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Pittsburg Leader

The Book of
PROMINENT
PENNSYLVANIANS

A STANDARD REFERENCE

LEADER PUBLISHING CO.

PITTSBURGH, PA.

1913

II.

WILLIAM FLINN.

Perhaps no man in Pittsburgh has been more responsible for the physical and political advancement of the city than has William Flinn. Few men of Pittsburgh have taken as active a part in the general development of this great municipality as has Senator Flinn. Although involved in many private business interests of large caliber and requiring a good deal of time for their management, Senator Flinn always has found time to participate in general matters affecting the welfare and advancement of Pittsburgh.

Senator Flinn was born in the city of Manchester, England, May 26, 1851, the son of John and Mary Flinn. His parents emigrated to the United States during the year of his birth, and in looking for the most promising place in which to locate they chose Pittsburgh, whence they came upon arrival in New York. Since coming to Pittsburgh, William Flinn never has made his home elsewhere. He entered early into activities identified with the city's growth and became a part of them.

In early life, he was given a rudimentary education, attending the public schools and getting as much mental drilling in this manner as it was possible to receive under limited circumstances. The necessity of going to work without continuing his education to the extent enjoyed by many other young men led Senator Flinn to become a brass finisher and a steam and gas fitter. He rose rapidly in the world by strenuous endeavors, and entered into the big contracting firm of Booth & Flinn, Limited, general contractors. In 1877 he was elected a member of the board of fire commissioners of the city of Pittsburgh. He became a member of the State House of Representatives for the sessions of 1879 and 1881, and it was apparent he was destined to rise further.

With the support of his friends, Senator Flinn was elected a delegate to the Republican National Conventions of 1884, 1888, 1892 and 1896. He has been chairman of the Pittsburgh Republican City Executive Committee, and was elected to the State Senate in 1890 and 1894, being re-elected in November, 1898. Senator Flinn continued active in matters affecting the political situation at home and elsewhere in the country and became known as a power to be reckoned with. His business interests growing to big proportions, Mr. Flinn was forced to retire from active political matters for a time, engaging in the management of his private affairs and looking after interests relating thereto.

Following this period of political retirement, however, Mr. Flinn suddenly reappeared as the champion of Theodore Roosevelt and the active head of the Bull Moose party. The stirring times connected with the overthrow of the Penrose organization in Pennsylvania by Senator Flinn are matters of history. Displaying his old-time political strategy and ability to recognize what the voters wanted the most, Senator Flinn was able to demonstrate how easy it is to establish new regimes in statesmanship and politics when the public support has been obtained.

