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The Settlement of<sup>e</sup>  
Ionia, Mich.,

— BY —

SAMUEL DEXTER

WITH

A History of  
THE SESSIONS FAMILY  
of the Branch  
of

ALONZO SESSIONS

and

CELIA DEXTER SESSIONS

THE PUBLIC TRUST

OF

THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Beur of Frances Thomas  
4-29-47



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## Settlement of Ionia, Michigan

(By Mrs. L. P. BROCK, in Detroit News Tribune, May 25, 1913.)

IONIA, Michigan:—The little city of Ionia, nestling close to the foot of the hills on the north side of Grand River, climbing up their sides, and spreading over the level country at their top—charming in name, location and environments, will on Wednesday, May 28, arrive at the eightieth anniversary of the coming of its first white settlers, the colony from New York led by Samuel Dexter, and Ionians feel that they have much to be proud of, not only in the high character of its colonists, but of the interesting Indian lore attached to this region, for much as this locality was loved by the whites, even as much was it loved by the race that preceded them, who hunted in the forests, fished in the streams and built their wigwams by the banks of the river that was their broad highway, flowing through—as they considered it—their Indian paradise.

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Michigan was inhabited by three tribes of the great Algonquin nation which inhabited all the land south of Hudson Bay, east of the Mississippi and north of the present state of Tennessee, except the state of New York which was the possession of the five confederated tribes of the fierce and war loving Iroquois. The Pottawatomies lived in the south part of the state, the Chippewas in the north part and northern peninsula, and for many years the Sauks occupied the country around Grand river, but were finally overcome by the Ottawas, whose home it became for many generations. All of these tribes though so widely scattered, often warring desparately among themselves, belonged to one great stock, and spoke various dialects of one language.

As nearly as can be ascertained at the beginning of the eighteenth century the Pottawatomies numbered about 800 warriors, the Ottawas about 1,200 and the Chippewas, with whom these tribes were linked in a very close confederacy, numbered more than both of them.

At the coming of the whites, 80 years ago, its human oc-

cupants, the Ottawas, some Chippewas, and perhaps a few Pottawatomies, remnants of three of the most powerful tribes known in what at an early day was designated the northwest territory, were mostly to be found along the banks of the Grand, where their villages were located at the mouth of rivers flowing into it.

The Ottawas were originally located in the vicinity of the Ottawa river in Canada, from which they derive their name, but were driven from there by the terrible Iroquois, from New York, who were always making war on other Indian tribes. They fled to the land of the Chippewas. The Iroquois followed them to their new haunts, but the two tribes combined and were enabled to repulse the Iroquois, who afterward seldom sought a warpath which led so far to the north.

The celebrated Father Marquette visited the northern peninsula in 1668 and established a mission for the Ottawas at St. Es'prit, near the west end of Lake Superior. But in 1670, the Ottawas no longer fearing the Iroquois, established their principal village on the island of Mackinac, and then at St. Ignace, just across the strait. Father Marquette established a mission for them in 1671.

From that point the Ottawas spread southward, especially along the east shore of Lake Michigan, which was of easy access by means of their boats, and thence by paddling up Grand river, they first invaded the hunting grounds of the Sauks, the last quarter of the seventeenth century. These excursions, of course, ended in a series of conflicts which culminated in the Sauks fleeing, terror-stricken, from the graves and hunting grounds of their forefathers, down the river and across Lake Michigan into what is now Wisconsin, where they located.

The same year that Father Marquette established the mission at St. Ignace, there occurred another scene at Sault Ste. Marie of great significance to the occupants of this region. The French had obtained a foothold in Canada in 1535, and in 1670 the intendant of Canada, sent Lieut. Lusson, a French officer, into the Lake Superior region to hunt minerals. To signalize his expedition by an imposing ceremony, he called together all the tribes of the lake country to meet him at the Soo, and no less than 14 tribal organizations being represented, he made a proclamation, taking over the present State of Michigan, and adjacent lands in the name of his sovereign, Louis XIV. of France,

promising the tribes in return protection from their foes. "Long live the king," said Lusson. "Long live the king," said the Frenchmen present—and the thousands of savages yelled in unison. They would not have been so ready to turn over their lands in any way, to an unknown potentate across the sea, if they had not become afraid of the Iroquois, who by this time were being fitted out with muskets and ammunition by the Dutch at New York. Thus the State of Michigan, in a way, passed into the hands of the French.

After this date the Indians comprising the Michigan league usually acted together in their war-like expeditions, and with the aid of the French, held comparative peaceable possession of this their home for nearly one hundred years. But the English wanted territory. And in 1754 was begun, the "Old French and Indian war," which finally resulted in the acquiring by the English of all the French territory east of the Mississippi and in February, 1763, the treaty of peace was signed between France and England. When the Indians were told of this they were furious, and a great uprising was planned by Pontiac, a full blooded Ottawa and head chief of the tribe here—then about 50 years old. History points him out as excelling in sagacity and strategy any Indian chief known. He gathered all of the nations of the lakes and rivers of the north together and the destruction of all the English forts and garrisons were to take place on a certain day. The feeling of the Indians is well expressed in the following historically authenticated facts. Major Rogers with his Rangers, was sent to Detroit to replace the French with an English garrison and on nearing the post he was met by Pontiac. "What is your business in my country, and how dare you enter it without my permission?" was the haughty demand of the Indian chief. Rogers told his errand. Pontiac replied with dignity: "I stand in the path," and again in part of a speech of another chief to an English trader: "Englishman, although you have conquered the French, you have not yet conquered us. We are not your slaves. These lakes, these woods, were left to us by our ancestors, they are our inheritance and we will part with them to none." But the face that was to usurp them was at hand, and needless to say after numerous attempts to foil the English, Pontiac renounced forever his great scheme, and the greatest chief that ever walked the trails through this beautiful valley had to give way to the greater race. He was murdered near St. Louis by an Illinois Indian, hired to do so by an English trader, it is said, and

was buried with all the honors of war by his friend, St. Ange, French commandant at St. Louis, but the Ottawas sprang to arms to avenge his death and almost exterminated the Illinois tribe.

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Then came the war of the Revolution and the formation of a new government, but it was 1796 before the British surrendered the post at Detroit to the United States, and not until then did the government obtain any control of the territory known as the State of Michigan. In 1807 General Hull made an agreement with the chiefs of the Ottawas, Chippewas and Pottawatomies, by which they ceded a large portion of their lands in eastern Michigan to the United States government. In 1812 war was again declared in which the Indians joined forces with the British, but with the victory of the United States all hopes of the Indians for holding onto their lands were vanquished—peace and protection were generously extended to them by the government and then the war-like career of this great league which had extended for more than a hundred years was at an end. They no longer kept strictly to tribes, and when the whites came here it was no unusual thing to find bands made up of Indians from all three tribes. Soon after the close of the war of 1812, it became evident to General Cass, then governor of the territory, that more land would have to be acquired from the Indians to accommodate the immigration spreading in all directions from Detroit, so he planned to secure further cessions from the tribes, laid his plans before the government, obtained authority to proceed in the matter, and called the chiefs together in council at Saginaw in 1819, this cession to include our own locality. The council was held in a large bower, which by direction of General Cass, had been built by Louis Campau, the French trader. Great opposition resulted but in the end the Indians acceded to the United States six million of acres which included most of Ionia county and were to receive annually forever one thousand dollars in silver coin, also annuities from other treaties to be paid in silver, the Indians reserving the right to hunt and fish so long as the government owned the land, and they were permitted to make sugar, until the lands were sold to settlers, but without any unnecessary waste of trees. In 1821, at Chicago, that part of Ionia county that was not covered by the treaty at Saginaw was purchased by the government.

Many Indians were still here when the first white settlers came, but according to treaty stipulations they had a right to be here, until actual settlers purchased the land, after which the Indians, as they had agreed, retired readily, yet mournfully, from their old haunts, their cultivated patches and their villages, to still deeper wilds in the northern wilderness.

During the latter part of the 17th and earlier part of the 18th century the present State of Michigan contained a widely scattered class of inhabitants, called Indian traders. Generally French, their business was buying fur and pelts from the Indians, and in exchange selling them calico and other commodities, and they were governed by certain rules issued by the respective governments that had controlled this region. Their trade must be confined to their own section; they must be fair and friendly in trade; attend no council held by Indians; convey to them no liquors; no traders allowed without a license; inculcate ideas of peace among the Indians; and assure them of the protection of the government, etc. The commodities they gave to the Indians sometimes came from Detroit on Indian ponies, but more often from Montreal by boats, portaged through the lakes and streams of upper Canada, then to Mackinac, when they were distributed to the various traders. Along the Grand River at about the time of the settlement here of the first whites were Louis Campau, who had lived since 1828 at what is now Grand Rapids with his wife, Sophie de Marsac—for whom the D. A. R. chapter of that city is named. At Lowell was Rix Robinson, who married an Indian princess, a daughter of one of the great war-chiefs of the Ottawas, who was own cousin to Pontiac.

Robinson was one of the few who remained true to his Indian wife, whom he married in accordance with tribal custom, and a short time ago the residents of that section raised a memorial to his name in the locality of his old home.

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East of Ionia there was established the post of Louis Genereaux, who had been here some years when the settlers arrived. He was quite successful as a trader, and owned a large batteaux, with which his goods and peltries were transferred up and down the Grand. He also had an Indian wife and half-breed son, Louis, Jr., who was a wild youth, and brought sorrow to his father by killing or roast-

ing to death an Indian, for which he was sent to prison for a long term and soon after the father removed from the locality then known as Genereauville.

