

# CHARLES R. BUCKALEW

## A Useful and Honorable Career Closed

### Death followed a Brief Illness

Editor's Note: In the history of Columbia County, one of its most distinguished citizens, Charles Rollin Buckalew, an attorney by profession, elected to numerous local, state, and national offices, including United State Senator from Pennsylvania during the Civil War, appointed to responsible positions by the President and Governor of Pennsylvania, died a hundred years ago on May 19, 1899, at the age of seventy-seven. *The Columbian*, a Bloomsburg newspaper, printed an extensive obituary about his life on May 25, 1899, which is reprinted here. It also included an account of a meeting held by the Columbia County Bar to pass a resolution marking his death. The article enumerated his public service and provided a brief but good overview of his life. No other citizen from the county ever achieved a political career equal to that of Mr. Buckalew.

Our honored townsman, Charles R. Buckalew, is no more. His death occurred at his home on Fifth street last Friday morning, about eight o'clock, after a brief illness. On Monday night he was found unconscious, and though he afterwards recovered consciousness, he was not rational, his disease being pronounced to be congestion of the brain. Though his recovery was scarcely expected, his death was not looked for when it did occur, and was a shock to his family.

Mr. Buckalew's age was 77 years, 4 months and 21 days. He was born in Fishingcreek township, Columbia County, Dec. 28, 1821. He was married to Permelia Wadsworth, daughter of Rev. E. Wadsworth, a clergyman of the M.E. Church at Town Hill, Luz. Co., Feb. 14, 1849. Mrs. Buckalew survives him. They moved to Bloomsburg soon after their marriage, and have always resided here, except when Mr. Buckalew's public duties called him away home. Two children were born to them, Warren J., a member of the Bar of this county, who died some years ago, and Alice M., wife of L. E. Waller, Esq. Capt. J. M. Buckalew, of Fishingcreek township, a brother of the deceased, survives him.

The funeral was held on Monday afternoon at two o'clock, at the house, the services being conducted by Rev. Dr. Conner, of the M. E. Church, and consisting of the beautiful ritual of that church. There was neither singing nor funeral discourse. Many beautiful floral offerings rested on and near the casket. The pallbearers were Col. J. G. Freeze, A. Z. Schock, J. M. Clark, James Scarlet, Samuel Wigfall and N. U. Funk. The carriages were in charge of Frank Ikeler and W. H. Slate.

The burial took place in Rosemont Cemetery, and just as the town clock tolled the hour of three, the mortal remains of an honored citizen, a distinguished statesman, and an honest man, were lowered forever from the sight of those who had known and revered him in life.

#### Mr. Buckalew's Career

Charles R. Buckalew was born in Fishing Creek Township, Columbia County, Pa., December 28, 1821.

After receiving an academic education he studied law with M. E. Jackson, Esq., of Berwick, Pa., and was admitted to the bar at that place at the August term, 1843.

He was appointed Prosecuting Attorney of Columbia County in April, 1845, and resigned in 1847.

In 1850 he was elected to the State Senate for the district composed of the counties of Luzerne, Columbia, and Montour. He was re-elected in 1853.

In 1854 he was appointed special commissioner to exchange the ratifications of a treaty with Paraguay and made a journey to South America by way of England. In 1856 he was chosen a Senatorial Presidential elector for Pennsylvania.

In 1857 he was chairman of the Democratic State Committee, and in the same year was re-elected to the State Senate for the district composed of the counties of Columbia, Montour, Northumberland and Snyder.

In the following winter he was nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate to be one of the commissioners to revise the criminal code of the State.

This post and office of Senator he resigned in the summer of 1858 and was appointed Minister Resident of the United States to Quito, in the Republic of Ecuador, where he remained three years.

On January 14, 1863, he was elected to the United States Senate for six years from the 4<sup>th</sup> of March following.

During his term in the Senate of the United States Mr. Buckalew, in addition to his ordinary Legislative duties, on the first of March, 1864, submitted to the Senate a "minority report on the repeal of the fugitive slave acts," Mr. Sumner submitting the report of the majority.

On February 20, 1866, he submitted an elaborate report on the subject of lighting, heating and ventilating the halls of Congress.

On February 21, 1866, he delivered his celebrated speech on "Representation in Congress." On January 15, 1867, he addressed the Senate "On the Executive Power to Make Removals from Office;" on July 11, on "Reconstruction," and on the same day on "Cumulative voting."

On January 29, 1868, he spoke on the subject of "Reconstruction;" on March 26 on "The McCordle Case" and on the "Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court."

On March 3, 1869, he submitted a "Report on Representative Reform," and on the close of the proceedings on "Opinion on the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson."

In 1869 he was re-elected a State Senator for the district composed of the counties of Northumberland, Montour, Columbia and Sullivan.

In 1872 he was nominee of the Democratic party of the office of Governor of the state, but was not elected.

