

CHESTER TIMES – February 21, 1913

DEATH CLAIMS JOHN COCHRAN – Pioneer Resident, Ardent Churchman and Noted Real Estate Operator Passes Away – Had Reached Ripe Old Age

Death removed from earthly scenes, shortly after ten o'clock this morning. John Cochran, a pioneer resident and businessman who for many years was prominent in the social, religious and business affairs of this city. Of late years he has been an invalid, the result of an accident that crippled him to a great extent, but he was a remarkable man in many respects for one of his advanced years and evinced an active interest in public matters. For many years he was an official and member of the First Presbyterian Church and until a short time ago was a regular attendant, although obliged to depend upon crutches for support in getting to the house of worship. His death was peaceful at his place of residence, 405 East Thirteenth Street, surrounded by members of his family, including his son, City Solicitor A.A. Cochran. He built and formerly occupied the Clauson Mansion at Seventeenth Street and Edgmont Avenue and for a long time he resided on East Twentieth Street.

SKETCH OF HIS LIFE – John Cochran, one of the most successful real estate operators in eastern Pennsylvania, and a gentleman favorably known throughout the Keystone State is the only son of Job and Abigail (Engle) Cochran, and was born October 25, 1825 at Chester, Pennsylvania, within three squares of where he died. He received his preliminary instruction in the private schools of Chester and completed his education at Cassington Academy in Vermont. Leaving school at the age of eighteen, he engaged in farming with his father, whose farm contained two hundred and seventy acres, now lying within the corporate limits of the city of Chester and most of it covered by solid blocks of houses. At the time of the elder Cochran's death but three houses stood on this land, which now furnishes homes for not less than ten thousand people. After the father's death the land was divided between his two sons – the daughters receiving their shares in money – and John Cochran sold his part, eighty-three acres, to John C. Larkin, who laid it out into building lots, with Ninth Street running through the center of the new addition. Having disposed of his real estate interests, Mr. Cochran formed a partnership with R. Morman Johnson, under the style of Johnson & Cochran, and began a general mercantile business at Fourth and Market Streets on the site of the old Irwin tavern now occupied by W.P. Lademus' jewelry store. He carried on that business successfully for a period of five years, and then began dealing in real estate. While conducting his real estate operations on an extensive scale, he also engaged in the mortgage, loan and life insurance business. His office remained in Chester for nearly twenty years, during which he did much for the upbuilding of this city, but in 1876 he transferred his business to Philadelphia and was afterward engaged in various real estate enterprise in this county and elsewhere. He was the chief promoter of Norwood Park and of Prospect Park, at Moore's station, and thus laid out what are now two of the finest residence towns between Chester and Philadelphia. He originally owned Norwood entirely, but afterward admitted John Shedwick of Philadelphia to an interest in the property, and they labored together for its development and improvement. Since moving his office to Philadelphia, Mr. Cochran has been largely engaged in the real estate commission business in that city. An examination of the records in September, 1877 showed that he had a greater number of deeds on record than any other man in Delaware County and had sold more land and made more improvements than any other man. Among these sales may be mentioned the forty-one acres comprising the

grounds on which the Shaw & Esrey Mills are located at Chester, and forty-six acres at Village Green, which he purchased and laid out into building lots. He has always been successful in his real estate transactions, and was with perhaps a single exception, the largest real estate dealer in the city of Philadelphia.

Political Mr. Cochran was a republican of broad and liberal views but has never taken any very active interest in politics. In religion he is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Chester, in which he has served as a ruling elder for thirty-five years, and as superintendent of its Sabbath school for a quarter of a century. He has also been a trustee of his church for many years, and has been an earnest advocate of temperance principles all his life.

In June, 1848, John Cochran was united by marriage to Catherine Johnston, a daughter of Samuel Johnston, a prosperous farmer of Springfield Township, this county. By that union he had a family of ten children, five sons and five daughters: J. Engle, Samuel J., formerly a member of the real estate firm of Cochran and Sweeney of Chester; Herman L., drowned while skating at the age of sixteen; Helen, married Frank W.S. Martin, a civil engineer of New York City, who now resides at Plainfield, New Jersey; Dr. Mary J., a practicing physician of West Philadelphia; Anna, unmarried; J. Howard, who was in real estate and insurance business at Chester; Archibald, who studied law, was admitted to the bar, and is now practicing and is City Solicitor of Chester; Kate and Metta, who both died in infancy. Mrs. Catherine Cochran died in November, 1875 at the age of forty-six years, and on December 9, 1880, Mr. Cochran wedded Annie E. Woods, a daughter of Rev. James S. Woods, a Presbyterian clergyman of Lewistown, Pennsylvania, whose grandfather on the maternal side was John Witherspoon, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and a lineal descendant of John Know, the eminent religious reformer of Scotland. Mrs. Cochran, who died recently, was herself a devoted Presbyterian.

The Cochran's are of ancient Scotch lineage, the paternal grandfather of the subject of this sketch having been born and reared at Stratham, Scotland, near which he resided most of his life. In that country Jeb Cochran (father was also born and lived until his twelfth year). In 1804, with his father, mother, three brothers and a sister, he came to the United States, and settled near Chester, in what is now Delaware County. After attaining manhood he purchased a farm between Chester and Media, upon which he resided for a number of years. Later he bought sixty acres at South Chester, the former site of the Wellman iron and steel plant, and lived there for many years, removing in Chester sometime previous to his death in 1844, when in the fifty-second year of his age. He was an extensive cattle raiser and dealer, and became quite prosperous and a large land owner. Politically he was an old line Whig, and took a prominent part in politics during his more active years. He was one of the organizers of the Delaware Mutual Insurance Company, now of Philadelphia, and served as a director in that organization until his death. He was twice married, his first wife being Elizabeth Engle by whom he had two children: Engle and Sarah, who married Herman Lombard, for many years connected with the Pennsylvania Railroad as division superintendent, comptroller and vice president, in which latter position he served until incapacitated by age, and became very wealthy. Mrs. Cochran died, and Mr. Cochran afterward married her sister, Abigail Engle, by whom he was the father of three children: John, the subject of the foregoing sketch, and two daughters, named Elizabeth and Margaret. Elizabeth became the wife of William T Crook,

a large woolen manufacturer at what is now known as the Bancroft Mills, who own three woolen mills at the time of his death in 1891, when in the seventy-sixth year of his age. He resided on the old Leiper farm near Chester. Job Cochran was at one time interested in a canal enterprise at Carthage, South America.

KEITH LOCKHART COLLECTION