While many of the Ottawas in other sections had been in the habit of leaving for Mackinac at the close of the sugar-making season, assembling by boat at the mouth of the Grand, then proceed in company up the lake, to return by some route in the fall—it is said the Indians in this locality stayed here the year around. The rich bottom land gave ample facilities for raising their garden stuff, while fish and game were to be had in abundance. In 1830 the chief Indian village was just east of here at the mouth of the Maple and numbered some 800. The principal chief was Cocoosh, while Black Cloud was second in command. There was a small village at Ionia, whose chief was Cobmosa, an Indian of much dignity and manliness, who was second in command of the Flat river band, and their principal encampment was near Lowell.

The importance of Grand river during these days was great, and sometimes the craft upon it presented a very imposing sight. It was about 1856 before the railroad was built and as this section was very isolated, about 150 miles from Detroit, the country between unsettled, the roads terrible during the greatest part of the year, to say nothing of unbridged rivers and streams, no wonder the river was looked upon as the surest way of access to the outer world, even if it was by way of the straits. Then were the boats of the Indians, the serviceable craft of the traders, Campau, Robinson and Genereaux, furnished with mast and sail and looked handsome going up and down the waters of the river. December 1, 1837, a sidewheel steamer, the "Gov. Mason," came up to Ionia, then on to Lyons, when the water was high. But with the coming of the railroad the great need and use of the river was ended.

In the early thirties the fame of Michigan lands reached the east, and as ever, adventuresome souls were eager to push out into the new west. In the fall of 1832 Hon. Samuel Dexter of Herkimer, N. Y., came on a prospecting trip and in company with his friend, Dr. Jewett, later of Lyons, Ionia County, rode horseback through southern and western Michigan, looking up government lands. After following the lake shore to Chicago he came back to Michigan and located lands at what is now Grand Rapids, on the east side of the river across from a large Indian village, and



**SAMUEL DEXTER,**  
Founder of Ionia, Michigan



**MRS. DEXTER.**  
Wife of Samuel Dexter

near the home of Louis Campau and his wife, the French trader. He entered a tract of land two miles long and eighty rods wide, near where is now the very heart of the City of Grand Rapids (afterward giving to Kent County ground for their court house site), and then came on east to Ionia, where he located a quarter section. He then returned to his home in New York to make preparations for removal, to the new home, he had chosen, selling out his possessions, inducing others to join him, and preparing himself, his wife and nine children for a life in an unbroken wilderness, miles from any sign of civilization. He was then 47 years of age, and had been a member of the New York legislature for one or two terms. He was the seventh in descent from Sir Gregory Dexter, who came from London with Roger Williams to Providence, R. I., in 1643. Sir Gregory Dexter owned a printing establishment in London and printed Roger Williams' dictionary of the Indian language, a copy of which is in the library of congress, a very rare specimen. The two men formed a close friendship, so great that Dexter sold his business and came back to the colonies with Williams. The king granted him a charter of the whole State of Rhode Island, and he was the first accomplished printer in America and printed the first almanac for the meridian of Rhode Island. He also became a preacher and at Roger Williams' death succeeded him and therefore became the second Baptist preacher in Providence.

Samuel Dexter's father was also named Samuel Dexter, who married Candace Winsor, a lineal descendant of Roger Williams, and he was a revolutionary soldier and ensign in Col. Lippitt's Rhode Island regiment. They had thirteen children, the fifth, Darius Dexter, being the grandfather of Mrs. William Jennings Bryan, the wife of our present Secretary of State. Samuel Dexter, whose colony settled Ionia, being their seventh child, John and Darius, the fourth and fifth sons founded the village of Dexterville, which is now a suburb of Jamestown, on Chautauqua Lake, New York, and the house in which Darius Dexter lived still stands there. These two brothers went west in 1838, and Darius settled in Pike County, Illinois. His daughter Lavina married John Baird, the father of Mrs. Bryan. John went to Wisconsin, near Kenosha, and settled on a farm which today is owned by his grandson, now seventy-one years of age, and is known as "Dexter Farm," George and Stephen, the twelfth and thirteenth children came to Michigan and located land on the north bank of Whitmore Lake, north of Ann Arbor, but quite soon removed to Ionia county, and



about 1835, located farms in Easton township, a few miles from the new settlement their brother founded, in which locality they afterward lived and died.

Upon Mr. Dexter's return home from his Michigan trip, he interviewed people, and wrote many letters in praise of the "west" as it was then and his enthusiasm induced others to join him in the new enterprise of securing land. He sold his farm for twelve thousand dollars, quite a bit of money to bring into a new territory, especially as it was all in gold and silver. It was packed in bags labeled "axes," and there was always the watchful eye of two men, on guard over it.

The colony when it got under way, April 22, 1833, numbered 62 people consisting of six families. Samuel Dexter's, Erastus Yeoman's, Oliver Arnold's, Darius Winsor's and Edward and Joel Guild's, also five young men, Wm. B. Lincoln, a young practicing physician, and four others, who left the colony soon after its arrival at Ionia. They chartered a canal boat for use as far as Buffalo, put on board only such articles as would be actually necessary to them in their new home, their own teams drawing the boat on the Erie canal.

To many of their neighbors, such an undertaking seemed one of folly, but the resolution had been deliberately taken and although the abandonment of old home and friends was a severe trial, it was bravely met. Their venture had become widely known, so that the first day or two they found the landing places along the canal crowded with old friends who had come to take a last look and say a parting word. At Buffalo they transferred themselves to a steamboat, in due time arriving at Detroit, and then the real hardships were to begin. Most of the household goods were shipped by boat via the straits of Mackinac to Grand Haven to be brought by small boat up Grand river, but the rest of the goods and the families were loaded on the wagons, teams attached and with a guide, who as assistant surveyor, was familiar with the country, they struck out into the wilderness, most of the way cutting the road as they went. The first day out of Detroit they could make but seven miles, the roads were so heavy. They stayed one night at Pontiac, at that time a very small place, having a hard name, so much so that if any one wanted to send a person to a bad place, he would say "You go to Pontiac." Nearly two weeks were consumed in the journey from De-

troit to their destination and to the women and children unaccustomed to hard fare, wild scenes, exposure and severe fatigue, the labor was almost overwhelming. They had much trouble in crossing marshes and fording streams. Many women walked and sometimes when they got stuck in the marshes the men had to carry them ashore. At night the men would build great fires and the women would then cook and they baked biscuits in the bakers set up in front of the fires. At Shiawassee, there were three children sick with the scarlet fever, a son of Edward Guild and Providence and Riley Dexter. Two of the children got better, but on May 26 about four in the afternoon, Riley, the youngest child of Samuel Dexter, died when the company was about 30 miles east of Ionia. Mr. Guild had a small trunk which he gave for a coffin and the child was laid in the grave by the light of the camp fires, his father making a feeling prayer, before the coffin was lowered. They piled the grave high with logs to protect it from the wolves and also carved his name, age and date of death on a large tree at its head.

The second day after, May 28, they arrived "home" about 10 o'clock in the morning and their first meal was dinner eaten a little way south of where the large armory now stands. As they could not expect their household furnishings that were sent around the lakes by boat, for some time, the men drove stakes in the ground and put sticks across them, then laid the side boards of a wagon box on for a top so had the first extension table in Ionia county.

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The Indians, who founded the village here, numbering about 500 inhabitants, and who had known of Mr. Dexter's intention to return, from the visit among them the fall before, had given up his coming on account of the late arrival of the colony, and had put in their gardens of corn, melon, squashes, etc. There were five wigwams that were built of bark, four down by the river near the present Pere Marquette car shops—not more than 10 feet square, two bunks on one side, one above the other. The other was a little way northwest of these and about 14 feet square. The Indians disliked to give up their homes and gardens, but knowing they were simply holding their lands by sufferance until actual settlers arrived, they readily, though mournfully, gave up, after Mr. Dexter paid them for their bark wigwams and gardens, he doing business through a

guide, who acted as interpreter. The largest wigwam was then occupied by the women and children of Mr. Dexter's family, the others were occupied by the families of the rest of the colonists, the men occupying tents, wagon boxes and such other shelter as circumstances would permit. Two log houses were immediately commenced, one for Mr. Dexter and one for Mr. Winsor, and very soon after one for Mr. Yeomans. Mr. Dexter's was built where the Jacob Schmoltz brick block now stands, Mr. Winsor's just west of the creek that crosses East Main street, and Mr. Yeoman's in what is now Easton on land still held by his descendants.

In a few days after their arrival, some of the men of the colony started for the land office at White Pigeon. They met Louis Campau, who begged them to come to settle at Grand Rapids where he and his wife had lived so long alone. So Joel Guild decided to go—took up some land there and within a month "Uncle Louis" and some of his help, came up to Ionia in bateaux for the Guild family, they arriving at Grand Rapids, June 23, that being the day Grand Rapids called her "birthday," having been started as a white settlement by the family of one of the Ionia colony. Edward Guild and family some time after joined his brother there, as did also Mr. Winsor's where they afterward lived and died.

The first white child born in the community was Eugene, son of Darius Winsor, whose birth occurred in August, a little time after the arrival here, and the first death was also in his family—that of his little 6-year-old daughter, which took place the same summer, and who was buried on the hill, not far from the present central school grounds, on the I. H. Thayer property. There were four men of the original colony who always made Ionia their home—Samuel Dexter, Erastus Yeomans, Oliver Arnold and W. B. Lincoln.

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Oliver Arnold was the pioneer mechanic and foundryman, and chose for his home a spot across the river, at the foot of the hills immediately south of Ionia, where has grown up quite a burg, called South Ionia. There he took advantage of the water power furnished by a creek flowing down from among the hills, and established a growing business, which is still conducted by his grandson.

Erastus Yeomans lived nearly all his long life of over 90 years on the land he located in Easton, very near Ionia. He was appointed first postmaster of Ionia county, receiving the appointment under President Jackson, which position he held for six years. In 1841 he was elected associate judge of the county, serving in that capacity for eight years. He was always "Judge" Yeomans after that, and lived a highly honored and respected life. In his latter years he lived in his large home in the west end of Ionia, which still stands.

Dr. W. B. Lincoln was Ionia county's first physician, and had his hands full from the start, being called from everywhere, over a large territory, rapidly filling with settlers. He had a large practice for years, extending from Grand Rapids, 40 miles west of Ionia, to about an equal distance in other directions. He was also first school teacher. Mr. Dexter hiring him to teach the children of the community at his home, and old letters from these children speak of him as "having a most gentle and fine influence over the young people, looking well after their language." He also built the first frame house in Ionia, erected in 1834, still doing duty as part of Dr. Allen's residence.

He was the first township clerk, chosen at the meeting authorized by the legislative council, to be held on Monday, April 6, 1835, at the home of Antoine Campau & Co., purchasers, a short time before, of the business of Louis Geneveaux, the fur trader. He was also the first bridegroom of the community, his marriage to Cinthy, daughter of Oliver Arnold, taking place at the residence of the bride's father, on Sunday, July 5, 1835, 'Squire' Dexter performing the ceremony. They lived a long and happy life together, having three daughters, one of whom, Mrs. Dr. H. B. Barnes, has always resided in Ionia.

Samuel Dexter always busied himself in doing all that he could to better the condition of the new community, in which he was so interested. The corn, that matured the first summer, was at first pounded in a mortar dug out by the Indians in a hollow stump, but Mr. Dexter went to Detroit and brought back a large coffee mill, having a handle on each side, by which two men could grind corn, making meal instead of the coarse samp produced by the "stump" process. That winter all the new settlers around, so rapidly coming into this new country, used this mill, coming from Lyons and as far away as Portland. In September, following the colony's arrival in May—Mr. Dexter (according to

a letter written by his daughter, Prudence, many years ago) built a sawmill, on the plat of ground just west of the armory, now called Dexter park, that was at least the second mill built in Ionia county, though history is not very definite about that. H. V. Libhardt (father of Mrs. H. R. Wager, of Ionia and Washington, D. C.) came with his family in July, 1833, to settle at Lyons, and soon built

a little sawmill which might have been the first. Mr. Dexter used the waterpower from the creek, crossing Main street at Dexter street, it being carried to the mill in an overhead race, a big wooden trough up on stilts as high as the second story windows, a splendid slippery place where his grandchildren used to have gay times wading up in the air. The next year (according to the letter) Mr. Dexter put into the sawmill a small run of stone that ground the first wheat raised in Ionia county. The first grist belonged to Asa Spencer, and that hour was a joyful one for the settlement, as the people had occasionally been compelled to go to Pontiac for flour, sometimes making the journey on foot owing to bad roads, and a relief from such a condition must have been a very welcome one.

Mr. Dexter was exceedingly generous in the use of his money and lands. He gave land to the Baptist society to build a church on which the present edifice stands. Also the west part of the present court house grounds to the county for a court house site, and lots in Ionia to any one who would build a house thereon, and many of its later wealthy citizens got a start in this way.

He was entrusted largely with the affairs of the growing community. A land office was early established in Ionia and once, when Mr. Dexter carried the funds to Detroit for deposit, he had an unfortunate experience. He was at that time accompanied by his son-in-law, Jonathan Tibbitts. The money, \$200,000 and over, was placed in kegs and was carried by ox teams. The teams waded and swam Grand river—the wagons and money kegs were carried across in canoes by Indians and one canoe loaded with kegs tipped over in the river, but after much difficulty the heavy kegs were finally recovered.

He was ever a miller, and from his little sawmill finally evolved the large Novelty mills, that a few years ago, burned down, now replaced by Dexter park and the large state armory, in excavating for which one of the old grinding stones was found.

As has been stated before Mr. Dexter brought nine children with him from the east, and one daughter was born after they came here—but very few of his descendants live here now. His daughter Celia, married Alonzo Sessions, at one time lieutenant-governor of Michigan, and their youngest daughter is the wife of Major Arthur P. Loomis, formerly private secretary to Governor Warner. They live in their fine farm home, a short distance over the hill from South Ionia, and Mrs. Loomis is the nearest kin to Mr. Dexter left here.

He was a short stout gentleman of genial, kindly disposition, very fond of his family. He was a strong Baptist, and deacon of the church, but in his later years, became interested in spiritualism, and after going by team, down into Ohio, to witness psychic phenomenon, became convinced of the truths of the spirits return after death.

He died in Ionia, in August, 1856, in his 69th year, at the home occupied by him for many years, across the street from his mill, his gardens being on the northeast corner of Dexter and Main streets, and was buried in Oak Hill cemetery, a beautiful spot, overlooking the little city he founded.

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The month of November, 1833, saw a welcome addition to the colony, in the coming of Alfred Cornell and family—numbering 12 persons—from Madison county, N. Y.—Their trip from Detroit taking two weeks. Willing hands turned in to build a house for them, and though bed quilts and blankets had to do duty for doors and windows, the house was no less a home. Mr. Cornell was afterwards chaplain at the Michigan reformatory and in 1876 wrote the following words of those early days:

“You may naturally say, they must have suffered very great privation, and endured very great sufferings. Not at all, my friends, not at all. Thank you for your kindly sympathy, but know this—there are none of the pioneer settlers now living, who do not look back with pleasure—even desire—to the days when an untrodden wilderness surrounded them; when the nearest settlement was 100 miles away. The memories of those days are full of the sweetness of real life, virtuous and noble aspirations. Never before did husband and wife so realize their oneness, never the family union so complete and perfect, or neighbors live in such joyful fellowship. The circumstances and surroundings were favorable for the development of the noblest

qualities—to the stirring up of generous impulses, awakening of the kindlier feelings that insure mutual sympathy and help. They were like the returned days of man's primitive virtue and innocence. Helping others, they helped themselves; seeking to make others happy, they increased their own happiness. Everything was to be done, and they rejoiced in the doing of it. Every new acre of improvement produced joy. Every fruit tree planted was watched over with ever-increasing interest, as the family estimated the time when it would yield them its ripened fruit. Every new building marked an advance in civilization and all were jubilant. No man, who has come in the possession of the paternal patrimony, with the lands all cultivated, buildings all made, fruit trees in bearing condition, can have a just appreciation of the vitalizing power and life-giving energy embodied in pioneer life, or the abiding pleasure with which the early pioneer looks back to the days and doings, when the wilderness was made to bud and blossom as the rose."

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People often wonder how the town came to be named Ionia. Many thinking it should have been named Dexter, and state history has this to say:

"The name given to the territory embraced within the limits of the county, by the fourth legislative council of the territory of Michigan, which convened at Detroit, January 4, 1831, was suggested, doubtless by some member of that body familiar with ancient history." After the settlement became the county seat in 1835 or 1836, people called it "Ionia county seat" for a long-time, until it finally became simply "Ionia."

Ionia, in ancient geography, was a country on the western coast of Asia Minor, and was named after the Ionians, who returned from Attica to these shores, from which they had previously emigrated to European Greece, and founded there 12 cities for themselves, and drove the old inhabitants out of their seats. (How closely our modern Ionians followed their ancient namesake, when they drove the Ottawas from their cornfields and hunting grounds. Though Ionia never possessed great political power, the commerce of its cities extended to the shores of the Black Sea, as well as to the coasts of the Mediterranean. Ionia was the cradle of Greek epic and elegaic poetry, history, philosophy, medicine and other science. It developed a new style of architecture,

and it was the birth place of several celebrated painters."

Ionia, Mich., has the rare distinction of bearing a name that has only five letters and yet has four syllables.

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### **Children Show How Ionia was Settled**

(From Grand Rapids Press, May 28, 1913.)

In honor of the eightieth anniversary of the settlement of Ionia by Samuel Dexter and his little band of pioneers more than one hundred school children depicted those stirring scenes of history with song, dialogue and pantomime.

All roads led to the Union school grounds where the crowning feature of the Founders' week celebration took place. For years and years Ionia has celebrated Founders' week. It has come to be a sort of homecoming period and from time to time special celebrations have taken place. The eightieth anniversary of the coming of Dexter however, was deemed worthy of a more than ordinary recognition and teachers and pupils voluntarily assumed the burden for the production of a suitable folk festival.

For weeks the children and teachers had been preparing and rehearsing for this tableau and the affair went through without a hitch. In every detail it was true to history, even to the costumes and stage furnishings, most of which were from eighty to one hundred years old.

The festival was divided into six scenes, the idea being to give glimpses of various periods and phases of Ionia's early history. After a preliminary scene covering part of the Indian history prior to the coming of the whites, the caravan of Samuel Dexter came upon the stage and there

followed a reproduction of the greeting between Dexter and the Indians he was forced to dispossess. To add to the historical value of this scene John Loomis, son of Maj. A. P. Loomis and a great-grandson of the original Samuel Dexter, took the part of the sturdy old pioneer settler. William Arnold, great-grandson of Oliver Arnold, another of the original party, also had a place in the tableau.

### **Given on School Lawn**

The festival was staged on the broad expanse of lawn, at the Union school. Scene one opened upon a typical early Indian village with four wigwams. Forty children took part in this scene which covers the conquest of the Sauk Indians by the Chippewas and Ojibways. The scene showed the



attack of the braves of the two offensive tribes and the stubborn but futile defense of the Sauks who were driven from the field.

In the second scene the trading post era was depicted. Here was represented the trading post of Louis Genereaux between Ionia and Lyons and the Indians were shown approaching the French trader's cabin and bartering skins and products of the hunt and chase for trinkets, blankets, etc. These two scenes were preliminary.

In the third scene the coming of the whites was graphically shown. The same costumes were worn, even the same type of cart was used and a yoke of oxen was obtained to make the scene perfect. This scene really was an extenuation of the one before. The Indians were gathered about their village when the cry was raised that the whites were coming. The caravan was seen approaching and there was great excitement. An interpreter came on ahead after halting the main body and engaged in conversation with the chief. The interpreter then brought Dexter forward for a conference and in pantomime, Dexter explained he had bought all the land and must ask the reds to move. They demurred somewhat, but on payment of \$25 in silver for the crops planted and the wigwams, they agreed to leave.

The Indians departed and there followed a scene of the early settlement when the whites lived in the huts of the departed Indians. Here the girls showed how the pioneers churned and spun. One rocked a baby in one of the 100-year-old cradles. The boys played checkers.

### **District School Features.**

The big hit of the day was the pioneer district school. Twenty-five children took part in this tableau. It had been carefully studied and rehearsed and easily was the most popular of the scenes. Charles Jack, one of the pupils in the Union school, was teacher and the pupils carried out in detail the methods in the earliest schools of this district. The old-fashioned method of spelling and pronouncing by syllable was carried out. The old slate was used. There was the spelling class. The multiplication tables were given in song and there wasn't a detail missing. Every scene won rounds of applause, but this was received with almost riotous enthusiasm.

The sixth and last scene showed the fourth of July celebration in Ionia eighty years ago. The street parade was reproduced in costume, with a fife and drum corps. There was a typical stump speech of the times and the finish showed the old noise-making stunt of "shooting the anvils." In that day the pioneers bored holes in the anvils and loaded them with powder. They fired them and got a regular cannon report. The scene, however, did not include the powder.

The finale was a real old Virginia reel to the tune of "The Irish Washerwoman."

One of the prettiest little details of the festival was the singing of Pioneer Joel Guild's famous song, "I'm Off for Michigania," by a sextet of eighth grade girls.

### **Teachers Made Day a Success.**

Teachers and pupils have co-operated in making this unique celebration the universal success it has proved. Miss Marjorie Streeter, principal of the Union school was general stage manager and director and she was ably assisted by her crops of teachers, including Misses Ella Hutchins, Eleanor Welsh, Luella Welsh, Margaret Seymore, Martha Knight, Stella Bloomer, Gertrude Sommers, Lucy Cull, Helena Braun, Dorothea Foess, Isa Nesbitt, Louise Call and Mrs. Lucile Briggs.

In addition to these teachers the director, Mrs. Grace Duncan took a leading part in the arrangement and production of the scenes in the tableaux and Miss Edith Williams and her class of county normal students also entered into the spirit of the occasion and assisted in making it a great success.

The principal address in connection with the festivities was delivered by Daniel W. Tower of Grand Rapids, a grandson of Samuel Dexter.

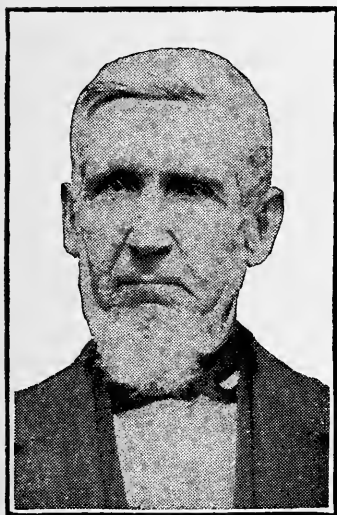
The scenes accurately portrayed the history of Ionia. The story is familiar to all Ionia people and to many in other sections of Michigan. Ionia was second only to Lyons in the point of early settlement and for years was one of the most important villages in the state. It originally was the head of navigation on the Grand River and for years before the Detroit and Mackinac railway made the steamboat business unprofitable, vessels made regular trips between here and Grand Rapids.

Ionia was named by Samuel Dexter after the settlement originally so named on Prairie Creek had failed and been abandoned. Dexter simply applied the name to his own village. Nathaniel Brown had first named the Prairie Creek village and had instituted a rivalry with the Dexter village. When his sawmill failed, however, the settlement rapidly declined and Brown returned to Chicago. Probably as an evidence of the success of his people in the rivalry for industrial importance Mr. Dexter took the other's name. Ionia is of Greek origin and was the name applied to a large territory in ancient Greece.

## ALONZO SESSIONS

The following sketch of the life of Alonzo Sessions appeared in the Ionia Sentinel, Ionia, Mich., July 6th, 1886, three days after his death and was from the pen of Gen. J. H. Kidd, the editor.

"Alonzo Sessions was born August 4, 1810, in Marcellus, Onondaga County, New York. He was of New England stock, his grandfather having lived on a rough farm in the state of Connecticut. Amasa, the eldest of eleven children was the father of Alonzo. At the age of nineteen he made his way on foot to the wilds of central New York where he taught school and cleared land, alternately, till he earned enough to pay for a farm on the east side of Skaneateles lake, where he died in 1838. His wife, Phoebe Smith, was a daughter of Job Smith, an officer of the revolutionary army. Her brother was sheriff of the county and member of the legislature. Alonzo was one of nine children and was trained in habits of frugality and industry, and in the strictest of religious tenets, his parents being members of the Baptist church. Being a diligent student he early acquired a good education and taught school. In 1831 he went to Bennington and engaged as clerk in a store for two years, receiving as compensation for his services, board and ten dollars a month. In 1833 he left his native state for Michigan, traveling from Detroit on foot, most of the way, viz Mt. Clemens, Rome and Pontiac to Farmington, where he struck the Grand River trail and followed it through Shiawassee, Clinton and Ionia counties to the present site of the City of Ionia, where he found five families, part of them living in unfinished log cabins, and others in Indian wigwams. He then embarked in a batteau to Grand Rapids, and thence went on foot, by way of Kalamazoo, to White Pigeon where the U. S. land office was and entered his land. The next winter he spent in Ohio, teaching school in Dayton till 1835, when he bought a team and came through his land on the south side of Grand River. The journey consumed sixteen days and from Marshall was through an unbroken wilderness. He built the first log cabin in the township of Berlin and the first bridges across the small streams between Ionia and Saranac. In 1837 he married Celia, daughter of Samuel Dexter, the pioneer of Ionia, and sister of the late John C. Dexter, Stephen F. Dexter, now of Evart, Mrs. Don Jones and Mrs. Tibbitts. By her he has had 13 children, seven of whom and Mrs. Sessions survive him. The farm which at first consisted



**Alonzo Sessions**



**Celia Dexter Sessions**

of 360 acres, increased to 800, and though hewn out of the wilderness has come to be one of the most valuable in Ionia county. Mr. Sessions has been greatly honored by his fellow citizens in the matter of official positions. He was the first supervisor of Berlin, and chairman of the first board of supervisors for Ionia county, and held the office at intervals, 18 years in all. He was justice of the peace for several years; was sheriff in 1841-2; member of the legislature in the lower house in 1856-58-60; during his last term in the legislature he was appointed assessor of internal revenue for the Fourth Michigan district and held this position four years. In 1872 he was a presidential elector on the republican ticket and chosen president of the electoral college. In 1876 he was elected lieutenant-governor and re-elected in 1878. When the national banking law was passed he, with others, started the First National Bank of Ionia, of which he has been a director since its foundation, and president since 1866. In politics he was a republican. He never united with any religious denomination of the church. He was of a stern, unyielding disposition, direct and inflexible of purpose himself and intolerant of the opinions of those who differed with him. In his business relations he was the soul of honor and he had no sympathy for the weaknesses, or charity for the failings of others, and had a hearty contempt for dishonesty in any of its forms. His austere and cold bearing toward others repelled many who would have liked to be his friends, but if he encouraged close intimacy it must have been with a limited circle. The rugged virtues of his character commanded the respect of his fellow citizens, while he did not win their affection like men of a more sympathetic mold and with more of the milk of human kindness in their composition. Yet, in spite of all this few men have wielded a greater influence in the community, or done more to set an example of sturdy manhood and honest endeavor than Alonzo Sessions. He was certainly an exemplar of personal honesty and unflagging industry, and viewed from most any light, his life must be pronounced a success.

“If he appeared to take too morose and desponding a view of human nature and the motives that govern men, it was perhaps because he, in a long life devoted to the study and observation of public affairs and political questions, had detected so much that was unworthy, selfish and ignoble, that his mental vision was obscured to the good that is in men. He was inclined to be a pessimist in his measure of men’s characters and motives. He had a lofty ideal to

which few can attain and indeed of which he himself fell short. But if we could all come as near it taken for all in all, as he did, it would be cause for profound thankfulness."

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The foregoing sketch and analysis of the character of Alonzo Sessions was written by one who was neither professedly friendly to him or whose political associates were in harmony with the rigid views advocated by Mr. Sessions, and yet it is as accurate as anything that could have been written by a member of his family. It does not however take account of the fact that over fifty years of the life of the subject of the sketch was spent in the hard stern school of necessity. He was obliged with muscle and brawn to hew out a home for himself and his increasing family. His indomitable spirit conquered, and he gave each of his children opportunities for education and social intercourse with their equals that were denied to him. Fitted by nature to have stood high in the councils of the nation, his life for the most part was spent in the hard grind of manual labor. With his wonderful energy and thoroughness it is impossible to predict what might have been his career had the first half of his life been surrounded by more favorable conditions. Social intercourse with one's equals or those who have had a wider experience is a great educator and tends to soften the lines that become too rigid in an atmosphere of isolation. He had rigid views as to economy, but he was never mean in money matters and never took advantage of another's misfortunes. He loaned money to his neighbors at regular rates, and on some occasions when he had little hope that the loan would be paid. He loved his children, but he exacted much because he expected much. He was serious minded but nevertheless fond of social intercourse. Under a serious exterior he had a big heart, for he would do much for a friend, and he had many. God stamped him a man. While he held aloof from church associations, he respected and admired a good man or woman none the less because they were church members. He had no patience with cant or lip religion. As one recalls his private and public career, not forgetting the stony farm where by hard knocks he worked out his livelihood, the great wonder is how he did it.

August, 1913

F. A. SESSIONS.

## EARLY PIONEER LIFE IN IONIA.

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### Some Recollections of H. C. Sessions, as to His Early Days in Ionia County.

I was born in a log house on the east bank of Stoney Creek, Ionia County which was the first house owned and occupied by my father and mother. In this log house all the cooking was done in a fire-place and the baking in an old style oven built on the out side of the house—no stoves—no lamps. The well-to-do and thrifty had tallow candles for light.

My recollection of the log house begins about 1848. In 1849 or 1850 my father built a new house, the main part of stone and the wing of the structure was constructed of wood. This at the time was the largest and most extensive house in the county. It contained two fire-places, one in the basement for cooking, and one in the dining room for the purpose of heating the house. In connection with the fire-place, in the basement and built along side of it, was situated a brick oven for baking, where all the bread, pies and cakes, (if any) were baked for the family. It may be of interest to the young folks of this generation, who in order to bake turn on the gas and then think the domestic work very hard.

In those days in order to do the baking the Dutch oven had to be filled with wood, and then more wood, until full of live coals, and the walls of the oven sufficiently hot to do the baking after the coals were removed, which required hours of preparation, generally a good half day. All candles were made by my mother, as well all soap, sugar, vinegar and molasses which was used by the family.

The yarn for stockings and mittens was spun by hand and stockings and mittens knit at home.

In time the wood stove came in, which was used for cooking but no oven for baking. Then followed a stove with an oven some years later. The next innovation was the kerosene lamp. With the advent of the stove and the lamp other inventions followed in rapid succession owing to the advent of railroads which were constructed in our section in 1856 and '57.

In my younger days before the advent of railroads, the hay was cut with a scythe, wheat oats and other small grains



were cut with a cradle, which was raked and bound by hand.

In time came mowing machines and rakes hauled by horses for handling the hay, also a machine for cutting the grain called a dropper. This latter machine would cut the grain and the driver would drop it unbound, while men would follow up and bind it by hand. These were soon superceded by the binder of the day, which was a very crude affair compared with the modern machine of today.

The above mark the differences of conveniences as between the early settlers of seventy-five years ago and today.

Indians were more frequent visitors to my father's house than white men, except the immediate neighbors, striking awe to my timid heart and I always had the sensation that mother rested easier when the Indians moved on.

The Chief Cobmosa was a frequent visitor to our home, he and my father being great friends. I recollect father trading to him wheat for a double barreled shot-gun with which I used to hunt turkeys and other game.

## GENEALOGY OF THE SESSIONS FAMILY.

1677 to 1913.

Samuel or Alexander Sessions came to America from Wantage, England about 1677 and died in Andover, Mass., in 1689.

Nathaniel Sessions, born in Andover, Mass., in 1680. Moved to Pomfort, Conn., 1704 and was one of its first settlers. Died in 1771.

Capt. Amasa Sessions, born in Pomfort, Conn., in 1775. Died in Pomfort, Conn., in 1799. He was a captain of a company in the Old French War with Putman; by his wife Hannah Miller had children among them being:

Nathaniel Sessions, born June 10th, 1750, died October 5, 1824 in Union, Conn., his wife Jane Wales was born—

Amasa Sessions, born June 30, 1770, went to Skaneateles, N. Y., 1798, married three times, was a Baptist, Antimason and anti-slavery. Among his children by second marriage to Lilla Bennett, was

Alonzo Sessions, born 1810, his wife Celia Dexter Sessions. To whom were born—

Sidney Sessions, (unmarried), member 8th Ill. Cavalry, killed at Whitehouse Landing 1862.

John A. Sessions—died in Ionia. Children, Clara, Millie, Clyde and Roy Sessions, all living.

Henry C. Sessions, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Children, Alonzo B., Katherine Sessions-Holmes, Jay B., Aileen, Hal C., Olive May Sessions, all living.

Elizabeth Sessions Sheldon, Seattle, Wash. Children, Mary Celia, Ellen, Frank, Alice and Edward M., Jr. *Sally*

Frank A. Sessions, Reading, Pa., unmarried.

Carrie M. Sessions Loomis, Ionia, Michigan. Children, Mary, John, Arthur and Edward.

*Francis*  
Ralph D. Sessions, Reading, Pa. *Dexter, James*

## GENEALOGY OF THE DEXTER FAMILY OF AMERICA.

Sir Gregory Dexter, (First American Ancestor), born at Olney Northampton, England in 1610. He afterward resided in London, England, where he owned a printing establishment. In the meantime Roger Williams, the famous Puritan that came to the United States with his young wife and settled in the vicinity of Boston, but being dissatisfied with the way the Indians were being treated by the main body of Puritans, he moved to what is now Rhode Island, being followed by a number of adherents, where he purchased land of the Indian chiefs and founded the city of Providence, and established the first Baptist church. He wrote a dictionary of the Indian language, and desiring to have it printed he went back to London for that purpose, and in this way met Gregory Dexter who printed the dictionary, a book of about two-thirds the size of an old fashioned Saunders spelling book, and a copy of which is in the possession of the Congressional Library at Washington, D. C., one of their very rare specimens. The two men formed a very close friendship and Roger Williams persuaded Gregory Dexter to return with him to the colonies which he did in 1644, bringing his printing establishment with him, settling in Providence. He was the first accomplished printer in America, (Thomas History of Printing, as found among manuscript papers of President Stiles of Yale College). He printed the charters of the colonies and is named in the second Sir Charles, 11-1663. (This was sent me by Miss Flora Dexter of Kenosha, Wisconsin, R. D. 34, and I hardly know what it means, but if you wish, you can write and ask her). He also printed the first almanac for the meridian of Rhode Island. He secured from the King of England the charter of the whole state of Rhode Island; was one of its foremost men; studied for a preacher, and at the death of Roger Williams, succeeded him in the pulpit. He lived to be ninety (90) years of age, and left several children and the family is a large and well-known one today.

His son Stephen and his wife were killed by the Indians during one of the wars at that time. Gregory Dexter died in 1700.

2nd. His son Stephen married Mary Arnold. Born, Providence, R. I., 1647; died, 1676.

3rd. His son John Dexter married Mary Feild. Born, Providence, R. I., 1670; died 1734 at Smithfeild, R. I.

4th. His son John Dexter married Mary Browne. Born, 1701 Smithfeild; died 1780 at Smithfeild, R. I.

5th. His son William Dexter married Rhoda Warner. Born Smithfeild, R. I., 1728; died —.

6th. His son Samuel Dexter married Candace Winsor or Windsor. Born Smithfeild, R. I., 1757; died —.

Candace Winsor was born in 1758 and was a daughter of Rev. Eseck Winsor, connected with the Revolutionary War as chaplain of a Rhode Island regiment. The Winsor's were noted for their learning and piety, many of them becoming ministers of the Baptist church. Candace Winsor, was a lineal descendant of Roger Williams, the fourth generation from Williams. Her great grandfather, Samuel Winsor, having married Mercy, widow of Resolved Waterman and daughter of Roger Williams. At the age of 75 years Candace Winsor Dexter was a member of the colony of 63 people that emigrated from New York in the spring of 1833, under the leadership of her son Samuel and settled at what is now Ionia, Mich. Here she lived for 13 years and died at the age of 88 years in 1846 and is buried in Ionia, in Oak Hill cemetery.

Her husband was Samuel Dexter and he also was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, being an ensign in Col. Lippts, R. I. regiment. They afterward removed to Herkimer County, N. Y. They were the parents of thirteen children, as follows:

William, born No. 14, 1778.

Prudence, born Nov. 2, 1779.

Ann, born March 10, 1781.

John, born Jan. 23, 1783.

Darius Dexter, born Nov. 26, 1784.

Mercy, born Aug. 19, 1786.

Samuel, born Dec. 15, 1757.

Betsey, born Oct. 7, 1791.

Winsor, born Sept. 1, 1793.

Otis, born June 3, 1795.

Warner, born March 15, 1797.

Geo. Washington, born, Aug. 4, 1798.

Stephen, born Oct. 19, 1801.

There has been received by me items concerning descendants of six of their sons, making seven of the children of whom nothing is known at the present time. Those known are: John Darius, Samuel (founder of Ionia), Otis, Geo. W. and Stephen.

John and Darius the fourth and fifth children, as young men engaged in the lumber business on the banks of

Chataqua Lake, N. Y., founding the village of Dexterville, which is now a suburb of Jamestown and the stone house which Darius built is still standing there. These brothers moved further west in 1838—Darius settling in Pike County, Illinois and John settling and locating a large farm five miles from the present city of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Darius has a number of descendants living now in Pike County. One daughter, Larnia, married John Baird and their daughter Mary, became the wife of William Jennings Bryan, the famous "Commoner" and present Secretary of State. One of his sons Harrison by name, was for many years in the lumber business in Cincinnati, when he died, and his daughter, the only child, is now a resident of Los Angeles, her name being Mrs. McFarlane. Darius Dexter had another son, Perry, who left many descendants in Pike County. Mrs. McFarlane was the only child and when Miss Flora Dexter's brother went to Cincinnati and hunted them up after her father's death, said, "She would welcome any Dexter relative with open arms, as she had not heard her father's name in years."

