

## GRIEST, WILLIAM

WILLIAM GRIEST, formerly and for many years secretary and general manager of the old Portland Natural Gas and Oil Company, the first assessor of Jay county, formerly and for years deputy to the treasurer of Jay county, a former justice of the peace in and for Penn township, the township in which he was reared, and later engaged in the insurance business at Portland, where he is now living retired, is a native of the old Keystone state, but has been a resident of Jay county since he was four years of age and few there -are who have a wider acquaintance throughout the county than he. Mr. GRIEST was born on a farm in York county, Pennsylvania, June 5, 1846, and is a son of John and Hannah (EDMUNDSON ) GRIEST, both natives of that same county and both of colonial Quaker stock, whose last days were spent in Jay county, where they had established their home more than seventy years ago. John GRIEST, who died at his home in the Balbec neighborhood in 1874, was born on June 26, 1806, and was a son of John GRIEST, the son of Daniel GRIEST, who was a son of John GRIEST, who was of the family of GRIEST's who had come to this country from England in 1685, joining their fortunes with those of the Quaker colonists in and about Philadelphia, this last-named John GRIEST, the progenitor of the line from which William GRIEST takes descent, settling in 1737 near the York county line in Adams county, Pennsylvania, and William GRIEST has a record of the lineal descent from that line down to the present generation, as well as a walking stick brought by the GRIEST family from England in 1685, which he greatly prizes. The EDMUNDSON's are descended from William EDMUNDSON, the so-called Quaker Apostle, who was an officer in Cromwell's army, but later joined the Friends and was a contemporary of Fox and Penn and active in promulgating the Friendly faith, establishing his home in Ireland about 1660. He reared a considerable family, some of the members of which came to America early in the eighteenth century, the line from which Mr. GRIEST springs dating from Caleb EDMUNDSON, who was living in York county, Pennsylvania, in 1760 and who was the grandfather of Thomas EDMUNDSON, the Jay county pioneer, who moved with his family here from Pennsylvania in 1837, the year following the organization of Jay county, and became one of the most substantial and influential pioneers of Penn township. Mr. GRIEST has the marriage certificate of his EDMUNDSON grandparents, made out after the quaint and interesting form of the Friends discipline.

John GRIEST was reared in the firm faith of the Friends and was given a sound education, for some years in the period of his young manhood being a school teacher. He was trained in the technical details of woolen mill operation under the direction of an uncle and in time became the proprietor of a woolen mill, but about the time of his marriage in 1833 to Hannah EDMUNDSON disposed of his factory and became engaged in farming, a vocation he followed in his home county until 1850, when in response to the good reports which his father-in-law, Thomas EDMUNDSON, had been writing back concerning conditions in Indiana, he disposed of his farm and with his wife and ten children came to Jay county, the family driving through with their household goods and some essential farm equipment, the journey consuming four weeks. It was in April that the GRIEST's made their trip out here and they settled on land adjoining the EDMUNDSON homestead in the Balbec neighborhood in Penn township, put up a log cabin and proceeded to clear a farm from out the unbroken forest. On that pioneer farm John and Hannah GRIEST spent the remainder of their lives, their deaths occurring within a year of each other, the latter dying in 1873 and the former in 1874.

As stated above, William GRIEST was but four years of age when he came here with his parents in 1850 and he grew to manhood on the home farm, helpful in the arduous labors of effecting a clearing and developing the place. Though the school facilities of that time and place were meager, he had the advantage of home education, and after a supplementary course at Liber

College began teaching school, a profession he followed from 1866 with but one interruption for twenty years, this interruption being a year he spent in the court house as deputy county treasurer during the incumbency of Albert Grissell. After his marriage in 1874 Mr. GRIEST continued to make his home on the old home place at Balbec and presently bought the farm, which he continued to operate, meanwhile teaching during the winters, until 1886 when David HOOVER, county treasurer, employed him as deputy treasurer and he moved to Portland, occupying this deputyship during the two terms of the Hoover incumbency. In 1891, when under legislative enactment the office of county assessor was created, Mr. GRIEST was appointed assessor, the first to hold this office in Jay county, and served in the interim preceding the next election. It was in this same year, following his retirement from the treasurer's office, which Mr. GRIEST became engaged in the office of the old Portland Natural Gas and Oil Company as a bookkeeper. In 1904, he was elected secretary and general manager of this company and he continued to serve in that capacity until, after the failure of the natural gas supply, the company sold out and the plant was dismantled, as is narrated elsewhere in this work. Upon leaving the gas office Mr. GRIEST became engaged in the insurance business in association with John W. HOLMES and so continued until his retirement from active service on January 1, 1921, since which time he has been giving his attention largely to the collection and preservation of data for the archives of the Jay County Historical Society, of which he is one of the most active members and in the affairs of which organization he has for years been deeply interested. Mr. GRIEST is a birthright member of the Society of Friends at Pennville, to the simple and quaint forms and mystical views of which society he is devotedly attached, and is an active member of the Pennville Meeting. Mr. GRIEST is a Republican and has for many years been recognized as among the local leaders in that party's councils. During his long residence in Penn township he for eight years served as justice of the peace in and for that township and as Squire GRIEST became widely known throughout that section for the soundness and equity of his judgments in such cases as came before his court. He has retained the interest in school work acquired during the two decades in which he served as a member of Jay county's teaching staff and for seven years served as a member of the school board in Portland. For forty-four years Mr. GRIEST has been an Odd Fellow and is now (1921) district deputy of the Encampment branch of that popular order.

William GRIEST has been twice married. In 1874 he was united in marriage to Frances BOURNE, who was born in Franklin county, this state, and who died in 1899. In 1910 Mr. GRIEST married Jessie RILEY, who was born in Ohio, a cousin of the beloved Hoosier poet, James Whitcomb RILEY, and daughter of Davis RILEY, a veteran of the Civil war and formerly and for years one of Jay county's best known citizens, who came here with his family from Ohio and located at Pennville, later moving to Portland, where his last days were spent. Mrs. GRIEST was reared in this county, having been but a young girl when her parents came here, and she completed her schooling in the old Portland Normal School. For thirty-five years she was a teacher in the schools of this county, the last twenty-five years of this long term of service being spent in the Portland public schools, and she thus has for years been recognized as one of the leaders in the general cultural activities of the community. She is the present (1921) regent of Mississinewa Chapter, No. 185, of the Daughters of the American Revolution, is a charter member of Alpha Lodge, Daughters of Rebekah (1.0.0.F.), an officer of the Presbyterian Sunday school and a member of the Twentieth Century Club.

**SOURCE: Milton T. Jay, M.D., History of Jay County Indiana, Historical Publishing Co., Indpls. 1922, Vol. II, pp.80-82. Transcribed by Eloine Chesnut.**