

WEIK'S HISTORY
OF
PUTNAM COUNTY
INDIANA

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ILLUSTRATED

1910:
B. F. BOWEN & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

JOSEPH A. THOMAS.

The history of the Thomas family in Putnam county is coincident with much of the important and interesting history of this locality and in examining the local records we find that many members of this worthy family of the past and present have been prominent in various walks of life locally and have always discharged their duties in a manner befitting high-grade citizenship and in a manner that never failed to win the esteem of their fellow countrymen who knew them best.

Of this family, Elzeaphus Thomas should receive our first consideration. He was long a well-known citizen of Morton, Clinton township, and his death occurred September 22, 1889, when eighty-two years, ten months and seventeen days old. Elzeaphus Thomas was the son of Joel and Mary (Stiles) Thomas, the former of Bath county, Kentucky. Joel Thomas brought the family to Putnam county, Indiana, about 1825 and entered land in Clinton township, one mile north of Morton, and there spent the remainder of his life, dying at an advanced age. William Thomas, father of Joel, came here about 1828 and settled near Pisgah church, but soon moved to the Thomas farm north of Greencastle, on the place where H. T. Thomas was born. His wife, Fanny Butcher, married in Kentucky; she lived to be about seventy years old. William's sons besides Joel were Isaac, William, George and Lewis. Isaac was a soldier in the Union army; he lived in Madison township until his death; William spent many years in Parke county, where he died; George also lives in Parke county, and Lewis married there. Isaac and Joel are the only living ones in Putnam county. The elder Joel Thomas' children, besides William were. John and James, who served in the Union army. Elzeaphus Thomas married Ruth A. Ralston, who died January 22, 1876, when sixty-six years, five months and twenty-one days old. Mr. Thomas settled on the farm at the Morton Corners and in the fifties built the house that still stands there. Rudy Burkett having recently built on the site of the original house. Mr. Thomas began life with but little, but prospering, he added to his place until he became one of the well-to-do and influential men of this and adjoining counties, owning at one time nineteen hundred acres of valuable land, mostly near the home place, so that he could ride horseback over his broad acres and give it his personal attention. He loaned money and traded in stock extensively, keeping all within range. He paid as high as fifty and sixty dollars per acre for that which at first cost only four or five dollars per acre. He hauled wheat to Lafayette and sold it for thirty-seven and one-half

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cents per bushel. He was a keen observer, a good manager and was very successful in business. Although often importuned to do so, he would never hold office, being a Democrat, but no politician. His family consisted of eleven children, named as follows: John H. spent his life in this county, dying at the age of seventy-three years in 1903; Elizabeth is the widow of George Frank at Morton; Margaret is the widow of George Cooper and is living in Clinton township; Marthy Patsy married Richard Lloyd, lived in this county and died when past sixty years of age; Amanda Ellen, wife of Harry Randel, employed in the bank of J. L. Randel at Greencastle; James N. lives in Clinton township; Joseph Andrew, of this review; Rosanna married Ed. Perkins of Greencastle; Sarah Frances is the wife of James Cross, of Lebanon, Indiana; Milton E. died at the age of forty-seven years, in this county; Mary Augustus married Rudy H. Burkett, of Greencastle.

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Joseph Andrew Thomas, whose name initiates this sketch, was born April 10, 1843, at Morton, Putnam county, on a farm where he spent his boyhood days until the breaking out of the Civil war when he showed his love of country by enlisting in 1861 in Company B, Forty-third Regiment Indiana Volunteer Infantry, serving with much credit through all the vicissitudes of his regiment for three and one-half years. He was captured by the enemy at Marks Mills, while with Steele, while on detail for supplies, and he was later sent to Camp Ford, Tyler, Texas, placed in the stockade there and retained eleven months or until exchanged in March, 1865. He was compelled to march three hundred miles on short rations, in reaching Tyler. He relates that his Christmas dinner that year consisted of ox tail soup. When finally liberated he was much reduced in flesh, but he never regretted his service to his country.

