

# Nelson Elias Waldo

- My grandfather Gerald Waldo died in 2000.
- He maintained until his death that his father, Nelson Elias Waldo disappeared when my grandfather was 10, in 1926 and no one knew what happened to him
- We have been able through research to trace his roots back to Big Rapids, MI where he served two terms as Treasurer (1908/1909) and purchased the assets of the R. E. Webster Co.
- In 1912 he was accused of two significant crimes and served three years at Ionia State Prison after being convicted of forgery
- Post-prison he moved to Detroit followed by a very short time in Kalamazoo then back to Detroit
- I have been unable to find any record of him post 1927

# Timeline

- 1877 Born in Green Twp.
- 1903 Begins work for H. F. Burtch
- 1904 Marriage to Mary Helen Denczek of Remus
- 1904 H.F. Burtch sells to S. G. & I. F. Burtch
- 1908 N. E. Waldo Elected Treasurer of Big Rapids
- 1909 N. E. Waldo Elected Treasurer of Big Rapids for Second Term
- 1910 Ernest Franck Elected Treasurer
- 1910 N. E. Waldo acquires R. E. Webster Co. from the Websters
- 1911 After consideration, N. E. Waldo decides not to run for Treasurer
- 1912 BR Ways and Means Launch Investigation
- 1912 Ida Belanger comes forward
- 1912 Waldo Sentenced to Ionia
- 1913 Waldo released on 5 day furlough to attend his father's funeral
- 1915 Waldo Released
- 1916 Waldo moves to Detroit listed as Autoworker
- 1922 Waldo moves to Kalamazoo as Abstractor for Title Bond & Mortgage Co.
- 1923 Waldo back to Detroit as autoworker
- 1928 Mrs. Waldo listed as widow of Nelson

# Characters

## **Napoleon & Ida Belanger**

- Napoleon was a bartender who died on May 28, 1910 in Big Rapids of diabetes
- He and his wife lived at 219 N. Michigan Ave.
- His family was an early neighbor of Nelson's in-laws
- Napoleon made Nelson the executor of his will

## **Mary Waldo**

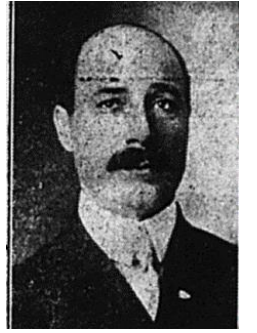


- Born in 1893 as Mary Helen Denczek in Remus
- Married Nelson Waldo in Big Rapids in 1904
- In 1928 she is listed as Nelson's widow in Wyandotte, MI
- Remained in Wyandotte until her death in 1970



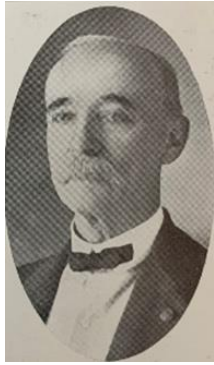
### **H. I. Drescher**

- Harry Drescher was an undertaker and politician.
- He was elected Mayor in April of 1910 and again in 1911 serving until April of 1912.
- Was listed as an endorser of one of the notes against Ida Belanger's Insurance Policy
- Elks Board Member with Nelson



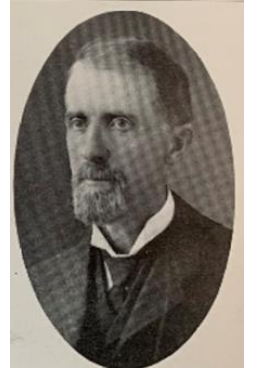
### **L. F. Bertrau**

- L. F. Bertrau moved to Big Rapids in 1905
- President of the Board of Trade.
- Owner of the Bertrau Block where his business Bertrau, Almroth and Co. is set.
- Signed Bond for Nelson's Bail



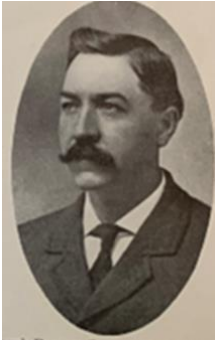
## S. G. Webster

- Simon G. Webster was born in Concord, MI August 24, 1843.
- Moved to Big Rapids in 1862
- Owned a grocery store in Big Rapids from 1872 to 1882
- County Treasurer from 1882 to 1886
- 12 year stint as a supervisor in the Auditor General's Office in Lansing.
- In 1904 he and his brother formed an abstractor and general real estate business named Webster Brothers. .



## W. D. Hopkinson

- William D. Hopkinson was born on the Erie Canal on March 14, 1849.
- 1867 he located in Green Township purchasing a farm that adjoined Henry H. Waldo.
- During the winters he was a school teacher in Green Twp. and most likely taught Nelson Waldo who attended school to the 8th grade.
- In 1885 he purchased a General Store in Parris, Mecosta County, the same city Ida Bolanger found Isaac Watson living.
- In 1902 he was elected as a Republican to be the Register of deeds. In 1912 he was elected Mayor and was the sitting Mayor at the time of Nelson's trial.

