

[Baker, Benjamin M.]

Benjamin M. Baker<sup>1</sup>  
Death of An Old Resident of the City  
Had Lived in Rochester Over Seventy Years and Was  
Prominently Identified With the City's Interests  
One of the First Watchmen of the Town and Was Once an Alderman

Benjamin M. Baker died at his residence, 91 South Fitzhugh street, at 6 o'clock this morning after an illness of nine days. Had he lived until December [27] he would have been 90 years old.

Mr. Baker came to Rochester when 17 years of age from the east, walking most of the way with his earthly possessions in a knapsack which was a relic of the Revolutionary war. Since that time he has been in active business life, first as a store keeper in the old village days, afterwards in the livery business. For the last twenty-five years his time has been given to caring for the property he has accumulated. He amassed quite a large property, every dollar of which represents a dollar's worth of methodical and well applied energy. He has been connected with many business enterprises of Rochester. He was one of the first stock holders of the Rochester Trust and Safe Deposit Company and a director until a few years ago when on account of advancing age he felt it wise to resign. He was at the time of his death a trustee of the Monroe County Savings Bank; was one of the incorporators and for some time president of the iron works at Charlotte.

Many years ago Mr. Baker became the owner of extensive farms in the Genesee Valley on the outskirts of the city and sold the park to the commissioners the land which now constitutes Genesee Valley Park.

His tall, erect figure has been familiar upon the streets of the city through three generations of business men. He was a man of very quiet life and simple tastes and retiring habits, enjoying most invariably good health and daily attending to the discharge of his business duties. In business matters Mr. Baker was invariably successful, the only notable exception being the failure of the Charlotte iron furnace, which his friends have always asserted was largely due to the fact that his associates failed to follow his advice.

In the financial wreck which followed the failure of that company the directors and stockholders became much involved. When the amount of his loss was determined Mr. Baker gave a check for the amount, over \$50,000, with the same unruffled coolness which characterized his every act.

In politics Mr. Baker was an unswerving Democrat. In his early years he was somewhat active in the affairs of his party. He was elected watchman of the village of Rochester when only 19 years of age, but because of his minority was not allowed to qualify. When he attained the age of 21 he was re-elected and served in that capacity for some time. He was a member of the Common Council of the city from the First Ward in 1851 and 1852.

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In later years Mr. Baker took no more active interest in politics than to regularly vote and contribute to the campaign expenses of his party.

He erected and was owner at the time of his death of what is known as the Baker building at the corner of West Main and Fitzhugh streets.

He is survived by his wife, Angelina Wood, and by a daughter, Frances A. Baker, residing in this city, and a son, Henry B. Baker, a planter at Franklin, La.

He was a man of remarkable strong character and had many friends both in the social and business world.

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Transcribed on 15 Apr 2013 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY

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<sup>1</sup> He was a member of the First Universalist Society of Rochester.