

# FUNERAL SERVICES FOR THE HON. GEORGE M. CHRISTIAN ARE HELD THIS AFTERNOON

Died May 3, 1932

## Impressive Masonic Burial Rites Are Conducted At The Grave By Members of Hermon Lodge.

The funeral services for the Hon. George M. Christian who passed away at the home of his daughter Mrs. A. C. Lyon, 1430 Broad street Tuesday morning at 2:30 were from the home at four o'clock afternoon. The Rev. Robert L. of the Congregational church in charge of the services at home and at the grave in Herwood cemetery. John Ganna Past Grand Master of Iowa Mason conducted the impressive Masonic burial rites with the assistance of members of Hermon lodge of city.

Active pall bearers from the lodge included F. E. Spaulding, F. A. Spaulding, Paul Meyers, A. M. Burton, F. F. Clindinin and Charles K. Needham. Honorary pall bearers were H. W. Spaulding, R. C. Ross, G. H. Hamlin, I. S. Bailey, V. G. Preston and J. H. McMurray.

Relatives and friends from out of the city who were here to pay their final respects to the beloved man were Miss Blanche Cocain of Chicago, Mrs. J. H. Jamison of Des Moines, Mrs. B. J. Thompson of Forrest City, Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Christian of Forrest City, Mrs. A. O. Rowse and Mrs. R. V. Cavanaugh of Rock Island, Mrs. Charlie Earle of Davenport and Mr. and Mrs. Howard L. Hedrick of Ottumwa, W. L. Patton and Mrs. W. E. Long of Mason City, Mr. and Mrs. Harley Stipp of Des Moines and Governor Dan Turner of Des Moines. Many hotel men from Des Moines and other cities in the state were also in attendance.

The life of George M. Christian has been one of continued service and experiences in meeting people from all over the world. In possession of his daughter is a scrapbook which has been kept by the family and in this book are hundreds of clippings from all over the country especially in association with his work in the hotel field. All are high in praise of his work and efforts. For many years he

was the proprietor of a chain of hotels which included some of Iowa's best known hostleries. With his partner H. L. Hedrick he owned at one time the Allison hotel in Cedar Rapids, the Lacey in Oskaloosa, the Keokuk in Keokuk, besides four in Des Moines, the Elliott, the Antlers, the Oxford and the Second Hotel Savery. At different times he served as president of the Northwestern Hotel Keepers' association, president of the Des Moines Hotel Keepers' association and president of the Iowa Hotel Men's association.

Mr. Christian came to Grinnell as station agent for the Rock Island in 1870 and it was not long before, in partnership with Hiram Johnson, he purchased the Grinnell House, which he conducted until 1877. In the spring of that year he purchased what was then Grinnell's leading hotel, the Chapin house, which stood on the ground between the Rock Island tracks and Third Ave., which he conducted until 1890. For three years, from 1885 until 1888, he leased and operated the big summer hotel at Colfax Springs.

In 1880 Mr. Christian entered public life when he was appointed superintendent of the railway mail service by Gen. J. S. Clarkson, then first assistant postmaster general. He held this position for fifteen months and July 1, 1890, was ap-

There is not sufficient time nor space to relate in this issue all the detailed activities of this busy life. George Melville Christian was born in Chicago, June 19, 1847, in a house which stood where the Rock Island station now stands. His father, David William Christian, served four years in the 51st Illinois infantry during the Civil war. His mother, before her marriage, was Lucy Anna Patrick of Ware, Mass. George attended public school in Chicago and later the Bryant & Stratton Commercial college in Davenport. This was all his "schooling." He received his education in the hard school of life.

