

JOHN WESLEY ROBINSON is secretary and treasurer of the Garfield Fire Clay Company, manufacturers of clay products, whose plant is at Garfield, Robinson P. O., Indiana county, the leading industrial establishment in that vicinity. The Robinsons have been connected with the fire brick manufacturing industry in this region for a long period, and their thorough qualifications as business men and high personal character have been appreciable influences in the development of this section.

This Robinson family is of Scotch-Irish extraction. Irvin Robinson, the first ancestor in America, was a native of Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Ireland, to which country his ancestors emigrated from Scotland. He was one of five children, having two brothers and two sisters, his brother William living in England, his brother John and two sisters coming to Baltimore and settling there; this brother visited him once in Indiana county, but owing to the newness of the country and difficulty in getting to the post office, the nearest one being at Armagh, eight miles away, over a trail through a wilderness infested with wild beasts, wolves, panthers, wildcats, etc., so that Mrs. Robinson was afraid to let her sons go to the post officer very often, all intercourse and writing stopped and the connection was lost.

In his youth Mr. Robinson was impressed into the British army and was sent to serve in the American Colonies, where the Revolutionary war was going on. He was a soldier in Lord Cornwallis' army. He carried a Bible in his breast pocket, and in one of the battles he was shot, the bullet string the Bible and penetrating almost through it, the good book thus saving his life. At another time he was struck by a bullet in the arm, causing a painful wound. He was made a prisoner at Yorktown, Va., when Cornwallis surrendered his army to Washington. At the conclusion of peace he returned to England with his regiment and was discharged from the service. During his service in America Mr. Robinson's sympathies were with the colonists and though as a soldier he had to do his duty, he formed a liking for the country and determined that as soon as he could he would return to it. When about twenty-five years of age he was married to Catherine Elliott, of their native city, Enniskillen. He was granted a pension by the British government for service in the army, but did not lift it after he became a citizen of the United States. Two children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Robinson in Ireland, George and John. These four, with Mrs. Robinson's parents, the Elliotts, and their family emigrated to America, landing in Quebec in September, 1793, after a stormy three months' voyage, they did not stop in Canada, but came to the United States, finally landing at what is now the city of Hollidaysburg, Blair Co., pa. here he bought the land that Hollidaysburg is now built on and settled down, but not for long. Mrs. Robinson's parents had settled in Ligonier valley, between Fairfield and Ross Furnace, and her longing to be near her parents caused them to sell their property, which they did to General Holliday, and remove to what is now known as the "Campbell Farm" in Fairfield township, about four miles southwest of Bolivar, Pa. here Mr. Robinson lived until he finally moved to what is now West Wheatfield township, Indiana Co., Pa., across the Conemaugh river from Bolivar, to the farm now owned by the heirs of Elliott Robinson, or the property of the Garfield Fire Clay Company, and on part of

which there is now built the village of Garfield (Robinson P.O.). Here he bought a tract of 425 acres in what was then called Poplar Bottom, on account of the large number of poplar trees growing on it. Here he lived until his death, in 1829, aged sixty-seven years, his widow surviving until 1859, dying at the age of eighty-six years.

Mr. Robinson studied medicine three years and practiced his profession among the then limited population of that region. He was a Methodist of Quaker ancestry and used the Quaker habits and language. Mrs. Robinson's mother's maiden name was Woods, and her family also came to the United States; there were members of the Church of England. Episcopalians, in the United States, and one or more of the sons were ministers in the denomination.

Irvin Robinson and wife had twelve children born to them, all of whom lived to raise families: they were George, John, Jane, Hance, Irvin, Thomas, Mary, James, William, Elliott (of whom later), Christopher and Elizabeth Woods.

