

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.



PHOTO. BY F. O. PEASE.

JACOB WALTERS.

JACOB WALTERS, one of the oldest settlers in De Witt county, was born in Pennsylvania in 1801. His father and mother (Andrew and Sarah Walters), were also natives of that state. Jacob was the second child in a family of ten children (five boys and five girls). When he was about seven years of age, viz. in 1808, his parents removed to Ohio, and settled upon a farm in Perry county, of that state, and in the subscription schools extant at that time the subject of this sketch obtained his education, which was necessarily of a limited character, for most of his boyhood days were passed in hard work upon his father's farm.

In 1824, J. Walters was married to Miss Phoebe Bateson of Ohio, by whom he has a family of ten children, all of them married and living at the present time. He and his family removed from Ohio, to De Witt county in 1833, and settled (as was then the custom) in the timber upon the site of his parent's home, in the south-east corner of Wilson township.

At that time the county was but sparsely settled, and both energy and courage were required to battle with the numerous obstacles to a successful and peaceful rural existence, and these qualifications Jacob Walters undoubtedly possessed, which, perhaps, the following anecdote partly illustrates.

About two years after Mr. Walters came to this county, accompanied by his neighbor Thomas (or Tommy) Wilson and three boys, he came upon a wolf's-den on the prairie three miles from the timber; the boys were sent home for the dogs, guns, etc. in order to dispatch the wolf family for the sake of the bounty, then paid by the county for a wolf's scalp. As soon as the boys had departed the wolf-dam, who had been lingering near, started hastily for another point in the timber, and as Mr. Walters expressed to his friend,—to fetch assistance,—he was right in his conjecture for in a short time she returned at full speed in company with two very large gray wolves, and the three side by

side with ruffled fur, gleaming eyes, and snapping jaws, made straight for the hapless hunters—the courage and presence of mind displayed by Mr. Walters undoubtedly saved their lives—instead of running away as doubtless some would have done, he rushed towards them, shouting and clapping his hands—the ferocious beasts stopped at a short distance from him, and squatting snapped their jaws together in rage evidently surprised, and hesitating to attack, he kept them at bay in this manner until the boys returned, when their dogs scared them out of range; the cubs were however secured and the five dollars bounty obtained for each of them.

Mr. Walters by his diligence and industry was at one time the owner of a thousand acres of prairie land, in addition to his home farm of one hundred and sixty acres, which (with the exception of the latter) he has from time to time distributed amongst his children. Mrs. Phoebe Walters died in 1870, in her 66th, year. Seven years later in February 1877, Jacob Walters was married to his present wife, who was a Miss Martha Baird, the daughter of Wm. L. and Martha G. Baird, the former of Kentucky, the latter of Virginia. Miss Martha was born in Kentucky, but at the time of her marriage was a resident of Woodford county, Illinois.

Mr. Walters has never sought an official position in the county, preferring to bestow his entire business ability upon a farming life. In politics he is a democrat and cast his first vote for Jackson, in 1829. His faith is that of the Presbyterian church, while Mrs. W. is a member of the Christian denomination.

In spite of his eighty-one years, Mr. Walters is yet an active man, as full of life and energy as most men of seventy, and bids fair to live many years yet, honored and respected, as he has been in the past.