Otis, the tenth child, was associated with John and Darius at Dexterville, N. Y. for a time, but left and for many years was Captain of an Ohio river steamboat. A grandson of Otis Dexter, W. T. Wilson is living at Logansport, Indiana, a man of unusual attainments and of very high standards. He graduated from Princeton University in 1874, later from Columbia Law School and then from a Business College in Pittsburg and is now a lawyer and banker. He visited the descendants of John near Kenosha in September, 1906, accompanied by his daughter Dorothy, then aged 15.

During the month of July just past, a Miss Marsden of Yonkers, N. Y., another descendant of Otis Dexter has also been visiting the Dexters at Kenosha.

John and Darius Dexter married sisters, Sophia and Hetty Winsor of Providence, Rhode Island.

John in 1838 located land near Kenosha which is now the property of his grandson Walter, now 71 years of age, who inherited it from his grandfather, his grandfather having raised him, his only heir. John had only two children, Jackson and Louisa. The son died at the age of 29, leaving a little son Walter who was raised by his grandfather. Louisa died at the age of 25 years, leaving no heirs.

Walter, now living at "Dexter Farm" has six children. A married son in Chicago who has three sons, Howard, Walter and Robert Dexter; a daughter, Mrs. Courtlandt Dewey

of Kenosha, who has two daughters, Perdita and Persis. Perdita was married last July 19, to Charles A. Pope, whose father is head of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Her new home will not be very far from Mrs. Julia Jones Smead. Two daughters, one of whom is Miss Flora Dexter (very bright and entertaining), and two sons, interested in stock raising are with their father.

John, in 1842 built a large white brick house of seventeen rooms and it was the family's pride to beautify its "old fashionedness" but three years ago it caught fire and burned to the ground with all its highly treasured relics—the only one they saved was an old deed made out by Samuel and Candace Dexter with Samuel Dexter, Jr., as one of the witnesses and which they had framed. They now have a fine modern new house and this deed is their most treasured possession, hanging in their library. But nothing can ever take the place of the old home. (I want to say that Miss Flora Dexter had a photo taken of this deed and sent to Mrs. Arthur Loomis, her new found cousin, and I presume if you would like a copy for the projected book you could secure it through her.)

It was by the big fire place in this old home that the present Dexter, then a boy, can remember seeing the four brothers standing together. Samuel, Otis and Darius having come on a visit in 1855 to visit their older brother John, all white haired men. That was the year before your grandfather died. Miss Flora Dexter wrote me that her father had always felt very much alone, many times she having heard him say, "It seems strange that I have no relatives on the Dexter side, when I consider grandfathers ten brothers, whose descendants must surely be in existence somewhere." The first "discovery" came in 1904 when his son Walter (named for his father) went to Cincinnati and found the Dexter lumber business there—though its head was dead and found in that way Mrs. McFarlane, with whom he is now well acquainted. Afterward when Mr. Bryan became so widely known the ancestry of his wife was made public and W. T. Wilson wrote to her and as she knew Mrs. McFarlane, all that acquaintance quickly began. They had never heard of the Ionia relatives since the time Samuel visited the old home in 1855, until I made it known this spring which happened in this way: Last year the program committee of the Women's Literary Club came to me for suggestions and I told them that I thought some recognition of the 80th anniversary of the founding of Ionia would be very appro-

priate for the last club program preceding May 28th, Ionia's 80th birthday. When I opened the year book, they had put me down for a paper on "The Life of Samuel Dexter." I gasped, as I knew then there was very little in local histories, but I must say it led me into very pleasant paths even if they have been arduous ones to follow. I thought of course Mrs. Loomis could help me and in January phoned to her, when to my astonishment she said she knew scarcely nothing. After a while I received the genealogy of your grandfather's family from Miss Belle Tower of Grand Rapids also a short letter descriptive of the trip from New York of the colonists written by her mother, Prudence Dexter Dallas-Tower. In the meantime I wrote to James Tibbitts of Washington to see if he could tell me anything of interest, and after a long time he sent me the family line from Gregory Dexter and quite a good deal he had gleaned from a visit made to Herkimer County, N. Y., also from the files of the Rhode Island Historical association in Washington, where of course you know he is located. A very few days after I received his letter, I noticed in a Sunday newspaper the fact that Mrs. Bryan was eligible to the D. A. R. and traced her ancestry from Gregory Dexter. I thought it over a few days and thought quite likely she was eligible to the D. A. R., through Samuel Dexter, your great grandfather. So I write to her, told her how and by whom Ionia was settled and what I had on hand and she wrote me a kind and lengthy letter, in which she stated that I must surely be on the track of her ancestors as they also came from Herkimer Co., N. Y., but as her books were at home in Lincoln, Neb., she could not tell for sure whether Samuel and Darius (her grandfathers) were brothers and so told me to be sure and write Miss Flora Dexter who was very much interested in the "Dexters" and had all the data, which of course I did, and it has been the means of this branch of the Dexters becoming known to those branches and Mrs. Smead and Mrs. Myra Kidd who have been east visiting from Los Angeles have been out to Kenosha, (they thought Myra the sweetest thing they ever laid eyes on), and have been to Mrs. Smeads; also Dan and Belle Tower met them at Mrs. Smeads and they all were going out to Kenosha but Daniel Tower was taken sick and had to return to Grand Rapids. Much pleasure has come from all this to all the members of the family.

Ionia's celebration was much appreciated and grew in enthusiasm. The Club day program, Saturday May 24th, was given over to me entirely and proposed holding it in the

Baptist church as that was the first church established in Ionia, Samuel Dexter and his wife being two of its first members, also they gave the land where the present church now stands. Six of his grandchildren occupied front seats besides many other descendants and I surprised them with the many things they had known nothing of before. Also I presented the large picture of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Dexter to the city which a club of ladies did at my instigation. Then the next day came the write-up in the Detroit paper to give the affair state interest—hundreds of extra copies being ordered—and it aroused a great interest along the route taken by the colony 80 years ago. Then on Wednesday May 28th, the real birthday came—the Historical Pageant given on the school grounds by 150 to 175 school children in six scenes—going far beyond anyone's expectations and as the day was ideal, witnessed by hundreds of people. Camera men were there also, and "bushels" of post card views have been sold. Altogether it proved a beautiful and educational remembrance for Ionia. In twenty years when Grand Rapids and Ionia each will have their 100th birthday it is already planned to have a joint celebration as Grand Rapids celebrates June 25th as her birthday—the date Joel Guild, one of the men who came with the Dexter colony, but decided soon to remove down there, arrived there with his family.

I also came into knowledge that George and Stephen, the two youngest children out of that family of thirteen, came to Ionia county some two years after Samuel, and located farms in Easton. They had nineteen children between them but all the children are dead but Mrs. Dunham, a daughter of Stephen, 80 years old and who this spring removed to Ann Arbor to live with her daughter Ida, (Mrs. Jachariah York.)

I received a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Aldrich, who have a farm a little way out of Lake Odessa, in this county. Mr. Aldrich being a grandson of Stephen Dexter (brother to Samuel), and they were greatly interested in all the data. They drove over to the Historical Pageant but did not make themselves known. Have a chest, in good condition marked "S. Dexter, Grand River Valley via Mackinaw, care Rix Robinson, trader, Crockery," which they are going to bring to Ionia, to be put in the Historical Room.

As for Samuel, all that I have learned since I gave the address was that Samuel (the founder of Ionia) took the contract for building quite a large section of the Erie Canal and that his wife went with him to see to the care of the



large force of men on the canal boat he purchased. At home were his father and mother, Samuel and Candace Dexter, as also the children, who were cared for by a relative. Your great grandfather, Samuel always held that the Erie Canal project would never be a success, but he lived to see it finished and rode upon it himself. Samuel Dexter (your grandfather) sold the farm in Herkimer County for \$12,000.00 in gold and silver which was packed in kegs for shipment and then labelled "axes" for safety, and on the trip two men of the party always kept watch over them.

His mother's special pet was her granddaughter "Prudie," (Prudence Dexter Dallas-Tower), whose eyes were so weak she never attended school after she was thirteen, and on the trip of the colonists out from Detroit, they would both sit in one of the wagons and the grandmother would hold an umbrella over the child to keep the strong sunlight from her. Of course the family during the first summer lived in one of the bark wigwams purchased by Mr. Dexter from the Indians. In the middle of the earthen floor was a pit in which on cool days fires were built, and the smoke would not all escape through the hole in the roof, and hurt the child's eyes, so she was placed in a corner and a blanket stretched across in front of her to protect her and then the grandmother would sit outside of the blanket and read to her.

Samuel Dexter married Anna Fargo and they were the parents of ten children, all born in New York, except Helen the youngest daughter, who afterward became the wife of Chauncey Elwood. The only "Dexters" living today to carry down the family name in this branch, are: Mr. E. L. Dexter of Winters, California and Czar Dexter of Eddy, Montana. E. L. Dexter is the grandson of Lorenzo and is the father of two daughters and Czar Dexter has no children, so the family name becomes extinct in this generation. Their children were as follows:

Lorenzo Dexter, grandson is E. L. Dexter.

Mary Dexter Tibbitts.

Celia Dexter Sessions.

John C. Dexter.

Prudence Dexter Dallas-Tower.

Stephen Dexter—son, Czar Dexter.

Harvey Dexter.

Emmeline Dexter Jones.

Riley Dexter.

Helen Dexter Elwood.

Samuel Dexter and wife are buried in Oak Hill Cemetery at Ionia, and on the monument standing in the center of the lot are the following words:

(On one side):

"Samuel Dexter who passed to a higher life, Aug. 6, 1865,  
Aged 69."

(On the opposite side):

"Sacred to the memory of Anna Fargo, wife of  
Samuel Dexter."

