

An Old Timer Passes Away In Wyoming

(By W. G. RAY)

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From the "Republican-Boomerang" of Laramie, Wyoming, we have clipped the following notice of the death of George Cook, a former Grinnell man who married a Grinnell girl, and who has been for a good many years in the newspaper business at Laramie, Wyoming. His wife was a former employee of The Grinnell Herald and a sister of Miss Sadie Bailey who is one of the early time citizens of this place and one who knows more about early events than anyone else I know of.

"In a nursing institution at Roy, Utah, where the retired veteran journalist had gone in an attempt to regain his health, death Oct. 17 wrote 'thirty,' symbol of newspaper finality, after his name.

Mr. Cook, who for more than three decades held a position of prominence on the staff of the old Laramie Republican and later of The Republican-Boomerang, died of a heart attack while asleep in a wheel chair. He was 80 years old.

Funeral services will be held tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock from the Stryker mortuary, with the Rev. Arthur L. Miller of the Union Presbyterian church officiating. Interment will be made in Green Hill cemetery. The Knights of Pythias, of which he was a life-long member, will be in

charge of the commitment at the cemetery. Mr. Cook will be buried beside the grave of his wife, Bessie Bailey Cook, who preceded him in death by four years.

His younger daughter, Mrs. George Lucas, will arrive tomorrow morning from Ogden with her husband and three daughters to attend the services.

It has been requested that no flowers be sent.

Mr. Cook had made his home in Roy since 1932. He gave up active newspaper work in the fall of the previous year, when he underwent a major operation which kept him bedfast for many weeks. Though he slowly recovered some of his strength his health was never completely restored.

The grand old man of the Wyoming news world was actively engaged in journalism and related activities for 60 years. When he retired from the staff of The Republican-Boomerang in September, 1931, he had served 30½ years continuously as city editor of the paper, a record probably not paralleled anywhere else in the Rocky mountain region.

For a third of a century Mr. Cook recorded virtually all the vital statistics, local activities and goings and comings of Laramie citizenry, never passing up an opportunity to mention a thing which would boost the welfare of the community. When he retired from full active service in March,

1929, he remarked to a group of friends that he had missed only two or three city council meetings in 28 years and that he had recorded proceedings of approximately 14 different city administrations.

For 14 years Mr. Cook was assisted on The Republican by his wife, the late Bessie Bailey Cook, who served as society editor until 1915, when her daughter, Maude, now Mrs. George Lucas of Ogden, took up the work. Mrs. Lucas wrote up local social events until 1923, ending a period of 22 years in which The Republican's society was in the hands of either mother or daughter. The other daughter, Miss Leslie B. Cook, head of the English department of Laramie high school, served for a time also as University campus reporter, so that for a long time the publishing of The Republican was a 'family' matter.

Reminiscing in a newspaper article published a few years ago Mr. Cook said:

"Thirty years ago W. E. Chaplin wrote about the political fights; I wrote about the dog fights and Bessie handled the 'cat' fights. Then he hastened to amend: 'No, I'll not say that, for there never was a cross word at any of the card parties of the society ladies in those days. The "heavy" stuff came from the editor, the "light" stuff from the reporter, and the "soc," as it was called, from the society reporter.'

Mr. Cook was born in Warrensburg, Mo., July 9, 1854. He went to work as an apprentice on a newspaper there when he was 16 years old and he continued in the newspaper field until illness compelled him to retire about 60 years

later. He served out his apprenticeship in a composing room and later took up reporting. He was at one time a member of the staff of the Sedalia, Mo., Bazon, a publication which gained a reputation similar to that of Bill Nye's Boomerang. Later he was employed on papers in Kansas City and St. Louis.

While city editor of The Republican, Mr. Cook served 30 years as special correspondent to the Denver Post, and at different times was a local reporter for the Wyoming State Tribune of Cheyenne and the Rocky Mountain News at Denver.

Mr. Cook was married to Bessie Bailey at Grinnell Iowa, Oct. 16, 1889. The couple went at once to live in Sedalia. Mr. Cook came to Laramie March 27, 1901, and his wife joined him here the following May. Mrs. Cook succumbed to a long illness at the family home here July 4, 1930.

Besides his two daughters, Mr. Cook is survived by a son, Lewis Cook, an electrical engineer at Wichita, Kan. He had six grandchildren, Mrs. Lucas' three daughters, Lesbeth, Marion and Nancy, and Lewis Cook's three children, David, Elizabeth and George. Mr. Cook was an ardent member of the Knights of Pythias. He was one of the few men to receive the jewel of the local lodge for 50 years of continuous membership.

