

William Bonham, a prominent attorney at law of Hartford City, was born in Perry County, Ohio, January 14, 1834, his parents, Peter and Susannah (Yost) Bonham, being natives of Pennsylvania and West Virginia respectively, the latter born in Wheeling in the year 1800. They were married in Perry County, Ohio, and to them were born eight children - Isaac lives in Lawrence County, Indiana; Nicholas died in hospital at Louisville during the war; Lyman, deceased, was also a soldier in the late war; George W. was a soldier in the late war, and is now living in Blackford County; W. A., the subject of this sketch, and Francis M., who resides at Bryant, Jay County. In 1837, the parents came by team with their family to Indiana, locating first in Delaware County, and in 1839 came to Blackford County, and settled in Washington Township, where the father lived until his death. Although game was in abundance in the county, Mr. Bonham was no hunter, preferring to devote his time to clearing his land and making a home for his family. His widow continued to reside on the old homestead until 1870, when she removed to Lawrence County, Indiana, where she has since made her home. W. A. Bonham, our subject, was a lad of five years when brought by his parents to Blackford County, where he was reared on his father's frontier farm, and has ever since claimed Blackford County as his home. His education was received in the common and select schools near Hartford City, and in Auglaize County, Ohio. When twenty-one years of age he commenced teaching school in Ohio, where he was thus engaged two years. He then returned to Blackford, where he followed the teacher's profession until 1864. He was persuaded to adopt the legal profession by Andrew J. Neff, who was at that time the leading lawyer in Hartford, and in 1858 he began the study of law with Mr. Neff. In January, 1861, he was admitted to the bar at Hartford City, before Judge J. M. Haynes, judge of the Common Pleas Court. His first law partner was Jacob T. Wells, who is now deceased, with whom he was associated at intervals about six years. From about 1874 until 1879 he was associated with John Cantwell after which he practiced alone until the fall of 1885, when his son, John A., became his partner, under the firm name of Bonham & Bonham. Mr. Bonham was united in marriage, February 2, 1860, to Miss Mary A. Robey, whose parents, Henry and Mary M. Robey, came to Blackford County from Perry County, Ohio, in 1850. Mr. and Mrs. Bonham are the parents of three children - John A., with his father; George L., married and living in Hartford, and Florence Alice. Mr. Bonham has been connected with the Republican Party since 1860, although his first presidential vote was cast for a Democrat. His father was a Democrat in politics and at the time of his death was holding the office of county commissioner. In 1860 Mr. Bonham was a candidate for recorder of Blackford County, on the Republican ticket, but with the entire ticket suffered defeat. In 1862 he was appointed deputy collector of internal revenue for

Blackford County, and held the position until superseded by an appointee of President Andrew Johnson. In the fall of 1864 he was elected State Senator from the district composed of Blackford and Delaware counties, and served in the regular and special sessions of 1865, and in the regular session of 1867. In April, 1865, he was one of those invited from Indiana to escort the remains of President Lincoln to the Illinois State line. In 1866 he was editor of the Hartford City News, a Republican paper published by John M. Ruckman, and continued until a difference arose between himself and the publisher of the paper as to the policy of Johnson. Mr. Bonham vigorously opposed the administration and supported Congress, while Mr. Ruckman for a time was inclined to support the policy, but finally yielded. In 1867 Mr. Bonham was elected Assistant Secretary of the Senate, serving in this capacity in the regular and special sessions. He was the Republican candidate for Congress in the Democratic Twelfth District of Indiana, but was defeated. In 1869 he was the candidate for Representative from Jay and Blackford Counties, but the district being Democratic his opponent was successful. He has served as chairman of the Republican Central Committee. Mr. Bonham is a member of both the Masonic and Odd Fellows orders, and has passed through all the chairs in the local organizations of each. He has represented the Odd Fellows lodge in the grand lodge of the State, and has also represented the chapter of the Masonic lodge in the grand lodge.