

W. G. RAY

Personal Recollections by
Mrs. H. R. McMurray

1936

(From The Brooklyn Chronicle)

W. G. Ray was known among the older residents of Brooklyn in two ways the best. One was for his political activities in the earlier days and the other for his work in the county institutes. Charles Chapnan, the Talbotts, U. M. Reed, M. L. Gordon and many others can all testify to his activities in the cause of Republicanism in the county, state and nation in the earlier days. A loyalty which he retained practically to his death.

Mrs. Charles Gay of Hartwick, the late Mrs. J. W. Frizzell and Mrs. F. F. Breniman were among

his institute pupils. There are others, too, whose names have slipped our mind but who, nevertheless, have frequently mentioned his outstanding work as a teacher in the early institutes.

Until the election of 1932 he was probably more closely in touch with the politics in this county than any other person. His failing health in 1931 practically eliminated him from further activity in the local campaign. He probably understood the county organization of government as well as anyone else. Through his various lodge activities, his work at writing up meetings and conventions in the county, he had a very wide acquaintance.

He did not wait in making up his mind on a question to see the popular side or the probable winning side. He made up his mind regardless and was quite as likely to forsake the popular hue and cry as to be with it and with his mind once made up he did not waver from his purpose. He could be depended upon to the last degree to do as he said he would and to take the stand he might promise to take on any issue and no forces were ever strong enough to cause him to forsake a principle or a promise. He was never "sold out" to anyone and never bought his business.

As long as he was vigorous and a real power, not only in his own office, but in the community in which he lived, no one could realize that one of his dominant personality and strong character could ever fail. But he did, as does everyone else, and, although the attitude of others toward him perhaps changed, as far as he himself was concerned he was never beaten. Poor health with much suffering and affliction to both body and mind assailed him, the depression hit his business and his other investments, one son seriously ill, another was helpless and dependent, but he never gave up. He never talked of trouble or depression. He refused to recognize both his own physical weakness or any of his other troubles. These matters were never discussed by him or referred to in any way.

With a dogged determination he met his obligations in full without one word of complaint that he had more than he could bear. He literally never said "die" or give up. Surely such a one did mean when he wrote:

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud;
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed."

He never admitted even the possibility of defeat in any of his enterprises. He fought the fight largely alone, never conceding that there was a fight. He never admitted to himself that anything he wished to do was impossible or even hard to accomplish. On almost his last day when paralysis

he made his wants known enough to outline his plans for his annual paper at the Fortnightly club in Grinnell, to be given in February.

On the same day he signed some important papers when doctor and nurses thought he couldn't possibly do it. He signed his name with nearly paralyzed fingers on several papers by the mere force of his determination to do it. The signatures are clear and plain and unmistakable, and closely resemble the signature which he had signed to hundreds of documents for years.

Miss Nona Adkins, one of his employees, began some ten years ago to make a scrap book of his articles. She went back into the files of The Herald and collected many and they have been carefully preserved. Not one of these articles is about himself. They are about local problems, national problems, old time stories and events—not one word about himself, even when he was made Master Editor.

It probably never occurred to him to write about himself. He was much too busy and not in the least concerned about himself. Neither was he too much concerned about his neighbors and friends. He once said, "Surely we have a nice neighborhood. We all mind our own business." Another expression, meaning the same thing, which he often used when anyone was commenting on someone's behavior or acting of which he or she did not approve: "What's it to me? It's not my funeral." How many times we have heard him say that. And now, it was his funeral Saturday and how strange it seems! (daughter)

which genuine love is capable, greater than the pain, the sorrow, the loneliness, the death of the cross on Golgotha was our Lord's confidence in the love of his father. Some say that the genuine greatness of a father's love is revealed only when his child is in greatest need. In like manner the greatness of God's love was revealed on a cross just outside Jerusalem. Where the night is darkest the light shines brightest. May your confidence in His love lighten the deepest shadow, uphold you beside the still waters or through the deepest valleys."

Comments of Iowa Editors On The Late W. G. Ray

**FORTHRIGHT EDITOR WAS
W. G. RAY**

Herald 2-4-36
Iowa newspaperdom loses another veteran editor in the death of W. G. Ray, whose publishing career began with purchase of an interest in The Grinnell Herald 45 years ago. He and his younger sister came to Iowa from New York in 1875. Together they worked their way through college, being graduated from Grinnell in 1882.

