

DISCOVERING A NOTED JURIST IN OLD ROSEMONT CEMETERY

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A few months ago I spent some time looking through old issues of *The Morning Press* published in 1927. I came across an obituary that caught my attention. It reported the death of Judge George W. Bartch in Salt Lake City, Utah, on March 15, 1927, with the interment in the family plot at the Rosemont Cemetery on March 21. The notice announced the Masons conducted a graveside service, and the pallbearers who were from Bloomsburg. Several questions came to my mind. Why was this judge who died in Salt Lake City buried in Bloomsburg? What kind of judge was he? In short, who was Judge Bartch?

Clearly, there had to be some connection to Columbia County. The reference to a family burial plot suggested other family members were probably buried there. After utilizing a number of sources such as census schedules, land deeds in Columbia County Courthouse, Bloomsburg State Normal School alumni publications, Internet sites, county histories of Schuylkill and Columbia Counties, and Old Rosemont Cemetery records, I discovered the reason for his grave in Old Rosemont Cemetery.

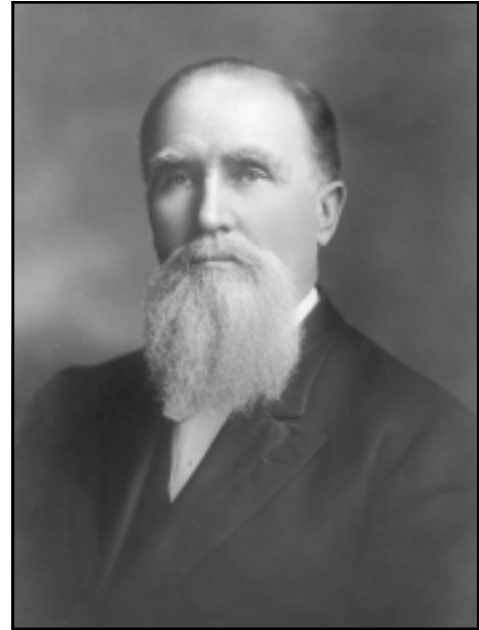
George Washington Bartch was born in Dushore, Sullivan County, Pennsylvania, on March 15, 1849. At the age of eight, both of his parents who were German immigrants had died; he then lived with an older brother who had a farm in Cherry Township, Sullivan County. At the age of sixteen he began a teaching a career in a rural school near Dushore. Later he enrolled in the elementary curriculum at Bloomsburg State Normal School of the Sixth District and graduated in 1871. In the same year he married Amanda Alice Guild who lived in Hemlock Township, Columbia County. The Shenandoah School Board elected Bartch as school superintendent in 1874, a position he held until he decided to become a lawyer. In his spare time he read law and in 1884 was admitted to the bar in Sullivan County. Then, he moved his family to Bloomsburg and opened a law practice. Apparently, sensing there were opportunities for career advancement, he moved to Cannon City, Colorado, in 1886. Two years later Bartch and another attorney, John W. Blackburn, formed a partnership and decided to open their law firm in Salt Lake City; Utah, which was still a territory, would not become a state until 1896.

Moving to Utah turned out to be a propitious decision for Bartch. Being a Republican he took an active role in building up the party. This, in turn, proved to be beneficial; President Benjamin Harrison appointed him Probate Judge for Salt Lake County in 1889, and he served until 1893 when he became a member the Utah Territory Supreme Court, a position he held until 1895. When Utah became a state, he became a candidate for the Utah State Supreme Court. Winning election in 1896 to a ten year term, he became one of the first

members of the Utah State Supreme Court. In addition, he had the honor of serving as the Chief Justice on two occasions, 1899 to 1900 and from 1905 to 1906. Upon retirement from the court, he resumed his private law practice, often as a legal counsel for railroads. Other activities involved land speculation and an interest in Mexican mining operations.

After Bartch and his family moved west, he still kept in touch with family and friends in Pennsylvania. Periodically, there were brief references to him in the Bloomsburg Normal School Alumni Quarterly, and one of the items noted the Bartch family in 1899 spending some of the summer in Bloomsburg. When Mrs. Bartch died on November 10, 1902, the funeral was held at the home of her sister, Henrietta, the wife of Thomas J. Barton in Bloomsburg. Burial was in the Rosemont Cemetery. Although the Bartch family lived many years in Utah, they still retained a connection to Bloomsburg. Therefore, it is not surprising that when Judge Bartch died, his grave would be in the family plot in the Rosemont Cemetery.

Whenever you take the time to walk through Old Rosemont Cemetery and let your eyes scan the numerous tombstones, you are looking at names that once had a connection to our community. The name on a grave marker is a title to a life story.



Judge George W. Bartch,
Utah Supreme Court Jurist



Bartch Family grave site in the Old Rosemont
Cemetery, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania