



*Bethel M. Custer*

**Bethel Moore Custer**, a prominent business man, farmer and land owner of Llanwellyn, this county, who has done much for the improvement of his section, and been closely identified with building operations in Llanwellyn and elsewhere, is a son of **John** and **Elizabeth (Osborn) Custer**, and a native of Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, where he was born June 8, 1828. The **Custer family** is of German decent, and one of the oldest in this country, the Chester branch being remotely connected with the distinguished **General Custer**, who lost his life on the plains in fighting the Indians. **William Custer**, paternal grandfather of the subject of this sketch, was a stone mason by trade, and afterward followed farming for a number of years. He was a Whig in politics, and a member of the German Lutheran Church. He married and reared a family of six children: **Anna Ramsey**, **Mary Vandyke**, **Margaret**, **Bethel Moore**, **Amos** and **John**. **John Custer** (father) was a farmer and stone mason. He served as a soldier in

the war of 1812, and lived to be sixty-seven years old. At the time of his death he owned a farm of two hundred acres in Perry County, this State. Politically he was a Whig, and in religious faith and church membership a Lutheran. He married **Elizabeth Osborn**, and by her had a family of eight children, four sons and four daughters: **Mary A. Egbert**, **Margaret Branyan**, **George W.**, **Elizabeth Keel**, **Bethel Moore** (subject of this sketch), **Anna Lubbe**, **John** and **Thomas**. Her father was a large manufacturer, owning two factories, one at Conshohocken, Montgomery County, and the other in Philadelphia. He was an Englishman by birth, and came to the United States for the purpose of setting up some special machinery. He liked this country so well that he remained, and afterward became a large manufacturer here.

**Bethel Moore Custer** passed his boyhood days on his father's farm in Montgomery County, receiving his early education in the public schools of that county, and afterward completing his studies in Philadelphia. At the age of fifteen he became an apprentice to the blacksmith trade, and spent more than four years in making himself familiar with every branch of that business. He worked at his trade for three years, and then engaged in the dairy business, with which he has been more or less connected ever since. In 1850 he started a business in West Philadelphia, which he afterward turned over to his sons, who still conduct it. In 1866 he purchased the farm on which he now resides, at Llanwellyn, but prior to this he had resided on Sixty third street, West Philadelphia, where he carried on farming and dairying for some time, and later removed to Belmont, Montgomery County, where he continued the business for two years before coming to Delaware County. His present farm aggregates two hundred and twenty-five acres of choice land, but his original purchase contained five hundred acres. The village of Llanwellyn is built on part of the tract he first purchased. **Mr. Custer's** dairy farm is perhaps the largest in Delaware County. He keeps one hundred fine cows, and uses twenty horses in carrying on the

business, besides which he is also largely interested in raising fine horses for the markets. He also devotes considerable time to real estate transactions, and is vice president of the First National bank of Darby, which he was largely instrumental in organizing. He has sold many lots in the village of Llanwellyn, upon which valuable improvements have been made, and still has a number of good lots for sale on easy terms, and is largely interested in several other real estate enterprises, which promise much for the development and prosperity of the county.

On November 6, 1851, **Mr. Custer** was married to **Mrs. Jane Robinson**, nee **Crothers**, by whom he had ten children: **Louisa J. Partridge**, **Charles D.**, **Samuel C.**, **Ida J. Ulrich**, **Isaac R.**, **Maggie S.**, **John W.**, **Bethel Sherman**, **Lizzie** (deceased), and **Mary Alice**. **Mrs. Custer** died on Christmas Eve, 1871, at the age of forty-four, and on June 11, 1872, **Mr. Custer** wedded **Martha Holmes**.

In political affiliations **Mr. Custer** has always been a staunch democrat, and has taken an active interest in local politics for many years, never missing a presidential election since he attained his majority. He was nominated for Congress from the district comprising Chester and Delaware Counties, against **William B. Ward**, and after a heated campaign was defeated by a majority which was one thousand less than that usually given by his political opponents in the district. **Mr. Custer** has been twice nominated for a seat in the State assembly, but, belonging to the minority party, he has been defeated each time, though by reduced majorities—in one case the usual majority of twenty-five hundred being brought down to four hundred. These facts are an eloquent tribute to his popularity among the people who know him best, and of his high standing in the county. He has served as township auditor and road supervisor, and has been a member of the school board for over seventeen years, during much of which time he has served as secretary and president, being deeply interested in school work and educational affairs. All his life he has been a voracious reader, and has acquired a large fund of useful knowledge, having a finely cultivated mind, and always keeping well posted on current events. For forty-five years he has been a prominent member of the Baptist Church, and is also a member of Cassia Lodge, of Montgomery County, and of St. John Commandery, Knights Templar, of Philadelphia.

He was one of the original promoters, and is financially interested in the Philadelphia and Telford road, being instrumental in pushing it to completion between Darby and Chester. This, like all the other enterprises in which **Mr. Custer** has been engaged, has proved a financial success, and is now paying a handsome dividend. In every relation of life he has been active and useful, and is widely known and universally esteemed for his integrity, uprightness, industry and benevolence.

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