

HON. THOMAS R. COON is the present efficient mayor of Hood River and a prominent fruit grower of the valley. Formerly he was occupied in the work of the educator and made an excellent record in the same. He was born in Marion county, Oregon, on March 4, 1854, the son of Thomas L. and Folly L. (Crandall) Coon. The father was born in Allegany county, New York and followed school teaching. He died on January 10, 1854, before our subject was born. He came from an old colonial family of Scotch and English ancestry. The mother was a native of New York and died in Salem, Oregon, the widow of Stephen Price. The Crandall family descended from John Crandall, who came to Massachusetts in 1636 and married Elizabeth Gorton, daughter of Samuel Gorton, a noted leader in the colonies. Crandall was very prominent among the promoters of the constitutional guarantee for religious toleration in Rhode Island. He was five times chosen to represent his town, Newport, as a commissioner of the general court of Rhode Island. He was appointed by this court a member of a committee to draft a letter that should be presented to "His Highness and Council" of England asking for protection against the hostile efforts of the other colonies of New England insisting that Rhode Island should prevent the Quakers from having "their liberty amongst us as entertained into our houses or into any of our assemblies. The idea of full religious toleration which this colony always maintained toward each of its inhabitants was quaintly expressed in this letter as follows: "Plead our case in such sorte as wee may not be compelled to exercise any civill power over men's consciences soe longe as humane orders in poynt of civility are not corrupted and voyalated."

Speaking of the descendants of John Crandall one writer says: "The peculiar features in the character of the Crandall family are seen to have been patient industry, unvarying independence, firmness in adhering to principle, soberness of mind and unflinching support of high moral and religious views and movements, though some times very unpopular."

Our subject's parents came to Oregon in 1850 and settled on a donation claim where Silverton now stands. Mrs. Coon laid out the town of Silverton and lived there until 1861. Our subject was educated in the public schools of Salem, and in the Willamette University and commenced teaching when twenty. He took a teacher's life diploma at the earliest age possible and was the first native teacher of Oregon to secure a diploma by examination. He helped organize the first state teacher's association in Oregon and also the first territorial teacher's association in Washington. He was principal of the Mt. Tabor school and the Central school in Portland, of one of the Seattle schools and of the city schools in Astoria. In 1883, he came to Hood River, bought state land near town and was one of the first strawberry raisers of the country. He was first to discover the value of the Clarke's Seedling strawberry, an Oregon variety, now known all over the United States as "The Hood River Strawberry." He shipped the first berries from Hood River and helped to organize the Hood River's Fruit Growers Union and wrote articles of incorporation.

On April 12, 1874, at Tacoma, Washington, Mr. Coon married Miss Delia McNeal, who was born on Green Bay, Wisconsin, on April 12, 1854. The Tacoma Ledger claims that they were the first couple married in Tacoma. Mrs. Coon's father, Abraham McNeal, married Miss Beebe. Mr. Coon has one half-brother, Eugene Price. Mrs. Coon has three sisters, Sarah Orchard, Jennie Cooper and Annie Coad. Our subject and his wife are members of the United Brethren church and are prominent people of Hood River. In politics, he is independent and was for many years identified with the Republican party. He has held various prominent offices and is a man of ability and energy. He served two terms as joint representative, in the sessions of 1893 and 1895. He was elected mayor of Hood River on the ticket called the Majority Rule but recently resigned the position. In 1894 Mr. Coon representing the Hood River Fruit Growers Union was one of four delegates from Oregon who took part in organizing the Northwestern Fruit Growers Association at Spokane, Washington. Mr. Coon has labored zealously for the advancement of the fruit growing industry throughout the northwest, and has accomplished more than can be written in promoting the same, and it is with pleasure that we have the privilege of mentioning these items wherein he has done so much labor, beneficial to the Hood River country.

Mr. Coon, assisted by his two sons, now owns and operates a large orchard and fruit ranch overlooking the Columbia just below Lyle, Wash. Here and at the old home on Hood River Heights Mr. Coon, a pioneer, will follow the bent derived from his ancestors, many of whom in their later years engaged in literary and reformatory pursuits.