

Citizens – C. W. Redfern

By Barbara Bedau Brow
White Lake Area Historical Society



Charles Walwyn Redfern was a pioneer of the White Lake area since 1866. He was the youngest of three children born to Matthew and Hannah (ne Hine) Redfern. He was born in the village of Caledonia, Monroe County, New York, on 1 May 1847. He came to Michigan with his parents in September 1853, settling in Calhoun County.

In 1866 they moved to their new home two miles north of the village of Montague. They come over from Chicago on the lumber schooner “Maggie Thompson”, arriving on 23 April. The “Maggie” docked at the Ferry-Dowling wharf where the balance of their journey to their new home in the woods was made by lumber wagon and ox team.

Mr. Redfern’s education was obtained in the common district school. Through outside study he prepared himself to be a school teacher and taught his first school in White River Township. While teaching he became interested in the telegraph and when the railroad was built through this area in 1871 he became the telegraph operator and station agent at

Montague. Later he transferred to Whitehall with the added duties of steamboat passenger agent.

Charles also worked as a reporter for W. E. Osmun who owned a Montague newspaper called the Boomer from 1886-1889.

After about 18 years with the railroad, Charles entered the hardware business which was destroyed in the September 18, 1890 fire that destroyed all of Whitehall's business district.

By 1896 buildings were being constructed for The Redfern Company a floral business he had for several years. However, by 1901, he had to give up the business for health reasons and sold it. He then busied himself in the real estate business.

Redfern had been confined to his bed for about two weeks before his death at his home on Saturday, 14 January 1922 at the age of 74. He is buried in Oakhurst Cemetery along with his parents and two siblings.