

7-20 OBITUARY. 1897

John William Derr was born in Lehigh county, Pennsylvania, Sept. 30th, 1824. Died at Grinnell, Iowa, July 14th, 1897, aged 72 years, 9 months, 14 days.

Deceased spent his early manhood working for his parents on the home farm in the county of his birth. At the age of 21, with no capital except a pair of willing hands and a strong determination to make a success of life, he started out into the world to do for himself. He was united in marriage with Julia Ann Madden in Montour county, Pa., May 20, 1847. Five children resulted from this union, two of whom, Mary Elizabeth Derr-Jones and James Monroe Derr, are deceased; and three of whom, viz., William Harris Derr, traveling for the Spaulding Mfg. Co. of this place, Charles N. Derr, for a number of years editor of the Lititz, Pa., Express, and at present justice of the peace there, and Martha J. Derr, of the same place. Of five grandchildren all are living. Both the daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Martha Julia, graduated from Linden Hall Seminary, of Lititz, and afterward taught in that institution some years.

Deceased's two brothers, Rev. Joshua Derr of Ohio, a Lutheran minister, and Dr. Nathaniel Derr, a physician of Mercer county, Illinois, passed on before, but a sister, Mrs. Samuel Kram, of Montour county, Pa., survives.

The deceased filled clerical positions for a few years after his marriage, when he took up the study of dentistry. He entered the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, from which institution he graduated with honors in 1854. He located at Lititz, Pa., where he practiced his profession for over twenty years, receiving a liberal patronage and establishing a first-class reputation in his profession. He was a member of the Harris Dental Association of Lancaster, Pa., and also of the American Dental Association.

About thirty years ago Dr. Derr came to Grinnell and practiced dentistry here for a time. He then went to Kansas, but returned and settled in Grinnell about 1895. He followed his profession in this place from that time until his death. His proficiency in dental surgery was conceded by all.

On April 6th, 1892, he was united in marriage with Mrs. Martha M. Gore, of this place, who survives him.

Deceased united with the Presbyterian church in early manhood, but was connected with the Moravians at Lititz, and joined the Congregational church when he came to Grinnell. He was a Christian gentleman, a kind husband, an honorable citizen, and his sudden death was a severe shock to his devoted wife and a painful surprise to a wide circle of friends.

Deceased possessed a magnificent physique, a picture of perfect health. For a few weeks prior to his death he had been consulting his physician, and was informed that he had heart disease, but the symptoms were not such as to greatly alarm him. On Wednesday he spent the greater part of the day writing to his son Charles in Pennsylvania. About 5 o'clock he went down town for his mail. Returning home about 5:30, he passed through the house.

His wife, who was preparing supper, called to him a few minutes later, and receiving no response, she went to him the great beyond. Friends responded quickly to her cry for help, but human assistance was of no avail. He evidently died without a struggle. He has gone to his reward,—that of a good man whose more than three-score and ten years record a successful effort to live a just life before God and man. Mrs. Derr, who survives him, has the sympathy of all in her sad bereavement. Better still, she has the consolation of knowing that he has simply gone on before; that there will be a happy reunion by and by.

The funeral services were held on Sunday afternoon at the home on Spring st., and were conducted by Rev. E. M. Vittum in presence of a large number of friends and neighbors. Mr. Vittum gave a sketch of the Doctor's life, mainly as given above, and spoke of the blameless life just closed and the respect in which the deceased was held by all who knew him. Death, he said, was commonly regarded as a leveller, but in truth it emphasizes the difference between men of well and ill-spent lives.

A quartette, consisting of Misses Kate Bray and Stella Bartlett and Messrs. E. B. Brande and Ora Parish, sang two selections, one of them the Doctor's favorite hymn, by Rev. Isaac Watts, beginning "Thus far the Lord hath led me on,"—tune, Hebron.

The pall-bearers were Messrs. Howard Sanders, Albert Sanders, H. W. Spaulding, and Deacons Lucius Sanders, E. S. Bartlett, and W. W. Sargent.

The remains were followed to Hazelwood cemetery by a long procession of friends in carriages.