

Biography of John E. Kelley

This biography is from "Memorial and biographical record; an illustrated compendium of biography, containing a compendium of local biography, including biographical sketches of prominent old settlers and representative citizens of South Dakota..." Published by G. A. Ogle & Co., Chicago, 1897. Pages 238, photo on 239.

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HON. JOHN E. KELLEY, the congressman from South Dakota, whose portrait appears on another page of this volume, is a prominent farmer, and well-known citizen of Flandreau, South Dakota. He was born in Columbia county, Wisconsin, March 27, 1853. His parents, Thomas and Catharine (O'Niel) Kelley, were both natives of Ireland, and came to America about the year 1840, and located first at Montreal, Canada, then in New York state, and later in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and from thence to Columbia county, Wisconsin, where he pre-empted what still constitutes the old homestead. This he improved and cultivated and made his home until his death in 1884. The mother now lives in Portage, Wisconsin. Of their nine children, six are still living, viz: Mrs. Bridget Mulhern, Marquette county, Wisconsin; Mrs. Catherine Johnson, Minden, Nebraska; C. W., Portage, Wisconsin; our subject; Mrs. Anna Pardy, Moody county, South Dakota; and Mrs. Sarah Win. Portage, Wisconsin.

John E. was born on the old homestead in Wisconsin, and was educated in the common schools of that place and by private instruction. At the age of twenty years he began working in a lumber camp in Wisconsin and two years later started for Minnesota. He located in Fillmore county in 1876, rented a farm and lived there two years. In 1878 he went to Dakota and located six miles north of Coleman, Moody county where he took a timber claim and a homestead. Mr. Kelley made his home here until 1893, and, during this time, has developed and improved his farm to its present state of cultivation. In 1893 he moved to Flandreau and has since made that his home. Politically Mr. Kelley was formerly a Democrat, but left the party on account of its policy on economic questions, seeing no material difference in it and the Republican party until after the nomination of Mr. Bryan, whom he supported for the presidency in 1896, and, previous to his leaving his party took little part in political matters aside from using his own elective franchises. Of recent years, however, his friends have urged him into the political field. In 1890 he was elected to the state legislature by the Independent party. He was twice nominated a candidate for congress by the People's party, but each time was defeated in the election. In 1896 he was again nominated at the convention at Huron and was elected on the People's party ticket, and is now in congress, where he has been assigned to the committee on arid lands and irrigation and also to the state department expenditures. Mr. Kelley also gives considerable attention to literary subjects, and until January 1, 1897, was editor of the "Flandreau Herald." He still owns his homestead and now has an elegant new residence in Flandreau.

The estimable lady who presides over the household affairs of Mr. Kelley bore the maiden name of Miss Maud M. Bodine. She became his wife April 16, 1896, and they have been blessed in their married life by the advent of one child, Marion Frances. By a former marriage Mr. Kelley has four children, viz: Annie Marie, wife of Henry Martin, Flandreau, South Dakota. They have one child. Cora, Gertrude and Zita. Mrs. Kelley is a member of the Catholic church.