Elliott Robinson, son of Irvin and Catherine (Elliott) Robinson, was born Oct. 8, 1808, in Fairfield township, Westmoreland Co., Pa., and was very young when his parents went to the farm now owned by the Garfield Fire Clay Company, in West Wheatfield township, Indiana Co., Pa. After his father's death in 1829 he bought the interests of the other heirs in the property left by his father, and he became the sole support of his widowed mother, who made her home with him until her death. While yet a young man he engaged in canal boating, running a section boat between Pittsburg and Philadelphia. He built and operated both saw and flour mills in Wheatfield township, Indiana county, and in Bolivar, Westmoreland Co., P. He was largely interested in the lumber business during the greater portion of his life, as well as in farming and merchandising. When the Pennsylvania railroad was building he had the contract and built the section of the road from Bolivar west about two miles. He was a pioneer in the fire brick business, being the second man to engage in that industry in Westmoreland county. In about 1856 he and C. A. R. Benny, of Pittsburg, built what is now known as Reese, Hammond & Co. No. 2 Works. In connection with Breniser & Company he rebuilt what is now known as Reese, Hammond No. 1 Works. In the spring of 1869 he moved to Blacklick, Indiana county, where in company with F. M. Kinter and Charles A. Hadley, he built the Blacklick Manufacturing Company's fire brick works. Here he lived and operated the works for about three years, when he returned to his home in West Wheatfield township, and soon after he with three others erected the Enterprise or Lincoln Fire Brick Works. He was interested in the Garfield Fire Clay Company to the extent of backing his sons William I. and Thomas J., who started that industry in 1887.

Mr. Robinson very early in life joined the Methodist Episcopal Church and was an active member of it all his life, filling every office in the church, from trustee to local preacher. He was instrumental in building more churches, and in organizing more new congregations, than any other man in the community, giving largely of his time and means to these objects.

In about 1833 Mr. Robinson was united in marriage to Margaret, daughter of Robert Nixon, of Fairfield township, Westmoreland county. Mrs. Margaret

(Nixon) Robinson's mother was Rebecca Lawrence, daughter of Fitz Randolph Drake, of Piscataqua, N. J., and a lineal descendant of Capt. John Drake, the brother and heir of Sir Francis Drake. Mr. Drake was a royalist, and when the Revolutionary war broke out he went back to England. His son-in-law, Lawrence, was a patriot and being in good circumstances financially furnished Washington's army with cattle and provisions, seriously crippling himself, however, as Congress never paid him for these supplies for the army. Later Mr. Lawrence removed his family to Pennsylvania, and settled near Hollidaysburg, and he and his wife are buried in the old Frankstown cemetery near Hollidaysburg.

Elliott and Margaret (Nixon) Robinson had five children: (1) Irvin, born in 1834, died in infancy. (2) Eliza Catherine, born in 1839, married William L. Winkle, and died in 1880. (3) Mary Jane, born in 1841, married A. B. Rugh, and resides in Pitcairn, Pa. (4) John Wesley, of whom later. (5) Ann Elizabeth, born in 1846, was a deaconess in the M. E. Church in Pittsburg, and is now deceased. After the death of the mother of these children, which occurred in October, 1847, Mr. Robinson in 1848 married (second) Sarah A. Lynn, daughter of Robert Lynn, of Wheatfield township, Indiana county. Their children were: (1) Caroline Margaret, born in 1849, at present resides in Garfield, Pa., and is the secretary and treasurer of The Robinson Company (Store). (2) William I., born in 1851, married Margaret McHail, of Bolivar, Pa., and resides in Bolivar. He is president of the Garfield Fire Clay Company, also The Robinson Company. (3) Thomas J., born in 1853, was vice president and sales manager of the Garfield Fire Clay Company and president of The Robinson Company (Store) until his death, in 1907. He was an active member of the M. E. Church and a member of Acacia Lodge, No. 355, F. & A.M., of Blairsville, Pa. He married Sarah Alice Kennedy, of Bolivar, and resided in Garfield, where his widow still makes her home. There were three other children born to these parents, Simpson N., Emma R. and James, all dying in childhood. Mrs. Robinson died in 1859. Mr. Robinson married (third) in 1866 Mrs. Sarah Jane (Doty) Sutton, daughter of Robert and Fannie (Campbell) Doty, and widow of James Sutton, of Hopewell, Blacklick township, Indiana county. There were no children born to this union. Mr. Robinson died June 10, 1891, lacking four months of being eighty-three years old. Mrs. Robinson died in 1894.

