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HON. ANDREW GREGG CURTIN

- Born April 23, 1815----Pennsylvania Genealogies, by Egle. Page 251
- " April 22, 1817----Biographical Directory of the American
Congress 1774-1927. Page 871
- " April 22, 1819----History of Centre & Clinton Counties, by
Linn. Page 187
- " 1815----Census of 1870. Age given, 55 yrs. Minister
to Russia. Page 29--Centre County,
Pa.

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ANDREW G. CURTIN, REPUBLICAN - DEMOCRAT

Data compiled by Charles M. Steese, Secretary
Union County Historical Society

The first Republican Governor to be elected in Pennsylvania was Andrew Gregg Curtin of Center County.

In 1860 the Republican Party in Pennsylvania stood in the role of a "new born babe". United States Senator Simon Cameron was its leader, and by combining his efforts with those of Curtin, who was a candidate for Governor, he was able to do two things - first, keep a political enemy out of the Governor's Chair and second, secure control of the Pennsylvania Delegates to the Republican National Convention. Cameron and Curtin delivered these delegates to Abraham Lincoln. President Lincoln rewarded Cameron with the portfolio of Secretary of War and later sent him as Ambassador to Russia. In an autograph letter to Curtin he promised him a diplomatic appointment. Lincoln died before he could make good this last promise, but one of his successors did what Lincoln had in mind.

Andrew Gregg Curtin was born in Center County on April 23, 1815, a son of Rolland and Jane (Gregg) Curtin.

The father, a native of Ireland, was studying in Paris and during the French Revolution in 1793 was seized along with other students, and narrowly escaped being executed. Upon his escape he made his way to the coast of France and boarded a ship bound for America. Shortly after his arrival he made his way into the interior of Pennsylvania and finally settled in Center County where he became a store-keeper. Here he married Jane Gregg, a daughter of Andrew Gregg, a former Congressman and United States Senator.

A number of histories give a different date for the birth of Andrew G. Curtin. The compiler felt that the date contained in the resolutions of the Center County Bar Association adopted on the day of Curtin's funeral was correct,

and that is the date used in this paper.

Curtin's education was completed at Dr. Kirkpatrick's Academy at Milton, and he was admitted to the Bar in 1837. He married Catherine, daughter of Dr. William I. Wilson, and they had one son William, and three daughters.

In 1855 Governor Pollock appointed Curtin Secretary of the Commonwealth. At that time this office also included that of Superintendent of Public Schools. In 1860 he was elected Governor of Pennsylvania - the first Governor to be elected by the Republican Party. He was re-elected in 1863, and thus became Pennsylvania's War Governor, serving as such all through the Civil War.

When hostilities ceased in 1865, one of Curtin's first moves was the establishment of Soldier's Orphan Schools in different parts of the State. For this he is known as the "Father of Soldier's Orphans".

In 1868 Curtin was an unsuccessful candidate for the vice presidential nomination. In 1869 President Grant appointed him Minister to Russia, which post he held until 1872. Upon his return from Russia, he became interested in the independent political movement for Horace Greeley against the re-election of General Grant. This alienated many of his Republican friends, and it was thought by many that his political career was ended. But in 1873, Curtin was elected a delegate-at-large to the Constitutional Convention which wrote the Constitution under which Pennsylvania is now governed.

In 1878 he was defeated for Congress in the 20th District, composed of Union, Clinton, Clearfield, Elk, Mifflin, and Center Counties. Two years later he became the Democratic candidate for Congress in the same district, was elected and served until 1887. During the time he was in Congress he was Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Curtin closed his public life as a Member of Congress.

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Thus we have an interesting political comparison - one who served the State as its first Republican Governor to finish his career as a Congressman elected by the opposition party, but all this with the respect and admiration of all who knew him.

Andrew Gregg Curtin died at Bellefonte October 7, 1894.
