

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.

The Noted Thatcher Family¹

Various Perry County families notably the **Blaine**, **Bigler**, and **Stephens'** families, have had more than one noted descendant, but the **Thatcher** family not only had one, but three brothers of the same family who attained a preeminent place in their adopted State, as well as in that great section lying west of the Mississippi. Surely to the parents should go much of the credit for the foundation upon which these men built. Their father, **Henry Thatcher**, was born in New Jersey, June 19, 1807, his father having come from the New England States, of Revolutionary stock.

When a young man he came to Perry County, where he was a blacksmith upon the Pennsylvania Canal. He attended school and later became a teacher during his younger manhood. On the maternal side they are descended from **William Albert**, whose birthplace was in Switzerland and who came to America and settled in Northamptontown (now Allentown) during the period between 1720 and 1735. He had three sons, two of whom, **Abraham** and **William**, were Revolutionary soldiers. **John Albert**, the only son of **Abraham**, located in Adams County and married **Charlotte Catharine Hykes**, a daughter of **George Hykes** (of Swiss descent), locating later in Perry, where was born **Lydia Ann**, the mother of these noted boys. She was the eleventh child of a family of thirteen children, eight daughters and five sons, and was born March 8, 1814.

Before locating in Perry county **John Albert** had resided in Adams County until soon after 1800. He then located upon a farm near Alinda, where he not only carried on farming, but during the winters manufactured "grandfather's clocks." having learned clockmaking in Allentown. He was a justice of the peace and a highly respected citizen. Throughout Perry, Cumberland and Adams Counties, especially in some of the older homes, are to be found these highly prized grandfathers' clocks. During recent years, when offered for sale, they have often brought fancy prices. That many of them were made in Perry County may be news to many, but is a fact. **John Albert** was an expert clock-maker in his day, and his clocks indicated seconds, minutes, hours, date of the month and phase of the moon. His death occurred in 1834, the result of accidentally inhaling poison fumes from molten brass, while about to cast wheels for clocks. He was aged 61 years and left a wife, four sons and eight daughters.

When **Henry Thatcher** taught school in Tyrone Township three terms were at the school near the **Benjamin Smith** farm near Alinda. He boarded at **Smith's** and there he first met **Lydia Ann Albert**, his future wife, she being a sister of **Mrs. Smith**, first born of **John Albert**. On September 24, 1835, she was joined in wedlock to **Henry Thatcher**, the young school teacher.

¹ Mr. Wm. T. Albert, a cousin of the noted brothers, and less than six months the junior of the celebrated chief justice, has been associated with the Thatcher interests many years and has known them all his life. He and one other performed all the bank duties for several years. The force now comprises thirty-five men. Now in his eightieth year he is still daily at his post in the First National Bank of Pueblo. He was also personally acquainted with Judge Wilbur Fiske Stone, author of a History of Colorado, in three volumes, from whom we quote, and as late as August, 1920, shortly before the death of Judge Stone, had an interview of several hours at his office in Denver. Mr. Albert has kindly read the sketches of these noted brothers which appear in this book, and pronounces them to be correct. That of Chief Justice Thatcher appears with the sketches of the other chief justices, Gibson and Gantt, immediately preceding this page.

They immediately went to New Buffalo, then a thriving shipping point on the new Pennsylvania Canal, and entered the mercantile business. They were successful from the beginning and continued business there until 1847, when the rapid strides of the town of Newport caused them to change locations. The change also brought them closer to their people, who largely traded at Newport. In 1857 they again changed locations, moving to Martinsburg, Blair County, Pennsylvania. They were the parents of six children, **John Albert**, **Elvina** (died at the age of fifteen), **Mahlon D.**, **Henry Calvin**, **Sarah Catharine** (Mrs. **Frank G. Bloom**, living at Trinidad, Colorado), and **Mary Caroline** (Mrs. Marshall H. Everhart, living at Martinsburg, Pennsylvania).

Mr. Thatcher was a good business man, and the aged people of Perry County still speak of **Thatcher's** store at Newport. That he had ability in selecting his help is verified by the fact that one of his early clerks was **Rev. T. P. Bucher**, who became the second county superintendent of schools of Perry County, largely through the good reputation he had attained as **Mr. Thatcher's** clerk. (See "The County Superintendency.") The parents of this noted family were very strict with their children along moral and religious lines and they were baptized in the faith of the German Reformed Church. Their mother and her sisters, in fact, the whole family, are traditionally noted for their kindness, even temperament and motherly ideals.

