

ENCYCLOPÆDIA

OF

CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHY,

OF

PENNSYLVANIA.

VOL. II.

---

ILLUSTRATED WITH PORTRAITS ON STEEL.

---

NEW YORK.

ATLANTIC PUBLISHING & ENGRAVING COMPANY.

---

1889.

## WALTER HORTON.

WALTER HORTON, of Sheffield, Warren County, Pennsylvania, was born in Sullivan County, New York, October 17, 1832. On the paternal side he is descended from Barnaba Horton, of Mously, Leicestershire, England, who came to America in 1636 or '37 and settled on Long Island. William Horton, a lineal descendant of this emigrant, was one of the early settlers of Colchester, Delaware County, New York. He was a man of means and prominence, and stood high in the esteem of his fellow citizens, by whom he was chosen Judge, being the first to hold that office in the county. For many years he carried on lumbering and tanning in a small way. His youngest son Isaac located at Liberty, Sullivan County, New York, and was for many years engaged in the same business. His eldest son Homer, the father of the subject of this sketch, was a tanner and lumberman, and during his life was engaged with a number of associates in that line of business. The wife of Homer Horton and mother of Walter, was Jane Davidge, a native of Somersetshire, England. She came to America from her birthplace with her father, James Davidge, in 1815, and was brought up at Liberty. The eldest son of his parents, Walter Horton received a fair education, which began in the local public schools and was continued after his twelfth year at the Liberty Academy, in which he remained a pupil until his seventeenth year. During his pupilage the institute was under the management of Prof. John F. Stoddard, who was at that time engaged in compiling and bringing out his celebrated series of "Practical and Mental Arithmetics," a labor in which young Horton rendered him much valuable and highly appreciated assistance. At the age of seventeen Walter closed his school studies, and for the next three years was occupied in assisting his father in the tanning and other business. At the age of twenty he entered the employ of Allison, Davidge & Co., tanners, at Hancock, Delaware County, New York, and remained with this firm three years, acquiring in that time a practical mastery of the trade. He was next employed as Superintendent of the tanning property then being established by Thomas Smull & Sons, of New York City, extensive manufacturers of sole leather, at a point near White Haven on the Lehigh River in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. This property, which became known as the Lehigh Tannery, was built and put in operation under Mr. Horton's management, and was successfully established at a time when a number of similar enterprises were springing up in the same region. One of these en-

terprises was the Gouldsboro Tannery, situated twenty miles above on the Lehigh, and owned by Messrs. Pratt and Gould, Mr. Jay Gould being then General Manager. In the latter part of 1856 Mr. Horton started in business on his own account, purchasing the interest of his uncle, Mr. John Davidge, in the firm of Allison, Davidge & Co., his old employers at Hancock, Delaware County, New York. The firm was then reorganized under the style of Allison, Crary & Co., with Mr. Horton as junior partner. Although owning but a small interest in the firm, and being heavily in debt for that, the young man took his place proudly and hopefully. The panic in the following year was a serious matter to the firm. The price of stock fell greatly, and for some time the outlook continued very gloomy. Business went from bad to worse, and May 12, 1862, as if to extinguish what little hope remained, a woods fire communicated to the establishment, and the tannery with all its contents and a large and valuable stock of bark were totally destroyed. Fortunately, the leather in the vats was saved, also a quantity of hides stored in outbuildings. The insurance, covering only about one-third of the loss, was paid to the firm after some delay caused in part by a most thorough investigation of the origin of the fire, conducted by the expert insurance adjuster, Mr. J. B. Ames, of New York, assisted by Mr. Wm. Palen, now said to be the most successful leather broker in this country. A further complication in the business of Messrs. Allison, Crary & Co. arose from the fact that just previous to the fire it had entered into a new enterprise, with Mr. John Davidge as managing associate, in building the Lake Como Tannery, in Wayne County, Pennsylvania, thus heavily increasing its indebtedness. To add to this embarrassment, Mr. L. H. Allison, the capitalist of the concern, was incapacitated for business by a sudden access of nervous illness, and, after a few months, died. As all the members of the firm were experts in their business, and were widely known as men of energy, those to whom they owed money did not press for an immediate settlement of their claims. Mr. Horton sold his interest in the Lake Como Tannery, situated in Wayne County, Pennsylvania, to his brother Lucien, in order to bring what money he could into the firm. Finally, under the considerate backing received from Messrs. Bullard & Co., a large leather house in New York City, the most pressing debts of the concern were paid, and within five months from the date of the conflagration the tannery was rebuilt and again in operation, the firm as newly organized consisting of Messrs. H. H. Crary, Walter Horton and George H. Allison, son of L. H. Allison. It so happened that

