

# VENANGO COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

## HER PIONEERS AND PEOPLE

*Embracing a General History of the County*

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*A Genealogical and Biographical Record of  
Representative Families*

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TWO VOLUMES

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ILLUSTRATED

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VOLUME I

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J. H. BEERS & COMPANY  
1919

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and his wife: Susan Taylor, born March 27, 1868, was married June 25, 1889, to Edward E. Hughes, and their children are Henry M. and Charles Mackey; Myra Barnes, born March 27, 1870, married Cyrus Clark Osborne; Cyrus Fay, the next in the family, was born July 1, 1872; William Chase, born Jan. 7, 1877, died in Hong Kong, China, Jan. 14, 1912; Julia Anne, born Nov. 9, 1878, married Dr. Karl Emmerling, of Pittsburgh, Pa.; Marion Paige, born April 13, 1884, married Thomas J. Campbell, of Franklin, Pa., April 28, 1909, and has one child, Marion Paige, born March 24, 1910.

JAMES B. RIAL, of Franklin, is one of the extensive oil producers of that region, and though he may not be counted among its oldest residents he may very properly be included among the pioneers in the oil industry, with which he has been associated since he was a mere boy. His father, coming to Franklin to engage in business because it promised to be a live center of trade, was quick to see the possibilities in the oil fields, and the son being old enough to afford him practical help naturally did so, thus early entering the line which has proved to be his chief interest. Father and son in turn have ranked with the most substantial men of their time in this region.

The late Edward Rial, father of James B. Rial, was of English extraction, John Riale, his first ancestor in America, having come to this country from his native England in 1725. The final "e" was not used in spelling the name for long after his arrival here. John Riale settled in Bucks county, Pa., where he followed farming. His son Richard, the next in the line we are tracing, was born between 1735 and 1740, and was also a farmer in Bucks county. John Rial (2), son of Richard, was a resident of Bucks county, serving many years as justice of the peace at New Britain.

George Rial, son of John Rial (2), was born about 1800, and at the time of his death had his home at Harrisburg, Pa., where he is buried. He did contracting, constructing large works, and when he died was building a canal for the government, from Clark's Ferry to Harrisburg. His death was caused by accidental poisoning. His wife, Harriet (White), survived him with one son, Edward.

Edward Rial was born July 22, 1826, at Harrisburg, Pa., and was reared by his maternal grandparents, his parents dying when he was very young. Though his educational advantages were limited to the instruction he had in a few terms' attendance at country school

he became a well educated man, having an active mind and intelligence which only needed the spur of interest. He saw that if he was to succeed, it would have to be through his own efforts, but that was no discouragement to one of his ambitious temperament. After working in a hardware store in Center county for a time he conducted a livery stable, and later carried on a hotel at Tidioute, Pa., at the same time operating a stage line between that point and Warren. In this connection he had the government contract for carrying the mails. From Tidioute he removed to Union City, Pa., where he was occupied in a new venture, the manufacture of an improved patented pump. In 1869 he came to Franklin, where he first embarked in the grocery trade. But before long he caught the fever then raging over the oil discoveries in this region, and showed his faith in the value of the product by selling out his grocery and investing in oil leases and lands, being one of the first to try his fortune in that way. Though never reckless of his hard-earned capital he was liberal in making investments, and chose carefully, his judgment proving unusually sound. By 1879 he was interested in nineteen wells, all producing. Mr. Rial was indefatigable about following up promising leads, and never spared either time or pains to investigate his purchases thoroughly or plan their exploitation to the last detail. Hence his success. He built the tramway to the summit of Point Hill, to deliver supplies to the wells above, being the first to make this improvement in service. It was so with all his operations. They were well thought out and well dispatched, and he continued to engage in active business until his death, at Franklin, Aug. 15, 1911, at the age of eighty-five years. He is buried with his wife in Franklin cemetery. Mr. Rial was a member of the Baptist Church, to whose support he contributed liberally, and in politics he was a Democrat in principle, but not active in the party.

On April 2, 1848, Mr. Rial was married to Catherine Morrison, who was born Jan. 1, 1832, daughter of Thomas Morrison, of Mercer county, Pa., and died March 9, 1900. Eight children were born to this union: Clara, born Jan. 7, 1849, married John P. Kennedy, of Philadelphia, and died April 2, 1877, the mother of two children, Rosan (born Oct. 1, 1875, wife of H. Griffith Clark) and James E. (born Sept. 9, 1876, married Alice Parker and has a daughter Catherine, born Oct. 11, 1900); John, born Oct. 17, 1850, died April 11, 1851; Edward, born May 6, 1852, married Oct. 4, 1875, Henrietta Kilgore, and died Aug. 1, 1900.

leaving a son, Wirt Duffield (born in September, 1876); Savage, born Feb. 25, 1854, died Oct. 13, 1856; Emma, born Feb. 16, 1856, died Aug. 10, 1856; James B. is mentioned below; Phyla Emma, born Dec. 16, 1859, married Sept. 29, 1887, Edward L. Branch; Katharine was born Jan. 20, 1862.

