

History of Des Moines County and its People (Vol II)

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## HENRY BECK

Henry A. Beck, conducting a general contracting business in Burlington, his native city, was born April 3, 1865, a son of Jacob and Agnes (Mesmer) Beck. His father was born in Germany in 1818 and the year 1850 witnessed his arrival in Burlington. The previous year he had crossed the Atlantic and settled in St. Louis, where he remained until he came to this city. He was a carpenter, having learned his trade in the old country, and here he became identified with building operations. His study of political conditions led him to give earnest support to the republican party, but he never sought or desired political preferment. He died in 1897, having for almost a quarter of a century survived his wife, who passed away in 1874. She was then fifty-two years of age, her birth having occurred in Germany in 1822. In their family were eight children: Henry, who enlisted for service in the Civil war as a member of Company D, Twenty-fifth Iowa Infantry, and was killed at the siege of Vicksburg; Lena, who became the wife of John B. Schworm and both are now deceased; Rosa, the wife of Nicholas Sickinger, a resident of Topeka, Kansas; Anna, the deceased wife of Albert Albertsen; Mary, residing in Pasadena, California; Lizzie, who married John Kraul, of Burlington; Mollie, the wife of John J. Miller, of Burlington; and Henry A., of this review. The parents were consistent members of St. John's Catholic church.

Henry A. Beck attended the public schools of Burlington until he had passed through consecutive grades to the high school. When his text-books were put aside he entered the employ of William F. Hayden, under whose direction he learned the carpenter's trade. He remained with Mr. Hayden for twenty-one years, gradually working his way upward until he became foreman, in which capacity he continued during the last years of Mr. Hayden's life. About 1898 Mr. Beck began contracting on his own account and that he occupies a prominent position in building circles is indicated in the fact that he has been accorded the contracts for the erection of the Young Men's Christian Association building and the Young Women's Christian Association building; for the Hertzler & Boersch department building; the Schramm & Schmeig store; the Chittenden & Eastman warehouses; the Moehn Brewery; the Nurses' Home of the Burlington Hospital; the offices of the water company; the Citizens State Bank building at Mediapolis; and many private residences in Burlington and throughout the county. In a word, he is recognized as one of the most prominent contractors of Burlington. He is himself an expert mechanic and is thus able to direct the labors of those whom he employs. He possesses sound judgment, is thoroughly reliable and lives strictly up to the terms of his contracts. His word is at all times as good as his bond, and his business integrity is unassailable.

On the 12th of June, 1888, Mr. Beck was united in marriage to Miss Lena Stoll, who was born June 12, 1867, in Burlington, a daughter of Andrew and Mary (Bauemly) Stoll. The father was born in Germany about 1830 and made coopering his life work. His death occurred in 1879. The mother was born in Germany, August 26, 1840, and passed away in February, 1903. In their family were eight children: Joseph, who died in infancy; William, deceased; Maggie, the wife of Christ Reichert, of Burlington; Joseph, also residing in Burlington, Mrs. Beck; Lizzie, the deceased wife of Claude Miner; Francis, who

has passed away; and Mollie, the wife of Conrad Lersch, of Burlington.

To Mr. and Mrs. Beck have been born three daughters. Ruth Marie, who was born December 31, 1889, and was graduated from the Lincoln school; Helen Margaret, who was born October 13, 1894, and followed a course in St. John's parochial school by a commercial course in Elliott's Business College, being now a stenographer in the office of Ben Poor, city solicitor; and Dorothy Agnes, who was born May 3, 1901, and attends St. John's school.

Mr. and Mrs. Beck are communicants of St. John's Catholic church and Mr. Beck is a democrat, having supported the party since casting his first presidential vote for Grover Cleveland. For four years he filled the office of building commissioner of Burlington. In 1889 he erected a modern residence and now has a pleasant home in the west end. He also owns four residence properties, which he rents, and he has done much for the development and improvement of the city. He is thoroughly public spirited and cooperates in many movements for the general good. He is also a broad and liberal-minded man, always approachable, always genial. He has been actuated in his business undertakings by the desire to provide well for his family, and he and his wife occupy an enviable position in the social circles of the city.