

HOWK, GEORGE VAIL, of New Albany, was born in Charlestown, Clarke County, Indiana, September 21, 1824, and is the only surviving son of Isaac Howk, one of the pioneer lawyers of the state. The Howk family are of German origin, but settled in Massachusetts early in the last century, and engaged chiefly in agriculture. Isaac Howk, the father of the subject of this sketch, was born on a farm in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, in July, 1793, and was educated at Williams College, in that county. In 1817 he settled in Charlestown, Indiana, and engaged in the practice of his profession. In 1820 he married Miss Elvira Vail, a daughter of Doctor Gamaliel Vail, who had emigrated from Vermont to Indiana Territory in 1806. Their son, George V. Howk, grew to manhood in Charlestown, Indiana. His father died in 1833, but his mother devoted the remainder of a long life to the education, comfort, and happiness of her children. She died in New Albany, Indiana, September 15, 1869. Judge Howk graduated from Indiana Asbury University in the class of 1846, under the presidency of Matthew Simpson, widely known as one of the bishops of the Methodist Church. Some of his classmates were, Newton Booth, United States Senator from California; James P. Luce, James M. Reynolds, and Joseph Tingley, now one of the professors of the college. He studied law with Judge Charles Dewey, who was for ten years a Judge of the Supreme Court of Indiana, and one of the ablest jurists the state has produced. He was admitted to the bar in 1847, and settled in New Albany. December 21, 1848, he married Miss Eleanor Dewey, the eldest daughter of Judge Charles Dewey, late of Charlestown. Mrs. Howk died April 12, 1853, leaving two young children. September 5, 1854, he married Miss Jane Simonson, eldest daughter of General John S. Simonson, United States army, who still survives. They have two children, John S. and George V. Howk, junior; and one daughter, Jane S., the child of Judge Howk's first wife, is also living. In 1852 and 1853 Judge Howk was city judge of New Albany; and from 1850 to 1864, during most of the time, was a member of the city council. In 1857 he was Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Floyd County; in 1863 he represented that county in the House, and from 1866 to 1870 he represented Floyd and Clarke Counties in the Senate of Indiana. He was chosen one of the Supreme Judges of Indiana at the general state election in October, 1876. Soon after taking his position on the bench, he gave promise of the great ability he has since displayed. His decisions are clear, concise, and conclusive, taking rank with those of the ablest jurists of the state; and his suavity of manner toward all with whom he comes in contact officially makes him very popular with the attorneys practicing at the bar of the Supreme Court. In politics Judge Howk is a Democrat. His mother was a Methodist, and he was educated in a Methodist college, but he is not a member of any religious denomination. His wife and children are Presbyterian.