

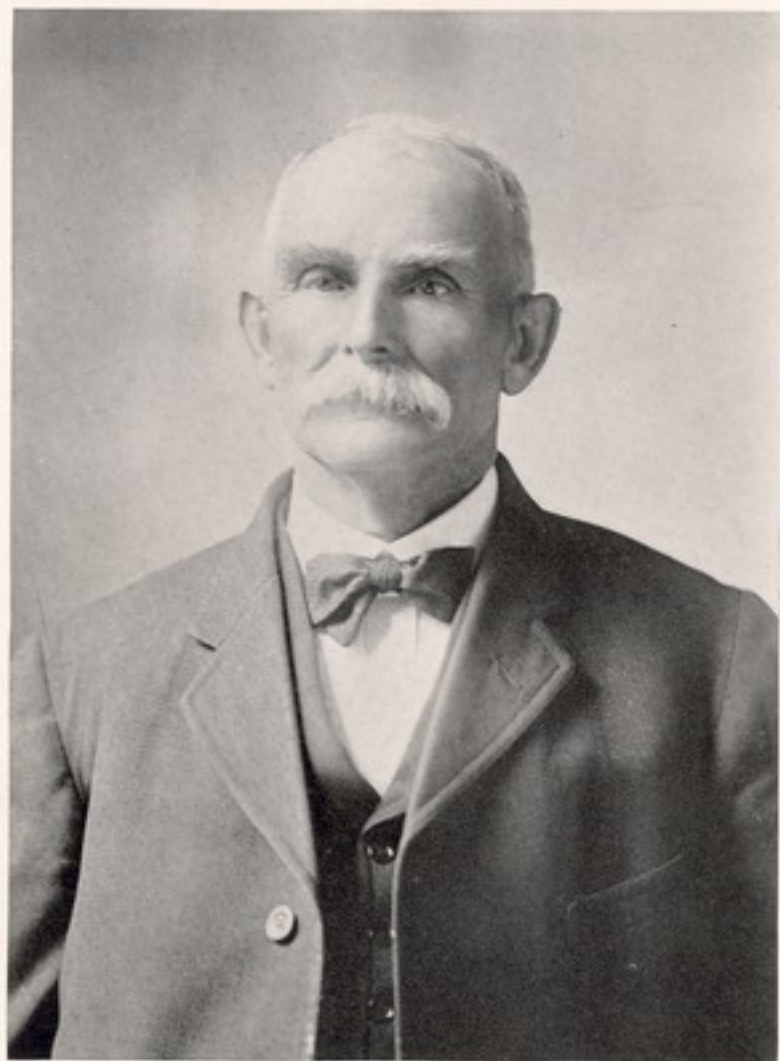
ANDREW J. UNCAPHER. Many lives have entered into the foundation and development of Starke County, and none of them more worthy to be considered in a history of pioneer personalities than A. J. Uncapher. Mr. Uncapher was practically the founder and builder of the prosperous little Village of Grovertown in Oregon Township, and for upwards of fifty years has been the leading figure in that community. In a sketch of his activities will be found more of the history of Grovertown than could be written under any other head.

Before the present Pennsylvania Railroad was built through Starke County, in this then comparatively wild section of Oregon Township Mark E. Reeves owned forty acres in the northeast corner of section 27. Mr. Reeves made a contract to deed the railroad company a hundred feet on each side of the right of way on condition that a station and certain other buildings should be built by the railway company. A civil engineer named Grover laid out and platted the site, and it was named Grovertown in his honor. Before the railway company had completed its buildings it asked of Mr. Reeves a deed to the hundred foot frontage on either side, but he would only agree to the terms of his contract to turn over the deed when the railway company completed its part of the contract. The company refused this and took down a partly completed water tank, moved it to another location, and thus killed the townsite for the time being. The plat still remained, and a couple of parties had built small stores, but the proposition was not in a way to substantial success. Grovertown, as it chanced, was exactly the halfway mark between Fort Wayne and Chicago.

