

**WILLIAM D. ROBINSON.
KITTANNING, PA.**

MR. ROBINSON'S ancestors were among the early settlers of Perry Township, in the County of Armstrong, Penna., his father having removed thither, and to what is now known as Parker's Landing, in 1810, where he soon after entered largely into the manufacture of leather, erecting a tannery, and necessary buildings for this purpose.

The subject of the following sketch, WILLIAM D. ROBINSON, was born in this new home in the wilderness, near the present borough of Parker's Landing, on the 2d day of October, 1820. He was the eldest of nine children, seven sons and two daughters. Schools were not as plentiful as now, in this new Petroleum field, but such as they were, young ROBINSON enjoyed and improved, as soon as his age would permit. He was schooled until he was twenty. Meantime, he acquired a thorough knowledge of the business his father carried on. He was known as a first-class tanner and currier, and followed this calling until he had nearly reached his majority attending school winters, and assisting his father from seven to eight months of each year. When he was in his twentieth year he sought and obtained a clerkship in Shippen's Furnace, Venango county, Pa. This position he held about a year, when he was tendered a like responsible place in an iron manufactory at Brady's Bend. Here he remained three years, faithfully discharging his duties, challenging and receiving the confidence and esteem of his employers.

In 1843, he embarked in business for himself, opening a country store at Parker's Landing, for the sale of dry goods, groceries, crockery, hardware, etc., etc. This enterprise he continued for nearly twenty-six years, establishing a character for uprightness and honorable dealing never questioned. He retired from mercantile pursuits in 1869; having acquired a competency, accelerated doubtless, by his successes in developing and producing petroleum oil.

In the winter of 1864-5, the oil excitements of the upper and lower Oil Creek region were at their height, and Mr. ROBINSON very earnestly conceived the idea, that oil deposits existed in the region of his third of a century's residence. He had examined and carefully-noted the then generally received opinion of "surface indications," and soon reached the conviction that oil could be found there. He purchased thirty-six acres of the old Homestead farm, lying on the Allegany River, and now forming a portion of Parker's Landing. This 'thirty-six acres of land he made the basis of a stock company, called "The Clarion and Allegany River Oil Company," with a capital of \$100,000. The stock was all subscribed mainly by Philadelphia capitalists, who knew Mr. ROBINSON as a truthful, honest man and upon the organization of the company Mr. R. was made the Superintendent, and assumed charge of the work.

In the spring of 1865, he commenced his first well, under the auspices of this company, and this was the first oil well drilled at Parker's Landing. The embarrassments attending this first effort to find oil at Parker's Landing may be estimated by those familiar with new territory. All the machinery for the well had to be boated from Pittsburgh and Oil City; and there was neither derrick nor development between these two points. Fifty and sixty miles from a machine shop, if a break occurred, Pittsburgh, or Oil City, or Titusville, were the nearest points for repairs. It required the entire summer of 1865 nearly six months to complete this well. In October, 1865, the sand-pump brought up the unmistakable evidences of a "third sand" or oil rock. The well was tubed, and started off at about ten barrels per day. It averaged the first year nineteen barrels per day, and oil was sold from it, during its first two or three months' product, at \$8 per barrel. The well continued to produce for a long time, and was a source of much profit to the company. During the same year (1869,) he began and completed, upon his own account, a third well, on the Fox farm, just above his first developments. This proved to be another success, the well producing from the start, and for more than a year thereafter, seventy-five barrels per day.

Mr. ROBINSON has been a resident of Kittanning, Pa., thirty miles below Parker's Landing, since 1859. Here he has provided himself with a commodious residence, furnished with all the modern luxuries of a sumptuous home. During the past thirteen years he has given his personal attention to his large business at Parker's Landing, where he is still the fortunate possessor of some valuable oil property, spending much of his time in that locality. In all his business relations he has maintained a high character for promptness, probity, and unflagging industry. No man stands higher in the esteem of those who know him best. He is clearheaded, honest to a fault, and possesses the financial ability to execute to the letter, every contract he may enter into. He is a man of generous impulses, and does good without ostentation, or desire for notoriety. Of simple tastes and habits, he enjoys his ample fortune without worry or apparent anxiety. Possessing to the fullest extent the confidence and esteem of all who know him, his declining years are sure to be his truest and happiest. He has a well preserved constitution and vigorous health, the results of correct habits of life, and he bids fair to live to a good old age, to enjoy the fruits of his industry, and the friendship and devotion of a wide circle of friends.



SOURCE: Henry, J. T., *The Early and Later History of Petroleum*. Philadelphia: Jas. B. Rodgers Co., Printers, 1873; pages 579-581, with Robinson's photograph on page 578.