HISTORY

—OF—

BERRIEN AND VAN BUREN COUNTIES,

MICHIGAN.

With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches

OF

ITS PROMINENT MEN AND PIONEERS.

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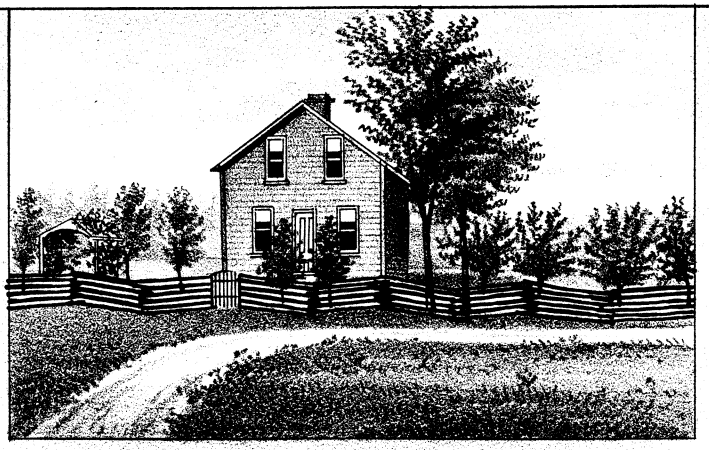
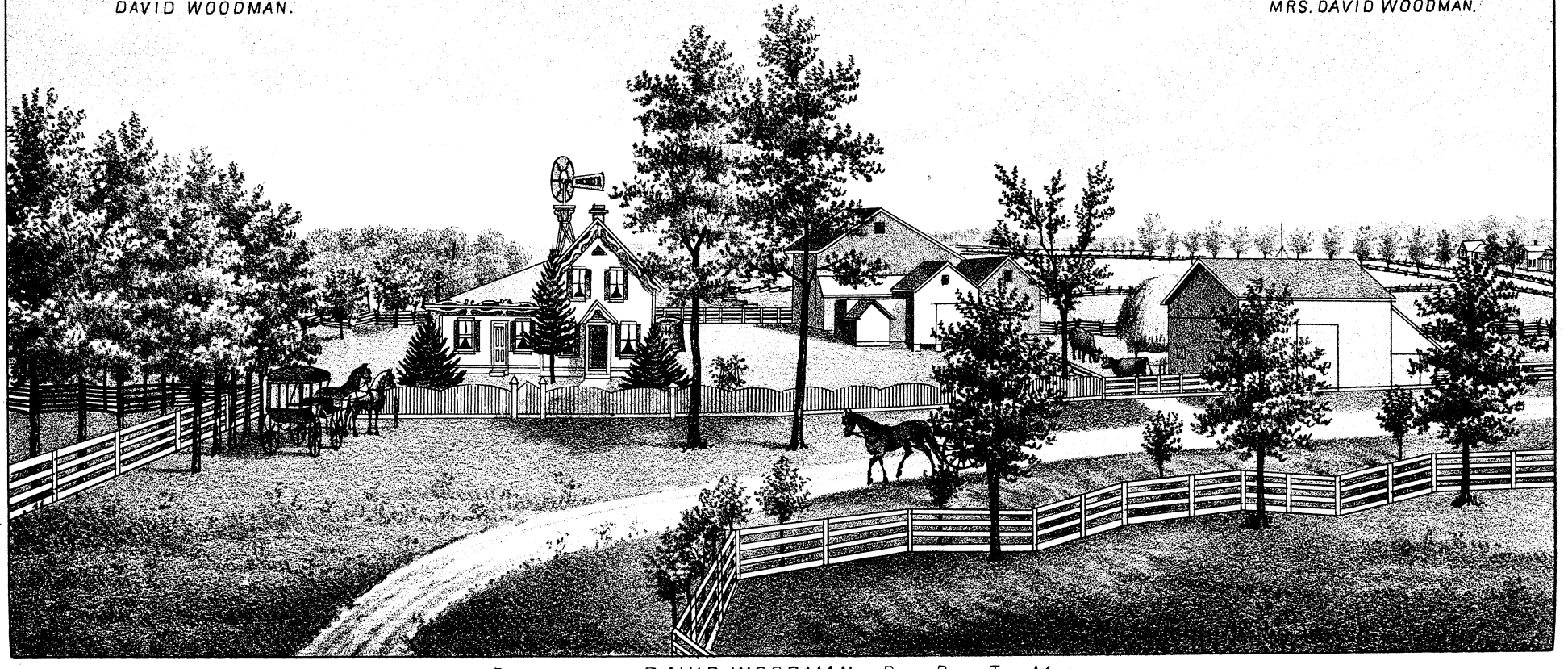
DAVID WOODMAN.