The next chapter in the history of this little village begins with the entrance of Mr. Uncapher on the scene in 1867. He purchased from Mr. Reeves the entire forty acres, erected a general store, and began as a merchant and trader to contract for all the live stock, grain and other produce raised in the neighboring country, and keeping a store which sold the settlers everything they needed from a threshing machine to a goose yoke. His store was the real town, and year after year his prosperity increased. He gathered in the trade from a large scope of country, and his customers came even from the then struggling village of Knox. He had bought his first stock of goods in March, 1868, and some years ago he erected a fine store building on the main corner of the town and near the railway station. This building is 24 feet wide



Mrs A. J. Uncapher



A. J. Uncoffer.

with 110 feet depth and 24 feet high. Here he carried an immense stock of merchandise, fitted for the local trade, and though the subsequent building of railroads and the rise in importance of Knox interfered somewhat with his original business, it has been one of substantial prosperity down to the present time. Mr. Uncapher also served as post-master of Grovertown twelve years, and later his son had the office four years. He was station agent and express agent, and at one time the business of the express office on a 10 per cent basis yielded \$5 a day. He also represented some fire insurance companies, did a large business in that line, but his chief prosperity has come from his real estate investments. His surplus from the business at Grovertown was invested in lands, largely in Oregon Township, and as an investor he has shown almost infallible judgment. He had been brought up on a farm, knew farming as an experienced operator, and became an expert valuator of practically every piece of land in Oregon and adjacent townships.

His real estate investments were not confined to Starke County. In 1888 he went to Chicago, and in a subdivision of Englewood, then a separate suburb, bought seven acres, paying \$1,600 an acre. He laid out this subdivision and improved it, and still owns a portion of the tract, which is now included in the City of Chicago and is one of the most closely built up sections of the city. It has, of course, had a wonderful increase in value in the past twenty-five years. Mr. Uncapher gave his attention to this city property until 1892, and then returned and resumed business at his old stand in Grovertown. His store at Grovertown is now under the management of his son Sidney.

For many years he has continued handling lands in Starke County, and has not only bought but has added extensive improvements, and has done as much perhaps as any other one man to contribute fertile and productive acres to Starke County. Upwards of three thousand acres in Oregon Township alone have at one time or other been under his ownership, though at the present time his holdings amount to about two thousand acres. This includes much of the choicest land to be found in Oregon Township and he pays taxes of more than two thousand dollars annually.

For a man whose success is so undisputed, Mr. Uncapher has had a really remarkable career, beginning as a poor boy. He had only a few months education all told, and has relied on hard work, sound judgment and an adaptability which has caused him, especially in his earlier years, never to refuse an opportunity for legitimate earnings. At one time he carried mail by horseback and by buggy over his father's star route from Plymouth, Indiana, to Logansport, a distance of fifty miles, and later he also looked after the mail carrying between Grovertown and San Pierre. While he has been extremely successful in the acquisition of wealth and prosperity, it has been a fortune well deserved and no one can justly grudge him a single dollar. He has been the central figure in all the growth and activities of Grovertown, and while it is not a city, it is one of the important centers of population and business in Starke County, and has had a steady prosperity.

Andrew J. Uncapher belongs to a pioneer family of Starke County. He was born July 30, 1842, a son of Israel and Margaret (Sult) Uncapher. His parents came from Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, located in Marion County, Ohio, in 1837, and after a residence there of five years moved out to the western frontier in Missouri. Later they returned to Ohio, and in 1853 Israel Uncapher came to Starke County. He was a man of mechanical turn of mind, had been a miller in Ohio, and a farmer in Missouri. On moving to Starke County he located in Oregon Township near Grovertown, and acquired his first eighty acres in section 23. He entered this land at Winnemac, going on horseback to make the entry. There he lived as a farmer and a man of industry and excellent qualities until his death in 1881. For twelve years he served as justice of the peace.

