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A  
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE LATE

HON. EDMUND LOVELL DANA,

PRESIDENT OF THE

OSTERHOUT FREE LIBRARY.

WILKES-BARRÉ, PA.

By SHELDON REYNOLDS, A. M.,

SECRETARY.

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*PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF, AND READ BEFORE THE DIRECTORS  
OF THE LIBRARY, JULY 26, 1889, AND BEFORE THE WYOMING HIS-  
TORICAL AND GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, SEPTEMBER 13th, 1889.*

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## EDMUND LOVELL DANA.

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Judge Edmund L. Dana, late president of the Osterhout Free Library, died at his residence in this city, Thursday evening, April 25, 1889, in the 73d year of his age.

He was a descendant in the fifth generation of Jacob Dana, Cambridge, Mass., 1640. One branch of the family removed to Wyoming prior to the year 1772, and became prominent in the affairs of the settlement and in the struggles that ensued to hold possession of the territory under the claim of the Susquehanna Company, as well as in defence of this outpost against the attacks of the public enemy. Anderson Dana, the great grandfather of the subject of this sketch, a lawyer by profession, was one of the representatives of Westmoreland county, or Wyoming, in the Assembly of Connecticut, and in many ways proved himself a useful and valuable member of the community. Returning to his home from the Assembly on the eve of the Battle of Wyoming, he, together with other members of his family, took part in that engagement, and was slain in battle July 3d, 1778.

Judge Dana was the son of Asa Stevens Dana, and was born in this city January 29, 1817. After a preparatory course of study of three years at the Wilkes-Barre Academy, he entered the sophomore class of Yale College and was graduated A. B. from that institution in due course, in the year 1838, and subsequently received the degree of A. M. Upon leaving college he found employment as civil engineer in the work of the survey and building of the North Branch Canal, extending from Pittston to the New York State line. After one year spent in this occupation he entered as a law student the office of Hon. Luther Kidder, and on April 6th,

1841, having completed the prescribed course of study, was admitted to the bar of Luzerne county.

At the time of the breaking out of hostilities between the United States and Mexico, he was the captain of the Wyoming Artillerists, a military organization formed a few years prior to that event, and in response to the government's call for troops he offered the services of his company. They were accepted, and attached to the infantry branch of the service the company was mustered as Co. I, First Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers. Under the command of Capt. Dana, the company numbering 124 men set out for Pittsburg, the rendezvous, and arriving there was, on the 16th December, 1846, sworn into the service of the United States, and proceeded by the way of New Orleans to the seat of war. They there joined the army under Gen. Scott and participated in many of the battles and sieges incident to that masterly advance from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico, the brilliant conception and successful issue of which reflected alike the military genius of Scott, and the mettle, discipline, and courage of the troops under his command.

Capt. Dana, with his company, was with the army at the debarkation at Vera Cruz, an undertaking made memorable by reason of the unrivaled skill with which nearly 12,000 men, fully armed and equipped, within the space of seven hours, effected a landing in open boats upon a shore unprotected from the sweep of the surf and in the face of the enemy, without the loss of a single life or other casualty. He was engaged in the siege of Vera Cruz immediately following the debarkation, and saw the surrender of that city together with its famous stronghold, the Castle of San Juan d'Ulloa. He took part also in the decisive battle of Cerro Gordo, and in the capture of Perote Castle and the cities of Jalapa and Pueblo, and the Pass of El Pinal.

After the arduous and brilliant series of operations, occupying but a few months in their execution, had



brought within the army's grasp that grand objective point toward which these historic places served as stepping stones, he had the satisfaction of witnessing the fall of the City of Mexico and the happy termination of the war.

There are several incidents in his Mexican service worthy of remark as showing in a more especial manner the merit of the man and its recognition by his superiors in rank. Upon his arrival in one of the advance transports at the island of Lobos, which had been selected as a rendezvous for the troops proceeding to Vera Cruz, he was detailed to the important work of the survey of its harbor, a work of great responsibility and requiring accurate knowledge of a special nature. He proved himself well fitted by education and experience for this duty by the prompt and efficient manner in which he performed it.

In the charge up the steep and broken approaches of El Pinal Pass he commanded the assaulting column, and was among the first to cross over the defensive works of the enemy.

In the defense of Pueblo during the thirty days' siege of that city by the Mexican forces under Generals Rea and Santa Ana, Col. Childs, the commandant, says in his official report in reference to the behavior of the garrison which included Capt. Dana's company: "Never did troops endure more fatigue nor exhibit more patriotic spirit and gallantry. Officers and soldiers vied with each other to be honored martyrs in their country's cause." In addition to this commendation of the official report, Capt. Dana received special mention in general orders for efficiency and soldierly bearing during this investment.