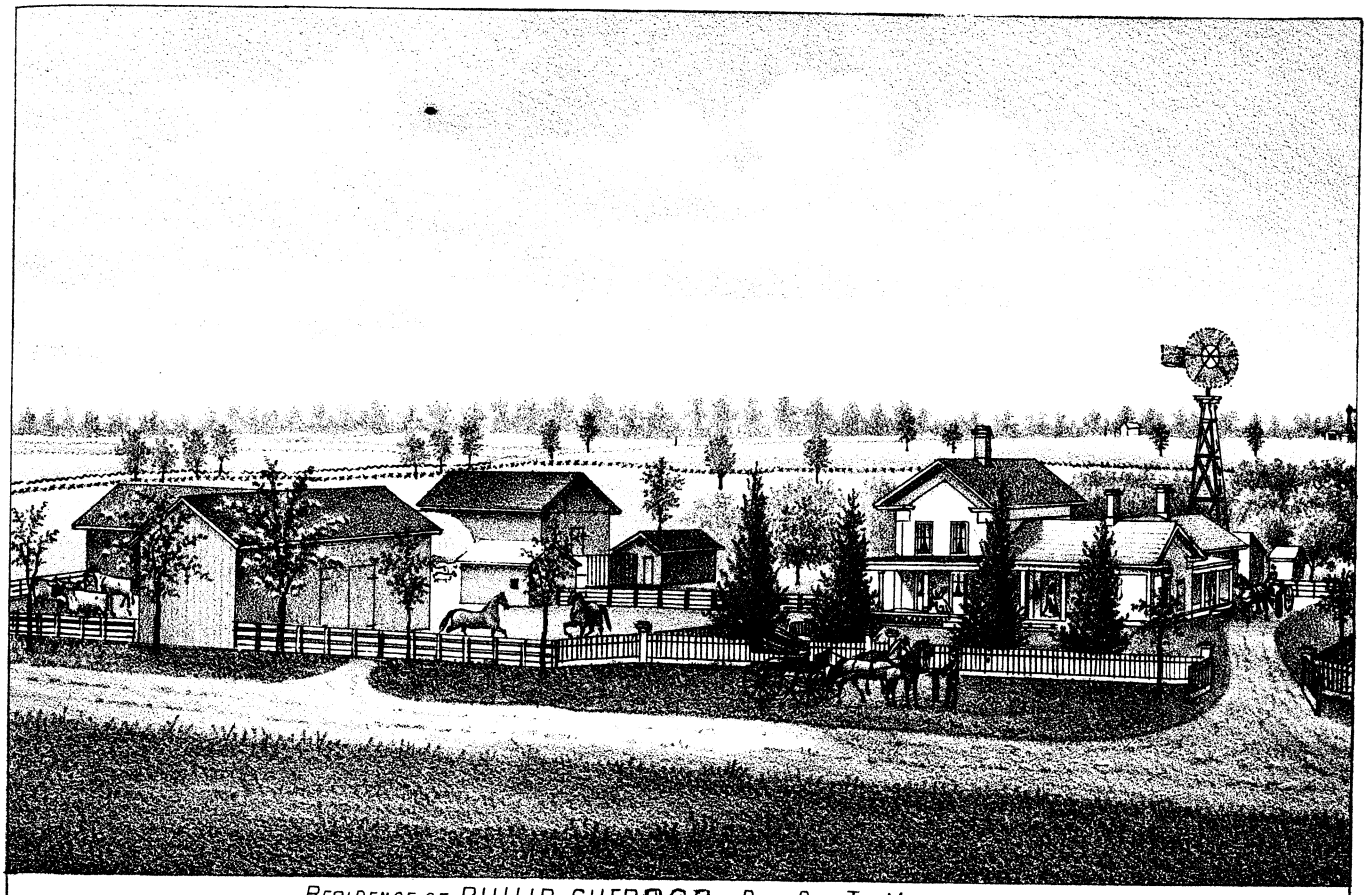