The origin of the W. G. Ray personality is no doubt to be read in these early days of hardship and self-help in a state which was just emerging from the pioneer stage. They molded him as a rugged conservative, an editor who spoke his mind without fear or favor.

With the readers of his newspapers, there was never any guesswork as to where W. G. Ray stood on the issues of the day.—The Des Moines Register.

W. G. RAY PASSES

The death of W. G. Ray, publisher of The Grinnell Herald, removes one of the oldest and prominent citizens of Grinnell and among the prominent publishers of the state.

As a citizen he had been honored by his home city and as a publisher by the presidency of the Iowa Press Association and citation as a master editor and publisher. Of later years and because of the infirmities of age Mr. Ray had not as formerly been active in politics and as publisher. Yet his was a name held in high respect at home and in the state.

Perhaps his last public appearance was in attendance at a meeting of south Iowa group of publishers held recently at Newton. He gave evidence of his 78 years and of illness there which predicated the end, which came Thursday. At that assemblage he was an honored guest among a coterie of publishers and editors to whom he was a landmark in the field of Iowa publishers and editorship.

An able man, of strong convictions and with willingness and fa-

held convictions and sided with his beliefs and with those who held similar convictions.

Seventy-eight is a ripe old age following a life of activity in citizenship, politics and business. The time comes to rest. Resquiescat in pace.—Times-Republican, Marshalltown.

W. G. RAY DID A GOOD JOB

One of the finest friends and neighbors whom we enjoyed in our years here in Newton in the newspaper business was W. G. Ray, a master Iowa publisher and former president of the Iowa Press Association, who died last week after serving well past a three score and ten of active, conscientious and constructive living.

We knew that Mr. Ray had been in failing health for some time. At the meeting of central Iowa press association papers in Newton some weeks ago, he made a special effort to attend with us and to take part in the "shop talk" discussions. It was plainly visible that his health had failed him considerably. But it did our hearts good, and we know that it did the hearts of the press association members there good to see this fine old pioneer of central Iowa journalism lend his support and counsel to our meeting.

W. G. Ray was held in high esteem by his associates of the fourth estate, by his neighbors in Grinnell and by his friends throughout Iowa. He was firm in his convictions and he fought for those things which he thought would promote the best interests of his community and his state. Mr. Ray was a builder of the old school. He believed in firm, sound foundations. He believed that the newspaper had a responsibility to its community and he strove to fulfill it. Those living with him and around him will agree that he did fill it—in fine fashion and to the credit of all.

Newton has lost a fine neighbor and Iowa a fine fellow worker.—The Newton Daily News.

A memorial issue of the Herald was published by the Herald staff on January 31, 1936. Unfortunately, no copy available for this book. Mr. Ray died January 30, 1936.

Services Held For W. G. Ray

Herald 2-4-1936
Rev. Robert Ing's Brings Tribute Full of Beauty and Sincerity to Funeral Saturday.

A tribute full of beauty and sympathy was brought by Rev. Robert Ingis to the funeral services for W. G. Ray, held at the home of High street Saturday afternoon.

Although the day was cold a large number of friends were present to attend the simple but impressive services.

A male quartet from Grinnell college sang two beautiful selections, "Crossing the Bar" and a lovely musical setting of Stevenson's "Requiem". The quartet was composed of F. Walter Huffman, Dexter Williams, Richard Kinsel and D. E. Peck.

Funeral bearers, as announced in last Friday's Herald, were as follows: honorary pallbearers, G. H. Hamilton, Senator H. W. Spaulding, S. J. Phoney, C. K. Needham, V. G. Preston, President John S. Nelson, Judge D. W. Hamilton and Professor H. W. Norris; active bearers, David Sutherland and Montezuma, Carl E. Child, Paul P. Meyers, A. M. Burton, Mayor B. N. Whitaker and E. F. Nuckolls.

Burial was in Hazelwood.

At least a partial list of those present from out of town includes: Professor F. I. Herriott and Mrs. Austin Haines of Des Moines (Mrs. Herriott, Mrs. Ray's sister, was unable to be present because of illness), Don McMurray of Des Moines, C. M. Richards of Toledo, Iowa, David Sutherland and Clyde McFarlin of Montezuma, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Talbot, Mrs. Lola Landes, Mrs. J. A. Barnes, Mrs. J. J. Schultz, Ross Deamer, Rev. Brauner, William Karr, William Smith, W. B. Quegg, Floyd Eich-

horn, R. J. Breckenridge, F. L. Neff, Mr. and Mrs. Simpson Morrison, Miss Dona Lawson, Lawrence Kinnaman and Miss Hildegarde Hettman of Brooklyn. Members of The Herald force attended in a body.

