

Death Calls W. C. Rayburn

Poweshiek County Bar Loses One Of Its Ablest Members And Grinnell A GOOD CITIZEN.

FUNERAL SERVICES WERE HELD MONDAY

Mr. Rayburn Had Been County Attorney, County Sept. of Schools And Mayor of Grinnell.

One of the most able of Poweshiek county's lawyers and a man whose upright life and genial personality have made him respected and honored and have won his friends wherever he was known passed from the scene of life's activities when Will C. Rayburn died at his home at 2 o'clock Saturday morning.

Will Rayburn's friendly smile, his apt comments on the affairs of the day and his kindly interest in the best things of community life will be missed by all who have been accustomed to seeing him day by day as he went up and down among us. His ability as a lawyer was acknowledged everywhere and those who placed their legal affairs in his hands knew that they had in him a wise counsellor who always had their best interests at heart and who would further these interests by every honorable means.

Mr. Rayburn was born April 22, 1862, in Highland county, Ohio, the son of Thomas Woods and Emeline Underwood Rayburn. The parents were farmers and he was one of a large family. He passed his 69th birthday last April. He grew to young manhood in Ohio and then came west, living for a time in Indiana and then coming to Iowa.

He arrived in this section an ambitious, energetic young man with his way to make and as so many young men have done before and since, he turned to school teaching. He was superintendent at Lynville and then at Malcom and in about 1888 he succeeded Superintendent Laylander in the Brooklyn schools.

Having decided to enter the law

he then went to Des Moines and studied in the office of Cummins & Wright. He was a great admirer of A. B. Cummins and later on was to be one of the chief factors in carrying Poweshiek for Cummins in the latter's senatorial campaign. He received his degree from Drake Law School and was admitted to practice before the Iowa bar in 1893.

He had decided to locate in Grinnell and came here to establish his practice but in order to get a start he accepted election as county superintendent of schools in 1893 and served four years. From that time on he has devoted himself consistently to the practice of his profession.

In the fall of 1894 he was married at the home of the bride in Nevada, Iowa, to Miss Isabel Hawthorne Garrett, who ever since has been his companion and helpmeet. One child was born to them, Wilna, who has grown to womanhood in Grinnell and for several years has been her father's law partner.

Mr. Rayburn was elected mayor of Grinnell in the spring of 1898 to succeed Dr. E. W. Clark, and served two years. He also served two years as county attorney soon after 1900. In these positions he showed a fearlessness and a devotion to duty that made his service of outstanding value.

He is surviving wife and daughter, four sisters, Mrs. Nellie R. Tucker, Mrs. Myrtle Mills and Mrs. Ethel Lovall of Wilmington, Ohio, and Mrs. Nettie Cadwallader of Beaches, Ohio, and one brother, C. B. Rayburn, of Marion, Ohio. His mother at the age of 88 years is still living at Wilmington, Ohio, and this group with many other friends as well as relatives regret the passing in almost his full strength of a man whose life has been one of work for others.

Mr. Rayburn was a member of the Masonic and Elks lodges and for many years had been a valued member of the Fortnightly Club, in whose bi-weekly meetings he took great pleasure.

Funeral services were held Monday afternoon at 1 o'clock from the home, conducted by Rev. Robert Inglis with a prayer by Rev. E. M. Vittum. They were simple and without ostentation as he would have wished. Burial was made in the cemetery in Nevada. Pallbearers were Judge Silwood of Newton, Prof. W. J. Rusk, Prof. G. L. Pierce, Dr. L. G. Lemley, Carl E. Child, Paul P. Meyers, Chas. Manly and J. G. Shifflett.

Many members of the bar of this district were present Monday to attend the funeral of W. C. Rayburn. From Newton came Judge Silwood, Vas Morgan, Monte Carey, and Senator Oliver P. Meyers. Judge Patterson adjourned court and present from this county were Judge Bechly and Judge Talbot who recently came here from California.

Will C. Rayburn was a builder. He was not only a builder of community life but of material structures and also of character. Of Quaker birth he maintained his membership during his entire life in the church to which he was born and his daily life both in public and private living exemplified constantly the cardinal virtues of that people.

Beginning his educational life as superintendent of the Lynville school he made sure advancement to the schools of Malcom, to the schools of Brooklyn and to the county superintendency.

