

A
Twentieth Century History
OF
CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN.

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EDITOR.

ILLUSTRATED.

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belongs to the Elks lodge, the Knights of the Maccabees, the Legion of Honor and the Knights of Pythias. In politics he is an unfaltering Republican, and has served for two terms as city treasurer, as city clerk for one term and as alderman for the second ward for two terms. In the discharge of his official duties he displays the same fidelity and care which are manifest in the management of his private business interests and in Dowagiac he has a wide and favorable acquaintance resulting from a genial manner and an upright life.

THEODORE F. WILBER.

Theodore F. Wilber, an honored veteran of the Civil war, who enlisted in defense of the Union when only seventeen years of age, is now living in Dowagiac. He was born in Seneca county, New York, at the family home on the west bank of Cayuga Lake, June 12, 1846. His father, Gideon S. Wilber, was also a native of Seneca county, where he resided until 1854, when with his family he came to the middle west, settling first on a farm in Wayne township, Cass county, where he lived for about a year. In the spring of 1855 he bought a farm in La Grange township, removed to that property and continued to make his home there throughout his remaining days. His entire life was devoted to general agricultural pursuits and he tilled the fields and cultivated the crops until his life's labors were ended, being a diligent, energetic man. He was also a public-spirited citizen and his fellow townsmen, recognizing his worth and loyalty, frequently called him to positions of trust and responsibility. He held many offices during the years of his residence in this county. He was superintendent of the poor for about fifteen years and was deputy sheriff for two years. He gave his political allegiance to the Republican party from the time of its organization, watched with interest the progress of events in the south prior to the Civil War and when the Republican party was formed to meet existing conditions, he joined its ranks and was one of its most loyal advocates. For forty years he was a reader of the semi-weekly *New York Tribune* and at one time was the only subscriber to the paper in this part of the country. He was well known in the county as a man of public spirit, interested in everything relating to the material, intellectual and moral as well as political progress of the community, and he assisted in building three different churches, although he did not ally himself with any denomination. He was, however, a man of high moral principles and genuine worth who was reliable in business affairs and at all times commanded and merited the confidence and esteem of those with whom he came in contact. He married Miss Louisa M. Hause, also a native of Seneca county, New York, and a daughter of John Hause, whose birth occurred in the Empire state and who died in Cass county at the age of eighty-three years. The death of Gideon Wilber occurred when he had reached the vener-

able age of eighty-five years. In his family were five children, one daughter and four sons, all of whom are living with one exception.

Theodore F. Wilber, the second child and eldest son, was about eight years of age when brought by his parents to Michigan and has since remained a resident of Cass county. He began his education in the public schools of New York and continued his studies in the district schools of LaGrange township. Through the summer months he aided in the work of the fields and remained at home until seventeen years of age, when, in response to his country's need, he enlisted as a private of Company M, First Michigan Cavalry, in 1863. With that command he served until the close of the war and was then sent among the Indians on the frontier to aid in the suppression of the uprisings among the red race. He thus did duty in the far west until March, 1866, after serving for nearly three years. He was ever a faithful and loyal soldier, never faltering in the performance of any duty that devolved upon him whether it led him to the firing line, stationed him on the lonely picket line or called him to the frontier.

When the war ended Mr. Wilber returned to his old home in LaGrange township and resumed farming on his father's place. He gained intimate knowledge of the best methods of tilling the soil and caring for the crops and was thus well qualified to carry on farm work on his own account when he established a home for himself. He was married on the 24th of December, 1868, to Miss Fannie Jennings, a daughter of Milton and Margaret (Burns) Jennings. Her father was born in Connecticut. Her mother died when Mrs. Wilber was only two years old. There were three children in the family, the eldest being Charles, who enlisted for service as a soldier in the Civil war and was killed in battle. The elder daughter, Martha, is now deceased, leaving Mrs. Wilber, the youngest member of the family, as the only one now surviving with the exception of a half sister, for the father was married twice. Mr. and Mrs. Wilber have one son, Fred J., who is a civil engineer, who was graduated on the completion of the engineering course in the Michigan state university at Ann Arbor in 1900 and is now located in Buffalo, New York.

Mr. Wilber is executor for the father's estate, comprising two hundred and sixty acres of land, and in the management of this property displays good business ability and executive force. He belongs to H. C. Gilbert Post, G. A. R., of Dowagiac, and is now senior vice commander. He has always taken an active part in the work of the Grand Army of the Republic and is a stalwart advocate of the principles upon which this order is based. He enjoys recounting incidents of army life around its campfires amid the genial companionship of his old army comrades. He was but seventeen years of age when he enlisted and twenty years of age when honorably discharged and was therefore not a voter until one year after he had completed his term of military service. His first presidential ballot was cast for General Grant and he has always been

an advocate of the Republican party. He has resided in this county for a half century and is now the only Wilber here representing his father's descendants. He is well known and his strong and salient characteristics have been such as have won for him favorable regard from his fellowmen. Great changes have occurred since he came to the county as the work of improvement has been carried forward and Mr. Wilber's mind reverts back to the time when much of the land was still uncultivated, when there were considerable stretches of forest yet uncut and when several of the towns which are now the centers of business and commercial enterprise had not yet been founded. He has ever been deeply interested in the work of development and has borne his full share in this task, manifesting at all times the same loyalty which he displayed when upon southern battlefields he followed the stars and stripes.

H. A. CREGO.

H. A. Crego, known throughout Cass county as Squire Crego, has for thirty-six years been justice of the peace, and no stronger evidence could be given of capable service and impartial decisions than the fact that he has so long been retained in the office. He has lived in Cass county from an early day and now makes his home on section 29, Volinia township. Moreover he is entitled to representation in this volume as a native son of Michigan, his birth having occurred on the 2nd of August, 1840, in Lenawee county, at the junction of the Chicago and Monroe turnpikes. His parents were Rulof D. and Eliza (Arms) Crego. The father was born in the Mohawk valley of New York and there remained until about thirty years of age, when, believing that he might enjoy better business opportunities in the new but growing west, he made his way to Michigan, settling in Lenawee county. He had been married in New York. His first wife was Mary J. Strannahan and there were ten children born of that marriage. Following the death of the mother the father married again. His wife was a native of Conway, Franklin county, Massachusetts, and was there reared. She first married Ichabod Nelson, and it was subsequent to his death that she gave her hand in marriage to Rulof D. Crego. By this marriage there were born three children, of whom Squire Crego is the second. The other two, however, died in infancy, so that the subject of this review is the only surviving member of the entire family.

When only two years old Squire Crego was brought to Cass county by his parents, the family locating in Newberg township, where he was reared in the usual manner of farm lads of that period and locality. He was educated in the district schools and shared with the family in the pioneer experiences incident to the establishment of a home on the frontier. The father died when the son was eighteen years of age and he and his mother remained in Newberg township for about four years thereafter, when Mrs. Crego also passed away. Squire Crego, how-