IMAGES *of America*

ALPINE TOWNSHIP
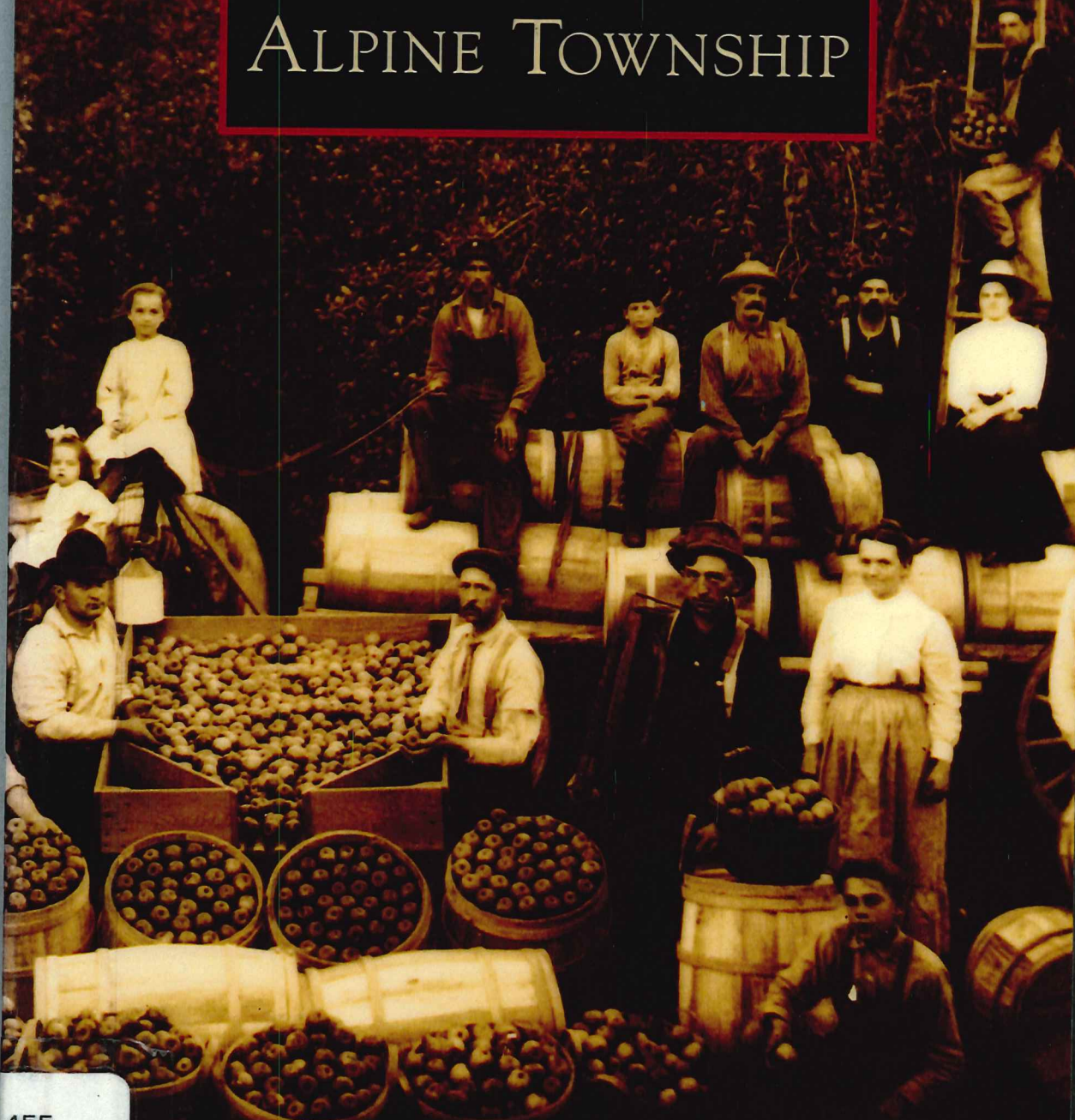
Mary Rasch Alt

*This book is dedicated to my parents, who taught me
the important things in life. Faith and family are first. Two other very
important things are to take photographs and to keep records.*

INTRODUCTION

It was the Treaty of Washington in 1836 that opened land north of the Grand River to settlers and speculators.

