

History of Perry County, Pennsylvania, Including Descriptions of Indian and Pioneer Life from the Time of Earliest Settlement Sketches of Its Noted Men and Women and Many Professional Men, By H. H. Hain, Harrisburg, Pa., 1922 - Hain-Moore Company, Publishers, Harrisburg, Pa.

John A. Thatcher, Pioneer, Merchant, and Banker.



John A. Thatcher, Pioneer Merchant and Banker.
One of three brothers to attain fame in the
Great West.

The oldest member of the famous **Thatcher** family, **John A. Thatcher**, was born in New Buffalo, Perry County, Pennsylvania, on August 25, 1836, the son of **Henry** and **Lydia Ann (Albert) Thatcher**. The other children were **Elvina**, **Mahlon D.**, **Mrs. Frank G. Bloom**, now of Trinidad, Colorado; **Mrs. M. H. Everhart**, now of Martinsburg, Blair County, Pennsylvania; **Henry Calvin**, who was the first chief justice of Colorado, and **Dora**. **John A.** attended school in New Buffalo until 1847, when his father, who was a merchant, moved to Newport, on the Pennsylvania Railroad, as a better business location and, later, April 1, 1855, moved to Martinsburg, Pennsylvania. He then attended the Newport schools and the Tuscarora Academy; later, also, attending Prof. Wilson's Airy View Academy. All three of the brothers took an academic course, and all could have had a college course, as well, 'but the two elder ones chose not to take the latter.

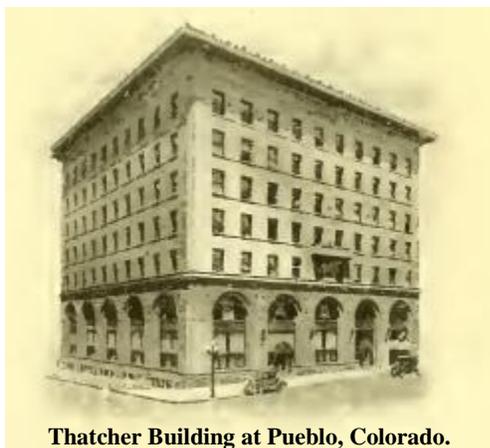
In the spring of 1854, at Newport, his father arranged for **John A. Thatcher** to learn the tanning trade with William Brown. Mr. Brown, at the end of the first year, sold out or discontinued his business, and **John A. Thatcher** spent another year, from March, 1855, to March, 1856, at Fahs' tannery, at Blain, Perry County. In the fall and winter of 1856-57, he taught school in Schuylkill County, and in 1857, went to Holt County, Missouri, where he clerked for five years, becoming more familiar with the details of mercantile life.

Oregon, the county seat of Holt County, and Forest City, on the Missouri River, were flourishing places, during the opening up and settlement of Kansas, and did a big business. The outbreaking of the Sectional War brought troublesome times, on the border, and Holt County became subject to raids from organized hands of thieves and desperadoes who infested the Missouri River territory. In 1862 conditions became so bad that **Mr. Thatcher** decided to make a change, and follow the advice of some friends who had preceded him. He and another acquaintance bought a team, and loading the wagon with merchandise, set out across the plains for Colorado. Starting from Nebraska City, Nebraska, they arrived at Denver, September 15, 1862, where he remained until December. At this time, James H. Voorhees, who had a partner with him in business in Denver, proposed to **John A. Thatcher**, that he would furnish a load of goods, share the profits with him, if he would take them to Pueblo and open a store there. As he was anxious to be at work the proposal was accepted.