Business houses closed from 2 to 2:30 o'clock out of respect to this good friend of Grinnell.

The Herald feels that it is meeting the wishes of many friends and is glad of the opportunity to publish in full the sympathetic and very suitable remarks of Rev. Mr. Ingis, which are as follows:

W. G. RAY
"It is fitting that all loyal Grinnellians should pause to pay tribute to W. G. Ray. In a unique way he is identified with this community. He was not merely typical of what we like to think makes a good citizen of this community. He was all of that and, it seems to me, very much more. In a peculiar way he became a part of her life.

"Watch the panorama of his life as it weaves a distinct pattern among the institutions and affairs of our little city. He never considered himself an 'old timer' or an 'early settler' here, but for those of us whose participation in serious matters is limited to the twentieth century he is indeed a link which binds us to the great part of which we are heirs. That impression is given, at least partly, because of his prodigious memory and his extraordinary interest in the events and persons of those early days. When this community, with all others, was in the midst of the liquor struggle of three years ago I recall a conversation with Mr. Ray in which he outlined, in great detail, the development of the movement to outlaw the liquor traffic in Iowa. I rather imagine that the secret of his phenomenal memory regarding such matters is found in the fact that he has been a vital participant in the prohibition movement and all other community affairs. He had such a remarkable knowledge of persons in the early days because he had shared experience with them. His scrap books are full, not of evidence of passages, recognition of himself, not even the report that he had been designated Master Editor by his fellow editors, of which he must have been proud, as were all of us,—but his scrap books are full of the life of the people of this community. In a sense he has been the historian of his town. He may not have come to Grinnell until 1875 but he was so interested in the founding and early growth of our city that his stories of those days have the authentic ring of a founding father. If his own knowledge of those days was not complete he at least became the agent of all those who would preserve all the rich human material stored in their memories. He became the repository of community history. Through him a great tradition has been preserved. Because he was so profoundly interested in what he himself called 'the development of the community,' because he was so deeply engrossed in a recollection of persons and events he became to us not just another Grinnellian but made during his college days and the town were a strong influence in pulling him back to this place ever since. The people we have met, in intelligence and the thrift and the simplicity of manner, which has marked them, have made them, to the writer, typical of the friends he would know, and have given to the place the character which has made it for him a loved home. Those qualities of intelligence, thrift and industry, which were the basis of his own philosophy of life, are, naturally enough, the standards by which he evaluated the personalities of others.

"A side of his character not revealed in his public service or his enthusiasm for history comes out in an editorial written at the time of the death of his sister, Mrs. A. L. Ames, the sister with whom he came west on his great adventure. 'Nine years she and I lived together in the home, companionable, loving each other with a real childhood love. . . . From 1865 until her marriage, February 1, 1894, she was my companion. We played together at home, studied together and came west together. We studied together in college and graduated together and all associations were of the sincerest, loving kind. Always until her marriage and she had a home of her own, we were together whenever opportunity offered. Our association was heavily delightful. In many things she surpassed me. She was a harder working student. She seemed always to be tireless and was able to win favors when I might have failed.' It was this side of his character that his home folks knew and was revealed in his care for Bobby.

"At the end of so vigorous and useful a life these words of Henry's are appropriate:

SE BE MY PASSING
My work accomplished
And the long day done,
My heart
Shall be at rest
I let me be gathered to my rest
That suddenly serene and blessed
Death.

community begins and the man leaves off. In the case of Mr. Ray it may be said that the two entities — man and community — very largely coincided. I am sure that this is the time and the place for some one, without the blaring of horns, or the shooting of cannon but quite simply to say, "Thank You!"

"That his love for his town was sincere is in evidence in nearly every line he wrote. The description of the old landmarks, the naming of distinguished names, even the recollection of mud streets, board sidewalks, cyclones and fires, all reveal a genuine regard. Lines like these are found among his reminiscences: 'The writer has watched this community grow for fifty years (this was written in 1929). He always found it a place where people meet upon the level. Coming here as a mere hired lad on the farm he found a cordial welcome from the people of the city whom he met. . . . It was the lot of the writer to spend a few years in school work outside

Grinnell. Every one who has that genuinely historical instinct and passion seeks to discover the real meaning of a particular time or place or person, and in so doing identifies himself with it. It is in this respect that Mr. Ray and Grinnell from the March day when it was a big pole on a lawless prairie to this very day are identified in our minds.