In 1837, Solomon Wright brought his family from Wayne County, New York, to Kent County and settled on a piece of property next to Indian Mill Creek on the road we call Four Mile Road today. The Wright family is thought to have been the first white settlers of Alpine Township. Many were to follow and locate first on streams or near lakes. Soon the heavily forested area north of Walker was surveyed, sectioned, cleared, and busy with very productive farms.

On April 5, 1847, a group organized the 36 square miles of North Walker. It met at a schoolhouse. The name for the township, All Pine, was suggested for the heavy concentration of pine trees in one area of the township. It was shortened after Adelia (Hubbell) Hills suggested Alpine.

At this first meeting, township officials were elected: Edward Wheeler, supervisor; C. D. Shenich, clerk; Casper Cordes, treasurer; and William H. Withey, John Coffee, John Colton, and John Tuxbury, justices. The next meeting was held at Edward Wheeler's home, which was a central location in the township. Soon a small log school was erected on a corner of the Wheeler farm and was used to hold the township's meetings. In about 1860, a wood frame town hall was built on the northeast corner of section 21, the location of the present Alpine Township Historical Museum.

This area of Michigan was nearly all forest before the pioneers came. The township was only a seasonal residence for Native American tribes in Michigan. On the northwest edge of the township is Cranberry Lake, named for the fruit Native Americans harvested there.

In 1839, John Coffee and Richmond Gooding came to Alpine Township and settled five miles west of the Wright family. They named their post office after the township they left in Ohio—Pleasant.

It was not long before sections of Alpine Township were being claimed, cleared, and farmed by families by the name of Hills, Brown, Snyder, Hildebrant, Waterman, Dole, Card, Ruthardt, Rogers, Hilton, Denison, Herrick, Tuxbury, Lillibridge, Pearsall, Snowden, Cassidy, Davenport, Thome, Buck, Miller, Umlor, Boyd, Childs, Withey, Ballard, Fox, Scheidel, Cordes, Chase, Wheeler, and Platte. All can be found on the 1855 plat map and census records. Some of these same families have remained, enjoying the rich fruits these founding families hewed out of the forest.

One of Michigan's great explorers, John Ball, also purchased land in Alpine Township. He could see the richness of the lumber and goodness of the land when he surveyed it.

