

THOMAS J. VAN GIESEN, ex-sheriff and ex-district attorney of Forest county and a successful member of the Armstrong county bar, now resident of Leechburg, is a self-made man and has been pre-eminently the architect of his own fortune. He was born on his father's farm, in President township, Venango county, Pennsylvania, June 2, 1840, and is the son of Thomas J., Sr., and Rhoda (Crane) Van Giesen. The family traces its American ancestry to New Jersey, where John van Giesen, the paternal grandfather of Thomas J. Van Giesen, was born and reared. He served in the war of 1812, and afterwards removed to Venango county, where he followed farming until his death, which occurred when he was eighty-three years of age. He married in New Jersey and had two children: Thomas J., Sr., and Lettie, who married and lived in New Jersey until her death. Thomas J. Van Giesen, Sr. (father), was born in Essex county, New Jersey, in 1797 and removed, in 1838, to President township, Venango county, where he purchased a farm on the left bank of the Allegheny river and resided until his death, in 1849. He was an upright and God-fearing man of Quaker belief, who was of unassuming disposition, but firm in his convictions of right and duty. In political matters he affiliated with the Whig party. He was a man who strictly attended to his own business affairs. He married Rhoda Crane, a daughter of Thomas Crane, of New Jersey, and reared a family of six sons and seven daughters. Mrs. Van Giesen died in 1853, aged fifty-two years.

Thomas J. Van Giesen was reared on the home farm until he was thirteen years of age, when, both of his parents being dead, he went out into the world to fight the battle of life for himself. Without either friends or influence, he worked at whatever a boy could secure, and after being employed on a farm two or three years, he went, when only sixteen years of age, to the oil region, where he became an oil driller. When the late war commenced he left that business, enlisted as a private, on August 19, 1861, in Co G, 83d regiment, Pa. Vols., and served until 1865, when he was mustered out as first lieutenant of his company. He was twice wounded, the first time severely at Malvern Hill and the second time was struck in the head by a bullet, in front of Petersburg, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, 1864. At the close of the war he returned to the oil region, where he was engaged for several years in the oil business. In 1871 he removed to Forest county, of which he was elected sheriff in 1873. At the end of his term of office he read law, was admitted to the bar in 1878, and four years later was elected district attorney of that county. He discharged the duties of that office in a very acceptable manner. When his term expired (1885) he removed to Edenburg, Clarion county, where he practiced his profession successfully for three years. He then came to Leechburg, where he is rapidly building up a good practice.

December 22, 1868, he married Cynthia E. Sloan, daughter of Samuel S. Sloan, a prominent contractor of Tionesta, Pa. They have three children living: Anna Maud, T. Lee, and W. R. Dunn. Mrs. Van Giesen is a member of the M. E. church. She is an active business woman, and conducts a large millinery store at Leechburg.

Thomas J. Van Giesen is a member and the class leader of the M. E. church of Leechburg. He is a republican in politics, a strong and active worker in the cause of temperance, and a member of Forest Lodge, No. 184, A.O.U.W., and Leechburg Council, No. 1045, Royal Arcanum. He is one of the many veterans of the Army of the Potomac, who have their names on the roll of the Grand Army of the Republic. Three of his brothers were in the army with him: John H., who was a sergeant, was twice wounded

and died in a Confederate prison; Charles C. and Ira. Mr. Van Giesen is a plain, unassuming man, a good lawyer and a respected citizen.