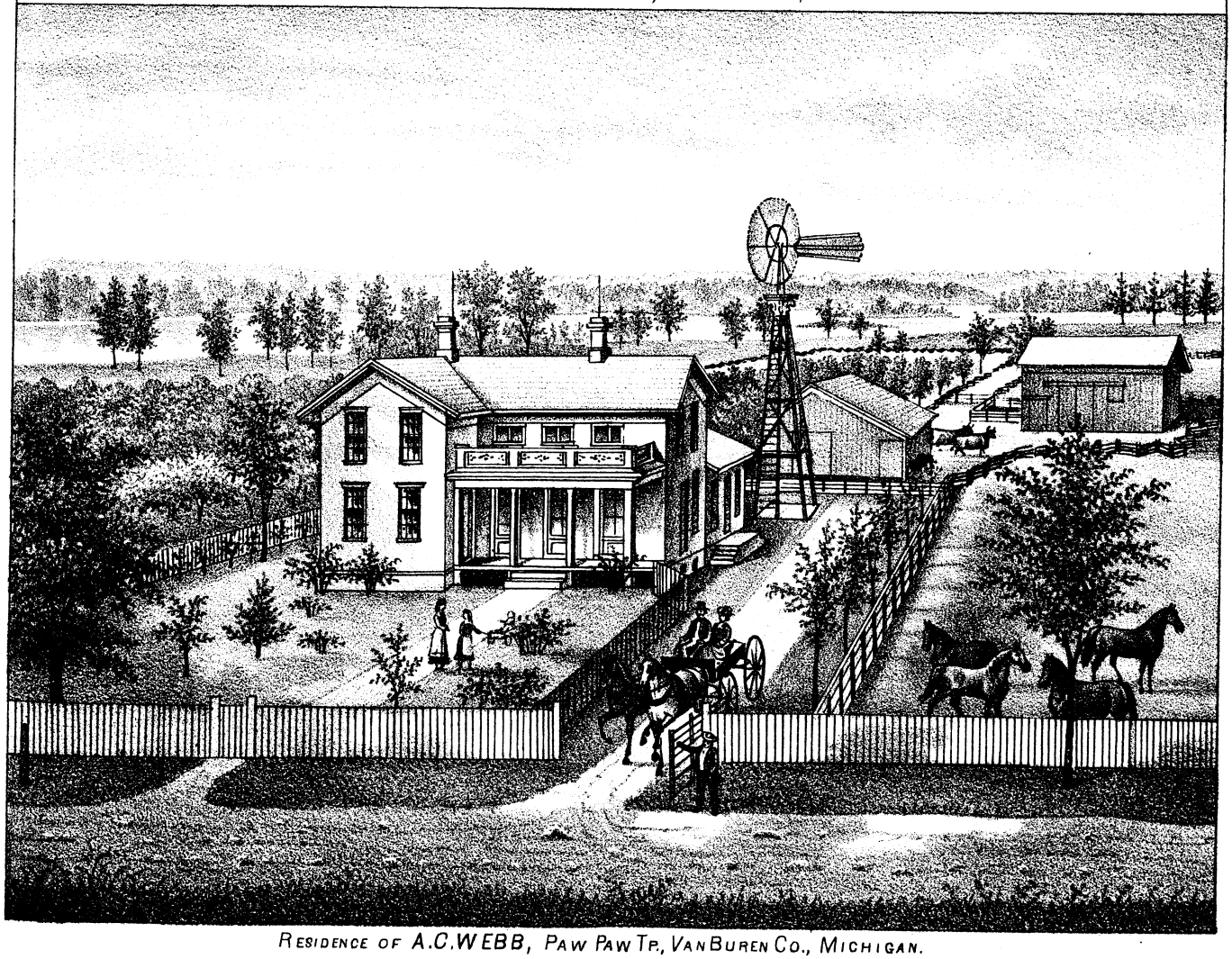
MRS. DAVID WOODMAN.