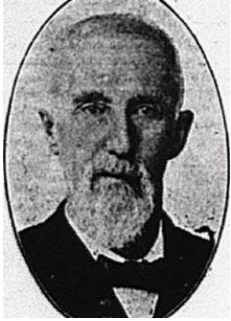


## **Judge J. F. Barton**

- Joseph Barton was born in Big Praire Twp., Newaygo County, MI on May 2, 1861.
- His Grandfather James Barton was a prominent judge in Newaygo
- Served as prosecutor before being elected Judge.
- Political rival of A. B. Cogger
- Sitting judge that sentenced Nelson

## **Isaac Watson**

- Isaac Watson was born in Marilla, Erie County, NY on January 15, 1862.
- In 1892 he married his wife Anna in Milwaukee, WI and soon moved to Big Rapids.
- In 1908, Watson deserted his wife and she filed for divorce in Mecosta County.
- He died on August 4, 1923 in Grant, Newaygo County, MI.
- He was the original borrower contacted by Ida Belanger



### **W. A. Northrup**

- Long Serving Alderman
- Chairman of Ways & Means
- Ordered initial investigation of treasurer's office
- Dissuaded council from hiring Nelson Waldo to conduct the investigation

### **B. I. Webster**

- Buell I. Webster Register of Deeds for Mecosta County from 1897-1902.
- Brother of Simon Webster and co-owner of R. E. Webster Co.
- Listed as a signer on Nelson's forged notes

## **A. B. Cogger**

- Albert Cogger preceded Barton on the bench
- In a March 1912 story Cogger's secret letter to A. F. Bunting of the MI Bond and Surety Co. drew criticism
- The same article lists N. E. Waldo as an agent of that company
- Cogger petitioned Barton for leniency in Waldo's sentence
- Defeated Woodbridge Ferris in the 1917 Mayoral Race

## **John Bumb**

- Listed as the original borrower on forged notes
- Mr. Bumb owned a company that was bankrupted in 1906
- He was the father-in-law of Nelson's Sister-in-law Berniece Denczek
- In 1920, John lived with Nelson in Detroit as a Boarder



1910  
Pre Prison



L/R: Nelson, Donald, Mary

1918  
Post Prison



L/R: Nelson, Donald, Gerald, Mary

April 7, 1908  
Muskegon Chronicle  
Nelson Waldo Elected Treasurer

The Evening Press  
Big Rapids Elks Lodge Grand  
Opening

A fine banquet at the armory closed the work. Prominent Elks from all over the state were present and some spoke at the banquet. Among the visitors were James B. McInnis, Grand Rapids, toastmaster; L. M. Williams, past ruler of Detroit lodge and publisher of The Elks paper, and the following former state officers: C. A. Mitts, Grand Rapids, esteemed lecturing knight, and Michael Fay, Manistee, past district deputy.

**Result at Big Rapids.**  
Big Rapids, Mich., April 7.—Democrats elected W. P. Nisbett mayor by 96 majority; clerk, Barney Lazer, (Rep.) 437; treasurer, N. E. Waldo, (Rep.) 110; justice, Joseph H. Kilbourne, (Dem.) 172. In the wards republicans elect four of the five supervisors and four of the five aldermen.

## ELKS AT BIG RAPIDS

New Lodge Is Instituted by District Deputy Leckie.

(Special to The Evening Press.)

Big Rapids, July 29.—Michigan's newest Elk lodge, Big Rapids lodge No. 974, was organized last night. Cadillac Elks had charge of the work under the direction of W. P. Leckie of Dowagiac, the new district deputy. Forty were initiated and the time was too short to allow many others to get in. The officers are Dr. F. W. Joslin, exalted ruler; H. I. Drescher, esteemed leading knight; D. H. Vincent, esteemed Loyal knight; E. J. Darling, esteemed lecturing knight; N. E. Waldo, secretary; William P. Nisbett, treasurer; W. H. Redmond, tyler; J. A. Dalziel, George W. Milner, O. R. Brush, trustees.





Big Rapids Pioneer  
June 27, 1912  
Initial Shultus  
Findings  
Slide 1/2

# FINDS CITY

# S

## Expert Auditor Un- earths Sensation

## SAYS FRANCK IS SHORT

## Charges up Over \$850 to City Treasurer Franck

From Monday's Daily.

Walter L. Schultus of Grand Rapids, expert auditor and accountant, who has been working on the city treasurer's books since Friday last week, has unearthed what looks like a real sensation in the way of a shortage. The total shortage that he has dug up so far is \$3,600.71.

How far this extends and to whom the greater part of it is to be charged up to, Mr. Schultus is not yet prepared to say, as he has not yet had time to go back far enough. He is through with checking up ex-treasurer Ernest Franck's books for the last two years. According to Mr. Schultus when Mr. Waldo went out of office there was a shortage of \$2746.71. At the end of Mr. Franck's term the shortage was increased to \$3600.38, making a difference for Mr. Franck that has not been accounted for of \$853.67.

Mr. Schultus says he does not know for certain whether Ernest can account for some of this sum, as he has not turned over three bank books as yet. The accountant says he was to have them Saturday but so far he has not yet seen them.

On the showing made by the auditor Mayor Hopkinson has already telegraphed the bonding company asking them to make good the shortage.

Mr. Franck told the auditor when asked for the bank books that the "muss" might be cleared up, said there was no "muss" as far as he was concerned, that the whole thing would be straightened out when all the books were examined. According to Mr. Franck whatever muss there is was made by his predecessors.

From Tuesday's Daily.

There is a possibility that the shortage of E. J. Franck, ex-city treasurer, will be larger even than first announced. At least that is the statement of Walter L. Schultus, the auditor. He, however, has not yet got all the information he wants.

As an aid to expeditious work Mr. Schultus wants every person who has a city order to get it cashed at once. There are some orders missing, and until these are turned in it is impossible to tell the extent of the seeming defalcation.



Big Rapids Pioneer  
June 27, 1912  
Initial Shultus  
Findings  
Slide 2/2

Another step is to learn from the taxpayers themselves what has been paid on the special improvements. To this end postal cards will be sent to all persons who have paid within the past few years taxes on special improvements, to learn whether they have paid their taxes in full or in part, or any of them.

