

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

Judge John W. Reed, of Brookville, for twenty years Common Pleas judge of the Fifty-fourth Judicial district, composed of Jefferson County, fulfilled on the bench the abundant promise of his career as a practicing lawyer. Then, with ripened judgment and enriched experience, he resumed practice in the fall of 1916, in the field where his earliest successes were scored. There are few members of the Pennsylvania judiciary more generally known to the profession all over the State, and fewer who have so enviable a reputation for all-around excellence of character as well as legal acquirements. Here we have a man who measured up to the fullest requirements of his office from the scholastic standpoint, and at the same time never failed to dispatch his duties with a business-like promptness for which he became noted, and by reason of which he was often called to preside in courts outside of his own district when pressure of work made such assistance necessary. The Judge has long been a citizen of Brookville, Jefferson County, but he is a native of the adjoining county of Clarion, born at Clarion May 13, 1853. He is of Scotch-Irish extraction, and the early members of the family in this country, where it has been established for several generations, were so far as he knows settled largely in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

Cumberland County was formed in January, 1750, and the **Reed** name is among the earliest entries on its records. The **Reeds** were evidently there before the county was organized. In 1754 Tyrone Township (now in Perry County) was created, and in 1763 that township was divided, the western division being named Toboyne. It is there that the **Judge** finds, as early as 1767, his maternal ancestor, **Joseph McClintock**, and in 1772 his paternal ancestor, **John Reed**. The latter died in 1799, and **Judge Reed** has a copy of his will, which was made Aug. 13, 1799, and probated Dec. 20, 1799. It was sent to the **Judge** by **Jeremiah Zeamer**, of Carlisle, as well as an interesting letter. In this will, among other items, he makes the following bequest: "I do bequeath to my son **Robert** one dollar and a black yearling colt; and to my son **Robert's** son **John**, I do will and bequeath 15 pounds, when he is seven years of age, and all that tract of land which I am now possessed of, adjoining lands of **John** and **Robert McKee**, **Samuel Reed** and others, in the township aforesaid (Toboyne), containing 75 acres be the same more or less, all which I do bequeath to him, his heirs and assigns forever, provided always that if the last mentioned **John Reed** should die before he arrives at the age of twenty-one years, then I do allow all legacies mentioned to him to descend to the other children of my son **Robert** that now are or shall be in existence at my decease. I do allow that the profits of the aforesaid real estate shall go to my son **David** until the aforesaid legatee arrives to the age of ten years."

Robert Reed, afterwards known as **Colonel Reed**, son of the above-named **John Reed**, was born about 1771 and died in 1849. He was the **Judge's** great-grandfather. On March 1, 1792, he was married, in the Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, Cumberland Co., Pa., by Rev. Dr. Davidson, to **Rachel McClintock**, daughter of **Hugh McClintock** and granddaughter of **Joseph McClintock**. **Mr. and Mrs. Reed** moved to Butler County, Pa., in the year 1797.

Joseph McClintock died in 1799. His son, **Hugh McClintock**, of Toboyne Township, died it is thought in 1807. On Feb. 15, 1814, there was presented in the Orphans' Court of Cumberland County a petition setting forth that this **Hugh McClintock** had died intestate, leaving to survive

him a widow **Ann**, and the following children: **Hamilton, Frank, Rachel** (married **Robert Reed**), **Jane** (married **Frederick Peale**), **Mary** (married **Robert Purdy**), **Robert, Hugh, James, Ann** (married **Andrew Fleming**), **Isabella** and **John**.

John Reed, son of **Col. Robert** and **Rachel (McClintock) Reed**, was born April 5, 1797, and died June 23, 1855. He was proprietor of a hotel at Clarion, and died in Clarion County. He had seven children: **James W.**, born Nov. 7, 1819, died Oct. 12, 1820; **Harriet**, born Feb. 10, 1822, died unmarried Nov. 27, 1841; **Lovira**, born Jan. 10, 1824, married and left children, dying Sept. 11, 1855; **John**, born Feb. 8, 1826, was the **Judge's** father; **Caroline**, born Feb. 28, 1828, married and left children, dying in 1909; **Rachel**, born June 13, 1831, died July 15, 1835; **Sally Ann**, born June 26, 1834, died June 24, 1840.

John Reed, father of **John W. Reed**, was born Feb. 8, 1826, in Butler County, Pa., was reared there, and learned the trade of machinist, which he followed until his enlistment at Clarion in the Union army in the fall of 1861. He became a member of Company F, 63d Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, and died after the battle of Fair Oaks, of typhoid fever, June 24, 1862. On Aug. 16, 1849, he was married at Clarion, Pa., to **Rachel A. Everhart**, who was born March 1, 1832, in Centre County, Pa. Both her parents died in her early childhood, her father being killed in a mill when she was quite young. **Mr. and Mrs. Reed** had three children, all born at Clarion: **Clara A.**, born in October, 1850, is now the widow of **Warren Whitehill**, an oil man, of Allegheny County, Pa., and resides with one of her daughters near Pittsburgh, Pa.; **Mr. and Mrs. Whitehill** had three children, one son and two daughters, all living and all married. **John W.** was the eldest son of his parents. The younger son, **Ernest W.**, born in April, 1859, is married and living with his family in Clarion, Pa., where he is a successful dentist; he has a wife and four children, three daughters and one son. **Mrs. Rachel A. (Everhart) Reed** lived and died at Clarion, passing away July 22, 1910.

