

# Sketch of William Farnsworth<sup>1</sup>

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By Morgan Lewis Martin

There was one victim to the terrible accident on Lake Michigan, whose loss should call forth more than a passing notice. When the writer of this article first came to the West, he found among the few Eastern adventures who had already preceded him, an active, energetic and persevering spirit in the person of William Farnsworth. He was at that period, engaged in the prosecution of the fur-trade, and resided in a place now known as Marinette, on the Menomonee River. The family name is highly respected, and well known, in northern New York and Vermont, and some of its numerous heritors with the Scotch-American disposition so characteristic of the locality in which they were born, had followed the track of the early Jesuits into the Western wilderness.

The subject of this sketch first came to Mackinaw and Green Bay nearly forty years ago as a clerk of the American Fur Company. Of a bold, enterprising and independent character, he chafed under the restraints which were held with an iron grasp by their agents, over all persons in their employ, and soon found himself at the head of an establishment in opposition to the regular clerk of the company. At that period, it was no easy task to undertake the prosecution of a trade with the native tribes of this

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<sup>1</sup> This article originally appeared in the *Bay City Press*, of Green Bay, Sept. 22d, 1860. The disaster alluded to, in which William Farnsworth lost his life, was the sinking of the "Lady Elgin," Sept. 7, 1860. The *Evergreen City Times* stated that Mr. Farnsworth first visited Sheboygan, as early as 1814; was there a few months in 1818, as a trapper and Indian trader; and finally went there to reside in 1835; and, with the exception of three or four years' residence in Milwaukee, after the revulsion of 1837, he ever after continued to reside in Sheboygan. He was, at the time of his death, about sixty-five years of age; and when his remains were recovered, they were conveyed to Sheboygan, where they were interred with masonic and civil honors. References to him may be found in Col. Childs' "Recollections of Wisconsin," and Mr. Rublee's "Early Times in Sheboygan County," in vol. iv., *Wis. Hist. Colls.*