An item of \$138 has been found that has not been credited to the proper fund, and the money is still missing.

Mr. Schultus is preparing a new set of books and a new system for the keeping of city accounts, that will be more modern and by which the officers can have their books checked up and verified with ease.

Ernest Franck maintains his innocence. "I may be a little slow, but I am not a thief," he said this morning, "nor an embezzler, and when the books are all examined my accounts will be found all right.

Mr. Schultus is preparing a new set of books and a new system for the keeping of city accounts, that will be more modern and by which the officers can have their books checked up and verified with ease.

Ernest Franck maintains his innocence. "I may be a little slow, but I am not a thief," he said this morning, "nor an embezzler, and when the books are all examined my accounts will be found all right.

Mr. Schultus, however, says he has not yet seen the bank books that he wants, and that if Franck would bring them to him it would greatly expediate his work.

A representative of the Fidelity Surety & Guarantee company of Baltimore, which furnished the bonds for Franck, is expected here in a short time. He will immediately demand that the accounts be straightened by the ex-treasurer, and if they are not then he will have a warrant sworn out.

Whether the bonding companies for

the other ex-treasurers can be held is problematical. Mr. Kilbourne, who represents some of the bonding companies, gave it as his opinion that they could. Mr. Schultus, however, is of the opinion that the company is held responsible only for six months after the term of office expires.



July 11, 1912  
Big Rapids Pioneer  
Walter Shultus Investigation

# WALDO & FRANCK PAY SHORTAGE

---

CITY TREASURER RECEIVES  
OVER \$4,100 IN CASH.

---

## WORK NOT YET COMPLETED

---

Accountant Shultus Still Working on  
Books—Water Works and  
Cemetery Books All  
Right.

From Friday's Daily.

Wednesday afternoon Nelson E. Waldo, former treasurer of the city of Big Rapids, paid James Taggart, present city treasurer, the sum of \$2,459.11, said to be due to the city on account of a shortage. The sum of \$1,695.11, said to be due from ex-treasurer Franck, was paid over Tuesday. This makes a total of \$4,154.33 turned into the city treasury on account of disclosures made by the accountant.

Mr. Shultus is still working on the special assessment rolls, in an effort to learn whether any of the taxpayers had paid their assessments in full and had not been credited.

Ald. Northrup is authority for the statement that the water works books have been checked up by the accountant and found O. K.

July 11, 1912  
Muskegon Chronicle  
"Hushed Up"  
Slide 1/2

---

## FORMER TREASURER HELD FOR FORGERY

---

Deserted by Friends Who Sup-  
ported Him He Is Unable  
to Get Bail.

---

Big Rapids, Mich., July 11.—Deserted by the host of friends who supported him when he was found to be short in his accounts as city treasurer, Nelson H. Waldo, aged 33 years, is in jail today charged with forgery and unable to procure bonds for his release.

The complainant against the former treasurer is Mrs. **Ida Bolanger**, widow of the late Napoleon Bolanger, who claims that Waldo defrauded her of \$2,000 by forged notes on which he borrowed money which she received from her husband's insurance policies. Waldo is said to have admitted the forgeries, and to have promised to make good.

In addition to this complaint, Mayor Hopkinson declares that he will lodge a formal complain in behalf of the city charging Waldo with the embezzlement of \$2,400 from the municipality.



July 11, 1912  
Muskegon Chronicle  
"Hushed Up"  
Slide 2/2

According to Mrs. Bolanger, Waldo was a great friend of her husband, and was made the trustee of her property at her husband's death. She declares that Waldo brought three notes to her soon after she got the insurance money and obtained \$3,200 on them.

Shortly after his arrest, it became known that Waldo recently forged the name of R. E. Webster & Co., former employers, on a \$600 note, but that he had paid it back this week, and the matter had been "hushed up."

Waldo is married and has one child. He is one of the best known politicians of the county, and has always been held in highest esteem. When discrepancies were found in the books of the city by Accountant Walter Schultus of Grand Rapids, the matter was believed to be due to much inefficiency in handling accounts.

Big Rapids Pioneer  
September 12, 1912  
Post Conviction Summary of  
Case  
Slide 1/2

Nelson E. Waldo.

Waldo, convicted of forgery on his own confession, be sentenced by the court.

After requesting Waldo to stand up the judge read the statute governing the case, to the effect that the sentence for this kind of case shall be 14 years in the state's prison, or one year in the county jail, which he construed to mean that the minimum should be one year. Then he read from the indeterminate sentence law, which obligates the judge to make the sentence indeterminate, and also read from the probation law, which permits the judge to suspend sentence and place a first offender in charge of a probation officer. After he finished reading, he asked the defendant:

"Have you anything to say why the sentence of the court should not be pronounced on you."

"I haven't," Waldo answered in barely audible tones.

The judge said in part:

The court has been petitioned by prominent business men to exercise leniency. The court does not deem such a course advisable. A careful examination of this case and the correspondence I have had with this woman lead me to conclude that this is not a case for leniency. Many have signed the petition out of the kindness of their heart, yet they would be surprised if I should follow their advice. On January, 1911, no young man in this county had a brighter future or better name than you. There is no excuse for your deeds. The sentence of the court is that you be not more than 14 years nor less than one with a recommendation of two years at Ionia.



