

PENNSYLVANIA

A HISTORY

Editor-in-Chief

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With Introduction by

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casions he has proven his loyalty to every movement for the promotion of the public good and the general progress of this section of the State.

Theodore C. H. Keck is the son of Jacob Keck, who was born in Baden, Germany, and died in 1912, and of Louisa (Trautman) Keck, of Pittsburgh, who died in 1886. For a number of years Jacob Keck was proprietor of a book and stationery store in Butler, where he was one of the most enterprising citizens. For forty-six years he was justice of the peace and esquire in Butler, which doubtless is a record for length of office-holding in that line, and he fulfilled the responsibilities of his office to the satisfaction of the public. He was also one of the founders of the Workmen's Building and Loan Association.

Theodore C. H. Keck was born October 21, 1875, at Butler, where he attended the public and high schools, and he was afterwards a student at the State College. He studied law in the offices of S. F. Bowser, and was admitted to the Butler County bar February 26, 1900, beginning his practice in association with John Murrin, and so continuing for a few years. Mr. Keck then established his offices in his own name for general practice in all the courts, and with his headquarters in the Butler County National Bank Building. He is vice-president and treasurer of the American Mirror Works at Butler.

In political matters, Mr. Keck is a supporter of the principles of the Democratic Party. He was active in local work during the World War in behalf of the draft board, and he was one of the "four-minute" speakers. His fraternal affiliations are with Lodge No. 272, Free and Accepted Masons; the Royal Arch Chapter; the Council of the Royal and Select Masters; the Commandery of the Knights Templar; and the New Castle Consistory, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite. He is also a member of the Sterling Club, the Country Club, the Kiwanis Club, and the Board of Commerce, all of Butler.

ROBERT MAGEE DOWNIE—Inventor, author, and business man, for years secretary and general manager of the Keystone Driller Company of Beaver Falls, Robert Magee Downie, who died in 1924 at the age of seventy-one, had a career singularly rich with achievement. Mr. Downie was the father of the modern sanitary artesian drilled well. In 1881, when he was barely out of college, he and his brother, John G. Downie, invented and patented a portable drilling machine, the first of its kind in existence, and this invention not only supplanted the process of digging wells by hand, which had been in use since the days of Abraham, but with some improvements, made it possible to reach gas and salt veins and mineral deposits of various sorts.

Robert Magee Downie was the oldest son of James Niblock and Jane Boyle (Magee) Downie, and the descendant of a family of Scotch Covenanters. Through his maternal grandmother, Mary (Niblock) Downie, the line is traced back to the year 1679, when a John Niblock, ancestor of the family, fought in the Covenanter Army at the battle of Bothwell Bridge in Scotland. After the battle, which was a disastrous one for the Covenanters, young Niblock, among others, escaped to Ireland, but he was pursued by the British officers and forced again to flee for his life.

This time he went to Holland, and although the British pursued him there, too, the Dutch Government refused to give him up to them, and he lived in exile in Holland for a period of about nine years. When William of Orange landed in England in 1688, Niblock joined his army and fought on his side at the Boyne Water in 1689. After the Irish War, Niblock married a Scotch wife, and settled in County Down, Ireland, where many of his descendants are still to be found.

