

vocate of the principles and policies of the Democratic party. He held membership in the Grange, and was a zealous member of the Christian church at Leonard, in which he had been an elder for many years. At the time of the Civil war he served about six months in the state militia.

In 1860 was solemnized the marriage of Mr. Peoples to Miss Minerva Patton, who was born in Kentucky, from whence her parents came to Missouri when she was a child. She died in 1865, and of her two children one is living, Eldridge, who is a successful farmer of Custer county, Nebraska. In 1868 Mr. Peoples contracted a second marriage, being then united to Miss Amanda Fink, who was born in Shelby county, where her father, the late John Fink, was an early settler. Of the seven children of this union four are now living: William, a resident of Shelbyville; Christine, wife of George Jarrell, of this county; Laura, wife of Louis Perry, of Shelby county; and John, who is identified with agricultural pursuits in this county. The mother of these children died August 6, 1881.

#### BENJAMIN F. VAN VACTER.

This well known and highly esteemed business man and influential citizen of the village of Leonard, where he is engaged in the real estate business, is a native of Shelby county and a scion of one of its sterling pioneer families, as his father, Benjamin Van Vacter, here took up his abode more than eighty years ago, having settled in Taylor township when this section was a veritable wilderness, wild game being plentiful and pro-

viding much for the larders of the sturdy pioneers, whose slumbers were often interrupted by the howls of the predatory wolves. The subject of this sketch recalls many of the scenes and conditions of the pioneer epoch, and he has not only witnessed but has also assisted in the development of this county into one of the most attractive and prosperous in the great state of Missouri.

Mr. Van Vacter was born on the old homestead of his father, in Taylor township, this county, one mile east of the present village of Leonard, February 5, 1846. His father was born in Jefferson county, Virginia, of staunch Holland Dutch ancestry, in the year 1797, and he was reared to maturity in the historic Old Dominion state, where he continued to reside and where he followed agricultural pursuits until 1837, when he set forth for the wilds of the far West, as Missouri was then considered on the very frontier. Soon after his arrival in this state he came to Shelby county, which at that time had very few settlers, and here he entered claim to 400 acres of government land, the entire tract being in a state of primitive wildness. He here set himself vigorously to the strenuous work of reclaiming his land to cultivation and in due time he developed one of the productive farms of the county, continuing to reside on his homestead, one mile east of Leonard, until his death, which occurred in February, 1866. He was one of the honored and influential citizens of this section of the country, honest and straightforward in all the relations of life, industrious and energetic, and possessed of strong mentality and individuality, so that he was not denied

the confidence and good will of the community in whose upbuilding he so ably assisted. He was a staunch adherent of the Democratic party and both he and his wife were zealous members of the Christian church, having been organizers of the church of this denomination in Leonard and having contributed liberally to its support. In 1840 was solemnized the marriage of Benjamin Van Vacter to Miss Anna Smith, who was born in Ireland, and whose death occurred about 1901. They became the parents of five children, and the three surviving all continue their residence in Shelby county, namely: Joseph H., Benjamin F. and Robert O.

Benjamin Franklin Van Vacter, to whom this brief sketch is dedicated, was reared on the pioneer farm, to whose work he early began to contribute his quota of aid, and he continued to attend the district schools in Taylor township, at varying intervals, during the days of his boyhood and youth, laying in these primitive institutions the foundations for the broad and practical knowledge he has since gained under the direction of that wisest of head-masters, experience. He continued to be associated in the work and management of the home farm until the death of his honored father, after which he engaged in farming and stock-growing on his own responsibility on a farm of 120 acres deeded to him by his father at the time of death. This homestead, in section 20, Taylor township, continued to be his place of abode and the scene of his enterprising and successful endeavors as a general agriculturist and stock-grower until 1884, when he sold the property and removed to the

village of Leonard, where he entered into partnership with Theodore P. Manuel and engaged in the general merchandise business, under the firm name of Van Vacter & Manuel. About four years later he sold his interest in this enterprise to his partner, and since that time he has given his attention principally to the dealing in real estate in the state of Kansas, in which connection his operations have been of no inconsiderable scope and importance, and have been a source of distinctive profit to him. He is one of the substantial citizens and business men of his native county, was one of the organizers and incorporators of the Farmers' Bank, of Leonard, in which he is still a stockholder and of which he served as vice-president for a short period. In politics he is a staunch adherent of the Democratic party, and in earlier years he was a zealous and effective worker in its local ranks. He is a member of the Christian church and is active in the support of the various departments of its work. Mr. Van Vacter takes a loyal interest in all that tends to advance the material and civic prosperity of his native county, and measures and enterprises of a public order receive his earnest support.

#### LUTHER KEMP.

This well known citizen of Taylor township is the owner of a fine farm of 220 acres and is contributing his quota to upholding the prestige of the great industry of agriculture in Shelby county. He has been a resident of Shelby county since his boyhood days, and in the section in which he was reared and is best