



JOSEPH P. WILSON.

It is given to comparatively few men to see great cities grow to metropolitan proportions on the site of their frontier homes. One of the men who pioneered in Minnesota, who settled at the site of Minneapolis when there were more Indians in the vicinity than white men, and who has lived to see the city and state develop to magnificent commercial and social proportions, is Joseph P. Wilson. Like so many of Minnesota's pioneers, Mr. Wilson is a native of Maine. He was born at Columbia Falls, March 16, 1823. In 1833 the family moved to New York City, where he spent his youth. At one time he was in the employ of Horace Greeley, and later, for two years, was in the law office of Silas M. Stillwell. When twenty-two years of age, in 1845, Mr. Wilson came West, settling first in Illinois, where he was for a time in the law office of B. F. Fridley of Geneva. The next year he was admitted to the bar, but he has never practiced his profession. In 1847 Mr. Wilson was engaged in the purchase of government land, in Northern Illinois, for Eastern capitalists. It was during his service in the army in Mexico that he first met Colonel John H.

Stevens, the Minneapolis pioneer. After the war with Mexico Mr. Wilson took a trip up the Mississippi River, visiting the towns of Galena, Prairie du Chien and Stillwater, but he returned to Oswego, Illinois, where he engaged in business in 1849. But he had his eye on Minnesota, and made his way to the territory and settled at St. Anthony Falls on April 19, 1850. Inhabitants were then very few, and the Indians of the Sioux Nation occupied the land west of the river. St. Anthony was the last settlement between the East and the Pacific Ocean. The place was entirely without means of communication with the world except by means of steamers on the Mississippi, and all groceries and other supplies had to be shipped from Galena or St. Louis. Mr. Wilson remembers well sending four hundred miles to Galena for a cooking stove and a barrel of flour. A Minneapolis man sending to Galena for flour! And this was only forty-six years ago. Upon coming to Minneapolis Mr. Wilson engaged in a mercantile business and continued in that line for some years. Later on he engaged in the real estate business, which he has followed ever since. In 1851 he purchased from the government a tract of land in what is now Northeast Minneapolis, and also a tract at St. Anthony Park, paying one dollar and a quarter per acre. He was one of the original proprietors of the town site of St. Cloud, in 1855, and in 1882 he laid out East St. Cloud, improving the place and making it what it is. He still has large interests there. From 1863 to 1871 he was a government contractor for transportation of army stores and for the furnishing of grain and other army supplies to the military posts on the frontier. Ever since his arrival in Minnesota Mr. Wilson has been identified with the public affairs of the state and his own locality. He was a county commissioner of Ramsey County from 1852 to 1855, a member of the constitutional convention in 1858, and a member of the state senate in 1864 and 1865. Since that time he has been a delegate to most of the Democratic state and congressional conventions. It is almost unnecessary to say after this review of Mr. Wilson's life that he is a self-made man—reliant, energetic, and having the confidence and respect of all who know him.