The plains, when the **Thatcher** sons first located in Colorado, were dangerous. **Frank G. Bloom**, vice-president of the First National Bank of Trinidad, Colorado, and associated with and in charge of the **Thatcher** cattle and land interests in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, was employed by **Henry Thatcher** at his store in Martinsburg in 1861. For almost a year prior to 1865 he was in correspondence with **M. D. Thatcher** about locating in Colorado in the fall of that year. The Indians were then on the warpath, and during that fall they burned every stage station, save three, for a distance of 450 miles along the Platte River. Their mode of attack was to fire the haystacks connected with the stations, and when the stage employees would rush out they would be shot. **Mr. Bloom** left the following spring and saw lying by the trail the ox teams, with their yokes yet upon their frames, but the wooden parts of the wagons all burned. Flour was emptied over the prairies so that the redskins could take the sacks for shirts. On his way west his outfit was held up at Fort Kearney, Nebraska, until fifty wagons came up. There they elected a captain who had charge of the train until the arrival at Denver. The outfit was loaded with green apples, the wagons first being faced with chaff and burlap, and the apples packed in bran. At Denver the apples sold for twenty-eight cents per pound. **Mr. Bloom** landed in Denver April 15, 1866. During the following October he was sent by the **Thatcher Brothers** to Four-Mile Creek, near Canon City, to start a store. He was there ten months and sold \$20,000 worth of goods without any help. In 1867 he located at Trinidad, and in 1869 returned to Pennsylvania and was united in marriage to **Miss Sarah Catharine**, a daughter of **Henry Thatcher**, the Martinsburg merchant. On their arrival at Kansas City the trains only ran by daylight on account of the danger of Indian attacks. There were then no sleepers. On the train with **Mr. Bloom** and his bride, were General Custer and his wife. A curtain of blankets was rigged up and stretched across the car at nights, the ladies occupying the one apartment and the men the other, as they remained in the cars from Sheridan, Kansas, to Pueblo and Trinidad. In that same year **Mr. Bloom** became associated with the **Thatchers** in a business way.

Throughout all their dealings the **Thatcher Brothers** were never interested in shady dealings nor in grafting. It is said of them that during their long business career they never foreclosed a mortgage. What was the basis for the marvelous success attained by these three brothers, in their several spheres of activity and influence? An illustration may help answer. When **John A. Thatcher**, after crossing the plains, arrived in Denver, in 1862, and failed to secure immediate employment, he became uneasy and restless. When his new-found friend from Pennsylvania suggested that he remain at the store, that his partner would be down from the tannery, about thirty miles away, and might be able to give him work for awhile, at the tannery, he replied, "You bet your life I will not go away." He there showed his desire not to be idle, and his willingness to do anything honorable his hands found to do. The habits of his youth, formed in his father's store in Perry County, thus seemed the bulwark of his life at that critical time.

When **M. D. Thatcher**, after leaving Perry County, resided with his parents at Martinsburg, he was in full communion with his church and took an active part in Sunday school work, being librarian and treasurer of the latter. He systematized the methods and being a fine penman kept everything connected with the library in perfect order, carefully, neatly and accurately, up to the time of his going West. He showed that nothing was too small to do and that what was worth doing was worth doing well. His companions remember that when a school boy he would promptly and voluntarily return from school to his father's store and clear the counter of the miscellaneous mixture of dry goods usually found at the close of a busy day with customers. He there laid the foundation for his future career, doing all business throughout his busy life with the same careful accuracy and dispatch as was the habit of his youth.

When the last of these two brothers, associated so closely all their lives, had passed away, **Alva Adams**, their friend and former governor of Colorado, wrote thus to his friend, C. S. Morey:

"Although two and one-half years lay between the deaths of **John A. Thatcher** and **Mahlon D. Thatcher**, our tribute of appreciation and regret cannot be paid the one without including the other. The varied talents of the two men supplemented each other. Their business career was an example of the power of personal and financial confidence and harmony. Neither selfishness, envy, nor ambition ever broke the current of a common kinship. **David** and **Jonathan** were not finer friends than these two brothers. They were the joint architects of a great career. They built up a business fabric of surpassing splendor and influence. Under the guidance of their strong hand and brain, the firm, '**Thatcher Brothers**' became a citadel of commercial and financial stability — it is one of the institutions of the nation. **Thatcher** — integrity, stability, have been synonymous terms in our business world. This reputation should be prized as a richer heritage than their estate of gold. 'Empire Builder' is one of the stock phrases in Western obituary and history — **John A. Thatcher** and **M. D. Thatcher** were state and empire builders in the truest sense. For half a century, **Thatcher Brothers** have been without a rival in business leadership and success. This distinction came from faith in Colorado and Pueblo coupled with a financial genius of a high order.

"As young men, the **Thatcher Brothers** had a splendid dream of the ultimate destiny of this new land, and they lived to see that dream come true. They had vision — courage and confidence. Chance had little part in their success — hard work, good sense and probity were their masters of achievement. They never read the ribbon of a stock ticker. Scheming and speculation were not in their business methods. They followed only legitimate channels of finance. They dealt in millions and every dollar was clean. For fifty years, these men walked the streets of Pueblo — their conduct and business open to every citizen — no stain ever touched their name or their business character. In their banking career, thousands

became their debtor; not one of the thousands can say that he was ever oppressed by **Thatcher Brothers**. They never turned from misfortunes of the worthy. To aid honest men, they often went beyond the limitations of legitimate banking. Not a few business men owe their solvency to the liberality and tolerance of this ideal banking firm. Though absorbed with great interests, they were not exclusive. To all the door of their office as well as the door of their home was open. To gossip and harshness they were strangers. They were careful of themselves as they were of their business. No criticism — no bitterness ever fell from their lips. With all their power, they were modest and unassuming. In their home life, they were gentle, kindly and considerate.

"In the marts of commerce, their word was a bond from New York to the Pacific Coast. Their fortune was not hoarded, but has been invested in scores of great enterprises which have developed the West and helped to make Colorado a happy and prosperous home for a million people.

"All in all, **Thatcher Brothers** were ideal bankers — ideal husbands and fathers, and valued citizens.

"Not in the history of the Commerce Club has it been called upon to mourn the death of two members who have been so potential in the affairs of Pueblo and Colorado."

www.theperryhistorians.org