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## THE CITY OF IONIA - ITS FIRST SETTLEMENT AND EARLY HISTORY From the *Detroit Post and Tribune* of June 1, 1878

In the fall of 1832 the Hon. Samuel Dexter, of German Flats (near Herkimer), New York, came into this quarter of the country, viewed the land, chose the northwest quarter of section nineteen, town seven north, range six west, of Ionia county, and entered it at the land office in Kalamazoo. That was the first step taken towards the civilization of this region. He returned to his home, sounded the praises of the country, and by the ensuing spring had enlisted a company of sixty-three persons to lead in the work of subduing this land.

This company consisted of Samuel Dexter, Erastus Yeomans, Oliver Arnold, Joel Guild, Edward Guild, and Darius Windsor, with their wives and children; and Dr. William B. Lincoln, Patrick M. Fox, Windsor Dexter, Warner Dexter, and Abram Decker, single men. They left home April 25th, and reached Detroit by the steamer Superior, May 11. Then they began their march to the Grand river, following very nearly the present line of the Detroit and Milwaukee railroad. It took them sixteen days to reach Ionia, and they camped out nine nights on the way, arriving at the site of the future city May 28, 1833. They could find shelter only at Royal Oak, Pontiac, -a hamlet of a half dozen cabins, -and at two isolated settlers' cabins. The last of these was where Corunna now is, and from that point they had to cut their way through the woods where no wheel had ever passed before.

On their way they had the first white funeral in the Grand river valley. About thirty miles from their journey's end one of Mr. Dexter's children died. They could not well carry the body with them, so a grave was hollowed out in the forest, a wooden trunk was brought forth by one of the company, and in it the little body was laid to rest.

The site of Ionia was then occupied by an Indian settlement, where some 500 Indians stopped to raise a little corn, fish, and make sugar in the proper seasons.

In the same year settlements were made at Grand Rapids, Grand Haven, and Grandville, and each cherished the hope of growing into a great city. These pioneers had been preceded by Genereau, near Ionia; Louis Campau, at Grand Rapids; and Rix Robinson, at Ada; all were Indian traders with no fixed idea of remaining at their posts, although Campau and Robinson did stay and did good work, and left names that are cherished by the inhabitants of those sections.

It was too late to clear land for work that season, so they bought an Indian plantation for \$25, and planted five acres to corn and potatoes. That was the beginning of Ionia county's agriculture, as well as of its city. They had some articles to trade with the Indians for fish, venison, maple sugar, etc., six spans of horses, and ten head of cattle. A supply of provisions and other goods they had sent around the lakes, and got them in the middle of the summer. Messrs. Dexter, Yeomans, and Windsor built log houses, and the rest lived in Indian wigwams, and all quite in Indian fashion for a time; even getting most of their eatables from their red brethren, with whom they ever kept on the most friendly terms. A few years later, indeed, a family named Glass, in North Plains, some miles from the settlement, was murdered and its buildings burned. This is the only "Indian outrage" on record in the Grand river valley; and as the head of the family was never seen afterwards, many believe that he, for some reason unknown, did the deed himself and

fled at once from the scene of his crime. The crime created much alarm, as the settlers feared more trouble with the Indians, and the story fixing it on Glass is said to have been started to quiet the fears of the people.

#### FIRST HOUSES

The first log house was built by Samuel Dexter, about where the grist-mill, on the corner of Main and Dexter streets, now is. In 1834 Dr. Lincoln built the first frame house. It is still standing, opposite the postoffice, and is occupied by A. F. Carr. Indeed, Dr. Lincoln is

#### A CHAMPION PIONEER,

and we may as well dispose of him here as anywhere. He was the first physician in the Grand river valley west of Jackson, taught the first school in Ionia county, and was one of the leading actors at its first wedding, July 5, 1835, when he and Miss Anthilda P. Arnold, were made one flesh by Squire Dexter, the pioneer preacher not yet having come to town. The happy couple are still living on a pleasant farm, just north of the city limits-the doctor having retired from practice-and are the best authorities on the early history of the county to be found, as the doctor has kept a written record of leading events. We are much indebted to them for information for this sketch.

#### FIRST STORES

The first store-a log building-was put up by John Lloyd, in 1834, on the northwest corner of Third and Main streets. Its' stock comprised dry goods, crockery, groceries, hardware, and whisky, and the proprietor did not grumble about hard times. The first brick store was built by Wilson & Kennedy, dry goods dealers, just west of the first national bank, and is now owned by Dye & Carr. The first brick house was built by Frederick Hall, where Hitchcock & Tabor's store now is.

#### THE FIRST TAVERN

was opened in 1836, by Asa Spencer, in the frame house built by Dr. Lincoln; the rush of settlers to this point upon the opening of the land office having created a necessity and profit for it. This was followed soon after by another, kept by William McCosland, on the site of the present Sherman House, which was thus early set apart as a place for the entertainment of Ionia's stranger guests.

#### THE POSTOFFICE

was established in 1835, and Erastus Yeomans was the first postmaster. He had his office at first in his log house, a few rods west of his present residence. Mr. Yeomans is still living, at the age of eighty-six, strong in mind although feeble in body. He thinks he was appointed in 1836, but is not sure, and the burden of evidence favors 1835. Soon after he built for the postoffice a twostory frame building, where McMullen & Yeomans' drug store now stands. His successors, in their order, were Jacob Winsor, Ethan S. Johnson, Jona than Tibbitts, David Irish, Edward Stevenson, Lewis Smith, Marion L. Smith, and Alfred H. Heath, the present incumbent.

### THE MILLS.

In the fall of 1833, Mr. Dexter built a saw-mill on Bellamy, or Welch Creek, two and one-half miles west of the present city; and in 1834 he put into it a run of stone for grinding meal and flour. This was an epoch in Ionia's history. Previous to that its people had done their grinding in a "big coffee mill," fitted up under Mr. Dexter's piazza. Its hopper would hold six quarts of corn, and every man was his own miller.

Two small streams flow through the east and west ends of the city. Mr. Dexter conceived the idea of uniting these streams and thereby gaining water power for a mill. He brought the water of the eastern brook along the base of the hills to the western, found that he had the power he wanted, and in the fall of 1837 built the first grist-mill. It was situated about the middle of Main street, just in front of where the City Mills now are.

In 1852 Page & Bean built a steam saw-mill. It has been once burned, once torn down, and is now represented by Fargo's mill.

### THE FIRST SCHOOL,

as we have said, was taught by Dr. Lincoln. He opened it in the fall of 1834, in his office in his new frame house. It was a private school. The first public school was taught by Mason Hearsey in the fall of 1835. The school-house was built in 1836, on the north side of Main street, a little east of Senator F. S. Freeman's residence. Previously, May 12, 1835, Alfred Cornell, George Case and John McKelvy were elected commissioners of common schools, and William D. Moore, A. Cornell, Jr., Nathaniel Soules, and William B. Lincoln, inspectors. That was the beginning of the school system in the county.

