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Ouachita County, Arkansas - from Goodspeed's History of Arkansas

Judge James M. Stinnett is one of the most successful of Ouachita County's farmers, and is one of her oldest and most highly esteemed residents. He was born in Morrison County, Tennessee, November 22, 1820, and is a son of William and Catherine (Smith) Stinnett, who were born in Ray County, Tennessee, the latter in 1801. The father was inured to farm work when a boy, and continued to make this occupation his chief calling throughout the rest of his days, dying in 1847, and his widow in 1848. Their union took place about 1819, and in time a family of eight children were born to them, James M., Thomas L. (a resident of this county), and Marissa (the wife of William S. Smith, residing in Chester County, Tennessee), being the only ones now living. Judge James M. Stinnett, the subject of this sketch, received his education by the light of poplar rails and pine knots during the evenings, and at the age of twenty years began the battle of life for himself. In March, 1840, he was elected constable of the Twelfth District of McNairy County, Tennessee, and at the end of two years was elected justice of the peace, serving until 1848. In 1840 he was married to Miss Rebecca F. Spain, of Henderson County, Tennessee, a daughter of Marmaduke and Elizabeth Spain, and to them four children were born, only Catherine E., the wife of Robert Williams, a resident of McNairy County, Tennessee, being now alive. Mrs. Stinnett was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and died in 1848. Mr. Stinnett was married to his second wife, Miss Eliza J. Pickett, of McNairy County, Tennessee, April 7, 1850, his wife having been born in Hardeman County, Tennessee, in 1830. A family of sixteen children was born to this union, nine of whom are now living: Franklin P., Preston B., James K. P., Jefferson D., Laura A. (wife of Robert S. Neal), Sarah A., Ruth and Robert L. In 1849 Mr. Stinnett went to Lower California, in search of gold, and like a great number of other forty-niners, spent a great deal of money and received nothing in return. He returned home in 1850, satisfied to spend the balance of his days in Arkansas, and was actively engaged in farming here until the breaking out of the Rebellion, and in 1862 he enlisted in Company H, Arkansas Cavalry, under Capt. McMillan, and served until the close of the war, participating, in the battles of Mark's Mill, Mount Elba and Poison Spring. He was paroled in Texas, and returned home to again make a home for his family, and succeeded so well that in time he became the owner of 1,200 acres of land, but is now the owner of 240 acres, as the rest was divided among his children. When he settled on his present property it was a wilderness, but he built a log cabin, and set energetically to work to clear up his farm, and has now one of the loveliest places in the county. He has always been a Democrat in his political views, and has held a number of important offices in this county. From 1866 to 1868 he held the office of county judge; in 1874 was again elected, and served from that time until 1878, and was re-elected in 1888, and is now ably discharging the duties of that position. He is a Royal Arch Mason, and he and wife are members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.