

HISTORY
OF
WESTMORELAND
COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

GENEALOGICAL MEMOIRS

COMPILED UNDER THE EDITORIAL SUPERVISION OF
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The office and sitting rooms, with others, are located on the ground floor. The outside of Hotel Arlington is neatly painted and presents an inviting appearance, and the inside, from garret to basement, fully corresponds with the impression formed by the outside, and serves to make a model house. They have an extensive laundry building attached to the house, and numerous other buildings are utilized for various purposes. One of the features of the Hotel Arlington and one of considerable importance is an excellent garden, which furnishes fresh vegetables. The light used is both gas and electricity, and the entire building is admirably fitted up for their use. Mrs. Seiler presides over the culinary department in person, and as a modern cook she is unexcelled, while those who assist her are experts in this line. The excellence of this department of this favorite hostelry has been a large factor in gaining the popularity it enjoys. Mr. Seiler is ably assisted by his brother-in-law, Louis Knechtel, who fully understands all the duties of his position. Mr. Seiler does a large business in the line of banquets, both at Hotel Arlington and at Oakford Park, and as a caterer is recognized as among the best.

Mr. Seiler married, February 28, 1893, Amelia Knechtel, born in Steins-honau, Austria, 1871, received a common school education, and came to this country in 1886. She is the daughter of Frantz Joseph and Emiline Knechtel, the former named having died in Germany, 1883, and the latter residing in Jeannette, Pennsylvania. Mr. and Mrs. Knechtel were the parents of six children, four sons and two daughters, all of whom reside in Jeannette. Mr. and Mrs. Seiler are the parents of two children: Alvin, born December 17, 1894, and Hobert, born September 17, 1897. Both are students of the public schools in Jeannette.

GEORGE SOWASH, an enterprising druggist of Irwin, Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, was born October 15, 1851, the son of George and Elizabeth (Bankert) Sowash.

The progenitor of the Sowash family in this country was John, who was a native of France, and who came to this country about the middle of the eighteenth century. His name was Wills in the old country, but on coming to America he married a German woman named Sowash, and he changed his name to that form. He settled in Maryland, and it is not known whether or not he made his home in Westmoreland county. They had four children, one of whom was John.

John Sowash, Jr., was born in Maryland, and upon his marriage to Catherine Thomas, both of them having accumulated a little money, they jointly purchased one hundred and sixty acres of land on the site where Jacksonville, Westmoreland county, now stands. John Sowash followed the occupation of a farmer during the remainder of his active, working life. He was a soldier in the Revolutionary war, a lieutenant in the militia. In church connections he was a Methodist. He and Catherine (Thomas) Sowash were the parents of fifteen children, of whom three died young. Those attaining maturity were: Garrett, John, Joseph, David, Jacob, George, Elizabeth, Catherine, Sarah, Ann, Hannah and Rachel. Rachel was born April 13, 1814, and is still living, retaining the full mental and physical vigor of her youth to a remarkable extent. John Sowash lived to an advanced age.

George Sowash, son of John and Catherine (Thomas) Sowash, was born in Jacksonville, Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, and was educated in the common schools of that place. Early in life he engaged as a miller and carder, owning one of the first steam mills in the county, near Jacksonville, known as



John Sawash

the Sowash mill, which about 1845 was destroyed by fire. Mr. Sowash purchased, in 1854, the George Keck farm, residing thereon until 1866, and then purchased a farm at Crabtree, near Georges Station, where he farmed until 1876, when he retired from active business pursuits. In political proclivities he was an old line Whig, and after the formation of the Republican party, joined that organization. He was an elder in the Presbyterian church at Harrison City for a number of years. George Sowash married, August 14, 1835, Elizabeth Bankert, who was born in Baltimore, Maryland, a daughter of Mathias Bankert, whose father was an immigrant from Germany. Their children are: John, born June 6, 1836; William Henry, born September 16, 1838; Mathias, September 16, 1840; Catherine; Harriet; Millard Fillmore, born January 15, 1849; and George, see forward. George Sowash, Sr., died in Irwin, whither he had removed in 1876, September, 1882. His wife died January, 1883.

George Sowash, youngest son and child of George and Elizabeth (Bankert) Sowash, was educated in the common schools of his native place, and remained on the home farm until 1876, when he removed to Irwin, where he engaged in the drug business which he followed continuously and very successfully until 1896. At that time he received the appointment to postmaster at Irwin, under William McKinley's first administration, assuming charge of the office in October, 1896, and was reappointed by President Roosevelt in 1900. Mr. Sowash purchased in 1900, a drug establishment in Irwin which he now conducts, his store being situated on the corner of Main and Third streets. He is a progressive, enterprising business man, and his business enjoys a generous and constantly increasing patronage. He is a strong Republican in his political affiliations. Fraternally he is a member of F. and A. M., Shidle Lodge, No. 601, Irwin, of which he is past master; Urania Chapter, Lodge No. 192, R. A. M., Greensburg; Kedron Commandery, Lodge No. 18, K. T., Greensburg, of which he is Past Exalted Commander; Syria Temple, Mystic Shrine, Pittsburg. In church connections he is a Presbyterian.