### THE FIRST CHURCH

The Methodists are apt to claim that they are the skirmishers of the church militant, and first to appear at the outposts of civilization. But the Baptists were ahead of them at Ionia, and June 24, 1834, under the guidance of the Rev. E. Loomis, of the American Home Missionary Society, held a conference preliminary to the formation of a church society. Samuel Dexter, Erastus Yeomans and Alfred Cornell and their wives were the members of this conference. August 23 the church was organized. Benjamin Barber was received by letter, and Dr. Lincoln as a candidate for baptism. February 18, 1837, a meeting was held in the school-house, at which articles of faith and a covenant were adopted. The membership was twenty. In May following the Rev. A. C. Sangster and family joined the church, and he became its first pastor. In 1845 the Rev. Alfred Cornell assumed the pastorate. Previous to this the people had worshiped in the school-houses or private houses, but under his administration a large frame church was built. It gave way in 1870 to the present building on the old site, and was removed up the street to do duty as a shop. Mr. Cornell served the church faithfully for nineteen years. He is now chaplain of the House of Correction here-active, full of life and work, and very companionable.

This was the pioneer church of Ionia county, and the first Protestant church in the Grand River valley, having been preceded only by the Catholic Mission church at Grand Rapids.

## TOWNSHIP ORGANIZATION.

Ionia township was formed in 1835. It embraced all the territory of the present county, and was attached to Kalamazoo for judicial purposes. The first town meeting was held at Generau's trading post, April 6, 1835. Erastus Yeomans was elected supervisor and Dr. Lincoln, clerk. When Kent county was organized in 1836 Ionia was attached to it.

## COUNTY ORGANIZATION

Ionia county was established by legislative enactment in 1837, and divided into two townships, with Montcalm county attached for judicial purposes. The present division into sixteen towns was made in 1850. The first election of county officers was held in the spring of 1837. There were two hundred and ninety-three votes polled. At this election these officers were chosen: Associate judges-Isaac Thompson, Truman H. Lyon; probate judge, William D. Moore; sheriff, E. W. Curtiss; clerk, Asa Brunnell; treasurer, John E. Morrison; register of deeds, Adam L. Roof.

## THE FIRST COURT

The first term of the circuit court was held in May, 1837, Judge Epaphroditus Ransom presiding. The only business done was to admit Adam L. Roof to practice. At the November term Cyrus Lovell was appointed the first prosecuting attorney.

## THE LAND OFFICE

In 1836 the land office was opened in Ionia and there came a rush of settlers and speculators. Two hotels were opened, and these and the houses of settlers were filled to overflowing. Many are the stories told of the manner in which men were stowed away for the night, and the reckless way in which they threw their bags of specie about, feeling sure that no one would steal them, considering the very poor facilities for getting away with the plunder. The opening of the land office at this juncture is said to have been unfortunate for the county. Fraud was alive and at work even in those days, and succeeded by his work in the land office in driving away many who came to buy homes; and the land was left to speculators, who held it from settlement and improvement. The lion. Alonzo Sessions, in Prof. Everett's "Memoirs of the Grand River Valley," says:

"The land office was opened by officers so void of all sense of honor as to practice daily, in open daylight, the most bare-faced frauds upon poor men who desired small tracts to live on, and a criminal favoritism in the interest of those who had money to bribe them. \* \* \* The bids were required to be in writing, and placed in a box previous to the day of sale. When the time for final decision came, all bids were missing except the one put in by the favored one. Again, only gold, silver, or the notes of a few favored banks were receivable for lands. This was a surprise sprung by Jackson's Specie Circular, and many - in fact most poor men - came unprepared. The nearest banks were at Detroit, and no road. A broker's office across the street from the land office was a good thing to have, for gold and silver were in demand at ten per cent premium. The broker's office sold specie while the supply lasted; but gave out before noon and night. At night and at noon boxes were seen to pass from the land office to the broker's, and the specie used to buy land was used twice each day, and somebody pocketed twenty cents on each dollar of it; and the money was taken from the pockets of those who had no money to spare."

## THE RAILROADS

The Detroit and Milwaukee Railroad was completed to Ionia in 1856, and was a great boon to the inhabitants, as it placed them in reach of markets, lack of access to which was the chief barrier to their progress. It is hard to conceive now of the slowness with which things moved in those early days, especially away from navigable waters. It used to cost more to get stoves from Grand Haven to Ionia than from New York to Grand Haven. All supplies came around by way of the lakes and were poled up the river in flat boats. Thirty-day paper of merchants would often fall due in New York before the goods would reach Ionia. Wheat would drop early in the fall to almost nothing, as it was known that it must be sold before navigation closed, if at all. The change wrought by the first railroad was apparent, and merchants and farmers alike acknowledged their indebtedness to it.

The Detroit, Lansing and Northern Railroad was completed to Ionia in December, 1869; to Howard City in August, 1871, and the Stanton branch in February, 1873. This branch will be extended twenty miles further north, to Milbrook, the coming summer.

## OTHER FIRSTLINGS

The first Methodist preacher who visited Ionia came in 1835 and said that "he had taken his life in his hands, and came all the way from Ohio to go into the backwoods to preach the gospel to the heathen." The saying got noised abroad and injured his usefulness among "the heathen," some of whom still live to tell unpleasant stories of one whose very name is forgotten.

The first white child born in Ionia county was Eugene Winsor, son of Darius Winsor; time, 1833.

The first wheat was exported from Ionia in 1839, when Gileo Ishani took 2,254 bushels down the river.

Mr. Henry B. Lebhart, of Lyons, delivered the first Fourth of July oration in the Grand river valley.

Ionia had her first Fourth of July celebration in 1836, and Alonzo Sessions was the orator. We believe that was his first appearance on any stage.

The first village in the county was Ionia, incorporated in 1835. It was also the first city, chartered in 1873.

The first duel in the county was never fought. A Dr. Beckwith was offended by A. F. Bell, the lawyer, and challenged him to mortal combat. Bell promptly accepted; chose for weapons, potatoes, and for the ground opposite sides of Grand river; firing to be kept up until honor was satisfied. The doctor thought the terms ungentlemanly and declined to fight under them; so the duel never came off and has had no successor.

The first blacksmith, or mechanic of any kind, was Oliver Arnold.

The first newspaper established in the county, so far as we could learn, was the Ionia Gazette, the first number of which appeared on the first Tuesday in January, 1849. It was founded by E. R. Powell; was neutral in politics for two years, after which it became democratic. It was merged into the Ionia Sentinel in 1867.

In 1837 John Aleny, of Grand Rapids, represented Ionia, Kent and Ottawa counties in the State Legislature. Ionia's first representative, however, after it had gained a separate existence as a county, was the Hon. A. F. Bell, in 1847.

## IONIA AS IT IS IN 1878.

Bidding good-bye to the past, let us look at Ionia as it is to-day. Its situation is one of considerable beauty. The valley of the Grand river is here about two miles wide, bounded on either side by hills of very respectable size, clad in the green of meadow and woodland and the russet of plow-troubled earth. The river winds through the center. Half a mile north of it the little city begins to lay claim to the bottom lands, and with its business houses and residences occupies them for the space of about two miles in length and half a mile in width. Around this the hills are drawn in an irregular semi-circle. But the town used to be very ambitious and pushed over the hills to the north, covering their sides and summits with handsome residences and spacious, well-kept grounds. The owners of these residences look out from their windows upon about as pleasant a landscape as is to be found on this peninsula, and their view is not marred by the smoke of furnaces and factories.