Big Rapids Pioneer  
September 12, 1912  
Slide 2/2

### History of the Case.

Up to the middle of last June Nelson E. Waldo as one of the most popular young business men in the city. Every one was his friend, and nothing but good was heard about him.

sways and means committee from the council got suspicious that everything was not right with the city finances. They suspected a shortage of about \$4,000. It looked as if ex-treasurer Franck was the guilty party. After considerable talk it was voted by the council to engage N. E. Waldo, a former treasurer, to audit the books of his successor. The council later reconsidered this action

and engaged Walter Shultus of Grand Rapids, an expert accountant. A few days after he began working Shultus convinced himself that not only Franck but Waldo were guilty, and that the greater part of the deficit was charged up to Waldo. The figures were finally fixed at a little over \$2,700. Waldo denied the charge at first but later admitted the possibility of clerical errors, as he called them, and expressed his willingness to make good the shortage. He did so paying everything but the interest.

During the month of July, just after this sensational charge had subsided, and while the city officials were hesitating whether to swear out a warrant for Waldo's arrest or not, the city was again shocked by the announcement that Waldo had been placed under arrest on a forgery charge—that he had defrauded a widow of nearly \$3,000 by exchanging for her good cash forged notes.

The notes in the possession of this widow, Ida Bolanger, by name, were three in number. One was for \$1,500. This was signed by Isaac M. Watson as maker, and the signature was forged. It was endorsed by B. I. Webster, S. G. Webster, R. E. Webster and N. E. Waldo. All of the endorsements but his own were forged. A second note was for \$800. It was signed by Henry Golz as maker, the signature being forged, and endorsed by N. E. Waldo and H. I. Drescher. After his arrest it was stated privately that H. I. Drescher's name was not forged to this note, but that it was genuine, and that Mr. Drescher had received some benefit from this note. An examination of the note, however, reveals the fact that the same hand that signed the name of N. E. Waldo had also written H. I. Drescher's.

The third note was not a forgery, but had the amount raised from \$300 to \$900. It was made by John Bumb.

September 12, 1912  
Big Rapids Pioneer  
Nelson Waldo Convicted  
(Re-typed for Searching)  
Slide 1/4

**Waldo, convicted of forgery on his own confession, be sentenced by the court.**

**After requesting Waldo to stand up the judge read the statute governing the case, to the effect that the sentence for this kind of case shall be 14 years in the state's prison, or one year in the county jail, which he construed to mean that the minimum should be one year. Then he read from the indeterminate sentence law, which obligates the judge to make the sentence indeterminate, and also read from the prohibition law, which permits the judge to suspend sentence and place a first offender in charge of a probation officer. After he finished reading he asked the defendant:**

**"Have you anything to say why the sentence of the court should not be pronounced on you."**

**"I haven't," Waldo answered in barely audible tones.**

**The judge said in part:**

**The Court has been petitioned by prominent business men to exercise leniency. Many have signed the petition out of the kindness of their heart, yet they would be surprised if I should follow their advice. On January 1911, no young man in this county had a brighter future or better name than you. There is no excuse for your deeds. The sentence of the court is that you be not more than 14 years nor less than one with a recommendation of two years at Ionia.**

**History of the case. Up to the middle of last June Nelson E. Waldo was one of the most popular young business men in the city. Everyone was his friend, and nothing but good was heard about him.**



September 12, 1912  
Big Rapids Pioneer  
Slide 2/4

After a report the ways and means committee from the council got suspicious that everything was not right with the city finances. They suspected a shortage of about \$4,000. It looked as if ex-treasurer Franck (Ernest Franck Big Rapids Treasurer following Nelson 1910-1911) was the guilty party. After considerable talk it was voted by the council to engage N. E. Waldo, a former treasurer, to audit the books of his successor. The council later reconsidered this action (See Article about Alderman Northrup) and engaged Walter Shultus of Grand Rapids, an expert accountant. A few days after he began working Shultus convinced himself that not only Franck but Waldo were guilty, and the greater part of the deficit was charged up to Waldo. The figures were finally fixed at a little over \$2,700. Waldo denied the charge at first but later admitted the possibility of clerical errors, as he called them, and expressed his willingness to make good the shortage. He did so paying everything but the interest.

During the month of July, just after this sensational charge had subsided, and while the city officials were hesitating whether to swear out a warrant for Waldo's arrest or not, the city was again shocked by the announcement that Waldo had been placed under arrest on a forgery charge-that he defrauded a widow of nearly \$3,000 by exchanging for her good cash forged notes.

September 12, 1912  
Big Rapids Pioneer  
Slide 3/4

The notes in possession of this widow, Ida Bolanger, by name, were three in number. One was for \$1,500. This was signed by Isaac M. Watson as maker, and the signature was forged. It was endorsed by B. I. Webster, S. G. Webster, R. E. Webster and N. E. Waldo. All of the endorsements but his own were forged. A second note was for \$800. It was signed by Henry Golz as maker, the signature being forged, and endorsed by N. E. Waldo and H. I. Drescher. After his arrest it was stated privately that H. I. Drescher's name was not forged to this note, but that it was genuine, and that Mr. Drescher had received some benefit from this note. An examination of the note, however, reveals the fact that the same hand that signed the name of N. E. Waldo had also written H. I. Drescher's.

The third note was not a forgery, but had the amount raised from \$300 to \$900. It was made by John Bumb.

This made a total of \$2,900. Waldo was arrested and his bail was fixed at \$1,500. He was unable to secure bondsmen and languished in the county jail for several weeks.

Later it was thought that if he had his liberty he might be able to sell his farm in Wheatland township, against which there was a mortgage for about half its value, and thus reimburse Ms. Bolanger. With this in view L. F. Bertrau and Barney Rau signed his bond, which was reduced in the meantime to \$1,000, and they in turn were secured by eight other business men, who agreed to lose \$100 cash in case Waldo defaulted.