George Sowash married, June 30, 1881, Sarah A. Staurt, who was born in Irwin, June 2, 1859, daughter of William A. and Mary A. (Miller) Stuart. William A. Stuart was born August 14, 1823, in Fairfield township, a son of Berekiah Stuart, also of that township, and of Scotch-Irish descent. Mr. Stuart died March 27, 1899. His widow survives him and lives with her daughter at Irwin. She was born May 16, 1823. Mr. and Mrs. Sowash are the parents of three children: Carrie Lillian, born May 17, 1882; Frank Boyle, October 1, 1884; and Mary Stuart, January 13, 1890.

JOHN SOWASH, a practical farmer of Claridge, Penn township, Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, was born near Jacksonville, Pennsylvania, June 6, 1836, a son of George Sowash. (For ancestral history of Mr. Sowash, see preceding sketch). He was the son of poor parents, and his boyhood was spent in assisting in the duties of the home place and at work in and about the coal mines, giving him but little time for educational advantages. When he began his independent career he was without capital, but he had energy and pluck and good executive ability. With these as a capital stock he started to lay the foundation of his career, and has been successful from the beginning. Today he stands as one of the most substantial citizens of this part of the county, honored and respected by the entire community, a self-made man. "Like father like son," his sons are all good, successful business men, thus showing that the characteristics of the father can be transmitted to the child-

ren. He remained on the home farm until 1864, when the Civil war being in progress he enlisted in Company C, Two Hundred and Fifth Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery, serving in the army of the Potomac until the close of the war, when he was honorably discharged. After his return to civil life he located on his present farm of one hundred and sixty-five acres, and has since been very successfully engaged in agricultural pursuits. He is a prominent figure in the community, and has served his township as assessor, collector, justice of the peace (since 1894), and in all these offices has acquitted himself most satisfactorily. In religious faith he is a member of the United Presbyterian church of Irwin.

John Sowash was married (first) in 1866, to Sarah Rose, daughter of John Rose, Esq., and Jane (Katz) Rose. Their children were: 1. George Albert, educated in New Wilmington College and Allegheny Theological Seminary, was ordained to the ministry in 1897, and in the fall of that year was sent to Egypt as a missionary, where he has since conducted his labors. He married (first) Miss Graham, and they had three children: Jane, Grace and John, deceased. Mrs. Sowash died in 1902, and Mr. Sowash married (second) Cathleen Springer, a native of Dublin, Ireland, and a teacher in Egypt. They have one child: Mona. 2. Jane Rose, wife of George M. Clark, of Penn township. 3. Bertresse, wife of Zeb Bonner, of Irwin, a merchant. 4. John R., merchant, a resident of Irwin. 5. Amanda M., wife of Rev. Walter Strangeway, of the United Presbyterian church. They have two children, Beulah Marie and Maru Helen. 6. William H., of Bell township, farmer, married Anna Highberger, and they have five children, Katherine H., Amanda, Marie, John (deceased), George Albert, and Marguerite. 7. James K., a merchant of Latrobe, married Mary Bell Dougherty. Sarah (Rose) Sowash, mother of these children, died in 1882. John Sowash married (second), March 17, 1886, Hannah Cooper, a native of Penn township, and the daughter of Joshua Cooper. Of this union four children were born: Mary E., and three who died in infancy.

CHARLES BESWICK, a well known and retired business man of Manor, Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, is a self-made man in the true sense of the word. He is now living on the fruits of his industry and temperance, and enjoying well-merited comfort. William Beswick, father of Charles Beswick, was a miner by occupation, a resident of Lancashire, England. He married Alite Whitaker, and left her a widow with seven small children.

Charles Beswick, the sixth child of William and Alite (Whitaker) Beswick, was born on Gillot's farm, Lancashire, England, January 25, 1825. He was but three years old when his father died, and as the family was in very straightened circumstances he was obliged to begin work to assist in their support before he was seven years of age. He obtained employment in the mines and continued at that sort of labor until 1854, when he decided that Australia offered better opportunities to a young man than his native country. His voyage from England to Australia was made in a sailing vessel and occupied one hundred and seventeen days. He located in Ballerette, Victoria, and engaged in prospecting for gold. He remained in Australia for about two and three-quarter years and then returned to England where he had left his family, arriving there in December, 1857. He then engaged in the grocery business until 1860, when he, with his entire family, emigrated to the United States, where his brother George had preceded him in 1848. He located in the borough of Manor, Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, and purchased a farm, which he