

Commemorative Biographical Encyclopedia of the Juniata Valley, Comprising the Counties of Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juniata, and Perry, Pennsylvania, J. M. Runk and Company, Publishers 1897

John Thompson, Delaware Township, Juniata County, Pa., was born September 9, 1824, in the township in which he now resides. He is a son of **John** and **Jane (Gilfilen) Thompson**. The **Thompson** family are of the hardy and industrious Scotch-Irish race. The grandfather, **John Thompson**, was born in the north of Ireland. Emigrating to America he settled at the Furnace, in Delaware Township, Juniata County, where he engaged in farming, fishing and hunting. He owned a farm of more than two hundred acres, the greater part of which he cleared, erecting on the place a commodious log house and making other improvements. He was married three times, and was the father of a number of children. He died on the property in Delaware Township on which he had lived, and is interred in the Thompsonstown graveyard. **John Thompson**, son of the said **John Thompson**, was born on the farm at the furnace. He obtained his education in the subscription schools, after which he followed farming and fishing, being also employed as a pilot for the arks and rafts on the Juniata River. He was prominently connected with the construction of the canal, and boarded over one hundred Irish laborers who were employed in building it. He owned two boats, which he built himself, and which he used to convey his produce to Harrisburg and other points. **John Thompson** erected one of the first brick houses that was seen in that portion of the State, the bricks for its construction being made and burnt on his own farm. He was an industrious, enterprising citizen, and a progressive man. **Mr. Thompson** first married a **Miss Stewart**; their children are: **Jane**, married **Mr. Claybaugh**, both are deceased; **Mary (Polly) (Mrs. Michael Benner)**; and **Martha**, who died in early life. His wife having died at the home in Delaware Township, he was married, secondly, in Perry County, to **Miss Jane Gilfilen**, a native of that county, and a daughter of **James Gilfilen**, a respected farmer of Scotch-Irish descent. Their children were: **William; James; Robert; John; Rebecca**; all of whom are deceased; and **John**, of Delaware Township, Juniata County. In politics **Mr. Thompson** was a strict Whig, but no office seeker. He was a consistent member of the United Presbyterian Church. After a busy and industrious career he was cut off in the prime of life, in the year 1829. It was the good fortune of **John Thompson** to have for his wife a woman of more than ordinary ability and enterprise, who was a valuable help meet while he lived, and a devoted mother in caring for the orphans he left behind him. She was a woman of rare business skill, and was the owner of a boat on the canal named the "Dove." She died on the old homestead farm.

John Thompson, the only surviving child, is almost entirely a self-educated man, having had but limited school facilities. He attended subscription schools for a short time, and also spent one year in the public schools. At the age of five years he lost his father, from which time he was compelled to make his own way through the world. At the age of seven years he was obliged to earn his own bread and butter by laboring for his uncle, at a compensation of fifty cents a month and board. A rather dreary outlook for future life, one would suppose. But **John Thompson** possessed that combination of industry, integrity and perseverance that will win success under the most adverse circumstances, and he eventually won, in a manner most creditable to his sterling manhood. At the age of eleven, young **Thompson** was driving on the canal for his mother, and from that time until her demise he never ceased to assist her with support and care. At the age of twenty-four he left the homestead, making his residence at the

old still house, where as a poor man he began his married life. He farmed his mother's land on shares until her death, and then purchased a portion of the homestead property, which he has cultivated ever since. In 1855, he erected on his property a fine stone dwelling house, costing more than four thousand dollars. This comfortable and commodious residence was destroyed by fire in 1891, which entailed on the proprietor a heavy loss, running into thousands of dollars, in consequence of the destruction of clothing, furniture, thirty beds, and, most serious of all, valuable papers which never can be replaced. The following year he rebuilt at an expense approximating \$2,000. At one time **Mr. Thompson** was engaged in the hotel business, having conducted successfully for eleven years the **Thompson House** at Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County, Pa., the hotel property situated near the railroad station, which is now owned by the Cumberland Valley Railroad Company. **Mr. Thompson** has been very successful as a breeder of excellent stock, in which he is also an extensive dealer. **Mr. Thompson** was married in 1847, to **Miss Sarah Rodgers**, born in Walker Township, and a daughter of **Matthew Rodgers**, of Scotch-Irish descent. Their children are: **Jennie R. (Mrs. John Milleisen)**, of Quincy, Ill.; **James L.**, of Walker Township; **John**, a merchant in Topeka, Kan.; **Cerrilla; Hulde** and **Lewis**, both of whom died in infancy; and **Cloyd**, of Colorado. His wife died in 1893 on the homestead from the effects of spinal disease. All the members of **Mr. Thompson's** family attend the Presbyterian Church. He is a Republican, but is not an office-seeker.

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