

Hon. John Strohm

By C. H. MARTIN

HON. JOHN STROHM was born October 16, 1793, in Little Britain township, Lancaster county, about one mile south-east of the village of Pleasant Grove, and about one mile north of Mason and Dixon line. This portion of Little Britain township was included with the division made in 1844, and is now known as Fulton township.

Rupp among "30,000 Names of Emigrants sailing for America" lists among the 205 passengers on the ship "Crawford," Charles Smith, master, from Rotterdam, Johan Henrich Strom. This ship arrived at Philadelphia October 26, 1768. Johan Henrich Strom was raised in the Kingdom of Wurtemberg. He died during the voyage and was buried at sea. His widow, whose maiden name was Maria Huetwohl, with two sons and a daughter, landed at Philadelphia, and finally settled at Strasburg, this county. She faced life in a new country with the care of three children. One of these fatherless boys about eight years of age at the time his father's body was consigned to the boisterous Atlantic, was David Strohm, born April 25, 1761. He died in 1846. He married Ann Herr, November 6, 1791. She was born June 27, 1776, and died May 16, 1838. Ann Herr was the daughter of Rev. John Herr, who was the son of Emanuel Herr, the 5th son of Rev. Hans Herr. David Strohm and wife were raised in Strasburg township, but in early life removed to Little Britain township where their first son, John, was born.

John Strohm was, therefore, a great-great-grandson of Hans Herr. His mother was of a very religious nature, and to her instructions and admonitions may be attributed the foundation of that high integrity and truth that characterized his conduct during his whole life. He was first sent to school when about four years of age and soon showed an aptitude for learning that few children of that age exhibit. The schools of that day were of inferior quality and afforded none of the facilities now obtainable in acquiring an education.

In 1804, David Strohm bought a farm in Strasburg township and in the spring of 1805 when the boy, John, was in his 12th year, removed from Little Britain township to the newly acquired farm, from which John was sent to school a few months during winters until he was 16 years of age, receiving such education as farmer boys of that period and vicinity received. He was very fond of reading and from seven years of age read everything that was within reach. His father's library consisted principally of the Bible and a few religious books in German, one of which no doubt

was "Die Wandelnde Seele" (The Wandering Soul) found in a great number of Lancaster county homes, and some books picked up at sales. Among these was an old geography giving description of the various countries and outlining principles of astronomy, relation of planets, etc. This book he studied carefully and from it derived his first knowledge of many things previously unknown to him. His mother encouraged his reading by borrowing such books as she could among friends. Another means of acquiring information was reading of a weekly newspaper which his father received. From this he obtained a knowledge of the leading events of the world and an insight in the politics of our country.

In 1809 at the solicitation of his teacher, he studied surveying but did not practice it to any extent for nearly twenty years afterwards. About the same time he began to purchase books with such money as he could spare.

When about 18 years of age, Judge Clark, one of the Associate Judges of the county, who made his acquaintance at a public sale, where he was clerking, wished to engage John Strohm as a teacher in his neighborhood, but his parents influenced him to reject the offer. The following year he accepted a proposition from Christian Barr, of Bart township, to teach school for a three-month term. This was along the valley road about one-half mile from Hawksville, east of the present boro of Quarryville. The last of his scholars attending his school here was John Mowrer, who died in May, 1883, eighty-six years of age. He found teaching irksome, and at the end of the term returned to his father's farm where he remained three years. In 1815, he again accepted a position as teacher in Lampeter township, at the solicitation of Christian Herr, of Pequea, who raised a school for him. This was long prior to the enactment of the free school law in Pennsylvania, and by "raising a school" was meant, some one in the community soliciting pupils and engaging a teacher who was paid by the parents of the respective pupils. Mr. Herr offered this new teacher boarding at his own house, and remained a life long friend. He continued teaching in this neighborhood for five years, and by the satisfaction given and good conduct gained confidence and esteem of acquaintances.

On December 23, 1817, John Strohm married Susanna Herr Barr. She was the oldest daughter of "Limeburner" John Herr, having previously married Mr. John Barr, deceased. His wife, too, was a descendant of Hans Herr. They began housekeeping in the neighborhood of his school. In 1821 he quit teaching and began farming.

