

Benjamin F. Davis spent his boyhood days upon the old homestead farm in Forest City township and pursued his early education there. It was supplemented, however, by study in the high school at Minneapolis, Minnesota, and in the State University of Minnesota. He afterward took up the profession of teaching, which he capably followed for six terms in Howard county, imparting readily and clearly to others the knowledge which he had acquired. He later devoted two years to farming in Howard county and in the fall of 1883, his fellow townsmen, appreciative of his worth and ability, called him to public office by electing him to the position of county auditor. He made so excellent a record during his first term that he was reelected and at the close of his second term retired from office as he had entered it—with the confidence and goodwill of all. He then took up the abstract business and in 1890 became one of the organizers of the American Loan & Investment Company of Cresco. He was at that time elected its secretary and has since served in that capacity, bending his attention to constructive effort, to administrative direction and executive control. This company has built up the biggest business of the kind in Cresco and Mr. Davis has been an important element in the steady growth of their patronage.

In 1878 Mr. Davis was united in marriage to Miss Ann H. Jones, a native of Wisconsin and a daughter of Richard and Ann (Hughes) Jones, who, like Mr. Davis' parents, were natives of Wales and on leaving the little rock-ribbed country across the sea took up their abode in Wisconsin. Their son, Thomas H. Jones, is a resident of Howard county and is mentioned elsewhere in this work. To Mr. and Mrs. Davis have been born seven children, namely, Alice, William, Elmer, Anna, Catherine, Bess and Benjamin F.

The family is well known in Cresco and Howard county and in social circles the parents occupy an enviable position the hospitality of the best homes of the city being freely accorded them. But Mr. and Mrs. Davis hold membership in the Methodist Episcopal church. He votes with the republican party but is not ambitious for office. In matters of citizenship, however, he is never remiss and, actuated by a public-spirited devotion to the general good, has given generous and hearty aid to many movements looking to the welfare and benefit of both city and county. He was a little lad of but nine years when he came to Iowa and thus for more than a half century he has been a witness of the growth and development of this section of the state, while at all times he has borne his part in the work of general progress and improvement.

ELTON M. ELDRIDGE.

Elton M. Eldridge, an active and energetic representative of farming interests in Howard county, now makes his home on section 36, Howard Center township. He is one of the native sons of this county, having been born within its borders January 31, 1860. His father, Ira Eldridge, was a native of Burlington, New Jersey, born in January, 1814, and at the age of twenty-five years left the east and became a resident of Columbus, Ohio, where he established a grocery store. In August, 1855, he arrived in Howard county, Iowa, where he established a general store at Howard Center, conducting the business for two years. He then bought one hundred and sixty acres of land in Howard county from the government, paying the usual price of a dollar and a quarter per acre. With characteristic energy he began the cultivation and development of the land and continued as an active farmer until he reached the age of seventy years, when he retired and established his home in Cresco. He was married to Eliza Carleton, of St. Clair, Michigan, and they became parents of eleven children, five sons and six daughters. This family was one of the first to settle in Howard county and from pioneer times has been associated with the development of the community.

Elton M. Eldridge was reared upon the old homestead farm with the usual experiences of the farm-bred boy who divides his time between the work of the schoolroom, the pleasures of the playground and the tasks incident to the development of the fields. Upon his father's death he took over the management of the farm and has since given