while the firm was wading through the series of disasters and drawbacks alluded to, the exigencies of the Civil War, then raging, had so greatly enhanced the price of leather, that the value of its unfinished stock in the store in New York, together with that of the untanned leather which escaped destruction lying in the vats at the tannery, and the hides stored in the barns, proved more than sufficient to cover the losses sustained by the fire. With the steady increase in the price of leather, which, as gold rose to "two seventy-five," advanced from eighteen cents per pound and under, to fifty cents per pound and over, the profits of the firm for a period of two years or more were very large and there was a corresponding improvement in the business done by it. Towards the close of 1863 Mr. George H. Allison, who was not a resident partner, being desirous of securing a greater share in the very profitable business of the firm, proposed to purchase the interest of Mr. Horton. Although Mr. Crary opposed the sale at first, the transfer was finally made in January, 1864, Mr. Horton agreeing to take the former into partnership in any new enterprise he might originate. Being now out of business, Mr. Walter Horton accompanied his uncle, Mr. Webb Horton, now of Middletown, Orange County, New York—who had just previously sold out his interest in the tanning business at Narrowsburg, Wayne County, New York—on a prospecting tour through the principal hemlock forest regions of Western Pennsylvania. After an inspection covering several weeks, they decided to establish a business at Sheffield, Warren County, Pennsylvania, and as a foundation bought the Bowers property on that place. They also bought several thousand acres of land in Warren, Forest and McKean Counties, at the low price of from one to five dollars per acre, and taking time in their selections, became the possessors of many desirable lots, heavily timbered mostly with hemlock, but to some extent with pine. In the fall of 1867 the firm of W. & W. Horton, composed of Mr. Walter Horton and his uncle, sold a part of their interest in this property to Mr. Horace H. Crary, of Hancock, New York, (but now a resident of Binghamton in that State), and Mr. Wm. McNair, a lumberman from Callicoon, Sullivan County, New York, who married Miss Elizabeth Horton, the sister of Mr. Walter Horton. With these partners the firm was reorganized on November 1, 1866, under the style of Horton, Crary & Co., and before the close of the next year had completed the Sheffield Tannery and was actively at work. Started at a period when the business was in a most flourishing condition, this tannery has proved a profitable one

from the beginning, and at the present day is one of the most prosperous in the State. Shortly after this enterprise was launched, the youngest brother of Horace H. Crary, Mr. Jerry Crary—who had been wounded at the battle of Resaca, Georgia, in 1864, and was then recovered sufficiently to undertake clerical work—was given the position of book-keeper with the firm, but upon more fully recovering his strength he was admitted to partnership. Mr. George Horton, a young cousin of Mr. Walter Horton, and now a partner, joined the firm as foreman of the Sheffield Tannery, in 1867. With a view to harmonizing the tanning interests at Sheffield, Messrs. Horton, Crarys & Co. bought about this time a controlling interest in the sole leather tannery founded at that place by Mr. J. F. Schoellkopf, of Buffalo, before their own enterprise was launched. With this gentleman they formed an independent partnership under the style of Schoellkopf, Horton & Co. Mr. Charles Sigel, who became a partner in 1873, is still managing and supervising the interests of Messrs. Schoellkopf, Horton & Co., in this business. Another enterprise in which Messrs. Horton, Crarys & Co. put their capital, was the Tionesta Tannery, built by them in association with Mr. John McNair, (also a brother-in-law of Mr. Walter Horton,) and Mr. C. W. R. Radiker. They also bought the Brookstown Tannery, situated eight miles from Sheffield, and started under the firm name of the Forest Tanning Company. Later they purchased the Arroyo Tannery, at Arroyo, on the Clarion River, Elk County, Pennsylvania. The firm built the Tionesta Valley Railroad from Sheffield to Spring Creek, which opened up connection with the Pittsburgh and Western Railroad. Later the firm bought the Cherry Grove and Garfield Railroad, and it now controls and operates about seventy-five miles of roads and switches, of special service to its own business in moving lumber and bark, and of great value to the region through which it runs for transporting passengers as well as freight. In 1875, upon the death of Mr. William McNair, his interests in the business were sold to Messrs. Isaac Horton, (youngest brother of Mr. Walter Horton,) and George Horton and George Dickenson. In 1886, owing to failing health, the last named gentleman sold his interest to Mr. James H. Horton, youngest brother of Mr. George Horton, and Mr. Lane B. Schofield, son-in-law of the late Mr. William McNair, and removed to Dakota, where he is now extensively engaged in wheat farming near Fargo. In 1873 Messrs. Walter Horton and H. H. Crary associated with Mr. James Horton, brother of the former, and Mr. Edson G. Davidge, under the firm name of H. H. Crary & Co., and built the