He remained with his father until his marriage in 1867 to Nancy C. Burkett, who was twenty years old at that time, the daughter of Benton C. and Rebecca (Nutgrass) Burkett, a sketch of whom appears elsewhere in this work. She was born in Russell township, this county, and she was always always known by the soubriquet of "Nan."

After his marriage Mr. Thomas settled in Clinton township, near where his brother James lives and there he remained for fourteen years, getting a good start, then bought his present excellent place at Morton, and he bought a farm in Russell township which he operated very successfully. He received one hundred and forty-two acres of his father's farm and he has owned over five hundred acres in all at one time, most of which has been given to his sons. He has been an excellent manager and is regarded as one of the leading agriculturists of this township.

To Mr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Thomas three children were born, one of whom died when nineteen years old, named Zoe; Alva V. owns one hundred and sixty acres near Brick Chapel, Monroe township; he married Gertrude O'Hair and they have two children, Russell and Orville. Ottis M. has remained single and he operates the home farm. Joseph A. Thomas is a good Democrat but no politician, and he is known to be a man who is deeply interested in the welfare of his neighbors, with whom he is uniformly popular because of his honesty.

JOHN W. O'DANIEL.

The history of the loyal sons and representative citizens of Putnam county would not be complete should the name that heads this review be omitted. When the fierce fire of rebellion was raging throughout the Southland, threatening to destroy the Union, he responded with patriotic fervor to the call for volunteers and in some of the bloodiest battles for which that great war was noted proved his loyalty to the government he loved so well.

The subject is descended from sturdy Scotch ancestry, where the name was formerly spelled "O'Donnell." The paternal grandfather, William O'Daniel, was a native of Scotland, while his mother was a native of Germany. William O'Daniel, Sr., emigrated to the United States and among his children was a son, also named William, father of the subject of this sketch. William O'Daniel, Jr., who was born after the family came to America, became a shipbuilder in New Jersey, removing later to Pennsylvania, and eventually locating near Columbus, Ohio, where he followed the coopering business. In the fall of 1852 the family came to Owen county, Indiana, locating near Cataract, where the father had a contract to do the coopering for the mill there. In 1854 the family removed to Cloverdale and in August, of the year following, the father died. His widow lived to be eighty-four years old, her death, on May 24, 1909, having been caused by blood poison. Up to her last illness she had enjoyed remarkably good health. William O'Daniel, Jr., was twice married. By the first union were born Elijah, George, Washington, Eliza, Maria, Priscilla, Rachael, Sally Ann and William R. The children by the second marriage, which was to Emily Holdren, were George W., John W., Louis R., Thomas J. and Uriah V. George W. was a member of the Fifteenth Regiment Indiana Volunteer Infantry during the Civil war and died at Nashville, Tennessee. Louis R. died at Cloverdale in young manhood. Thomas J. resides at Cloverdale and Uriah V. at Greencastle. All the children were born in Ohio excepting the last named.

Claypool and resides in Indianapolis; Ruby Alice, who was the wife of Hon. L. P. Chapin, long an honored citizen of Greencastle, and who is the subject of a sketch found elsewhere in this work, died in Indianapolis on November 6, 1907, and is buried in Forest Hill cemetery, Greencastle.

PROF. OSCAR THOMAS.

The men most influential in promoting the advancement of society and in giving character to the times in which they live are two classes, to-wit: the men of study and men of action. Whether we are more indebted for the improvement of the age to the one class or the other resolves itself to a question of honest difference in opinion; neither class can be spared and both should be encouraged to occupy their several spheres of labor and influence, zealously and without mutual distrust. In the following paragraphs are briefly outlined the leading facts and characteristics in the career of a gentleman who combines in his makeup the elements of the scholar and the energy of the public-spirited man of affairs. Devoted to the noble and humane work of teaching, he has made his influence felt in the school life of Putnam county and is not unknown to the wider educational circles of the state, occupying as he does a prominent place in his profession and standing high in the esteem of educators in other than his own particular field of endeavor.