The writer has known Mr. Rayburn since 1887. We know what he has been to the community. We know the daily life he lived as a citizen, as a member of the school board of Grinnell, as mayor of the city of Grinnell, as county attorney and as a leading and active member of many of the local organizations which have worked for the betterment of the community.

Looking back over a period of more than forty years we will say

what we have said many times before that his crowning work in the educational field was the four years he spent in the county superintendency.

He was quiet but earnest, active and potential in his work for the betterment of the rural schools. His mind was that of an engineer and to his master spirit is due the progress which has been made in the building of country school houses on a modern system. He planned the first modern schoolhouse in Poweshiek county and that schoolhouse has been a pattern for practically all schoolhouses since that time.

It is to be said of everything which Mr. Rayburn accomplished, and he probably accomplished more for Grinnell and Grinnell life than any other man of his generation, that he did it quietly. There was no noise, no advertising of the fact that he was doing this for Grinnell. He was essentially a quiet man and his finest work was done with a spirit that carried force through quietly accomplished.

He had the confidence of the public. They knew that his heart was with the country schools and everyone turned to him for advice and assistance with the knowledge that it would be given them and given them intelligently and effectively.

As member of the Grinnell school board he was the controlling figure in the purchase of the present lot on which Cooper school now stands and in the construction of that modern school building.

As mayor he enforced the laws and especially the prohibitory laws without fear or favor. He was guided always by what he considered right. He bore the brunt of the work and he gave the position of mayor a certain character for earnestness and law enforcement which is still a marvel to many who understood the courage it took and the effectiveness of his work.

He was the most active builder of the Masonic Temple. In fact from the time he entered the Masonic order he was for many long years recognized as the leader in every forward movement made by that order. He was chairman of the board which built the Masonic temple and he worked to complete its construction with a devotion and a vision which few in the town fully appreciated.

It was not only in the Masonic lodge but in every organization to which he belonged that he showed his devotion, his determination and his foresight. He was chosen as one of the charter members of the Fortnightly club. He was one of the first members of the Kiwanis club and in both of these local organizations he gave his time and his energy not only for the upbuilding of the club but also for the upbuilding of the community spirit which they represented.

While Mr. Rayburn had a multitude of duties which naturally took him from home and made him friends elsewhere the best of his life was in the family circle where his wife presided with a love and a grace which made the home a real pleasure for a home loving man. His daughter too was his pride and when she grad-

uated from Drake with honors and joined him officially as a partner in the legal business it seemed as if his family pleasure and family hopes were completed.

Court Adjourns Out Of Respect for W. C. Rayburn

District court in Montezuma adjourned Monday out of respect to Will C. Rayburn and is in session today for only formal and routine business. No trial work is assigned and jury cases will be tried next week. Mr. Rayburn has practiced before this court for many years and there is sincere grief among his brother members of the bar at his passing.

Monday, September 14, 1931

Will C. Rayburn Prominent Attorney Buried Today

(By Nell D. Needham)

A short and simple funeral service was held at the home this afternoon at one o'clock for Will C. Rayburn, who passed away early Saturday morning, Sept. 12. The service was in charge of Rev. Robert Inglis and Dr. E. M. Vittum. Burial was at Nevada, Iowa, where Mrs. Rayburn's people are buried. Pall-bearers were: Judge Sicaold of Newton, Chas. M. Manly, J. G. Shifflet, Paul Meyers, Dr. L. G. Lemley, Carl Child, Prof. G. L. Pierce and Prof. W. J. Rusk.

William C. Rayburn was born in Highland county, Ohio, April 22, 1862. He grew to manhood and received his education there and in the early eighties came west as a teacher. He first taught school at Lynnville and later at Malcom and Brooklyn, finishing his career as a teacher in this county by serving most successfully as county superintendent of schools.

In 1893 he graduated from the law department of Drake University, was admitted to the bar, and at once opened a law office in Grinnell. However this was during the time he was serving as county superintendent of schools which office he continued to hold while gaining a foothold in the practice of law.

In 1894 he was married to Miss Isabel Garrett of Nevada, Iowa. Their romance began while both were engaged in teaching in the Brooklyn schools. Their marriage took place in Nevada, but they at once returned to Grinnell to make their home. At the time of their marriage Mr. Rayburn was living in the home of Mrs. Mary Cox, a distant relative, and it was to this home he first brought his bride. They went to housekeeping at 1329 Broad Street, where they resided until they moved to the present home at 1404 Broad Street seven years later. For the past 30 years Mr. and Mrs. Rayburn and Wilma, their only child—a contented and happy family circle—have enjoyed the peace

and comfort of this home so carefully planned and built by Mr. Rayburn in his youth that it might endure and be a haven and a joy to him in his declining years.