The forgery came to light when Mrs. Bolanger, who was making her home at Cheboygan, wrote to Isaac Watson at Paris, asking if she could have the interest on her money. Watson wrote back that he owed her no interest, nor anything else. Where-upon Mrs. Bolanger came here and found out that the notes she had were forged.

September 12, 1912

Big Rapids Pioneer

Slide 4/4

**Forgery was only one of the incidents of the crime. Waldo had been a close friend of the Bolanger family, and Napoleon Bolanger had such implicit confidence in Waldo's integrity that on his deathbed he placed him in charge of his estate and made him executor for his wife, leaving for him to care of her insurance money.**

**Besides the crime to which he pleaded guilty Waldo was said to have forged other notes, some of which he took up, and in some cases gave worthless papers in return. In Mrs. Bolanger's case he promised, if she did not prosecute, to make good her money, and finally did give her a third mortgage on his farm, which however is thought now to be worthless.**

**There are stories in circulation to the effect that Waldo had been forging names for years, as far back as 10 years some say. He was always able when detected, to make good and probably would have done so in Mrs. Bolanger's case if his embezzlement of the city money had not been discovered. The unexpected demand for \$2,700 upset his calculations and made him helpless.**

**Throughout this trial his young wife, the mother of his one child stood by her husband in the most devoted fashion. She appeared in court every time he did, and circulated a petition for him getting many signers. There is much sympathy expressed for her.**

Lansing State Journal

March 12, 1912

Article About Scandal Involving Michigan Bond & Surety  
Co.

In the article there is a letter from Judge Albert Cogger  
to the head of the company that is deemed  
inappropriate legal advice. The article later names  
agents of the company with concerns, listed as an agent  
in Big Rapids is Nelson E. Waldo

Slide 1/3

**WETS SCORE WHEN  
THEY RETURN BILL  
INTO COMMITTEE**

---

SUCCEED IN TAKING MEASURE  
PROHIBITING BREWERY-  
OWNED SALOONS FROM  
GENERAL ORDER.

---

**MEMBERS WANT TO QUIT**



Lansing State Journal

March 12, 1912

Slide 2/3

Another letter found in the files of the bonding company, which is attracting a great deal of interest because of what at least may be termed a friendly relationship between the company and a judicial officer, was written by former Judge A. B. Cogger of Big Rapids to A. F. Bunting, under date of April 8, 1911. It is in relation to the case of Bull vs. Redick and follows:

"As you know I am now circuit judge of the circuit and of course could not sit in the trial of the Bull vs. Redick case. Our next term is in May and it occurred to me that possibly the other side would make a move to have it transferred to some other circuit because of me being disqualified under the provisions of sections 10105 to 10112 of the C. L. of 1897 as amended by act 212 of P. A. of 1909. It might be a good idea to make the first move with a view of keeping it out of Isabella and Clinton county. I make this as a suggestion only. Think they will notice it for trial at the May term because when I saw Mr. Duzenbury last he said he was very anxious to have it tried at that time. I am not going to discontinue practice outside my own circuit for the reason that I will not be on the bench after Jan. 1, next."

Lansing State Journal

March 12, 1912

Slide 3/3

### List of Agents of Concern.

Aside from these there are agents who were members of the legislature before 1907 and since. Apparently the agents have been picked as much for their political influence and strength as for any other reason. Any one conversant with the politics of their district will find a name to be reckoned with there among the agents of the company here appended and they also will find a few names that are state wide in their political influence. In addition to the members of the 1907 legislature already mentioned, the following is a complete list of the 1912 agents:

J. H. Bidwell, Lapeer; A. E. Willard, Empire; Martin Brown, Leland; H. R. Clark, Adrian; A. L. Newmark, Newberry; Edward McNamara, St. Ignace; Macomb Insurance agency, Mount Clemens; Byron N. Seaman, Romeo; A. C. Christeneen, Manistee; Peter White & Co., Marquette; Frank Foster, Ludington; N. E. Waldo, Big Rapids; H. B. Moulton, Menominee; Leslie D. Madill, Midland; Bert J. Nickels, Monroe; Seth C. Dixon, Dundee; C.



Big Rapids Pioneer  
September 2012  
Albert B. Cogger Appears on  
Waldo's Behalf  
Slide 1/2

CONTAINS 120 NAMES OF BUSI-  
NESS MEN AND OTHERS.

## COGGER APPEARS FOR WALDO

Judge Asks Attorney If He Personal-  
ly Recommends Probation but  
Cogger Puts Responsibility  
on Petitioners.

From Saturday's Daily.

Nelson E. Waldo was ordered to appear in court this morning at 10 o'clock. Because the train from the east was late and Mr. Cogger who was called to Remus yesterday, was unable to be present, it was after 11:30 before Judge Barton explained the purpose of the assemblage.

The court said that it was not the intention at this time to impose sentence on the defendant, but to give him or his friends an opportunity to be heard.

He called on Mr. Cogger.

Mr. Cogger said in part: I have had only a few talks with Mr. Waldo. In these I have advised him to tell all, to conceal nothing. He has confessed his guilt. He has had the sympathy of the people and he told me he tried to rectify those whom he had wronged, as far as he was able, and if he has done this it would not be proper to deprive him of his liberty.

Sometime ago Mrs. Waldo asked me to draft a petition. I have done it and it has been circulated for your consideration. It was signed liberally. There are three and a half pages of names.

Mr. Cogger then read the petition. It prayed that the defendant be either placed on probation or that he be given the minimum sentence. He read the list of names, those of prominent business men and others not prominent.



