

# Dr. Steiner Of Grinnell Dies at 90

July 2, 1956

**Des Moines Reg.**  
Dr. Edward A. Steiner, 90, former professor of Applied Christianity at Grinnell College, Grinnell, Ia., died at his home in Claremont, Cal., Saturday.

He had been critically ill following surgery a month ago. Dr. Steiner retired from his post at Grinnell in 1941 after 38 years on the staff.

He was a nationally known scholar, lecturer and author. In 1903 he toured Russia for Outlook Magazine and wrote the biography "Tolstoy, the Man." Among other books he wrote are "The Immigrant Tide" and "The Making of a Great Race."

## Oberlin Graduate

Born Nov. 1, 1886, in what is now Czechoslovakia, he was educated in the public schools of Vienna and was graduated from the University of Heidelberg in 1885.

He studied for the ministry and received his A. B. degree at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, in 1891. He later took graduate work at Goettingen and Berlin. He was an ordained Congregational minister.

He was, perhaps, best known at Grinnell for his "half-hours." One by one,

he asked each of his students to come to the small study at his Grinnell home.

Once there, the student would be invited to sit in a huge old chair with a large footstool in front of it. Dr. Steiner would sit in a small straight-backed chair opposite. He would talk a bit, then encourage the student to talk.

At the end of the half-hour he would try to tell the student what kind of a man or woman he or she should be.

## Harry Hopkins

One Grinnell student who sat in the big chair was the late Harry L. Hopkins, who years later became the closest personal adviser to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Hopkins came for the "half-hour" although he was not in any of Dr. Steiner's classes.

Following the half-hour, Dr. Steiner advised him not to become a newspaper reporter, as Hopkins was planning, but to enter social service.

Hopkins, who had been the editor of the college paper, went to Montana and became a reporter.

But a short time later, Hopkins wrote to Dr. Steiner and said he was ready to go into social service.

Dr. Steiner found him a job in New York City. In later years, Steiner praised Hopkins's work as federal relief administrator.

Dr. Steiner did not always live the life of a scholar. In his youth, two attempts to board ships for the United States were thwarted. In his third attempt, he was aided by his mother and was successful.

The police in the Austro-Hungarian empire were seek-

ing him for "conspiracy." The charge arose from his sympathy towards the oppressed Slovaks. Sympathy for the oppressed was a dominant trait of Dr. Steiner from childhood.

He expressed that characteristic here by becoming an expert on immigration and is credited with motivating reforms at Ellis Island through his writings and lectures about his own treatment there.

On his arrival in this country, Dr. Steiner worked in what he called a "sweat shop" pressing cloaks, in a baker's shop, a feather renovating factory, a sausage factory and doing farm chores.

Next he worked in tobacco fields, a steel mill and in the coal mines. While a coal miner in Ohio, he was involved in a strike and served six months in jail. When released from jail, he went to Chicago, Ill., to work in a machine shop until harvest time when he worked in the fields.

## Remarried at 74

At Oberlin College he met

his first wife, with whom he lived until her death 50 years later. About two years later at the age of 74, he was married again, to Miss Clara Elizabeth Perry of Westerly, R. I., a long-time family friend.

Dr. Steiner is survived by his wife, a son, Dr. Richard M. Steiner of Portland, Ore., and a daughter, Mrs. Clyde Hightshoe of Ottumwa.

Always a pacifist, Dr. Steiner once told of walking the streets of Grinnell, during World War I, and having people turn their backs on him and refuse to speak.

It was then that he expressed gratitude to Grinnell College. He was allowed to continue teaching. "No one so much as came to me and told me to be careful," the late scholar said. "Here at Grinnell, academic freedom is real."

He once advised a high school graduating class, "Don't allow yourself to be molded to a collegiate pattern. Be yourself. The freshmen in college are our hope. The seniors too often are our despair."

# Prof. Steiner Dies In West

To Conduct Interment  
Rites Here Thursday  
H-R July 2, 1956

Prof. Edward Steiner, professor emeritus of Applied Christianity at Grinnell college, died Saturday at Claremont, Calif., and interment services will be conducted at Hazelwood cemetery here at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday.

A noted speaker, lecturer and author, Prof. Steiner joined the Grinnell college staff in 1903 and served until 1941. He received his B.D. degree from Oberlin, Ph.D. from Heidelberg and was awarded an LL.D. from Grinnell prior to his retirement.



## Dr. Steiner And Grinnell

H-R editorial July 5, 1956

Grinnell and the college lost one of its most noted former citizens and faculty members Saturday in the death of Edward A. Steiner.

Dr. Steiner first came to Grinnell in 1903. For 38 years he was a member of the faculty of Grinnell college, and during that time gained wide fame for himself and for the school and the town as a lecturer of renown throughout the country.

His chair of Applied Christianity at Grinnell was also famous with leaders in education

and in the religious world.

Some of his literary works were also practically text books among religious leaders. Among them were: "Tolstoy The Man", "The Immigrant Tide", and "The Making of a Great Race."

Dr. Steiner was also an ordained Congregational minister, and during his life contributed articles to leading educational and religious publications.

His memory will linger long with Grinnell and Grinnell College.

## Edward Steiner--a Great Teacher

Editorial Des Moines Reg. July 3, 1956

"What is wrong with us?" Dr. Edward A. Steiner once asked a Des Moines audience. "Perhaps we are not yet quite human. Biologically we may be, but spiritually and psychologically we may not be."

