

JOHN W. WAGNER.

John W. Wagner was born in the attractive little village of Canal Fulton, Stark county, Ohio, on the 21st of January, 1836, being the son of Henry and Mary (Cox) Wagner, both of whom were natives of Pennsylvania, whence they emigrated to Ohio, becoming identified with the early settlement of Stark county, the paternal ancestry being of stanch German and

Irish origin and the maternal Irish. Henry Wagner was a potter by trade, but directed his efforts in other directions upon coming to Ohio. He primarily located at New Lisbon, Columbiana county, where he entered the employ of the McKinleys, ancestors of President McKinley. He was thus employed in a furnace and also maintained a boarding house. After a time he removed to Canal Fulton, where he became the general manager of the successful enterprise conducted by John Robinson, in the way of general merchandising and the forwarding and commission business. His death occurred in the year 1868. He was a man of spotless integrity of character and his life was one of devotion to duty and of consecutive and faithful industry.

The boyhood days of our subject were passed in the little hamlet where he was born, his educational privileges being such as were afforded in the common schools of that section and period. At the early age of fourteen years he assumed the individual responsibilities of life by securing employment as a driver on the canal. The sturdy boy who thus trudged his way along the tow-path of that primitive, though then important, "artery of commerce," found that his ambition was more alert than that of the dejected beast which he urged forward with its unwieldy burden, and he was ready to grasp the first opportunity for advancement. At the age of seventeen he secured a position as salesman in the hardware store conducted by his father's employer, and he continued to be thus occupied until 1862, when he was enabled to buy the stock and good will of the business. He carried the enterprise successfully forward until the fall of 1870, when he disposed of the business to W. G. Myers and removed to Canton, Ohio.

He was determined to make his operations consecutive and progressive, and throughout his entire business career he has never hesitated to broaden his sphere of endeavor as rapidly as circumstances and duly conservative judgment would justify. Upon locating in Canton, Mr. Wagner engaged in the manufacture of plows, associating himself with the firm of Bucher & Gibbs, and continued to be concerned in this line of industry until 1873, when he associated himself with E. J. Forney, under the firm name of Wagner & Forney, and effected the purchase of the hardware stock of John Reed, of Mansfield, which city then became his home. In 1882 Mr. Wagner purchased his partner's interest in the enterprise, which had by that time greatly expanded. He continued the business individually until 1891, when he admitted his son Clayton to partnership, whereupon the firm name of Wagner & Son was adopted. The further expansion of the enterprise rendered expedient the organization of a stock company, and the year 1896 witnessed the incorporation of the Wagner Hardware Company, whose official corps

is as follows: John W. Wagner, president; James E. Shires, secretary; Clayton Wagner, vice-president and manager; A. C. Ackerman, treasurer. The building used for the accommodation of the company is one of the finest business structures in the city, the stock carried being exceptionally large and comprehensive, while the reputation of the concern is such that it holds unmistakable prestige among the important commercial industries of the city of Mansfield.

Thoroughly progressive and public-spirited, Mr. Wagner has naturally extended his interests in other directions. In 1884, soon after the organization of the Mansfield Mutual Fire Insurance Company, he was chosen as its president, and has since served in that capacity. The company is known as one of the most solid and effectively managed in the state. Mr. Wagner is also director of the Citizens' National Bank of Mansfield and of the Humphries Manufacturing Company. He is the owner of two excellent farms,—one being located in Richland county and the other in Stark county.

The marriage of Mr. Wagner was solemnized in the year 1861, when he was united to Miss Melinda Cook, a daughter of Rev. Samuel Cook, who was a clergyman of the United Brethren church and a resident of Stark county. Mr. and Mrs. Wagner are the parents of three children, namely: Clayton, who is associated with his father in business, as already noted; Edith, the wife of Rufus A. Tracy, of Mansfield; and Mary E., who is still with her parents.