

OBITUARY.

8-4 Stephen Goss. 1908

With the death of Stephen Goss, who died Wednesday afternoon at his home at 1029 Pearl street, of the infirmities of age, there passes one of the men who had been prominent in the business life of the town in an early day and who was one of the interesting characters of the town. A long illness kept him from being known to many of the younger generation here, but those who have known him for years found in him a man who had enjoyed unusually rich experiences and had known many of the great men of our national history.

Mr. Goss was born in Laconia, among the New Hampshire Hills, over eighty years ago. Laconia was the county seat and attracted many of the great men of the day. As a boy Mr. Goss was a great sportsman, devoting much of his time to fishing and swimming. Those who knew him well have heard him tell of fishing trips with Daniel Webster and of how as boys they would spend their Saturdays swimming across the bay three miles and back again at night.

In the ante bellum days Mr. Goss was a pronounced abolitionist, and as it was one of his traits in later life to stand fearlessly and openly for whatever he believed was right, so he was uncompromising in his stand on the slavery question in a time when even in New England it was dangerous heresy to oppose slavery. Thus he became personally acquainted with that fearless little group of men who were fighting abolition's battles and leavening the whole country with New England liberty yeast. He was the friend of Theodore Parker, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips and was one of those who entertained Phillips and General Benjamin Butler on their visits here. As a young man he was a warm admirer as he was a personal friend of Webster's, and used to go to the court room and public places to hear his eloquence, which stirred him deeply.

Later he moved to Massachusetts, where he became a shoe-maker, in a small way at first, but later as an employer of many hands. When Massachusetts and the rest of New England began to pour its swarms into the west and the struggle to make the northwest free territory began, Mr. Goss came into northern Michigan. This was the most significant point

for New England immigration for it was not until they had proved the prairies of Michigan inhabitable that the New Englanders dared a few years later to plunge out boldly onto the broader Iowa prairies, where it had been prophesied no man could make his home on account of the lack of fuel and water.

While in Michigan Mr. Goss superintended the building of the first telegraph line through the northern part of the state. During this period he enjoyed all the experiences of the advance agent of civilization in a new country, meeting with Indian exploits and many interesting adventures.

It was also the telegraph that brought him and his wife to Grinnell in the seventies when he was superintending the construction of the Western Union line through Iowa. He was a personal friend of Jesse Spaulding, the Illinois lumber millionaire, who aided him to start in the lumber business here. Later he was associated in the business with the Carney brothers, B. J. Carney coming here from Chicago to engage with Mr. Goss in the lumbering business. A few years later Mr. Goss sold out his interests and for many years has lived a retired life, being an invalid most of the time. Mrs. Martha Marmoh had for some time been a faithful housekeeper for him.

Mr. Goss, with all the keenness of his New England intellect, was regarded by all who knew him as a rare and interesting character. Not highly educated he had a natural culture and a sharp mind. His recollections, in which he often indulged, were entertaining and instructive to a rare degree. In religion he was more or less of a free thinker and in all his reasoning was independent and fearless. He was one of the charter members of the local organization of the I. O. O. F., which had charge of the funeral services at the grave in Hazelwood yesterday.

He was one of a type of men who were useful and prominent citizens in the days when our present western institutions were in the moulding. It is because there are men like Mr. Goss with careers so entertaining and with tales so well worth hearing that the writer differs with a New York editor who said here not long ago that life in Iowa was a dull gray monotony. There are just such types and characters all over Iowa awaiting the discerning eye and portraying hand of artists to immortalize them in fiction. Some day we hope that Grinnell will produce its own historian or novelist to give some of them permanent form.