

Snow's History of Adams County, Indiana, John Fletcher Snow, B. F. Bowen, Indianapolis, IN, 1907, p. 298 (image 609)

JOHN NIBLICK

John Niblick, with whose career this sketch is concerned, is one of the substantial business men of Adams county and one of the best known throughout northeastern Indiana. He was born in Adams county and has spent his life in that county. His connection with the business life of the county and particularly with the business life of Decatur and Berne, have left indelible impresses on the development and success of the locality. He was born in Decatur, January 8, 1853. His birth occurred in a house that occupied the site of the present Journal office. From his thirteenth year he has been engaged in business and has had an active career. He engaged in the general mercantile business at Decatur in 1866 and began to learn a business of which he has made a distinct success. The story of the development of the mercantile establishment in Decatur bearing his name is the story of the development of the business life of John Niblick. This business was established in Decatur in 1840 by J. D. Nuttman. Mr. Nuttman conducted it for seventeen years and then sold his interests to his brother, John Nuttman, and John Crawford. The business was then conducted under the firm name of Nuttman & Crawford until 1866, when Jesse Niblick purchased the interest held by Mr. Nuttman. Again the firm name was changed and this time became Niblick & Crawford. In 1874 Frank Crawford, a son of John Crawford, and John Niblick, a son of Jesse Niblick, were taken into the partnership and the firm continued to do business under the new name of Niblick, Crawford & Sons. Another change came about in 1888, when both of the Crawfords retired from the partnership and the Niblicks secured the entire business. This necessitated another change in the name of the firm and Jesse Niblick & Son appeared on the sign above the store. This last partnership arrangement was continued until the death of Jesse Niblick, October 6, 1895. The business was operated by John and William H. Niblick as executors of their father's estate until 1897, when the business was incorporated as Niblick & Company. John was chosen president of the company formed in this manner to operate the business and he is serving the company in that capacity today. Since the incorporation two of the original stockholders and partners in the business have died. These are Charles P. Ehinger, who was manager of the store from its incorporation, and William H. Niblick. Mr. Niblick was secretary of the company and president of the bank. The deceased partners were succeeded by Daniel M. Niblick, who is the manager the store and secretary of the company.

Niblick & Company represents the largest enterprise of its kind in Adams county. The store carries a large and varied stock of day goods, notions, carpets, rugs, curtains, glassware, groceries and the like, and the annual volume of business done exceeds one hundred thousand dollars. A force of twelve people is constantly employed and John and Daniel Niblick give their personal attention to the operation and management of the growing business. The store building is owned by the Jesse Niblick estate and was erected by Jesse Niblick in 1876 at an original cost of twelve thousand dollars. This includes the cost of the bank building adjoining. The store has approximately seventy-five thousand square feet of floor space and is a building admirably adapted to the display and sale of goods.

Mr. Niblick is an active business man. He is interested in a number of Decatur enterprises and is considered an able financier. He is a director of the Old Adams County Bank and has taken an active part in the management of its affairs and contributed largely to its growth into a sound and substantial financial institution. For a time, from 1890 to 1896, he managed a grain business in Decatur and made it a successful enterprise. He is a man who believes in doing thoroughly that which he undertakes to advance the interests of his city. He is in the van of movements to build up the city and to increase its commercial significance. He is public spirited and a firm friend of education. He served for a number of years as a member of the Decatur school board and has always taken a keen and active interest in the educational progress of the city.

May 18, 1876, Mr. Niblick was married to Miss Mary J. Studabaker, a daughter of Judge David S. Studabaker. She is an accomplished and highly educated woman and is a graduate of the Glendale Female College in the class of '75. Mrs. Niblick is prominent in the social life of Decatur. She is interested in movements started by women and is active in local and state women's clubwork. She is president of the Eighth District Federation of Women's Clubs and has been instrumental in bringing peace out of chaos when the women's club life of Indiana was threatened by dissensions and factional disagreements. With her husband and family, she is an earnest member of the Methodist Episcopal church, in which denomination and its work both Mr. and Mrs. Niblick take leading and active parts. Mr. Niblick has been an officer of the Decatur church for many years and was secretary of the board for twenty-one years. In addition he is a delegate to the conferences of the church.

