

BIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

OF

Des Moines County, Iowa

CONTAINING

BIOGRAPHICAL *and* GENEALOGICAL SKETCHES *of*

MANY OF THE PROMINENT CITIZENS OF TO-DAY

AND ALSO OF THE PAST

*“Biography is the only true history.”*—EMERSON

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ILLUSTRATED

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welfare of popular education, which he believed to be thoroughly in concord with his exalted ideals of American liberty. From a material point of view he was highly successful, as his medical practice was very lucrative. He was a man of strong and resolute character, noted for the purity, integrity, and fearless uprightness of his life, and was possessed of natural talents far beyond the ordinary. It was in no selfish spirit that he dedicated his powers to the service of humanity, and he received his reward in the high respect and warm regard in which he was ever held by those who knew him. He died at Augusta on Dec. 23, 1899. A devoted husband, a loving, indulgent father, and a strong, true man, he has left a memory and an influence that shall long endure. Mrs. Randall is a lady of exceptional ability, of pleasing presence and conversational powers, and inherits the instinctive culture of her many generations of Puritan ancestry. She has a wide circle of acquaintance, and her home is the center of a refined hospitality.

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#### JOHN CALVIN McCLURKIN.

THE great Mississippi valley, with its broad prairies and rich lands, furnishes splendid opportunities to the farmer and stock-raiser, and Des Moines county is an attractive district of this great region for him who would win success in the raising of stock or in the cultivation of cereals. Mr. McClurkin is to-day a prominent representative of the former department of business, and has a valuable tract of land in Yellow Springs township. He

was born in Louisa county, Iowa, Aug. 29, 1846, his parents being Matthew and Eliza Ann (McClure) McClurkin. The mother died in Louisa county when her son John was only six years old. The father went to California during the gold excitement on the Pacific Coast, making his way to that far-off country in 1849, but he died within a day and a half's travel of the mines, his remains being interred there.

After the death of his parents, John C. McClurkin went to live with an uncle in the paternal line, and remained with him until he attained his majority. He was educated in the district schools, was reared to the occupation of farming, and has always followed that pursuit. He came to Des Moines county about 1863, when a young man of seventeen years of age, and was here employed as a farm hand for some time, working persistently and earnestly in order to acquire a sum of money that would justify him in the purchase of land.

Mr. McClurkin enlisted in Company H, Forty-fifth Iowa Infantry, at Morning Sun, and was mustered into service at Keokuk. They went down the Mississippi River, and from thence to Corinth, where they were stationed to do guard duty at the railroad bridge over the river at Moscow. He served with his regiment until he received his honorable discharge from service at Keokuk, the time of his enlistment being for one hundred days.

About 1875 he bought a farm of T. Reed, and he now owns two hundred and forty acres of valuable land in Yellow Springs and Washington townships, eighty acres being in the former and one hundred and sixty acres in the latter

township. Here he raises and feeds from one to three car-loads of cattle each year, and he also has upon his place about seventy-five head of hogs of the Poland China breed. He is an excellent judge of stock, and is thus enabled to make careful purchases and profitable sales. He finds that the branch of business which he has chosen as a life work gives him ample opportunity for the exercise of his business talents and industry.

March 11, 1880, Mr. McClurkin was married to Miss Malvina Louisa Reed, a daughter of David and Helena Jane (Carithers) Reed, a native of Indiana. Six children have been born of this union: Anna Jane, David Roy, Mildred Eliza, Leila Myrtie, Lizzie Viola, and John Calvin. Mr. McClurkin has spent his entire life in Iowa, covering now a period of almost sixty years. His attention and interests have been concentrated upon agricultural pursuits, and he is now a prominent representative of stock-raising here. His business methods will bear the closest investigation and scrutiny, and the extent of his operations have made him prosperous.

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#### WALTER G. STEINGREABER.