Professor Oscar Thomas, superintendent of schools of Putnam county, although yet a young man, has shown that rightly applied energy and ambition worthily pursued may accomplish large results in a comparatively short time. He is a native of this county, having been born in Madison township, January 20, 1872, the son of William Thomas, who was born in Greencastle township, June 17, 1844, and who is the representative of an excellent old pioneer family. He was educated in the primitive schools of his native community and devoted his life to farming, being now one of the leading agriculturists of Madison township. The Thomas family is of Irish stock, the lineage of which may be traced back to 1685, since which remote period many members of this historic family have distinguished themselves in various walks of life.

William Thomas married Elizabeth J. Ewing, born October 5, 1842. She was born in Montgomery county, Indiana, where her family were long well and favorably known. She is a woman of gracious personality and is still living in Madison township. To Mr. and Mrs. William Thomas eleven

children were born, named as follows: Eliza, wife of Charles J. Priest, died in 1883; Mrs. Dora Reeves, a trained nurse, is living at home; Henry is a traveling salesman living in Indianapolis; Oscar, of this review; J. Elmer is living in Oklahoma, being a state senator there; Charles B. is an undertaker at Rosedale, Indiana; Ona, wife of Edward Wiley, died in Denver, Colorado, 1904; Bertha, who was a teacher, died in 1907; Fred is a teacher, living in Greencastle; E. Cleve is also a teacher and is living at home; Frank died when two years of age.

Professor Thomas was reared on the home farm, which he worked when old enough during the summer months, devoting the winter to study in the public schools of Madison township. Being ambitious to become familiar with the classics and higher sciences, he continued his schooling by entering the Central Normal College at Danville, after which he took a course in DePauw University, where he made a splendid record and came out well qualified to enter his chosen life work—teaching, which he soon began and which he has since followed, teaching for a period of thirteen years in townships of Madison, Mill Creek, Monroe and Franklin. Of this time three years was spent in the high school at Brick Chapel, giving eminent satisfaction from the first. He soon became known throughout the county and his services were in great demand, having so discharged his duties as to win the highest encomiums of the superintendent and boards of the various schools where he was employed, to say nothing of his great popularity with the pupils under his charge and of the general public. In 1903 he was elected county superintendent of schools and so faithfully and satisfactorily did he fill this important trust that he was re-elected in 1907.

The office of county superintendent of Putnam county was organized by act of Legislature in 1873, the first superintendent being John R. Gordon, who served two years. L. A. Stockwell was elected in 1875 and held the place six years. L. E. Smedley was next elected, serving for a period of eight years. F. M. Lyons succeeded him and also served for a period of eight years. S. A. Harris came next with a service of six years.

Professor Thomas was married on December 8, 1903, to Dessie O'Hair, daughter of J. E. O'Hair, an excellent and well established family of this county. Mrs. Thomas was born April 4, 1875, in Monroe township, and educated at DePauw University and, being a woman of refined tastes and high ideals, has been of great assistance to her husband in his life work. This union is without issue.

The Professor is a member of the Christian church, while Mrs. Thomas holds membership with the Methodist Episcopal congregation. Politically the former is a Democrat, but is in no sense a politician.

Professor Thomas' record presents a series of successes and advancements such as few attain. He pursues his chosen calling with all the interest of an enthusiast, is thoroughly in harmony with the spirit of the work and has a proper conception of the dignity of the profession to which his life energies are so unselfishly devoted. A finished scholar, a polished gentleman and possessing the traits of character necessary to insure success, the services thus far rendered and the laurels gained bespeak for him a wider and more distinguished career of usefulness in years to come, should he see fit to continue the noble calling which he has heretofore followed with such signal and happy results. Unlike so many of his calling who become narrow and pedantic, the Professor is essentially a man of the times, broad and liberal in his views, and he has the courage of his convictions on all the leading public questions and issues upon which men and parties divide. He also keeps in touch with the trend of modern thought along its various lines and, being a man of scholarly and refined tastes, the acquaintance of Professor Thomas with the literature of the world is both general and profound, while his familiarity with the more practical affairs of the day makes him feel at ease with all classes and conditions of people whom he meets.

