

Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. Genealogy, Family History, Biography, Containing Historical Sketches of Old Families and of Representatives and Prominent Citizens Past and Present. In Two Volumes – Illustrated, Volume I, Chicago, J. H. Beers and Company, 1916



*W. N. Ehrhart*

**William Nelson Ehrhart**, A. M., Ph. D., late of Mahanoy City, was in control of the public school system of that borough for so extended a period that any account of its development for almost two decades would be practically a chronicle of his life during that time. He did valuable work as an educator wherever placed; but his reputation rests chiefly upon this, his crowning achievement, for which he will be remembered all over Schuylkill County.

**Professor Ehrhart** was a native of Perry County, Pennsylvania, born near Newport, Feb. 15, 1848, son of **John** and **Eleonora (Super) Ehrhart**, of whose family one son and four daughters still survive, viz.: **David M.** of Juniata Township, Perry County; **Mrs. D. M. Numer** and **Mrs. Jerome Toomey**, of Newport, Pa.; **Mrs. George Black**, of Harrisburg, Pa.; and **Mrs. Cyrus Mogel**, of Wila, Pennsylvania.

**Prof. Ehrhart's** paternal grandparents, **Michael** and **Sarah (Wolf) Ehrhart**, were both natives of York County, Pa., the former born in 1795. He died in Ohio in 1859. The latter was born in 1795, and died in Huntingdon, Pa., in 1875. They were the parents of eight children, **John, Mary, David, Michael, Sarah, Susan, William** and **George**. All have long since been deceased. The family was prominent and early established in York County. **Prof. Ehrhart's** father was born in 1818 in York County, Pa., and died in Perry County, Pa., in 1898. His mother, **Eleonora (Super) Ehrhart**, was born in Perry County in 1823, and died at Wila, Pa., in 1909. His father was a carpenter and builder, and also engaged in agricultural pursuits. The last fifteen years of his life he lived retired. He had a well merited reputation in the county as a man of unquestioned honor and high Christian character. He and his wife were members of the Lutheran Church. The **Ehrhart family** is well known and highly esteemed.

On the maternal (**Super**) side, the oldest member of whom record has been kept was born in Württemberg in 1700. The immediate ancestor of the family was the son of the foregoing. His name was **Johann**, and he was born in 1742, and died in 1831. His wife, **Christina**, died in 1818. To them eight children were born, viz.: **Conrad, John Jacob, John, Barbara, Catherine, Maria, Agnes** and **Christina**. **Grandfather John Jacob Super** was born in August, 1775, and died in December, 1854. His wife's grandfather, **Alexander Ruediger**, was a native of Saxony. He came to Tuebingen, Württemberg, and settled there. One of his sons, **Sigmund**, born in 1746, was educated at the University of Tuebingen. **Henrietta Eleonora (Mr. Ehrhart's** grandmother) was his only daughter. She was born in 1783. Her father died in Nufringen, where he had been pastor of the Lutheran Church from 1792 to 1805. He received

the degree of D. D. in his twenty-sixth year. **Grandfather Super** was in the German army twenty years. He came to America with his wife and four children, **Rudolph, John, Jacob,** and **Christina** (**Henry W., Eleonora** and **Barbara** were born in this country), landing in Philadelphia in 1819. He afterwards lived in Baltimore, Md., but spent the latter years of his life in Perry County, Pa. A number of the descendants of grandfather **John Jacob Super** have attained to high literary eminence, notable among them **Dr. Charles W. Super**, professor and later president for about seventeen years of the State University at Athens, Ohio, and **Ovanda B. Super**, for many years professor of the languages at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa. The former attended the Tuebingen University, Württemberg, and was a student there just a century after his great-grandfather, **Sigmund Ruediger**, was a student at the same university. **Prof. Ovanda B. Super** attended the University of Leipzig, Germany, and the University of Paris, France. Both are eminent writers and authors of text-books used in the leading universities in this country. Both have now retired. The first of **Grandfather Super's** brothers to come to America was **John**. He passed most of his life in Baltimore, where some of his descendants still live, and are prominent and honored citizens. His youngest son, **Henry W.**, was a long-time professor and afterwards president of Ursinus College, at Collegeville, Pa.

**William N. Ehrhart** was reared in the locality of his birth, and acquired his early education in the public schools there. Then he attended the State Normal School at Bloomsburg, Pa., where he was graduated upon completing the elementary course, and a few years later graduated in the scientific course from the State Normal School at Millersville, Pa. He later, upon completing the regular course of study, had the degrees of A. M. and Ph. D. conferred upon him by Taylor University, Indiana. Practically all his life was devoted to educational work and the improvement of public school facilities, either as teacher or in an administrative capacity. For some time during his early manhood he taught in his native county, but Schuylkill County was, the field of his labors for more than forty years, and the results of his influence here in behalf of her public schools may be most appropriately cited as the true memorial of the work to which he dedicated body and soul during all that period. His first position in this county was as principal at Llewellyn, where he was engaged for two years. Becoming principal of the high school at Tamaqua, he filled that position for nine or ten years with marked efficiency, so that he changed (in 1884) to enter upon greater responsibilities as principal of the high school at Shenandoah. There he continued for about nine years, during which period the school experienced the growth characteristic of **Mr. Ehrhart's** supervision everywhere. He was one of the promoters of, and took an active interest in, the Free Public Library of the Shenandoah school district, giving much painstaking labor to the advance of same. Resigning in 1893 he removed to Pottsville, where he was in business for a couple of years, but his heart was still in his profession, and when the principalship of the Mahanoy City high school was offered him in 1895 he accepted. It was the sphere for which he was eminently fitted, and he did such promising work that after a year the board of education concluded he would be most valuable in the superintendency, and for the next eighteen years all the schools of the borough had the benefit of his guidance. Here he also greatly interested himself in the Public Library, and to his efforts, and the Board of Library Trustees, too much praise cannot be given for the large and fine Free Public Library of Mahanoy City school district. Though he kept up his duties until within a year of his death, retiring at the close of the school year in the spring of 1914, he had been ill for about a year and a half. About a month before his death he was obliged to take to his bed, and he passed away March 31, 1915, at his home in Mahanoy City.