Westfield Tannery at Westfield, Tioga County, Pennsylvania. In 1880 the two first named gentlemen associated with Messrs. W. G. Garrett and L. R. Johnson, and built the Harrison Valley Tannery, at Harrison Valley, Pennsylvania, the firm thus formed taking the style of Walter Horton & Co. This firm also started a leather house at 107 South Street, Boston, Massachusetts, and another at 80 Gold Street, New York City, the latter doing business under the style of Horton, Crary & Co. In 1888 they founded a tannery at Salamanca, New York, under the firm name of James Horton & Co. The combined interests in tanning in which Mr. Walter Horton is now concerned produce about four thousand sides of sole leather daily, consuming in the same period two thousand heavy hides. The firm has a very large export trade, which in the year 1888, to Europe alone, comprised 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. of all the leather going out of the port of New York. This amount exported equalled about one-third of the firm's total product. In 1875, in drilling for oil, Messrs. Horton, Crary & Co. struck the largest gas well developed in the Sheffield region. They immediately commenced using the gas for fuel, introducing it in the town of Sheffield for that purpose, and are entitled to the credit and honor of being the first parties so employing natural gas. In 1881 Mr. Walter Horton and two of his partners, Mr. Jerry Crary and Mr. Charles Sigel, drilled a test oil well about three miles from Sheffield, and struck the first oil which had been produced within fifteen miles of that point. Subsequent drilling developed large quantities of oil and the barren lands of the firm, which, stripped of timber, had been deemed of little value, became a new source of wealth. Nearly the whole of the Cherry Grove Oil Field was on land owned by Horton, Crary & Co., and the firm realized a large revenue from it. More recently they have been producing oil in large amounts from lands purchased at the beginning of their operations in Sheffield. Their gas lands likewise yield them a considerable revenue. Viewed in any light Mr. Horton's experience has been a most remarkable one. While good fortune has entered largely into it, the wealth and success he has won has been owing mainly to his own unvarying integrity, and to a restless activity which has kept him constantly planning and working, conquering in one field only to enter another in search of new victories and successes. In all the years of his business life and in all the multiplicity of operations in which he has been engaged with many partners, and under many varying circumstances, he has never failed to pay every dollar of liabilities incurred by himself or partners. It is worthy of note that

in all his experience, varied as it has been, no partner in any of the firms in which he has been interested has ever failed. His relatives, both Hortons and Davidges, who constitute a somewhat numerous family, are nearly all interested in the tanning business, and are all successful and highly respected. The name of Horton is permanently identified with this great industry, and like the staple with which it is connected, is known in all the marts of the world. Mr. Horton and his associates have shown great justice to and likewise taken both interest and pride in advancing and aiding a large number of young men who have proved efficient in business. Many of them now hold lucrative positions or are engaged in business for themselves, and their success is one of the present joys of their kindly benefactors. Mr. Horton married, in 1867, Miss Hattie C. Lee, of Tompkins County, New York, daughter of Dr. William Lee. They have had two children, both girls. Cora, the first born, died at the age of six years. Myra, the surviving daughter, is the wife of Mr. Louis Schoellkopf, son of Mr. J. F. Schoellkopf, of Buffalo, New York, where she resides with her husband.

---