In 1830, his name was first brought before the public at the county convention as candidate for the Legislature without his

knowledge. He then was little known over the county, and his friends did not succeed in having him nominated. The next year, however, he was elected to the Legislature as an Anti-Mason. He was re-elected in 1832, and received the largest vote of any of the candidates at that election, namely 6357 votes — compared with 6275 for Thomas H. Burrows. The other candidates too falling a few hundred short of Strohm's vote. He was re-elected to the House in 1833. In 1834 he was elected to the Senate for a four-year term. At this election, October 14, 1834, he received 4910 votes to 3853 cast for J. Slaymaker, his opponent. He was re-elected to the Senate in 1838. In 1842, he was elected Speaker of the State Senate. The fidelity by which he presided over the Senate and fairness of decisions resulted in no appeals having been taken from any of his decisions. In 1833, he bought a property in Martic township, later Providence township, where he lived until 1882, a period of 49 years.

“The Old Guard,” a newspaper published some few years in Lancaster about 1835 was the organ of Honest John Strohm. Preston B. Elder was Managing Editor. In 1840, Theo. D. Cochran succeeded him as Editor.

At the election, October 8, 1844, he was elected to Congress by the following vote:

John Strohm, Martic township, Whig, 7286.

Isaac Winters, Earl township, Democratic, 5096.

Henry Witmer, Paradise township, Native American, 2574.

He was re-elected to Congress October 13, 1846, at which time following vote was cast:

John Strohm	3866
Henry Haldeman	2521
E. C. Reigart	823

He took his seat in Congress March 4, 1845, the same day James K. Polk was inaugurated President. The large problems before the country at this time were the annexation of Texas, which resulted in the Mexican War, and Great Britain's claim to a large portion of the territory of Oregon.

Much might be said of John Strohm's attitude on the problems before the Legislature and Congress while he was a member of these respective bodies, which I forego. He was noted for strict attention to business and a watchful care of the interests of his constituents and community at large, more than for his brilliancy of oratorical display. He seldom addressed these bodies in Legislative argument, but gave his views in confirming language. As a Whig, he was strong opponent of slavery.

At the time of John Strohm's second election to Congress, a

rising star in the West, known as the Lone Whig of Illinois, was elected to Congress. Ida Tarbell, in her life of Abraham Lincoln, names our relative, John Strohm, as one of Lincoln's fellow boarders.

In "New Letters & Papers of Lincoln," compiled by Paul M. Angle, Houghton, Mifflin Co., Riverside Press, Cambridge 1930, Page 41, is the following: "The Congressional Directory for 1848 lists Lincoln as residing at Mrs. Spriggs, Capital Hill. It also shows that among her boarders were seven other Congressmen. John Blanchard, John Dickey, Joshua R. Giddings, Abraham R. McIlvane, James Pollock, John Strohm, and Pat W. Tompkins. Mrs. Spriggs' was one of the best known of the "Messses," or boarding clubs. Her house was located where the Library of Congress now stands. A few words reference to these associates of John Strohm's:

Lincoln served only this one term in Congress, but in 1860, was elected President and became the Great Emancipator.

John Blanchard was born in Vermont; after graduating at Dartmouth, settled in York, Pa., where he was admitted to the Bar. Later he removed to Bellefonte, where he was elected to Congress and served the same years as John Strohm did. He died at Columbia, Lancaster county, while going from Washington to his home on March 9, 1849.

John Dickey was born in Greensburgh, Pa., and served in two Congresses. His son, O. J. Dickey, after graduating from Dickinson College, began practice of law at Lancaster, where he was elected to Congress to fill the vacancy by death of Thaddeus Stevens.

Joshua R. Giddings elected to Congress, Jefferson, Ohio, and served several terms.

Abraham R. McIlvaine elected to Congress, Chester county, Pa., and served several terms.

James Pollock was elected to Congress, Milton, Pa.; served several terms. Later was Director of Mint, at Philadelphia; originator of "In God we Trust" on coins.

Pat. W. Thompkins was born in Kentucky; began practice of law at Vicksburg, Miss.; elected to Congress November 4, 1847. Removed to California with gold rush of 1849.

This group of congressmen had much in common—all being elected on the Whig ticket, and strong opponents of slavery.