Big Rapids Pioneer  
September 2012  
Albert B. Cogger Appears on  
Waldo's Behalf  
Slide 2/2

Of course, the crime having been confessed, a severe sentence may be imposed. But the legislature, he said, thought it wise to enact the indeterminate sentence law, and even went farther, making it possible for the judge to place the guilty man on probation for his first conviction. This was done on the theory that the individual may be benefitted more by being free than by being incarcerated. As you know, the attorney said, he has done what he could to replace the money taken. He has already suffered much. Even if placed on probation and even if every act of his were perfect it would take him many years to live down the deed.

Judge Barton, as Mr. Cogger closed, asked pointedly:

"Do I understand that you recommend the use of the probation act in this case?"

This came rather unexpectedly, but it did not phase the attorney very long. He said:

"I've known Mr. Waldo many years. When I first heard about this matter it broke me all up. I could not sleep. And I am not yet in the frame of mind that unfits me to express an impartial judgment. Other people who have known the defendant ever since he was a boy, have expressed their opinion. I also have my opinion but it may be warped.

The judge called for other expressions, either for or against.

The prosecutor arose, and expressed the one idea only, that what may be hard for the individual may be best for society, and that society as well as the individual should be considered by the court.

Mr. Cogger supplemented his remarks by saying that only one person refused to sign the petition for Mrs. Waldo and only two for Mrs. Bumb. He said the bonds were signed by L. F. Bertrau and Barney Rau, who were secured by the signatures of eight others.

The judge called for other expressions, either for or against.

The prosecutor arose, and expressed the one idea only, that what may be hard for the individual may be best for society, and that society as well as the individual should be considered by the court.

Mr. Cogger supplemented his remarks by saying that only one person refused to sign the petition for Mrs. Waldo and only two for Mrs. Bumb. He said the bonds were signed by L. F. Bertrau and Barney Rau, who were secured by the signatures of eight others.

The judge asked the amount of the bonds, the prosecutor answering that it was originally placed at \$1500, but being unable to get this sum, it was reduced to \$1,000.

Judge Barton asked that all parties appear in court at 10 o'clock sharp Monday forenoon, when the case would be finally disposed of.



Big Rapids Pioneer  
How Shortage Was Discovered  
Slide 1/3

**HOW SHORTAGE  
WAS DISCOVERED**

---

**ALD. NORTHRUP GIVES INSIDE  
HISTORY OF BIG SENSATION.**

---

**BALANCE MADE ON PAPER**

---

**But Ways and Means Committee  
Wanted to See Bank Books—  
That Started In-  
vestigation.**

---

From Saturday's Daily.

Just how did the present investigation, which promises to restore to the city over \$4,000, begin?

The Pioneer asked Ald. W. A. Northrup this question in the belief that he was best qualified to answer. As chairman of the committee on ways and means Mr. Northrup had charge of the work of auditing the books of the city clerk and city treasurer. The balance of the committee consists of Ald. Minier, Ald. Frank Starr, Ald. Lypps and Ald. Geedey. Mr. Northrup was very willing to tell all he knew, believing that as a public official it was his duty to do so. He talked very frankly and as a means to stop a possible repetition of this kind of work he was willing to urge extreme measures.

"We began auditing the books in the customary way," Ald. Northrup said. "We got through with the city clerk's books and then commenced on the treasurer's. We found the treasurer's books all right. They balanced exactly with the city clerk's books. Franck had himself charged and

credited with all orders issued, as shown on the books of the city clerk, just as it should have been. The books were already for the committee's O. K.

"There was only one thing left that was not shown up," continued Ald. Northrup, and that was the special sewer bonds and the premium and accrued interest on the \$25,000 park bonds. This made us think and lead us to make a further investigation, with the result that I found that the special sewer bonds were in no place charged up to the treasurer, nor was there a scratch of the pen relative to the \$25,000 park bonds and the accrued interest and premium, which amounts to \$465. The only record that we could find for these was on the minutes of the council proceedings and we had to dig to find them.



Big Rapids Pioneer  
How Shortage Was Discovered  
Slide 2/3

"Franck up to this time had been assisting us. We then asked him to produce the sewer rolls and his bank books, so we could learn the actual balance on hand, but since that time we have been unable to get Franck to meet us. We had arranged for several meetings with him, but he never showed up. Finally Mayor Hopkinson went to the Citizens State bank and got the city balances off the books there. He gave the figures to Ald. Minier and Minier gave them to me. As soon as I compared the figures secured from the bank with the figures shown on the annual report I saw there was a shortage somewhere of between four and five thousand dollars.

"I told the aldermen privately what my suspicions were and asked for an audit of the books. Last week Monday a motion was made by Ald. Lypps that the city engage Mr. Shultus or some other expert accountant. Because Mr. Shultus charges \$10 a day and expenses for his work some of the aldermen seemed to favor a local man, and Ald. Lloyd moved as an amendment that N. E. Waldo's name be substituted for that of Mr. Shultus. The amendment carried by a vote of 5 o 3, Mayor Hopkinson not being present and N. P. Geedey presiding as president. But while the amendment carried giving the job of auditing the books to N. E. Waldo the motion as amended did not carry, those aldermen who favored Mr. Waldo voting against their own motion with

myself and the other two members. I voted against the amended motion because I did not want the work done by a local man. I wanted it done by an expert or not at all. Why the others voted against it I don't know, but they joked me about voting against an audit when I asked for one.

"It was after this meeting that I explained more fully in private to the aldermen my suspicions. They asked me why I did not state them before I voted. I told them I did not desire to blacken any man's character in that way, but I urged that something be done. The result was the calling of a special meeting by Mayor Hopkinson on Wednesday evening, when Mr. Shultus was engaged.