RESIDENCE OF DAVID WOODMAN, PAW PAW TP., MICH.



RESIDENCE OF PHILIP SHERROD, PAW PAW TP., MICH.



RESIDENCE OF A.C.WEBB, PAW PAW TP., VAN BUREN CO., MICHIGAN.



PETER GREMPS.



MRS. PETER GREMPS.

PETER GREMPS,

whose portrait, together with that of his wife, appears on this page, was born in the town of Palatine, Montgomery Co., N. Y., May 12, 1801, and was the youngest and the only son in a family of six children. His parents, John P. and Nancy (Belinger) Gremps, were also natives of the town of Palatine. John Gremps was a soldier of the Revolution, and was wounded in action. He died about the year 1815. Mrs. Nancy Gremps died in 1837.

After his father's death Peter Gremps remained at home with his mother. In 1820, when but nineteen years of age, he was married to Christina H., daughter of Peter and Elizabeth Houck, natives of Schoharie Co., N. Y., and lived on the old homestead until 1835. His attention was attracted to the wonderful tide of emigration which swept westward, and he decided to join the throng who were seeking homes in the great West. To decide was to act, and he came to Michigan *via* the Erie Canal to Buffalo, thence by lake to Detroit. At the latter place he met his son, John Gremps, and a nephew named Arnold Vedder, who had made the journey with teams across Canada. Two weeks later they arrived at the site of Paw Paw, Van Buren Co. Mr. Gremps purchased land on section 12, and became one of the founders of Paw Paw village. He was its first postmaster, which was the only office he could be induced to accept. He was ever industrious, frugal, and genial, and trained his family to similar habits. He at first accumulated but a moderate quantity of worldly goods, but finally became possessed of an abundance. In company with Messrs. Willard and Daniels, he built the first grist-mill at Paw Paw, the same which is now standing. His principal business was always that of a farmer. Mr. and Mrs. Gremps were the parents of six children, as follows: John, born in 1821, died in 1861; Ann Eliza, born in 1823, died in 1847; Rosanna, born Dec. 14, 1825, married to Alonzo Shultz, May 25, 1854, and now living with her husband in the village of Paw Paw; Peter H., born July 17, 1828, married to Caroline S. Durkee, Jan. 16, 1868; Margaret, born in March, 1830, died April 2, 1862; Nancy M., born in March, 1833, married to Daniel Boone, June 5, 1868, and now living in Adrian, Mich. Peter H. Gremps occupies a portion of the old farm, but not the old homestead. He has one child, Belle, born Dec. 24, 1871, and is a worthy representative of his honored sire, who died March 29, 1874. Mrs. Peter Gremps, Sr., died April 24, 1860.

ANDERSON C. WEBB.

The father of this gentleman was a native of New York, and was born July 10, 1811. He married, in the State of Ohio, Julia Cone, who was born in Connecticut, May 21, 1815. They are both now living in Kansas.