When he was a young boy he earned his first money by folding papers for the Press and Tribune in Chicago. The first two quarters which he earned and proudly carried home to his mother are still preserved in the family archives. His first steady job was acting as messenger for Stephen A. Douglass, while that famous democrat was president of the United States fair in Chicago in 1860. In 1861 he was a news agent on the Rock Island railroad from Chicago to Kellogg, then the western terminus of the line. He became a telegrapher while working at Pond Creek, Ill., for H. F. Royce, later superintendent of the Rock Island, who then had a general store there and also acted as station agent. He was employed as an expert operator in Tiskilwa and Morris, Illinois, and also in the superintendent's office in Davenport. In 1868 he foreshadowed his later activity in the hotel business by owning and operating a restaurant at 174 South Clark street, in Chicago.

pointed postoffice inspector by John Wanamaker, postmaster general. He was so efficient in this work that he held office through change after change in administration until he resigned March 1, 1898, to accept the position of United States marshal for the southern district of Iowa, with headquarters in Des Moines, which he held until he retired from active life not many years ago.

Mr. Christian's political activities in the republican party were varied and honorable. He started by serving as alderman and mayor of Grinnell. He was for a number of years chairman of the republican county central committee and a member of the state committee from the Sixth district, serving as chairman of the finance committee. In 1888 he was a delegate to the republican national convention in Chicago and was chairman of the finance committee of the Iowa delegation. He had charge of the organization of the Allison campaign for the presidential nomination in that convention. He was a delegate to all the republican state conventions for a long period of years, until he retired from active politics.

It was not Mr. Christian's fault that he was not a Civil war veteran. He was only fourteen years old when the war broke out but tried several times to enlist, only to be refused on account of extreme youth. He was a Mason, a Knight Templar, a member of Za Ga Zig Temple of the Shrine, an Elk and was formerly a member of the Grant club in Des Moines. He also served as a trustee of the Congregational church.

Mr. Christian was married in 1869 to Miss Margaret M. Rowse of Davenport, who preceded him in death a few years ago. To them were born four children, one son, George H., deceased, and three daughters, Miss Jessie Christian of Chicago, Mrs. Alma Lyon of Grinnell and Mrs. Sumer Bump of Burlingame, Calif. There are also three grandchildren, George Christian, Bonnie and Betty Bump

of Mrs. A. C. Lyon, Mr. Christian's daughter, it is possible to reproduce it through the columns of this paper. The Herald is very glad to do this because this story of Mr. Christian's life contains a number of instances from his unusually rich experiences which will be read with interest by countless friends in this community. With this introduction The Herald presents this very interesting work by one of Grinnell's youngest authors.]

#### Chapter One—Childhood

He worked as trainboy on the Rock Island line for some time with a run from Chicago to Davenport, Iowa, and later from Davenport to Kellogg, Iowa, which was the end of the line and at that time a stage took the people on to Des Moines. He leased certain runs and had other boys working under him.

At Kellogg he stayed at a sleeping house on the edge of Skunk river and he could fish out of the window.

During the Civil war he got 10 cents per paper on the trains and when he heard that a detachment of soldiers were coming he would make a barrel of lemonade and would get an extra lot of cakes, peanuts, etc.

He tried to enlist in the army and they took him as far as Peoria. They asked him where his father was and he told them he was in the army and they asked him if he had his mother's consent and he said no, so they sent him home.

When they got their first rebel prisoners at Camp Douglas he was watching them unload bayonets, uniforms, etc. He wanted to see how they cooked and lived so he fell into line with them and got inside the prison and when he was ready to go they could not let him out as they could not make sure that he was not a prisoner and he did not get out till eleven o'clock at night.

# George M Christian

[Editor's Note: In looking up material regarding the life of the late Hon. George M. Christian The Herald became aware of a life of Mr. Christian written by Richard P. Pooley, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Pooley. It is a very interesting little volume, typewritten and prepared with an introduction, table of contents, and foreward in true literary style.

In glancing through the book The Herald was impressed by the richness of Mr. Christian's experience and through the kindness



(By Richard Pooley)

3-10-97  
GEORGE M. CHRISTIAN.

Mr. George M. Christian, who was on Saturday slated for United States marshal of the southern district of Iowa by the decision of the caucus of the members of the Iowa delegation in Washington, was born in Chicago, June 19, 1847. At the age of 13 he was an employe in the office of Stephen A. Douglass. At the opening of the war his father and older brother went into the service and he was left to support his mother and sister. This he accomplished by work done for the Tribune, the Republican, the Times, and "Long" John Wentworth. He was carrier for the Tribune and a collector for the Republican for several years. In 1866 he entered the office of H. H. Royce, afterwards general manager of the Rock Island system, and now dead, at Pond Creek, Ill. Later he went into the office of Superintendent Kimball, of the Rock Island, at Davenport. In the spring of 1870 he removed to Grinnell and there took possession of the Grinnell house. Later he managed, and now owns the Chapin house property. He served in the city council of Grinnell and for two terms was mayor. In 1888 and 1889 he was chairman of the repub-

lican county central committee and member of the state committee. He was a delegate to the Republican National convention in Chicago in 1888. March 13, 1889, he was appointed assistant superintendent of railway mails, by Assistant Postmaster General J. S. Clarkson. In July, 1890, he was appointed a post-office inspector, and has occupied that most responsible place since. Under his recommendation when Oklahoma was opened, about sixty republican postmasters were appointed. Mr. Christian has always been a faithful and energetic worker for the good of the grand old party. Mrs. Christian lives in Grinnell with her three daughters, one of whom is studying music in Chicago at this time. A son is connected with the postal department in Des Moines.—Register.

Wedding bells rang gaily Saturday night at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wyatt in South Grinnell, the occasion being the marriage of Mr. G. H. Christian and Miss Agnes Wyatt. The parlor had been profusely decorated for the occasion, festoons of ivy and smilax intertwined with flowers shedding their fragrance and beauty thru all the house. At nine o'clock the young couple, who had been assisting to entertain the guests, quietly stepped to one side and were joined hand and heart, in a beautiful ceremony pronounced by Rev. E. M. Vittum. The bride was beautiful arrayed in ocer gloria silk trimmed with the same material of a silver gray, and wore at her bosom a bunch of pink and white carnations intertwined with smilax. The groom wore the customary wedding suit. After the ceremony the relatives poured congratulations upon the couple and joined in hearty good wishes for the future. A bounteous wedding supper closed the evening's enjoyment. The bride and groom took the first train for their Des Moines home ready furnished for them. Mr. Christian has a good position in the money order department of the postoffice at Des Moines. The Herald joins with numerous friends in wishing Mr. and Mrs. Christian unbounded prosperity and happiness.

After serving at Davenport he was appointed day operator at Grinnell, Iowa, in April, 1870, where after a short time he left the Western Union and took over the Great Western Telegraph office here. The Iowa Central had just reached Grinnell and they had a telegraph of their own called the Hawkeye and he handled all of their relay business.

### Chapter Three—Hotel Man in Grinnell

Shortly after his arrival in Grinnell he bought with his wife's uncle, Hiram Johnson, the Grinnell House and in 1876 Mr. Christian bought Mr. Johnson's interest in the Grinnell House.

In those days they had quite a time getting water in Grinnell and some days at the Chapin House he had to have them bring water from J. B. Grinnell's well. He had a man who could locate water come and he told Mr. Christian that if he would dig under his front sidewalk he would find water, so he dug a deep well and got some water but it went dry in a little while and he was in as bad a fix as ever. Then he had the railroad bring water from the standpipe in an engine tender and put it in a 300-barrel cistern but this proved unsatisfactory so he got permission to put a force pump in the town well (which had a windmill over it) on the west side of the park. He connected this with the Chapin House with pipes and settled the water question.

He put the first bell system in the state in the Chapin House with a button in the room and a bell in the office and vice versa. A Des Moines man had a patent on them at that time.

Mr. Christian proved himself an able hotel man in the management of this hotel. The Des Moines Leader had the following notice of it in the paper:

"Among the leading hotels of Iowa may be ranked the Chapin House of Grinnell. Mr. G. M. Christian, its well known proprietor, is the acknowledged leader of his profession in the state holding the office of president of the Iowa Hotel Keepers' association and that of vice president of the national organization. This hotel, situated on the junction of the C. R. I. & P. and the Iowa Central railroads, has made itself the headquarters of traveling men in this vicinity."

He also furnished meals for all the trains on the railroad.

