

JESSE W. STONEBURNER.

It is a difficult matter to look over the fine, productive farms of northeastern Indiana today and note their high state of cultivation and modern, comfortable homes and then to realize that within the memory of men still living these farms were nothing else than a part of an unbroken primeval forest. It is just as difficult for the men of today to grasp the meaning of the toil and hardships the men who transformed the forest-clad acres went through. Yet the pioneer families that labored and fought adverse conditions to reclaim the smiling farms their descendants inhabit today contended with forests, swamps and other opposing conditions. Jesse W. Stoneburner is a son of such pioneer parents, who, although they came to northeastern Indiana after the first rush of settlers, made their farms out of heavily timbered tracts. He was born in Hocking county, Ohio, February 9, 1850. His parents were Israel and Catherine (Weldy) Stoneburner, both natives of Ohio. His father was born in Perry county, February 1, 1826, and his mother in Hocking county on November 7, two years later. They were married August 27, 1846, and lived on an eighty-acre farm in Hocking county until 1860, when they moved to Adams county, Indiana, where the elder Stoneburner purchased a tract of one hundred acres for one thousand seven hundred dollars, but fifteen acres of which were partly cleared. There was a hewed log house and log stable on this tract, and this was the first home of the family in Indiana. Like other pioneers, the family was confronted with the labor of clearing their farm and making it productive. Hard work resulted in bringing the entire farm under cultivation and in time substantial barns and outbuildings, and a comfortable residence was erected, and Israel Stoneburner lived on this Washington township farm for more than thirty-five years. He then moved to Decatur, where he lived a retired life until his death, May 26, 1903. He conducted a general farming business and developed into a successful farmer. His crops were rotated with care and he tilled his farm in a highly intelligent manner. He was a staunch adherent of the Democratic party and a member of the German Baptist church. His wife was an estimable woman. Nine children were born to this estimable couple. With the exception of one child all grew to maturity. The children are: Elizabeth, Jesse W., Abraham, Mary Ann, Joseph W., Matilda, Margaret A. and John B. Levi, and Matilda are deceased.

Jesse W. spent his boyhood on his father's farm, where he assisted in clearing the land. He attended the winter terms of the schools of his district and picked up as good an education in the English branches as was possible under the conditions that then existed. When he attained his majority he decided to start out for himself. He worked for three years as a farm hand for various men of his section of the country and when twenty-four years of age purchased eighty acres of land in section 15 of Kirkland township. This land he tilled in a modern and rational manner and had it soon in a satisfactory condition.

In 1874 he married Miss Sarah R. Kistler, a daughter of Stephen and Mary (Bowman) Kistler. His wife's parents were natives of Trumbull county, Ohio. The finely improved farm owned by Jesse W. Stoneburner was not a finely improved farm when he secured it. In fact, the land was timbered and in a rough state. To bring it under cultivation he labored hard. In time, however, he cleared his land and drained it and laid tiling through it until it became one of the model states of its kind in the county. He is not a man who is contented with half measures. He must have the best, produce the best crops possible, and this spirit spurred him on to more and more improvements. He built a handsome and comfortable residence, large barn and other necessary outbuildings and made his farm one of the show places of the neighborhood. In 1903 he purchased an additional eighty acres in section 27 of the same township, and this farm, under his son's management, is also highly productive and well improved.

During his active life Mr. Stoneburner has taken an interested part in the affairs of his township. He is a Democrat so far as his political affiliations are concerned. When a young man he was an active worker in the interests of his party and was elected a justice of the peace, which office he held for four years. Later he was elected township assessor, and held this important and exacting office until 1894. He and the members of his family give their support to the German Baptist church and he is an elder of the local congregation. The Stoneburner family is one of the most highly respected in Adams county. To Mr. and Mrs. Stoneburner ten children were born: Amos, Viola, Mary C, Victoria, Floyd, Miles W. and Alice , a twin, are living. Stephen L., Ida L. and Willis W., the other twin, are dead.

Snow's History of Adams County, Indiana, John Fletcher Snow, B. F. Bowen, Indianapolis, IN, 1907, p. 420 (image 859).