

George Hurlbut, of Charles City, Iowa; and Mamie, the wife of O. H. Potter, of Bassett, Iowa. Having lost his first wife, Charles D. Watts wedded Catherine Miller and of this marriage Ralph E. Watts is a son. The father was brought to the United States when but two years of age in company with a brother who was ten years his senior. They lived with foster parents in Elgin, Illinois, where they grew to manhood, and there during his youthful days Charles D. Watts worked for a number of years in the state institution for the insane. In 1874 he came to Chickasaw county and some time afterward purchased a farm near Bassett. About 1903 or 1904 he took up his abode in the town of Bassett, where he conducted the hotel for a year and then removed to Ionia, where he was hotel proprietor until 1908. In that year he purchased the hardware business of Daniel Butterfield and conducted, the store up to the time of his death, which occurred on the 3d of October, 1912, when he was fifty-nine years of age. His widow is still living and has become the wife of P. K. Ashley, her home being now in Charles City, Iowa.

Ralph E. Watts was educated in the public schools of Bassett and in the Ionia high school, from which he was graduated as a member of the class of 1912. He worked as a clerk in his father's store while not in school and after the father's death took charge of the business, which he conducted for his mother up to the time of her marriage to Mr. Ashley, when she turned over the business to him and he has since been sole owner. He carries a good line of shelf and heavy hardware and is enjoying a very satisfactory trade.

In 1915 Mr. Watts was united in marriage to Miss Doris Gladys Cagley, of Bradford township, Chickasaw county, by whom he has two children, Margaret E. and Doris L. In politics Mr. Watts is an earnest republican and in religious faith he and his wife are Congregationalists. They are well known in Ionia and he is a dynamic force in the business circles of the city. Alert and energetic, he never loses sight of a legitimate opportunity for the advancement of his interests and it is to such class of men that the progress and upbuildings of a community are due.

#### JOHN S. SWENSON.

John S. Swenson, one of Howard county's foremost manufacturers and an inventor of more than local renown, is proprietor of the Swenson Grubber Company and secretary and treasurer of the Electra Lightning Rod Company of Cresco. He was born in North Cape, Wisconsin, September 26, 1872, a son of Lorens and Anna (Johnson) Swenson, both natives of Norway, who in childhood days came to the United States with their respective parents. The paternal grandparents of John S. Swenson established their home near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, when that city was but little more than, a trading post, while the maternal grandparents settled near Black Earth, Dane county, Wisconsin. Following their marriage, which was celebrated in the Badger state, Mr. and Mrs. Lorens Swenson began their domestic life at North Cape, Wisconsin. Early in life Mr. Swenson manifested marked inventive genius, being a natural-born mechanic. Among his many inventions may be mentioned the Swenson steam valve and the original Swenson mower, which was among the first mowers brought forth in this country. In association with Ole Storle he invented one of the first self-binders of the United States, the knot-tying device of which was later sold to one of the large reaper manufactories at a substantial figure. Another product of his mechanical skill and ingenuity was the stump puller, now manufactured by the Faultless Stump Puller Company of Cresco. In 1895 Lorens Swenson and his son, John S. Swenson, founded the Faultless Stump Puller Company, engaging in the manufacture of stump pullers at Cresco until 1899, when they sold the business. While the father was in Waukegan, Wisconsin, looking after the interests of his steam valve, John S. Swenson invented his present stump puller, which won the gold medal at the Lewis and Clark Exposition at Portland, Oregon, in 1905. In 1900 he and his father had founded the Swenson Grubber Company and began the manufacture of this invention, which is sold from coast to coast, while prior to the recent great war the company also did an extensive export business in South America. In 1907 John S. Swenson acquired his father's interest in this concern and became sole owner. On account