

Commemorative Biographical Encyclopedia of the Juniata Valley, Comprising the Counties of Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juniata, and Perry, Pennsylvania, J. M. Runk and Company, Publishers 1897

S. W. Bernhisel, Blain, Perry County, Pa., was born October 11, 1842, in Madison Township, on the farm which he now owns, and which his father owned before him. He is a son of **Cornelius** and **Margaret (Burrell) Bernhisel**. His grandfather, **Samuel Bernhisel**, was a native of the eastern part of Pennsylvania. Removing to what afterwards became Perry County, he settled on the farm now owned by **Henry P. Lightner**, and lived there until his death. He married **Susan Bower**, who attained to the remarkable age of ninety-six years. Their children are: **John**, who went to Utah, and became a Mormon; **William**, died in Madison Township; **Fanny (Mrs. John Kell)**, died in Saville Township; **Samuel**, died while traveling, on his way to the west; **Cornelius**; and **Diana (Mrs. Jacob Burrell)**, died in Madison Township. **Cornelius Bernhisel** was born August 17, 1814, on the farm now occupied by **Mr. Lightner**, in the brick house, now one hundred years old; it is in Tyrone Township. Here he attended subscription schools. His father died while he was still very young, but his mother, being left in comfortable circumstances, afforded him the best educational advantages the neighborhood had to offer. He lived at home until he was about seventeen, and then, coming into what is now Madison Township, he obtained employment from **Abraham Bower**, and remained with him for six years, receiving from four to six dollars per month. Out of this small stipend he prudently managed to lay by some money, and **Mr. Bower** dying at the end of six years, he and his brother **William** rented the farm, and cultivated it for two years. He then removed to the farm of **James Clark**, in Jackson Township. A year later, in the spring of 1842, he bought the farm now owned by his son, **S. W. Bernhisel**. Here he remained until the spring of 1869, when he relinquished farming, and removed to that property of his which is now owned by **James Stewart** and **Mrs. Peter Stroup**. An old saw-mill stood on the place, which **Mr. Bernhisel** began to rebuild; but that work was interrupted by his death, July 17, 1870. His son afterwards finished the structure, and sold it when settling the estate. **Cornelius Bernhisel**, in earlier days a Whig, afterwards espoused the principles of the Republican Party. He was almost continuously in township offices. He was active and attentive to business, either public or private, and was endowed with a degree of intelligence and good sense which made him an influential person. **Cornelius Bernhisel** was twice married; the first marriage, contracted while he was still in the employ of **Mr. Bower**, was with **Margaret Burrell**. Their children are: **Susan**, widow of **George T. Rice**, resides in Kalamazoo, Mich.; **S. W.**; **Emma (Mrs. W. A. Wylie)**, of Philadelphia; and **Margaret Ellen (Mrs. Chance)**, of Philadelphia. **Mrs. Bernhisel** died April 17, 1861. **Mr. Bernhisel** afterwards married **Catherine Smith**, who survives him. He was a member of the Lutheran Church.

S. W. Bernhisel passed his youth on the farm, receiving his elementary education in the common schools, and completing his course under the tuition of Prof. David Tressler, later Captain Tressler. His vacations were by no means seasons of idleness, being employed in active duties on the farm. After his school education was ended, he taught for five terms. On September 2, 1864, **Mr. Bernhisel** enlisted at Harrisburg, Pa., in Company F, Two Hundred and Eighth Pennsylvania Volunteers, Capt. G. C. Palm. The regiment formed part of the First Brigade, Third Division, Ninth Army Corps; their division commander was General Hartranft. After enlistment, the regiment remained one week at Camp Curtin, and then proceeded to Baltimore, Md., from which point it was transported by steamer down the Chesapeake Bay to

City Point. For one month, they were encamped at Bermuda Hundred, doing picket duty; the next move was to the front of Petersburg, Va., where again they were on picket duty. From that place they were ordered to Hatcher's Run, where they arrived just after the battle. Afterwards, they raided through to Nottaway River, to intercept Mosby and his men, who were coming up to cut off communications with City Point, the base of supplies for the Union army. On the morning of March 25, General Lee tried to accomplish the same design; he took Forts Steadman and Haskell. **Mr. Bernhisel** took part in the battle of Fort Steadman for five hours. The division took 1,700 prisoners.

After the fight at Fort Steadman, his regiment was in the battles of Richmond and of Petersburg. On April 2, 1865, a charge was made on the first line of breastworks, the Two Hundred and Eighth occupying a prominent position. By four o'clock of the same day, three lines of breastworks had been captured. The nearest that **Mr. Bernhisel** ever came to being wounded was having the visor of his cap struck by a mini-ball, and the left side of his cape penetrated by another. On the morning of April 3, 1865, the regiment followed General Lee to Appomattox Court House, where he surrendered; they then returned to Alexandria, Va. They took part in the grand review at Washington, D. C; and were discharged at Alexandria, Va., June 1, 1865, and mustered out at Harrisburg, Pa.

Having thus served his country through many scenes of hardship and privation, as well as of difficulty and danger, and having performed his duty with gallant fidelity, **Mr. Bernhisel** returned to his home, and resumed the quiet pursuits of the farm. After a series of years marked by success and increasing usefulness, he was in 1893 obliged by impaired health to relinquish active employment. He still, however, deals to some extent in stock, buying cattle in the fall, fattening them, and disposing of them in summer. He is also, as he always has been, much interested in the work of the Republican Party, of which he is an enthusiastic and influential member. His farm, which contains 161 acres, is one of the best equipped in the county. Among other convenient structures, for various uses, the barn is conspicuous. It is one hundred and sixteen and a half feet long by forty-seven in depth, and contains all the latest improved appliances. The farm is stocked with the finest cattle, etc., and with Kentucky bred horses. The home, which is the crowning ornament of his farm, is an ideal one. The house is of brick, forty-eight feet by thirty feet, and two and a half stories in height, comfortable, cheerful, well supplied with convenient and elegant furniture, and with books and whatever else may serve to gratify the mind and the taste, it is the model of what a farmer's house should be. In all its appointments, it is the outcome and expression of the refined and courteous hospitality of its master and mistress.

S. W. Bernhisel was married, September 17, 1868, to **Emma S.**, only daughter of **Hugh Gray**, deceased. Their children are four in number: **Laura Belle**, born January 3, 1870, died in her third year; **Harry Grant**, born September 13, 1871, at home; **Charley William**, born December 24, 1875, at home; **Lillie May**, born August 4, 1882, at home. **Mr. Bernhisel** is a member of the Lutheran Church at Blain, Pa., and is active in the work of his congregation.

Mr. Bernhisel has served his township as judge of elections, tax collector, inspector, auditor and school director. During 1894, he was mercantile appraiser.