CAPT. WILLIAM H. ALLEE.

Back in the early pioneer days of Putnam county is traced the history of the Allee family, many members of which have made their influence felt for the general welfare of the locality during each succeeding generation, one of the best known being Capt. William H. Allee, who, after an unusually successful, interesting and useful career, is sleeping the sleep that knows no breaking, but his good deeds are still alive and his memory is revered and cherished by hosts of friends, for he was indeed a grand character, whom to know was both to admire and to love.

Mr. Allee was born in Jefferson township, Putnam county, Indiana, in 1833, when the country was new, and he lived to take part in its great development. He was the son of John and Lucretia (Pruitt) Allee, a complete ancestry of whom is to be found in the sketch of F. M. Allee on another page of this work.

Mr. Allee grew up on the home farm, and, owing to the new condition of the country when he was a boy, it fell to his lot to do a great deal of clearing and hard work, and his educational advantages were limited, but he made

good business ability and sound judgment and is practical and methodical in all his operations.

On October 13, 1878, Mr. Meek married Alice Lewis, a daughter of Gaskin and Margaret (Brinton) Lewis. She was born on the farm which she now lives, her father having been a native of Ohio and her mother of Kentucky. Her paternal grandfather was James Lewis, an early pioneer of this section of the state, while her maternal grandparents were Bryant and Mary (Tharp) Brinton, who came here in an early day and entered a quarter section of land lying in sections 9 and 10, Jefferson township. Gaskin Lewis followed farming, and was also a successful school teacher, having also served as assessor of Jefferson township. He died in 1872, being survived a number of years by his widow, whose death occurred in June, 1897. To Mr. and Mrs. Meek have been born five children, namely: Ora Everett, who lives on the home place, married Marie Farmer; Elsie Jane is the wife of Harrison Hunter, of Marion township, and they have two children, Helen Irene and Harold Harrison; Margaret Ann, Emma Opal and Wilfred Claude.

Politically Mr. Meek is a staunch Republican and has taken an active interest in the success of the party in local elections, having served for twelve years as chairman of the township committee. He has also served as township assessor. Fraternally he is a Freemason, belonging to the blue lodge at Cloverdale. Mr. Meek has taken an intelligent interest in the welfare of the community and gives his unreserved support to every movement that promises to benefit the community along moral, educational or material lines. Genial and courteous in his relations with his fellow men, he enjoys a large circle of warm friends, who esteem him for his personal worth.

WILLIAM THOMAS.

William and Margaret Thomas, who came from Kentucky in 1834, settled on land just north of Greencastle and were pioneers of that part of the county. William died in the fall of 1839 and in the following year his widow, with her two sons, George and Lewis, settled in Madison township. She lived with George until her death, in March, 1863, aged sixty-four years. George has been living in Parke county for thirty years, and Lewis, who also removed to Parke county, died there in 1907. There were two other sons, William and Isaac, who both died in Parke county. Joel Thomas, one of the children, was born in Mason county, Kentucky, and was brought

