

A Builder Of Grinnell Is Called

H-~~X~~ Sept-4, 1934

R. G. Coutts Passes Away Monday
Morning Aged 78 Years,
2 Months and 9 Days.

FUNERAL SERVICES TO BE WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Mr. Coutts Had Taught for Twenty
Years Famous "Bob Coutts"
Class" of M. E. Church.

R. G. Coutts, for almost a half century a resident of Grinnell, reached the end of a long life in which he exemplified to the full the ideals of a stalwart, Christian manhood when he passed quietly away at 6:40 o'clock Monday morning in the residence on Hamilton avenue which he built and in which he had made his home ever since May 1, 1886.

Mr. Coutts in a literal sense was more concerned with the material upbuilding of Grinnell than any other man in its history, for in his long career as a contractor and builder he had been engaged on practically every business building which has been erected in Grinnell since he moved here in 1885. He leaves to his children the proud legacy of an unblemished reputation. Every job which Bob Coutts undertook was well and honestly done to the best of his ability. He stood four square, just as his buildings have done during all the years since he erected them.

A devout Christian, Mr. Coutts was for many years an earnest worker in the Methodist church. All his life long, he was a Sunday school teacher. For twenty years he had been the teacher of a large men's Sunday school class which had come to be known as "Bob Coutts' class" but he taught his first class in the Methodist Sunday school the first Sunday he was in Grinnell and was in charge of a class of men and women until he undertook the teaching work with which he later became so peculiarly identified.

Robert Gordon Coutts, son of Adam and Helen Coutts, was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, June 25, 1856, and at the time of his death had reached the ripe old age of 78 years, 2 months and 9 days.

He landed in Quebec, Canada, on his eighteenth birthday, June 25, 1874, and came directly to Poweshick county, landing in Malcom and walking from there across country to Picasant township. For two years he was connected with a store where the town of Ewart now stands, but it did not take him long to swing into his life work as a builder and he did some of the work on the court house in Montezuma.

He was married in Ewart on September 15, 1881, to Alvaretta Farley, who preceded him in death Nov. 24, 1930. To this union were born eight children, of whom seven survive him, the oldest child, Mabel, having died August 23, 1883, at the

age of five months. The surviving children are Ross V., of Grinnell, Harry G. and Dwight R. of Chicago, Hazel R., of Iowa City, Mrs. Russell George of Mt. Pleasant, Mrs. S. G. Norton, of Brunswick, Ga., and Ray C., of Cedar Rapids.

It is expected that all the children will be here for the funeral.

He also leaves to mourn his loss two sisters, Mrs. Elizabeth Beattie of Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and Mrs. Edward Lincoln, Jr., of Grinnell, and two brothers, W. P. Coutts of Kellogg, Iowa, and J. M. Coutts of Newaygo, Michigan.

Mr. Coutts had resided in Grinnell since July 25, 1885, and during all that time until his last illness, came upon him twelve weeks ago, had been actively connected with all of Grinnell's business and religious interests.

His civic and fraternal activities were many. He was a member of the city council during the nineties, was mayor from 1905 to 1907, was a Past Noble Grand of Grinnell Lodge No. 358, I. O. O. F., and was a member of Hermon Lodge No. 273, A. F. and A. M. His active connection with the Methodist Episcopal church and Sunday school has already been referred to

and was an integral part of his life.

His business connections of late years had been with the firm which he founded and which bears his name, in which he was associated with his son Ross. As a member of the firm of Clark, Coutts & Beyer he was actively associated in real estate and building operations in Grinnell during the earlier years.

His memory will be kept green in Grinnell as a man who lived uprightly, loved mercy and walked humbly with his God.

Funeral services will be held from the Methodist Episcopal church Wednesday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock, conducted by Rev. H. S. Wilkinson. Burial will be in Hazelwood cemetery. There will be a short service at the house for relatives at 2 o'clock.

The same pallbearers will act as did at the burial of Mrs. Coutts: C. S. George, Fred Heinle, T. S. Mason, G. C. Murray, N. O. Pilgrim and G. O. Watland.