For, while Mr. Rayburn enjoyed his friends, his clubs, and association with people generally, his home and his family were his chief interest and his greatest source of pleasure and satisfaction. He could never understand why men and women should want to be forever coming and going. He was interested in his work, and after work there was home—he was content.

From the time he opened his law office here his practice grew apace until he enjoyed a large and lucrative business—not so lucrative as it might easily have been—for he was

ever generous and sympathetic, many times charging but a nominal fee or nothing at all for legal services when he felt clients could ill afford to pay. Honorable and upright living and untarnished integrity meant more to him than riches. He was fair and just in all his dealings with his clients and with his fellowmen.

When his daughter Wilma graduated from Grinnell college and decided to study law he was delighted. When she finished her course at Drake with honors and was admitted to the bar of Iowa, his pride knew no bounds. The firm of Rayburn & Rayburn was not a law firm in name only. Wilma and her father had ever formed a close corporation, and they worked together in business happily and successfully as they had worked and played together,

ever since she was a tiny youngster.

In recent months since her father failed in health and strength the junior member of the firm has relieved him of every burden she could possibly shoulder. She has been a partner in every sense of the word.

Mr. Rayburn was born of Quaker parents and retained his membership in the Quaker church at New Vienna, Ohio, to the time of his death. His mother, a dear old Quaker lady, is still living at Wilmington, Ohio, at the age of eighty-eight. He was one of nine children. One brother and four sisters survive him. Just a short time ago he visited his mother and other members of the family. His brother, C. E. Rayburn, lives at Marion, Ohio.

He was a member of the local Masonic lodge, the Elks and the Fortnightly club. He served as Master of the Masonic lodge and had an active part in the building of the Masonic Temple on Broad Street. At the time of the dedication of the buildings he acted as Master of Ceremonies. He enjoyed the give and take of the Fortnightly club and was keenly interested in all discussions of local and national affairs.

He also served Grinnell as Mayor, as city attorney, and stood for law observance in Poweshiek county as county attorney. For many years he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Grinnell Savings Bank and at one time served as president of that institution. He served his turn on the school board, the library board, many important committees, and in countless ways, gave of his time, his strength and ability to the community.

In an unobtrusive way he had a hand in many enterprises in Grinnell. He was always interested in the way work was being done on building projects and did not hesi-

tate to call attention to mistakes. A careful and patient worker himself, he could not tolerate poor workmanship or slighted details. Practically every building erected in down town Grinnell during his residence here was improved and benefited by some timely criticism or suggestion by Will Rayburn. In the same spirit he guarded and protected to the extent of his power the life and limb of all the trees of Grinnell. He was not willing to spare even one. The felling of a tree was a personal affront, the destruction of one a personal loss.

Until a few years ago Mr. Rayburn enjoyed the best of health. Some months ago he submitted to an operation and for a time his family and friends hoped for his complete recovery. He resumed work in his office and looked after cases in court. In the past few weeks, however, he failed very rapidly. The end came rather unexpectedly, but perhaps as a blessed relief from long months of suffering.

This is one of the very few instances that a citizen dies and is buried between publication dates of the local newspapers. Mr. Rayburn passed away early Saturday morning and was buried this afternoon before this paper went to press. This announcement will come as a shock to many who have not heard of his passing. Judge Patterson adjourned court at Montezuma for the day as a mark of respect to the deceased and his family, and to permit the members of the Poweshiek county bar to attend the funeral. Judge Bechly, Judge Silwood, Judge Patterson and Judge Talbot of California were among those who attended the services.

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He is survived by his devoted wife and daughter, four sisters, Mrs. Nellie R. Tucker, Mrs. Myra Mills and Mrs. Ethel Lovell of Wilmington, Ohio, and Mrs. Nettie Cadwallader of Blanchester, Ohio, and one brother, C. B. Rayburn, of Marion, Ohio. His mother, at the age of 88 years is still living at Wilmington, Ohio, and this group with many other friends as well as relatives regret the passing in almost his full strength of a man whose life has been one of work for others.

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James Shibley spent the week end in Ames on a pleasure trip.

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