At the same election Colonel Freeze was chosen a member of the convention to reform the constitution of the state, and upon the defeat of Mr. Buckalew for Governor, Colonel Freeze promptly tendered to Mr. Buckalew the seat to which the former had been chosen in the convention. Accordingly, on the third day of the setting of the convention Colonel Freeze offered his resignation to that body, and on the next, November 15, Mr. Buckalew was selected to fill the vacancy and served during the sittings.

In the same Fall of 1872, Mr. Buckalew published a work on "Proportional Representation," which was edited by Colonel Freeze.

In March 1876, at the Democratic Convention at Lancaster, Mr. Buckalew was by acclamation nominated to head the Democratic electoral ticket of the state at the ensuing Presidential election.

In November 1876, he was elected representative in Congress from the district composed of the counties of Columbia, Montour, Carbon, Monroe and Pike, and parts of the counties of Lackawanna and Luzerne.

In 1877 he contributed an article on "Proportional Representation" to Johnson's Cyclopaedia, and in 1883 gave to the public an elaborate work on the constitution of Pennsylvania.

In 1886 he was elected president of the Bloomsburg and Sullivan Railroad Company, and in 1888 was again elected to Congress, serving two terms. In 1894 he was once more a candidate for Congress, but was defeated.

He has been a director of the first National Bank for a number of years, up to the time of his death.

For some years past he has lived a retired life, and has not practiced his profession actively for ten years or more.

Mr. Buckalew was a pleasant companion at all times, because of his genial disposition, although to many he appeared cold and instant, but to those who knew him more intimately he was a conversationalist of rare gift. His fund of knowledge was varied and extensive. His acquaintance with botany enabled him to talk most entertainingly on the subject, and this was but one of the many subjects with which he was familiar, outside the lines of his professional education. He was a public speaker of great force; not one who amused his audience by anecdote and buffoonery, but who convinced them by his logic and by the ponderous force of his arguments, sometimes, indeed, seeming to be dry and uninteresting, but only because the closeness of his reasoning was beyond the grasp of the ordinary listener.

In court he was always the courteous gentleman to both the court and opposing counsel. He never engaged in repartee, and never lost his temper in trying a case. He belonged to a school of old time lawyers whose likes we seldom look upon in these modern days. To those whose privilege it was to know him well, he will be kept in pleasant remembrance for many long years to come.

#### Meeting of the Bar

Pursuant to the call of the President, a meeting of the members of the Bar of Columbia County was held in the Court room on Monday afternoon, May 22d, at one o'clock to take action upon the death of Hon. C. R. Buckalew. The meeting was called order by Col. John G. Freeze, President of the Bar Association. Besides a large number of the local attorneys there were present from out of town the following gentlemen: Hon. Stanley Woodward, President Judge of Luzerne County, Ex-Attorney General Henry W. Palmer, Alexander Farnham, Esq., of Wilkes-Barre; Henry Watson, Esq., of Williamsport; James Scarlet, W. Kase West, Judge H. M. Hinckley and W. J. Baldy, Esqs., of Danville; C. B. Jackson, and C. C. Evans Esqs., of Berwick.

After stating the object of the meeting the chairman called upon Judge Woodward for some remarks, to which he responded by paying a high tribute to the character and ability of the deceased, whom he had known for many years. General Palmer also addressed the meeting on invitation of the chair, and spoke feelingly and appropriately of Mr. Buckalew's services and of his worth as a man.

The chairman, then appointed C. B. Jackson, C. W. Miller and Geo. E. Elwell a committee on resolutions, and on motion of Mr. Miller, Col. Freeze was added to the committee. The following report was then made by the committee, and was unanimously adopted:

*Resolved*, That in the death of Charles R. Buckalew the State of Pennsylvania, and the nation as well, have lost a public spirited citizen, who in many ways distinguished himself in the public service, and after having devoted thereto many years, retired from public life to his home, with a character of spotless integrity, and unsullied renown.

That his services to his party and to the public welfare in the Senate of the United States during a most trying period of our history, and also to his native State in the Constitutional Convention of 1874, and in many other public positions, have justly given to him a reputation as a statesman and a lawyer, second to one of the distinguished men

who were his contemporaries, or of the leading men of a former generation, and the moving principle of whose whole life and work was the public good.

That as a member of the bar of Columbia County for more than fifty years, he proved himself to possess a thorough knowledge of the law; and was not only the oldest in years and professional life, but also entitled to rank with the ablest men of the profession, who have preceded him in practice in the courts of the county.

That we hereby extend to the surviving members of his family our condolences and our sincere sympathy upon their bereavement.

That a copy of the foregoing resolutions be presented to the Court at its next sitting, and by permission of the Court, filed among the records and spread upon the minutes.

That a copy of these resolutions be prepared and transmitted to the family of the deceased.

That the Bar of Columbia County attend the funeral services in a body.

John G. Freeze

C. B. Jackson

Geo. E. Elwell

C. W. Miller

The meeting then adjourned, and the members of the Bar proceeded in a body to attend the funeral.

Geo. E. Elwell, Sec'y

Charles R. Buckalew