Death of Robert G. Coutts

Yesterday afternoon at the Methodist Episcopal church Grinnell citizens gathered to pay their last tribute of respect and affection to one of the best citizens the community has known, Robert G. Coutts.

The funeral services were in charge of the pastor, the Rev. H. S. Wilkinson who spoke of the life and work of Mr. Coutts from the standpoint of a friend as well as pastor. David Phillips sang two selections, the organ accompaniments being played by Prof. Elias Blum of the Grinnell School of Music.

Members of the Bob Coutts Sunday School class attended in a body. Pallbearers were C. S. George, Fred Heinle, T. S. Mason, G. C. Mar-ray, N. O. Pilgrim and G. O. Watland. Burial was in Hazelwood.

His first work in Grinnell was on May 1st, 1875, and although that city did not become his permanent residence until July 25, 1885, he

often said that he had worked in Grinnell during part of every year after 1875 until making his permanent home in that city. On Thanksgiving Day, 1885, he began work on the building of his home on Hamilton Avenue which was completed on May 1, 1886, and in which he and his family resided almost continuously until the time of his death.

In addition to the immediate family he is survived by two brothers and two sisters and eight grandchildren: W. P. Coutts of Kellogg, Ia.; James M. Coutts of Newaygo, Mich.; Mrs. Mary Lincoln of Grinnell; Mrs. Elizabeth Beattie of Inch, Aberdeenshire, Scotland; Betty Jane and Rosemary, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. D. R. Coutts; Chicago; Winifred, Dorothy and Mary Jane George daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Russell C. George of Mt. Pleasant, Ia.; and Robert, Jean and Mary Elizabeth, son and daughters of Mr. and Mrs. S. G. Norton, Brunswick, Ga.

For more than half a century he was engaged in contracting and building and during that time erected or assisted in the construction of many homes and other buildings which stand today as symbols of his industry.

He was a member of the Methodist Episcopal church of this city from August 9, 1885, until the date of his death and during all of that time was a teacher in the Sunday School of his church. In 1913, the men's Bible Class of that Church which has come to be known as "Bob Coutts' Sunday School Class" was organized, for which he was teacher or assistant teacher continuously until his death.



12-18-1891

The Congregationalists of Newton paid Mr. R. G. Coutts a neat and substantial compliment by sending him as a Thanksgiving offering a handsome 14k gold watch—Duoher case and Elgin works—and solid gold chain and charm. Mr. Coutts built their church during the summer and this was sent as a gentle hint that the work was well done in the estimation of the many friends he had made while at work there. On the inside is engraved, "Presented to R. G. Coutts by the building committee and congregation of the First Congregational church of Newton, Iowa." Mr. Coutts was as proud and happy Thanksgiving day as if he had inherited a million.

4-28- A GOOD RECORD. 1896

One of the men who has taken an active and efficient part in the building of the new church is Mr. R. G. Coutts, one of the most popular contractors in central Iowa. One reason for Mr. Coutts' popularity is that he never does poor work. The man who secures his services can go to Europe and feel sure that the work will be done as carefully and as durably as if he was present every day watching its progress. It was a famous painter who said he succeeded because he "put brains into his work." Mr. Coutts has succeeded because he puts brains and conscience into his work.

Mr. Coutts came from Scotland in 1871 and located at Ewart. His first work in Grinnell was in 1877, when he constructed the basement of the South School building. In 1885 he came to Grinnell, and since that time he has been rapidly growing in public favor. Among the handsome buildings he has constructed of late are the new Methodist Church and the Broad street block. Among the best residences the past year he has done the mason work for S. Pettit's house, for S. S. Preston, J. A. Flook, T. H. Buchanan, and N. Harrington. He also built the Buchanan & Pierson market. Among his best buildings of recent years are the Congregational church in Newton and the Normal college of the same place.

Mr. Coutts sells all kinds of mason's materials and, like his work, he only handles the best. He has kept for several years from twenty to forty workmen busy each season, and always pays the top wages. He gives all his contracts his personal supervision.