A. J. Uncapher was eleven years old when his parents came to Starke County, and while his education was limited to the pioneer schools, he learned the best lessons of life in hard work. He lived on the homestead with his father until reaching his majority, and then started out with no capital except energy and ambition to succeed. He went west at the age of twenty-one, but returned not long after and made a living by canvassing for books, then sold sewing machines, and another fact of interest in his early career was contracting to build a schoolhouse. He got out the material from the native forest, cutting the trees with his own hands, and finished the contract, for which he received \$501. For one term he was a teacher. At the same time he raised potatoes on five acres of ground, and sold the crop in the ground for \$250. In the early days he was one of the chief buyers and shippers of potatoes from Starke County, sending them east in carload lots, and in this way largely got his start. From dealing in potatoes he engaged in the general merchandise business, and a general outline of his activities since that time has already been related.

Early in his business career Mr. Uncapher met and married Mary E. McCormick. Their marriage relationship has been one of ideal happiness, characterized throughout with love and success. Mr. Uncapher is a man of exemplary morals, his favorite beverage is cold water, he has never used tobacco, and has devoted himself to business, to home and to church. In his career he felt called upon to do something in the name of religion, and one of his first acts was donating land for a cemetery, and his little son, Charles, was the first to be buried therein. Soon afterwards he and his wife were converted and baptized at a general conference of the United Brethren Church, held at Indian Village by Elder Fletcher Thomas. Since then he has been very useful in church work, has served as Sunday school superintendent, as class leader, delegate to conferences and conventions. He paid more than half the cost of the United Brethren Church at Grovertown, and it is said that no deserving person has ever called upon him and gone away empty-handed. Though always a democrat in voting, Mr. Uncapher has

never aspired to office and his chief contribution to the public welfare has been through his steady influence in the development of his section of Starke County.

To Mr. and Mrs. Uncapher have been born the following children: Sidney A.; Dora A.; Ruea P., deceased; Cuba D., who died at the age of thirteen; Charles W., who died when one year old; Mary L., who died at the age of eleven months; Albert J.; and Mark E.

FRANK SLANSKY. One of the substantial citizens of Wayne Township is Frank Slansky, who has a comfortable and well improved home in section 18. Frank Slansky first came to know Starke County when a young man, more than thirty years ago, in the capacity of a farm laborer. For a number of years he worked at his trade in Chicago, and about sixteen years ago returned to Starke County and has since enjoyed prosperity as an agriculturist. He is a representative of the sterling Bohemian people who are so numerously represented in this section of Starke County, and while establishing a home and rearing his family has also been a useful factor in community affairs.

Frank Slansky was born at Pilsen, Bohemia, June 15, 1864. Many generations of the family had lived in the same locality, and his parents were Frank and Mary (Taylor) Slansky, both of whom died in Bohemia in the prime of life and when their son Frank was four years of age. After their death he was reared by his grandmother Mary Taylor, was educated in the local schools, and at the age of sixteen left his native land in 1880 and came to the United States. He took passage on a steamer at Hamburg, Germany, and was fifteen days on the ocean until landing in New York City. He came west to Chicago and then to North Judson in Starke County, where he was employed on a farm two and a half years. He then returned to Chicago and found employment as a laborer and afterwards developed skill as a mechanic in cabinet-making. He was for many years a capable employe of a piano factory, where he was one of the most proficient in general wood-working, as a finisher, framer and joiner. This was his occupation for a number of years, but in February, 1908, he returned to Starke County and bought sixty acres of land in section 18 of Wayne Township. He has since added twenty acres and now has a well improved farm of eighty acres, part of it in meadow and pasture, and the rest cultivated through the staple crops of Starke County. He has a comfortable home, substantial barn and other buildings, and enjoys a well deserved prosperity as a member of the Starke County agricultural community.

During his residence in Chicago Mr. Slansky married Josie Svoboda. She was born in the same locality of Bohemia as her husband in the year 1867, a daughter of Thomas and Josie (Hololova) Svoboda, both of whom spent all their lives in Bohemia, her father dying at the age of eighty-five and her mother aged seventy-five. They were both devout members of the Catholic faith. Mrs. Slansky had known her husband from childhood, and three years after his departure from Bohemia she followed him, taking the same route though landing at Baltimore, and