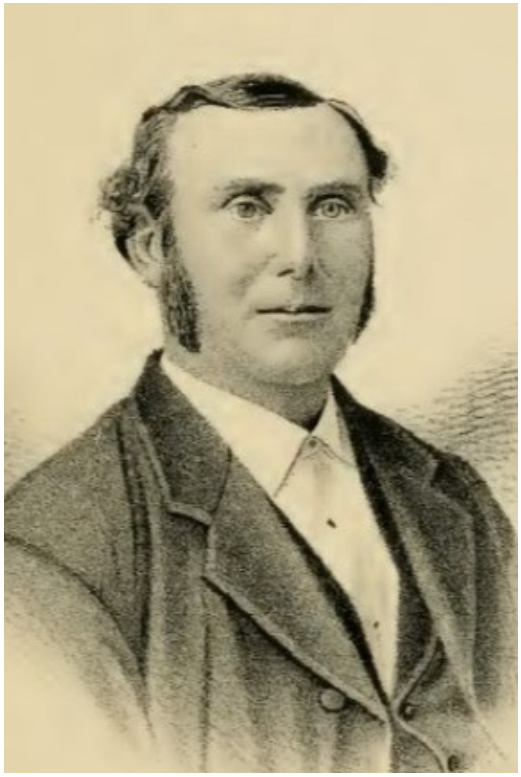


STODDARD, ALBERT R.
May 22, 1837 – May 22, 1912

Overview
Albert R. Stoddard was a merchant, coal mine developer, business executive, and community leader whose career was closely tied to the growth of Hampton, Illinois, during the late nineteenth century. Born in Pembroke, Maine, on May 22, 1837, he became the principal architect of Hampton's commercial and industrial expansion after relocating to Rock Island County in 1868. Throughout more than four decades in Hampton, Stoddard helped build successful mercantile and coal-mining enterprises that provided employment, attracted investment, and contributed significantly to the local economy. He died on May 22, 1912, his seventy-fifth birthday, after a lengthy illness.

Contemporary accounts described Stoddard as a respected businessman known for honesty, fairness, and a good-natured disposition. His influence extended beyond commerce and mining into labor relations, where he demonstrated a practical ability to negotiate compromises between workers and employers. Through his partnership with Samuel Heagy and his leadership in several mining ventures, Stoddard became one of the most prominent business figures in the upper end of Rock Island County during the late nineteenth century.

Family and Career
Albert R. Stoddard was born in Pembroke, Maine, and entered business at a young age. At about twenty-one, he established himself in the hardware trade and remained in that profession until 1867. Seeking greater opportunities in the Midwest, he moved to Hampton, Illinois, in December 1868. Shortly after arriving, he formed a partnership with Samuel Heagy, creating the firm of Heagy & Stoddard. The business quickly became one of the area's

most successful mercantile enterprises, selling between $60,000 and $75,000 worth of goods annually.

Stoddard married Eliza A. Hunter on April 4, 1863. The couple had no children. His wife predeceased him, and at the time of his death he was survived by a sister and other extended family members.

While maintaining an active retail business, Stoddard became increasingly involved in coal mining. Together, Heagy and Stoddard began prospecting for coal in 1869 and later opened Mine No. 1 near Hampton. Their mining operations expanded rapidly, leading to the formation of the Hampton Coal Mining Company. Over time, the company opened several additional mines, making it one of the region's largest coal producers.

After suffering substantial financial losses in mining ventures, including a failed coal project near Mattoon, Illinois, and difficulties with the Northern Mining Company, Stoddard continued working in the industry. He later served as superintendent of a coal mine operated by his brother-in-law, A. J. Blethen, in Henry County, Illinois, before eventually retiring and returning to Hampton.

Political Contributions
Although Stoddard was not primarily a political officeholder, he participated in public affairs through civic leadership and economic governance. Historical records identify him as a Democrat, and he often exercised his influence through business organizations and community institutions rather than elected office.

One of Stoddard's most significant public contributions occurred during a labor dispute in October 1886 involving coal miners and mine operators. When reports circulated claiming that mine owners had rejected a miner wage increase, Stoddard publicly refuted those allegations through a sworn affidavit. Rather than opposing the miners' request, he worked to create a compromise that would protect both labor and management interests.

Stoddard proposed a plan requiring mine operators to post a $500 bond guaranteeing stable coal prices for six months. He believed that maintaining market stability would make it possible to support higher wages for miners while preserving the financial health of the mining companies. Witnesses present at the meeting confirmed that his proposal was adopted and that the operators agreed to the arrangement. These actions demonstrate Stoddard's ability to navigate complex economic and labor issues through negotiation rather than confrontation.

His conduct during the 1886 negotiations reveals a leader skilled in compromise, accountability, and consensus-building. By balancing worker concerns with business realities, he helped reduce conflict and encouraged practical solutions during a period of frequent labor unrest in the coal industry.

Local Economic Influence
The greatest impact of Albert R. Stoddard was on the economic development of Hampton and the surrounding region. As a partner in Heagy & Stoddard and later as a mining executive, he helped transform Hampton into one of the most important coal-producing

centers in Rock Island County. The mines he helped develop employed hundreds of workers and produced between 1,000 and 1,200 railcar loads of coal per week, supplying markets throughout the Mississippi River Valley.

Stoddard's influence extended beyond coal extraction. He helped oversee transportation infrastructure, including railroad connections and shipping facilities that enabled coal to reach regional and national markets. Heagy & Stoddard also constructed a wharf and supplied coal and wood to steamboats operating on the Mississippi River, further integrating Hampton into wider commercial networks. Their commercial success created jobs, spurred construction, increased trade, and encouraged population growth throughout the area.

Even when major business ventures resulted in significant losses, Stoddard continued pursuing industrial development opportunities. His willingness to invest capital, organize new mining companies, and expand production reflected a commitment to economic growth and community prosperity. Through entrepreneurship, industrial leadership, and skilled negotiation, Albert R. Stoddard helped establish the foundation of Hampton's late nineteenth-century economy and left a lasting legacy in the history of Rock Island County.