A VERY prominent resident of Des Moines county, Iowa, and one who is numbered among the most influential citizens of Benton township, is Walter G. Steingreaber, who was born in Saxony, Germany, Dec. 27, 1844, the son of Charles and Henrietta Steingreaber, both natives of Saxony. The father of our subject was by trade a glazier, an occupation which he followed until com-

ing to America, but after purchasing a farm here he devoted himself exclusively to its cultivation, and continued to reside upon it until his death, which occurred in 1889, in the seventy-ninth year of his age; while the mother died in 1893, aged eighty-three years. Both were faithful members of the Lutheran church, and the father, who took an active interest in political affairs as a member of the Republican party, was very successful in a material way, becoming one of the notably prosperous and influential men of his day in this section. The mortal remains of both were laid to rest on the home farm, which is still owned by members of the family. To them were born six children, as follows: Charles, who died at the age of thirty-six years; Agnes, Hetwig, and Louise, also all deceased; and Walter G. and William R., the latter of whom being the only one born in America.

In November, 1850, our subject came to America with his parents, landing at New Orleans, whence they proceeded up the Mississippi River to Burlington, and located on an eighty-acre farm purchased by the father in Burlington township, four miles north of Burlington, on the Irish Ridge road. Here Mr. Steingreaber passed the days of his youth as his father's assistant in the work of the farm, and meantime acquired a good common-school education in the district schools of his township, which he later supplemented by a complete course of training in the Commercial College of Burlington, thus evincing an unusual enthusiasm for the cause of education, and at the same time acquiring exceptional preparation for the business and duties of his later life.

On Dec. 27, 1871, Mr. Steingreaber was united in marriage to Miss Rebecca Hunter, daughter of William and Rebecca (Givens)

whom are now living: Lucretia, married Anderson Jarvis, resides in Kansas, and has a large family of children; George W., a farmer, near Martinsburg, married Miss Emma Brockway, now deceased, leaving one unnamed child, who died soon after its mother. He married for his second wife Miss Alice Miller, and they have five children: Mary, Leonard, Myrl, Jessie, and Anna; John, also a farmer in Washington township, married Miss Mary Bashford, and they are the parents of six children: Martha, Nellie, Lena, Clara, Acil, and Howard; Millard, resides on a farm in Washington township, married Miss Clara Bozarth, and they have two children, Ivy and Harry; Benjamin F., died in infancy.

Mr. Green's second wife was Miss May Jane Tatman, who was born in Maryland, and came to Perry county, Ohio, when quite young, and who became the mother of two children, Mary and Martha, both of whom died in infancy. Mr. Green was called upon to mourn the death of his second wife, and in the course of time, married for his third wife Mrs. Arminda Brown, widow of David Brown. Mrs. Brown had two children, Perley B., editor and proprietor of the *Harlan Republican*, resides in Harlan, Iowa, married Miss Eva Dougherty, and they are the parents of six children: Leah, Harold, Edna, Bessie, David, and Margaret; Mary married Frank O'Kell, a farmer in Washington township, and has one daughter, Bertha.

By the marriage of Mr. Green and Mrs. Brown, nine children have been born, seven of whom are living: James L., a farmer, living in Washington township, married Miss Rosa Stoner, and they have

been blessed with two children, Joseph and Zella; Nellie, the wife of Frank Grow, who lives in Nebraska; May, resides at home; Grant, of Washington township, married Miss Martha Helt, and by this union four children have come to them: Fern, Eveline, Donald, and Delbert; Frederick and Hosea, both of whom died in infancy; Martha F., the wife of David McCahan, a farmer in Louisa county; Blanche, married Albert Grow, a farmer residing in Nebraska; Jessie, at home with her parents.

Mr. Green has witnessed many changes of all kinds during his residence of over forty-five years in Des Moines county. What was timber-land fifty years ago, or in many cases hills and hollows, are now built up into cities and villages, which are supplied with all the modern conveniences which tend to lessen man's labors. Mr. Green is certainly a self-made man, and though he has met difficulties and obstacles in his path, he has overcome these by determined purpose and resolute will, steadily working his way upward, and commanding the respect and admiration of his fellow-men by reason of his honorable life and unflinching course.

