

**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF THEODORE EDGAR  
POTTER, PP. 1-226**

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The Autobiography of Theodore Edgar Potter, pp. 1-226 by Theodore Edgar Potter

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THEODORE EDGAR POTTER  
1832-1910



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
THEODORE EDGAR POTTER

1917

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TO THE WIFE WHO SHARED WITH  
THEODORE EDGAR POTTER THE PERILS  
OF FRONTIER LIFE AND WHOSE DEVOT-  
TION AND COMPANIONSHIP WAS THE  
SOURCE OF HIS GREATEST JOY, THIS  
BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.





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94.  
*Mary Potter*  
12-11-35.

#### PREFACE.

Theodore Edgar Potter, whose life story fills the succeeding pages of this book, died at his home in Lansing, Michigan, October 25, 1910. The manuscript of this autobiography was found in his library after his death. It is now published in conformity with his last wishes so that his children and grandchildren may appreciate the struggles, privations and dangers that marked the lot of those pioneers, who, like himself, gave their best years to the development of the great western country. The story is told in his own words,—the few changes made have been in the arrangement of matter and in embodying in it incidents which he mentioned in letters and other articles but which he did not chronicle here.

The story is so complete that any addition may seem superfluous. But to the members of Mr. Potter's family, for whom this book is printed, it lacks the incidents of warm personal friendship that in their minds rendered his life so distinctive, and which he in his modesty failed to chronicle. The writer will be pardoned therefore if he calls attention in this preface to a few phases of Mr. Potter's life which are of extreme interest and tender memory to his family.

Theodore Edgar Potter was a fond husband and father. He lavished upon his family the affection that flowed so freely from his deep and generous nature. To him and his wife were born five children, and to them all and their children in turn, he was endeared by his generous affection. The writer can speak for the grandchildren. He was especially interested in their receiving the benefits of the education which poverty denied him in his youth, and never lost an opportunity to urge them forward in their studies. He was extremely anxious that they should learn the value of money and acquire the habit of saving. His plan of encouraging them to save is illustrated by his habit of giving each grandchild a dollar to invest at Christmas and offering prizes for those who could show the best return on their investments at the next Christmas season. Undoubtedly the happiest day in his life was October 5, 1908, when

in the midst of a gathering of all their children and all their grandchildren save one, he and his devoted wife celebrated their golden wedding. His death in 1910 broke the family circle, for his wife, five children and thirteen grandchildren all survived him.

He was a public-spirited citizen. He answered the call of duty whether it demanded service on the battle field or in public office. He was twice a supervisor of the township of Vermontville. In 1896 he was elected alderman for the third ward in Lansing, Michigan, a position he held for two terms, at the end of which time he refused renomination for a third term. His public service was not rendered entirely through public office. Many a person in Lansing owed food and fuel to his generosity during the winter of 1893-4.

He was a devoted worker in the Grand Army of the Republic and a member of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. During the last few years of his life, after retirement from business, he devoted practically all his time to the work of the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1898 he was elected Commander of the Charles T. Foster Post in Lansing, and in 1899 was reelected. In 1899 the department commander offered a silk flag to the G. A. R. post in Michigan gaining the largest percentage in membership during the year. Commander Potter went after this prize for his post and in the year increased its membership from 191 to 320. A small post in the state having only eleven members won the prize by an increase of 100 per cent but the increase in numbers in the Charles T. Foster Post was so large that the Department Commander had a second flag made and presented it in person to the Post.

Mr. Potter's interest in the G. A. R. was not confined to the local organization. From 1901 to 1909 he was each year a special aide-de-camp of the Commander in Chief, and attended the national encampment during most of these years. In 1903 he was appointed Special Aide in Charge of Military Instruction in the Schools of the State of Michigan. In his work in this field Mr. Potter aimed to inculcate patriotism, and accomplished this by offering a series of prizes for the best essays submitted on Abraham Lincoln. The contest was a spirited one and aroused much favorable comment throughout the state.

The influence of such a life as his cannot be measured. His country has expressed its gratitude for the years of patriotic effort