The original plat of the city covered but very little territory, and additions have been made to it at such times and in such shapes as suited the owners of lands, who laid out additional streets as seemed best to them without much regard to securing regularity of lines. The result is that a street here is a very uncertain quantity, and the lines marking the city limits crooked as the crookedest heart could wish. As near as may be shown without a map this is the situation of the streets; omitting the indescribable bits that so soon are done for, one wonders what they were begun for. The principal streets run east and west. First, just north of the railroad depots, is Front street. Next to it is the principal thoroughfare, Main street, on which are all the business houses, three of the chief churches and the place where the county buildings ought to be.

North of Main street is Washington street, and north of that, on the brow of the hill, High street. This traverses a little more than half the length of the city-the western half-when it comes to a sudden stop; there is a jog and Lafayette street leads the pedestrian on out to the city limits. Intersecting these at right angles, beginning at the east, are Jefferson, Jackson, Rich, Union, First, Pleasant, Second, Third, Dexter and State streets. Of these only Dexter, Third, State and Jackson run through from High or Lafayette to Front. First and Second run north to Washington street; Pleasant and Union south to Washington; and Rich runs south to Main.

The business is confined chiefly to the part of Main street which lies west of the Detroit and Milwaukee depot. There are no public buildings except churches. At the head of Church street is a square designed for county buildings; but all to be found there is a low one-story brick, worth, perhaps, \$1,000, where the judge of probate, county clerk, register of deeds and treasurer have their offices and pigeon-hole their papers, having no safer vault in which to put them. And then there is a two-story frame house in which the sheriff lives, and attached to which is the jail. One peep into

## THE IONIA COUNTY JAIL

would have driven John Howard to suicide, unless, indeed, he should have learned the ease with which one may escape from the black hole. Two very rude cells in a shed are all there is to it; low, dingy, unhealthful, insecure things, a disgrace to the community which permits them to exist. The objections which will lie against this jail - if they are careful not to let too much of their weight come upon it - are: It is almost impossible to keep prisoners in it, and by their escape justice is defeated or crippled; if they do not

escape, they are deprived of rights which belong even to the worst of criminals. In either case justice suffers. And yet the people of Ionia county refused this spring to vote \$10,000 for the construction of a new jail.

### IONIA S STRONG POINTS

But what Ionia lacks in one point it makes up for in another direction. If it should blush for its jail, it may well be proud of its churches, which are not equaled by any other town of its size, nor surpassed by any of double its population in the State. Of these more anon. If it has no manufactures to speak of, it can boast of as fine residences and as handsome grounds as can be found in cities ten times as large, and certainly no city of its own class in the State can equal it in this respect. Among the more conspicuous are the houses of O. Tower, J. M. Kidd, L. S. Lovell, H. Rich, J. H. Kidd, J. C. Blanchard, Benjamin Harter, G. S. Cooper, L. Clute, A. J. Webber, F. W. Stevenson, A. F. Bell, W. C. Page, W. P. Burhans, A. B. Morse, James Kennedy, W. W. Mitchell, S. F. Page, Ira Root, Benjamin Vosper.

### POPULATION AND CITY OFFICERS

The census of 1874 credited Ionia with a population of 3,251; it now claims 4,000. The present city officers are: Mayor, James M. Kidd; clerk, C. H. Spencer; treasurer, John W. Baldie, marshal, Charles Broad; attorney, W. O. Webster. Its police force consists of the marshal and a night watchman, S. M. Norton.

### THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED

One who spends a week in Ionia will be apt to remember these things touching it, and will speak of them to friends: Its exceptionally handsome residences; its churches; its pleasant situation; its need of money invested in manufactures. Having thus taken a general view of the city, let us now look at some of its institutions and its business more closely.

### THE STATE HOUSE OF CORRECTION AND REFORMATORY.

A mile and a half west of the village is the State house of correction and reformatory. The act providing for the establishment of the institution and for a board to select a site for it, was approved April 25, 1873; and Hampton Rich of Ionia, Charles T. Hills of Muskegon, and John M. Swift of Northville, were appointed to constitute the board. The principal places bidding for the location were Muskegon, Grand Rapids, East Saginaw, Adrian, and Ionia. The latter got it. By an act approved April 22, 1875, \$150,000 was appropriated for the erection of the officers' quarters, rotunda and two wings, dining room and hospital building, boiler and engine-house, and a section, - one-third, - of the workshops. By virtue of the same act Hampton Rich of Ionia, Charles Kipp of St. Johns, and Westbrook Divine of Montcalm, were appointed building commissioners. The designs for the buildings submitted by Mortimer L. Smith of Detroit, were accepted; he was appointed architect, and H. M. Lewis of Ionia, superintendent of construction. Eighteen bids were received for the work of erecting the buildings, ranging from \$189,281, by L. M. Daniels, of Ionia, to \$130,575, by Jules A. Knapp & Co., of Detroit. The contract was awarded to the latter firm for \$134,575, some alterations in the specifications justifying the addition of \$4,000 to the contract price.

In 1877 the present board of managers was appointed. It consists of Hampton Rich of Ionia, Westbrook Divine of Belding, and Thomas F. Moore of Adrian. July 17, 1877, the board of managers met and accepted all the buildings covered by the contract, except the workshops, which were completed and accepted the 7th of the next September.

June 26, 1877, John J. Grafton of Ionia, was appointed warden, and on July 5th he nominated these officers, which were confirmed by the board: Deputy warden, O. H. Webster, Detroit; clerk, Charles S. Lowe, Ionia; engineer, Isaac R. Dolson, Ionia. The prison opened August 15, 1877, and the first prisoners entered it August 30,-three men from Eaton county, for ninety days each, one for adultery, and two for assault and battery. The next day sixty men were transferred to it from the State prison at Jackson. That is, in brief, the history of this young prison.

### *The Buildings*

are situated on the high bluffs which bound the valley of the Grand river on the north, and command a fine view of the country, pure air, and excellent natural advantages for sewerage. Of the buildings, the three-story building in front, in the center, the rotunda, just behind it, the two wings on a line with the walls, the two-story building directly in the rear of the rotunda, the one-story building near the west wall, and forty feet of the long two-story building in the rear, are completed. The second wing, extending from the rotunda on the left, is about ready for the roof; the foundation is laid for a corresponding wing on the right, and work is progressing on the workshops. The two-story building outside the walls at the southeast corner was designed for the warden's residence. No provision has yet been made for it, and it is very likely never to be built. The walls and buildings are of Ionia cream-colored brick, trimmed with Ionia (brown) sandstone.

The three-story building in front has seventy-six feet front, and is eighty-nine feet deep. On the first floor are the warden's office, parlor, manager's room, officers' dining room, clerk's office, and turnkey's room. On the second and third floors are the living rooms for the warden's family, the keeper's rooms, and officers' reading room.