James B. Rial was born July 29, 1857, at Tidioute, Warren Co., Pa., and acquired his education in the public schools, continuing his attendance after the family settled at Franklin. Help was scarce in those days, so he began to work with his father when only a boy. In 1870 they drilled the second well on Point Hill, where James B. Rial now resides, and were rewarded with what is known commercially as the first sand heavy oil, the best in the United States. In 1874 he became his father's regular partner, the firm being known during the lifetime of Edward Rial as E. Rial & Sons, and later as E. Rial & Son, and the Rial oil interests at present are carried on under the name of J. B. Rial & E. Rial Estate. The Rials have drilled and bought about one hundred and twenty-five wells on the Point alone, and James B. Rial owns many producing wells at this writing. Besides his interests at Franklin he has wells in Butler county, up French creek, and in different parts of Venango county along the Allegheny river. Practically all his business hours have been given to the production of oil, and his heavy investments have been made to pay well by judicious operations. Like his father he is a clever judge of oil properties, and his long experience in handling them has made him one of the most trusted authorities in the region.

Mr. Rial is widely known in business circles, especially in his own line, and the social connections he maintains have further widened his acquaintanceship. He belongs to the Washington Club, Odd Fellows fraternity, Red Men, Eagles, Maccabees and Masons, in the latter affiliating with Myrtle Lodge, No. 316, F. & A. M.; Venango Chapter, No. 211, R. A. M.; Keystone Council, No. 42, R. & S. M.; Franklin Commandery, No. 44, K. T.; and Zem Zem Temple, A. A. O. N. M. S., of Erie, Pennsylvania.

In 1877 Mr. Rial married Ida J. Brown, daughter of James H. and Sarah Jane (McChristian) Brown, the former a well known contractor of Franklin. Ten children have been born to this marriage, namely: Edward J., living on Point Hill, who is in partnership with his father; Sarah J., wife of Willard Carr (they live on the Point); Harry E., living at Rockmere, who married Rosa Eckels; Geor-

gia, wife of Curt McElheny; James O., of Franklin, who is a machinist by trade and associated with his father in business; Ida J., wife of Warren Shaffer, of Cranberry township, this county, an oil operator; Roll R., who lives on the Point and is with his father in business; Ruth, wife of Elmer Kechler, of Youngstown, Pa.; Irene A., wife of George W. Black, of Franklin, Pa.; and Helen Marie, wife of Donald Bleakley, son of W. J. Bleakley. Mr. and Mrs. Rial have fourteen grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. They have a beautiful home on the Point, the location commanding a view that cannot be surpassed in this region for beauty of scenery. The family are Presbyterians in religious association.

HENRY BALDWIN PLUMER, for many years prominent in legal and political circles in Pennsylvania, was born in Franklin, Venango Co., Pa., Sept. 25, 1841, youngest son of Arnold and Margaret (McClelland) Plumer. He received a thorough education and in his boyhood had the advantages of the guidance of his distinguished father, during which association his mental and moral characteristics no doubt took shape in the way that afterward made him distinguished. He was particularly taught to revere those principles of life and morals which had won for his father the confidence and respect of all who had business or professional relations with him. He studied in the University of Pennsylvania, being a member of the class of 1862, was graduated from Harvard Law School in 1863, and was admitted to the bar in Boston in 1863, being subsequently granted the right to practice at the bar of Fayette county, Pa., before the Supreme court of Pennsylvania, and at the bar of Philadelphia. He began practice in the office of his brother-in-law, Judge Samuel Gilmore, of Uniontown, and later removed to Franklin, Venango county, where he practiced with his brother Samuel Plumer. In the pursuit of his profession Mr. Plumer made an enviable reputation for legal knowledge and skill and for his eloquence in presenting cases to the court. He threw himself with all the zeal of his nature and with all of his great learning into the cause of his client. He was ambitious for success, but he never wished it at the price of his honor, and looked with disdain upon anyone whose standard was, first, success, no matter what the means. He belonged to that class of lawyers who look upon the profession of the law as an order of government, and believed that, whether in office or out of it, he who measured