



SAMUEL R. VAN SANT.

The choice of the Republican members of the last legislature for speaker of the house of representatives was the man whose name stands at the head of this sketch. Samuel R. Van Sant was born at Rock Island, Illinois, May 11, 1844, the son of John W. Van Sant and Lydia Anderson (Van Sant). John W. Van Sant was born in New Jersey, in 1810. He and his father and his grandfather were ship builders. The grandfather, whose name was also John, was in the marine service during the Revolutionary War. He was born in 1726 in New Jersey, where he lived and died, and where most of his descendants live yet. If the cause of the colonies had failed he would have been hanged as a pirate, but their success made him a patriot. It was said of him that he could build a ship, rig her and sail her to any port in the world. The Van Sants (formerly spelled Van Zandt) are of Dutch descent, the family having come from Holland in the early years of settlement in this country. The grandfather of the subject of this sketch was a soldier in the war of 1812. He was also a clergyman in the Methodist church, and five of his sons fol-

lowed him in that profession and in the same denomination. John W. Van Sant, the father of Samuel R., is still living at Le Claire, Iowa, in his eighty-seventh year. He came West in 1837, and has been engaged in building and in repairing steamboats ever since. He is still in active business and retains his interest in the Van Sant & Musser Transportation Company and other business enterprises. Lydia Anderson (Van Sant) was a native of New Jersey, daughter of Elias Anderson, a private soldier in the Revolutionary War. Her family were all active supporters of the cause of the colonies. She is still living in her eighty-fifth year. Samuel R. attended the Rock Island schools and was a pupil in the high school when the war broke out. He enlisted at the first call for troops, but, owing to his youth, not yet being seventeen, was rejected. He enlisted several times but was each time rejected for the same cause. Finally in August, 1861, having received his father's written permission, he was accepted as a member of Company A, Ninth Illinois cavalry. He served over three years, and during that time was never sick, never missed a fight and was never wounded. He belonged during most of his term of service to Grierson's famous raiders, and was in constant service after going South. When mustered out of service he entered Burnham's American Business College, at Hudson, New York, where he graduated, but feeling the necessity for further school training, he entered Knox College, at Galesburg, Illinois. He entered the preparatory department and went through the freshman year at college, but was then obliged to leave for lack of funds. While at college he learned the trade of a calker, and subsequently was appointed superintendent of the boat yard where he learned his trade, and later with his father, bought the same boat building business, where they erected the first raft boat of large power, constructed especially for the lumbering business. Several other boats were built by the Van Sants, and since that time Samuel R. has been actively engaged in the business of rafting and lumbering on the Mississippi river. He located in the spring of 1883 at Winona, which has since been the head-

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quarters of his business and his home. Mr. Van Sant has always been a Republican, has taken an active interest in public affairs. He served as alderman for two years from the Second ward in Winona, was twice elected to the legislature, first in 1892 and again in 1894, and on his second term was made speaker of the house. Was also a candidate before the last Republican state convention for the nomination for governor, but was defeated. Nevertheless he took an active part on the stump and spoke nightly for weeks for the success of his party and its candidates. He is an enthusiastic member of the Grand Army. In 1894 he was elected Senior Vice Commander and in 1895 Department Commander of Minnesota. And as a department officer he traveled more than twenty thousand miles attending campfires, encampments, reunions, etc., of his comrades. He has also held the office of commander of John Ball Post, of Winona, two terms. Mr. Van Sant esteems the honors he has received from the Grand Army as the greatest he has ever been favored with. He is also a member of the Masonic order, of the Knights of Pythias, the A. O. U. W., M. W. of A., the Elks, the Veteran Masons and the Sons of the American Revolution. Mr. Van Sant was married in 1868 to Miss Ruth Hall. They have had three children, only one of whom is living, Grant Van Sant, a law graduate of the University of Minnesota.

EDWARD J. WEBBER.

The subject of this sketch is of French descent, both of his parents having been born in France. His father Joseph K. Webber, was born in Alsace and served in the French army. He emigrated with his family to America in 1847, settling in Illinois. He was a soldier during the War of the Rebellion on the Union side. His wife's maiden name was Helen Brist, also born in Alsace. Edward J. was born in Wheeling, Illinois, April 2, 1858, where the family resided until 1860. They then removed to Lake County, Indiana, then a comparatively new country, and lived on a farm during the war. Edward attended the district school until he was sixteen years of



age, walking back and forth to the school every day which was three and a half miles distant from his home. He then, in 1874, started to learn the trade of horse-shoeing, at which he became an expert, and has followed that line of business until 1892. He moved to Minnesota in 1882, settling at Fergus Falls, and with a small capital started in his chosen line of trade. Within three months, however, he was burned out, losing all he had. He was not discouraged, but started in again, and with close attention to his business he made a success of it. In 1884 he added to his business and began the sale of agricultural implements as a side line, and this growing to such an extent he sold out his shoeing business in 1892 and devoted his entire attention to the implement and seed business, in which he has been very successful. He is also vice president of the Citizens' National Bank, of Fergus Falls. In politics Mr. Webber has always been a Republican and an ardent advocate of party principles. He was twice elected a member of the city council of Fergus Falls. In 1882 he was married to Miss Emma Bachman, at Niles, Michigan. They have two children, Herbert E., twelve years old, and Margory L., three years old.