### *The Rotunda*

is octagonal in form, and eighty-nine feet in diameter. Into it the wings containing the cells open, and its first floor is used as a general assembly room for prisoners. Here the convicts are collected after work to be marched to their cells, and thence to their meals. In it, too, are the offices of the chaplain and the deputy warden. The chapel occupies the second floor of the rotunda, and is appropriately fitted up for the purposes for which it is designed. The wings containing

### *The Cells*

are each 175 feet long and 45 feet wide. In each wing are three tiers of cells, with two rows of cells in each tier, placed back to back, one row opening to the east and one to the west. At the top of every block is a circular air duct, two and a half feet in diameter, through which runs a steam pipe. Each cell is five feet wide, eight feet long and six and one-half feet high; floor a single slab of Ohio blue-stone; ceiling the same; furniture, an iron bedstead, small square stand, and a stool about three feet high. The door is an iron grating, which in no way hinders the entrance of air, and it and the air shaft in the cell,



communicating with the air duct above mentioned, secure perfect ventilation. The cells are heated by steam pipes along the walls of the corridors.

Each cell locks separately; but in addition to this, at night when all are locked up, by the simple turning of a lever a single long iron bar comes down across the tops of the doors in every row of cells, so that all are locked together. Between each row of cells and the wall of the wing is a space of eight feet. The windows of the wings are grated; the cells are lighted from the corridor. An iron balcony runs around the upper tiers. At the extreme end of each tier are fourteen iron wash-bowls, with water on tap for the use of prisoners. There are 156 cells in each wing; 312 are now ready for use; and when the buildings are completed there will be separate accommodations for 624 convicts. The ground floors of the prison throughout are of Ohio bluestone laid in cement.

#### *Dining-room, etc.*

The two-story building in the rear of the rotunda is 213 feet long and 76 feet wide. On its first floor are the dining-room, kitchen, bake-room, and laundry; on the second floor are the hospital, tailor and shoe shops, and drying-room. The dining-tables consist of maple planks a foot wide and twelve feet long, set on iron standards. Six men are seated at a table. The laundry is furnished with steam washers and wringers.

The hospital contains a general sick-room, large, light, and airy, and a number of single rooms. Each room has a bath and wash-room, with hot and cold water, and water-closet attached.

The low building in the rear is the boiler-house-40x60 feet-which contains four horizontal tubular boilers, thirteen feet long and five feet in diameter. They furnish heat for the institution and power to the engine for its work, which at present is confined to pumping the water for the prison and running the washing-machines. The detached building near the western wall is a stable and carriage-house. A little east of it is another one-story building containing the blacksmith shop, etc. The workshops are to be 400 feet long, 75 feet wide, and two stories high. The ceilings throughout are fifteen feet high, the walls are twenty-five feet high, thirty inches thick at the top, and capped with blue stone. In the towers at the corner are the guards' watch-houses.

#### *Guards, Gas, and Water*

Four guards are on the wall all day long. They are armed with Springfield rifles and Smith & Wesson revolvers-five-shooters. The guards at the gate have seven-shooting Spencer carbines instead of a rifle. The keepers have revolvers, and in the turnkey's room is a Springfield rifle, with bayonet, for each of them.

The water for the institution is furnished by a cluster of springs a few rods north of the northern wall. These springs are enclosed in a brick curb eighteen feet in diameter, in which there stands ten feet of water. From them it is pumped through a six-inch pipe into a reservoir at the northeast corner, whence it is distributed over the grounds and buildings.

Gas for lighting is manufactured on the grounds by two of Berry Brothers' gas machines.

In every department there is a telegraphic signal box, by which communication can be had in an instant with all parts of the buildings and grounds, and notice given of trouble in any quarter to all the officers and guards "as quick as lightning."

### *Discipline*

The prison uniform is a round-a-bout coat and pantaloons of plain gray satin; and for summer wear heavy duck cloth. Under this is worn a hickory shirt, and in winter good flannel underclothing is provided.' There is no "prison cut" here for the hair, it being merely kept trimmed to a medium length; but beards and mustaches disappear in the basement, with outside clothing, when one enters here to stay awhile.

The punishments used are cutting down of rations, losing "good time," confinement in the "solitary" and flogging. A convict who keeps all the rules and behaves himself well gets two months off his sentence the first year, seventy-five days the second year, and so on, increasing the time deducted as the years go by until a "five years' man," who keeps all the rules, will save twelve months' time and get out at the end of four years; and a man in for twenty years may shorten his term seventy-five and one-half months. For sentences of less than one year five days per month is allowed. For every violation of rules an inmate forfeits all the time gained for the month in which it was committed, and the board of managers may deduct all the time previously gained. One can readily see what a potent element in the discipline of the prison this time factor may be made if judiciously managed.

For graver offenses confinement in "the solitary" is provided. There are six solitaires in the rotunda, built in the little towers that may be seen about it. Each of them is four feet wide, five feet long, and eleven feet high, and has for its sole furniture a night bucket, a heavy iron ring in the floor and two chains suspended from the wall. It is perfectly dark but well ventilated. An unruly prisoner is put into this loose; and only chained when he pounds and threshes around in it and refuses to be quieted.

For the gravest offenses flogging precedes the solitary. It is inflicted at the end of the prisoner's cell-block with a strap an inch wide laid on the bare hips.

Recently a convict, with an improvised slung-shot, knocked down a keeper at a gate and got out. The guard's gun covered him and he was in again in five minutes. He meant to kill. He lost all his good time, and got fifty stripes, spent two weeks in the solitary and wears a ball and chain at his work. When his time is up he will be re-arrested for assault with intent to kill. The general aim is to avoid these severe punishments as far as possible.

### *Food and Work*

The food furnished the prisoners is plain but plentiful and substantial. If the bills of fare were printed, hash, bread, coffee, beef stow, codfish, corned beef, potatoes, pork and beans, cabbage and such things would figure in it.

The law requires that the inmates shall be kept at hard labor ten hours a day. The workshops are empty as yet; no contracts have been let, and the prisoners are employed in grading the grounds, building the unfinished portions of the prison, doing its cooking, washing, baking, tailoring, etc. But four men who have a right outside the walls are employed on the prison improvements-those are the master mechanic and three masons, whose places could not be filled from among the convicts.

### *Aim and Management*

The institution is meant to be reformatory and to separate young offenders from old and hardened criminals. The law allows courts at their discretion, to sentence to this place all males guilty of felony between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, except for crimes involving a life sentence, and all persons guilty of misdemeanors and sentenced for ninety days or more.

The board of managers meet at the prison at least once a month, and are required to examine all its departments; and all State officers, commissioners of State institutions, sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys and ministers of the gospel may visit it at pleasure, and the officers are obliged to show them around. It is the interest of the managers that they should allow no abuses to pass undetected, and, with their watchful care and the constant liability that some of these other privileged parties may pop in at any moment the chances for the growth of abuses are reduced to a minimum. The prison seems to be well officered and well managed, and to be fulfilling the end for which it was designed.

There are now 220 prisoners in it, and there have been confined in it since it opened 385 different persons. There should be more, but a clause in the law requiring a copy of the information and abstract of all the testimony taken in the case to be sent in with every prisoner operates to keep judges from sending men here at such trouble and expense. The managers of the House of Correction and the State Prison Inspectors may agree on the transfer of convicts from Jackson to Ionia, and in this way some of the pressure on the resources of the Jackson prison has been removed. In one of these transfers Dan Van Waggoner, who about a year ago went out riding with a man from Kalamazoo and tried to kill him in a most cold-blooded manner, was sent here. He has a forty-five years' sentence to work out, and is not yet twenty. He is making a good prison record and will knock a big hole out of that-about sixteen years -if he makes the most of his "good time."