Big Rapids Pioneer  
How Shortage Was Discovered  
Slide 3/3

"M. Shultus was not on the job very long before he became fully convinced that there was a shortage. Waldo's own books are plainly against him. Taking what money was on hand when he took the office of treasurer from Robert Blakely, adding to that the amount of money he had actually collected and the amount of money he paid out, he is shown by his own books to be \$2,700 short. The same thing is true of Franck.

"What strikes me as very strange is that we could have had intelligent men audit these books for three years and not find out that there is a shortage. Of course the reason is that they never asked for the actual cash balances, but accepted the prepared annual statement on its face as true."

At this point Ald. Norhrup made plain his idea of the situation, and what should be done.

"Both these young men have my deepest sympathy and appreciation of their present troubles," he said. They are men of excellent character and are well liked, but sentiment has no place in matters of this kind. The betraying of a public trust is a serious matter. Now if we accept the money and permit them to go free we shall be inviting other officials to follow their examples, in the belief that if they are discovered all they will have to do is to restore the money they have taken. While it is hard to say it, I believe that after this matter is settled and the city gets its money criminal proceeding should be started."



September 9, 1912  
 Ionia State Prison Registry  
 (From State of Michigan  
 Archives)

COVERED WITH HEAVY HAIR. BROWN BIRTHMARK 3/4" X 1/2" ON R. BUTTOCKS OUTER.  
 IRRREG SCR CUT 1/2" ON 'L' 3RD FINGER BET. 1ST & 2ND JOINTS, RUNNING AROUND FINGER.  
 IRRREG SCR 1 1/2" BOTTOM 'L' THUMB, CROSSED BY SECOND SCR CUT 1" LONG.

R. Ear Length 5-8 Peculiarities Bertillion Height 1.64.2 Out Arm 1.70 Trunk 90-3 Head-Lgt. 19-2 Width 15-0  
 When Discharged, Height L. Foot 25-0 L. Middle Finger 11-5 L. Little Finger 8-9 L. Fore-Arm 44-4 Nose Length 4-0 Nose Width 3-2  
 Weight 126

**NELSON E. WALDO** Alias Reg. No. 7138 Sentenced SEPT 9 1912 From MECOSTA County  
 Term 1 To 14 YRS Crime FORGERY Received SEPT 10 1912  
 Discharged (Parole) Sept 11, 1914 DOT 11-1913 RETIRED FARMER Description When Rec'd. Age 35 Height 5'8 1/2" Weight 128 Build MED TALL Complexion FAIR  
 Hair VY DARK CHEST. Eyes LT BLUE Forehead MED HIGH Nose MED. LARGE Lips MED. Chin MED. POINTED  
 Beard DARK Teeth REG. & GOOD Past Occupation REAL ESTATE, INSURANCE & ABSTRACTS When and where Born FEB 22, 1877 - GREEN TWP, MECOSTA CO, MICH  
 Former Place of Residence 1883 TO LITCHFIELD, MICH 2 YRS. BIG RAPIDS, MICH ON FARM UNTIL 1890. HILLSDALE, MICH. 1 YR - BIG RAPIDS, MICH ON FARM UNTIL  
 1900 WKD IN WOODS 1 YR - LUTHER, MICH 6 MOS. 1903 WITH H.F. BERTCH, THEN WEBSTER CROS UNTIL 1911 - BOUGHT BUSINESS & RAN IT FOR  
 HIMSELF - UP TO TIME OF ARREST.

Name, Address, Nativity and Occupation of Parents, Father HENRY H. WALDO, 102J 4TH AVE, BIG RAPIDS, MICH. - N.Y (AMER) RETIRED FARMER  
 Mother SAME ADDRESS - AMER. Other Relatives BROTHER - ARTHUR W WALDO, NYE, MONTANA. SISTER (IDA)  
 MRS FRANCIS N. FORD, 516 N. MICH. AVE, BIG RAPIDS WIFE, MRS MARY H. WALDO, 504 N. MICH. AVE, BIG RAPIDS. SON, DONALD,  
 4 YRS, WITH MOTHER.

