

Kindly submitted by: Pauline Anthony

# William H. Rice

William H. Rice, the late Treasurer of Northampton County, is a well known and influential citizen of Bethlehem. He comes of a good family, who settled at a very early day in this county, his great-grandfather being a native of England. His grandfather, Peter Rice, was born in Easton, and his death occurred when his son, William B., our subject's father, was twelve years of age. The latter was a blacksmith by trade, and in his youth hired out to a farmer in Saucon Township, where he learned his trade. Later he came to Bethlehem, becoming a foreman of the coach manufactory of J. S. Leveres. He afterward engaged in this business on his own account, manufacturing carriages, and also engaging in general blacksmith work at the corner of Broad and New Streets until 1862. His death occurred December 19, 1893. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church, but later became identified with the Reformed Church. At one time he was a member of the Council. His wife, Mary A. Weider, was born in Lehigh County, her parents being Moravians. The mother is still living on the old home, though now nearly eighty years of age. Of her five children, three sons and one daughter are still living.

William H. Rice was born on the corner of Broad and New Streets in this city, February 3, 1843, and attended the public schools of this place. When a lad of thirteen he worked on a farm for a year, after which he was employed at driving cattle from the Blue Mountains to Chester. Afterward he was in his father's shop until reaching the majority, when he became a partner in the business with his brother George, his father at that time retiring from active business. Mr. Rice continued operations at the old place of business until January 4, 1891, when he became Treasurer of the county.

In the spring of 1890 our subject was nominated on the Democratic ticket for Treasurer, and though there were eight candidates he succeeded in winning the nomination on the sixth ballot. In the fall of that year he was elected by a majority of forty-five hundred, leading the ticket. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, 1891, he took the oath of office, and faithfully served in this most responsible position for three years, retiring from the same on the 2d of January, 1894. During this time he traveled almost constantly, covering a distance of nearly eighteen thousand miles. He was under bonds for \$120,000, and his duties were discharged to the satisfaction of all parties.

In Bethlehem Mr. Rice has built several residences, two of these being located on Broad Street and two on Main Street. His own residence he erected in 1887. In public enterprises and the upbuilding of the town he has been actively interested. His father was one of the first men to help organize the Bethlehem Iron Company and was a stockholder at the time of his death. Mr. Rice is a stockholder in the Bethlehem Gas Company and was for a time a Director in the Bethlehem Iron Company.

In 1866 occurred the marriage of William H. Rice and Miss Ellen R. Blean, who was born in Allentown and is a daughter of Jacob Blean, of that place. Mr. Rice is a Democrat in politics and for two years has been on the County Committee. For three years prior to his accepting the office of Treasurer he was one of the City Council, being Chairman of the same. Socially he belongs to Monocacy Lodge, I. O. O. F., and is a Trustee in the Reformed Church. He is a well informed and genial gentleman, with whom it is a pleasure to hold conversation.