Anderson C. Webb is the third in a family of seven children, and was born March 16, 1839. Until he was fourteen years old he lived with his parents in Ohio, and came from there with them to Michigan, settling in Paw Paw township, Van Buren Co. He remained at home most of the time, assisting his parents, until he was twenty-six years of age, and on the 2d of February, 1865, was married to Miss Laura M. Rhodes, daughter of Henry W. and Laura M. Rhodes. She was born in Paw Paw, June 3, 1843, her father being one of the pioneers of the place. Mr. and Mrs. Webb are the parents of four children, as follows: Dora M., born June 8, 1866; Frank J., born Oct. 26, 1868; Cora M., born Feb. 12, 1872; Fred A., born April 28, 1878. On the 24th of October, 1865, Mr. and Mrs. Webb settled on the farm where they are now living, a view of which will be found in this work. The place, which contains one hundred and forty acres, was but partially improved when Mr. Webb occupied it, but is now a very pleasant home. Mrs. Webb is the oldest in a family of five children; her parents are yet residing in Paw Paw. Mr. Webb is a Republican in politics, and he and his wife are members of the Free-Will Baptist Church, with which they united in 1870. Mr. Webb received his education at the common schools, although for a short time he attended the Agricultural College.



HENRY W. RHODES.



MRS. HENRY W. RHODES.

HENRY W. RHODES

was born in the town of Burrilville, R. I., Nov. 8, 1811, and was the second in a family of six children,—four sons and two daughters,—who are all living at present. Mr. Rhodes' father, Henry Rhodes, was born in Providence, R. I., in 1783, and died in Paw Paw, Mich., March 24, 1852. The latter's wife, Demaris (Parker) Rhodes, was born in Rhode Island in 1782, and died in Paw Paw, in 1868. William Rhodes, the grandfather of Henry W., was a sea-captain during the Revolutionary war. The parents of Mrs. Henry Rhodes, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Parker, were natives of England, and Quakers.

Henry W. Rhodes removed to Vermont with his parents when eight years old, and remained there until he was twenty-two, assisting in the home duties and taking care of his father and mother. In the summer of 1833 he proceeded to Monroe Co., N. Y., returning to Vermont in the winter following, and coming thence to Michigan. In October, 1835, he arrived in the latter State, and in November purchased one hundred and sixty acres of land on section 8, in the township of Paw Paw, Van Buren Co. May 18, 1836, he was married to Laura M., daughter of Joseph and Achsah (Moore) Luce, and widow of Jeremiah Trumble. She was born in Monroe Co., N. Y., on the 22d of April, 1813, and was the fourth in a family of eight children,—three sons and five daughters. Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes were married in Monroe Co., N. Y., where he had returned for her. Her father, Joseph Luce, was born in Massachusetts, June 11, 1782, and died April 9, 1847. Her mother, Achsah (Moore) Luce, was born in New Hampshire, Feb. 9, 1780, and died April 5, 1863. To Henry W. Rhodes and wife have been born the following children, viz.: Laura M., born June 3, 1843; William H., born Dec. 3, 1844; Charles P., born May 1, 1846, died Oct. 18, 1850; Frank W., born July 19, 1849; Julia S., born March 26, 1853. Laura M. is the wife of A. C. Webb, of Paw Paw; William H. married Mary E. Roeney, of Philadelphia; Frank W. married Jenny Salt, a native of Canada, and resides on the old homestead in Paw Paw; and Julia S. became the wife of James H. Wilder, who has settled on a farm in Dakota Territory.