He joined the Knights in Sedalia in 1879 and he transferred to Damon lodge No. 3 after moving to Laramie. He was also a member of the grand lodge of Wyoming. For many years he was keeper of the records and seals of the local lodge.

Mr. Cook was a member of the Laramie Kiwanis club for many years and he was active always in its service work. He and Mrs. Cook were members of the First Congregationalist church at Sedalia, but in Laramie Mr. Cook was affiliated with the Union Presbyterian church.

Mr. Cook served as Albany county coroner in 1930, filling an unexpired term. His staunch loyalty and support to the republican party kept him always keen and active in politics.

Mr. Cook's keen eye and unusual sense for news gave him the reputation of being the best small town reporter in Wyoming. In his writing he specialized in the little things of human interest which made his personal columns long and filled with delicious bits of interesting 'home town' goings-on. As the champion of 'Piety hill,' he

was always first to notice the first bit of green and the first pansies and he recorded faithfully the appearance of the first robin.

Mr. Cook was always sensitive to the rebukes and derision which a reporter meets in his daily tasks, but his purpose was never daunted by reproof. 'The public is entitled to know what is going on,' he would say. He was, however, one of the most lovable, sympathetic and generous characters in Laramie's history.

One of Mr. Cook's outstanding journalistic accomplishments was his building up of the 'Railroad News' column, a project unparalleled by any other reporter in localities along the Union Pacific railroad. Defying the strict censorship practiced by big corporations, he always filled his column with interesting items covering the activities of railroaders, sometimes depending solely on 'switch shanty' gossip, which so many times later became 'big scoops' on other papers. So successful was he with his uncanny ability to uncover goings-on that on occasion official investigators were sent to Laramie to investigate the 'leaks.'

In his later years Mr. Cook was

a picturesque figure as he hurried down town before 6 o'clock every morning, his black broadcloth overcoat always open, even in sub-zero weather, his pencil behind his ear or in his mouth and his soft hat pushed back on his head. So regular were his missions and so precise his routine that shopkeepers often jestingly remarked that they could set their clocks by his passing.

Even in retirement Mr. Cook did not relax the industry which had been his life-long habit or relinquish his lively interest in news and personalities. From his home in Roy, Utah, he frequently sent to The Republican-Boomerang clippings from other newspapers dealing with persons formerly known in Laramie, especially in the railroad world, and his letters were crammed with newsy commentary. His last contribution, published only a few weeks ago, was a discussion of Gene Fowler's history of the Denver Post, 'Timber Line,' in which Mr. Cook found grist for stimulating reminiscence on many characters and incidents of the earlier west."

The Republican-Boomerang says editorially of Mr. Cook, the following:

"The news of the death of George A. Cook, for over thirty years associated with this paper, comes with an indefinable sense of loss to all who knew and worked with him. George Cook was no ordinary man, but above all he was the human, kindly sort of a person for whom one had a real affection, and the longer one knew him the more that regard increased. So in The Republican-Boomerang family there is a feeling that one of its most loved members has gone, leaving a niche which can never be filled.

George Cook was a newspaper man in every fiber of his being. To him his craft was life itself. Everything he thought and everything he did either began or ended in his paper. To it, therefore, he gave a type of service which was whole-souled and whole-hearted, unique in its quality of devotion and constancy.

No man ever had a better 'nose' for news. He saw an item where the ordinary reporter found nothing. He was the very personification of industry—inde fatigable and persistent. How well his associates remember his daily rounds. He walked a veritable marathon every day and when he reached the office his notebook fairly bulged with items, personals and recollections. The amount of copy he produced was prodigious, and there was never any letup in his activity.

At night if anything was going on in town he was there, and Sundays and holidays saw no abatement in his news gathering instinct. Even when he went on a vacation he had scarcely gotten out of town before a budget of things he had either seen or heard was sent back. In it all there was the joy and satisfaction of one who loved his work and so glorified it by his consecration to it.

For his paper itself, and those who conducted it, there was on his part the greatest admiration, affection and loyalty. The Republican-Boomerang was the best paper in the world—he knew it and could prove it. Thus he gave to his association with us a quality all its own. His memory will long be cherished, and his activity and accomplishments will ever remain as an inspiration and a mark to aim at for those who still hold aloft the torch."