### *The Present Officers*

of the prison, with their salaries, are here given: John J. Grafton, warden, \$1,500 and living expenses of self and family; D. P. Fargo, deputy warden, \$1,000; Charles S. Lowe, clerk, \$1,000; C. O. Thompson, treasurer, \$500; Alfred Cornell, chaplain, \$1,000; Wilbur F. Reed, physician, \$600; Isaac R. Dolson, engineer, \$1,000; David Stellberger, baker, \$600; thirteen keepers at \$600 each; eight guards at \$480 each. Among the keepers is S. C. Whiting, formerly of the Detroit house of correction, who is hall master here.

### THE CITY SCHOOLS

On the top of the hill, at the northeast corner of Union and High streets, about half a mile north of the Detroit and Milwaukee depot, is the union school building. It is a handsome structure, three stories high, with a basement, built of Ionia's cream-colored brick. It stands in the center of a grove three acres in extent, and commands a good view of the surrounding country. It was built by L. F. Mills of Ionia, cost \$30,000, and school was opened in it in September, 1866.

The high school, with two recitation rooms, and the offices of the principal and the superintendent, occupy the third floor. On the second floor are four rooms for the grammar school and intermediate departments; and in the first three large session rooms for primary scholars. The high school boasts of a fine piano, and has a fair cabinet of

minerals and philosophical apparatus. Other rooms in the building are provided with cabinet organs bought by the pupils and teachers.

Besides this there are three ward school buildings in the city, each containing two rooms, built at a cost of \$4,500 each. More room is needed, and an addition of two rooms will probably be made to the second ward building this summer.

There are 1,060 people of school age in the district, of whom 800 are enrolled in the schools, with an average daily attendance of about 700-and that is about all there are seats for. There has been a constant increase in the average attendance for the past seven years. The high school will seat 130 pupils, and has 126 in attendance. Prof. A. L. Todd is employed as superintendent of schools at a salary of \$1,400 per year, and Prof. A. P. DeWolf as principal of the high school at a salary of \$900. The assistant in the high school and the principal of the grammar school get \$550 each; the lowest salary paid is \$320. In all sixteen teachers are employed. The total cost of supporting the schools last year was \$12,307.74, an average of \$17.78 per pupil. Over \$1,300 was received as tuition from foreign pupils. The district owes \$10,000, which has to be paid at the rate of \$1,500 per year. The present organization of the school board is: President, Osmund Tower; secretary, Virgil Van Vleck; trustees, A. W. Kimball, Lemuel Clute, Geo. Cooper, and Chauncey Waterbury.

## RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

### *The Methodist Church*

The Methodist Episcopal house of worship, corner of Main and Union streets is the finest in the city. It is a very handsome building, of Ionia brick, and trimmed with Ionia sandstone, and cost, including furniture, \$63,000; debt, \$8,000; seating capacity, 1,000; built in 1870. The Methodist Church organization is the next to the oldest in the city, and had its beginning in 1835, when the Rev. Mr. Monette, of Ohio, formed the first class. This class consisted of Oliver Arnold and wife, their son Silas D. Arnold, and two daughters, A. P. and Anthilda Arnold. Silas D. Arnold was the first class leader. This church has now 400 members, and a Sabbath school 200 strong. Its present pastor is the Rev. E. Cooley, salary \$1,400.

### *The Christian Church*

The Church of Christ-Disciples-was organized January 4, 1859, by the Rev. Isaac Errett. It began life with a membership of forty-three persons, mostly from Muir, where Mr. Errett had been preaching for some time. In 1869 it built a neat brick church edifice, which will seat 600 people, and cost \$21,000. It is on the north side of Washington street between Rich and Jackson streets. This society has a membership of 250; has eighty children enrolled in its Sabbath-school and pays its pastor a salary of \$1,000. Its present pastor, the Rev. A. J. Hale, has been here six months. Former pastors: The Revs. Isaac Errett, J. B. Crane, W. R. Spindler, O. Eberts, L. R. Gault.

### *The Presbyterian Church*

was organized October 8, 1842, by the Rev. L. M. S. Smith. Its charter members were: William Babcock and wife, Araminta Dye, Rebecca Dye, Lucretia 61 Webster, Mary S. Lovell, Samuel P. Hodges, Dolly B. Overhiser and Harriet A. Bates. In 1857 this society built a frame church on Main street, just east of the present M. E. Church. This was

enlarged and improved about a year ago, and cost, with improvements, \$12,000; will seat 500 people. It is very tastefully finished and its members pride themselves on their organ, which has the reputation of being the best in the village. This society has 280 members; 225 scholars in its Sunday-school and pays its pastor \$1,700. Its present pastor, the Rev. J. Pierson, has been with it ten years, and is the oldest Protestant pastor in the city. He has resigned, however, and there will be a vacancy in the pastorate July 1st. The former pastors were: The Revs. L. M. S. Smith, - Waring, S. S. Brown, L. Q. Root, Louis Mills, R. W. Landis, E. D. Newberry.

#### *The Baptist Church,*

as the oldest in the city, has been treated of elsewhere. Its present church edifice was built in 1870, at a cost of \$20,000. It is a brick structure, ranking next to the Methodist for elegance, on the corner of Main and First streets; will seat 500 people. The society has 350 members; 275 pupils in its Sabbath-school; pays its pastor \$1,300. The Rev. S. Donnelly, the present pastor, has been here one year. Former pastors, the Revs. A. C. Sangster, H. D. Buttolph, Alfred Cornell (for nineteen years), J. H. Morrison, Levi Parmely, J. Rowley, E. O. Taylor.

#### *The Episcopal Church*

St. John's Church is eighteen years old, having been organized May 14, 1860, by the Rev. Melancthon Hoyt. It worships in a small wooden building on the corner of Washington and First streets, which cost \$2,000, and will seat 160 persons. It has fifty communicants, a Sabbath-school of forty scholars, and pays its pastor \$500. Former pastors, the Revs. Melancthon Hoyt, D. B. Lyon, Ezra Jones, D. E. Brown, Robert Wood. The Rev. William Brittain, the present pastor, has been here one year.

#### *The Congregational Church*

Some dozen years ago there was trouble in the Presbyterian church, and as the result of it the Congregational church was organized May 14, 1868, with forty members. The Presbyterians say that the Congregationalists "split off" from their church. The Congregational brethren say that the Presbyterian church was originally Congregational, and as such acquired all its present prosperity, but a certain minister won the hearts of his people from their primal faith and led them into Presbyterianism; when those who were not able to brook the government of a Presbytery secured a shop on the north side of Washington street, between Rich and Union, and fitted it up as a house of worship. But they date their organization back to 1842, and look upon themselves as robbed of their rights by Presbyterians. Their church is worth \$3,000; they have 127 members, forty scholars in their Sabbath-school, and pay their pastor \$1,200 a year. The Rev. W. H. Thomas has been with them seventeen months, but has resigned, to accept the pastorate of the First Congregational church of Kalamazoo. The Rev. Benjamin Parsons was its first pastor, and Rev. Mr. Barker preceded Mr. Thomas.

