

Benjamin Grant Willis

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WILLIS, BENJAMIN GRANT, Lawyer, was born March 9, 1823, in Boone County, Kentucky. His father, Benjamin Garrett Willis, was a native of Madison County, Virginia; came to Kentucky in 1804; settled in Adair County, but subsequently removed to Boone; was sheriff of the county for several years; son of William Willis, a soldier in the Revolution; was a farmer, and died in 1828. His mother, Ann Moseby (Grant) Willis, was a native of Scott County, and daughter of John Grant, after whom Grant County was named, who came to Kentucky with Daniel Boone; remained for a time at Boonesborough, and, subsequently, with his brother, built Grant's Station, near the head of Elkhorn; was for several years member of the Legislature of Kentucky, and was a conspicuous figure in the early Indian troubles of the State. Benjamin Grant Willis entered Indiana University, at Bloomington, at the age of ten, and with wonderful success pursued a thorough classical and scientific course of study, for three years. He then returned to his home, in Boone County, and, after spending two or three years in rest, and work on the farm, in 1839, he entered Miami University, at Oxford, Ohio. In 1840, he left school, and began the study of the law under James M. Preston, of Burlington. In 1842, he was examined by Judge Henry O. Brown, and John J. Marshall, and admitted to the bar. In the same year he entered upon the practice of his profession, at Burlington; in 1844, practiced for a few months in Helena, Arkansas; returned to Burlington; and, in 1848, removed to Brookville, the seat of Bracken County, where he has since remained, in the active practice of his profession. In 1851, he was elected County Judge of Bracken County, and held the position till the Fall election of 1854. In 1866, he was elected County Attorney, and occupied the office for four years. He has always been a Democrat, and gave his first Presidential vote for Lewis Cass; his last, before the rebellion, to John C. Breckinridge; and his first gubernatorial vote, for Gen. William O. Butler. Mr. Willis was married, July 29, 1845, to Clara J. Payne, a native of Augusta, and daughter of John Payne, who was, for forty years or more, Clerk of Bracken County.

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