

Wilson RICE, vice president and a member of the board of directors of the Portland Oil and Refining Company, of which he was one of the organizers, a veteran well driller and oil producer, and for years one of the best known men in that field of endeavor in Indiana, is a Pennsylvanian by birth, but has been a resident of Indiana for the past twenty-five years or more. He was born at Waterford, in Erie county, Pennsylvania, May 14, 1850, son of Henry and Martha (MOORE) RICE, the latter of whom was a native of Ireland, born in County Derry, October 27, 1811, who came to America with her parents when she was eight years of age, the family locating in Erie county, Pennsylvania. Henry RICE was born in New York City on January 8, 1808, and was but a child when his parents moved to Crawford county, Pennsylvania, where he received his schooling. After his marriage he became a substantial farmer in Erie county, that same state, where he also was for years engaged in the sale of farm implements. He and his wife were the parents of ten children, four of whom are living, the subject of this sketch having one brother, James RICE, and two sisters, Lydia and Jessie.

Wilson RICE completed his schooling in the old Waterford Academy, an institution of learning that was erected in 1811, and remained at home until he was eighteen years of age, when he started to work in the oil field about Pleasantville, Pa., as a pumper. A year later he took up drilling and was thus engaged with the Standard Oil Company for about twenty years, working with rigs throughout the Eastern oil field. He then very properly came to the conclusion to engage in business on his own account and bought a rig and began his career as a contractor. Mr. RICE began his independent career as a contractor in Pennsylvania. About eight years later he moved to Ohio and two years later came to Indiana. The first well he brought in for himself in Indiana was on the Starr farm in Wells county in 1896. In the fall of that year he brought in his first well in Jay county, on the Weller farm, and has since made his headquarters at Portland. In 1904 Mr. RICE opened the rich pool on the Antles farm, the first well there being a twenty-five-barrel well, which was quickly followed by others of much larger proportions. Mr. RICE's most productive well was a 120-barrel producer on the Weller farm, which came in at a depth of 1,070 feet, and his deepest well was that he brought in for the Alberta Land Company on the Bow river, in Alberta, Canada, in 1911, when he struck a productive flow of gas at a depth of 2,060 feet. Mr. RICE has two rigs working and has long been recognized as one of the real veterans of the business, his whole attention having been given to drilling since he was eighteen years of age, a record of experience exceeding that of any other producer hereabout. Mr. RICE is a Republican and a member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Country Club of Portland. He also is a member of the local lodges of Masons, the Elks and the Eagles at Portland, of the Odd Fellows at Anderson, Ind., and of the Knights of the Maccabees at Bradford, Pa.

On April 11, 1871, Wilson RICE was united in marriage in Pennsylvania to Wilda GREGG and to this union two children have been born, Lenna, who died at the age of three years, and Mae. Mrs. RICE was born at Sugar Grove, in Warren, county, Pennsylvania, and her schooling was completed at the Edinburg , Pa., Normal School, after which for ten years she was engaged as a teacher in her home state. She and her sister Margaret are the only survivors of the nine children born to her parents, John and Anna (PILLING) GREGG, both of whom were born in England, but who were married in Warren county, Pennsylvania, their respective parents having settled in that county upon their arrival in this country from England.

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