#### *Catholic Church*

St. Peter's church was erected in 1860. It is a plain frame, at the west end of High street; cost 82,000; will seat 300. The Rev. C. G. Bolte has been its pastor since 1863, and preached to the people a year before that. There are 140 families in his parish, with

about 800 members. The people pay what salary they choose under 8700. A parochial school of seventy scholars is connected with the church, of which Miss Matilda Harvey, of Detroit, is teacher. The Catholic church property, including schoolhouse, etc., is \$8,000.

#### *German Evangelical*

The German Evangelical church was organized in 1859. In 1866 it built a plain frame church on Washington street near the west end, which cost \$1,800 and will seat 100 people. It will be enlarged this summer so as to seat fifty more. The society has 100 members, a Sunday-school of seventy scholars, and pays its pastor, Rev. Fred. Miller, \$600 a year.

Besides the churches above mentioned, the Lutherans and Free Methodists hold meetings once in two or three weeks in Firemen's Hall.

### SECRET SOCIETIES

#### *Freemasons*

There are in the city two Masonic lodges, a council, a chapter, and a commandery of the Masonic order, all in a very prosperous condition. They have leased the third floor of Union block, southwest corner of Third and Main streets, for ninety-nine years, and have there fitted up one of the most commodious and handsomely furnished lodge-rooms in the State. It is claimed, indeed, that there are but two in the State superior to this. Before the Masons took it, this was known as Union Hall.

The oldest lodge in the city is Ionia Lodge No. 36, which was chartered by Grand Master Jeremiah Moors, Jan. 10, 1850. Levi Taylor was its first master, and C. S. Hooker its first senior warden. It held its first meeting in the old Eagle hotel, since burned, where the Bailey House now stands. It meets in Masonic Hall on Wednesday evenings on or before the full moon. Its present membership is 200, and R. C. Hatheway is its master.

Washtenong Lodge, No. 286, was instituted January 13, 1872, by Grand Master A. T. Metcalfe. C. R. Taylor was its first master. Present master, Dr. O. R. Long; membership, sixty.

Ionia Chapter No. 14, R. A. M., was chartered January 9, 1856; N. Shoemaker, grand high priest. Its charter members were George W. Wilson, Frederick Hall, Philander Hinds, David Irish, J. R. Croswell, L. B. Barnum, Dorus M. Fox, Wm. Jones, and Levi Taylor. Mr. Hall is the only one of these now belonging to the chapter. It has 213 members, and meets on Friday evening on or before the full moon. C. Waterbury is the present high priest.

Ionia Council No. 12, R. and S. M., was chartered June 5, 1861, by Frank Darrow, T. I. G. P. It meets on Monday evenings after the full moon, has twenty-eight members, and R. C. Hatheway is its thrice illustrious master.

Ionia Commandery, No. 11, Knights Templar, was organized June 5, 1861. It has 100 members, and Dr. B. F. Doughty, of Lowell, is its present commander. Meets on Friday evening after the full moon.

#### *Odd Fellows*

Ionia Lodge No. 175, I. O. O. F., was organized in Bayard's Hall November 22, 1871, by Grand Master Isaac Sides. T. A. Willetts was its first noble grand. It received its

first charter January 18, 1872. It now has its lodge room in Smith's Hall on Union street, just opposite Masonic Hall. It has seventy-five members, and meets every Tuesday evening; D. P. Chapman, N. G.

Relief Encampment of Patriarchs No. 53, was instituted in January, 1873, by L. C. Tillotson, grand patriarch. T. A. Willetts was its first chief patriarch. It has forty-seven members; E. A. Chubb, chief patriarch; meets in Odd Fellows' Hall on the first and second Thursdays of each month.

#### *Other Secret Societies*

Ionia Lodge, Knights of Honor, was organized two years ago. It has twenty members; H. C. Sessions, dictator.

Ionia Lodge, No. 32, Ancient Order of United Workmen, was organized in January, 1878, and has twenty-eight members. A. H. Heath is master workman, and J. C. Taylor recorder.

A Division of Sons of Temperance was organized March 26, 1877. It has sixty-eight members, and meets in Odd Fellows' Hall. E. A. Chubb is its present patriarch.

On July 20, 1873, James Pogue was authorized, by Grand Chief Engineer Charles Wilson to organize Grand River Division, No. 168, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and did so. It meets in Odd Fellows' Hall, which is all we were able to learn concerning it.

#### LADIES' LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

At some time or other in the history of almost every town in Michigan two or three women gather together and decide that there ought to be a library in their community, and that what should be shall be. And very soon it is. Ionia reached this period in her history three years ago. Mrs. J. Pierson was the first to move in the matter, and went about soliciting subscriptions and stirring up the women to the work. The Ladies' Library Association was born and christened May 25, 1875, and received for its first birthday present the little that Mrs. Pierson had been able to secure for it in the few days immediately preceding. Its first officers were Mrs. J. Pierson, president; Mrs. G. W. Webster, secretary; Mrs. Van Vleck, treasurer. These ladies have since been elected annually to their respective positions. It has given ice cream and strawberry festivals, one or two lectures, some amateur entertainments, and by the receipts from these, members' dues and some donations, has come into possession of 950 volumes and has \$90 in the treasury, which will be expended for books in a few days. It expects to add to its store of books now at the rate of 100 new volumes annually, exclusive of donations, and this rate will be greatly increased as the years go by. The present librarian is Miss Anna Babcock, with Misses Mary Norton and Alice Stanton as assistants.

#### AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

The Ionia County Agricultural Society was organized in 1856. Its fair grounds, comprising 20 acres, are on the north bank of Grand river, just south of the city, and are admirably adapted for the purposes of the society. The 48a present officers of the society are: E. P. Kelsey, president; W. D. Arnold, secretary; J. W. Loomis, treasurer. The Ionia Driving Park Association has grounds adjoining those of the Agricultural society. This is not a sporting organization, but was formed to give instruction in horsemanship, and to

provide grounds and track for private "speeding?" and pleasure driving. But little interest is taken in it, and it will probably be absorbed by the Agricultural society in the fall.

#### THE BAND

The Ionia City Band was organized a year ago. It musters thirteen pieces, manned mostly by young men. Under the leadership of Quincy Hoyt it is making creditable progress.

#### Y. M. C. A.

The Young Men's Christian Association was organized here in February last, with W. D. Webster, president, and J. E. Howard, secretary. It has seventy members, and being homeless as yet, meets in the basements of the various churches. A Bible class is conducted under its auspices, which meets every Tuesday evening, and the members do considerable work among the prisoners at the House of Correction.

#### SCIENTIFIC

The Ionia Scientific Association was organized in the fall of 1877, and held two or three meetings. Dr. F. Gundrum is president and C. B. Wardell, secretary. Just at present it seems to be engaged, like Mr. Micawber, in waiting for something to turn up, but some of its members think it will begin more active operations in the fall and become a permanent institution.

#### RED RIBBON

With all its virtue and temperance Ionia did not lack material for the great temperance reform to act upon, and there are 250 Knights of the Red Ribbon, bound together by club ties under the presidency of Henry Wilson. They have just fitted up a commodious club room on the second floor of the old Masonic building.

#### THE DEUTSCHER

Arbeiter Unter-Stutzungs Verein was organized April 7, 1878, with H. Henreisch as president.