Among his lineal descendants was Mary Niblock, who, in 1824, married a young man named John Downie, and the couple settled on a farm in County Down, Ireland, and lived there for fifteen years, during which time they had six sons and two daughters born to them. Mary (Niblock) Downie's brother, James Niblock, was a machinist, and was closely associated with George Stevenson in the building of the first passenger steam locomotive in England. In 1842 John Downie and his wife and children left Ireland and came to America, landing in Washington after a nine weeks' voyage, and then, in a six-horse wagon, they and all their belongings came across the Allegheny Mountains to Brownsville, Pennsylvania, along the Old National Turnpike. From Brownsville they descended the Monongahela River to Pittsburgh, and after a short stay there, moved to Butler County, Pennsylvania, where the family lived until about 1856. This was the period of pre-Civil War excitement, and John Downie, being like most Covenanters, a man of strong convictions, was quick to identify himself with the anti-slavery cause. When the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, or as it was popularly known, the Squatter Sovereignty Bill was passed, throwing Kansas and other western territory open to slavery, John Downie, with others, hastened to move into Kansas for the purpose of outvoting the slavery sympathizers. He and his family left Pennsylvania, traveled down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers by boat to St. Louis and up the Missouri River, but about fifty miles from St. Louis, the boat was attacked by border ruffians, and the Free State men were compelled to leave. John Downie and his family, however, continued their journey by land, and finally crossed into Kansas near Fort Leavenworth, and settled at a spot near where the town of Winchester now stands. In the struggles of "bloody Kansas" during this period, Mr. Downie was active on the side of the Free State men, both from religious convictions and from natural sympathies, and two of his sons later enlisted in the Union Army when the Civil War broke out. For ten years the Downies were the only Covenanter family in the territory of Kansas, but later they and a few other families who had moved in organized the Winchester Reformed Presbyterian, or Covenanter, congregation, on September 7, 1867. Afterwards John Downie moved to Wayne County, Nebraska, where he lived for some years, but he returned to Kansas and died there at the age of ninety-one. He and his wife are both buried near Winchester. They were the parents of twelve children, eight born in Ireland, four in America.

James Niblock Downie, eldest son of John and Marv (Niblock) Downie, and the father of Robert Magee Downie, was born in County Down, Ireland, March 25, 1825, and came with his father and other members of the family to America when he was a

boy of seventeen. He helped clear the tract of land on Glade Run in Butler County, where the family settled, and shared in all the hardships and responsibilities of pioneer life. About 1850 he entered the employ of the owner of a large tract of land on the site of what is now Beaver Falls, and by 1859 he was able to purchase what became the Downie farm at Downieville. James N. Downie was a farmer all his life. He, like his father, had strong anti-slavery sympathies, and for some years the Downie house was a station on the underground railway for runaway slaves on their way to Canada, and later, during the Civil War, he left his family and enlisted for service.

James Niblock Downie married, on October 13, 1852, Jane Boyle Magee, of Harmony, Butler County. She was the eldest child of Robert and Martha (Douthitt) Magee, and belonged to a staunch Covenanter family. One of the reasons why the Downies had settled in Butler County was because there was in the vicinity, not far from Mars, a strong Covenanter Church, and to this the Magees belonged. Mrs. Downie's grandparents were James and Jane (Boyle) Magee, and both were born in Ireland, of Scotch descent. They came to America about 1795, were married in this country about 1799, and settled in Butler County, then a wilderness. Here were born to them thirteen children, eight girls and five boys. One of the boys, Robert, who inherited a part of the farm, married Martha Douthitt, near Brownsville, on March 14, 1825, and died in 1844 at the age of forty-four, his wife dying six years later at the age of fifty-three. They left a family of seven children, with the eldest, Jane Boyle Magee, a young woman of twenty-two, responsible for the upbringing of the family and the care of the Magee farm. She ably carried out this trust, keeping the family together and attending to all their concerns until the younger children were able to take over the responsibility, after which she married James Niblock Downie, and they were the parents of the following children: Robert Magee, of further mention; John Galbraith, Martha Jane (Hays), James Livingston and Mary Ann Elizabeth (Cook). In October, 1902, the couple celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their marriage. James Niblock Downie died a year later, and both he and his wife, who survived him for fourteen years, were buried in the family plot in Mars Cemetery.

Robert Magee Downie, the eldest son of James Niblock and Jane Boyle (Magee) Downie, was born in Adams Township, near Valencia, Butler County. He attended the public schools, and then taught for one year in the Butler County school, after which he entered Geneva College, then located at Northwood, Ohio. Mr. Downie was a student with a theological bent, true to the religious traditions of the family, and at one time he thought of becoming a minister. While he was a student in Geneva College, that institution was moved to Beaver Falls, and during this period he studied for one year at Monmouth College, where he met his future wife, but he graduated from Geneva College in the class of 1881, the first class to receive degrees after the removal to Beaver Falls.

