

date methods, derived a substantial annual income from his property. Obstacles had to be overcome in the beginning, but by endurance and industry he succeeded in the development of a valuable farm upon which can be found high-class improvements and modern and up-to-date equipment. In 1901 Mr. Smith was enabled to retire from active farm work and he has since resided in Decorah, renting out his land. He is one of the highly esteemed citizens of that city and has become connected with its financial life as a stockholder in the Citizens Savings Bank. He has never actively participated in politics but is a strong republican and gave his undivided support to President Taft. He attends the Episcopal church, in the work of which he takes an active interest. His six brothers and sisters, all now deceased were, George, Sarah, Clara, Rebecca, Mathilda and Ann. Mr. Smith is highly respected and esteemed in Decorah, where he is widely and favorably known for his many good qualities of mind and character.

BEN BEAR.

The prosperity of a section is due to the collaboration of many, but among them always stand forth a few who on account of their attainments are entitled to special mention. Ben Bear, who is closely connected with a number of the most important commercial interests of Decorah and Winneshiek county, is one of these and while he has attained individual success and must be considered today one of the most substantial men of this part of the state, he has by his labors also largely contributed to general advancement and development. A native of Germany, he was born in 1853 in Hohebach, Wurtemberg. His father was Jacob Bear and his mother before her marriage was Rose Tannebaum, a member of one of the prominent families of that section of Wurtemberg. The father also was a man of affairs in his native land where he was extensively engaged in the grain and wool business.

Ben Bear attended school in Germany until thirteen years of age, when the spirit to will and to do seized him and, believing he would find a greater field of opportunity in the new world, he came at that early age to America. He made the trip on the steamship Hermann of the North German Lloyd, the journey consuming four weeks. Indication of the spirit that then dominated him and has continued to influence his life is found in the fact that this United States citizen-to-be arrived in New York on a Saturday afternoon at four o'clock, and seven o'clock the next morning found him installed as errand boy in the general store of Rosenthal & Sulzberger, doing business at the corner of Fourth street and Avenue D. Industry and ambition were the keynote of his code and as his willingness to work, his devotion to the business and his ability became recognized he rose successively in this establishment until he became general manager, the period of his connection with this firm covering the years from 1867 until 1876. A determination to be master of his own business prompted Mr. Bear to seek a location in the middle west early in the latter year, his foresight enabling him to recognize the possibilities of that great and yet thinly peopled region. Somehow he had heard of Decorah and he decided upon this