

ADAM J. SMITH, of the lumber firm, Smith & Bell, of Decatur, is a native of Whitley County, Indiana, born near Churubusco, February 20, 1857, a son of Henry and Catherine Elizabeth (Leppla) Smith, natives of Bavaria, Germany, where they were married, and in 1840 came to the United States and located in Tuscarawas County, Ohio, and in 1856 moved to Whitley County, Indiana. They lived on a farm until 1886, when they moved to Churubusco, where the father died three months later, aged eighty-five years, and the mother still lives, aged seventy-four years. Both were members of the Lutheran church. They were the parents of six children - William, of Coesse, Indiana; Henry, of Churubusco; John, a farmer of Whitley County; Phillip W., of Decatur; Catherine, wife of James Roach, of Coesse, and Adam J. Adam J. Smith was reared in his native county, where he had good school advantages, completing his education at the Valparaiso Normal School. When twenty-one years old he began teaching, which he continued for some time in Whitley County, and in 1884 moved to Decatur and engaged in manufacturing and dealing in lumber. In the fall of 1886 he formed a partnership with A. R. Bell, under the firm name Smith & Bell. Mr. Smith was married June 5, 1884, to Miss Willie Fonner, a native of Adams County, daughter of John A. and Elizabeth (Pillars) Fonner. They have one child - Edith May, born April 15, 1885. Mrs. Smith is a member of the Methodist Episcopal church.

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**Snow's History of Adams County, Indiana, John Fletcher Snow, B. F. Bowen, Indianapolis, IN, 1907, p. 474 (image 967)**

ADAM J. SMITH.

Enterprise and pluck are the factors that have been most potent in insuring and making possible the enviable commercial standing of Adam J. Smith in the community in which he lives. Today he is properly rated among the business men of Adams county who have attained more than an ordinary degree of success, and this has been brought about almost wholly through his own efforts. He was born in Whitley county, Indiana, near the village of Churubusco, February 20, 1857. He is a son of Henry and Catherine (Leppie) Smith. Both of his parents were born in Bavaria, Germany, and were married in their native village in that country in 1830. Following their marriage the elder Smiths continued to reside in Germany until 1843, when they emigrated to the United States. They made their first home in the new land in Tuscarawas county, Ohio, where they resided until 1856. In this year they decided to move to Indiana, and selected the northeastern portion of the as a place of residence. They settled on a practically wild tract of land in Whitley county and successfully taught for three county, Indiana, and worked to improve cultivate their farm and lived on it until 1886, when they went to Churubusco to reside. Mr. Smith did not long survive the removal to Churubusco and died after a three mouths' residence at the advanced age of eighty-five years. His widow survived him until 1901, dying at the age of eighty-eight years. It is not remarkable that these people reached the advanced ages they did as both families are noted for longevity. The maternal grandmother of Adam J. Smith reached the age of a hundred and two years and other members of the family died when very old. Henry and Catherine Smith were the parents of seven children: William, Henry, Jacob, John, Philip W., Catherine, the wife of James Roach; Adam J. Jacob Smith died in infancy. They were among the most highly esteemed people of their community and consistent members of the Lutheran church.

Adam J. Smith, about whose life this sketch centers, was the youngest of his family. He was always of an aggressive and conservative disposition. His boyhood years were spent on his father's farm in Whitley county, Indiana, where he learned the practical value of his minutes and hours, out with the dawn of morning and always at work, each day gave a good account of itself when the year's balances were footed up. In this county in the country schools he received his preliminary education. At about the age of eighteen years he began his studies at the Northern Indiana Normal School at Valparaiso, became thoroughly fitted for the work of teacher and at the age of twenty-one years secured employment in the public schools of his home county and successfully taught for three years. In 1881 he was employed by a school supply house as salesman and continued in this work with good success for a period of two years. Though in this business he made a high salary, its transient nature was not to his liking and he resigned the position and took employment as foreman of the lumber mills at Williams and Monmouth, owned and operated by Colter & Company, of which his brother, Philip W. Smith, was then a member. He served in this capacity for about a year and a half, when he resigned his position and with a capital of about \$500 started in business for himself at Decatur -- the hardwood lumber business.

He was very successful in this undertaking and in 1886 formed a partnership with Alexander R. Bell under the firm name of Smith & Bell, which soon enlarged the business, built a saw mill at Decatur and steadily extended their territory of operation to several states. This firm has been in operation now more than twenty years and is one of the most extensive of its kind in northeastern Indiana. Its principal industry was and has been the manufacturing and sale of hardwood lumber. In 1906 this firm disposed of its milling interests and at this time devotes its entire attention to the purchase and sale of lumber in the states of Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and Missouri, its business annually running near the three hundred thousand dollar mark. Besides Mr. Smith's lumbering interests he is a stockholder in the telephone company, the furnace factory, the Smith & Uhlman Stock Company for the breeding of Hereford cattle, of which company he is the senior member, which company is operated on one of Mr. Smith's stock farms near Decatur, and is also a stockholder in the First National Bank of Decatur.

Mr. Smith has held many positions of honor and trust at the hands of his constituents, though never giving any especial attention to politics. He was for four years a member of the Decatur city council, served on the Decatur school board as secretary and treasurer for three years. He has for some years served as one of the trustees of the First Methodist church at Decatur, of which he and his family are devoted members. Not especially a lodge man, but he is a member of the Kekionga Lodge, No. 65, Knights of Pythias, of Decatur.

On the 5th day of June, 1884, Adam J. Smith was married to Miss Alwillda Fonner, a daughter of John A. and Elizabeth (Pillars) Fonner, who were early residents of Root township, Adams county. Mrs. Smith's mother was a daughter of Benjamin and Sarah Pillars, who came to Adams county in 1839 from the eastern states. Her father, John A. Fonner, came in 1841 and settled near the old Piqua road, just below Decatur. These pioneer residents accumulated a large amount of property, were hardworking people and were held in high esteem by their associates and acquaintances.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith are the parents of one child, a daughter, Miss Edith Fonner Smith, who was born in Decatur on the 15th day of April, 1885. She was educated in the Decatur city schools, from which she graduated in 1903. She has a great fondness for music, being a fine musician. Her parents gave her a musical education befitting her inclinations and station in society by a thorough course at the Parr Conservatory of Music at Cincinnati, Ohio.