#### THE MILITARY

The Ionia Light Guard, company G, Second Regiment, M. S. T., was mustered into the State service January, 1876. Its original officers, which it still retains, were captain, James H. Kidd; first lieutenant, O. S. Tower; second lieutenant, H. O. Sessions. It has 80 men enrolled; armory on Second street, near the Sherman house.

#### THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

used to consist of two hand engines, manned by volunteers, but is now completely disorganized. About two years ago the city bought the mill pond of the extinct woolen factory, at the north end of the city, and put in water mains along Main street, which are fed by a stream from the pond. The reservoir is forty feet above the street, and pressure enough is afforded to throw a stream over the business blocks. Hose is attached to hydrants along the street and this is Ionia's safeguard from fire. But the water in this pond is from the stream which Mr. Dexter coaxed along the foot of the hills to feed the west



stream and give power for his mill. Mr. Frederick Hall bought Dexter's right in the stream, and brought suit against the city to restrain it from diverting the water into the mains above mentioned, claiming that said diversion injured his proprietary rights in the stream. The case has been fought through all the courts, and the Supreme Court has just given its decision against the city. The water is still allowed to flow through the mains, and it is expected that the matter will be settled so as to allow the present system to continue.

## MERCHANTS AND MANUFACTURES

### *The Merchants*

One can hear more talk of hard times in Ionia in a day than in almost any other place in the State in a week. The failure of E. Colby & Co., two years ago, was a heavy blow to the town, as it affected directly almost all the leading business men. Other failures followed. The citizens feel that they have had more than their share of bankruptcy, and the merchants are profoundly "blue." Whether they have reason for this feeling may be inferred from this brief summary of the city's business: Fifteen dry goods and general dealers give their aggregate sales for the past year at \$375,000; sixteen grocers report aggregate annual sales of \$175,000; four houses dealing exclusively in boots and shoes report \$65,000; one firm selling only hats, caps, and firs, disposes of \$16,000 worth annually. Many of the dry goods houses deal also in groceries, boots, shoes, and hats, so that the sales of those dealing exclusively in those lines do not represent all the business done in them. For the rest, three clothing houses report aggregate annual sales of \$85,000; four hardware firms of \$95,000; three agricultural implement dealers of \$75,000; three dealers in saddles and harnesses of \$22,000; one furniture dealer of \$8,000; two jewelers of \$25,000; four druggists of \$30,000; one fancy goods dealer of \$6,000; and one confectioner of \$7,000. Smith & Smith, and H. & C. S. Lowe, news dealers and retailers of books and stationery, sell \$26,000 worth of goods yearly. This gives a total of fifty-eight dealers doing a business of \$1,010,000 a year.

To complete the business showing, we add the railroad shipments from Ionia during the year 1877, from figures furnished by officers of the railroad companies. During the year there were shipped by the Detroit and Milwaukee road 100,000 pounds of wool, 40,000 bushels of wheat, 800 bushels of barley, 75,000 pounds of fresh pork, 500 barrels of flour, 500,000 pounds of live stock, 400,000 pounds of staves. During the same time there were shipped by the Detroit, Lansing & Northern railroad 43,140 pounds of wool, 447,020 pounds of live stock, 201,284 pounds of pork, 1,647 barrels of flour, 36,623 pounds of butter, 1,214,150 pounds of building stone and brick, 36,550 bushels of wheat, 73,000 pounds of staves, 75,000 feet of lumber, 67,000 shingles; of agricultural products not mentioned above 1,035,181 pounds. In ordinary years about 3,000 barrels of apples are shipped from this point.

## MANUFACTURES, ETC.

But small space need be given to Ionia's manufacturing interests, as they are very slight. The chief manufacturer is, perhaps, W. H. Vanderheyden, who owns two extensive brick-yards, where most of the light colored brick seen in Ionia buildings was made. He furnished the brick for the Ionia prison, and ships largely to Grand Rapids, Lowell,

Lansing, and all the cities and towns in this section of the State. He also manufactures drain tile extensively, and employs from fifty to seventy-five men in the summer.

The Ionia pottery manufactures stoneware and earthen flower jars, turning out from \$3,000 to \$5,000 worth of work per year. J. M. Kidd, and R. Hearsey run planing mills and sash, door, and blind factories, which employ now fifteen men and turn out \$20,000 worth of work yearly. Mr. Kidd's manufacture of fanning mills and milk safes is included in this. Dr. T. Fargo's sawmill here cuts 1,000,000 feet of lumber, and makes \$22,000 a year. The Ionia City mills make fifty barrels of flour a day, mainly for home consumption.

Two marble works build \$9,000 worth of tombstones, etc., yearly. Four carriage and wagon makers produce \$20,000 a year. A small foundry completes the list within the city. A large foundry and machine shop is standing idle on Dexter street.

The Detroit, Lansing & Northern railroad has its machine and repair shops here, in which 125 men find work. The trains of this road are made up here, and 100 train men make their headquarters here in consequence. The company pays 225 men here \$15,000 a month, and yet some Ionians say "the road is a curse to the town."

There is a chance in this place for some enterprising manufacturers of wooden wares, as all sorts of woods are easily accessible, and there will be a lot of convicts to work on contracts soon.

#### BANKS AND INSURANCE.

The First National bank was organized in March, 1864. It has a paid in capital of \$100,000; surplus, \$22,000. The Hon. Alonzo Sessions is president, and R. P. Sherman, cashier. Its loans and discounts approximate \$150,000; deposits, \$70,000.

The Second National bank was organized in 1872; paid in capital, \$100,000; surplus, \$8,000; circulation, \$70,000; deposits, \$65,000; loans and discounts, \$125,000; George W. Webber, president; Virgil VanVleck, cashier.

Page & Wilson do a private banking business, with a capital of \$100,000.

The Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company, of Ionia county, is one of the most successful of its kind. It now has a capital of \$6,000,000. Officers: President, Alonzo Sessions; vice president, S. A. Yeomans; treasurer, William Sessions; secretary, Oscar Talcott.

#### TWO RAILROADS,

the Detroit & Milwaukee and the Detroit, Lansing & Northern, afford means of communication between Ionia and the outside world. These bring it within 123 miles of Detroit, thirty-seven miles of Lansing, and thirty-four of Grand Rapids, and lay the lumber regions at its feet.

#### THE HOTELS

Ionia's hotels will compare favorably with those found in other places of its size. The Sherman House and the Bailey House are the leading ones. The Sherman is a commodious brick structure, corner of Second and Main streets, convenient to the depots, and in the hands of those who will do the best they know to make things agreeable for their guests.

## THE PRESS

The Ionia local papers are very well conducted and a credit to the city they represent. We are happy to add that they are well supported.

The Sentinel, a staunch republican sheet, was founded May 1, 1866, by J. C. Taylor and T. G. Stevenson. In August, 1867, they bought their democratic rival, the Gazette, edited by the veteran E. R. Powell, now of the Montcalm Herald, and merged it in the Sentinel. Stevenson & Taylor now own and edit the Sentinel, and have called in steam to help them in their growing business. To Mr. Taylor we are especially indebted for aid in collecting material for this sketch. He knows how to greet brother journalists in a strange city and help them along in their work.

