

[Chapin, James Henry]

Prof. James H. Chapin, Ph.D.

The very sudden death of DR. J. H. Chapin of Meriden, Conn., was briefly noted in our last issue. He dropped dead Monday morning March 14, in a bank in South Norwalk, Conn., whither he had gone on some church business. In consideration of Dr. Chapin's long connection with St. Lawrence University and his large circle of acquaintances in this village, a somewhat extended account of his life and work is (demanded?) at our hands.

Dr. J. H. Chapin was born December 31, 1832, at Leavenworth, Ind., but spent his youth in Illinois, whither his father removed in 1839. He graduated at Lombard University, Galesburg, Ill., in 1857, and was for several years an instructor in mathematics and natural science in that institution. In 1850 he was ordained to the ministry in the Universalist church, and was settled at Perkin, and afterwards at Springfield in that state. During the war of the Rebellion he was in the service of the United States Sanitary Commission, and crossing the Rocky Mountains in the spring of 1864, canvassed the greater part of the Pacific coast from Mexico to British Columbia for funds for the commission, supplementing the work that had been so well begun by the Rev. T. [Thomas] Starr King, just before his death. In the autumn of 1865 he went to Boston as secretary of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, of which Governor John A. Andrew was president, and while holding that position made several tours of inspection of the schools in the southern states. In 1868 he became financial secretary of the Universalist convention. In 1871 he became professor of geology and mineralogy in St. Lawrence University. In 1875 he was elected president of his alma Mater at Galesburg, Ill., but after due consideration declined to go. In 1878 he resumed regular pulpit ministrations, and became pastor of the Universalist church at Meriden, and continued in that relation until 1885, when finding himself overloaded with professional duties, he resigned. He was an active fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and one of the founders of the association of American Geologists. He was president of the Connecticut convention of Universalists for a dozen years, and was for a long period, preceding his recent absence from the country, chairman of the committee on missions in the national convention of that church. He belonged to the Free Masons and Odd Fellows, and among the former held the rank of Knight Templar. He was twice married—first in 1857 to Helen M. Weaver, of Alstead, N.H., and again in 1878 to Kate A. Lewis, of Meriden, and leaves one daughter, Mary A.

Dr. Chapin had made several tours in foreign lands and not long since returned from a tour around the world, and has published two well-received works of science and travel. In his own city and state Dr. Chapin was a

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prominent and useful citizen. He served as a Republican in the legislature of 1888 and at the time of his death was a member of the State Topographical survey.

Prof. Chapin became connected with the college a few weeks after Dr. Gaines began his work there, and during the 21 years since, he has been not only a devoted servant, but a most loyal and liberal patron of the institution. From 1871 to 1872 he was a trustee of the University.

On Thursday last, the day of his funeral, a memorial service was held in the college chapel, at which President Hervey, Dr. Atwood, Dr. Weaver and Dr. Gaines all spoke. The unswerving loyalty to St. Lawrence, the spotless character, the untiring industry, and the gentle nature of the deceased were all emphasized with much feeling.

On Sunday morning a more public service in the memory of Dr. Chapin was held in the Universalist church, conducted by Dr. Hervey, assisted by Drs. Atwood and Gaines.

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Transcribed on 9 Sep 2013 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY