



History of Oakland County Michigan, Vol. 2: A Narrative Account of Its Historic Progress, Its People, and Its Principal Interests (Classic Reprint)

Thaddeus D. Seeley

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Excerpt from History of Oakland County Michigan, Vol. 2: A Narrative Account of Its Historic Progress, Its People, and Its Principal Interests

Henry Clay Ward. The mighty primeval forests of northern Michigan have been the foundation of many of the vast fortunes that have been amassed within the space of several generations by men of business sagacity. Gifted with prophetic foresight, they came into the wilderness of trees and their eyes beheld something beyond the waving of branches and fluttering of leaves. Cities made prosperous by their trade in timber; noble ships of this soil's product riding the waves of every sea; thousands of mouths being fed by the labor of preparing this timber for its final uses, - these are a few of the visions that may have come to these men, and perhaps they saw also the establishing of homes, factories, busy marts of trade, the introduction of the culture and comfort of civilization where in their day the forests sheltered only the wild creatures that are men's enemies. The pioneers in the timber business in Oakland county were not always men capable of land selection, and the opportunities afforded their chosen agents were sometimes so favorable, according to their contracts, that men of good business capacity, college bred and professionally prepared, were willing to accept the hardships and dangers of the life for a time, subsequently reaping rich returns. In this way Dr. David Ward, the father of the subject of this review, and the well known capitalist and timberman in Oakland county, became connected with that industry.

Dr. David Ward was born in New York state, and the family is one of the oldest in the United States, with the best blood of the nation in its veins. On his mother's side Dr. Ward is a descendant of the Puritans. He was the grandson of George L. Perkins, who was born at Plymouth, Massachusetts, within a stone's throw of historic Plymouth Rock, and the house in which he was born stands there to this day. His grandmother was born on the corner lot directly opposite the Perkins mansion, and both were descendants of families who came over in the Mayflower. The names of these families may be read on the quaint old tombstones in the Plymouth cemetery, from the earliest settlement of Plymouth.

In 1850 Dr. Ward married Elizabeth Perkins, who was born in Romeo, Michigan, and they became the parents of eight children: Henry Clay of this review; two who died in infancy; Charles W., a resident of Queens, Long Island; Flora, the wife of Fred H. Fay, New York; Willis C., who now lives on a farm at Orchard Lake, Oakland county; Helen, the wife of Louis Pelouze, residing on the old homestead at Orchard Lake, and Pearl, the wife of George K. Root, of New York City.

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