

Northern Kentucky
Views presents . . .

Hon. Richard Tarvin Baker

BAKER, HON. RICHARD TARVIN, Lawyer, Politician, and Farmer, was born September 13, 1816, in Campbell County, Kentucky. His parents were Samuel and Elizabeth (Armstrong) Baker; the former a native of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, and the latter of Mason County, Kentucky. They raised a very large family of children, of which he was the fourth. His father came to Kentucky, when quite a boy, with his parents, and located in Fayette County; but, about 1790, they settled in Campbell County, where he became a prominent farmer and citizen; held some offices of importance in the community; was of Scotch-Presbyterian extraction, and died in 1873. His mother was a daughter of John Armstrong, one of the early pioneers and business men of Mason County. R. T. Baker was raised on the farm, and received his education in such schools as were then supplied in the neighborhood. In 1838, he was appointed Deputy Sheriff for the county, and held the position three years. In 1841, he began reading law under his own direction; and, in the Winter of 1842, attended a course of lectures at the Cincinnati Law School, and graduated in the following March. For some time subsequently he was engaged in the office of the county clerk, but, in 1844, entered upon the practice of his profession at Alexandria, the seat of Campbell County, where he has since resided. In 1846, he was elected County Attorney, and held the position two years; in 1849, he was first elected to the Legislature, and was, therefore, a member of one of the most able and distinguished Legislatures of the State, that which adopted the present or new Constitution; in 1860, he was elected to represent Campbell and Pendleton Counties in the State Senate; was re-elected in 1865, serving eight years; in 1863, he was the Republican candidate for Governor, but was defeated by John S. Helm; and again, in 1867, he made the race for Governor, but was defeated by John W. Stevenson, of the Democratic party. In 1870, he was again elected to represent his county in the Legislature, and served one term. He cast his first Presidential vote for Gen. Harrison, and was a member of the old Whig party until its dissolution. At the election preceding the war of secession, he voted for Bell and Everett, the so-called Union candidates. He has since been identified with the Republican party, and was noted, during the war, as a bold and aggressive supporter of the National Government. He is what is styled a self-made man, purely; is a man of great natural talent; is thoroughly read; has great independence of character, adhering to his convictions of right and his avowed principles at all hazards, and yet seldom without peculiar suavity and courtesy; is a fine, versatile political speaker; has uncommon ability before a jury, carrying additional influence in his person and manners; is able as a lawyer, and stands in the front rank in his profession in the State. Mr. Baker has been twice married; in 1841, to Miss Sarah B. Bell, native of Campbell County, daughter of Benjamin B. Bell, for many years Clerk of Campbell County Court, and a prominent citizen of the county. She died in 1844; and, in 1853, he was married to Mary J. Orr, also a native of that county, and daughter of Dr. John Orr, an old and worthy physician of Alexandria.