed away in 1889, aged eighty-two.

Nathan Rambo was reared in his native village of Swedesburg, and obtained his elementary education in the public schools.

He afterwards took a course of training in a military academy at West Chester, Pennsylvania, and then embarked in the limestone business. He owned and operated large quarries in Swedesburg, and successfully conducted the enterprise until 1890, when he sold out to Robert McCoy and retired from business. Since that time he has been living quietly in his beautiful home at Bridgeport, surrounded by all the well-earned comforts and luxuries which go to make up an enjoyable life.

In both religion and politics Mr. Rambo adheres to the traditions of his family and is an ardent Republican and an active member of the Swedes' Episcopal church at Swedesburg. In 1873 he married Clara V. Walker. To Mr. and Mrs. Rambo were born two children: Harry and Merritt, who died in infancy.

LOUIS W. READ, M. D., surgeon general of Pennsylvania, and president of the association of military surgeons of the United States, has rendered conspicuous and valuable service in two of the world's great wars, and stands at the head of his profession in this country. He is the eldest son of Thomas and Sarah (Corson) Read, and was born at Plymouth, Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, July 5, 1828. His parents were natives of Delaware county, as were his grandparents, William and Susan Read, and his mother was a daughter of Joseph Corson, and a sister to Drs. Hiram and William Corson. His brothers and sisters, five in number, are: Joseph C., Dr. Alan W., Sarah, widow of Charles Jones; Hannah, and Mary, widow of John Roberts.

Louis W. Read spent his boyhood days at Road's mill, in Upper Merion township,

and received his education in the early common schools and Treemount academy, when it was under the charge of the celebrated Rev. Samuel Aaron. Leaving school, he read medicine with his maternal uncle, Dr. William Corson, and then entered the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania, from which he was graduated in the class of 1849. After graduation he devoted himself assiduously to obtaining the widest knowledge possible of his important profession, and while thus commendably engaged, came the Crimean war cloud in southern continental Europe, which opened before him an extended and highly valuable field for scientific observation and practical work. He offered his services to the Russian government, and being accepted, he served as a surgeon throughout the Crimean war, and was at Sebastapol during its long and terrible siege by the allied forces. During this service under the Czar, he effected important improvements in the manner of treating gun-shot wounds, which were afterwards generally adopted, both in Europe and the United States. Leaving Russia at the close of the war, he spent six months in the hospitals of Paris, where he had a new and valuable field for the study of serious wounds and complicated diseases. Returning home in the autumn of 1857, he came to Norristown, where he has been successfully engaged ever since in the practice of medicine and surgery. While ranking with the foremost of his profession as a general practitioner, yet as a surgeon he has won highest position and widest fame.

When the late Civil war commenced, Dr. Read was enjoying a fine practice, but patriotism with him was superior to home comforts and personal gain, and he tendered his services to the government in the