The record made by the Mahanoy City schools under **Prof. Ehrhart's** supervision is one of distinct progress, and an index of his superior qualifications no less than a creditable page in the history of the community. Though primarily a student, and all his life devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, he was as well grounded in the other requirements of successful pedagogy as in pure scholarship. He was a great reader, and delighted in the classics, science, history and fiction. He was the possessor of a large and carefully selected library. Moreover, he loved the young as much as he loved his books, and his understanding of the child's nature, and sympathy with youthful proclivities, made him a friend of his charges in the truest and broadest sense. He was greatly beloved and highly esteemed by teachers and pupils. When he assumed the reins over the Mahanoy City schools he gave his undivided attention to placing them in the first rank among similar educational institutions, and such is the standing they now occupy. His vigilance in every department, the inspiration of his personal example to high ideals, his readiness in making the best of existing circumstances until they could be bettered, his tact and thoughtfulness for all with whom he came in contact, are some of the tokens by which his strong personality is recalled in the circles where he was the moving spirit for almost a score of years. And it is not too much to say that to many he is still the guiding hand. He had the honor of being one of the members of the State Board of Examiners every year at the State Normal Schools during his superintendency, with the exception of the year of his illness. He is especially missed at the county institute, in whose activities he took part for years with unabated interest. He was a prominent member of the Schuylkill County Educational Association from its organization, and was its treasurer until he was obliged to relinquish the office owing to failing health. He was a member of the National Educational Association, the State Teachers' Association, and the National Geographic Society. He was one of the brilliant lights of that group whose names will always be associated with the most notable era of educational development of this section, a friend and co-worker of **Robert F. Ditchburn**, **B. F. Patterson** and **S. A. Thurlow**, all like himself prominent educators. In mathematics as well as literary culture he had the highest reputation. "By his removal one of the best mathematicians in eastern Pennsylvania is called away." Such was the general opinion regarding his intellectual acquirements. For his personal characteristics also there was nothing but eulogy. The teachers who worked so long with him found him a loyal friend and helper, and upon his retirement from office, to show their appreciation, placed in the high school his portrait, painted by a celebrated artist, and bearing the inscription: "From the Teachers of Mahanoy City." His fellow citizens in every walk of life found him conscientious, enthusiastic and unselfish, ready with counsel, influence or other assistance to reinforce any good movement. When he retired after a career of unselfish fruitfulness it was hoped that he had many years of enjoyable leisure to reward him, and his death was widely and sincerely mourned.

**Prof. Ehrhart** was an adherent of the First M. E. Church of Mahanoy City, and always a man of deep religious feeling which pervaded every interest of his life. The fine sentiments of friendship and appreciation of which he was capable were well shown in the memorial address he prepared for the Schuylkill County Institute upon the death of his beloved associate, **Robert Forbes Ditchburn** (it was read by a friend, **Prof. Ehrhart** being too ill to deliver it). They labored together along the same line for over forty years. It was a tribute such as only a personal intimate friend could give, and expressed with the delicacy of thought and language which **Mr. Ehrhart** employed so well. Indeed, though he confined his remarks to his departed friend, they

were so typical that in perusing them the mind unconsciously goes to the mirror which had the power to reflect so faithfully.

In the latter part of the Civil war, March, 1865, **Mr. Ehrhart**, though only a youth of seventeen, enlisted in Company G, 149th Pennsylvania Regiment. Volunteer Infantry, and he remained in the army until the close of the conflict, receiving his discharge in June. On June 24n 1897, he became member of Severn Post, G. A. R., and he also belonged to Washington Camp No. 112, P. O. S. of A. In politics he was a, staunch Republican.

**Prof. Ehrhart** is survived by his wife and only child, **Raymond Nelson Ehrhart**. He was married Sept. 11, 1877, to **Julia C. Whitenight**, daughter of **D. E.** and **Catharine (Aurand) Whitenight**, of Tamaqua, this county, and to them a son, **Raymond Nelson**, was born April 18, 1879. On the maternal side **Mrs. Ehrhart** traces her genealogy back to the Huguenots of France, and in fact to the thirteenth century. Her mother was of French extraction, the daughter of **Peter** and **Elizabeth Aurand**, of Tamaqua, Pa. The **Aurand** ancestors were eminent French Huguenots, having occupied positions of rank, and fled from France during the religious troubles consequent upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by King Louis XIV, 1685. Leaving all behind them, they fled to Holland, and later removed to the city of Heidelberg, Germany. The ancestor of the American branch, **John Aurand**, emigrated to America on the 2d day of October, 1753, on the ship "Edensburg," from Rotterdam. He first settled at Maiden-creek, and then moved to Tulpehocken, amongst the Huguenot colony, near Reading, Pa., where most of his children were born. **Raymond Nelson Ehrhart** is a graduate of Cornell University, at Ithaca, N. Y., in electrical and mechanical engineering, and now turbine expert, and one of the head engineers, for the Westinghouse Company of Pittsburgh, Pa. He married the only daughter of **Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Hopkins**, of Huntingdon County, Pa. **Mr. Hopkins** was a commissioned officer in the 110th Pennsylvania Volunteers. **Mr. and Mrs. Ehrhart** make their home in Edgewood Park, a beautiful suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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