to Indiana by his parents in 1834, when fourteen years old. He married Mary, the daughter of Aaron and Martha Stites, of Clinton township. She was born in Ohio, but came to Indiana with her parents when a young girl. Joel, after marriage, rented a farm for a number of years and in 1854 bought one hundred fourteen acres in the wildwood. By hard work he was able to pay for it, though the job of clearing it was a long and difficult one. He built a double log house which at that time was regarded as an unusually fine residence. He spent the rest of his life on this farm, placing eighty acres in cultivation. On November 8, 1884, he was instantly killed by a Big Four engine while walking on the railroad track in company with his brother and others, returning from a ratification at Carbon, being in the sixty-fourth year of his age. His first wife died August 4, 1879, after which he married Elizabeth Hart, a widow who died about four weeks before her husband was killed. His children, still living in 1910, consisted of eight sons and one daughter, as follows: William, of this review; Hiram, of Clinton township; John, of Madison township; James, of Parke county; Joel, of Washington township; Aaron, of Madison township; Levi, of Vigo county; Isaac Marion, a resident of the state of Washington; Fanny, wife of Frank Burcham, of Hickman, Nebraska.

William Thomas, eldest of the family, was born in Putnam county, Indiana, June 17, 1844. He remained at home until over eighteen years old, when he decided to face the world on his own account. Buying four horses, he was engaged for four years in hauling saw-logs to mill and threshing during the other seasons of the year. In about four years he had secured eighty acres of land, which he later sold at an advance and continued to trade about until 1873, when he got possession of his present farm. It was the homestead of Joseph Priest, eight miles west of Greencastle. It was an improved place and Mr. Thomas paid four thousand two hundred and fifty dollars for the one hundred twenty acres. He has since added until his holdings in the home farm amount to two hundred twenty acres. He also owns one hundred acres in Parke county and his land is largely devoted to raising and feeding hogs and cattle. He still continues also to operate his threshing outfit. He has been with the machine every season since he was eleven years old, making fifty-four consecutive threshing seasons. Of late years he has added clover hullers, corn huskers and other modern improvements. Mr. Thomas is well known as a thresher over a wide scope of territory. In 1899 he won a handsome medal as a prize offered by the *Milwaukee Thresherman* to the thresherman who had been in the service longest in the United States. For twenty-eight seasons he threshed

for any one of a set of customers from Raccoon creek, also for a period of twenty-six years for a bunch of men in Clay county. He has used more machines than any thresherman in the United States, being now on his twelfth machine. The first machine he was with was a "groundhog," four-horse-power chaff-piler. He was among the first to use steam power. Mr. Thomas served seven years as township trustee, though he did not care for or seek office.

On January 1, 1863, Mr. Thomas married Elizabeth, daughter of George and Eliza (Gregg) Ewing, of Madison township. They came from Fleming county, Kentucky, and settled in Montgomery county, Indiana, where Mrs. Thomas was born October 5, 1842. Her parents brought her to Putnam county when she was five years old and settled in Madison township when she was eleven years old. Her father died at the age of forty-two. Her mother was left with five children, the eldest of whom, Elizabeth, was only thirteen years old. The widow kept the family together until her marriage with Isaac Thomas, a brother of Joel. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas have had a large family, whose names are as follows: Henry, a traveling salesman, resident of Indianapolis; Oscar, superintendent of the Putnam county schools; J. Elmer, an attorney at Lawton, Oklahoma; Charles B., undertaker at Rosedale, Parke county, Indiana; Fred, a buggy dealer, of Greencastle; Cleveland, a teacher in Putnam county; all but Henry and Charles have been school teachers; Dora, widow of Charles Reeves, living at home, is a trained nurse. Three of the daughters reached maturity. Eliza married Charles J. Priest and died at the age of eighteen years; Leona, a teacher, married Edward Wiley and died at twenty-three years of age; Bertha, a teacher, died at the age of twenty-three.

JOSEPH D. TORR.

Few families have left a more distinct impression upon Putnam county than that of the Torrs, who have been identified with this section for over eighty-two years. The first arrival reached here in 1828 when James moved his brother William to Indiana with a six-horse team. James came himself in 1842 and located near his brother. He at once secured the farm in Madison township which has figured so conspicuously in the family affairs and been regarded as one of the county's landmarks. He first purchased two hundred acres, whose only improvement was a log cabin. To this he