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#### ROBERT A. McELHINNEY.

AN esteemed and honored resident of Washington township, Des Moines county, is Robert A. McElhinney, who was born in the city of Philadelphia, Pa., Feb. 12, 1840. His parents, Samuel and Ann (Elder) McElhinney, were both born in Ireland, and came to America in early pioneer times, settling in Philadelphia, where Mr. McEl-

hinney was engaged for a number of years in the buying and selling of stock. In 1840 they came to Iowa, and located in Louisa county, where they remained for a few years and then removed to Des Moines county, purchasing a farm in Yellow Springs township, upon which he was actively engaged in farming and stock-raising till his death, which occurred when he was seventy-three years old. He was a member and elder in the Reformed Presbyterian church. In politics he gave his vote and hearty support to the Republican party. The devoted mother of our subject died a few years before her husband. They were the parents of eleven children; six of whom are still living.

Robert McElhinney, subject of this review, received his early education in the common schools of Yellow Springs township and in the district schools of Louisa county, Iowa. He assisted upon the home farm till he was twenty-one years old, when he moved to a farm of one hundred and sixty-three and one-half acres on Section 12, given to him by his father, and which is located in Washington township. Here he has lived ever since, having made all of the many improvements on the place, building a good and substantial building for a residence, and other necessary outbuildings for the protection of stock and grain.

He is a progressive and successful farmer and stock-raiser, and has his farm well under cultivation, using all modern machinery and implements. Since coming to this township he has seen a great many changes for the betterment of the county, and he certainly deserves credit for always being ready and willing to assist and do his full share in any undertaking that would bring about a condition that would in any way tend to improve the township.

On Feb. 12, 1861, Mr. McElhinney was twenty-one years of age, and celebrated the day by being united in marriage to Miss Margaret Jane McClurkin, who was a daughter of Matthew McClurkin, who settled in Louisa county at an early day, and died on the road to California during the gold excitement. Unto Mr. and Mrs. McElhinney ten children were born, eight of whom are living: William J., a farmer of Louisa county, Iowa, married Lizzie Chambers, and they have one child, Willetta; Samuel F., a farmer residing in Washington township, married Miss Mary Chambers, and they are the parents of three children, Elbern, Clyde, and Isabelle; Annie, wife of Thomas Robb, a farmer of Yellow Springs township, and the mother of one child, Mary Margaret; Ella May, married J. M. McCloy, a farmer of Colorado; Margaret, at home; Mathew, lives in Minnesota; Robert W., at home; Winnie L., a teacher in the public schools in Yellow Springs township, at home. All of their children were born in Washington township, and two died there.

The beloved wife and mother of this large family passed away at the home place, Feb. 25, 1899. She was a consistent member of the Covenanter church, where her husband still holds membership. Mr. McElhinney was reared in the Republican faith, and in early manhood shared his father's political opinions, but never was an aspirant for public office. He has lived a just and helpful life, the position which he now holds in the esteem of his fellow-citizens being the result of faithfulness in every duty which has become his as a resident of the community. We take great pleasure in being able to place before the public the life history of so prominent a man.

friend and a kind and loving husband and father. In 1888 he built a fine residence upon his farm and in 1898 erected one of the beautiful homes in Burlington, at 809 North Seventh Street. He passed away Sept. 30, 1904, and his death was deeply deplored in social and business circles, for he was a man whom to know was to respect and honor, and who through his sterling traits of character had gained warm and enduring friendships.

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#### CONRAD BECK.