Charles W. Sutton, a son of Mrs. Robinson by her first marriage, lives in Garfield, Pa., and is a member of the Garfield Fire Clay Company and manager of The Robinson Company (Store).

John Wesley Robinson, son of Elliott and Margaret (Nixon) Robinson, was born May 12, 1844. He was educated in the public and select schools and at Jacksonville Academy, at Jacksonville, Indiana county. He taught one term of public school, after which he helped his father, clerking in the store and keeping his books. In 1869 he went with his father to Blacklick, where he had charge of the store of the Blacklick Manufacturing Company and was with them until 1872. In that year the Isabella Furnace Company built their coke oven plant at Cokeville, across the river from Blairsville, Pa., and he accepted a position with Graff, Baily & Geib, who operated these works, to take charge of the company store, being with them until 1876. In 1880 he with W. L. Winkle, his brother-in-

law, went to Altoona, pa., where in company with Max Kinkaid, a banker, John Reiley, superintendent of transportation Pacific railroad Company, and S. C. Baker, land owner and capitalist, he erected the Altoona Fire brick Works, of which Mr. Robinson was the secretary and for about three years acting superintendent as well. In the spring of 1885 he left Altoona to accept a position with A. G. Morris, of Tyrone, Pa., as chief clerk, having charge of and directing all the office business for his large lime and limestone business in Blair, Huntingdon and Centre counties. Here he staid for thirteen years.

In 1898 he removed to Garfield, Pa., Robinson P. O., to the old homestead where he was born, and took the position of secretary and treasurer of the Garfield Fire Clay Company, of which he had been a member for some time. In 1905 the business was incorporated, the brick works and real estate becoming the Garfield Fire Clay Company, Inc., and the store The Robinson Company, Ind. Mr. Robinson being a director in both companies and secretary and treasurer of the Garfield Fire Clay Company, to which he gives the principal part of his time and attention. He is a man of good business instincts and his long connection with this particular business makes him an authority on conditions in the industry.

On Oct. 14, 1880, Mr. Robinson was united in marriage to Cora E. Agnew, daughter of Samuel K. and Harriet (Hicks) Agnes, and now resides in Bolivar, pa. To this union eleven children were born, eight of whom are living: (1) Francis Elliott, born in 1881, a graduate of Bolivar high and Bloomsburg normal schools, is at present the vice president and superintendent of the Garfield Fire Clay Company, also a director of The Robinson Company and vice president. He married Rebecca M. Hammond, daughter of W. McC. Hammond, and resides in Bolivar, Pa. They have one child, Richard E. (2) John Everett, born in 1883, died in Tyrone, pa., in his eighth years. (3) Mary Margaret, born in 1886, is a graduate nurse of Jefferson Medical Hospital, Philadelphia, Pa., and is now in the United States naval hospital service, located at Canacao hospital, on Manila Bay, Philippine Islands. (4) Thomas Nixon, born in 1889, is at present assistant cashier of the Blairsville National Bank, of Blairsville, Pa. (5) Paul Agnew, born in 1891, is a student at Allegheny College, Meadville, Pa., in his junior years. (6) Eleanor N., born in 1893, is at home. (7) Florence, born in 1895, died in infancy. (8) Richard Vincent, born in 1897, is at home. (9) A son born in 1899 died the same day. (10) Katherine, born in 1901, is at home (11) Kyle Irvin, born in 1903, is at home.

Mrs. Cora E. (Agnew) Robinson's father was a veteran soldier during the war of the Rebellion, having spent four years in the service and dying in Altoona, Pa., soon after the close of the war.

Mr. Robinson is an active member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, having served as trustee and steward, and is interested in the Sunday school, in which he is teacher of the Bible class. He was a charter member of the Altoona Council, of the Royal Arcanum, and is also a charter member of Tyrone Council, No. 943, Royal Arcanum, where he now holds his membership. In politics he is independent, but having a strong leaning to the Prohibition party.