

COFFEL, HAL

Hal H. COFFEL, cashier of the Peoples State Bank of Pennville, a member of the bar of the Jay Circuit Court, former deputy prosecuting attorney for this county, former president of the board of trustees of the town of Pennville, a musician of recognized talent and attainment and a nature student whose lectures on bird life have given him the distinctive title of "the bird man" throughout the state, has been identified with the banking interests of this county for many years and has long been recognized as one of the active factors in the commercial and social life of the county.

Mr. COFFEL was born at Montpelier, in the neighboring county of Blackford, February 2, 1875, and is a son of George Washington and Ellen Virginia (HOWARD) COFFEL, the latter of whom, daughter of William J. and Sarah (BURLEY) HOWARD was born in the vicinity of the town of Cameron, in Marshall county, Virginia (now West Virginia), April 18, 1834, and died at Nottingham, in Wells county, Indiana, September 13, 1877. George Washington COFFEL was born on a pioneer farm in Henry county, this state, near the Wayne county line, west of Hagerstown, March 22, 1838, and died at Pennville on October 30, 1921. He was a son of Henry and Rebecca (WILLIAMS) COFFEL, who came to Indiana from Virginia in pioneer days and settled in the Hagerstown neighborhood, but later came up into this part of the state with their family and located on a farm in the vicinity of Montpelier, at a crossing called Five Points, where Henry COFFEL spent his last days, and where he is buried. He was a son of Henry and Barbara COFFELT, natives of Germany, who had come to this country after their marriage and had located in Rockbridge county, Virginia, where they established their home and reared their family. They had five children, George, Henry, Barbara, Anna and Elizabeth. In the second generation of the American descent the "t" was dropped from the family name, which since has been COFFEL.

The second Henry COFFEL was twice married and by his union with Rebecca WILLIAMS was the father of five children, Francis Marion, George Washington, Mrs. Sarah PERFECT, Mrs. Nancy Ellen HADWAY and Mrs. Elizabeth WILSON. Following the death of the mother of these children he married Catherine KESSINGER and had one child, a daughter, Mrs. Malinda Jane CANADA. . George Washington COFFEL and his wife, Ellen Virginia HOWARD, who were married in Blackford county, where they had located with their respective parents in the days of their youth, were the parents of three children, the subject of this sketch having had two brothers, Carl Porter, who died in infancy, and Marvin Arnold COFFEL, a soldier of the Spanish- American War, who died in the service of the United States Army at Corregidor, Philippine Islands, November 3, 1899. Marvin Arnold COFFEL took part in the expedition against Santiago de Cuba and was in the battles of El Caney, July 1, 1898; San Juan, July 2, and the battle of Santiago, July 3, 10-11. The command to which he was attached later was sent to the Philippines and there he died in service.

As will be noted by a comparison of dates above given, Hal H. COFFEL was but little more than a babe in arms when his mother died. He was reared in the home of his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Adelma LUPTON, at Pennville, in the schools of which pleasant little city he received his early schooling. In the summer of 1890, when fifteen years of age, he went to Portland, where he entered the local office of the L. E. & W. Railroad Company, with a view to learning telegraphy. After acquiring the mastery of the key he remained at the Portland railway station for some time and then was transferred to the station at Alexandria. He put in four years in the railway telegraph service and then resigned and entered the university at Valparaiso, Ind., directing his studies particularly in behalf of bookkeeping and commercial law, and on March 28, 1895, was graduated in the bookkeeping course. Thus equipped for the business career toward which he had set his mark, Mr. COFFEL returned to Pennville and entered his uncle's bank as assistant cashier. From the days of his childhood Mr. COFFEL has been deeply interested in musical expression and during his service at the bank continued his studies along musical lines. After five years of service at the bank he went to

Chicago to take a thorough course in the study of guitar, mandolin, banjo and harmony at Kimball Hall, where he came under the direction of the great Arling SHAEFFER, a master of technique and harmony along this line. Upon completing this course Mr. COFFEL located at Indianapolis, where he was made head of the Chicago School of Music in that city and president of the faculty of the same, and there he remained for three years, or until the illness of his aunt, Mrs. Eliza Howard LUPTON, required his return to Pennville to aid in the direction of the extensive business interests left to her charge by the death of her husband, Adelma LUPTON. Giving up his active musical work Mr. COFFEL in 1905 re-entered the Peoples State Bank of Pennville, as assistant cashier, and has ever since been giving his attention to the bank's affairs, having been elected cashier of the institution in the following year, 1906. He also is a member of the board of directors of the bank and in other ways is interested in the general commercial and industrial activities of the town and vicinity. Years ago, completing the course in law which he had begun at Valparaiso University in the days of his young manhood, Mr. COFFEL was graduated from the American Correspondence School of Law and is a member of the bar of the Jay Circuit Court and has been admitted to practice in the Indiana State Supreme Court. He has served as deputy prosecuting attorney for Jay county and during the time of America's participation in the World war served as a member of the legal advisory board for this county. For twelve years he has served as attorney for the board of trustees of the town of Pennville and has also served as a member of the board and president of the same. Mr. COFFEL is a Republican and has ever given a good citizen's attention to local civic affairs. He is a 32nd degree (Scottish Rite) Mason, affiliated with the consistory at Ft. Wayne, and is a member of the Portland lodge of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and of the Pennville lodge of the Knights of Pythias. For years Mr. COFFEL has given his earnest attention to nature study, the opportunities for which so lavishly abound throughout this region, and he is a member of the executive board of the Indiana Audubon Society as well as a member of the National Association of Audubon Societies (New York City), and of the American Forestry Association, and his services as a lecturer on bird life, in connection with the work of the Indiana state conservation commission, have caused him to be known widely as "the bird man," a complimentary title which he certainly seems to deserve, for perhaps no one in this state is better informed along this line than he. Though long ago relinquishing the ambition to be a musical director, Mr. COFFEL has not given up his musical work and continues to find delightful recreation in the composition and arrangement of music for his favorite instruments, the guitar, the mandolin and the banjo.

On July 4, 1910, Hal H. COFFEL was united in marriage to Vesta G. KING, daughter of George B. and Julia E. (GALE) LUPTON, of Petroleum, in the neighboring county of Wells, and to this union two children have been born, Virginia Yetive, born in 1911, and George Francis, 1914.

Milton T. Jay, M.D., History of Jay County Indiana, Historical Publishing Co., Indpls. 1922, Vol. II, pp.104-106.

Transcribed by Eloine Chesnut.