

BENJAMIN B. GRIFFITH.

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Benjamin B. Griffith, a pioneer of 1845, has now for sixty-six years been a witness of the development of the county and in substantial measure has aided in its progress and improvement. Success has come to him as the years have passed by, enabling him now to live retired. He was born in Jamestown, Ohio, September 1, 1837, and is a son of Isaac N. and Paulina P. (Johnson) Griffith. The father was born in Virginia, March 3, 1813. The mother was born in Ohio, August 10, 1815, of English parentage, while the father of Isaac N. Griffith was a native of Wales and his mother was of Pennsylvania German birth. In the year 1845 Isaac N. Griffith and his wife came to Iowa, settling in Henry county, and throughout his remaining days he was a resident of this state, his death occurring in Carroll county, August 10, 1890. He had entered land in Henry county, where he lived for two years, and later

entered land in Mahaska, Poweshiek and Marshall counties. After living in Henry county for two years the family in 1847 settled on the boundary line between Mahaska and Poweshiek counties and here Benjamin B. Griffith has since made his home.

Benjamin B. Griffith was but ten years of age when the family took up their abode on the Poweshiek county farm. He rode horseback from here to Iowa City, remaining in the saddle from sunrise to sunset in order to enter a piece of land which his father had staked out, wishing to secure the claim before it could be entered by another man who desired the same property. The entire distance covered by Mr. Griffith in his ride was sixty miles. At the family home were six children born of the father's first marriage: Hannah Ann, now the deceased wife of Rev. John Hestwood; Benjamin B.; John, living in Chicago; James E., a resident of Carroll, Iowa; Eli P., of Fort Dodge; and Helen, the wife of Louis Barger, of Carroll. The mother of these children passed away in Henry county, December 30, 1850, and the father afterward married again. By this second marriage he had two children: Isaac Newton, now living in Kansas City; and Mrs. Ella Aiken, of Glidden, Iowa.

The boyhood experiences of Benjamin B. Griffith were those which usually fall to the lot of farm lads. He aided in the arduous task of developing a new farm, the difficult work of breaking the sod and preparing the fields for cultivation early falling to his lot. At sixteen years of age he began working his way through school, desirous to enjoy a better education than had been accorded him in the public schools. He attended the state normal at Oskaloosa for a time and later spent two years in Western College at Tama, Iowa. His broadening knowledge better equipped him for life's practical duties and for six or seven years he engaged in teaching in the country schools of Poweshiek and Mahaska counties for a part of the time, devoting other portions of the year to farming.

On the 14th of April, 1858, Mr. Griffith was united in marriage to Miss Elizabeth Ferneau, who was born in Ohio, September 15, 1841, and in 1856 came to Iowa with her father, Levi William Ferneau. The children of this marriage were ten in number: Mrs. Ada L. Mullen, who is now living with her father and had two children, of whom one is yet living, Hugh E., who is engaged on the construction of the Panama canal; Frank E., of Des Moines; Maude N., who became the wife of Charles Brooks and died, leaving three sons, Ross, William and Mark, who are living with their grandfather; Blanche Paulina, the wife of C. L. Harris, of Montezuma, and the mother of two children, Elizabeth and Larid; Ralph H., who is principal of the schools at Thornton, Iowa, and has three children, Lihl, Louise and David; Kate Anna, the wife of C. W. Manatt, of Carroll, and the mother of two children, Naomi and Kathryn; Dick Carl, living in Montezuma; Hugh Bush, who has one son, Gerald, and makes his home in Montezuma; and two children who died in infancy.

Mr. Griffith engaged in farming for two years after his marriage. He put aside all business cares and considerations, however, at the time of the Civil war and from the schoolhouse where he was teaching he enlisted on the 14th of August, 1862, as a member of Company B, Fortieth Iowa Volunteer Infantry. He was on active duty for fourteen months and was then honorably discharged

on account of disability. He has since resided in Montezuma, where he has followed merchandising most of the time. After the war, however, he established a barber shop and his two sons living in Montezuma are now engaged in the same business. In his political views Mr. Griffith is a democrat but has never sought nor desired office. He belongs to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and to the Grand Army of the Republic and his brethren of those fraternities entertain for him warm and kindly regard. During his long residence here he has become very widely known and his many good qualities have gained him the friendship and esteem of all. The story of Poweshiek county's development is a familiar one to him. He came here when Montezuma had no existence, when only here and there had a settlement been made, much of the land being still in possession of the government. The broad prairies were starred with a million wild flowers in June and in winter were covered with an unbroken, dazzling sheet of snow. One could ride a long distance without coming to a fence or house to impede progress and the most farsighted would scarcely have dreamed of the wonderful development which was to take place, making this one of the prosperous and popular counties of the state.