

JAMES S. RALSTON, a successful farmer, and one of the leading business men of Armstrong county, is a descendant of two old time-honored families, which have been identified with the history of Plum Creek township since its earliest Anglo-Saxon occupation. James S.; Ralston was born at Shelocta, Indiana county, Pennsylvania, October 8, 1835, and is a son of David and Margaret (Sharp) Ralston. In the great westward tide of Scotch-Irish emigration that, during the closing years of the eighteenth century, swept over the Alleghenies from the grand old Cumberland Valley into western Pennsylvania, were the ancestors of the Ralston and Sharp families of Armstrong and Indiana counties. David Ralston, Sr., the paternal grandfather, of James S. Ralston, was a native of Cumberland county, married in 1803, Agnes Sharp, the first white child born in the region of the west side of Crooked creek, and located in what is now Plum Creek township, Armstrong county, prior to 1798. In 1809 at a log tavern on the farm now owned by John Ralston, he was mistaken, when he came out of the house after dark, for another person, and was struck on the head with a club by a man lying in wait for the other man. The blow thus inflicted soon caused his death. He left three children: David, John and Mary, who married William McCracken. Mrs. Ralston, who afterwards married James Mitchell, was born February 21, 1785, and died August 2, 1862. She was the second daughter of Capt. Andrew Sharp, who served as an officer in the Revolutionary war under Washington. In 1784 he became one of the pioneer settlers of Plum Creek township, and also purchased a large tract of land on which the town of Shelocta, Indiana county, now stands. In 1794 he traded this land for a farm near a town in Kentucky, where his children could received the advantages of a good education. He embarked on a flat-boat, on Black Lick creek, with his family and several others,--twenty in all, and on the Kiskiminetas, just below the site of Apollo, was attacked by seven Indians. Capt. Sharp, who succeeded in unfastening his boat, which was tied to the shore at the time, and in getting it into the middle of the river, received two wounds, one in the right , and the other in the left side. He shot one of the Indians, and the other six followed the boat twelve miles down the river, and shot the two men who were in the boat with him. After arriving at Pittsburgh, Capt. Sharp died of his wounds, on July 8, 1794, and his remains were interred there with the honors of war. He married Ann Wood, a native of Cumberland county. He left six children: Hannah Leason, Agnes Ralston, Joseph, James, Ann McCreigh and Margaret McCullough. David Ralston, the father of James S. Ralston, was born on Plum creek, Armstrong county, in 1804, and died at Indiana, in 1867. He was a merchant and grain-dealer at Shelocta for several years, went in 1837, to Indiana, and in 1842 was elected sheriff of Indiana county. He was a whig and republican, and was an active and thoroughgoing man. He made some very profitable investments in oil, and had acquired considerable wealth at the time of his death. He married Margaret Sharp, a daughter of James Sharp, and a granddaughter of Capt. Andrew Sharp. Their children are: Elizabeth, wife of Hon. A. W. Taylor; Nancy, married to J. P. Carter; James S. and Thomas Elder.

James S. Ralston was reared at Indiana, and attended the academy at that place with U. S. Senator M. S. Quay, Judge Silas M. Clark, and other prominent men. Leaving school, he was in the mercantile business with his father for some time in South bend. In 1860 he enlisted in the United States Navy as a seaman, and served for three years. Returning home at the end of that time, he enlisted (in 1863) in Co. C, 57<sup>th</sup> regt., Pa. Militia, and was engaged in the chase after the Confederate raider, Gen. John H. Morgan.

Some time after the expiration of his term of enlistment in the army he embarked in the salt manufacturing business, which he followed very profitably for two years. From 1864 to 1869 he was proprietor of the "Indiana House." In the latter year he removed to his present well-improved farm in Plum Creek township, this county. This farm contains one hundred and fifteen acres of choice farming land, and is situated close to the Indiana county line, and on the pike from Indiana to Kittanning.

September 3, 1859, he married Maria Antoinette Bleakney, of South bend township. They have three sons and three daughters: Edwin, Mary, Isabella, Bessie, William and Frank. In addition to his fine farm, Mr. Ralston is the proprietor of a large tract of farming land in the west, and also has a controlling interest in some valuable oil territory. He is a man of prominence, integrity, usefulness and marked individuality. He owns a fine library, gives much of his time to reading, and has made an especial study of political and financial matters. He is a Jacksonian democrat, has served in several township and borough offices, and in June, 1890, was honored by his party with a nomination for commissioner of Armstrong county.