CONRAD BECK, deceased, was a prominent farmer and stock-raiser of Pleasant Grove township, Des Moines county, and achieved a success which was an indication of superior business ability, executive force, and unfaltering determination. He was born Dec. 23, 1808, in Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany, near Frankfort-on-the-Rhine. When nineteen years of age he left home, his father giving him his blessing, a prayer book and the equivalent of a dollar in American money. Years afterward he repaid the money by sending his father three hundred dollars. After visiting France, Spain, and Portugal, Mr. Beck decided to locate near London, England, and for five years was in the employ of Lord Mangester as a gardener. On the expiration of that period he sailed for New York, believing that he would have better business advantages in the New World. He occupied a similiar position with General Luce in Dutchess county, New York, and in 1833 came to Iowa, settling at Rome, near Fairfield, where he purchased one hundred and sixty acres of land. On his way to that place he stopped for a

brief period at Burlington, and dug the first cellar in that city, for which labor he was paid ten dollars. Mr. Beck did not remain long in the vicinity of Fairfield, but removed to Pleasant Grove township, Des Moines county, where he entered land from the government, to which he added from time to time in later years. His first house was built of logs and clapboards, and had a single piece of glass for a window. He figured that the house cost him in money a dollar and twenty cents. In true pioneer style he began life in this county, putting forth strenuous effort to overcome the difficulties and obstacles under which all frontier settlers labor, and as the years passed his work was crowned with success. In 1849, however, he was filled with the desire to go to the famous newly discovered gold fields of California, and in connection with Hon. Justice Clark, each outfitted a big wagon with four yoke of oxen. Mr. Beck took with him sugar and other articles to trade with the Indians for pelts, and also commodities that he might sell to advantage. They proceeded westward to Council Bluffs, up the Platte River, and across the Rockies to San Francisco, where Mr. Beck sold his outfit. Mr. Clark's oxen had all died on the way, but Mr. Beck was more careful with his teams and lost none.

After a sojourn of a year in the far West, Mr. Beck returned by way of the isthmus route. After leaving the California port the vessel in which he sailed encountered a severe storm and was in great peril. The food supply also became largely exhausted, and they were on short rations for fourteen days before reaching the isthmus. Knowing that the ship's officers were responsible for the want of provisions, the passengers decided that

if cannibalism became necessary, as they were afraid it might, they would eat the officers first. Mr. Beck finally reached Iowa by way of the Mississippi River, returning home with fourteen hundred dollars in gold. He then resumed farming and stock-raising, and became one of the most prosperous men in his township, because of his progressive methods, his untiring activity, and his keen business discernment. He had three thousand acres of land, and built a stone residence in Pleasant Grove that was one of the finest homes in the county. He made his first purchases of land at government prices or a little more, and for some of his later investments he paid as high as thirty-five dollars per acre. With the growth and settlement of the county the land greatly increased in value, and he became one of the prosperous agriculturists of this part of the State.

In 1842, in the town of Burlington, Mr. Beck was married to Miss Elizabeth Grote, of Dodgeville, Iowa, who was born at Krois Minden, Germany, Dec. 21, 1821, and died June 19, 1895, at Morning Sun, Iowa. Her parents were John D. and Anna Grote. Her father was born, Aug. 19, 1790, and his wife's birth occurred in 1788, while her death occurred Sept 13, 1855. They came to America in 1840, settling in Iowa, where Mr. Grote carried on agricultural pursuits until his death, which occurred May 17, 1868. The children of Mr. and Mrs. Beck are nine in number: Mary, died August, 1904, the widow of David Schenck, of Memphis, Mo.; Sarah; William, who married Ella Berryhill, and lives in Morning Sun, Iowa; Caroline, the wife of Hon. F. N. Smith, of Burlington; Henry H., who married Fanny Vele, of Breckenridge, Texas; Cassie A., the wife of Hon. E. L.

McClurken, of Morning Sun, Iowa; Senna, the wife of Joseph F. Swallow, of Burlington; Elizabeth, the wife of O. B. Jamison, of Newport, Iowa; and Emma Louise, who married J. F. Barr, of Burlington.