(On the front):

"Mr. and Mrs. Dexter were the pioneers in the settlement of Ionia County—the honored founders of this beautiful and growing city. It seems most fitting that their last resting place should be upon an eminence overlooking the grand results to which they opened the way."

MRS. L. P. BROCK.

**GENEALOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE ANCIENT WINSOR  
FAMILY IN THE UNITED STATES.**

(BY OLNEY WINSOR).

(Printed in Providence, R. I., by L. W. Winsor, 1847;  
No. C. S. 71, W. 766).

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**Extracts.**

In the fifteenth century Lord Edward Windsor, a Roman Catholic was beheaded, probably on account of the religious troubles of those times.

Family records still existing, state that in the reign of Henry VII., Winsor Castle with the land about it, was presented by the family to the reigning monarch, who converted it into a royal castle and residence, and in honor of the donor, continued its ancient name. This is the present royal residence of the English Kings.

Under Henry VIII., Robert Windsor, a Roman Catholic Knight probably a son or grandson of Lord Edward Windsor, raised an army against the Protestants. The name and arms of the family were left out of the book of heraldry when same was raised, but they were preserved by the emigrant, Joshua Winsor who came to America in 1638, settling in Providence.

Robert Windsor, above mentioned, had a son Samuel, whose son was named John. The latter had a son Samuel, whose son Joshua was the emigrant who came to America before mentioned. He was one of twenty who paid the thirty pounds, which had previously been paid the Indians by Roger Williams for land purchased when Williams was banished from the Massachusetts Colony. These twenty persons were admitted by Roger Williams as equal sharers with twelve others who had come to Williams asylum and therefore became the first settlers after Williams in Providence.

On his arrival in America, Joshua Winsor dropped the letter "d" which has been adopted by his posterity. The name of his wife is not known.

He had one son, Samuel, and three daughters, Sarah, Susanna and Mary. Samuel married Merry Waterman, the widow of Resolved Waterman of Warwick. She being the daughter of Roger Williams.

A later descendant, Candace Winsor, married Samuel Dexter, the father of Samuel Dexter, Jr., the founder of Ionia.

MRS. L. P. BROCK.



A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF  
HENRY CLAY SESSIONS.

Son of Alonzo Sessions and Celia Dexter Sessions of Ionia, Michigan, was born in the township of Berlin, Ionia County, October 7th, 1844.

I lived on a farm with my parents until eighteen years old. Attended district school winters and worked on the farm the balance of the time.

My father had bought a section of land from the government about 1833, upon which he lived and farmed from 1835 until his death, and was rated as one of the large farmers of the county.

At the age of sixteen I went to a select school at Ionia, walking to school in the morning and home at night, three and one-half miles each way, and also did quite a number of chores morning and night. My tasks would begin about 5 A. M. and be over about 7 P. M.

At the age of eighteen taught a district school in the John B. Welch district, four and one-half miles north of Ionia for a stipulated sum per month and boarding with the patrons of the school.

When nineteen taught school in the Loomis district, one mile south of Ionia.

In the spring of 1844, being then in my twentieth year, I enlisted as a musician in General Custer's Brigade band. This brigade was composed at that time of the First, Sixth and Seventh Michigan Cavalry regiments, and the First Vermont Cavalry. This brigade was commanded by General Custer from 1861 to 1864, and by its fighting qualities and success in many battles and skirmishes contributed to his fame as a general, while his fame shed glory on the troops he commanded. I served until mustered out in the fall of 1865 at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

In the spring of 1864 it was generally supposed the war would soon be over, but as history shows some of the hardest fighting of the war was yet in store for the Army of the Potomac. The cavalry brigade was a part of General Sheridan's cavalry corps, and was with General Grant's army about Petersburg and City Point, Virginia, until the fall of 1864 when General Sheridan with his cavalry corps and two or three corps of infantry was sent into Shenandoah valley against General Early, who up to that time had been successful over the Union troops sent against him. As is well known, Sheridan succeeded in annihilating Early's army after some very severe engagements.

Generals Custer and Sheridan I used to see often when on the march. I saw General Grant several times, and President Lincoln two or three times—the last time when he came to City Point to confer with General Grant just before the surrender of General Lee. I saw all the great generals as they assembled for the grand review at Washington in May, 1865, after the close of the war.

After the grand review our brigade was ordered to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, to be fitted up for the plains and help quell the Indians. I secured a furlough at Ft. Leavenworth, and went home but had to return there for my discharge.

Soon after I went home, being anxious for more education, I went to Lima, N. Y. to school. I spent one and one-half years there. Then one year at the Agricultural College at Lansing, Michigan. I was principal of the schools at Saranac, Michigan, one year. Then I commenced the study of law with the firm of Wells and Morse, at Ionia. This was one of the leading law firms of that section, and was a good connection for me as I had decided to make the law my life profession.

They were each good lawyers and gave me all the help possible. Mr. Wells was afterwards probate judge, and later consul to some post in Scotland. Hon. A. B. Morse afterwards became a member of the supreme court of the state of Michigan, and was also consul for the United States at Dundee, Scotland. Mr. Morse was an able lawyer and an upright jurist. We have been lifelong friends.

During my time as a law student I was offered the position of deputy county clerk of Ionia county, which I accepted and at the end of term was elected to the position of clerk and served two terms. In the meantime was admitted to the bar, and was married to Fannie L. Bangs, the mother of Alonzo Bangs Sessions, Mrs. Katharine Holmes and Jay Bagley Sessions.

Alonzo B. and Jay B. served through the Spanish War and Filipino Insurrection of 1898 and 1899 with the First South Dakota Infantry, U. S. V. Alonzo B. commanded Company B of Sioux Falls, and was in the service from April 25th, 1898 to October 5, 1899. Jay B. went out as musician of Company B, transferred to Company D and was made a corporal, later assigned to duty with the regimental band as drum major. When the regiment left the Philippines he re-enlisted with the 37th U. S. volunteers, and remained on the islands until 1901. Both took part in many engagements with the Filipinos, and acquitted themselves with credit.

Fannie L. Bangs was the daughter of Francis L. Bangs, a Methodist minister and a close relative of Nathan B. Bangs, one of the founders of the Methodist Book concern. Her mother's maiden name was Webb. She was a sister of Dr. Fred Bangs of San Jose, California, and A. V. Bangs of the same place.

I practiced law in Ionia for about ten years, when I moved to South Dakota, settled at Groton and organized the Farmers' Bank. I moved from there to Columbia a year later and organized the First National Bank of Columbia and became its president.

Columbia was then the county seat of Brown county. In time we found the taxes so high that we decided to surrender the charter and organize a private bank. This we did, and then came the dry years and the panic of '93. We borrowed \$10,000.00 and paid off our depositors and quit the business with all my property pledged for the money borrowed.

It was while at Columbia and before the financial misfortunes that overtook me as a result of the dry years, that my beloved wife Fannie L. died and was buried in the cemetery at that place.

The family moved from Columbia to Aberdeen and for a time I was associated with Henry Williams in publishing the Aberdeen Daily News.

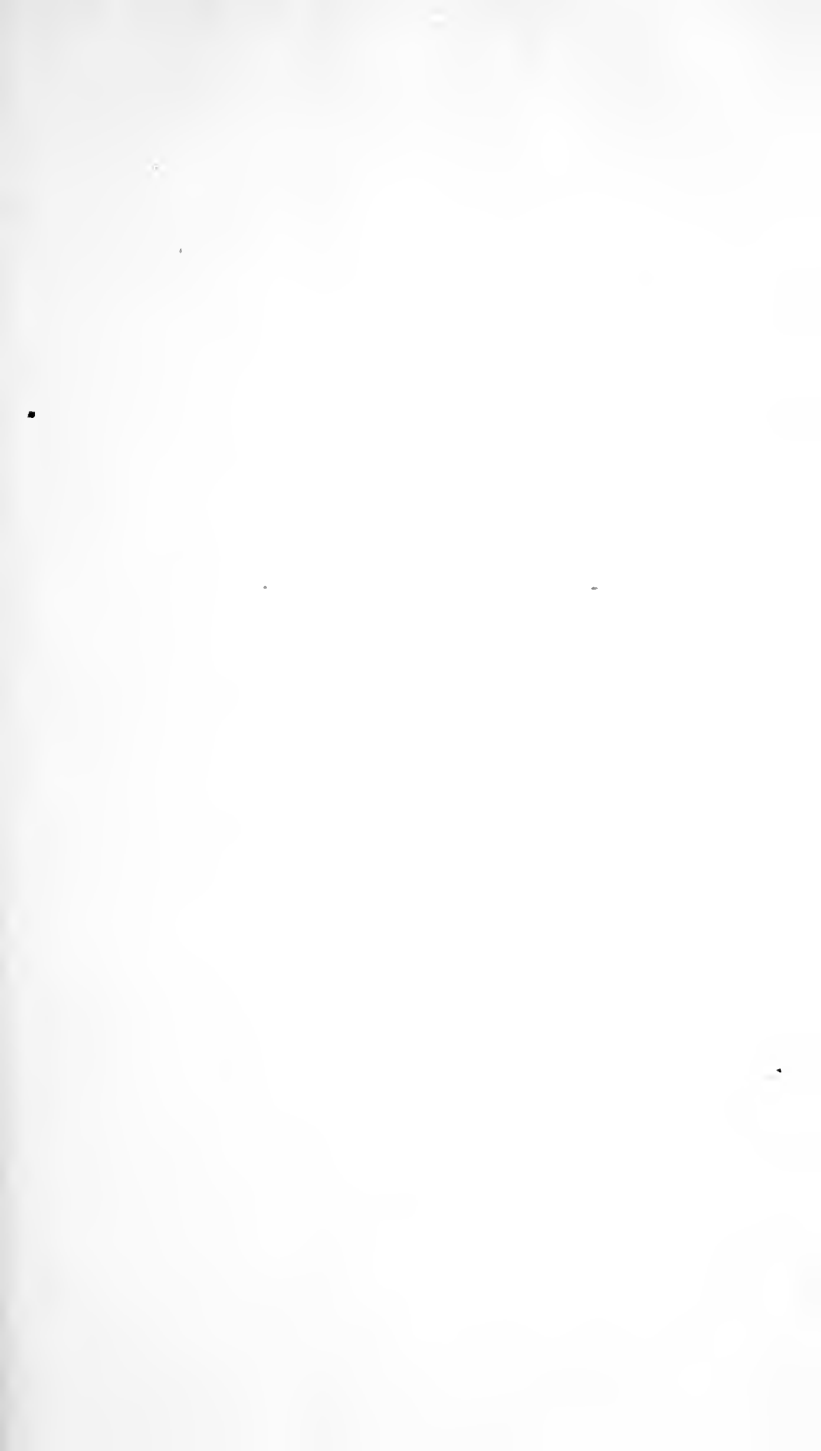
On December 6, 1892 was married to Margaret M. Lower of Osage, Iowa who is the youngest daughter of Charles B. Lower and Mary B. Lower, late of Osage, Iowa, both now deceased. Mrs. Sessions' sisters are Mrs. Addie Roberts of Plankinton, S. D., now deceased; Mrs. Nettie McKenna of Osage, Iowa.; Mrs. Benjamin Richardson of Wordsley, England; Mrs. E. B. Farnham of Charles City, Iowa.