The Standard was started at Saranac in 1870 and lived there one year. It was removed to Ionia in 1871, and in 1872 was purchased by J. P. Stevenson. Louis E. Rowley bought an interest in it in 1877, and it is now managed by the firm of Stevenson and Rowley. It is straight democratic, with hard money tendencies, but opposes the National banking system.

## IN THE COUNTRY ROUNDABOUT

The county is a fine one, rolling land, good soil, well wooded and well watered. Wheat is the staple, but the wool and fruit interests are growing rapidly. It produced a surplus of 1,000,000 bushels of wheat last year. Among the largest farmers are the Hon. N. B. Hayes, member of the House for the eastern district, who has a farm of 1,400 acres in North Plains, seven miles northeast of the city, devoted to wheat and blooded stock; Albert VanVleck, who has 1,400 acres in Ronald, cultivated chiefly in the same interests; and the Hon. Alonzo Sessions, who rules over 800 acres in Berlin, four miles west. Mr. Sessions boasts of having a greater variety of forest trees on his farm than any other in the State can show, and raises wheat and cattle. Other successful farmers are the three English brothers of South Boston, and the three Kelsey brothers of Ionia, who are successful stock breeders. In fruit, George Hosford, with his grapery, one mile south of the city, and N. E. Smith, half a mile north, are best known. The Hon. S. A. Yeomans, member of the House for the western district, has a fine farm of 300 acres one mile west.

The census of 1845 gave the county a population of 5,001; that of 1874 credited it with 28,376.

## IONIA SANDSTONE

About three miles east of the city, on the Detroit, Lansing & Northern railroad, are quarries where the brown sandstone, which is gaining a reputation as the Ionia sandstone, is found. It has a rich, fine color, which makes it desirable for ornament in connection with brickwork, and it has the strength essential to standing alone in solid masonry. It is used to a considerable extent in Ionia and Grand Rapids, and has satisfactorily stood tests subjecting it to a pressure of 128 tons to the square foot. The railroad company is using it exclusively for its improvements, and has enough on its right of way "for its uses for all time to come," says Supt. Milliken. It is claimed for it that it is equal to the best Ohio sandstone, and can be delivered dressed in Detroit for one-fifth less. There is considerable satisfaction in finding that Michigan has at last found good building stone within her borders. The quarry seems well nigh inexhaustible, and only needs some enterprising capitalist to work it up.

## REPRESENTATIVE MEN

### *Lieutenant Governor Sessions*

The Hon. Alonzo Sessions was born in Skaneateles, N. Y., August 4, 1810; enjoyed the ordinary educational advantages of the common school, and began teaching when seventeen years of age. He followed that for a few years, and was clerk for a while in a country store. In 1835 he came to Michigan, and in October of that year walked, with his brother Job, from Detroit to Ionia, by about the same route taken by the Dexter colony. After they left the eastern settlements, they lived on bread and raw pork, which they bought at their last shelter, and slept on the ground under the trees. They picked out their land in the township of Berlin, paddled down to Grand Rapids in a boat, and footed it from there to White Pigeon, where they entered their land at the land office. They had no teams and no money, and set about to get means to improve their farms. Alonzo went to Ohio to teach, and his brother went to work on a farm. In June, 1835, they returned to Berlin.

In 1837 Alonzo married Miss Celia Dexter, daughter of the leader of Ionia's band of pioneers. He began to serve his neighbors as justice of the peace in 1836; was elected supervisor in 1838, an office he has filled seventeen years, eight of which he was chairman of the board. He was elected sheriff of the county on the Whig ticket in 1840; representative in the State legislature as a Republican in 1856, and was re-elected twice. In 1862 President Lincoln appointed him assessor of internal revenue for the western district of Michigan, which position he held until retired by President Johnson in 1866. He was a presidential elector in 1872, and was elected lieutenant governor of the State. He was one of the first directors of the first national bank of Ionia, and has been its president since 1866. He gives his chief attention now to his farm of 800 acres, four miles west of the city, in which he takes an honest pride, as the fruit of a great deal of honest, hard work, guided by good business talent.

### *Hon. O. S. Tower*

The Hon. Osmond S. Tower first saw the light in the old Bay State, and left his native county of Hampshire in his early manhood to hunt fortune in Michigan. He settled at Ionia in 1835, and worked several years at the carpenter's trade, when he engaged in the manufacture of fanning mills and milk safes, and finally in the hardware business, in which he still continues. As is usual his neighbors first called him into public life in the capacity of supervisor. He next served a term as county treasurer. He went to the State senate in 1858 as a Republican, and was re-elected in 1860. When the United States court for the western district of Michigan was organized, he was appointed first marshal of the district. He held the position until invited to join the celebrated Bread and Butter Brigade organized by Andrew Johnson. He was on a sick bed when he received the famous "Randall Circular;" but immediately wrote a caustic and defiant reply to the document and gave it to the press. Then his head dropped into the basket. He has done much to develop Ionia, and has a very tangible material reward.

### *The Hon. Frederick Hall*

Another gentleman who is prominent in this section is the Hon. Frederick Hall. He hails from the Green Mountain State, and came to Ionia at an early day, with very little money in his pocket. Speculation in pine lands has done its work, and he is now one

of the wealthiest men in the county. He began to serve the county in 1843 as register of deeds, and was for a time register of the land office. In 1850 he was elected representative in the State Legislature. The road to political preferment in Ionia county is not owned by the democratic party, and having espoused its cause Mr. Hall, as a leading man, has spent his political life chiefly in bearing the brunt of its burdens and defeats. He was its candidate for Lieutenant Governor four years ago, and previous to that went over the course for it once in the race for congress. He is a big owner of pine lands, to the management of which and dealing in real estate he now gives his attention.

*The Hon. Hampton Rich*

There is no man in Ionia better known throughout the State than the Hon. Hampton Rich, and probably no man in the city has done more for its advancement or more and better work. He was born in Shoreham, Addison county, Vermont, December 1, 1815, and was named for General Wade Hampton, of Virginia, under whom his father served as an officer in the war of 1812. His parents moved to St. Lawrence county, New York, in his early childhood, and soon after into Canada, opposite Ogdensburg. Mr. Rich lived there until he came to Ionia in July, 1837. He has been engaged in mercantile business most of the time since that date. He served several years as justice of the peace and two terms as county clerk, and held several township, village and city offices. He was elected to the State Senate in 1866 and again in 1868. While serving in that capacity he perfected an act for building the Ionia and Lansing Railroad, organized the company, was elected its president, and served in that capacity until the road was built from Lansing to Greenville, and was largely instrumental in getting the railroad shops located at Ionia, which location, as we have elsewhere shown, was a great boon to the place. His connection with the State House of Correction has been treated of already. He has led the work about it from its inception, and a large portion of the credit for its excellent condition must be given him. He was president of the city school board when the Union school building was erected and superintended the work, and also adopted the plans for the Methodist church and superintended its construction. In short, every undertaking for the growth and prosperity of the city of his adoption has been furthered by his cordial work and liberal purse. If we have spoken a little warmly of him in this sketch, charge it to his fame in his own country. A disinterested citizen says: "Rich has done more for Ionia's material growth and prosperity than any other one man."