In his political views Mr. Beck was a Democrat, and in religious faith was connected with the German Methodist church at Pleasant Grove. In 1875, he retired from the farm and took up his home at Morning Sun, where his death occurred Oct. 13, 1895. He was a strictly temperate man, never using intoxicants of any kind, nor tobacco. He was noted for his industry and frugality, his honest dealing and his reliability. Indolence and idleness were utterly abhorrent to his nature, and he put forth earnest effort to provide for his family and secure a competency. He stood four square to every wind that blew, was a man of honest convictions, and never faltered in support of a course which he believed to be right. During the last sixteen years of his life he was blind. His wife passed away a few months before his demise, and it was his fondly expressed desire that he, too, might go and thus join her. As a frontier settler of Eastern Iowa, he took an active and helpful part in its early development and progress, and is now numbered among the honored pioneers of the State.

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#### TOPHEL FISCHER.

ONE of the most progressive farmers and substantial citizens of Huron township, where he is following his occupation with much success, is Tophel Fischer, who is one of the later comers to the county. Mr. Fischer was born at Roanoke, Ill., in April,

# INDEX.

---

Abercrombie, Col. J. C. . . . .	1035	Berges, John Dietrich . . . . .	285	Brun, Joseph A. . . . .	867
Abrahams, James Fox . . . . .	1026	Berges, Sr., John Henry . . . . .	286	Brydolf, Col. Fabian . . . . .	901
Adams, Hon. Abraham G. . . . .	1010	Bergsten, Gustaf Herman . . . . .	944	Bumgardner, Jacob . . . . .	576
Adolphson, Charles John . . . . .	826	Berlin, William . . . . .	920	Buhrmaster, C. F. W. . . . .	513
Anderson, Andrew Peter . . . . .	819	Bessin, Frederick . . . . .	389	Burdette, John William . . . . .	1028
Anderson, Carl Albert . . . . .	600	Biklen, Charles H. . . . .	476	Burdette, Robert J. . . . .	227
Anderson, Carl August . . . . .	538	Binder, Joseph . . . . .	783	Burkholder, Frank G. . . . .	915
Anderson, Charles John . . . . .	415	Binder, Joseph G. . . . .	785	Burnham, Loren B. . . . .	143
Anderson, James A. . . . .	869	Binder, Theodore . . . . .	778	Burns, Robert . . . . .	1074
Anderson, John . . . . .	146	Binkele, Henry A. . . . .	995	Buser, Maximilian . . . . .	804
Anderson, Nils . . . . .	287	Bird, George W. . . . .	667	Busse, Frederick William . . . . .	878
Andre, Edward . . . . .	273	Bishop, John Riles . . . . .	590		
Andre, John H. . . . .	272	Blair, William . . . . .	178	Cady, Ralph P. . . . .	606
Andre, P. A. . . . .	270	Blaul, John . . . . .	265	Caldwell, Elmer Ellsworth . . . . .	696
Andre, Philip C. . . . .	398	Blaul, Louis . . . . .	269	Caldwell, Milton P. . . . .	854