The children of this union are Aileen Sessions, Hal C. Sessions, Jr., and Mary Olive Sessions, all are living. Aileen and Hal were born at Aberdeen and Mary Olive in Sioux Falls.

In 1897 the family moved from Aberdeen to Sioux Falls, where it has since resided, and where all my children are living except Mrs. Katharine Sessions Holmes of Verdon, South Dakota.













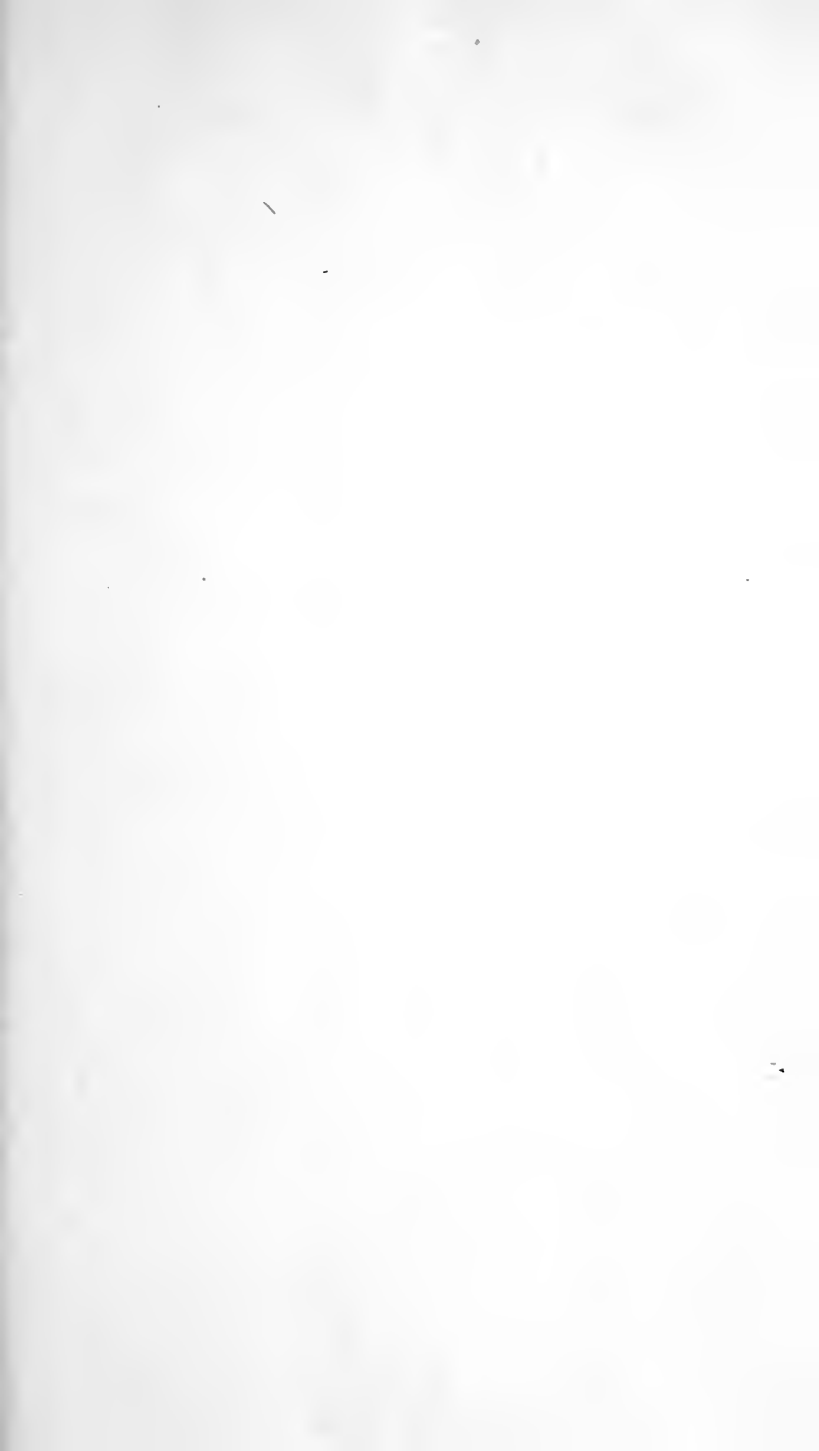








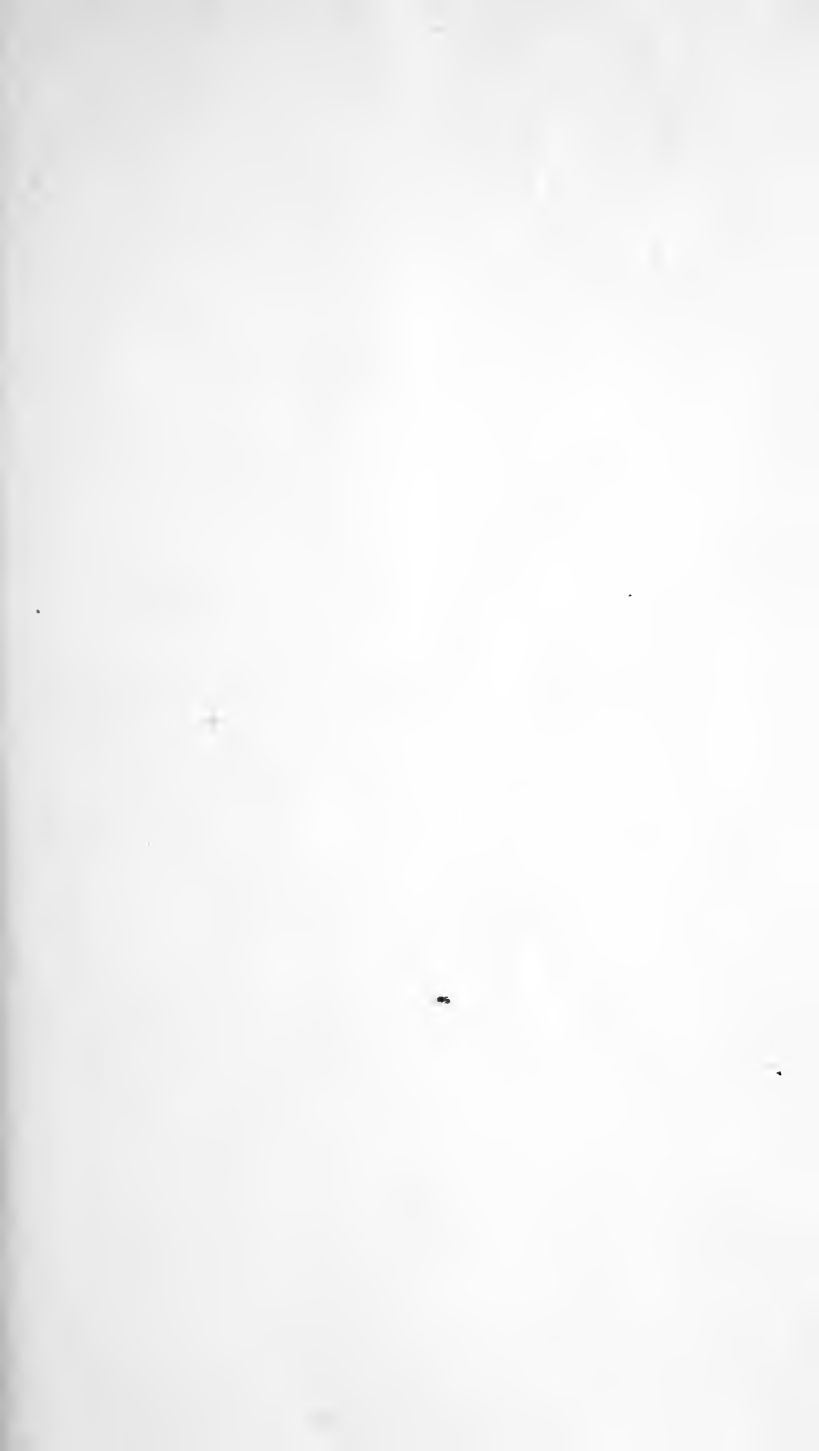
























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