Dr. Steiner was human, in the most glorious sense. He helped thousands of Iowans to grow into better humans. From 1903 till 1941, he taught Applied Christianity at Grinnell College. Some 4,000 to 5,000 students went through his classes, and sat in his home for his famed "half-hour" interviews. Many thousands of others during those years heard his talks—he was a popular speaker all over the state.

We honor him—but our fathers

helped him get an education and sought him out for a professorship. Would our generation do the same?

This professor of Applied Christianity was born to a Russian-Jewish family in Vienna, Austria. His sympathy for the Slovaks in Hungary got him in trouble with the Hungarian police, so he stowed away to America, where he worked in sweatshops and at casual jobs, rode the rods, did six months in jail for strike activity and then went back to school.

All his life he was openly a pacifist, openly critical of capitalism, an agitator for equal rights for Jews, Negroes and recent immigrants.

He loved Iowa and Iowa loved him. He was a great teacher and a great man.

## OBITUARY

EDWARD A. STEINER  
H-R July 5, 1956

Dr. Edward A. Steiner was born Nov. 1, 1865 in what is now Czechoslovakia and died Saturday, June 30, 1956 at his home in Claremont, Calif., after an illness following surgery.

He was educated in the public schools of Vienna and was graduated from the University of Heidelberg in 1885.

He studied for the ministry and received his A.B. degree at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, in 1891. He later took graduate work at Goettingen and Berlin. He was an ordained Congregational minister.

At Oberlin college he met his first wife, with whom he lived until her death 59 years later. About two years later at the age of 74, he was married again, to Clara Elizabeth Perry of Westerly, R. I., a long-time family friend.

He was former professor of Applied Christianity at Grinnell college. He retired from his post at Grinnell college in 1941 after 38 years on the staff.

He was a nationally known scholar, lecturer and author. In 1903 he toured Russia for Outlook magazine and wrote the biography "Tolstoy, the Man." Among other books he wrote the "The Immigrant Tide" and "The Making of a Great Race."

At Grinnell college he was best known for his "half hours." One by one, he asked each of his students to come to the small study at his Grinnell home, where there, the student would be invited to sit in a huge old chair with a large foot stool in front of it. Dr. Steiner would sit in a small straight-backed chair opposite.

He would talk a bit, then encourage the student to talk. At the end of the half-hour he would try to tell the student what kind of a man or woman he or she should be.

One Grinnell student who sat in the big chair was the late Harry L. Hopkins, who years later became the closest personal adviser to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

On his arrival in the United States Dr. Steiner worked in a variety of jobs including a baker's shop, a feather renovating factory, a sausage factory and doing farm chores.

He worked in tobacco fields, a steel mill and in the coal mines. While a coal miner in Ohio, he was involved in a strike and served six months in jail. When released from jail, he went to Chicago, Ill., to work in a machine shop until harvest time when he worked in the fields.

Survivors include his widow, the former Elizabeth Perry; one daughter, Mrs. Clyde B. Hightshoe, Ottumwa; a son, Dr. Richard M. Steiner, pastor of the First Unitarian church at Portland, Ore.; four grandchildren, Mrs. Duward L. Dawson, Des Moines; Sara Hightshoe, junior student at Grinnell college; Henry York Steiner, graduate student at Yale university; and David Steiner, senior student at Grinnell.

After cremation memorial services were held at 2 p.m. Tuesday, July 2 in Abernathy hall at Pilgrim Place, Claremont, Calif. The ashes were brought to Grinnell for final service Thursday, July 5, in charge of Dr. Richard Steiner, at his father's request.

*Grinnell College Alumni*  
**Edward Steiner**  
**Dies at Age 90**  
**In California** 1956

The greatest of Grinnell's teachers has died.

Dr. Edward A. Steiner, L.H.D. '43, professor emeritus of applied Christianity since 1941, died in Claremont, Calif., June 30, at the age of 90.

An Illinois congressman had a



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tribute inserted in the Congressional Record. Newspapers eulogized him in editorials. These were the signs of the deep impression made by Edward Steiner upon the people and the times in which he lived.

Born in what is now part of Czechoslovakia, but was then a portion of Russia, he came to America as an ordinary immigrant in the 1880's. He worked first in humble manual jobs and was once jailed for six months for participating in an Ohio coal mine strike.

From these beginnings he became a great teacher, a lecturer of national repute, a leader of American opinion, and an ultimately successful crusader for better treatment of new immigrants.

Dr. Steiner's service to Grinnell began in 1903. His very coming was mixed in controversy, for the professorial chair which he occupied had been marred by the scandalous conduct of its first tenant. It is not the least of the tributes which can be paid his memory that the character of Dr. Steiner quickly dispelled the afterglow of scandal and brought strength and dignity to the then-controversial "social gospel" at Grinnell.

He graduated from Oberlin College with a B.D. degree, and held the Ph.D. degree from Heidelberg.

Surviving Dr. Steiner were his widow, the former Elizabeth Perry; a daughter, Gretchen Steiner Hightshoe, '15; a son, the Rev. Richard M. Steiner, '24 (D.D. '44); and four grandchildren, three of whom are alumni or present students. They are Henry York ('56) and David ('57) Steiner, and Sara Hightshoe, '58.