Mr. Downie was born a mechanical genius. As a boy and young man he was keenly interested in machinery, and in 1881, after his graduation from college, he and his brother, John G. Downie, invented and patented a portable drilling machine, which was

the first piece of machinery of the kind ever made. More fortunate than many inventors, the two Downie brothers were almost immediately able to persuade wealthy and influential men of the vicinity to give them financial backing, and largely through the instrumentality of the Rev. Dr. H. H. George, then president of Geneva College, the new industrial project was located in Beaver Falls. The Keystone Driller Company, destined to become one of the most substantial industries of the vicinity, was organized, appropriately enough, on Ground Hog Day, 1882, with J. D. McAnlis, Rev. H. H. George, Robert Patterson, Dr. R. J. George, and Robert Magee Downie as the original members of the company. Mr. Downie was elected secretary and general manager of the concern at its organization in 1882 and served in this capacity until his death in 1924. The factory was at first located in the old Thornley foundry and machine shops in Fallston, but shortly afterwards moved to its present site in Eighth Avenue and Twentieth Street, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.

The importance of this concern is such as to merit a place in the general history of manufacturing in Pennsylvania, and a fuller account of its development will be found in that place. Here we are concerned chiefly with the personal career of Robert M. Downie, but his achievements were so intimately a part of the growth and progress of the Keystone Driller Company that the two cannot be separated. The concern began business by the manufacture of a portable machine for the purpose of making ordinary six-inch water wells for domestic use. Soon, however, the inventors of the machine discovered that they could improve it by making it self-moving; later the machine was adapted to drilling deeper holes to reach gas veins and mineral deposits. It could then be used for exploring and ascertaining the contents of alluvial gold deposits, and this use of machinery, by which more gold was made available and a great deal of the element of risk in gold-mining eliminated, had far-reaching results. At the time of Bryan's nationwide campaign for the free coinage of silver, the gold-dredging machine was widely discussed and had large sales in all gold-producing areas, and eventually so increased and cheapened the production of gold that Bryan's campaign was immeasurably weakened. Much of his failure as a presidential candidate is said to be indirectly due to the Keystone Driller Company.

A short time after the Keystone Driller Company was formed, Robert M. Downie and his brother, John G., invented the Downie pump. For a time this was manufactured at Downieville, but was later taken over by the Keystone Driller Company. The Keystone Excavating machine, another piece of machinery manufactured by the company, has been greatly improved by certain inventions made by Robert M. Downie during the latter years of his life. He was also the inventor of the vitrified paving brick, and with George F. Kennedy, and T. Livingstone Kennedy, both of New Brighton, formed the Fallston Fire Clay Company; and he was connected with the Pittsburgh Wire Company of Downieville.

Although preëminently an inventor and a business man of extraordinary ability, Mr. Downie kept throughout his life the keen interest in religion that was an inheritance from his Covenanter forbears, and

he had literary talent as well. The catalogues and sales literature published by his company were used as manuals in scientific training schools, a proof of their clarity of thought and diction. But Mr. Downie was an author in quite other and more pretentious fields. Among his books was one called "The Kingdom of Christ," which was widely read and attracted a great deal of favorable comment, and another, a book of poems, entitled "The Marriage of the Dawn," was also widely read. Shortly before his death he published a volume on "The Resurrection and its Implications."

Mr. Downie was a charter member of the College Hill Reformed Presbyterian Church, and served as an elder from its organization until the time of his death. He was a member of the executive committee, now known as the board of directors, of the National Reform Association, to which he gave generous support. From his college days there, he took the most active interest in the affairs of Geneva College, was a member of its board of directors, and gave much of his best effort to work for the college. After a long and honorable life, Robert M. Downie died, from an attack of appendicitis, October 23, 1924, at the age of seventy-one. He was deeply mourned, not only by those closest to him, but by a wide circle of friends and acquaintances throughout Beaver Valley.