After the declaration of peace with Mexico he returned to Wilkes-Barre and resumed the practice of law. His taste for military affairs led him to continue his connection with the militia of the State, and notwithstanding the cares of his growing practice at the bar he was able to devote much attention to the management of these organizations.

In recognition of his efforts in this behalf he was promoted to the rank of major general of the Ninth Division Pennsylvania militia, which office he held at the beginning of the late war. In 1862 Gov. Curtin appointed him commandant of Camp Luzerne, a camp of organization and instruction situated in the neighborhood of Luzerne Borough, where most of the men recruited in this vicinity were mustered into service and organized as the 143d Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, and of which regiment he was elected colonel, October 18th, 1862. In the following month the regiment broke camp and proceeded to the front where it was attached to the 2d Brigade, 3d Division of the First Army Corps under command of Gen. John F. Reynolds.

The more important events of the war in which Col. Dana and his regiment participated were the battles of Chancellorsville, May 2d, 3d and 4th, 1863; Gettysburg, July 1st, 2d and 3d, 1863; the Wilderness, May 5, 1864; the first battle of Hatcher's Run, 28th and 29th October, 1864; the Weldon Raid, Dec. 7th to 12th, 1864; the second battle of Hatcher's Run, 6th and 7th Feb., 1865.

At Gettysburg the command of the 2d Brigade, 3d Division, 1st Corps, devolved upon Col. Dana, and the brigade was engaged throughout the three days' battle. General Doubleday, of the U. S. Army, in a recent letter addressed to the president of the association of 143d Pa. Vols., refers to Col. Dana and his command in these words: "Had I known at the time the division was formed that Col. Dana had already had some military experience in Mexico I should have assigned him to the command of a brigade, but I did not learn this fact until after the battle of Gettysburg. What the regiment accomplished on that ever-to-be-remembered 1st day of July, 1863, has probably never been excelled in the annals of our long and sanguinary struggle for the supremacy of the Union and the Constitution. Holding a central point in my line, assailed by overwhelm-

ing forces from the North and West, they maintained their position from 11 a. m. to 4 p. m. against triple their number of the best troops of the Confederacy." The historian of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, in describing this sanguinary engagement, says: "Col. Dana throughout the severe and protracted contest moved on foot through the fire along the line wherever his presence was required. When all hope of longer holding the ground was gone the brigade fell back through the town and took a position on Cemetery Hill where the shattered ranks of the two corps which had been engaged were reformed."—(Bates Hist. Pa. Vols., vol. IV, p. 488.)

At the battle of the Wilderness, Col. Dana received a gunshot wound and was taken prisoner; thence he was sent as prisoner of war to Macon, Ga., and afterward to Charleston, S. C., where he, together with a number of other officers, was exposed to the fire of the Federal forces besieging that city as a measure of retaliation adopted by the Confederate authorities. Aug. 3, 1864, his exchange was effected, and rejoining his regiment then in front of Petersburg he took part in the actions and operations that followed the investment of that city.

In one of these actions wherein the advance of the outposts, picket, and skirmish line of the 5th Corps was committed to his command, Gen. Baxter, commanding the 5th Division, expressed to him in an official letter his satisfaction with the manner in which he had acquitted himself of the task, saying: "Your duties were important, arduous and of a highly responsible character, all of which you performed with credit to yourself and the command."

Early in 1865 Col. Dana's regiment much reduced in strength by hard service was assigned to special duty in Baltimore, and later at Hart's Island, where it remained until the close of the war. Col. Dana was detailed to court-martial duty during several months after the cessation of hostilities, and was honorably mustered out of the ser-

vice Aug. 23d, 1865, with the rank of brevet brigadier general conferred for honorable and meritorious service.

Upon his return home after an absence of three years he again applied himself to the practice of law, and continued his professional duties until his election to the bench in 1867. At the first election under the statute granting to this judicial district an additional law judge he was chosen to that honorable place, the duties of which he discharged during the full term of ten years. Prior to the expiration of his term of office the Democratic convention nominated him for the second time as additional law judge, and the Republican convention expressed its assent to his candidacy in the following words: "This convention having entire confidence in the learning, integrity, and ability of Edmund L. Dana as illustrated by his administration of the office of additional law judge of this district in the past ten years, cordially recommends him to the voters of Luzerne county for re-election." The action of the conventions of the two political parties and the almost unanimous commendation of the bar seemed to assure his continuance in the position for another term. In that year, however, the Labor-Greenback party, being a combination of two parties as its name indicates, gathering within its ranks the discontented of all parties, was enabled, by means of a most efficient organization and a canvass stimulated by the grievances growing out of the widespread riots and disorder of that time, to elect all of its candidates in opposition to those of the two older parties.

