



Marvin Kent

Friday, Sept. 21, was the ninetieth birthday of Kent's foremost citizen, Hon. Marvin Kent, and an informal reception was held at his home when he received and exchanged greetings with his relatives and friends.

Mr Kent, the projector and ex-president of the Atlantic & Great Western railroad, was born at Ravenna Sept. 21, 1816, a son of Zenas and Pamela (Lewis) Kent, both of Connecticut birth and of anti-Revolutionary descent.

Mr. Kent's father was in the mercantile business in Ravenna and it was in his store that Marvin Kent passed his earlier years. He received his education at Tallmadge Academy and at Claridon Academy. In his nineteenth year he was sent to Philadelphia and New York to purchase a stock of spring goods with instructions to rely on his own judgment as to his investments. He was very successful in his purchases and the year after attaining his majority he was admitted into partnership with his father at Franklin Mills, now Kent. Precarious health caused him soon to give up this business and he then assumed management of the tannery built by his father for John Brown of Osawatimie fame and while thus engaged married Miss Maria Stewart, daughter of Col. William Stewart. In 1844 he resumed mercantile pursuits and at the same time became largely interested in the manufacture of flour, continuing in the latter for nearly twenty years.

A history of Portage county says: "In the early days the pioneers de voted themselves to the task of building up a town on the Cuyahoga river with remarkable energy; not, however, until the various enterprises were taken hold of by the master hand of Marvin Kent did theories of progress, put forward by the old settlers assume practical shape."

In 1850, in connection with others, he erected and put in successful operation the extensive window glass factory at Franklin Mills and the same year he entered upon the most important enterprise of his life, which has secured to him a business reputation coextensive with the inauguration and completion of a great public transportation route between the east and the west—devising and projecting the Atlantic & Great Western railroad, designed to connect the Erie with the Ohio & Mississippi railroad, thus forming a grand trunk line, with uniform gauge throughout, from New York to St. Louis. In 1851 the necessary legislation was procured, but in order to secure the charter he was obliged to subscribe for the full amount of stock required by law for the organization of the company as well as to indemnify some of the first Board of Directors for the payment of one share subscribed by each to render them eligible for election, which fact furnishes a significant illustration of the want of faith in the success of an undertaking of that magnitude at that time.

The organization of the new company was completed and Mr. Kent was made its first president. The position he filled with a success characteristic of his great business tact, energy and ability, until the final completion of the road in 1864, save for an interval of about three years. On the 21st of June of that year he had the proud satisfaction of looking back over many years of unremitting labor and anxiety at last crowned with success, and also of driving home the last spike in the last rail. In his speech on that occasion he referred to the fact that on the fourth day of July, A. D., 1853, he broke ground for the new road by removing the first shovel full of earth with his own hands. The construction of this road encountered, perhaps, more obstacles and greater opposition than any other in the country. Yet, Mr. Kent showed himself equal to any and

every emergency and with heroic faith and one purpose he made success possible and victory sure

The Portage County Democrat, now The Ravenna Republican, of June 3, 1863, contained this tribute:

"The location of the shops at Franklin Mills is doubtless due to the position and influence of Marvin Kent, Esq., the president of the road, who resides at that point. If any man ought to be gratified and benefitted by the location of the shops it is President Kent. He was not only the early friend of the road, but if we are correctly informed he originated the idea of its construction. In carrying forward this great

improvement to its completion he has toiled and struggled for over twelve years amid doubt and discouragement, amid jeers and sneers and obloquy (*ed. noun, strong public criticism*) While others hesitated, he stood fast; when faint hearted, he persevered with unfaltering nerve and courage: when timid friends forsook, he succeeded in raising up other friends, and in attracting capital to this great work, and thus with a patience, a courage, an assiduity and unswerving fidelity to a single aim that reaches the point of real heroism, has he held on his way through twelve laborious years of fluctuations, vicissitudes and uncertainties, neglecting and abandoning his private business, pledging or imperiling, or at least casting into the hazzard of success, his large private fortune, for the benefit of his cherished enterprise. And yet he has labored all this time without general appreciation, the select few more intimately associated in official relations with him not knowing and appreciating his trials and his toils But it is time the man to whom more than to any other the country is indebted for its great and leading road should be understood and appreciated, for every man and every community benefitted by the construction of this road owes to Marvin Kent a debt of gratitude. He is to be congratulated on the success which intelligence, the ability and the fixed and resolute purpose which he has brought to bear on the enterprise, have accomplished. Who, under these circumstances, can grudge to Mr. Kent the location of the extensive machine shops in the place of his residence? Who more than he, and what community than the one favored by his residence among them can be more entitled to the benefit?"

Upon the successful completion of this road, Mr Kent substantially retired from active business, to the enjoyment of private life. Upon the death of his father in 1865, he became his successor as president of the Kent National Bank, which position he has held ever since. In October, 1875, he was elected state senator from the Twenty-sixth District of Ohio, and he served his constituents with credit and ability.

Mr. Kent is a gentleman of varied experience and of varied business qualifications, equally capable as an engineer or as financial manager to conduct a great public work. He is a man of liberal views and generous impulses and has in a great variety of ways aided in advancing the material welfare of those among whom he lives. He has been a generous promoter of every business enterprise in the city of Kent, which bears his name. There are enduring monuments of his public spirit on every hand in the community in which he lives, such as private and public edifices, business blocks, mills and factories, and about there all there is an evidence of permanency and durability, of exactness in details and adaptability to the uses designed

Mr. Kent has in every respect been a successful man and prominent among the secrets of that success are untiring energy, methodical methods of work and strict integrity.