

Jefferson County Pennsylvania Her Pioneers and People, Two Volumes; Illustrated; Volume II; Genealogy—Biography, Chicago, J. H. Beers & Company 1917

George W. Nelson, who is living at Brockwayville, developed a high standard of efficiency during the course of a signally active and worthy career, for nearly a quarter of a century handling important executive duties for the United Natural Gas Company. He was born at DuBois on the 4th of July, 1855, a son of **John** and **Mary (Home) Nelson**, his mother dying when he was a lad of five years, and he was but fifteen years at the time of his father's death. The orphan boy thus had close fellowship with adversity and was denied the customary educational advantages. Early becoming dependent upon his own resources, he not only gained a good education but forged sturdily forward to the goal of worthy success, having been the architect of his own fortunes. His active career was marked by diversified service. **Mr. Nelson** was the third of seven children. His elder brother, **Frederick**, went West, where he married and passed the remainder of his life; **Amanda** is the widow of **John I. Shaw**, at DuBois; **Mary** is the wife of **James Little**, also of DuBois; **Charles** is a carpenter in the State of Louisiana; **Jennie**, deceased, was the wife of **George Corbin**; **Nora** died at the age of three years.

The home being broken up at his mother's death, **George W. Nelson** was taken into the home of his grandfather, **James Nelson**, and when about fifteen years old he was virtually indentured or "bound out" to **Jesse Lyon**, a farmer near DuBois, where he had ample opportunity for hard work but none to attend school. At the age of sixteen he felt conditions had become intolerable, and ran away from his employer, the first day traversing a distance of twenty-four miles, over the Clearfield Mountains. Finally arriving at the home of his aunt, **Mrs. Nancy Leonard**, he there passed the winter, meanwhile finding employment in driving a four-horse team in the hauling of square timber, receiving for this service fifty cents a day. In the spring his brother, **Frederick**, joined him and they became associated in rafting timber down the Susquehanna River, this arduous and hazardous work bringing each of them from eight to ten dollars a day. He had learned the value of money and with habits of thrift saved a good part of his wages. After the close of the rafting season he engaged in hauling lumber and in the autumn found employment in a shingle mill on Jerry Run. Here he had an accident that nearly resulted in the loss of the fingers of his left hand, though they were fortunately saved by proper treatment. After recovery from his injury he worked in the summer seasons and went to school in winter, realizing fully the great advantage of an education. When he was eighteen years old he did not even know the letters of the alphabet. His ambition and courage under such conditions gained him the kindly aid of **Dr. Gregory**, then superintendent of schools for Clearfield County, who earnestly encouraged him to acquire an education. He ever manifests a deep sense of indebtedness to **Dr. Gregory** and **Professor Weaver** for the counsel and assistance they then gave him. He attended public school at DuBois, his alertness and earnest application enabling him to make rapid and effective progress. Finally he took an advanced course in the Clearfield County Normal School, at Curwensville, under his esteemed friend **Dr. Gregory**, and at the age of twenty-four put his attainments to practical use by entering the profession of teaching in Brady Township, Clearfield County. His success was but in proportion to his zeal and he continued the schoolmaster's work for eleven years, during eight of which he was engaged in the public schools of DuBois. Eventually abandoning the vocation in which he had thus proved ability and won success, he went to Janesville, Wis., and took up telegraphy. For three years he was employed as an operator on the Panhandle Railroad west of Pittsburgh, until a severe illness compelled him to resign. Meantime he married **Alice Burchfield**, of DuBois, who proved a devoted wife and helpmate, and to whose care and solicitude he owed much in regaining his former physical vigor.

Mr. Nelson had returned to his home at DuBois, where he took the position of watchman in the John E. DuBois Company, being soon advanced to that of engineer. On the 1st of September, 1893, he removed to Brockwayville, where he became local manager or superintendent for the United Natural Gas Company, a responsible executive post of which he was the incumbent for twenty-two years, retiring in September, 1915.

Mr. Nelson has served the State as local health officer at Brockwayville since 1908, now giving close attention to the duties of this office. He has always been a supporter of the Republican Party, but where no national or State issues are involved supporting men and measures meeting approval of his judgment. **Mr. Nelson** belongs to the Elks, F. & A. M., Lodge No. 379; Ridgway Chapter. No. 30, R. A. M., and Ridgway Commandery, No. 40, K. T., as well as Jaffa Temple, at Altoona, he and his wife are active and valued members of the Presbyterian Church and are popular figures in connection with the social life of the community.

At DuBois. at the age of twenty-eight, **Mr. Nelson** married **Alice Burchfield**, who was born at Ansonville, Pa., on the 1st of March, 1864, daughter of **Rev. William M.** and **Maggie (Van Dyke) Burchfield**. She was carefully educated under the direction and effective preceptorship of her father, a man of culture and erudition. **Mr.** and **Mrs. Nelson's** children are: **Mildred**, the wife of **Ira Neely**, of Center, Perry County, who has three children, **Olive, William** and **Alice May; Florence Olive**, wife of **O. D. Sibley**, of Perrysburg, N. Y.; **W. Frederick**, who was born at DuBois, Clearfield County, Feb. 5, 1891, educated in the public schools and at the Indiana (Pa.) normal school, and is present owner of the Variety Store at Brockwayville; **John Basil**, studying dentistry in Pittsburgh; and **Mary Alice**, who remains at the parental home.

Rev. William M. Burchfield was born near Mifflintown. Juniata County, on the 22d of February, 1834, and died at Cisna Run, Perry County, on the 31st of August, 1915. He was the only son of **Washington Perry Burchfield** and **Matilda (Junk) Burchfield**, both of whom died when he was but two years old. He early manifested contemplative and studious habits, natural predilections leading him to obtain a thorough education, though he was largely dependent upon his own resources. He was the first superintendent of public schools in Juniata County, and in 1862 was ordained a minister of the Presbyterian Church. He became pastor of the Fruit Hill Church at Ansonville, Clearfield County, where he remained about eight years. For the ensuing seven years he held the pastorate at Curwensville, and then became the virtual organizer of a church at DuBois, in which he continued his faithful ministrations for eight years. In 1887 he assumed charge of the churches at Landisburg, Center, Ickesburg and Blain, in Perry County, serving all of these until the charge was divided, when he retained the pastorate of the Center Church. In 1910 his impaired health and the infirmities of advancing years caused him to retire from active work of the ministry, and he was made pastor emeritus of the church at Center, the Presbytery placing his name on the roll of honorably retired clergymen. Until the close of his long, gentle and noble life he continued to officiate occasionally, revered as a faithful worker in the harvest of the Divine Master, "He was a truly good man, an able preacher, meek, gentle, humble, faithful, and his memory will long abide where he was known and served." **Mr. Burchfield** was affiliated with the Masonic fraternity, the beautiful ritual of which was used at his funeral, his remains being laid to rest in the historic old Center Churchyard in a plot donated by the trustees, in loving remembrance of their devoted old pastor. He organized Garfield Lodge, at DuBois, and was its first Worshipful Master, and was ever given special honor, the lodge sending a delegation to take part in his obsequies.

On the 25th of January, 1859, was solemnized the marriage of **Mr. Burchfield** to **Maggie Van Dyke**, who still survives him, as do also four of their five children: **Effie B.** is the wife of **Thomas H. Simon**, of Pittsburgh; **Mrs. Nelson** was the next in order; **Florence** is the wife of **Charles A. Weber**, of Grampian, Clearfield County; **Arthur Van Dyke** resides at Center, Perry County.

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