

It is often asserted that the superiority of the average American over the individual of any other nation is due to the fact that the native of this country has the blood of many nationalities circulating in his veins and that his bent of mind and tendency of disposition is dominated by the best elements of each nationality entering into his composition. The theory is probably correct; at least, Americans like to plume themselves upon its verity. In that case Bunyon J. Wells, the subject of this sketch, comes by his good qualities very naturally. English, Irish and Dutch are so beautifully mingled and tangled up in his composition that goodness must necessarily be his prevailing characteristic, and it is. He is a resident of Nottingham township, Wells County, Indiana. The date of his birth is April 5, 1835, in Guernsey county, Ohio.

The parents of Bunyon J. Wells were John and Sarah (Tedrick) Wells. John was born in Washington county, Pennsylvania, of English parentage. There he grew to manhood and learned the trade of a tanner. The family moved to Guernsey county when he was a young man, and there he found ample employment at his trade of tanning, was prosperous and got married. His wife was Miss Sarah Tedrick, daughter of Jacob and Sarah Tedrick. She was of Irish and he of Dutch descent. After marriage they went to housekeeping in Guernsey county and it was there all their children were born. About 1839 the family moved to Blackford county, Indiana, and settled on the land now owned by Sarber & Scott, which was then all in the woods. He prepared the timber to build a cabin and had to walk three and a half miles to the nearest neighbors to get them to come and help raise it. For a number of years he worked on his farm, but toward the latter part of his life he again devoted himself to the business of tanning leather. He continued to reside upon his land up to the time of his death, which occurred in 1879; his wife had then been dead about three years. Among the assets of his estate were three hundred and twenty acres of land. To John and Sarah (Tedrick) Wells six children were born, viz: James M., a resident of Montpelier; Martha, now deceased, was the wife of William Clevenger; Elizabeth, now deceased, was the wife of George Dawson; Sarah is the wife of Albert Dawson, a resident of near Petoskey, Michigan; Bunyon J., the subject of this sketch; Jacob, deceased.

To the public schools of Blackford county and Liber College, near Portland, B. J. Wells is indebted for his education. The public schools he attended until he was twenty years of age and then attended the college during three terms. For a time he devoted himself to teaching in Chester township, Wells County. Though doing much work on the farm from boyhood, he received no compensation whatever from his father, outside of his necessities, until he was twenty-one years of age, from which time he received wages the same as a hired hand. On March 31, 1859, Bunyon J. Wells was united in marriage to Miss Sarah J. Dawson, who was born in Champaign county, Ohio, February 2, 1837, the daughter of John and Prudence (Travis) Dawson.

John Dawson was a native of Hartford county, Maryland, and a son of Thomas and Margaret Dawson. Thomas came from his native country, Ireland, to Maryland when he was only fifteen years of age. There he married and there his son John was born. The most of the life of Thomas Dawson was devoted to farming. John grew to manhood in Maryland and became a manufacturer of boots and shoes. When war with England was declared, in 1812, he volunteered in a Maryland regiment, serving all through the conflict, and when peace was declared he came home, with health badly impaired. By the advice of his physicians he traveled on horse back through Pennsylvania and into Ohio. There he met, in 1817, Jane Travis, married her and settled down to manufacturing boots and shoes in Guernsey county, Ohio. For about eleven years he worked at this business and was fairly prosperous. In 1828 his wife died, leaving him children, viz: Rebecca, born August 2, 1818, died at the age of eleven years; Elizabeth, born November 6, 1822, deceased; George, born November 25, 1824, now a resident of Union City; Albert, born December 27, 1826, resides in Petoskey, Michigan. In 1830 John Dawson married Prudence Travis, a sister of his former wife. To them three children were born, the oldest in 1833, died in infancy; the second died aged eighteen months; Margaret, in 1835; Sarah J., the youngest of the family, was born February 2, 1837, and is the wife of Bunyon J. Wells, the subject of his sketch. In 1838 John Dawson moved his family to Wells County, Indiana, and settled on the farm in Nottingham township, where Lewis Abshire now lives. He secured four hundred acres of land, all in the woods. In winter he worked at the boot and shoe business, sometimes at home, sometimes in Camden, while in summer he attended to his farm. Here he remained until his death, which occurred March 12, 1877. When John Dawson settled in Wells County, Indiana, his nearest neighbor lived four miles away. In her girlhood, Mrs. Wells says, Indians were quite numerous in