While he was a leading hotel man in Iowa, still, some things were done that would hardly be approved of now, i.e.: From 1870 to 1875 he always had a carload of hogs in the lot back of the Grinnell House and fed them on the swill from his two hotels, and then ~~fed them on the swill from his two hotels~~

Just to show what a wide-awake and energetic young man Mr. Christian was I will state a few of the various enterprises he engaged in at this time.

He started the first teleph

exchange in Grinnell and got all the subscribers and managed the office for two years.

He ran the first theatre in Grinnell in 1877-78 in the room John Mincer's place now occupies on Main street.

He ran a livery stable in connection with the Grinnell House and he used to drive all the traveling men to the nearby towns in a lumber wagon so that they could carry their sample trunks along with them.

He bought a big omnibus in Chicago and used it to take people to the train, and from the train to the Grinnell House.

During fair week at Malcom he would take the bus down there and run it from the fair grounds to the town and back.

He also ran the eating house at the fair and a fruit stand. One day he left his daughter, Alma, to manage the fruit stand and later he heard her calling out, "Peaches, two for a nickel, three for a dime."

Speaking of fruit reminds us that in the early 70's he shipped in all kinds of fresh fruit for a Chicago commission house and supplied Grinnell merchants with the same.

He bought the empty oil barrels from the merchants for 50c apiece and stored them till he had a carload and then shipped them to Davenport and got \$1 apiece for them.

When the Great Western Telegraph Company became bankrupt their lines around Grinnell fell in to disrepair and Mr. Christian and a lumberman named Goss bought some of the wire and built the telegraph line from Grinnell to Montezuma.

He was assistant foreman of the Torrent Engine and Hose Company here for some time and when he resigned they gave him a gold-headed cane.

He leased the Hotel Colfax in 1885 shortly after it had been built and ran it as a health resort for three seasons. This hotel was at that time known as the best health resort on the Rock Island Lines.

The hotel had been built by a group of capitalists, they put a man in on a salary but he proved incompetent so they leased it to Mr. Christian.

During the three years that he ran the Hotel Colfax he was also postmaster for the hotel. He also

ran an incline car to bring the people to his hotel.

He was district agent for a gas machine for lighting houses. He bought three for himself and sold several others.

In 1888 he began to take a more active interest in politics and was elected delegate to the Republican National Convention and Chairman of the Republican County Committee and in 1889 he was made a member of the Republican State Central Committee because of his wonderful campaign work in Poweshiek County in which he increased the Republican majority by 125 with 300 less votes polled than at the previous election.

Although it was his wish that this should not be put in here still I wish to say that Mr. Christian in 1906 gave money to the Sunday School of the First Congregational Church in Grinnell so that now when a child reaches the age of seven he is presented with a beautiful Bible.

In 1911 he was elected as a delegate to the original "See America First" tour.

In 1912 when in Washington, Mr. Christian called on his friend Leslie M. Shaw who asked him if he could step into his office at three that afternoon to see him sign a check for \$40,000,000 (forty million) to the order of J. Pierpont Morgan, it being the first payment on the Panama Canal. Mr. Shaw stated that it was the largest check ever issued by the government up to that time. Each man in the group invited into the office handled and examined the check and then a photographer took a picture of the group and of the check.

He was president of the Des Moines Hotel Keepers' Association for ten years and was elected a life member when he retired. They also gave him a white-gold watch and when it was presented to him he pulled out a perfectly good gold watch presented to him 40 years before at Burlington when he was president of the Iowa Hotel Men's Association.

He was president of the Iowa Hotel Men's Association for three years besides being a director of two banks and one insurance bureau, and in 1923 he sold his last hotel, the Elliot in Des Moines.

Mr. Christian is a Mason, a Knight Templar, a member of the Za Ga Zig Shrine Temple in Des Moines, an Elk, and was formerly a member of the Grant Club of Des Moines and the Franklin Club of Grinnell. He was mayor of Grinnell for three terms and was a trustee of the Congregational Church of Grinnell.

2-11-98

#### THE NEW U. S. MARSHAL.

The name of Mr. George M. Christian has just been sent in to the Senate for the office of United States Marshal of the Southern District of Iowa, and he will doubtless be confirmed without delay and will enter on the office March 1st if not earlier. The headquarters are now at Council Bluffs but will be removed to Des Moines probably before long. Mr. Christian has lived many years in this city and has been identified with much of its advancement, having at one time been mayor of the city. His residence will continue to be in this city.