John W. Reed began his education in the public schools of Clarion, and later took an academic course at the Carrier Seminary there. During his early manhood he taught public school in the county for a few years, meantime taking up the study of law, and he completed his legal preparation in the office of Hon. James Campbell, of Clarion, being admitted to the bar Aug. 23, 1875. Beginning practice in Brookville, the same year, he remained there until the fall of 1877, when he returned to Clarion, where after a year's practice on his own account he went into the office of **Wilson and Jenks**, on a salary. This connection lasted for several years, until about 1883, when he moved with his family to Grand Forks, Dakota, at which place he engaged in the practice of law with two of his wife's brothers. During that period the firm of Wilson and Jenks made him some very flattering offers to return, and in May, 1884, he did so, becoming a partner in the new firm of **Wilson, Jenks and Reed**. When **Mr. Wilson** in 1886 was elected judge of the several courts of Clarion County, the firm was reduced to **Jenks and Reed**, and **Mr. Jenks** being appointed solicitor general of the United States shortly afterwards. **Mr. Reed** formed another connection, with **Judge Wilson's** son **Harry R. Wilson**, who had just been admitted to the bar. They practiced under the name of **Reed and Wilson**, and were associated until April, 1895, the date of **Judge Reed's** removal to Brookville, which has since been his home. While a resident of Clarion County, when it formed part of the same Judicial district as Jefferson County, he was a candidate for the Common Pleas judgeship, being defeated by Judge Clark. Shortly after settling at Brookville he became a candidate for judge of the newly created Fifty-fourth Judicial district,

composed of Jefferson County, being nominated on the Republican ticket June 17, 1895, on which day Gov. Daniel H. Hastings appointed him judge of the new district, so that he began his labors with its establishment. In the fall of 1895 he was elected for a term of ten years, assuming his duties on the first Monday in January, 1896, and in the fall of 1905 he was re-elected for another ten-year term. He was again a candidate in the fall of 1915, but met defeat in the clash of opinion regarding judicial and legislative responsibility in the no-license question. In 1914, after the death of **Judge Beaver**, he was a popular choice for the vacancy on the Superior Court bench, and though not appointed had the satisfaction of receiving a large number of flattering endorsements, sent to Governor Tener from all over the State, and from sources so varied, regardless of class or politics, that they proved an index to the sentiment prevailing among the profession concerning his work. His appointment was recommended heartily by members of the bench and bar in every section of the State and every branch of the judiciary, and expressed the respect of his professional associates in an unusual degree. Justice John P. Elkin, of the State Supreme Court, and Judge Joseph Buffington, of the United States Circuit Court, were among those who volunteered most laudatory comments on his fitness. Upon his candidacy for the third term in the fall of 1915, a "non-partisan committee" composed of leading representatives of the Republican, Democratic, Washington and Socialist parties in Brookville issued a pamphlet setting forth his claims to the support of his fellow citizens. It was addressed "To the Electorate of Jefferson County," and we quote from the introductory remarks: "Believing that the interests of Jefferson County, at home and abroad, will be best served and promoted by the reelection of **Judge John W. Reed** to the Common Pleas Bench of the county, we herewith present his past record as a man and judge for the careful consideration of the voters of the county. . . . The man who, humanly speaking, comes nearer exercising omnipotent power than any other man in our form of government should be a kindly-hearted, level-headed man who will exercise that power sparingly and who has a vision of human affairs sufficiently broad to enable him to intelligently and justly solve the difficult and intricate problems of life in their relation to the laws of the land, when submitted for judicial determination. Without intending to disparage the claims of any other candidate for this highly important and all powerful official position, we confidently present for your consideration the name of **Judge Reed** as one who possesses in a preeminent degree all the qualities of heart and mind that go to make a great and upright judge." Some account of the career at the bar and on the bench which brought him this reputation will be of interest. The earlier years of his practice were sufficiently varied to give him unusual experience, and he was foremost among the men of his age in his own section. Though successful in almost every department he won particular renown in criminal practice. It is said that during the last ten years of his practice he was counsel in some fifteen homicide cases in Clarion and adjoining counties. Certain it is that "He was in almost every important criminal and civil case of a very busy and important period in the history of the Clarion County Oil Regions, then the center of the petroleum industry from 1877 on. He was a trial lawyer of exceptional power and ability. On going to Jefferson County he got in touch with that other great Pennsylvania product—coal, and both as a lawyer and a judge has therefore had a most varied experience in these two prominent and most important Western Pennsylvania products. In his earlier days at the bar timber was yet a very important factor in Western Pennsylvania counties, and ejectment cases which tried the mettle of the old-time lawyers came to his share of the practice. Consequently you may readily see that he was, and is, especially qualified to deal with the industrial conditions of the western part of the State." The familiarity thus gained with industrial conditions in the State proved of Great value in his experience on the bench, enabling

him to decide unerringly many questions which came up in the courts in his long service as judge. Appeals from his decisions were rare, the number being less than sixty in all his twenty years as judge, and there were very few reversals of his opinions—only one reversal in thirty appeals taken to the highest Appellate court in the State. "It is confidently asserted that no judge in the State has a record in the Appellate Courts exceeding that of **Judge Reed**. He has held court in more than one third of the counties of the State, and in the appeals taken from his decisions in these various counties he has maintained the same high record, both in the number of the appeals and in the affirmation of his decisions that he has in his home county."