Andre, P. Henry . . . . .	273	Blaul, Theodore . . . . .	268	Calkins, Millard B. . . . .	492
Archer, Edward Gillam . . . . .	362	Bloomberg, Carl J. H. . . . .	171	Cameron, Clarence E. . . . .	675
Archer, George Henry . . . . .	853	Blythe, Joseph W. . . . .	15	Carden, John . . . . .	248
Arnold, Jacob . . . . .	568	Bock, Frederick . . . . .	932	Carithers, Andrew French . . . . .	243
Arnold, John . . . . .	588	Bock, Jerome . . . . .	505	Carithers, Isaiah Reid . . . . .	681
Asmussen, Benjamin . . . . .	675	Boeck, George . . . . .	544	Carmean, William R. . . . .	503
Augutta, William . . . . .	684	Bohlen, John Bernhard . . . . .	958	Carnegy, John Johnson . . . . .	788
Avery, Henry . . . . .	400	Boesch, George C. . . . .	158	Carpenter, George B. P. . . . .	188
		Boesch, John . . . . .	154	Carson, William . . . . .	16
Baird, James Wallace . . . . .	738	Boner, Wesley Reeves . . . . .	506	Carter, Thomas H. . . . .	1047
Bailey, John Clark . . . . .	512	Bosch, Charles G. . . . .	900	Cartwright, Stephen . . . . .	328
Bailey, Monroe . . . . .	965	Bosch, George M. . . . .	808	Cartwright, William H. . . . .	832
Bailey, William Henry . . . . .	773	Bosch, John George . . . . .	431	Caster, Dr. Jacob S. . . . .	230
Bandleon, Emil G. . . . .	65	Bosch, John G., Jr. . . . .	431	Catlett, Edward W. M. . . . .	978
Barhydt, Theodore W. . . . .	548	Bouquet, Peter . . . . .	807	Cave, William Frederick . . . . .	122
Barker, Hon. Charles I. . . . .	1025	Boyer, Aaron . . . . .	635	Chamberlin, Dr. W. B. . . . .	1042
Barr, James F. . . . .	847	Braden, John R. . . . .	438	Chambers, Governor John . . . . .	1052
Barton, Joseph H. . . . .	573	Brand, William . . . . .	663	Clarke, Governor James . . . . .	1054
Bauer, Fred Wilhelm . . . . .	312	Brant, John H. . . . .	566	Cline, John M. . . . .	955
Baughman, D. O., Jacob S. . . . .	520	Breder, Casper H. . . . .	104	Cludy, William . . . . .	967
Beardsley, Dr. Charles . . . . .	1011	Breuer, Charles August . . . . .	706	Cochran, Dr. R. L. . . . .	395
Beardsley, Simeon . . . . .	560	Breuer, Henry . . . . .	527	Comstock, Joab C. . . . .	160
Beck, Conrad . . . . .	849	Bridges, John Dilon . . . . .	705	Conkling, Edwin B. . . . .	406
Beckman, Edward August . . . . .	533	Bridges, J. A. . . . .	908	Conley, Melvin Deloss . . . . .	383
Beckman, John T. . . . .	236	Bringer, August F. . . . .	455	Connor, M. C. . . . .	1032
Beckman, Stephen J. . . . .	463	Brown, William E. . . . .	1046	Cook, Lyman . . . . .	689
Beere, Amos . . . . .	978	Browning, Hon. M. D. . . . .	1016	Coon, Marlow M. . . . .	1083
Beere, Charles . . . . .	939	Bruce, Hon. James . . . . .	1079	Copeland, William W. . . . .	56
Beere, John . . . . .	752	Bruhl, Max . . . . .	800	Corse, Gen. John M. . . . .	1017
Bendix, Christopher . . . . .	975	Brumm, William . . . . .	652	Cowles, La Monte . . . . .	34
Benne, Henry . . . . .	442	Brun, Emil . . . . .	885	Cowles, D. D., Rev. W. F. . . . .	332