Other contemporaries in Congress during John Strohm's membership of that Body were Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Douglass, Bill Allen, Alexander H. Stephens, Jeff Davis, and others whose acquaintance he enjoyed and of whom he retained most interesting recollections. When Mr. Strohm served in the Pennsylvania Legis-

lature, he was a conspicuous figure in the legislation that brought about the famous Buckshot War, and in his later years, he frequently loved to talk of those exciting times.

John Strohm, following terms in Congress, was the Whig Candidate in 1851 for Canal Commissioner, then one of the most important offices in the State. At this election, he was defeated, his opponent Seth Clover, being elected. Mr. Strohm, in addition to the foregoing honors conferred upon him, was a senatorial delegate in 1848 to the National Convention at Baltimore, at which Gen. Zachary Taylor was nominated as the Whig party candidate for President. In 1852, he was a member of the National Convention at Baltimore, which nominated Gen. Scott for President, and in 1859, he was a member of the State Convention at Philadelphia which nominated Gov. Geary for re-election. John Strohm was one of two Lancaster county delegates to the *National Hall* Convention in Philadelphia, after the Civil War where representative northern and southern men exchanged views as to the best method of reconstruction and reconciliation.

Other minor offices and positions of trust filled by him were: Elected Justice of Peace, Providence township in 1859. Re-elected in 1869, 1874, and 1880.

One of the organizers of the Strasburg Bank, and served many years as a director.

Director—Farmers Mutual Insurance Co. of which company he was Secretary for 36 years, and President for two years.

President—Big Spring & Beaver Valley turnpike.

Treasurer—Providence Township School Board.

He served as assignee, trustee, executor or administrator, settled more estates than any man in Lancaster county up to that time.

John Strohm's first wife by whom he had two daughters and three sons lived to majority; died in 1832. He remained a widower until 1857, when he married Ann Witmer, a widow.

John Strohm's mother's oldest sister, Esther Herr, married Peter Witmer. Their daughter, Nancy, married Michael Martin, my great-grandfather. Hon. John Strohm was, therefore, a first cousin of my great-grandmother, and it is not strange that father on a number of occasions went to John Strohm's house on business for grandfather. Father frequently spoke of Honest John Strohm, and the Herr family may well be proud of his notable record.

Honest John Strohm, a cognomen given him early in life, held a number of public trusts. Teacher, member of State Legislature, House and Senate, Congressman, delegate to numerous conventions,

confidant on many matters personal, political and legal. Lancaster county has not produced his equal; died full of years and of honors, in his 92nd year. The last year he lived with his step-daughter, at 34½ South Duke street, Lancaster, Pa., where he died, at three A. M., Friday, December 12, 1884, from congestion of the lungs, having been confined to bed only one day.

Funeral services were held Sunday morning, at ten o'clock, December 14, 1884, when Rev. Dr. Greenwald conducted a short service at his late residence. The pallbearers were: William D. Weaver, Esq., Charles M. Sproul, Esq., Charles I. Landis, Esq., Frank Griest, P. Eckert Slaymaker, and J. B. Hipple. In the brick church, east of Willow Street, services were conducted by Rev. Amos Herr. Bishop Benjamin Herr pronounced the benediction. Interment was made in the adjoining cemetery.

Mechanics' Society of the City and County of Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

A MEETING of the mechanics of Lancaster was held at the tavern kept by Mrs. Charlotte Eichholtz, widow, on Saturday evening, January 10th, 1829. Gen. Jeremiah Mosher was appointed president; James Cameron and Col. Levi Rogers, vice-presidents; and Henry Brenner and Ingham Wood, secretaries.¹ The president explained the object of the meeting as follows:

"It appears that the mechanics of this city have for some time been laboring under many disadvantages, in consequence of the illiberal treatment of many of their fellow-citizens towards them. Many industrious mechanics complain of the want of employment; and give, as a reason, a fact, which is too well known to everyone, that almost every article of mechanism that can [be secured] conveniently, is now imported from Philadelphia, or elsewhere; which, as a matter of course, not only deprives many persons who reside in this city of the means of a living, but, in a great degree, lessens the importance and dignity of the city. For this reason, it has been deemed expedient that the mechanics should meet and consult upon some plan of remedying an evil that is still growing."

On motion, it was agreed,

"That a committee be appointed to draft resolutions and report forthwith; whereupon, the following named persons were appointed: James Cameron, Col. Levi Rogers, Major John Getz,² Arthur Armstrong, Robert Russel, Thomas Jefferies, John W. Coch-

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