

[Persons, John W.]

DEATH AND FUNERAL OF JOHN W. PERSONS, ESQ.

—John W. Persons died at the residence of Surveyor Parsons, in Centerville, Oswego county, N.Y., on the 9th of January, 1883, which he had chosen for the closing scenes of life when he became conscious of his approaching dissolution. He was born in the year 1810 in the state of Vermont and was consequently 73 years of age. He was the son of a Universalist minister [Cornelius Gray and Mary Benjamin Persons] and the youngest and last of a family of eight children, and moved with his parents at an early day into the town of Ellisburgh, Jefferson county, where he spent, with few exceptions, the remainder of his years. The family moved onto the place now owned by Mr. A. D. Remington, in the vicinity of the hotel then known as the Tifft House, and between that and the Hanchett house, and [he] commenced his career while yet quite young by erecting a small shop, the machinery of which was propelled by the stream flowing south of the house known as the McCathron creek, which furnished at an early period quite a water-power. He manufactured articles of a miscellaneous character, which he distributed in connection with the first step he took in his career of traffic and trade from a pedlar's [sic] cart. About the year 1834 he came to Mannsville and erected a house and store where now stands the brick block and house, and engaged in trade a few years, and sold out to the late Philip P. Martin in 1836. He then moved to Belleville, this town, and again embarked in trade, but this proving an unsuccessful venture, he returned to this place and purchased the property where Samuel Nickles now lives and opened a store in the south end of the hotel then owned by the late Wm. Earl, where he did a thriving business for a number of years and was succeeded by the late James I. Steele. During this latter period he was elected a justice of the peace, and gained a reputation among lawyers and [auditors?] of being one of the most intelligent magistrates in the county. He next turned his attention to farming, but more particularly to the purchase and exchange of real estate, a system he followed to quite an extent and with good success for a number of years in this vicinity. He then purchased the Hickory mill in this village of the late Judge Wardwell and did an extensive business in custom work and flour and feed. Retiring from this he purchased a fine place and lived in comparative leisure for a number of years, and until, for the purpose of benefiting those in whom he felt the most interest, he purchased the large flouring mills in Centerville, Oswego Co., erected by the late Jabe Gilbert, a prominent business man of that place, which now belong to his estate. He recently disposed of his residence to Mr. W. G. Hitchcock and purchased the

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block now occupied by P.P. Martin & Co., the closing transaction of a long, active and fairly successful business career.

The deceased was among the prominent, intelligent and respected citizens of the town. He was a man of fine address, genteel in appearance and manner and always lived like a gentleman. He was courteous and kind, affable and neighborly, of intellectual and even æsthetic characteristics and tastes. He was a Universalist in belief and a democrat in politics, and his convictions on these grounds were intense, yet he was liberal in religion but a bitter partisan in politics, even, during the dark days of the rebellion verging on disloyalty, without intending to be disloyal. He was twice married but never blessed with issue, his last wife dying the same day just one year before him. The funeral was held at the Baptist church on the 13th inst., in charge of undertaker Lester, who took the old neighbors for bearers, and the sermon by Rev. L. B. [Lewis Beals] Fisher, of the Universalist church[es] of Ellisburgh and Henderson, assisted by Rev. R. A. Wheelock. The text was from Luke: "For God is not a God of the dead but of the living." The sermon was a scholarly production, replete with philosophical reflections and draped in chaste language and illustrated with apposite quotations from the life and poetry of Burns. The elocution was faulty in the extreme and lacked emphasis and force, and should and can in one so young a man be overcome. With an elocution commensurate with his thought Mr. Fisher can become one of the most efficient of preachers.

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