The home life of Mr. and Mrs. Niblick is most attractive. Their home is one of the social centers of Decatur and is characterized by refinement and culture. They are the parents of a number of most interesting children. These children are: Hattie, the wife of A. D. Suttles, a principal in one of the Decatur schools; Josephine, the wife of O. P. Edwards, of Leipsic, Ohio, where he is interested in a brokerage stone business and a bank; Burton S., a student at the Ohio Wesleyan University at Delaware, Ohio, and Helen, attending the Decatur high schools.

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### **Standard History of Adams & Wells Counties, Indiana - 1918 by Tyndall & Lesh, pp. 456-459**

John Niblick. It would be impossible to tell the history of Adams County or recount the business activities of the City of Decatur without a multiplication of reference to members of the Niblick family. More than eighty years ago they settled in the county, then a complete wilderness. They did the work of pioneers, clearing up the forests, making possible the cultivation of land, and their business enterprise took many directions. One branch of the family, of which Mr. John Niblick is a member, has been especially identified with merchandising and banking at Decatur. Mr. John Niblick is president of Niblick & Company, conducting perhaps the chief department store of Adams County, and it is interesting to note that this business is a lineal and logical successor of a stock of merchandise established in a log house in Decatur more than seventy-five years ago.

The Niblicks from time out of mind have been Irish Presbyterians, their original home being in County Armagh, Ireland. Several generations ago the name was spelled Niblack, and it was the grandfather of Mr. John Niblick who changed the spelling to the present form. The founder of the family in America was known as John Niblack, Sr., who was born in County Armagh of old Irish stock. Besides farming he was also an Irish miller. He brought his family to America about 1803.

James Niblick and his twin brother Robert were both pioneers of Adams County, Indiana. James Niblick was born in County Armagh, Ireland, in 1801 and was brought by his parents to America at the age of two years. From New York State they removed to Ohio, where James Niblick's brother followed farming and James learned the cooper's trade, and in the fall of 1834 came to Adams County, settling on section 6 of Washington Township. He is said to have been the ninth settler in the county. He subsequently sold his farm in that township and moved to Decatur, and later removed to Missouri, where he lived until his death in the fall of 1869.

Before coming to Indiana James and Robert Niblick lived for some time in Tuscarawas and Harrison counties, Ohio. James married his first wife there, Anna Carter, and they brought with them to Adams County two children, Jesse and Adelaide. They arrived in this county the same year as Decatur was laid out as a town. Robert Niblick made settlement at the same time and in the same community. Before they could engage in agriculture it was necessary to clear away the heavy forests which encumbered the land, and their first homes were log cabins. Indians were still numerous, and these pioneers had no difficulty in supplying the table with provisions of wild game. There were no

roads nor bridges, and the Niblick brothers cut or blazed trails through the woods in order to mark the way to their habitation. Robert Niblick died on his old homestead in Adams County. James Niblick married for his second wife Sarah A. Ball, who died in the fall of 1886, having returned to Decatur after her husband died in Missouri. James Niblick was the father of sixteen children, eight by each wife, there being five sons and three daughters of the first marriage and one son and seven daughters of the second. Among the children of the first marriage were Robert, Jesse, Mary Jane, Adelaide, and William B. William is a bachelor and still living in Chicago. Adelaide is Mrs. James Dailey and lives in Wells County.

Jesse Niblick, son of James and Anna (Carter) Niblick, was born in what is now Carroll County, Ohio, August 12, 1826. His mother died on the old homestead in Adams County August 12, 1838. Jesse Niblick was about ten years of age when the family came to Adams County and a few years later his grandfather, John Niblick, gave him the opportunity of attending school at Cadiz, Ohio. In 1842 he returned to the home farm, and he soon began an apprenticeship at the shoemaker's trade, and in 1846 engaged in that business for himself. He thus became early identified with the business affairs of Decatur, and continued the boot and shoe business until 1866. In that year he sold his business to his brother-in-law and in July of that year bought an interest in a general store with John Crawford, under the name Niblick and Crawford. They bought the stock of merchandise established by that pioneer of Decatur merchants, John Nutman. Later the firm of Niblick & Crawford brought in their sons as partners and the business title was changed to Niblick, Crawford & Sons. In February, 1887, the Crawfords withdrew and from that time on Mr. Niblick was active head of the business until his death in October, 1895. After that the store was conducted by his son John and the latter's brothers as executors, and in March, 1897, the business was incorporated under the name of Niblick & Company. This has been developed as a large department store, carrying a stock of staple merchandise sufficient to supply all the demands of both city and country dwellers. Thus there has been no interruption to a business which was established by J. D. Nutman in a log house in Decatur in 1840. Years have brought many increases and changes in style and quarters, but the house is today one of the oldest business firms of the county.

