

photographs, and commercial photography has become a profitable business.

In the fall of 1863 James M. and Ezra T. Nelson purchased a half interest in Mr. Comstock's factory and the firm was known as Comstock, Nelson & Co. Two years later Mr. Comstock disposed of the remainder of his interest, one-half of which was sold to James A. Pugh and Manley G. Colson, the latter being the foreman of his factory, and the other half was sold to his son, Tileston A. Comstock. At this time the firm name was reversed to Nelson, Comstock & Co. Another change took place in 1870, when Elias Matter, who had just severed his connection with Berkey Brothers & Co., purchased the younger Comstock's interest. The factory is now operated by the Nelson-Matter Furniture Company, of which William Barnhart is the president, Roy S. Barnhart, treasurer and James C. McBride, secretary.

Another of the pioneers in the furniture business of the city was George Widdicomb. He was born in Devonshire, England, and emigrated to this country in 1840, settling in Syracuse, N. Y. He worked there as a cabinet maker, and afterward engaged in business. Removing from Syracuse to Elmira and then to Havana, N. Y., he finally came west and settled in Grand Rapids in 1856. Here he worked at his trade in the Winchester Brothers' factory for more than a year, and then started in business on his own account. A shop was rented for a factory near the east end of Bridge street bridge. With his four boys, William, George, Jr., Harry and John, he commenced the manufacture of cheap furniture, and in the course of time a dozen other men were employed. From this factory Mr. Wm. Widdicomb went to Milwaukee to sell furniture, and claims the honor of being the first furniture commercial salesman from Grand Rapids. The firm also opened a retail store on the west side of Canal street between Huron and Erie streets. This store was kept open until 1863. The sign over the store was George Widdicomb & Sons. When the war broke out the two elder boys went to the front at the first call for troops. Harry and John followed one year later, and then Mr. Widdicomb retired from the furniture business. When the boys came home again they started a furniture shop just south of Bridge street on Canal, on the spot now occupied by the New England factory.

George Widdicomb, Jr., died in 1866 and that same year the