

[Conner, George Ricard]

CONNER IS DEAD

The Ex-Commissioner a Victim of Heart Disease
A Democratic Ward Leader Who Earned a Reputation
as a Stubborn Political Fighter—A Sketch of His Career

George Ricard Conner, ex-City Works Commissioner, died rather suddenly this morning at his home, South Second street, of heart disease, it is supposed. He was apparently in good health at the beginning of the week, but he was confined to his bed Tuesday and yesterday. The members of his family were aware that he was troubled with heart disease, but they did not think that the end was so near. Only last Sunday Mr. Conner had a party of friends at his house, and all congratulated him on his good health and robust appearance. He was aware as far back as sixteen years ago that his heart was not at least in a healthy condition, for a physician of a mutual benevolent order, who examined him with a view to his admission to a lodge, so stated to him. His health otherwise was apparently good. His wife and son, Thomas R. Conner, and his daughter Irene, aged 16 years, were at his bedside when he expired. Mr. Conner had often expressed a desire that his death should be sudden on the grounds that a protracted illness would cause attendants a good deal of trouble. It may be mentioned here that he was a very considerate man and that his domestic relations were of the pleasantest and happiest kind. When he went to any place of amusement he was generally accompanied by his wife, and it was often remarked by his friends that he was devotedly attached to her.

Mr. Conner was born 57 years ago in Gouverneur street, New York City, and was of Irish extraction. His father married a sister of the late George Ricard, for many years president of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank. The lady is yet alive at the ripe age of 82 years. Mr. Conner was in business for many years near the East River front, New York, and had five or six surviving children, the two sons being George Ricard and John Ricard Conner. The latter was secretary of the Crosstown Railroad until within the past few months, when it was leased by the Brooklyn roads. The Christian names of the three sisters yet living are Agnes, Maria and Tillie.

George Ricard Conner, when only 19 years old, was married to Cordelia L. Whiteside, who survives him with their three children, Thomas Conner, Mrs. Zelia King, wife of Clarence King, of the City Works Department, and Miss Irene Conner, aged about 16 years. He took an active part in fire matters in the Metropolis in his younger days, and belonged to Hose Company No. 6 until the disbandment of the old department. He was, up to his death, a member of the Exempt Fireman's Association of New York and the Eastern District organization. He was at Plattsburg with the latter body and vigorously protested against the decision of the judges of the tournament against his associates as unjust and unfair. He was a man of the most positive character and always stood by his conclusions, wrong or right, and in that way forced his enemies to pay the tribute of saying that he was a good fighter. Even Mr. Denis Short, secretary of the Excise Board, who gave Mr. Conner and Warden Hayes many a hard tussle in the Thirteenth Ward Democratic Association,

[Conner, George Ricard]

of which body Mr. Conner was then president (which position he retained until his death), admitted that he was a plucky political fighter. Such an admission from a hard hitter like Short meant a good deal.

Mr. Conner came to the Eastern District about twenty-five years ago and took up his residence on South Second street, near the home of his uncle, bank president Ricard. He was at the time, and until about seven years ago, a bookkeeper in McDougall's wholesale butcher stall, in West Washington Market, New York. He was one of the executors and heirs of Mr. Ricard's estate, which was, at the time of his death, thought to be very large, but which it turned out amounted to less than \$100,000. It was divided among a number of heirs. Mr. Conner then turned his attention to politics and was elected president of the Thirteenth Ward Democratic Association through a combination with Warden Hayes... Mr. Conner was nominated for Alderman the same year, 1883... Denis Short made the most desperate wordy assaults on him, but he kept perfectly cool. His decisions were partisan in those fights, and at least ten policemen attended each meeting. At one meeting the opposition undertook to throw Counselor Benjamin Baker out of a window after he had counted heads in a standing vote. The counselor recounted and Mr. Conner was beaten. He always rendered his own decisions afterward and had the nerve to stand by them. The result was that 240 members resigned in a body from the association. The circumstances are mentioned with the object of showing Mr. Conner's determination.

He was, since he settled in the Eastern district, a consistent and zealous member of All Souls' Universalist Church, on South Ninth street, near Bedford avenue, Rev. Dr. Almon Gunnison, pastor. He was regular in his attendance and energetic in all matters pertaining to church work. His uncle, the late Mr. Ricard, was for a generation a pillar of the church and a very liberal contributor. Mr. Ricard remembered it in his will and a tablet was placed near the pulpit in his memory.

Mr. Conner was a member of Hyatt Lodge, F. and A.M.; Exempt Fireman's Associations of this city and New York; Pioneer Lodge No. 1, U.B.L.; Pioneer Council No. 25, K. of L., and other orders. He was not possessed of much of this world's goods, the sum he inherited from his uncle being small. His aged mother, who kept house for her brother for many years, is wealthy. Mr. Conner's funeral will take place next Sunday afternoon from All Souls' Church. Dr. Gunnison will officiate.

[A lengthy paragraph here on his political career is omitted.]

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