

WILLIAM JOHN STEELE. Among the manufacturing companies which are eminently deserving of especial notice in a records of the great industries of Pennsylvania is the Leechburg Foundry and Machine company, whose career of prosperity has been remarkable under the management of its experienced business manager, William John Steele, --a man of high commercial standing. He was born on the old Steele homestead, six miles south of Oakland X Roads in Washington township, Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, October 1, 1849, and is a son of Absalom and Susan (Kistler) Steele. The Steele family is among the early settled families west of the Alleghenies. James Steele (great-grandfather) was a native of Ireland, and came to Westmoreland county in an early day. His son, Joseph Steele, was born in that county, and became an extensive land-owner and prosperous farmer. He married Barbara Blystone, by whom he had nine children. Their youngest child was Absalom Steele (father), who was born south of Oakland X Roads, July 15, 1820, and is till living in the enjoyment of good health. He has always been successfully engaged in farming and stock-raising. He is a member and officer of the Reformed church. He is a man of strong views and good general information, and stands well in the community where he resides. A republican from conviction, Mr. Steele is not an extremist, and has held the various offices of his township. He was a soldier for a short time in the late war. He married Susan Kistler, who was a daughter of Michael Kistler, and died December 23, 1886. To them were born twelve sons and one daughter, of whom twelve are living.

William J. Steele was educated in the common schools of his native township and Delmont academy. Leaving the academy, he taught four terms in the common schools,--three in Washington, and one in Salem township, Westmoreland county. In March, 1874, he became a member of the firm of Alcorn, Lauffer & Steele. Two and one-half years later he withdrew, and was a clerk for one year for G. L. Pfeffer, of Apollo. He next purchased an interest in the store known as the "Mill Store," which he conducted for a time with H. G. George for a partner, then became sole proprietor, and finally disposed of his building and goods to purchase the large Rugh farm, near Oakland X Roads, in Westmoreland county. After eighteen months' farming, he sold his farm, and in November, 1881, came to Leechburg, where he formed a partnership with Daniel Bowers, and they were engaged in the general mercantile business for several years. At the end of that time he purchased Mr. Bowers' interest, and continued to conduct the store with the best of success until April 1, 1889, when he sold, in order to accept his present important position as business manager of the Leechburg Foundry and Machine company, in which he and the president, W. A. Cochran, are the two heaviest stockholders. The company was incorporated October 11, 1887, and enlarged and built to the old works, which they purchased. In March, 1888, their entire plant was destroyed by fire; but they soon erected their present fine works, which are very capacious, covering a large area of ground and fully equipped with all modern improvements, as well as furnished with the latest improved machinery. Their mill, blast furnaces and foundries turn out principally heavy work, such as steel-works and rolling-mill machinery, rolls and ingot molds. The products of these works are in steady and extensive demand, owing to their general excellence, and the company is hard pressed to fill the orders which are constantly pouring in upon it. This company have a capital stock of \$100,000, and employ from one hundred to one hundred and fifty men, and its unexpected prosperity is, in a considerable degree, attributed to the clear-headed and

successful business management of Mr. Steele. The office of the company is in the Lewis block, Pittsburgh, and is connected with the works by telephone. The officers are W. A. Cochran, president; George Mesta, vice-president; W. D. Rowan, secretary, and R. R. Moore, treasurer.

October 23, 1875, Mr. Steele united in marriage with Jennie Spear, daughter of Armour Spear, of Oakland X Roads, Westmoreland county. They have had seven children,--four sons and three daughters: Ethel, Etta, Clifford, Banks, Maurice, Edgar and Irma.

W. J. Steele is a member of the Leechburg Presbyterian church, and has always been recognized as a good citizen and an honorable, progressive business man. In politics he is a protection or high-tariff republican, who believe in a strong protective tqariff as being the only means to fully develop and successfully maintain American industries and manufacturing interests.