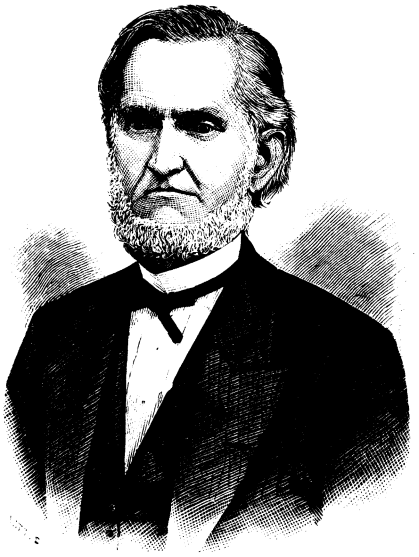
Henry W. Rhodes is by trade a mason, and his start in life was made with the trowel, his wife keeping house in the woods, with no neighbors nearer than a distance of three-fourths of a mile. The forest was thronged with wolves, whose nightly howls woke the echoes far and near. The red man visited the lone cabin occasionally to beg for victuals, and Mrs. Rhodes' recollection is vivid regarding the experiences of life in the Michigan wilderness. Mr. Rhodes began with the proceeds of his summer's work, less than two hundred dollars, and became an extensive owner and dealer in real estate, owning, at one time, seven hundred acres of land, aside from other tracts to which he held tax titles. He has at the present time considerable wild land in Kansas.

Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes have been connected with the Christian Church since 1844. In politics Mr. Rhodes is a Republican, and has often been selected to fill office in his township. He is numbered among the energetic class who have acquired prominence as self-made men, and is now enjoying the fruits of his labor through more than forty years in the "beautiful peninsula."

EDWIN BARNUM,

whose portrait is given in connection with this sketch, was born in Mentz, Cayuga Co., N. Y., March 31, 1814, and was the fifth in a family of seven children,—four sons and three daughters. He assisted in the duties of home until he was twenty-one, and in the spring of 1835 came to Paw Paw township, Van Buren Co., Mich., in which he lived, with the exception of a few brief periods, until his death, which occurred Aug. 24, 1875. Soon after his arrival in this State he located land on section 10 in Paw Paw, and kept "bachelor's hall" for one year. He boarded during the remaining time until 1840, and on the 21st of March, in the latter year, was married to Sarah Ann, daughter of John and Mary Lyle, who had moved from the State of

New York in the fall of 1835. Mrs. Barnum was born Nov. 5, 1820, and was the third in a family of ten children,—five sons and five daughters. Of these, eight are now living in Van Buren Co., and two in Cass Co., Mich. Mr. and Mrs. Barnum have had but one child,—Isaac, born May 19, 1842. At an early age he evinced extraordinary talent; being of a delicate constitution, he adopted the study of the law, in which profession he would have without doubt distinguished himself, had his health permitted. He is now in Colorado, seeking a new lease of life among the rocky peaks and pure, dry atmosphere of that State.



EDWIN BARNUM.

At the age of twenty-nine years, Edwin Barnum embraced religion, and united with the Christian Church, in which he was soon licensed to preach. He labored earnestly in this sparsely-settled region with an acknowledged power of doing good. His purity of life, genial temper, liberality, and great kindness of heart made him many friends. In language he was eloquent, and in principle correct. He held the office of county treasurer eight consecutive years, and filled, very acceptably, the office of supervisor several terms. For thirty-two years he was a consistent member of the Church of Christ. His faithful and devoted wife, now wearing the garb of widowhood, is living in the village of Paw Paw, surrounded by the comforts which she assisted her husband to accumulate.

DAVID WOODMAN,

the second son of the late Joseph Woodman, was born in March, 1818, in Wheelock, Caledonia Co., Vt. In the summer of 1831 he removed, with his father's family, to Riga, Monroe Co., N. Y., remaining there, laboring upon the farm summers and attending the district school winters, until the spring of 1835, when his father and family removed to Michigan, leaving him with Joseph Luce, upon a rented farm. In September, 1835, he, with Mr. Luce and family and four other families, took up their line of march for Michigan. The party consisted of twenty-nine persons; their outfit was five covered wagons, each drawn by two pair of sturdy oxen; nine cows were driven along, which furnished milk and butter for use on the way; it was known as the "big ox-train," and its progress was a matter of record at that time. It crossed the Niagara at Queenstown, arriving in Detroit fourteen days afterwards. It then wended its way westward, and arrived at Paw Paw in October, the journey occupying twenty-eight days. Paw Paw at that time consisted of a saw-mill, a very small hotel, a post-office, and three or four log huts or dwellings. The entire county of Van Buren at that time was included in the township of Lafayette, now Paw Paw. Young Woodman rendered his father efficient aid in improving the farm and erecting permanent buildings. As the spring of 1836 approached he, with his brother, prepared for sugar-making on section 33, and with two exceptions he made sugar at the same place for more than thirty years. At the time he opened his camp the adjoining forest was one vast Indian sugar-camp.