Family and faith gave these early settlers the strength to work from dawn to dusk building a life in this new wilderness of Michigan. As more families came to homestead in the township, churches and schools were organized and then buildings were built.
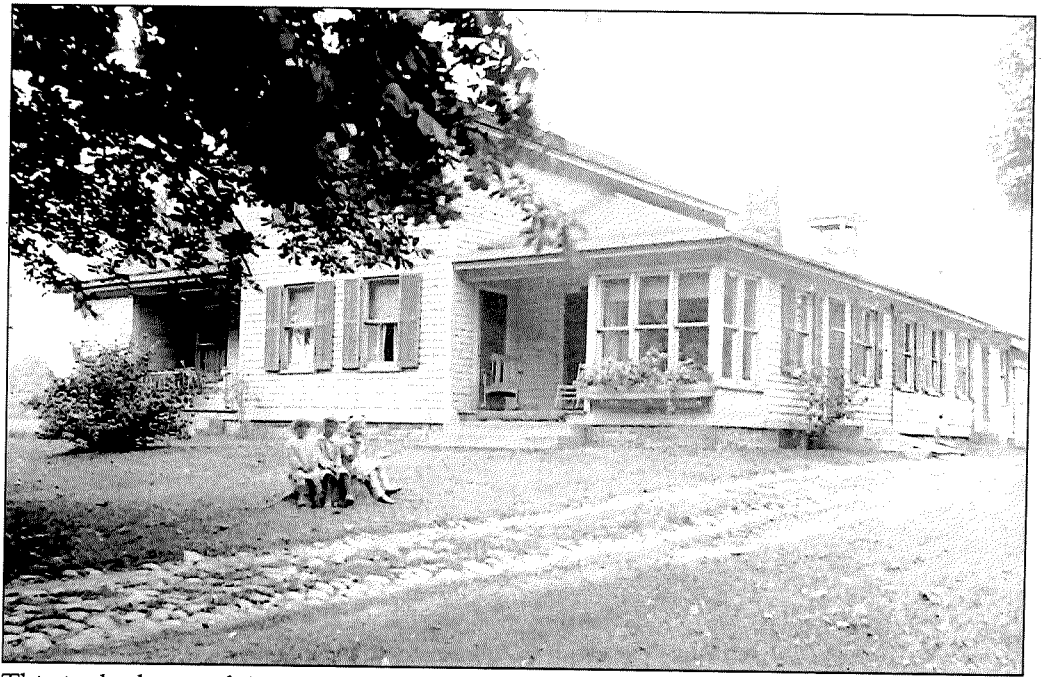
This is the home of Aaron Hubbell Hills, son of Turner Hills and Adelia (Hubbell) Hills, who moved to the area in 1837. Aaron married Ann Colton in 1852. They purchased the southwest corner of Seven Mile Road and Alpine Avenue. When George Ward bought this home, he remodeled it. A few years later, it was torn down to make room for four lanes on Alpine Avenue.
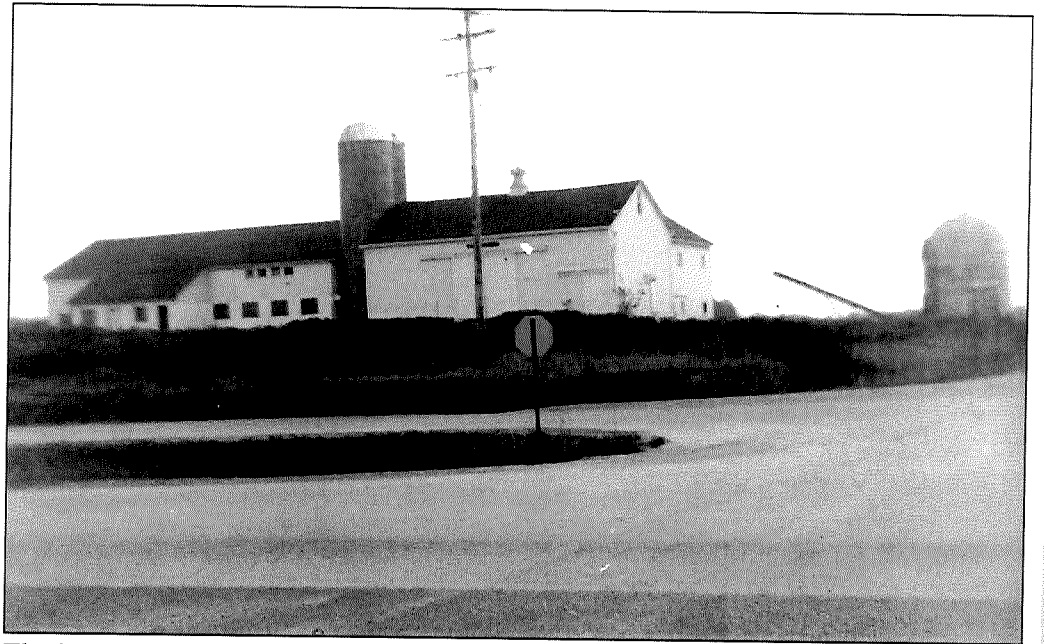
This large white barn was very impressive on the southwest corner of Seven Mile Road and Alpine Avenue at the farm of Aaron and Ann Hills, until Alpine Avenue was made into a four-lane highway. It has been torn down. This farm is now part of the township's industrial area.