

CENTENNIAL HISTORY
OF
MISSOURI
(THE CENTER STATE)

One Hundred Years in the Union
1820-1921



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March, 1870, Samuel Brown McPheeters fell asleep in Jesus, and another spirit joined the noble army of martyrs and confessors in the paradise of God." He left a widow, who was Miss Eliza C. Shanks, of Virginia, and two sons and two daughters. One daughter and the sons—Mr. Thomas S. McPheeters, of this city, and Professor W. M. McPheeters, D. D., of the Theological Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina,—survive their parents.

The subject of this sketch was the first person on whom Westminster College, at Fulton, Missouri, conferred the degree of doctor of divinity, and he was the worthy recipient of the honor in 1859.

The late General F. P. Blair, his intimate friend at college and in mature life, wrote of him: "It has never been my fortune to know a better or purer man, or one more upright and conscientious in the discharge of the duties of the most difficult and highest calling among men, and I feel it presumptuous in me, even at the request of friends, to attempt the delineation of a character which excites my highest admiration, but which I have shown so little capacity to imitate."

THOMAS S. MCPHEETERS.

It is a rare thing, in these utilitarian days, to find a man who, with ability of a high order in commercial pursuits, yet gives his keenest interest and attention to religious, charitable and civic activities. Such a man was Thomas S. McPheeters.

He was born in St. Louis, May 5, 1852, of an honorable and distinguished ancestry, his parents being the Reverend Doctor Samuel Brown and Eliza Shanks McPheeters. The father was born in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1819, a son of the Reverend William McPheeters, D. D., and Margaret Ann McPheeters. The progenitors of the family were Scotch, who settled first in Pennsylvania about the year 1680, and later removed to Virginia. Dr. Samuel B. McPheeters was graduated from the University of North Carolina, in 1841, and then read law for a year, but relinquished his intention to become a member of the bar, in order to devote his life to the ministry. In accordance with this purpose, he entered the Princeton University Theological Seminary, and was graduated in 1846. After several years of pastoral work in Virginia, he was called to the Westminster, now the Grand Avenue Presbyterian church of St. Louis.

In 1862, as a commissioner to the general assembly of the Presbyterian church, he opposed the taking of any position by the church on the issues then being fought out by the north and south. This aroused heated opposition on the part of some of his congregation, resulting in an attempt to banish him from the state by the Union military authorities. Dr. McPheeters appealed to President Lincoln, who then issued his famous order, declaring that the government could not attempt to run the churches. This controversy, was the direct cause of the separation of the Presbyterian church into the northern and southern branches. Dr. McPheeters did not long survive the successful outcome of the issue which he had raised and died in 1870 in Kentucky, to which state he had removed a short time before.

Reared in a cultured home, where character and education were regarded as the highest aims, Thomas S. McPheeters there received the training and education which were the foundation of his after success and which brought him into a position of leadership in business and political circles and caused his impression to be indelibly stamped upon other and higher planes of activity. He was educated in the Wyman school in St. Louis, which he attended until 1865, when he became a pupil in the country schools of Shelbyville, Kentucky, which he attended until 1870. He then matriculated at Washington and Lee University at Lexington, Virginia, and continued his studies there for three years, during the time that Robert E. Lee was the president of that institution. The influence of the life and character of General Lee must have been profound upon a young man who was able to appreciate the splendid things for which General Lee stood. Mr. McPheeters left the university in 1873, because of ill health and returned to his native St. Louis, where he immediately became identified with the business interests of the city, which was then making great strides at the close of the Civil war. Soon after his return to St. Louis, he became connected with the warehouse business, and from that time on was continuously engaged in that occupation. In 1890 he became

the president of the McPheeters Warehouse Company, one of the pioneers in the field and also one of the largest warehouse concerns in the west. He continued as president of the company until his death. He was one of the first to conceive the idea of cold storage and refrigeration and was one of the organizers in 1901, of the St. Louis Refrigerating & Cold Storage Company, probably the best equipped and one of the largest cold storage warehouses in the United States, and was the president of that company from the time of its organization. He was also president of the Polk Estate Company, and a director of the Hope Mutual Fire Insurance Company.

In spite of the importance and extensiveness of the business affairs of Mr. McPheeters, he devoted much of his time and interest to activities and movements looking toward municipal reform, progress and improvement, and to the aid and assistance of the individual, especially the young men of the community. He gave his best thought and attention to the work of the Young Men's Christian Association, and for thirty years prior to his death he was a member of the state executive committee, while for a quarter of a century he was the president of the central branch of St. Louis and chairman of its finance committee. For twenty-five years he was chairman of the state executive committee, and for many years prior to his death was a member of the international board. He was in charge of the campaign in 1898, which resulted in the erection of the large and well equipped building, which is now the home of the association in St. Louis, and devoted his entire evenings for many weeks toward raising the large sums necessary for the erection of this building. He was one of the organizers of the Civic League of St. Louis, and for many years prior to his death had served on its executive committee and done very active work in connection therewith. Like all the men of southern birth and family who lived in St. Louis, he was a democrat and stood for the highest ideals of that party, and never failed to give his time and efforts to securing improvement in political conditions. In 1903, he was elected president of the board of trustees of the Westminster College at Fulton, Missouri, which in 1905 conferred upon him the degree of LL. D. He continued as president of this board to the date of his death, and was the chief adviser and friend of that college in the city of St. Louis. None was fonder than he of the social pleasures of life, and he was an active member for years of the Noonday and University Clubs. He was chairman of a group of influential and prominent men who had a private room at the Noonday Club, and who there each day discussed public matters, and from this little coterie emanated some of the strongest movements for the improvement of municipal and political conditions of this city. His religious interest, which was at the foundation of his lifework, took its most active form in his membership in the Grand Avenue Presbyterian church, of which he served for twenty years as an elder.