Several wigwams being in close proximity to his own, he became quite familiar with the Indian language and their traits of character, one of which was honesty; that was always strictly adhered to. He well knew the old chiefs Pokagon and Pee Pee Yaw, and the old warrior, Shavehead, who was supposed to be one hundred years old, and boasted that he had killed a hundred men. In the spring of 1836, Mr. Woodman made a canoe at his sugar-camp, and, with the assistance of two others, the canoe was "backed" to Eagle Lake, about a mile distant. They were, no doubt, the first white men that ever floated upon that beautiful lake, and it was this party that gave the present name to that sheet of water. A pair of bald eagles had built an enormous nest in the forks of a large whitewood-tree standing on its southern shore, hence it was called *Eagle Lake*. Mr. Woodman was present at the first election ever held in Van Buren County, also at the first Circuit Court. He was also present at the organization of the township of Antwerp. He held a second lieutenant's commission (which bears the name of Stevens T. Mason) in a company of riflemen, also a first lieutenant's commission, signed by William Woodbridge, Governor, dated 1840. He commenced on the farm where he now resides in 1839, keeping what was called "bachelor's hall," working on his place summers and at other vocations winters. He frequently passed an entire week without seeing a single person. In 1841 he visited his old home in New England, and returned, thankful that he had found a better place than old Vermont. In the mean time he had cleared away the forest and erected a comfortable dwelling. He also built a house on some land he had purchased on the east side of the village of Paw Paw, and in May, 1844, he married Miss Jane Harris, who, about two years previous, had arrived from Wheatland, Monroe Co., N. Y., and was now a resident of Antwerp. They remained on their place in Paw Paw until April, 1845, when they removed to their farm. Early in the spring of 1852, Mr. Woodman removed his family to the village of Paw Paw, and, in company with his two brothers and brother-in-law, made a trip to California, their teams leaving Paw Paw March 16th, and arriving on Feather

River the 27th of July, making the journey in one hundred and thirty-five days. Mr. Woodman returned in the spring of 1853, by the way of Panama, Kingston, Jamaica, and New York, arriving home in June, 1853. He immediately took possession of his farm, purchased one hundred and fifty acres adjoining, and, with his usual energy, commenced improving his new purchase and preparing for building. His house had burned during his absence, and a small, rough structure had been erected in its place. He built his present residence in 1857, and in the summer of 1864, accompanied by his wife, he again visited Vermont. They traveled extensively in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, and returned through New York, visiting the early home of Mrs. Woodman. In 1866 they visited his brother in Kansas, traveling through Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, and Wisconsin, journeying over four hundred miles by stage and wagon. In 1876 they visited Washington, crossing over to Arlington Heights, where the nation's dead are buried, and where stands the mansion of the rebel chieftain, R. E. Lee. They spent a week at the Centennial, and returned by the Lehigh Valley and Suspension Bridge.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodman have had five children: Celia, born in 1845; now in California. Edson, born in 1847; enlisted in the army in 1864; was with Sherman in his Southern campaigns; was wounded at Bentonville, and receives a pension from the government; he owns a fine farm adjoining his father's, and is a noted breeder of Percheron Norman horses. Emma, born in 1854, died at the age of three years. Jason, born in 1860, is a member of the junior class in the Agricultural College. Dora, born in 1862, is a student in the Paw Paw union school.

