

## OAKLAND COUNTY - PERSONAL SKETCHES

**Michael E. Crofoot** became a member of the Oakland county bar about a decade after the Territory of Michigan had gained the dignity of statehood, and he was one of the honored and influential pioneer representatives of the legal profession in this county at the time of his death, May 11, 1884. He had served as judge of the probate court of the county and also as prosecuting attorney of the county. His was a large and benignant influence as one of the loyal and public-spirited citizens of Pontiac. Judge Crofoot was born at Schenectady, New York, March 14, 1822, and his death occurred about two months after the sixty-second anniversary of his birth. Judge Crofoot profited by the advantages of the common schools of the old Empire state and relied entirely upon his own resources in advancing his education along scientific lines and in preparing himself for his profession. At Genesee, New York, he completed a two-year course in Temple Hill Academy and in 1841 he began the study of medicine, his applications to this study having continued about one year. He then became a teacher in the schools at Gates, near the city of Rochester. In the spring of 1843, in consonance with advice given him by one of the officers of the school in which he had been teaching, he initiated the study of law. In this connection he was favored in gaining the preceptorship of General H. L. Stevens, who was then one of the leading lawyers in the city of Rochester. In the office of General Stevens he continued his legal studies three years, and in the meanwhile he reinforced his resources by teaching school during winter terms. In 1845 business matters in Michigan called General Stevens to this state, and soon afterward he established the family home at Pontiac. The General then prevailed upon the subject of this memoir likewise to come to Pontiac, and here Judge Crofoot was admitted to the Michigan bar in the winter of 1846. Thereafter he continued in the active and successful practice of law at Pontiac until impaired health compelled him to retire in 1879. In 1848 he was elected judge of the probate court of the county, and by re-election in 1852 he continued the incumbent of this office during a total period of eight years. In 1862 he was elected prosecuting attorney of the county, his re-election in 1864 attesting the high estimate placed upon his services as prosecutor in the troubled period of the Civil war. Judge Crofoot gave unsparingly of his time, energy and ability in support of measures and enterprises that made for the well-being of the home city and county, was connected helpfully with most of the public enterprises in Pontiac and was specially active in advancing the interests and standards of the public schools. He was for several years an officer of the Oakland County Agricultural Society and did much to promote the success of its annual county fairs. The Judge was a member of the building committee that had charge of the erection of

the original buildings of the Eastern Asylum for the Insane, at Pontiac, and was for a number of years a member of the board of trustees of this state institution. He was associated with Colonel J. Sumner Rogers in projecting and establishing Orchard Lake Military Academy, which was opened to students in September, 1877, and which for years had rank as one of the excellent military schools of the United States. It must ever be a matter of regret that the organization and service of this admirable Oakland county institution were finally permitted to lapse. While in the active practice of his profession Judge Crofoot maintained an office in Detroit, also, and his law business became one of broad scope and importance, his having been a secure place as one of the representative members of the Michigan bar. His political allegiance was given to the Democratic party and he and his wife were communicants of the Protestant Episcopal church. October 29, 1849, Judge Crofoot was united in marriage to Miss Anna E. Fitch, who was born in Bloomfield, New York, and whose death occurred in 1910, she having long been a gracious figure in the social circles of Pontiac. Of the seven children, four are living: Charles M., Louis W., Lodowick F. and Sarah E.