

CUNNINGHAM, JOHN W

John W. CUNNINGHAM, dealer in musical instruments and one of the veteran merchants of Portland, is a native son of Jay county and has lived in this county all his life, a resident of Portland for the past fifty years. He was born on a farm in Noble township on July 21, 1847, and is a son of Isaac and Anna (WAGNER) CUNNINGHAM, who were among the real pioneers of that section of the county. Isaac CUNNINGHAM, who was a veteran of the Civil war, was born in Gallia county, Ohio, and was eight years of age when his father, Benjamin CUNNINGHAM, moved from there with his family to Ft. Recovery [Mercer Co. Ohio] That was in 1830. Three years later, in 1833, three years before Jay county was established as a separate civic unit, Benjamin CUNNINGHAM came with his family over into Indiana and settled on a tract of forty acres in what later came to be organized as Noble township, this county, where he put up a log cabin, established his home and spent the remainder of his life. His son, Isaac CUNNINGHAM, traded a pony to a dissatisfied settler for a tract of forty acres in that township, put up a log cabin on the tract and established his home there, and it was in that log cabin that John W. CUNNINGHAM was born. During the progress of the Civil war Isaac CUNNINGHAM was called into service. Upon the completion of his military service he returned to the home farm and there spent the remainder of his life, developing and improving the place and increasing his land holdings to 120 acres. Isaac CUNNINGHAM and wife were the parents of five children, of whom the subject of this sketch was the third in order of birth, the others being Margaret Elizabeth, Mary Catherine, Rachel Ann and George W. Reared on the home farm in Noble township, John W. CUNNINGHAM received primary schooling in the pioneer schools of that district and was about sixteen years of age when his father was called into service during the Civil war period. He was the elder son and thus the management of the farm and much of the care of the family fell upon his shoulders during the time of his father's absence with the army. On his father's return he entered Ft. Recovery high school and on finishing the course there took a short course at old Liber College and then became engaged in teaching and for nine years was thus engaged, teaching during the winters and continuing farming on the home place during the summers, meantime also selling musical instruments locally. Many of the pupils who thus came under Mr. CUNNINGHAM's direction have become enrolled among the ranks of Jay county's able teachers and business men. During the progress of Mr. CUNNINGHAM's last school the school became the victim, as he

states it, of a fight between two rival schoolbook publishing houses, each striving to have its respective books adopted for use in the schools of Jay county. Mr. CUNNINGHAM was partial to the Eclectic series, then used in his school, and which were to be replaced by the Harper Bros. series. Exchange of books had been made in most of the county's schools when Mr. CUNNINGHAM entered the fight in behalf of the Eclectic series, arguing their superiority, and became the agent for the publishers of these books. Supported by other friends of this series of text books he induced the school authorities to keep the Eclectics at an even exchange for the used books of that series and for the lately introduced Harper's, thus saving to three townships about \$3.000 of exchange money besides, as he believes, giving the schools better books and at the same time creating the desired uniformity in text books. When he gave up teaching Mr. CUNNINGHAM located at Portland and has since been engaged there in the music trade. SOURCE: Milton T. Jay, M.D., History of Jay County Indiana, Historical Publishing Co., Indpls. 1922, Vol. II, pp.395-396. Transcribed by Eloine Chesnut