The following is a sketch of Mr. Christian's life. He was born in Chicago, June 19, 1817. His childhood was spent in that city and his first work when a child of thirteen was done in the office of Stephen A. Douglass. On the breaking out of the rebellion his father and older brother went to the front and left George at home to look after the household, he working as carrier on the Tribune for a while and then as collector for the Chicago Republican. At that time "Long John" Wentworth was editing the Chicago Times and he gave young

In the 70's after the railroad Montezuma was completed, Christian and Goss built the telegraph line to Montezuma, selling it to Western Union.

In the early 80's George Christian secured 100 subscribers to a phone exchange in Grinnell, which he managed for two years.

Mr. Christian's house at 4th Park Sts. which he built in 1870 was close to the home of J. Grinnell. The two were close friends as well as neighbors.



Christian a place as collector, which he held until 1866, when he was tendered a position as clerk in the office of H. P. Royce who was agent for the Rock Island at Pond Creek, Illinois, at the time. Learning the art of telegraphing, he was soon promoted to a position in Superintendent Kimball's office at Rock Island, which he held till 1870.

He came to Grinnell in April, 1870, as a telegraph operator and was tendered the position of agent. He resigned in August the same year, and went into the hotel business with Hiram Johnson. They purchased the Grinnell House from the Sanders Bros. At that time the Bailey was run by Mr. H. D. Works.

In April 1877, Mr. Christian bought the Chapin House from Mr. Snyder, before it was completed, and had charge of it till 1889. In 1869 he was married to Miss Maggie Rowe of Davenport, and four children were born to them.

It was during this period that he first held office being twice elected mayor of the city and besides serving a number of years in the council. In 1888-89 he was chairman of the republican county committee and also served as a member of the state committee, being elected a delegate to the national convention in 1892.

Hon. J. S. Clarkson, while assistant postmaster general, appointed Mr. Christian assistant superintendent railway mail service and he was detailed to establish the sixty new postoffices in Oklahoma.

July 1, 1890, he was appointed post-office inspector and has served with credit to himself and the service during his eight years of service.

In 1876 he bought the building by Max Snyder, situated on the corner of the Monroe Hotel where the now is, and named it Chapin in honor of Julie Chapin. This was later bought by Giff. There was once a restaurant side the Iowa Central track did little business. This Mr. Christian moved to Main St. beside Grinnell House and made the floor in to a theatre, the one of town. The building has reverted to its original use as John Mincer's restaurant.

Monday, September 2, 1929

## PIONEERS RECALL OLD HISTORY OF POWESHIEK CO

### Hon. Geo. M. Christian Came To Grinnell In 1870

Note—From time to time, this column will appear in The Register containing stories of the early days in Poweshiek county, any little bit of history or lore of pioneer days and stories about some of our old timers.

The publicity committee for the Grinnell Diamond Jubilee and College Homecoming and the Airport Dedication is endeavoring to unearth as much history of the covered wagon days as possible. Mrs. H. S. Conard is chairman of this committee and she will appreciate any help in the way of write-ups or suggestions you may have to offer.

Anyone who finds any errors in the write-ups that appear in this column from now on will be doing the publicity committee a great favor by personally writing in to the Register and rectifying the mistake.

Contributions are very welcome and may be sent to either the Register or Mrs. Conard.

#### George M. Christian

When George M. Christian came from Chicago to Grinnell in 1870 as a telegraph operator on the Rock Island road he found the Iowa Central road in process of construction. They built it, he says, from both ends, meeting at New Sharon. The new station was in the present location. But the Rock Island station stood where the freight depot now is.

In his early years here Mr. Christian was particularly interested in the hotel business. The Sanders House, a hotel owned by the father, uncles and grandfather of Miss Annie Sanders, stood on Broad St., south of the track, and later was moved to Main St. north of the track. This hotel Mr. Christian and his uncle, Mr. Johnson bought, named it Grinnell House and ran it some years.