Mr. Woodman has been one of the most successful farmers in his township, his farm comprising about three hundred acres of choice land. He practices mixed husbandry, raising stock and all the staple varieties of grain. He is one of the principal stockholders in the First National Bank of Paw Paw, and has been since its organization. He has held various township offices; has been assessor, highway commissioner, justice of the peace, and is now supervisor of Paw Paw. He is also president of the Van Buren County Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company; president of the Van Buren County Agricultural Society; director of the Western Michigan Agricultural and Industrial Society. He is also Master of the Van Buren County Pomona Grange. He is and has been for many years an elder in the Disciples Church of Paw Paw, a position he holds with honor to himself as well as to the church. He is now almost sixty-two years of age, enjoys perfect health, has never been confined to bed by sickness since he can remember; has only been visited by a physician, professionally, once, and that was to replace a dislocated shoulder, caused by a runaway accident. He has never used intoxicating liquors nor tobacco, believing both to be ruinous to health, destructive to property, and degrading to all using or trafficking in them.

PHILIP SHERROD

(a view of whose home appears in this work) was born in Erie Co., Pa., March 12, 1829, and was the third in a family of four children,—three sons and one daughter. His father, Daniel Sherrod, was born Sept. 20, 1800, in Pennsylvania, and his mother in Lincoln Co., Ohio, in 1802. They were married in Ohio in June, 1824, Mr. Sherrod having then been in the latter State one year. The maiden name of Mrs. Daniel Sherrod was Rebecca Kyle. After their marriage they located at Erie, Pa., where Mr. Sherrod engaged in farming.

Philip Sherrod came to Michigan in 1848, and remained eighteen months, farming and attending school. In the spring of 1850 he returned to Pennsylvania, but in November, 1851, came again to Michigan, and purchased the place upon which he now resides, in the township of Paw Paw, Van Buren Co. May 2, 1852, he was married to Berryund, daughter of James and Hannah Lee, who were early settlers in Michigan. Mrs. Sherrod was born June 16, 1823, and was the ninth in a family of ten children,—seven sons and three daughters. Daniel Sherrod had purchased, through an agent, the land on which Philip now lives, the latter purchasing of his father. Upon his arrival in Michigan Mr. Sherrod found his means exhausted, and in order to pay for his land cut and sold saw-logs. The first year he occupied the place, he cleared seven acres and sowed it to wheat. Mr. Sherrod now has one hundred acres, including twenty which have been added to his original purchase. All is under excellent improvement. His residence is neat and commodious, and his out-buildings are ample. Mr. and Mrs. Sherrod are the parents of three children, as follows: Daniel, born Oct. 9, 1854, died Aug. 12, 1858; Lena, born March 12, 1871; and one who died in infancy, nameless.

In 1868, Mr. Sherrod and his wife united with the Free-Will Baptist Church, in which Mr. Sherrod is now a deacon and a trustee. He is, politically, a Democrat, never having acted with any other party. He has held the office of highway commissioner six years, and justice of the peace, to fill vacancy, two years. Rebecca, the first wife of Daniel Sherrod, died in February, 1833, and in February, 1835, Mr. Sherrod was married to Hannah Cole, who was a native of New York. Seven children were the fruit of this union. Mrs. Daniel Sherrod, aged seventy-nine, is living in this township.

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Sherrod enjoy the esteem and confidence of all their acquaintances. Their walks have been upright in life, and their industry and economy have built for them the home they now occupy, with all its comfortable surroundings.

WILLIAM H. LEE.

This gentleman, whose portrait appears in this work, was the third in a family of ten children,—six sons and four daughters,—and was born in Chenango Co., N. Y., July 18, 1812. His father, James Lee, was a native of New York, and his mother, Hannah (Church) Lee, of Vermont. At the age of fourteen years William Lee began to learn the trade of a mason with his father, and worked in that business with the latter until he was twenty-four. In April, 1836, he was married to Susanna Brown, who was born June 5, 1817. To them were born ten children, of whom five are now living, viz.: Harriet E., wife of Alma Mulligan, of Bangor; John S., now a resident of Nebraska;