They loaded a wagon with an assortment of goods, reaching Pueblo (120 miles distant) in eight days. The driver, a Frenchman, was kept on the road to and from Denver all winter. In the spring, Mr. Voorhees wrote **John A. Thatcher** to bring back to Denver the remainder of goods on hand. At this point, the Denver partnership was dissolved; and later, Mr. Voorhees asked **Mr. Thatcher** to join him in business in Denver. After considering the matter a short time, he decided to join him, with the understanding that he could withdraw at any time, by taking his share of goods. In a month or two he withdrew, taking his share of goods which he took with an ox team to Pueblo, August 14, 1863. About this time he received savings which he had loaned (when clerking in Missouri) to an uncle named **Snyder**, who lived across the river, in Doniphan County, Kansas. This was the beginning of his own business, and the establishing of the first general store at Pueblo, located at Second Street and Santa Fe Avenue. His first counter consisted of two barrels with several boards or planks laid from one to the other. Later, the store was moved farther north on the corner of Fourth Street and Santa Fe Avenue, into a two-story adobe building. During the spring and summer of 1864 he kept writing to his brother, **Mahlon D.**, who had joined his father in business, on Jan. 1, 1864, for a period of five years, to come West. By September of that year, **Mahlon D. Thatcher** decided to withdraw from his father's business and terminate the partnership, in Martinsburg, December 31st. The father released the son, and receiving \$2,900 for his interest in the business, **Mahlon D. Thatcher** went to Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, to purchase goods for the store at Pueblo, and from that time on, the brothers were inseparable.

On April 17, 1866, **John A. Thatcher** was united in marriage with **Miss Margaret A. Henry**, second daughter of **Judge John W. Henry**, elected circuit judge in 1872, district judge in Pueblo County, in 1876, and who was on the bench until 1882. They had five children: **Lenore**, **John Henry**, **Lillian** (**Mrs. Forest Rutherford**, of New York City), **Albert R.**, and **Raymond Calvin**. Of these, **Lenore** and **Albert R.** are deceased. **Mrs. Thatcher** died early in 1922.

Pueblo, oft termed the "Pittsburgh of the West," and the Arkansas Valley, bear the marks of the genius of these men, furnishing the capital to start factories and foundries and to develop agriculture and stock raising. The **Thatcher Brothers'** store became a convenient and safe place to deposit money — the only safe in Pueblo — for stock and mining men. As these conditions grew and developed and doubtless, as a result of these developments, they then conceived the



Thatcher Building at Pueblo, Colorado.

thought of going into the banking business. A building was planned and erected in the fall of 1870, and finished by February 1, 1871, on the southwest corner of Santa Fe Avenue and Fourth Street, which housed the first business of the firm of "Thatcher Brothers, Bankers." Very soon after this, when matters could be arranged with the government at Washington, which required **M. D.** to make several trips East, Thatcher Brothers, Bankers, became The First National Bank of Pueblo, starting with a capital of \$50,000, which was increased to \$100,000 in 1874. The original charter was renewed after twenty years, in 1891, and again in 1911, and the bank is now in its third twenty-year period. This bank is

to this day one of the strongest banks in the country, and is still owned by the **Thatcher** interests and managed by them.

In addition to The First National Bank of Pueblo, Colorado, they also have interests in The First National Bank of Denver, The International Trust Company of Denver, and in other banks and trust companies in Otero and Bent Counties, in Trinidad, and other points in southern Colorado. They were also incorporators of the Grand Opera House Block, in Pueblo, Colorado, and owned great herds of cattle and vast acreages in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico.

John A. Thatcher did not care for politics, belonged to no clubs or lodges, and yet was a most companionable man. He was a member of the Pioneers Association of Southern Colorado, of the Sons of Colorado, and of the Pennsylvania Society of Colorado, having been honorary president of the latter at the time of his death. He gave liberally to all projects. He was shrewd, able, frugal, and thrifty, the corner stone upon which the **Thatcher** millions have been built. He was a home and family man, and built a home named "Rosemount," which, with the grounds occupies a city block, and is one of the most beautiful residences in the city. To the author's personal knowledge, **John A. Thatcher** was generous with friends of his youth, who had not been as successful as he, and funds from his hands reached places where they were badly needed.

Following a trip to Nevada and California, in June, 1913, he was taken ill, and on August 14th, exactly fifty years after the date of his arrival in Pueblo, passed away. Had he lived a few months longer, he would have seen the completion and occupancy of the new bank building, which is one of the finest in the state.

"The **Thatcher Family**," on the preceding pages, contains much in reference to **John A. Thatcher**.

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