"There is another way in which Mr. Ray is Grinnell. This town had 2,000 inhabitants when he came here but one has the impression that the only reason that he was not a Grinnellian is that Grinnell was the accident of birth. Certain it is that from 1875 to 1936 there have been very few men who have even approached the earnestness and the variety of his participation in our common life. He started out as a hired man on a farm west of town, he was a student in the academy and the college, he taught a rural school, after a brief absence he returned to Grinnell to become superintendent of schools, he continued as member and secretary of the board of education, he represented the county in the legislature, he was postmaster, he was chairman of the county republican committee, he was councilman, he was mayor at the time of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of Grinnell, he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, he was a trustee of the college, he taught a Sunday school class, and so on. He was an editor of a newspaper in this community for 48 years culminating in the receipt of the honor of Master Editor from the Iowa Press association. These are the high spots, but only the high spots, of a distinguished life devoted to this community. After a man's life gets so entangled in the

May we close this simple record with a word of personal appreciation and regard for his life lived in and for this community. The treasure of his life is not stored up in banks or in a market buoy but in the hearts and minds of those who met him, who with him lived and died, who with him were and are, and who with him are and are not. We have confidence that

The ship has sailing made
And to you men whom service
Is not a duty but a joy
And filled with both treasure and
hope, we, your neighbors and
friends, offer you all the help, the
sympathy, and sympathy of

W. G. Ray, Senior Editor of The Herald, Reaches Close Of Useful Life Thursday Morning — Funeral At Home at 2:00 P. M. Saturday.

The strong hand which for so many years has been at the helm of The Grinnell Herald and of so many worthy projects in Grinnell was stilled by death Thursday morning when Honorable W. G. Ray quietly slept his way across the border line which separates this life from the other shore. So quiet was his passing that those at his bedside could hardly tell that the last faint spark had fled. Death occurred at 9:20 o'clock in the morning after a sudden relapse which had been noted a few hours before, at 4:30 o'clock.

Mr. Ray had been in high spirits when he left The Herald office on the afternoon of Saturday, Jan. 18, to take a business drive to Toledo. He never returned to the spot about which his life activities had so largely centered. On Sunday afternoon he underwent a heart attack and on Monday he was taken to the Community hospital, where, after he had rested quietly for a few days, the decline began which resulted in his death.

Funeral services will be held Saturday at 2 o'clock from the home at 821 High street, conducted by Rev. Robert Inglis. Burial will be in Hazelwood cemetery.

Honorary pallbearers will be G. H. Hamlin, Senator H. W. Spaulding, S. J. Pooley, C. K. Needham, V. G. Preston, President John S. Nollen, Judge D. W. Hamilton and Professor H. W. Norris. Active pallbearers will be David Sutherland of Montezuma, Carl E. Child, Paul P. Meyers, A. M. Burton, Mayor B. N. Whitaker and R. F. Nuckolls.

Mr. Ray's son, Willard, will be unable to attend the funeral on account of illness.

W. G. Ray was born in Hope, Mich., Feb. 19, 1857. He would have been 79 years old on the nineteenth of next month. He was the son of Orlin L. and Harriet Shaw Ray. When he was three years of age his mother died when his sister, the late Harriet Ray Ames, was born. At the death of Mrs. Ray her father, Col. Enos Shaw of Madrid, St. Lawrence county, New York, came to Hastings, Mich., where the family then lived and took the four older motherless children home with him, so that Mr. Ray's earliest memories centered about northern New York state and the little red brick school house which he attended and about which his memory lingered lovingly his whole life long.

When he was 17 years old, he and his sister Harriet, who had been brought back to New York state when she was five years old, came to Iowa to make their home with Mr. and Mrs. W. O. Willard, Mrs. Willard having been a sister of their mother. It was a venturesome trip to the boy and girl from rural New York and the methods of travel were primitive, but they arrived safely and when Mr. Ray reached Grinnell his roots struck deep. He had reached his perma-

nent abiding place. He and his sister found a congenial home of refinement and high thinking with Mr. and Mrs. Willard. They attended the Grinnell Academy and later Grinnell College, from which they graduated together in the cyclone class of 1882. Probably Mr. Ray knew more about that bitter day in Grinnell's history than anyone else and his accounts of it, which have appeared in the columns of The Herald, have been of undisputed historical worth and form a record of authentic knowledge, which will be of great value in days to come.