The esteem in which Mr. Coutts is held is due to his sterling integrity and his determination to do the best in everything. That's a good record for any young man who wishes to succeed to emulate.

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 1922.

Teaching The Sunday School

(By W. G. Ray)

We have had several mighty fine Sunday school teachers in this town. The one probably who accomplished the most in his work, who had the largest following and who was the most popular Sunday school teacher here was R. G. Coutts. Mr. Coutts was a plain stone mason. He did not study much on theories of Christianity but took his Bible and expounded Christianity as he found it in the leaves of that book.

He studied the Bible and he taught the Bible and right here was the secret of his power and success as a teacher. He knew the Bible. He didn't talk much about evolution or any other of the various questions which will spring up and are discussed by people who make various theological questions the foundation of their studies. He talked the Bible, he taught the Bible and he quoted the Bible because he knew the Bible. He had one of the largest classes ever taught in Grinnell and they stuck by him because they wanted to study the Bible.

For our part it seems as if the old fashioned way of studying the Bible in the Bible school was more effective in teaching the young the meaning of that wonderful book than all the recent methods adopted. We have some fine Sunday school teachers today but no one young or old in Grinnell has attained the popularity or success of R. G. Coutts.

His class loved to hear him expound the Bible. They knew he loved its study and they knew that he knew what the Bible taught.

Four Friends Laughed Again With Each Other

(The following tribute to Robert G. Coutts was published in the Grinnell Register Sept. 1, 1924, and appeared in The North-east Window, written by Chas. K. Needham).

All of R. G. Coutts' sons and daughters were here yesterday to pay their last respects. And the best part of it is, these sons and daughters did not wait until death had claimed their father to express their affection and pay loving tribute. Every few weeks some of those who lived away would drive in and spend a few hours or a week-end with him, and the ones living in and near Grinnell were with him at every opportunity and did everything they could think of for his comfort and happiness. He spoke of them all together with members of their families, with the greatest affection and appreciation, many times in personal talks with me. Especially since the death of Mrs. Coutts, realizing how lost and lonely he has been without her, have his children tried to cheer and encourage him. As I sat in the church yesterday I thought this must be a real comfort and consolation to them all.

Rev. H. S. Wilkinson spoke of Mr. Coutts as a man who has lived his life intensely. Everything he did—he did with all his might. In his work he set the pace for his workmen. He loved his home, his family and his church intensely. He was enthusiastic and energetic to the very last day of health and strength. Even in sickness he could not learn to spare himself. Mr. Wilkinson read excerpts from a letter he wrote while in the hospital to a member of the famous Bob Coutts Sunday School class—a letter the equal of any sermon ever written. In fact, this personal letter to one of the old gang formed the basis of Mr. Wilkinson's closing challenge to fellow workers in the church and in the community to take up his torch and carry on as consistently and as valiantly as did this indomitable Scotchman.

He did, indeed, live intensely-- but joyfully. He was intensely religious and an enthusiastic Bible student and church man, yet he keenly enjoyed all the good things of everyday life-- always ready with a laugh, a joke or a pat story. I remember distinctly what a good time he had at the dinner Mrs. Needham and I gave to the members of the Sunday School class and their wives in the basement of the church six or seven years ago. The dinner was the forfeit I paid because I was absent from the class more times than Alex Manson that year. It was just before Christmas and I remember the tables were gay with wreaths and red candles. At each cover we placed a booklet tied with red ribbons. The menu and program were on the inside and on the cover was the same picture

of Mr. Coult's as appears in The Register today, making Teacher Bob the guest of honor.

Ed Brande was there that night--as a special guest--and he was scheduled to talk on "How To Keep A Baptist Dry" or some such nonsense. Ed was at his best and as an entertainer he had no peer. Davy McBlain was there--I can see him now--his roguish eyes--his snow-white beard--as he stood and without accompaniment sang in his inimitable Scotch dialect, "Nellie, My Ain Bluebell," as a special compliment to Mrs. Needham. Eugene Henely was there, with that funny lock of hair standing straight up--and made the best and wittiest speech I ever heard him make. Bob laughed until the tears ran down