

A History of the Juniata Valley and its People Under The Editorial Supervision of John W. Jordan, LL.D.; Librarian of Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Illustrated; New York, Lewis Historical Publishing Company; 1913; Volume II

WATTS

The **Watts** family of Belleville, Pennsylvania, descend from the English family of that name that has produced so many men famous in art, science and religion, including **Rev. Isaac Watts**, an English Independent minister and hymn writer, born July 17, 1674; **Alaric Alexander Watts**, a journalist and poet; **George Frederick Watts**, a painter and sculptor; **Henry Watts**, a noted chemist; and others. In the United States a well known public character was **Thomas Hill Watts**, born 1819, died 1892, a lawyer and statesman of Alabama. He exerted himself continually to keep his state from seceding, but later joined with the Confederacy and served as colonel of the 17th Regiment, Alabama Infantry, but in 1862 was chosen as attorney-general in the cabinet of Jefferson Davis. In 1863 he was elected governor of Alabama, and served as such until the close of the war.

The history of this branch begins with **Samuel Watts**, born in England prior to the year 1700, settling in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where he followed the occupation of a farmer. He married and reared a family, including a son, **Thomas**.

(II) **Thomas**, son of **Samuel Watts**, was born in England, came to Pennsylvania with his father and became a farmer of Caernarvon Township, Lancaster County. He married **Maria Snyder**, of Swiss parentage, and both died in Lancaster County. Children: 1. **George**, married and moved to Holmes County, Ohio, where he has descendants. 2. **Philip**, twice married, moved to the Kishacoquillas Valley, and left two children: **Franklin**, who became a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, and **Sarah**, who became a Sister of Charity, going to an institute in Paris. 3. **Samuel**, of whom further. 4. **Catherine**, married (first) a **Mr. Lapp**, (second) a **Mr. Silkmitter**.

(III) **Samuel** (2), son of **Thomas** and **Maria (Snyder) Watts**, was born in Fairville, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. June 22, 1822, died March 16, 1910. He was educated in the public school and remained at home, his father's assistant, until 1840, when he came to Belleville to become a clerk in the store of his uncle **Daniel Overholtzer**. He continued his studies under private tuition at the same time, but later returned to his father's home, where he found means to acquire a thorough education, attending the academy at New London Cross Roads, Chester County. There he had as classmates two men later famous in Lancaster County—**J. Smith Frithy** and **Robert Emmet Monaghan**. Again he returned home and studied under private tutors at New Holland. He next established a private school near his home where he taught for several years. In 1844 he began his long and successful career as merchant and financier. He first opened a store at Galtsville, Lancaster County, later established in the flour and feed business at Pottsville, Schuylkill County. In 1850 he exchanged his Pottsville store for that of his uncle **Daniel Overholzer** in Belleville, Mifflintown, taking possession in 1851. Although starting with little capital, he so used his powers of youth, perseverance, economy and business acumen that he became one of the most substantial and useful men of his borough.

As his business grew he enlarged and expanded in many ways. He was one of the principal organizers of the Kishacoquillas Valley Railroad Company and aided largely in the construction

of that road in 1892 and was its first president. He was also one of the organizers and a charter member of the Kishacoquillas Mutual Fire Insurance Company; charter member of the East Kishacoquillas Turnpike Company, a director and for several years its president. He was one of the leading incorporators of the Reedsville National Bank; its first president, serving until his death. He was also an organizer and president of the Farmer's National Bank of Belleville and of the Citizens National Bank of Lewistown, filling these responsible positions with honor and credit until his death. He aided in the improvement of Belleville by the erection of several modern residences and also made large investments in farm lands in Iowa, South Dakota and Illinois, placing these in charge of his son, **Samuel Henry Watts**. He abandoned mercantile life in 1895, then devoted himself to the interests of the banking institutions over which he presided. Both he and his wife were devoted members of the Methodist Episcopal Church and generous contributors to all churches, regardless of creed. He was very liberal in his own church and a willing worker. He built the present Methodist Church at Belleville and presented it to the congregation, and there with them worshipped and labored for the cause of religion until his death. In politics he was an ardent Republican, deeply interested in public affairs, but never sought or accepted office for himself. While **Mr. Watts's** life was an eminently successful one, he did not gain prominence by favor. He faced many discouragements and difficulties that would have defeated a less resolute, determined man, and fairly won the high standing he attained. When wealth was gained he used it justly, and there was never a man to say it was not fairly won. He aided in every public enterprise presented to him and much of the prosperity of his section of Mifflin County can be traced to his initiative or cooperation.

Samuel Watts married, February, 1852, **Maria**, daughter of **John** and **Margaret (Kurtz) Overholtzer** and granddaughter of **Jacob Overholtzer**, of Lancaster County. Children: 1. **Elizabeth**, died October 4, 1854, aged four months. 2. **Martin O.**, deceased. 3. **Samuel Henry**, now living in Iowa. 4. **James Kurtz**, a farmer of Belleville, Pennsylvania. 5. **Mary Elizabeth**, married **William H. Oldt**, whom she survives. 6. **Levi Metzler**, a traveling salesman of Belleville; married October 28, 1896, **Sue Stroup**, daughter of **Samuel** and **Sue (Stroup) Killian**. 7. **John**, of whom further. 8. **Isaac Sturk**, educated in the public schools, now member of the firm of **Watts Brothers** and interested in other Belleville business concerns.

(IV) **John**, son of **Samuel** and **Maria (Overholtzer) Watts**, was born in Belleville, Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, November 12, 1866, now member of the firm of **Watts Brothers** of Belleville. He was educated in the public schools and began business life as a clerk in his father's store. In 1895, in company with his brother **Isaac**, under the firm name **Watts Brothers**, succeeded to the mercantile business founded by **Daniel Overholtzer** and conducted by **Samuel Watts** since 1851 in Belleville. The business, general merchandise, under their management has prospered and increased, both partners being able, energetic men of affairs. **John Watts** is also a director of the Farmer's National Bank of Belleville and interested in other lines of business activity, including the senior membership of the firm, **Watts & Yoder**, extensive grain dealers and millers of Belleville. He is a Republican in politics, but has never accepted public office, belongs to Belleville Lodge, No. 302, Independent Order of Odd Fellows and is a communicant of Belleville Methodist Episcopal Church. **Mr. Watts** is unmarried.