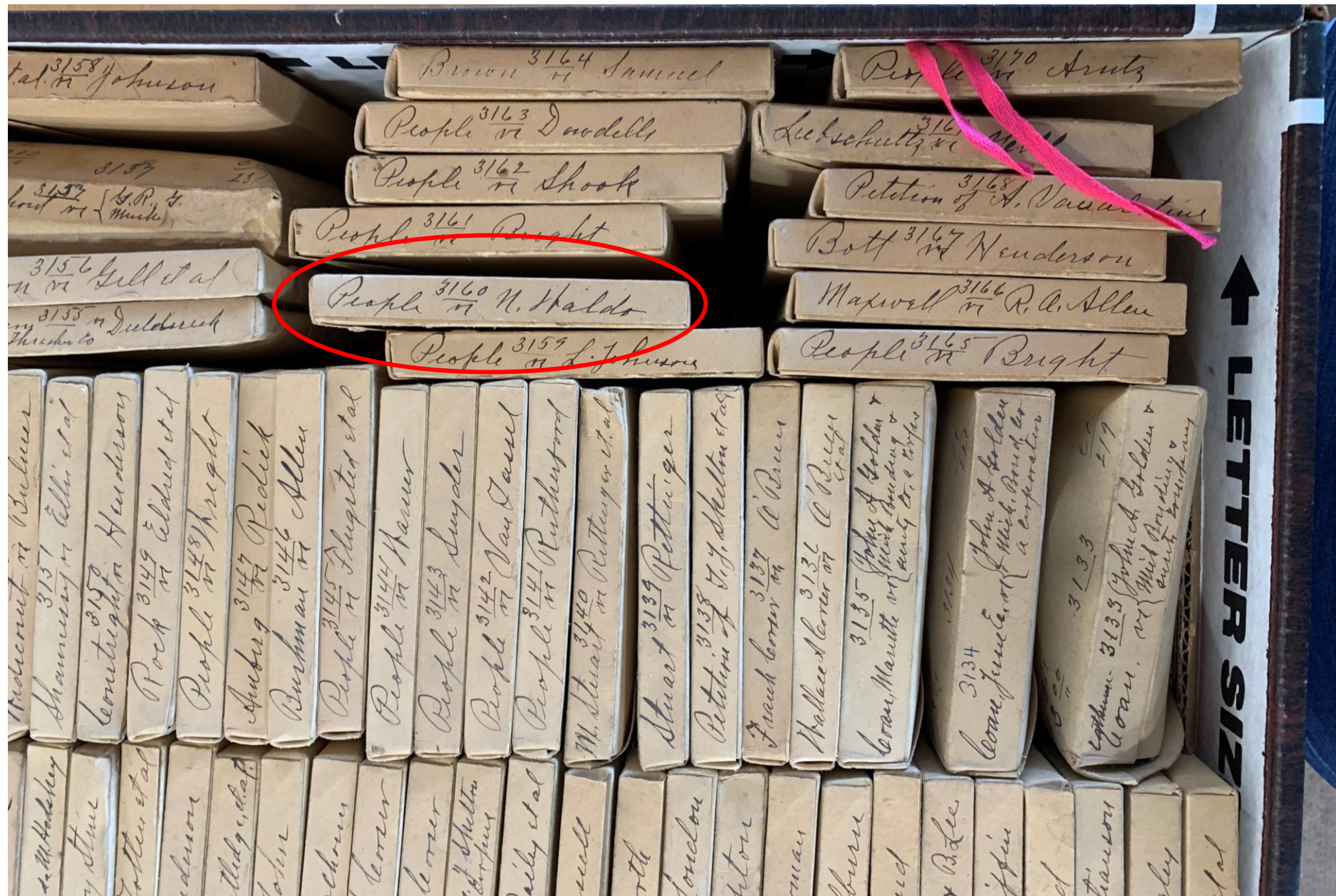
Correspondence WIFE & PARENTS Education 8TH GRADE & BUS. COLLEGE  
 Liquor No. Tobacco SMOKES OCCASIONALLY Accomplices and Disposition NONE GIVEN  
 Previous Arrests, Fine and Sentences DENIES PREVIOUS ARRESTS.

Scars, Tattoo, Marks and Peculiarities BROWN MOLE ON BACK AT BELT LINE, 2" R. OF SPINE - 3 BROWN MOLES BACK 'L' LEG BELOW KNEE - 3RD JOINT  
 'L' LITTLE FINGER ENLARGED. BROWN MOLE 'L' WRIST INNER 3" ABOVE HAND - SPOT 1 1/4" X 9/8" ON 'L' NECK WHERE HAIR DOES NOT GROW.  
 3 MOLES ON 'L' CHEEK. MOLE R. CENTRE OF FOREHEAD.

Bertillion Height 1.73-9 Out Arm 1.71 Trunk 94-2 Head-Lgt. 19-6 Width 15-3  
 R. Ear Length 6-6 Peculiarities L. Foot 26-2 L. Middle Finger 11-5 L. Little Finger 9-1 L. Fore-Arm 46-7 Nose Length 5-1 Nose Width 3-4  
 When Discharged, Height 5-8 1/2 Weight 132



Big Rapids Criminal  
Case Files  
September 1912  
State of Michigan  
Archives  
Slide 1/2





INDETERMINATE SENTENCE.

WARRANT FOR REMOVAL OF PRISONER TO THE MICHIGAN REFORMATORY AT IONIA, MICHIGAN.

(3089)

DOUBLEDAY BROS. & CO., KALAMAZOO, MICH. 10-'03

STATE OF MICHIGAN.

COUNTY OF Mecosta

ss. IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN:

To the Sheriff of Mecosta County, GREETING:

WHEREAS, Nelson E. Waldo

has lately, in our Circuit Court for the County of Mecosta, been duly convicted of the crime of Forgery and sentenced therefor to imprisonment in the Michigan Reformatory at Ionia, Michigan, at hard labor, for the period of not less than one year and not more than fourteen years,

from and including the day of his said sentence, as more fully appears by a certified abstract from the minutes of said Court of such conviction and sentence herewith delivered to you and accompanying this Warrant; you are, therefore, commanded to cause the said Nelson E. Waldo without needless delay, to be removed from the Jail of the said County of Mecosta to the Michigan Reformatory at Ionia, Michigan.

Witness, the Hon. Joseph Barton

Circuit Judge, at the Court House in the City of Big Rapids on this 9th

day of Sept. in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and twelve

Thomas S. Finney

Clerk of Circuit Court.

The People of the State of Michigan  
vs.

Nelson E. Waldo

WARRANT.

By virtue of this Warrant to me directed,  
I have taken the within named

Nelson E. Waldo

whom I have before

E J Jenkins

the justice within named; and that I have  
summoned the within named

to appear as witnesses before the said Justice,  
as I am within commanded.

Dated July 10 1912

Fees, \$ 2.75

J J Hendryson  
Sheriff

THE CIRCUIT COURT  
-FOR THE-  
COUNTY OF MECOSTA.

INFORMATION FOR

Forgery

The People of the State of Michigan

vs.

Nelson E Waldo

Names of Witnesses for the People:

- Isid Belanger
- Isaac M. Watson
- S G Webster
- B S Webster
- Henry Soly
- Harry J. Dresser

Filed Sept. 3 1912

Thomas S. Finney Clerk.

Prosecuting Attorney.