Robert Magee Downie married (first), Martha Margaret Vale, who was born in Van Buren County, Iowa, daughter of Jacob G. Vale, State Senator in Iowa for a number of terms and at one time candidate for governor. The Vale family came of Quaker stock. The progenitor of the family in America was Robert Vale, a ship-owner, engaged in bringing Hollandese immigrants over to William Penn's colony in America. The story is that one of these immigrants, very young and charming, lost her purse and ticket and was befriended by Captain Vale, who took her to friends in Philadelphia, and later, when he quit the sea, married her. William Penn presented Captain Vale with a thousand-acre tract of land in York County, where the couple lived after their marriage.

Martha Margaret (Vale) Downie, wife of Robert M. Downie, died April 13, 1908, from injuries received by falling into an excavation and being horribly burned by an explosion of gas which had accumulated there. Mr. Downie married (second) Margaret Greer Dick, daughter of Rev. John N. Dick, D. D., of Greensburg, in 1909. His children by his first marriage were: (J)ames Vale, a biography of whom follows; Regina Martha Downie, a physician, now practicing in Lansdowne; Robert Rex, (q. v.); John Lincoln, who lost his life in the World War, his twin sister, Mary Lydia, now Mrs. Mary White of Hickory; and Anna Jane, who died at the age of seventeen. A daughter of the second marriage, Elizabeth Jane Dick, survives her father, as does his widow.

(J)AMES VALE DOWNIE, sales manager of the Keystone Driller Company, of Beaver Falls, of which his father, Robert Magee Downie (see preceding biography) was co-founder and for years secretary and general manager, is the son of Robert Magee and Martha Margaret (Vale) Downie, and was born at New Brighton, Beaver County, Pennsylvania. He

is a brother of Robert Rex Downie (see following biography).

James Vale (J. Vale) Downie received his education in the public schools and in his father's *alma mater*, Geneva College. He worked as a reporter for the Beaver Falls "Tribune" during the winter of 1903 and 1904, and in the latter year entered the employ of the Keystone Driller Company, in the advertising department. The following year he was made advertising manager, in 1907 became connected with the New York office, and since 1922 he has served as sales manager. Mr. Downie published a book of verse, entitled "The Port o' Calabar," and short stories which have appeared in "Harper's Magazine," "The Red Book," and other well known periodicals. Mr. Downie is a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. He belongs to the Beaver Falls Chamber of Commerce and the Old Colony Club.

Mr. Downie married, in 1909, Janet Theodora Matheny, daughter of Dr. David Matheny, now deceased, who was a medical missionary, stationed in Asia Minor. Mr. and Mrs. Downie have one daughter, Theodora, born September 7, 1920.

ROBERT REX DOWNIE is the second son of Robert Magee and Martha Margaret (Vale) Downie (q. v.), of Beaver Falls, and brother of James Vale Downie (see preceding biography). He was born in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, attended the public schools of Beaver Falls, and was graduated from Geneva College in the class of 1916 with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. He afterwards studied for a year at the University of Pennsylvania, and then, during the World War, did service in the merchant marine. Mr. Downie was assigned to duty as quartermaster aboard the Clyde-Mallory line steamships, from which he was later transferred to the U. S. Army Transport Service as wheelman. After he received his discharge in February, 1919, he obtained his first business experience with an engineering plant at St. Catharines, in the Province of Ontario, Canada. He then entered the employ of the Keystone Driller Company, at first as a demonstrator of machines and later as a designer. Since the death of his father in 1924, he has been general manager of the company. He is non-partisan in politics, a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and of the Beaver Falls Chamber of Commerce.

EDWARD FRANCIS HARTMAN—Many years ago, before the Revolutionary War had been written on the early pages of the history of the American Colonies, a ship was making its way from Holland to the new country, with whose marvels the Old World was then all agog. Among her passengers were a young husband and wife by the name of Hartman, and before the long journey had been completed the mother had given birth to twin boys, Philip and Michael. Sad to say, however, the joy of seeing the new world was not realized by the young mother, who never recovered, but died and was buried at sea. The father and the boys settled near what is now Greensburg, Pennsylvania, and the boys grew up, reaching manhood in time to enlist on the side of the Colonies in the Revolution. Both brothers were soldiers, Philip serving under Captain Ogle. Philip Hartman became a pioneer settler in what is