

# David M. Sensenig

A Famous Local Mathematician

*By C. H. MARTIN*

David M. Sensenig was born in 1840 at Goodville, East Earl Township, Lancaster County, son of Michael and Barbara Martin Sensenig. When a young man he worked on his father's farm. He was greatly interested in mathematics even as a boy. He studied the Pike Arithmetic, one of the principal mathematical textbooks at that time, devoting much spare time thereto. While visiting his uncle one Sunday, he saw, lying back of the barn, a log which he presumed was a half-ton in weight. He spent the whole day in making calculations of the weight of the log—what its weight would be with one end lying on the ground as he lifted the other end to certain heights from the ground. When his father sent him to the field to do certain work, he soon found him doing all kind of mathematical problems. When old enough he began teaching school, and for some few years taught the Mill Creek School in Upper Leacock Township.

He attended the Millersville State Normal School, now State Teachers' College, graduating at that institution in the Elementary Course in the Class of 1867 and in the Scientific Course in 1870. Upon graduation he was elected a teacher of higher mathematics at that institution. In collaboration with Dr. Edward Brooks he helped to edit and complete Brooks' Arithmetic, which was to be known as Brooks and Sensenig's Arithmetic, but through some misunderstanding the textbook was named Brooks.

Mr. Sensenig was elected principal of the Indiana County Normal School, Indiana, Pa., and remained there a few years, later being elected professor of higher mathematics at Swarthmore College. He later was offered the principalship of the West Chester State Normal School, which offer he declined but did accept the vice-principalship, and later was elected head of the Mathematics Department, which position he held until his death. Between the years 1870 and 1880, he was a frequent lecturer on mathematics at Teachers' Institutes.

Mr. Sensenig was mathematician for a number of engineering firms which, with his teaching work, kept him very busy. He edited and compiled an algebra, which was used as a textbook in a number of normal schools. In collaboration with Prof. Anderson, also a Lancaster County man, he wrote a textbook on arithmetic known as Sensenig and Anderson's Arithmetic.

Mr. Sensenig was a tall, slim man, wore a mustache and goatee, making a very genteel appearance. His hobby aside of arithmetic was horses, of which he liked good ones. For many years he was one of the partners of the Sensenig Hardware Company at Goodville, where he spent his vacations. His pleasant and gracious manner won friends with all who came in contact with

him. As to religion he used to remark,—they were all his, which he exemplified in his life, extending financial aid to many young folks of Lancaster County in securing an education. While teaching at Millersville, one of the students who sat at his feet was the late Milton J. Brecht, who in later years classed Mr. Sensenig as the best teacher he ever had.

As in many other cases Mr. Sensenig married a classmate, Miss Annie M. Gillingham (Class of 1867), a very admirable young lady and a great help in his professional work.

While on a visit to the home of his wife's parents, Mr. Sensenig was stricken and died in January, 1907. He was buried in the Gillingham family graveyard at Morrisville, Pa.

I take pleasure in presenting to this Society, the first copy of the New Complete Arithmetic by Sensenig and Anderson, received from the printers, Silver, Burdett & Co., New York, so inscribed by Mr. Sensenig, through the courtesy of Mr. Clayton E. Martin, who was a student under Mr. Sensenig.