

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

John Calvin Dimm is a splendid example of the self-made men developed in the county since the war of the Rebellion. Of German extraction, he very early became imbued with a feeling of pride in his ancestry and tilled with a desire to emulate their example and add in the luster of the family name.

Mr. Dimm was born in the little hamlet of Dimmsville, Greenwood Township, Juniata County, October 8, 1865. His father, **John T. Dimm**, still keeps the little country store which was established by him and his own father forty-three years ago, under the firm name of **J. & J. T. Dimm**. **John T. Dimm** is still a well preserved old gentleman, who has lived his long and quiet life usefully and well. In 1884 he was elected county commissioner, and served his fellow citizens ably and honorably. **John Dimm**, the grandfather of **John Calvin Dimm**, was elected associate judge of the common pleas courts of Juniata County, occupying the bench in that capacity from 1852 to 1857. The pioneer **Dimm** in Pennsylvania was **John Dimm**, who came hither from Germany about the year 1650, and settled in Philadelphia, and later in Berks County, where he remained until his death. His son, **Christopher Dimm**, the great-great-grandfather of **Calvin Dimm**, settled in Luzerne County near the present site of the city of Wilkes-Barre, where he reared a family of five sons and two daughters. His son, **Henry Dimm**, the father of **John Dimm**, and the great-grandfather of **John Calvin Dimm**, married and resided in what is now Greenwood Township, where his progeny have since increased and multiplied.

Of such lineage, it was but natural that **John Calvin Dimm** should be filled with a longing for an education and an ambition to uphold the honor of the family name. The nearest school house to his early home was Straight Water, and therein young **Dimm** laid the foundation for all the knowledge which he has since acquired, and formed the habit of intellectual industry, to which he owes much of his present success. He was a light-hearted, rollicking little chap, in school and out, and his presence as a clerk in his father's store no doubt materially added to the family revenue. Put the taste he had had of education at Straight Water served only to increase the thirst for more and higher acquirements, and in the spring of 1883 he attended for a term the Mifflin Academy, then under the guidance of John Mason Duncan. In the fall and winter of that year he taught the school which he had first attended in Straight Water, keeping up at the same time his own studies, and in the spring of 1884 he spent another term at Prof. Duncan's academy, returning again to Straight Water as a teacher throughout the winter of 1884-85. In the spring of 1885 he entered as a student at Missionary Institute (now Susquehanna University) at Selinsgrove, Snyder County, where he remained until the summer of 1886, when he returned and taught the Flint School, in Walker Township.

At this time the mercantile instinct, which even a pedagogic training could not entirely repress, manifested itself, and at the close of the school term he engaged in the lumbering business. At the age of twenty-one years, therefore, **Mr. Dimm** was one of the busiest young men in the county. It was not mere inclination that led him to take up the lumbering business, but the necessity for outdoor exercise created by a delicate constitution which compelled him to lay down his studies. His first venture was on what is still known as Adams Ridge (now the

property of Reuben Guss), on the Cedar Spring road in Walker Township), where he bought a tract of timber and hired a sawmill. He returned as teacher of the Flint School for another term, at the special request of the directors and patrons thereof, and in the summer of 1888, he bought a steam sawmill and lumbered in the mountains up Licking Creek near the ruins of Selheimer's paper-mill, where he bought the timber right of three tracts, and at the same time was operating on a tract near Locust Run, in Delaware Township. At this time he had a narrow escape from becoming a professional education. He learned on the afternoon of the day on which the directors of the Mifflintown schools were to meet, that a principal of their high school was to be elected that evening. At the last moment, and at the urgent solicitation of friends who were familiar with his career as a teacher, he became an applicant for the position. There were in all eight candidates for the honor, and the first ballot resulted in a tie between **Mr. Dimm** and the teacher who finally secured the place.

Still dominated by the mercantile impulse, which was, however, somewhat modified by his educational training, in October, 1888, he launched into business in the Crystal Palace building, in Mifflintown, as a manufacturing stationer, starting with a large stock of paper and the necessary machinery for the manufacture of writing paper tablets, and employing ten hands. Just seven weeks after he had begun this new enterprise, his establishment was burned, entailing a heavy loss. Within thirty days **Mr. Dimm** had recommenced business in the Hollsbaugh building, expanding his plant so as to include a complete job printing outfit. For a few months he devoted his attention exclusively to job work, after which he resumed also the work of manufacturing writing paper tablets. For the next three years the growth of his job printing and stationery business was phenomenal. Throughout his career he was himself a most persistent advertiser, and much of his patronage came from distant localities.

With a large and growing business on his hands he was induced to undertake the publication of a weekly newspaper, and on June 1, 1892, appeared the first number of *The Juniata Star*. Although there were already four newspapers published in the town of Mifflin (which contained a population of about 1,000 only), and notwithstanding the fact that some people scoffed at the idea of there being room for another, **Mr. Dimm**, when he had later acquired full control of the editorial department of *The Star*, soon made a field peculiarly his own, and his journal is now as extensively read and as prosperous as any in the county. His specialty is making the cause of the farmer and the laboring man his own, against the oppressions of politicians and capitalists.

After becoming a resident of Mifflintown **Mr. Dimm** was appointed notary public by Governor Pattison, and served a term of four years from May 30, 1893. In 1895 he was appointed a member of the town council to fill the unexpired term of David Holman, deceased.

He was married on March 9, 1892, to **Miss Mary Gertrude Bratton**, daughter of **Charles Bratton**, of Bratton Township, Mifflin County. They have three children. Throughout his entire career **Mr. Dimm** has been a consistent church member, and an active worker in the Sabbath school and Young People's Societies. He joined the Lutheran Church in Pfoutz Valley, Perry County, in 1883, and in 1890 connected himself with the Presbyterian Church in Mifflintown, of which his wife is also a member.

As a whole, **Mr. Dimm's** career has been a remarkable one, and his record of achievements gives great promise of enlarged usefulness and continued success. Each successive occupation has been an outgrowth of, or dovetailed exactly into its predecessors, until he stands to-day a harmonious product of his mercantile, intellectual and religious tendencies and training. He has struggled through seas of financial trouble that would have overwhelmed most men. Coming to the county seat a poor country boy, he has built up a business that can never be taken away from him, as might have been the case had he inherited it. He knew nothing whatever of the printing trade when he engaged in the job printing business, yet, without serving an apprenticeship, or taking instructions from a trained hand he soon became one of the most skilful and finished job printers in central Pennsylvania. His history is a veritable object lesson and encouragement to every self reliant and plucky boy within the circle of his influence.

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