

Niles. Johnson,

Brother Niles was one of the early settlers of Oakland County and was held high in the councils of Masonry.

He was born in Richfield, Otsego County, N. Y., May 2, 1794. His was an active, stirring nature, He was the first to settle at Troy Corners, Troy township, January 27, 1822, building a cabin on the northeast corner of section 9 and began at once to lay the foundation for making it a trading center by supplying himself with trinkets, with which he bartered with the Indians. A larger stock of goods was procured several years after, and a store started on a small scale, which proved so successful that he opened a full stock somewhere about 1830. He continued in trade about twenty-five years, although not in the same place, the changes in the business making it necessary for him to seek more commodious quarters. About the time that he opened his trading-room he also opened a tavern, entertaining the traveler in a royal manner in his log-house, which had become a double building by the addition made to accomodate his business. He was also appointed post-master in 1830, thus giving the new settlement weekly mails.

The original acreage which he purchased consisted on one hundred and sixty acres, receiving a title from the government signed by President Monroe.

Being a carpenter by trade he assisted George Postal of Avon, in erecting several buildings in the winter of 1821, among them being the first frame house in the county. The next year he built a log house on his land and moved there, at that time several miles from the settlement.

His log house though comfortable for those times, was utterly barren of what now would be called furniture. The only table the Niles family had was the board cover of an old fashioned bread-tray, one end stuck in a crevice in the logs, the other supported by an iron-wood stick stuck in a hole in the rude floor. The chairs were made of iron-wood poles framed together, with elm bark bottoms; and the bed steads were of iron-wood, with elm bark for cordage. This was the "fit-out" which awaited Mrs. Niles and in this home she lived many years without any near neighbors except the dusky sons and daughters of the forest, who held her in great esteem, and who never molested her, or treated her otherwise than with affectionate kindness.

In 1823 he was commissioned the first post-master in Troy, a position he held without interruption until the election of General Harrison, in 1840. President Tyler reappointed him, and he held the office until the election of President Pierce, when he was succeeded by his son, Orange. In the fall of 1823 Governor Cass appointed him a county justice of the peace, and in 1831 reappointed him for the term of three years. At the expiration of this service in 1834, Governor George B. Porter renewed his commission, and he served as a justice of the peace until Michigan became a state, when he was elected to the same office for

several years. In 1834, Governor Porter appointed him "inspector of provisions and fish in and for the county of Oakland," and at the expiration of his term commissioned him "inspector of wheat and rye-flour, buckwheat-meal, pork, beef, fish, butter, lard, domestic spirits, and pot and pearl-ashes, for the district composed of the county of Oakland."

May 1835 he was chosen as a representative in the first legislature of the State of Michigan, and subsequently served two terms in the Senate. He was also commissioned as mail agent by President Pierce, and held numerous town offices to his credit and his fellow citizens' interests.

The Rochester Mills were erected by him in 1837. He constructed a new dam on the Clinton, above the site of the old one, and fitted up his mill for extensive flouring operations. It subsequently passed into the hands of General C. M. Griffin.

He was always engaged in some project whose ultimate results were always for the common good of his fellow-men. Being a man of more than ordinary intelligence, of resolution and ambition he was born to be a leader among men, and was generally accorded this position in the Democratic Party, of which he was a devoted member.

Masonic record. Charles H. Johnson, Secretary of the Grand Lodge of New York gives the following. "We find that he was initiated in a Lodge in Steuben County, New York, name of Lodge not given, Grand Lodge No. 594." In the returns for May 30, 1844 of Oakland Lodge No. 101 his name is listed as from Steuben County Lodge and that he was initiated in 1821.

He was a member of Oakland Lodge No. 2, in 1842 and no doubt was a member of that Lodge when it was number 343 under the register of the Grand Lodge of New York.

He acted as Grand Marshal at the laying of the corner-stone of Stoney Creek Lodge No. 5 Temple on Mt. Moriah in 1847. He was present when the Temple was dedicated in 1849. He was a member of the Royal Arch Chapter, Pontiac, Oakland No. 5., and was the Masonic compeer of General Cass, Judge Wm. A. Burt, Levi Cook, Benjamin Woodworth and many others of that time. He died after living a most useful life, March 23, 1872, and was buried with Masonic honors, the Fraternity from Pontiac, Birmingham, Rochester and Utica attending his funeral, together with a large concourse of citizens who deeply mourned his departure.