

Hon. **John Alexander Magee**, editor of the Perry County Democrat, and one of the oldest active



newspaper men in Pennsylvania, both in years and length of service, was born at Landisburg, then the county seat of Perry County, October 14, 1827. **Alexander Magee**, the father of **John A.**, was born September 20, 1791 in Philadelphia, and was of North-of-Ireland ancestry. He learned printing and bookbinding in Carlisle, Pa., and during the war of 1812 enlisted in Captain Alexander's company of volunteers. He came to Landisburg, Perry County, in 1820, and established the Perry Forrester, the pioneer newspaper of the county. He continued the publication of this paper until 1832, when he sold it to David A. Reed, of Cumberland, and embarked in the mercantile business in New Bloomfield, then recently made the county seat. He remained engaged in mercantile pursuits until 1841, when he was elected sheriff. After faithfully and acceptably filling this office, he lived retired until his death, July 8, 1845, at the age of fifty-four years. Mr. Magee was a prominent and representative citizen during the earlier years of the country's history, and shared in a large degree in the work of its material upbuilding. He was also a friend of education, and of every movement or enterprise calculated to promote the

moral or intellectual advancement of the people, he was a delegate from Perry County to the convention which framed the constitution of 1837-38, which remained the fundamental laws of Pennsylvania until 1874. A man of character and of conscience, he commanded respect and esteem, and was recognized as one whose aim in life was to perform the duties of each day fearlessly faithfully. **Mr. Magee** was

married about 1815, to **Sarah Crever**, born August 4, 1795, a daughter of **John** and **Eve Crever**, of Carlisle, Pa. She was of Pennsylvania-German descent, and was a model wife and mother. She died January 24, 1855. The children of this marriage were: **Anna Catherine (Mrs. Edward S. Swartz)**, of Berks County, Pa., deceased; **Eleanor (Mrs. James G. Sample)**, of Crawford County, Pa., deceased; **Mary A. (Mrs. Matthew McBride)**, of Perry County, Pa., deceased; **Eliza (Mrs. Samuel G. Morrison)**, of Lycoming County, Pa., deceased; **Margaret (Mrs. Joseph M. Shatto)**, of Perry County, Pa.; **John A.**, of New Bloomfield; **Sarah J.**, who makes her home with him; **Emma J.**, widow of **Addis McVeagh**, of Williamsport, Pa.; and **James Black**, who died in infancy.

John A. Magee received a common school education, supplemented by a course at the New Bloomfield Academy. In August, 1845, in order to give his education a more practical turn, he entered the office of the Perry County Democrat as a printer's apprentice, the editor and publisher at that time being George Stroop. After the usual apprenticeship, he went to Harrisburg in 1850, and there set type in the office of the Keystone and of the Daily American. In 1851, he taught school a



John A. Magee

portion of the time. In 1853 he was a type-setter in the office of the National Era, Washington, D. C. On the death of George Stroop, in January, 1854, he became the editor of the Perry County Democrat. He is still "at the helm" of this paper; is one of the oldest editors in point of service in the Commonwealth, and expects to die with the harness on. In the conduct of the Perry County Democrat, Mr. Magee has exhibited marked ability as a thinker and writer. A Democrat of the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian stamp, he has earnestly devoted himself to the advocacy of the recognized principles of his party, which have been set forth by him in the editorial columns of his paper in a clear, forcible and logical manner. He has for many years taken an active and prominent part in the political affairs of his native county and State, and of the country at large. In 1862, he was elected to the legislature, and served through the sessions of 1863, making a creditable record. He served as a delegate in 1868 in the National Democratic Convention, which met in New York, and nominated Horatio Seymour for President. In 1872 he was a candidate for Congress from the district then composed of Cumberland, Perry and York Counties, and notwithstanding the great Republican landslide of that year, received a majority of 1,826 out of a total of 28,890 votes, thus attesting his popularity with the people of the district. He was a delegate in 1876 to the National Democratic Convention which met at St. Louis and nominated Samuel J. Tilden. He was the unanimous choice of his county for Congress in 1874 and 1878, and has been many times a delegate to the State conventions of his party. In 1891 he was one of the candidates of the district composed of the counties of Juniata, Mifflin and Perry to the proposed convention, which was not held, to revise the constitution of the State. In the summer of 1896 he was a delegate to the Democratic State Convention, held at Allentown, and was there chosen a delegate to the Chicago Convention that nominated William Jennings Bryan as the Democratic candidate for President. In 1894, Mr. Magee was elected chairman of the First Division Democratic State Executive Committee, embracing the counties of York, Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, Dauphin, Lebanon, Perry, Juniata and Mifflin, and was re-elected in 1895-96, serving three consecutive terms. He declined to be a candidate in 1897.

It will be seen from the foregoing that aside from his position as the editor of a Democratic newspaper, of acknowledged value and influence, Mr. Magee has been intimately connected with the political affairs of Pennsylvania and the nation for more than a third of a century, and has, during that time, rendered to his party and to the people, able, acceptable and important service. His life has been one of unremitting activity. Loyal to the principles he believes in, he has fully merited the unreserved confidence reposed in him, and to-day is respected and esteemed by his fellow citizens of Perry county as a man whose life has been characterized by an unfaltering fealty to his convictions, an unremitting devotion to duty, and an unswerving adherence to honesty, uprightness and integrity in all his dealings.

John A. Magee was married, June 10, 1857, to **Margaret Hettie**, daughter of **William D. Ramsey**, Esq., of the Bar of Cumberland County. Four of their children are deceased: **Alexander R.**; **John A.**; **Benjamin C.**; and **Louis A.** The living are: **Charlotte Annie**; and **William R.**, a graduate of Lafayette College, who reside at home; and **James S.**, who is a cashier under Collector R. E. Shearer, in the internal revenue office of the Ninth Collection District at Lancaster, Pa. He married **Mary**, a daughter of **Frank Mortimer**, of New Bloomfield, editor of the Perry County Times, and is the father of three children: **John A.**; **James S.**; and **Frank M.** Although well advanced in years Mr. Magee still gives his personal attention to the editorial management of his paper, which has a large circulation throughout Perry County. Questions of public interest are dealt with in an able and thoughtful manner and local news receive care and attention their importance demands. The question of retiring from active service has not even been considered by this veteran writer in the newspaper field, and, as has already been stated, he purposes, "dying in the harness."