At the age of 61 he retired from the bench and found relaxation from the cares of office and a busy life among his books, indulging a highly cultivated taste for literature and art in the study and contemplation of these subjects; though the calls upon his time and attention arising from business relations and public duty were not suffered to pass unobserved. During this period he served several years as a member of the city council of Wilkes-Barre, a part of the

time as president of that body; also as a director of the First National Bank; vice president of the Wyoming Memorial Association; president of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, of which institution he was one of the founders and its first president; president of the Society of the Army of the Potomac; and president of the Osterhout Free Library.

Although he had passed the limit of three score years and ten, his vigorous constitution and apparent sound health gave promise of many more honorable and useful years; but the exposure of camp life and the stress of many campaigns, together with a serious nervous shock received in a railroad accident a few years prior to his death, were probably the active though remote causes that defeated that promise.

From a consideration of the facts in the life of Gen. Dana one becomes impressed with the singular range of vicissitude and experience that fell to his lot, as well as with the versatility of his gifts and the mental equipment that enabled him creditably to fulfill all of its requirements and attain a high degree of excellence in callings and pursuits so diversified in their nature and character.

Having the tastes and habits of a scholar and bred to a liberal profession, he experienced the highest gratification in the pursuits of knowledge. The study of the classics of the several languages, of mathematics, music, and art, occupied much of his time that was not given to the more practical concerns of his profession. He was known as a man of letters, of deep and sound learning. Endowed with these happy conditions, he nevertheless gave them up on two occasions for terms of years to follow a calling seemingly as foreign to his nature as it was different from his usual avocations, and chose rather a life full of privation and danger, but which presented a new and wider field of activity and usefulness. The phase of his character indicated by such a preference can be under-

stood only in the light of a rare patriotism which found expression in actions that cost him great personal sacrifice.

It is not an easy task to judge of the qualities of a soldier from the quiet manner of the scholar or from the kindly intercourse of a friend, an estimate of the character in such a case must be sought for, not from the man himself, but from what he has done. His military record shows that he possessed a high courage, uniting personal bravery with an intelligent appreciation of danger, and that his energy, resolution, and cool judgment in the face of the enemy inspired confidence in officers and men alike, and marked him as an able and accomplished officer. In this relation he exhibited those moral qualities that have served to raise the trade of war from brutal contests to an art that does much to preserve peace among nations, and made the calling of arms more humane and honorable. During two great wars he served the cause of his country faithfully and well; his name will remain honorably associated with many of the eventful struggles that have shed renown on the American arms and brought honor to the nation.

In the profession of law he stood in the first rank. A close and intelligent student, conscientious and painstaking in all business committed to his care he made the cause of the client his own. Notwithstanding the several interruptions in his professional calling arising from the causes before mentioned, he acquired a large and important practice at the bar and gained a measure of success that attested to his ability as an advocate and counselor.

Able as he was as a lawyer, the judicial qualities of his mind together with his broad learning and scholarly attainments made him better fitted for a judge than an advocate. To him the law in its theory was an exact science; from given premises logical conclusions would follow; the justice of a proposition could be ascertained by the abstract rules of law. The law of evidence, perhaps the most logical

branch of the science, was a congenial study, and in the ready application of its principles was recognized the justice of his rulings. Judge Rice has summed up his record in this connection in such apt phrase that I take the liberty of quoting his words: "He had real respect for the law, and faithful to his oath sought to administer it fairly and not to his own personal will. He was just and impartial, and no suitor could ever come before him with the hope of winning his case through favor, or the fear of losing it through partiality or inattention. He was a sensitive man in the best meaning of that term and I presume did not disdain the approval of his fellow men; but fears of popular clamor, or misconception of his motives, or of the wisdom of his course, did not warp his judgment. With modesty, yet becoming dignity, with conscientious fidelity, with industry and real learning, with a high sense of his responsibility, he administered the duties of his office wisely, uprightly and justly. He left a record without a stain, a record of distinguished, able and faithful service that will insure the lasting preservation of his memory in the respect and gratitude of the people whom he served."

As a man whom we were accustomed to meet in the daily walks of life, he was a genial and agreeable companion and friend; his cultured tastes and great fund of knowledge, his rare conversational gifts and kindly consideration for the opinions of others were some of the qualities of mind and heart that cemented many lasting friendships.

Among the men in this community who have in the past gained eminence in political life, in the several learned professions, in industrial and business enterprises, few if any may be said to have attained a larger measure of success or rendered more valuable and lasting services to his fellow man.









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