



John Wister

John Wister, Duncannon, Perry County, Pa., was born in Germantown, Pa., July 15, 1829. He is a son of **William** and **Sarah Logan (Fisher) Wister**, now both deceased.

Mrs. William Wister was a descendant of an English family, who settled in Pennsylvania at an early date; the family name is still prominent among the most substantial and honorable citizens of Philadelphia.

The **Wister** family, distinguished from a collateral branch, the **Wistars**, by only a single vowel of its patronymic, is also Philadelphian by a residence of one hundred and seventy years. Both these families are descended from one ancestor, **Hans Casper Wuester**, chief *jaeger* or huntsman, in the service of the Prince Palatinate, who with his wife, **Anna Catherina Wuester**, resided in the village of Hilsbach, near Heidelberg, in the Rhenish Palatinate. The first of their family to emigrate to America was **Casper**, born February 3, 1696, who, declining the inheritance of his father's comfortable position, and asked only for an outfit and the payment of his passage to

the New World, crossed the sea, and landed in Philadelphia, September 16, 1717. His possessions upon landing consisted of his modest wardrobe, his double-barrelled gun, and a pistareen (about twenty cents). His first meal consisted of apples, earned by helping to gather the fruit of an orchard somewhere in what is now Sixth Street, in Philadelphia. Alert and industrious, the young adventurer prospered; he became a merchant, and was interested in the early iron manufactures of the colony.

In 1740, he began manufacturing glass, his being the first enterprise of that nature in the country. On May 25, 1726, **Casper Wuester**, now **Wistar**, as he had Anglicized his name on taking the oath of allegiance to King George, married **Catherine**, daughter of **Dirck Jansen**, of Germantown. He was popular, and was elected to public offices. He became wealthy, and during the latter part of his life resided in Market Street, east of Third, at that time one of the most aristocratic neighborhoods of the young city. He died in 1752.

His son, **Richard Wistar**, was also prominent in municipal affairs, and was especially noted as a pioneer in prison reforms, having been influential in introducing many important and much

needed changes. **Dr. Casper Wistar**, son of **Richard Wistar**, born in 1761 and educated in that city and in Scotland, rose to great eminence as a physician and as a naturalist. He was early elected one of the presidents of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburg, Scotland, and was president of the Society for the further investigation of Natural History. He was the colleague, in the American Philosophical Society, of such men as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and David Rittenhouse, and in 1815 succeeded Thomas Jefferson as president of that society. He was not only honored for his splendid abilities and thorough culture, but beloved for his genuine kindness and unflinching urbanity. He was instrumental in the consolidation of the College of Pennsylvania with the university. He was a student of many branches of natural history. Perhaps none of the benefits he has conferred upon posterity has won for him more wide-spread gratitude than the introduction of the beautiful wine known to all lovers of flowers, and named in his honor *Wistaria*.

It was in 1726 that the pioneer of the family, **Casper Wuester**, sent for his brother, **Johannes**, or **John**, who, in conforming his name to English orthography, still adhered a little more closely to its original form, and made it **Wister**. He was born in 1708, and was a lad of eighteen when he came, on the ship *William and Sarah*, from Rotterdam to Philadelphia. He, like his elder brother, was prosperous, and a few years after settling in Philadelphia, bought property on Market Street, between Third and Fourth streets, on which "*Wister's Row*," consisting of a number of stores, was built. In 1741, he purchased an extensive tract in Germantown, on Main Street. On this land he built, in 1744, the first country seat erected by a citizen of Philadelphia. Plain, comfortable and substantial, a good specimen of the quiet and dignified taste of the times, the house still remains, and although it has been to some extent remodeled, it preserves enough of its original style to make it a most interesting relic. For thirty years before the Revolutionary war, the **Wister** family occupied this mansion every summer; and on Saturday, distributions of bread baked in its great oven were made to the poor.

John Wister died in the city of Philadelphia in 1789, in his eighty-first year. After his death, his son, **Daniel Wister**, returned to the mansion in Germantown, and occupied it during the remainder of his life. He was succeeded by his son, **Charles J. Wister**, who was married in 1803 to **Rebecca**, daughter of **Joseph Bullock**, of Germantown. **Charles J. Wister, Jr.**, his son by a second marriage, is now the occupant of the house, thus the home of four successive generations. The interior of the mansion, which contains many curious relics of colonial times, is even more interesting than the exterior.

The **Wisters** are distinguished for literary culture, and some of the family have won fame as writers; among these is **Mrs. Annis Lee Wister**, wife of **Dr. Casper Wister**, a very superior translator of German classic fiction. Among writers of short stories, **Owen Wister** has recently come to the front, having attracted much attention by his forcible and dramatic portrayals of western life.

William Wister was a native and lifelong resident of Philadelphia. He was prominent as a manufacturer, and during the last twenty five years of his life, was treasurer of the North Pennsylvania Railroad. A thoughtful and earnest man, maintaining well the high character of his old and honored family, he was always found on the side of true progress; the public school system, by which the blessings of education are diffused among all classes of people, found no

warmer advocate or more active promoter than he; and for this reason he was chosen among the first members of the Board of Education. He was a strong "old line" Whig, a personal friend of Henry Clay; he afterwards became a Republican, but although interested in public affairs, it was with the sentiment of a patriot, and not of an office seeker.

After a useful and active life, he passed away in 1883; his wife died in 1891. They had eight children, of whom **two** died in infancy; **Gen. Langhorne Wister** died in 1891; and those surviving are: **William; John; Francis; Jones; and Rodman**. All except **John** are residents of Philadelphia.

John Wister passed his boyhood in that city, and was educated at the Germantown Academy. He removed to Duncannon, Pa., November 1, 1845. Here he was at first employed by the Fisher Morgan Company. At the organization of the Duncannon Iron Company, **Mr. Wister** was made its treasurer, and at the death of his father, succeeded him as president. He is also president of the Trout Run Water Company, vice-president of the Perry County Railroad Company, and president of the Duncannon National Bank. **Mr. Wister** is in his political views an ardent Republican.

John Wister was married in Harrisburg, October 19, 1864, to **Sarah Tyler**, daughter of **Daniel D.** and **Margaret Boas**. Their children are: **Jane**, who died in infancy; **Elizabeth (Mrs. C. Stewart Wurts)**, of Germantown, Philadelphia; **Sarah Logan**; and **Margaret**. The family attend the Episcopal Church.

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