A man of domestic taste, Mr. McPheeters found his greatest pleasure in ministering to the welfare and happiness of the family circle. On the 28th of October, 1880, in St. Louis, he married Elizabeth Polk, a daughter of Trusten Polk, at one time United States senator and governor of Missouri. Trusten Polk was a direct descendant of Robert Polk, who was also the ancestor of President James K. Polk and General Thomas Polk, of Mecklenburg fame, and Bishop Leonidas Polk. Trusten Polk was born in Delaware, and after graduating from Yale, he prepared for the bar, and entered upon the practice of that profession in St. Louis, in 1835. He became one of the great leaders of the bar of this state at the time when Edward Bates, Hamilton Gamble and Henry S. Geyer were the leaders of the profession in St. Louis. In 1856, he was the democratic candidate for governor and was elected as chief executive of the state. Ten days later, he was elected to the United States senate, defeating Thomas H. Benton and Hamilton Gamble, and shortly after resigned the executive chair, to represent Missouri in the national legislative halls. He followed the course of the southern democrats and upheld secession measures, and in 1861, he resigned from the United States senate to enter the southern army, and subsequently became judge advocate general of the Confederate army, under General Sterling Price, with the rank of colonel. Following the cessation of hostilities he returned to St. Louis and resumed the practice of law, and remained until his death, an honorable and respected citizen of this city, as well as a prominent statesman of the commonwealth. In 1837, in St. Louis, Governor Polk had married Elizabeth N. Skinner, a daughter of Curtis and Anne Skinner, and it was one of their daughters, Elizabeth, who became the wife of Mr. McPheeters. By this marriage there was born one child, a son, Thomas S., Jr., now practicing law in St. Louis.

The family circle was broken by the hand of death, when on the 5th of October, 1909, Mr. McPheeters passed away, at the age of fifty-seven years. His life was far reaching in its activities and its accomplishments. Its keynote was his love for his Creator and his fellowmen, especially the young men of St. Louis, and he reached and touched hundreds of young men by his wholesome, whole-souled Christianity and by his spirit of youthfulness, which he never lost. He never swerved from the path of duty, nor deviated from the course which his judgment told him to be the true one. Few men in any community have done more or better work for their fellowmen, than did Thomas S. McPheeters.

THOMAS S. MCPHEETERS, JR.

Thomas S. McPheeters, Jr., member of the St. Louis bar and president of the McPheeters Warehouse Company, while with other commercial and business interests he is also associated, was born August 27, 1881, in the city in which he still resides, his parents being Thomas S. and Elizabeth (Polk) McPheeters. The father was a son of the Rev. Samuel B. McPheeters, a noted divine. Thomas S. McPheeters, Sr., was the president of the St. Louis Refrigerator & Cold Storage Company and also of the McPheeters Storage & Warehouse Company. He passed away in 1909, but the mother is still living. She is a daughter of Governor Polk and yet makes her home in St. Louis.

In the acquirement of his education Thomas S. McPheeters, Jr., attended the Smith Academy of St. Louis and then went east to become a student in the Lawrenceville (N. J.) school, after which he entered Princeton University and won his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1903. Having determined to make the practice of law his life work, he then matriculated in the Washington University Law School and gained his LL. B. degree upon graduation with the class of 1905. In the same year he was admitted to the Missouri bar and entered at once upon active practice. No dreary novitiate awaited him. His thorough preparation soon became recognized and his fidelity to the interests of his clients has always been proverbial. His practice grew steadily and in 1911 he entered into partnership with Benjamin A. Wood under the firm style of McPheeters & Wood, an association that has been maintained since the 1st of April, 1911. Ability has brought him prominently to the front as one of the leading lawyers of St. Louis and he has also become well known as the president of the Polk Estate Company and formerly was a director of the McPheeters Warehouse Company but following his father's death succeeded to the presidency.

On the 1st of September, 1910, Mr. McPheeters was united in marriage to Miss Madeline Tausig and they have one child, Thomas S. (III). The religious faith of the parents is that of the Presbyterian church and in political belief Mr. McPheeters is a democrat whose activity has greatly furthered the interests of his party. In club circles he is well known and is now a member and secretary of the St. Louis Country Club, the vice president of the University Club and a member of the Cottage Club of Princeton University. He turns for recreation to golf and sailing. The nature of his interests is further indicated in his membership in the Civic League. He belongs also to Phi Delta Phi, a legal fraternity, and to the St. Louis Bar Association and while liberal educational training qualified him for his professional career, he chose as a life work a calling in which advancement must depend entirely upon individual merit and ability and by reason of his constantly developing powers in the practice of law he has reached a place in the front rank among the members of the St. Louis bar.

JAMES STEPHENS SUMMERS.

James Stephens Summers, a clear, concise speaker and a logical reasoner, with a comprehensive knowledge of the principles of jurisprudence, has made for himself a creditable place at the Kansas City bar and now has a large clientage of distinctively representative character. Born in Monmouthshire, England, Septem-