Judge Reed had not been long on the bench when it became apparent that he had a gift for expeditious handling of court business. He kept his docket clear in spite of the fact that he was careful about the details of every case that came before him. But his comprehension was so broad that he was not confused by them, and the celerity with which he disposed of all trials interfered in no way with the dignity of their conduct. But it did establish a precedent of economical administration which will long remain a standard for those who appreciate what such methods save the citizens in taxes and litigants in legal expenses. With all this **Judge Reed** was never hasty or inconsiderate. His patience was proverbial and he was sympathetic, kindly and helpful towards all who came before him, whether as lawyers or litigants. His high ideals and strict methods became reflected in all the departments affiliated with his, his influence showing itself in many channels.

That **Judge Reed's** qualities were appreciated by his brother judges is evidenced by his being called upon to assist in many other parts of the State. He presided very often in Allegheny County—as often as his other engagements would permit, and his valuable aid was sought and appreciated in disposing of the great volume of criminal business of that county. "The Bench and Bar everywhere **Judge Reed** has held court join in commending his judicial services as being of the highest order." The DuBois Evening Journal of April 22, 1915, had an article which deserves quoting here, in part at least: "**Judge Reed** is one of the really big jurists of Pennsylvania, a man of brilliant professional attainments and who possesses the judicial temperament in a high degree. His vast store of experience, his demonstrated integrity, his fearlessness of public clamor as affecting the discharge of public duty and his wonderful ability combine to place him in the front rank of men now conspicuous in public life. Nor are his talents hidden beneath the bushel of Jefferson territorial lines. They are well known throughout the counties of Pennsylvania and have been recognized and confirmed time and again by the Appellate courts of this Commonwealth. . . . This man is no experiment, no unknown equation. The people have experienced twenty years of his economy and efficiency in office, they have observed his careful administration of a public trust; with the passing of the years, they have seen him ripen into an honored neighbor, a sympathetic friend, a distinguished citizen. Constantly a part of the environment in which he lived, the affairs of the people have been his affairs. He has labored energetically and effectively to solve the various problems that have confronted him and his people. . . . Pennsylvania needs more men like **John W. Reed**. Your administration, **Mr. Reed**, has been a triumph to you personally, a satisfaction to the people, a high tribute to our form of popular government, a bulwark to the rights of the citizen and a forum wherein Justice has been tempered with Mercy."

An incident of **Judge Reed's** life on the bench, about the middle of his second term, is characteristic of his experience: While holding court in Philadelphia, upon the request of President Judge Bregy of Common Pleas court No. 1, on going to his chambers one morning he found Judge Bregy and Chief Justice Fell of the Supreme Court there. The former said, "The Chief Justice wanted to call on you and I came with him. What do you think he has been saying? He says you are one of the best Common Pleas judges in the State." The Chief Justice remarked that he had not seen **Judge Reed** since the latter went on the bench, but that they kept track of the judges by their work.

Mr. Reed's record as a judge is typical of his whole life. Undoubtedly the rigorous conditions of his early years were good training for the calls of his mature life. At any rate, he has not been found wanting in any of the trusts reposed in him. While residing at Clarion he served as burgess, and was also a trustee of the State Normal School at that place, and a director of the public schools. He is an incorporator of the Dickinson Law School at Carlisle, a member of the American Bar Association, also a member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, and is a member of its general committee on legal education of the State, whose object is to have a universal curriculum of study for admission to the bar. He belongs to the Masonic fraternity, affiliating with Hobah Lodge, No. 276, F. & A. M., and Jefferson Royal Arch Chapter, No. 225, Brookville, Pa.; belongs to Brookville Lodge, No. 217, I. O. O. F.; and Brookville Lodge, No. 477, K. P. He is also a member of the "Americus Republican Club" of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

On June 16, 1880, **Mr. Reed** was married to **Myrta Corbet**, who was born Oct. 3, 1857, daughter of **Col. W. W. Corbet**, of Brookville, Pa., and they have one child, a daughter **Elizabeth**, born July 24, 1881, who in June, 1907, became the wife of **William S. Eyster**, of Pittsburgh, Pa. **Mr.** and **Mrs. Eyster** are now living in Brookville. **Mr.** and **Mrs. Reed** and **Mr.** and **Mrs. Eyster** are members of the Presbyterian Church. **Judge Reed** was elected a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church of Brookville in 1897, and for many years before and thereafter was a teacher in the Sunday school.

www.theperryhistorians.org