

History of Columbia and Montour Counties, Pennsylvania, Containing A History of Each County; Their Townships, Towns, Villages, Schools, Churches, Industries, Etc.; Portraits of Representative Men; Biographies; History of Pennsylvania, Statistical and Miscellaneous Matter, Etc. Edited By J. H. Battle. Illustrated. Chicago: A. Warner & Co. 1887.

Thomas Beaver came to Danville for his permanent home in 1857. To his hands, among others, had been entrusted the affairs of the Montour Iron and Steel Works, that had just previously suffered from the financial panic that at that time was passing over our country. **Mr. Waterman**, as co-trustee with **Mr. Beaver**, retained his residence in Philadelphia, hence the immediate responsibility rested mostly on **Mr. Beaver**. He soon had the entire works in successful operation, and in 1860 **Messrs. Waterman** and **Beaver** purchased the entire concern, which soon became one of the most extensive iron manufacturing plants in the country. In another chapter, to which the reader is referred, is given in full detail the history of this important enterprise. The account of it is to some extent the account of **Mr. Beaver's** enterprise and business sagacity. **Thomas Beaver** was born November 16, 1814, in Pfoutz's Valley (now in Perry County), Penn., a son of **Rev. Peter** and **Elizabeth (Gilbert) Beaver**. His ancestors on the paternal side emigrated from Germany about the beginning of 1741, and settled in Chester County, Penn.

The family name of his grandmother **Beaver** was **Keifer**, of whom there are now residents in Franklin County, this State. This family immigrated to this country in 1755, and first settled in Lebanon County. The father of our subject, **Rev. Peter Beaver**, born December 25, 1783, in Franklin County, Penn., was ordained in 1809 at Elkton, Md., by Bishop Asbury, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and was actively engaged in the ministry many years; he died in August, 1849. **Thomas'** mother died in 1818; she was **Elizabeth (Gilbert) Beaver**, the daughter of grandfather **Gilbert**, who was born in Germany, but was of English descent, his father having been a English soldier and one of Marlborough's men in the battle of Blenheim, and from that country immigrated to America. **The Gilberts** located in Lebanon County, where they resided many years, but later moved to Dauphin County. They are a large family and are farmers. The issue of the marriage of **Rev. Peter** and **Elizabeth (Gilbert) Beaver** is as follows: **George**, who married **Catharine Long**; **Samuel**, who married **Maria Leman**; **Jacob**, who married **Ann Eliza Addams** (one of whose children is a favorite son of Pennsylvania, **Gen. James Addams Beaver**, of Centre County, a gallant soldier and Christian gentleman); **Jesse**, who married **Mary Ann Schwartz**; **Thomas**, whose name heads this sketch; **Peter**, who married **Eliza G. Siminton**; **Sarah**, who married **Aaron Nevius**; **Eliza**; **Catharine**, who married **Archibald Greenlee**, and **Mary**, who married **Henry Miller**, now of Lewisburg. **Thomas Beaver's** educational advantages were rather meager. He never attended school after his thirteenth year, but as he possessed an indomitable will and innate intellectual force, his after success was none the less positive because of the lack of scholastic education in early youth. In April, 1827, he left the parental roof in search of his fortune, and for a number of months worked on a farm at \$2.50 per month, and in the winter of that year entered the store of **Beaver & Black** (his brother **Samuel** and **Judge Black**), at Milford. The following spring the business was removed to Newport, Perry County, and there he continued one year. His father having in the meantime opened a store at New Berlin, Union County, **Thomas** put in a year's work there, and then returned to Newport to take charge of the business of **Judge Black**, who was a prominent politician and spent most of his time outside. Close application to business brought its frequent

attendant, and illness compelled a climatic change, so through the friendly aid of **Gen. Mitchell**, chief of construction of the Pennsylvania Canal, on November 1, 1831, he went to Williamsport to fill an engagement in the general store of **Rev. Jasper Bennett**. His knowledge of goods and force of character were demonstrated at that early day, he being sent, when but eighteen years of age, to Philadelphia to purchase a stock of goods, making the tedious journey by stage-coach. In 1833 he formed a connection with **Peter Nevius** in general merchandising at Lewisburg, and remained until 1835, when he sold out his interest and assumed his brother **Samuel's** place at Millerstown, the firm then becoming **J. & T. Beaver**. Feeling a strong desire to learn of wider fields, he told his brother he would go to Philadelphia for such purpose, and carrying out such project in an intelligent manner, wrote to three of the largest firms there for their views and advice. **Reed & Son**, one of those selected, responded, attempting to dissuade the seeker after knowledge, while **Bray & Barcroft** wrote they would be glad to meet him and make his stay pleasant. **Mr. Beaver** accordingly went to Philadelphia in March, 1837, and made good use of his time, so that when he proposed to return he was met by **Mr. Barcroft** with "Thomas, you had better stay where you are;" and answered. "I cannot give up a business worth \$3,000 or \$4,000 per year for the sake of living in Philadelphia." **Mr. Barcroft** then said, "It does not suit us to make any change in our business until 1840. At that time we will give you an equal interest with ourselves in the business." Recognizing the value of such proposition from so strong a house, he acted upon it and returned to Philadelphia. An opportunity being offered to take hold of the affairs of the Montour Iron Company at this place, he came here in 1857. Not to particularize too closely, among his gifts to religious and educational causes may be mentioned \$30,000 to Dickinson College, Penn., and his recent most generous gift of \$100,000 to the Danville Public Library.

January 23, 1838, **Mr. Beaver** was united to **Miss Elizabeth**, daughter of **Robert B. and Cassandra (Berryhill) Wilkins**, of Harrisburg, Penn., who was born April 20, 1817. As a result of this alliance there were born seven children, two of whom died in infancy: **Emily**, born October 4, 1840, married **William H. Chamberlin**, of Lewisburg (since deceased), and bore him **Jesse, William, Thomas, John, Elizabeth, Mary, Emily** and **Laura; Arthur**, born September 17, 1842, married **Alice Diehl** (no issue); **Alice**, born Oct. 12, 1844, married **William H. Browne**, of Philadelphia, and has borne him **Elizabeth, Charles** and **Thomas** (twins); **Laura**, born Jan. 18, 1846, married **Rev. John De Witt**, professor of church history in Lane Seminary, Cincinnati (no issue); **Elizabeth Stewart**, born February 9, 1853, married **Lemuel E. Wells**, of New York, and has borne him **Thomas, Christian** and **Lemuel Stewart**. Into this happy home came the fell destroyer death at an all too early day, calling hence the faithful wife, tender mother and affectionate friend on December 27, 1884.

www.theperryhistorians.org