During his college course he



W. G. RAY

As he appeared in early manhood. This picture was taken when he was a member of the Iowa Legislature.

helped to finance himself by teaching several terms in rural schools of the county and laid the foundations of the wide acquaintance which he later enjoyed.

GRINNELL AND POWESHIEK COUNTY LOSES PROMINENT, USEFUL, RESPECTED CITIZEN

Hon. W. G. Ray, Well Known Editor and Publisher Dies at Local Hospital at 9:30 O'clock This Morning. G-H

Jan. 30, 1936.

W. G. Ray, for many years senior editor and publisher of the Grinnell Herald, and a resident of Grinnell for something like sixty years, passed away this morning about 9:30 o'clock. Funeral services will be held at the residence Saturday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock, conducted by the Rev. Robert Inglis. The family requests no flowers.

Mr. Ray entered the hospital ten days ago for a few days rest and treatment. For a time he seemed to be improving, then seem to grow weaker, failing very rapidly during the last 24 hours. In October, 1931, he submitted to a very serious operation from which, for a man of his age, he made a remarkable recovery. He had been at the Herald office almost daily, transacting business as usual. On Saturday prior to going to the hospital on Monday, he made a business trip to Toledo in his car. He was determined, active and energetic to the last.

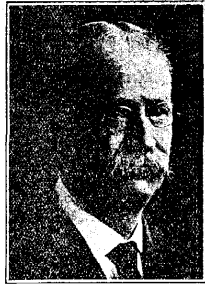
Born in Hastings, Mich., Feb. 19, 1837, Mr. Ray spent a part of his youth in northern New York, coming to Grinnell in 1875. He was graduated from Grinnell college in 1882, the "cyclone" class, and in later

years served as a member of the board of trustees of that institution. On August 16, 1896 he was married to Sarah Haines, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Haines, outstanding pioneers of this community. To Mr. and Mrs. Ray were born two sons and one daughter, Willard H. Ray of Norfolk, Va., Mrs. Arthur McMurray of Brooklyn, Iowa, and Robert Ray of Grinnell, Iowa, and his widow and three children, six grandchildren survive him. They are Roberta, Joan and Sally Ray, children of Willard Ray; Doris, George Ray and Arthur McMurray, Jr.

Mr. Ray had served this community in many capacities. From 1887 to 1889 he was superintendent of schools, from 1904 to 1912 he was Postmaster. From 1925 to 1931 he served this city as Mayor. He has been a member of the Grinnell school board since 1889, retaining the title of secretary of the board at the time of his death, although he had been inactive for the past four years. He also represented this county in the state legislature for two terms.

Among his many activities Mr. Ray recently served as president of the Iowa Press Association and had the honor of being named by that body as one of Iowa's Master Editors. He was also elected president of the Iowa League of Municipalities while serving Grinnell as Mayor. He was a member of the Masonic lodge and church, of the Congregational Consistory, of the I. O. O. F., Knights of Pythias, the Kiwanis Club and the Fortnightly club, and perhaps some other local organizations.

W. G. Ray was a good citizen and



W. G. RAY

He was a brilliant student and was active in college, political and newspaper activities. When the Beta Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, honorary scholastic fraternity, was formed in Grinnell College, his was one of the first alumni names added to the list and during his days of health he was a positive influence in the affairs of the Chapter.

After graduating from college he became principal of the Guthrie County High School at Panora, a position which he was to hold for five years. Here also his genius for friendship asserted itself, for the friends whom he made there remained friends his whole life through.

He was summoned from his duties in Panora in 1887 when he was called back to Grinnell to become superintendent of schools, a position in which he continued happily until 1889, when he became associated with The Grinnell Herald as junior partner with Dr. S. A. Cravath, at that time its editor.

Mr. Ray's period as superintendent of schools was one of the happy times in his busy life. He was genuinely interested in his students and followed their course after graduation with unflinching interest. Many people still living in Grinnell remember going to

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years served as a member of the board of trustees of that institution.

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