

**FARM BOY TO POLITICO:
WILLIAM TRENTON CREASY**

W. M. Baillie

You've never heard that name, W. T. Creasy? Neither had I, 'til I was researching the one-room McIntyre School in Catawissa Township and found that he taught there one year. Though he never lost his first interest—farming—he went on to become Pennsylvania's chief Democratic politician around the turn of the 20th century. He deserves to be better known in his native Columbia County.

W. T. Creasy was born in 1856, son of Nathaniel and Susannah (Krickbaum) Creasy of Catawissa Township. Their "Fairview" farm lay on the bluff high above the south bank of the North Branch, upstream of the town of Catawissa.

He attended Catawissa schools and studied hard at home between his farm chores. In 1872 at the age of sixteen he began teaching in a one-room school near Ringtown in Schuylkill County. He continued teaching, in different schools every year, for a half-dozen years.

We know a lot about his teaching career because he kept a teacher's journal, now in the Society's collection (Bd MS 358 Box 88). Not a daily log, it is a year-end summary of his classes. The journal's highlights:

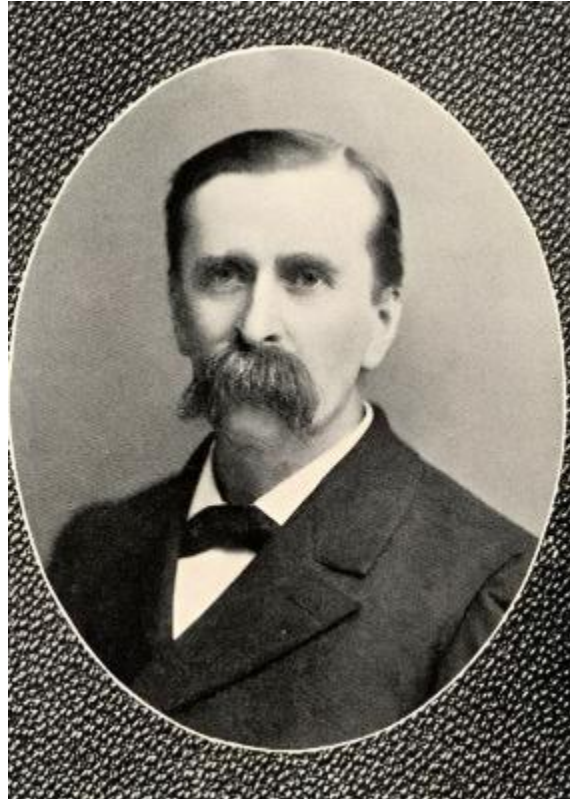
YEAR	SCHOOL	TOTAL ENROLLED	AVER. ATTEND.	AGE RANGE
1872-3	Lehr's	38	21	4 to 17
1873-4	McIntyre	61	38	4 to 19
1874-5	Catawissa Graded	62	44	9 to 14
1876-7	Hartman's	38	27	--
1877-8	Catawissa Graded	70	53	--

The first year's teaching load was relatively light for the era, with average daily attendance just 21, but his last year was much heavier, with over fifty pupils daily from an enrollment of 70.

For the year 1873-1874, when he was at McIntyre, he listed his enrolled students' names, ages, attendance records, and overall grades. He went on to summarize his daily schedule, the term length, and his classroom rules. The journal lists a "Programme" or daily schedule at the McIntyre School. After roll call, the morning was principally occupied with five "Reader" groups. Then followed Geography groups A to C and History until time for Recess. After the break came more reading, grammar, spelling and writing until "Intermission" or lunch time.

The “P. M.” subjects after Roll Call included Reader groups again, Arithmetic and Algebra, Spelling, and two unexplained classes: “Table” and “Mental Class A-C.”

The journal includes a summary of his “Rules”:
“No swearing fighting shouting smoking at School
No Whispering without permission
No chewing in school
Corporal punishment was used to a great extent”



W. T. Creasy

In the year 1875-1876 Creasy didn't teach but instead went back to school himself and earned a teaching certificate at the State Normal School at Bloomsburg. He had already taught for two years without any formal training for the job—not an unusual situation at the time.

Creasy continued to spend a lot of time at the family farms, and in 1886 his grandfather William Creasy bequeathed to his namesake grandson the homestead “Fairview” farm of about 156 acres. The heir continued to operate that farm until his death.

William became active in the Grange, a farmers' organization which began in Pennsylvania in 1873. This rapidly-growing group by 1910 had 700 local Granges in the state with a total membership over 53,000. The organization sponsored rural banks, held field meetings on farm topics, and lobbied the state legislature for better rural roads and for free rural mail delivery. In

1908 Creasy was installed as the fifth Master of the Pennsylvania state Grange and served in that post for six years, 1908-1914.

After he finished as Grange state Master, Creasy was chosen as Secretary of the National Dairy Union in Washington, D.C. He was active in that group's struggle against oleomargarine manufacturers.

In 1896, at age 40, Creasy was elected Representative in the state legislature, where he served continuously for sixteen years. (Between 1860 and 1950 no other Columbia County Representative served more than eight years.)

Creasy became Chair of the legislature's Democratic minority caucus, and in 1899 he was nominated for State Treasurer. In 1901 he was appointed Chairman of the State Democratic Committee—the top job in the party's statewide operations.

In all his years in politics Creasy continued to press the interests of the state's farmers. He worked diligently to talk up their needs, he wrote and sponsored bills to enhance agriculture, and he pushed for legislators' support of the Grange. At the Capital in Harrisburg and in newspapers across the state he was known as "Farmer Creasy."

In 1876, at age 20, Creasy married Sarah Jane Weaver, daughter of a farmer in Franklin Township. The couple had six children, five of whom married and had children.

W. T. Creasy died 14 February 1920 and was buried at Hillside Cemetery, Catawissa. He left Fairview farm to his second son, Luther Pierce Creasy.