

BENJAMIN T. HILL

Among the enterprising agriculturists of DeWitt County is the gentleman above named who has become known as a man of strict probity in the various relations of life, energy in any pursuit to which he gives his attention, and pleasing social qualities. He is located on section 3, Texas Township, which has been his home since his infancy. His earliest recollections are of the log house which was the first home of the family in this county and of the primitive condition of the surrounding country, which was but sparsely settled and was still in haunt of various kinds of wild animals. As he grew older he took a part in the work of improvement and when he looks about him can see the results of his own labors on every hand.

Mr. Hill is of Southern birth and ancestry. His father, George L. Hill, was born in Caroline County, Va., near Fredericksburg, and lived there until he was about seventeen years old. He then went with his widowed mother to Kentucky and after attaining manhood was married in Henry County. His wife, Louisa V. Hickman, was born about twelve miles from the city of Lexington and grew to womanhood in Henry County. After their marriage George Hill and his wife remained in the same county on a farm until October, 1837, when they came to this State. Their journey was made with an ox-team and fifty head of fine sheep, horses, milk cows and oxen were driven through.

Mr. Hill bought six hundred and forty acres in DeWitt County, comprising a quarter each in sections 2, 3, 10 and 11. A few acres were fenced and a log house had been built; these constituted the improvements. He built a substantial log house on section 3, and began the labor required to reclaim the land and make it a fit habitation for civilized people. For fifty years he resided there and then entered into rest November 30, 1887, at the age of ninety years, ten months and eighteen days. The faithful and efficient wife passed away September 25, 1886, at the age of eighty-three years, nine months and eleven days.

The parental family includes five sons and three daughters, our subject being the youngest. The others are Egbert O., now living on a ranch in Christian County, Mo.; Mrs. Phebe L. Beatty, whose home is in Havana, this State; Mrs. Sarah L. Blaikie who died in 1867; Lewis S., a farmer in Douglas County, Minn.; John H., deceased; Emily H., wife of Edwin Weld whose home is near that of our subject, and Rodney P., who is living on section 2, Texas Township.

The subject of this notice was born in Fayette County, Ky., June 18, 1836, and was eighteen months old when brought by his mother on horseback to this county. He attended the old fashioned log schoolhouse with slab benches, puncheon floors and stick and clay chimney, and in the intervals of study worked and played as did other lads in pioneer settlements. June 24, 1860, he was married to Diana, daughter of Morgan and Esther Reese. This lady was born in Wales September 12, 1837, and in 1840 accompanied her parents to Oneida County, N.Y. In

1858 she came to this county to attend the wedding of her sister and Rodney P. Hill and two years later was herself married to a member of the same family.

Mrs. Hill is the fifteenth child of her parents and has three sisters and two brothers living. Richard occupies the old homestead in New York; John lives in Vermilion County, Ill.; Mrs. Elizabeth Ellis resides in Independence, Mo.; Mrs. Maria Hyatt lives in the same city; Mrs. Ellen Hill lives in this county. Thomas Reese, a brother of Mrs. Hill, was a minister in the Baptist Church, in which several of the relatives of Mr. Hill on his mother's side had also been preachers.

Soon after his marriage Mr. Hill was given an interest in the homestead and took up his residence with his father on the place where he now resides. He and his wife have had six children; they lost one daughter in early infancy, and Freddie L., died at the age of eleven months. The surviving members of their family are Benjamin F., Superintendent of the Oakland School No. 2, in Chicago; Herbert W. who is teaching in Science Hill District, and Lillie May who is attending her brother's school in Chicago. The sons were graduated at Clinton and are well informed and equipped for the duties of life.

The first vote cast by our subject was for Abraham Lincoln and he continues to support the Republican principles. His brother Lewis was a private and Egbert a Captain in the Thirty-first Missouri Infantry during the Civil War; both were wounded, Egbert at Vicksburg, and Lewis at Ft. Donelson. Mr. Hill has held the offices of Road Master, School Trustee and School Director, in the last-named capacity having served twelve years. He belongs to DeWitt Lodge, No. 84, F. & A. M., and Goodbrake Chapter, No. 59 R.A.M. He and his wife belong to the Missionary Baptist Church and he has been a Deacon for twenty years. For twelve years he was Superintendent of the Sunday-school in the church at Clinton and he is still engaged in Sunday-school work now as a teacher. All of the children belong to the Baptist Church, three having been baptized at one time when the youngest was eleven years old.

[Source: Portrait and Biographical Album of DeWitt and Piatt Counties, Illinois. Chicago: Chapman Brothers Publishing Company, 1891]

RODNEY P. HILL

Among those who are cultivating a portion of the soil of DeWitt County with good results and securing thereby many comforts and enjoyments, is the gentleman above named. His home comprises a portion of section 1, Texas Township, and his occupation is that of a general farmer, wisely dividing his attention between diversified crops and such a number of domestic animals as can be well kept and easily cared for. His estate consists of one hundred and fifty-seven and one-half acres of well-improved land all under cultivation, and indicating in its appearance that it is controlled by one who understands his business.

Mr. Hill was born in Henry County, Ky., April 20, 1837. The ancestral history will be found in the sketch of his brother, B.T. Hill, on another page of this work. The temple of learning in which he studied during boyhood had but one window and was built and furnished in a primitive fashion. However, he was able to acquire a practical knowledge of the principal branches of study, and having an active mind and a desire for information he has added to his knowledge in various ways from year to year. He remained with his parents until his marriage, when he at once settled where he now resides. But little clearing had been done on the land and he now sees around him the fruits of his labors in the many comforts of modern life.

In 1858 Mr. Hill led to the hymeneal altar Miss Ellen Reese, a sister to the wife of B.T. Hill, and a lady of fine character, domestic knowledge and social nature. The happy union has been blest by the birth of four children, of whom we note the following: Ester Ann, who was graduated

from the Clinton High School, is with her parents; Joseph B. is farming in Nebraska; William M. is married and living on a farm in the same State and Frederick C. is attending the High School in Clinton and will be graduated this year.

Mr. Hill was never farther west than Springfield, until two years ago, when he visited his sons in Nebraska; he has traveled East several times however. He never belonged to any society except the Union League. His first vote was cast for J.C. Fremont and he has staunchly adhered to Republican principles since that time. He has been School Director twenty-five years and has ever shown deep interest in the cause of education and other civilizing and elevating influences. The entire family holds membership in the Baptist Church and Mr. Hill was a Sunday-school teacher for many years.

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