Wells County, and wolves and bears were also plentiful. One of the Dawson boys shot and killed an old bear and captured three cubs and one of the latter was brought up about the house as a pet. Deer were so plentiful it was not uncommon to see as many as fifteen in one herd and it is told by the Dawsons that they shot deer from the top of their cabin. At that time the state road was the only road and it was merely a trail blazed through the woods. The low ground was then so wet and marshy that they did not pretend to use it. Only the high ground was cultivated.

After marriage Bunyon J. Wells rented his father's farm for four years. The fifth year he moved to the one-hundred-and-twenty-acre farm where he now lives. Their home was an old log cabin, through the cracks of which, Mrs. Wells says, you could fling a cat. From this place, in November, 1864, he entered the Federal service, joining Company K, Fifty-third Indiana Volunteers. He went to the front almost immediately after enlistment, was "marching through Georgia" with Sherman in the spring of 1865, was stationed at Dalton and remained there until April, when they joined the forces at Alexandria in time to take part in the grand review at Washington City. He was discharged in July, 1865. In his absence Mrs. Wells looked after the stock, managed the farm and took care of his interests generally.

After returning from the service in the fall of 1865 Bunyon J. Wells moved his family to his father's farm, went to work at tanning and continued in that business until 1870, when he returned to his farm. Of the one hundred and twenty acres of which his farm is comprised, only thirty acres yet remained uncleared. The other ninety acres are well cleared, fenced, ditched and are splendidly cultivated. All of the improvements are substantial and lasting. On the place are six oil wells that at one time were "gushers," but are now giving out about twelve barrels a day.

Since 1870, a period of thirty-two years, Bunyon J. Wells has devoted his entire time to his farm. He raises crops of grain, hay, vegetables and fruit, breeds and feeds cattle and Poland China hogs. He has made his business of farming quite profitable. His youngest son, John W. Wells, owns the lease of the six oil wells on the place and also manages the farm. He is prudent, energetic and economical. While the flow from the wells was big he was engaged in pumping, saved his money and when the opportunity offered purchased the lease. He also owns forty acres of land purchased with money accumulated in this way.

To Mr. and Mrs. Bunyon J. Wells have been born five children, viz: Albertus V., born January 28, 1860; Geneva, born April 4, 1865, is the wife of John C. S. Burritt, and they are the parents of two children, Dwight and Beatrice, and reside on Mrs. Burritt's parents' farm; Prudence E., born November 12, 1867, married Frank Neusbaumer, a farmer, a resident of Bluffton, and have two children, Goldie and Leah; Carrie, born October 14, 1871, died November 4, 1888; John W., born May 11, 1874, married Mollie Nutter, and they have two children, Amy and Eugene.

In politics Bunyon J. Wells is a Republican, but not an office seeker or an office holder. The only public position he ever held was that of constable for two years. Nevertheless few campaigns come round in which he does not take an active part in the interest of his party. The only order to which he belongs is that of Lew Daily Post No. 33, G. A. R., at Bluffton. All through his long and useful life of nearly three score and ten years he has acted his part well by his family, his county, his state and his nation. To be right is his ambition, to do right is his creed.

Mr. and Mrs. Wells have in their possession an old parchment deed which was executed November 7, 1840, and bears the signature of President Martin Van Buren.

**"Biographical Memoirs of Wells County, Indiana," 1903, pp. 224-227.**