

GEORGE A. GOURLEY. But few men in the county have had a longer or more successful career in the mercantile business than George A. Gourley, a resident of Rural Valley and now one of the most substantial farmers of Cowanshannock township. He was born near Saltsburg, Indiana county, Pennsylvania, February 4, 1821, and is a son of John and Martha (Scott) Gourley. The Gourley family traces its ancestry to Ireland, where Samuel Gourley, the grandfather of George A. Gourley, was born. He came to Pennsylvania, where he purchased a farm in Westmoreland county and resided until his death. He was a whig in politics, and married Catherine Dickey, by whom he had several children. John Gourley (father) was born near Hannastown, Westmoreland county. He taught for many years in his native county, was an excellent penman and accountant as well as a skillful surveyor. In 1843 he came to Cowanshannock township, where he died some three years later. In 1816 he married Martha Scott, and to their union were born fourteen children, of whom seven survived lived to maturity: Lavina, Belinda, Juliet, George A., John, Samuel and Benjamin, who enlisted in Co. D, 62d regiment, Pa. Vols., in 1863, and after serving about four months died of quinsy in the hospital near Washington, D.C. Mrs. Gourley's father, a Mr. Scott, was a native of Westmoreland county, from whence he removed to Columbus, Ohio, where he died.

George A. Gourley was reared on the farm and received his education in the schools taught by his father. In 1852 he entered the employ of Philip Mechling, of Kittanning, as a clerk and remained with him until 1856. he then embarked in the general mercantile business at Rural Valley, which he followed successfully for twenty-three years. Since 1879 he has not been actively engaged in any special line of business and has given a part of this time to the management of his home farm of one hundred and eighty acres of land near Rural Valley, and another farm which he owns but a short distance from the same place..

On September 22, 1860, he married Ellen Earhart, daughter of Jacob Earhart, of Saltsburg. Their union has been blessed with four children, one son and three daughters: Mary A., wife of Dr. Stockdill, a prominent physician of Rural Valley (see his sketch); Olive B., married to Harper Ambrose, a farmer; Laura B. and George A. Jr.

In politics Mr. Gourley is a republican, and has always voted that ticket. He was remarkably successful as a merchant, and is prosperous as a farmer. His farms, in appearance and in the crops which they afford, give evidence of his agricultural knowledge and good management.