In 1871 Jesse Niblick with J. D. Nutman engaged in a private banking business, opening the Adams County bank, Niblick & Nutman, bankers. Later David Studabaker and R. W. Allison became associated with them. Joseph D. Nutman was responsible for the establishment of the first bank at Decatur in 1857. The institution was moved to Fort Wayne several years later. The permanent banking history of the city begins with the year 1871. Mr. Nutman soon retired from banking, leaving the firm Niblick, Studabaker & Company, and in August, 1874, the Adams County Bank was organized with a state charter. Jesse Niblick was elected a director and the first president of this bank, and was later succeeded by R. B. Allison as president, he taking the office of vice president. Jesse Niblick was also identified with the organization of Eagle Manufacturing Company of Decatur. He was also prominent in local affairs, was a staunch democrat, was elected clerk of Washington Township in 1848 and until 1865 was either clerk or trustee of the township, sometimes holding both offices at once. In the fall of 1865 he was elected county treasurer and reelected in 1867. For many years from 1870 he held the office of village trustee or councilman.

Jesse Niblick married October 16, 1851, Miss Catherine Closs, a native of Germany and a daughter of John and Catherine Closs. Jesse Niblick and wife were the parents of eight children. The sons to grow up were William, John, James K., Charles and Daniel.

Mr. John Niblick has spent all his active life in the atmosphere of the business which was established by his father. He was born in Decatur in a home that stood on the public square January 8, 1853. He was educated in the local schools and early became identified with the store of his father. He has been president of Niblick & Company since it was incorporated in 1897, and his brother Daniel is the present secretary of the company. His niece Mary Catherine Niblick has for many years

presided at some of the important departments of the store, and several of the many employees have long and faithful records of service and have contributed much to the prosperity, and importance of the establishment. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the largest mercantile enterprise of its kind in Adams County.

While the conduct of this store has absorbed Mr. Niblick's best abilities, he has never neglected to contribute his resources and influence to the public welfare in every possible way. He is a director and member of the finance committee of the old Adams County Bank. This institution which was first started by the state in 1874 as above noted, was conducted throughout the twenty years of its first charter as the Adams County Bank. It was rechartered in 1894 and then became the Old Adams County Bank. In 1914 it was again chartered and during the more than forty years of its existence no depositor has ever lost a single dollar and the resources and integrity of the institution are unimpaired to the present time.

On May 18, 1876, Mr. John Niblick married Mary A. Studabaker. She was born in Decatur in 1855, grew up and received her early education there and in 1875 graduated from Glendale College, at Glendale, Ohio. The Studabaker family have been identified with Adams and Wells counties for fully eighty years, and their relations with banking, business, law and civic and social affairs give them an enviable prominence in the history of this locality. Judge David Studabaker was a cousin of the great family of Studebakers of South Bend, Indiana, though there is a slight variation in the spelling of the name. Judge David Studabaker in early life was a teacher, was admitted to the bar in 1852, was in active practice of law at Decatur over thirty years, and filled many offices, including prosecuting attorney, member of the legislature and senate and judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He was also a railroad builder and was long active in the Adams County Bank. His death occurred in 1894.

Mr. & Mrs. John Niblick had four children: Harrie E. married Arthur D. Suttles, now assistant cashier of the Old Adams County Bank. Mr. Suttles was well educated in the Decatur High School and Normal School, and for about eight years was principal of a ward school in Decatur and he has been connected with the Old Adams County Bank since 1907. They have four children, Mary, Josephine, Arthur D., Jr., and Helen. The second child of Mr. and Mrs. John Niblick is Josephine, wife of O. P. Edwards of Leipsic, Ohio. They have one daughter, Harriet. Burton S., is now bookkeeper in the Old Adams County Bank and married Bessie Nolan. Helen, the youngest child, is a graduate of Lake Forest College, studied at Mount Holyoke, is a graduate of the Ohio Wesleyan University at Delaware and took domestic science work in Chicago. She has been very active in local affairs at Decatur and especially prominent in Red Cross matters. The Niblick family are active members of the Methodist Church. Mr. Niblick is a democrat.