INDEX.

1105

Jackson, Smith H.....	719	Lange, Paul .....	434	McLane, Daniel W.....	830
Jackson, William Harvey.	622	Langley, Howard Ames..	342	McMullin, John.....	815
Jacoby, James H.....	557	Landwehr, Joseph .....	672	McMullin - Woellhaf Co.,	
Jamison, George S.....	534	Laubscher, John .....	794	The .....	1098
Jenkins, George .....	718	Lauer, Anton .....	373	McNaught, Ira M.....	999
Johnson, Andy .....	890	Lauer, Theobald .....	898	McPake, John .....	969
Johnson, August H.....	748	Lee, John Thomas.....	599	Mehaffy, David.....	798
Johnson, Charles .....	837	Leffler, Hon. Shepherd...	1045	Mehaffy, John.....	746
Johnson, E. W.....	87	Lehmann, Jacob L.....	764	Mehmken, Fred .....	805
Johnson, Frank Alfred...	482	Lehr, Edward .....	970	Mercer, John M.....	62
Johnson, Frank E.....	541	Leicht, Fred .....	961	Merrill, T. A.....	1083
Johnson, Dr. G. J.....	1021	Lemberger, Henry .....	478	Mesmer, Leander J.....	668
Johnston, Richard .....	642	Leonard, David .....	414	Messenger, Hyram.....	532
Jones, John Lincoln.....	698	Lewis, Mercy .....	1038	Meyers, Herman.....	1077
Jones, William E.....	112	Lines, Allison .....	747	Millard, Frank.....	993
Jordan, Robert C.....	602	Lines, John B.....	716	Miller, George A.....	545
Julius, Frederick .....	858	Lloyd, Joseph A.....	322	Miller, William.....	734
Junk, Robert B.....	604	Lloyd, William Vaughan.	139	Mickey, Gov. John H....	1023
		Lofquist, John A.....	818	Moehle, Chris William..	708
Kaestner, Henry .....	593	Logan, Richard .....	420	Moehle, William.....	678
Kelly, Daniel .....	147	Logan, Samuel .....	420	Moehn, Adam.....	629
Kelley, David John.....	959	Lomax, Robert A.....	274	Moehn, Martin.....	374
Kelley, John L.....	257	Lowry, J. William.....	612	Mohr, Christian.....	918
Kendall, William Albert..	222	Lucas, Christ .....	780	Moir, Robert.....	553
Kirk, James .....	586	Lucas, Fred William .....	879	Montgomery, John .....	971
Killough, James .....	715	Lucas, Governor Robert..	1053	Moore, Henry.....	1041
Kitchen, Jeremiah .....	539	Luecking, Henry J.....	761	Morehouse, William H..	92
Klein, Joseph .....	319	Lundeen, Charles M....	951	Moyers, Pearl Alfred...	950
Kline, Charles Frederick.	594			Mumme, Joachim Andres...	686
Kline, John Belless.....	595	Magel, Benjamin .....	487	Munson, Peter August....	817
Klindt, Ferdinand H.....	704	Magel, Clarence J.....	489	Murphy, Michael W....	596
Knapp, Joseph .....	567	Magel, George Seibert...	490		
Koch, F. H. A.....	347	Magle, Henry (see Sei-		Nees, Peter.....	985
Koch, M. D., Frederick E.	348	bert Magle).		Nelson, Carl N.....	478
Koestner, Charles .....	851	Magel, Peter.....	490	Nelson, Charles H.....	945
Kolkman, Fred .....	444	Magle, Seibert .....	485	Nelson, Charles M.....	860
Koonz, J. C.....	315	Mailandt, Jacob P.....	810	Nixon, M. D., Samuel E...	197
Korf, Anton .....	941	Malchow, John.....	829	Nordstrom, Jacob Robert	727
Krekel, John Henry.....	792	Marquardt, Herman G..	108	Norton, Frank C.....	423
Krekel, Louis F.....	775	Marsteller, Frank L....	933		
Kriechbaum, T. W.....	45	Martin, Hugh Harvey....	760	O'Farrell, John .....	797
Krieger, Frederick .....	877	Martin, Major J. N.....	924	Orr, William.....	582
Krieger, William Henry..	876	Mason, Hon. Charles....	1007		
Krueger, Charles H.....	742	Mathes, Chris. ....	80	Parker, M. D., Addis E...	515
Kuechen, Frank X.....	369	Mathews, Howard A....	121	Patterson, Horace.....	150
Kuhlemeier, Fredrick J...	530	Mathews, J. Ken.....	300	Peterson, Andrew John..	676
Kuhlenbeck, John F.....	580	McClure, Isaac Newton..	103	Peterson, Henry Anton..	638
Kuntz, Christian .....	816	McClurkin, John Calvin..	201	Peterson, John August...	649
		McColloch, Nathan A....	896	Peterson, William.....	651
Lahee, John .....	458	McElhinney, Robert A...	571	Pieper, Henry William..	726
Lahee, John S.....	462	McElhinney, Robert....	1084	Pierson, Prof. Johnson...	1034
Lane, Charles Arthur....	751	McIntire, Joseph A.....	905	Pietzsch, Louie.....	791
Lane, John .....	575	McKee, David Harris....	78	Pilger, Jacob Andrew....	357
Lang, M. D., Anna J....	626	McLain, John W.....	623	Price, Dr. Jacob W.....	339