



## William Q. Atwood

### Brief Biography

- Born in 1839 on Shell Creek Plantation, Alabama.
- Given his freedom and moved to Ohio in 1853.
- Active in the Underground Railroad in the late 1840s and 1850s.
- First visited the Saginaw area in 1857.
- Moved to California with his brother, John, in 1859 and invested in gold, silver, horses, and operated a restaurant.
- Moved to East Saginaw in 1863, purchased land and sold it for a \$4000 profit.
- Established a real estate office in 1868.
- Married Charlotte Echols, a school teacher, in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1872.
- Operated Atwood Sawmill from 1874-88.
- Served as a three-time Michigan Delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1888, 1892, and 1896.
- Died in 1910 and was buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery on South Washington in Saginaw.
- Worth, at the time of his death, an estimated \$103,000, which would be equal to \$1,735,650 (estimated value) in 2002 dollars.

### Accomplishments

- Born into slavery and became a lumber baron in Saginaw.
- Received limited schooling, but became a self-taught scholar.
- Traveled to California to make money in the Gold Rush, but moved to Michigan to be part of the "Green Gold Rush."
- Became a skilled speaker and member of the Colored Debating Society.
- Served as three-time Delegate to Republican National Conference.
- Raised five children with his wife Charlotte.
- Became one of the wealthiest men in Saginaw in late 1800s and early 1900s.

### Other Resources

- A Nation Torn: The Story of How the Civil War Began (*Saginaw Hoyt*) J 973.7 RA
- Get on Board: The Story of the Underground Railroad" (*Saginaw Hoyt*) J African Heritage 973.7 Ha
- Indians, Jacks, and Pines: A History of Saginaw (*Delta College*) F 572 .S17 G7
- Michigan Log Marks, Their Function and Use During the Great Michigan Pine Harvest (*Saginaw Hoyt*) R Michigan Room 634.982 W93m
- Michigan Lumbertowns: Lumbermen and Laborers in Saginaw, Bay City, and Muskegon 1870-1905.
- Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman (*Delta Children Lit. Review Area*) E 444 .T82 S37 1996. (*Saginaw Hoyt*) J African Heritage Biography Tubman, H.
- Paul Bunyan: How A Terrible Timber Feller Became A Legend
- Stories of Early Saginaw for Elementary Grades of Saginaw County (*Saginaw Hoyt*) R Michigan Room 977.446 M451s



### **Files**

- William Q. Atwood Vertical File, Eddy Historical and Genealogical Collection, Hoyt Library

### **Videos**

- Saginaw Mosaic: The African Americans, based on the Black Presence in Saginaw, Michigan, 1855-1900/Roosevelt Ruffin (20 min. VHS. (*Saginaw Hoyt*) R Archives 977.445

### **Questions**

- What was the Underground Railroad?
- How many free states were in the Union in 1857?
- William Atwood had many jobs in his life time. List four of his occupations.
- What was a lumbar baron?
- What is the city of East Saginaw known as today?