

Northern Kentucky
Views presents . . .

Hamilton Gray

RAY, HAMILTON, a prominent business man and influential citizen of Northern Kentucky, was born May 25, 1814, in Washington County, Pennsylvania. At the age of eighteen, he came to Kentucky, and located at Maysville, a town presenting many attractions for able and energetic men; it then being the distributing point for the country south, and the business center of a large surrounding territory, rich in its productions. Maysville acquired additional importance in those times from its fine society, and the unusual number of able men of every pursuit who gathered in and about it; thus making it one of the most desirable locations in the West. Here Mr. Gray settled, and, for more than thirty years, took an active part in its business and social interests; and was largely identified with the commercial and political movements of his day. Whether engaged in the management of his own business; in directing the operations of a bank, with which he was long connected; in developing the mineral resources of his section; in regulating the financial embarrassments of his city, or in aiding in fixing the political status of his adopted State, he exhibited the same energetic, able, wise, and admirable traits, being at all times equal to what he conceived to be the duty and requirement of the hour. With characteristic boldness, he published a card, in 1861, assuming the undivided responsibility of recommending the introduction of Government arms into Kentucky, for the maintenance of public order; and, in making arrangement for the distribution of these arms, proceeded with such consideration, delicacy, and good sense, as largely to repress any turbulent manifestations, and secure the co-operation of the leading citizens of the State. Referring to his active participation in the early struggles and events attending the outbreak of the rebellion, the Hon. W. H. Wadsworth justly says: "It is a striking proof of the respect entertained for Mr. Gray by his most earnest opposers, in those dark times, that, in moments of doubt or danger, they invariably sought his advice and friendly assistance." The same gentleman also remarks, that, although Mr. Gray landed in Kentucky an entire stranger, he was soon surrounded by hosts of friends, who never deserted him. He had the faculty of not only winning friends, but of keeping them. He was of agreeable person and presence; polite, amiable, intelligent; of fine judgment, great patience, and manly courage; and all those admirable qualities that readily attach men to their fellows. He was singularly exact and systematic in his business habits; punctilious in his observance of social usages; and equally disposed to accept the duties and enjoy the pleasures and privileges of social life. During a trip made to Europe, in 1851, he kept a journal, full of notes and observations on art, agriculture, and trade, which well illustrates his culture, close insight, practical and varied knowledge, and his wide and liberal tastes. He died, April 4, 1864, at Maysville, where he had lived a long, useful, and honorable life. Although passing away at a time when the community was rent by political and social dissension, and the people were familiarized with death in every form and station, the announcement of his decease was received with universal expressions of sympathy and regret. Mr. Gray was married, January 28, 1840, to Miss Elizabeth Johnson, of Mason County, Kentucky, who is yet living, with three children—one son and two daughters. Their son, Hamilton Gray, is now one of the active business men of Maysville.