

## [Cook, Theodore Pease]

### COL. COOK, SOLDIER AND EDITOR, DIES

Veteran of the Civil War and Former Editorial Writer of the Observer.  
HIS ILLNESS BEGAN MANY YEARS AGO.

Theodore P. Cook, for years one of the editors of the Utica Observer, a veteran of the Civil War and author of much prose and verse of more than ordinary merit, died about 3 a.m. to-day at his home, 287 Genesee street. For many years his health had been imperfect and since February, 1913, he had been confined to his home with the exception of one occasion, when in the autumn of 1913 he went out to vote. Since 1913 he had been unable to walk unaided, though his condition generally was comfortable until about three months ago, when he suffered a stroke of apoplexy, which forced him to remain in bed. He had been in the care of a nurse for several years and subject to the ministrations of his sister, Miss Viola Cook, with whom he lived. It is supposed that the recent hot weather hastened his death. He was conscious to the last.

The death of Colonel Cook removed a brilliant son of a talented family of Puritan ancestry. His ascendants on one side at least possessed literary power and he inherited fine mental equipment, which he used effectively until illness cast a cloud over the bright flame of his intellect. Though handicapped by his affliction, he continued to write, and articles from his pen had been published with more or less frequency until within a few years. At the height of his career he was known as one of the ablest political writers in the State.

Enlisting as a youth in the Union army, he fought through the latter part of the Civil War. Then he turned his attention to the study of law, winning a diploma, but abandoning a legal career for politics and journalism. He enjoyed the personal acquaintance of many men of national prominence in the era following the Civil War and played no small part in the political history of the decade devoted to reconstruction. His productions, both prose and verse, appeared in periodicals of the highest standard and it is proof of the merit of his works that poems written by him many years ago live and are quoted to-day by those fortunate enough to know them.

Theodore Pease [Pease] Cook was born in Boston on December 21, 1844, a son of the late Rev. and Mrs. Theodore D. [and Calista Niles Pease] Cook, the latter pastor of an [sic] Universalist church in Boston at that time. The elder Cook was a direct descendant of William Bradford, and his wife possessed literary ability, which she revealed by the writing of verse, as her mother had done. Soon after the birth of Theodore, the family moved to Providence, R. I., where the son grew up and was educated in the public schools.

His literary bent was displayed early in life, for at the age of 14 he composed an essay on "True Greatness" for a periodical, which awarded him first prize, a gold pencil. About that time the elder Cook was assigned to a church in this city [Church of the Reconciliation, Universalist] and the family came here to live. Theodore attended the advanced school, when Andrew MacMillan was its principal, and the Utica Free Academy when George C. Sawyer was head of the school, and to those men he was

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indebted for the development of his literary taste and the improvement of a style of diction that was instinctively pure and by experience became polished and forceful.

Theodore Cook grew up in an atmosphere of literature. His brother, Marc, was a poet of rare ability, who turned off [out] exquisite lyrics with apparent ease. His mother composed verse while his father wrote sermons. Hence it was natural enough for the other son to indulge in flights of fancy. Soon after coming to Utica he produced a series of verses that brought him a considerable sum of money and he also brought forth some stories that were published.

While Theodore was a student in the Academy, probably in 1862, he joined the Young Men's Lyceum, which organization decided to arrange a series of lectures. As secretary, young Cook secured the services of Wendell Phillips, Artemas Ward, George William Curtis and Anna Dickinson and the enterprise was carried through with considerable success.

The coming of the rebellion had a profound effect upon Theodore P. Cook. Like other patriotic youths he was fired with enthusiasm for the Union cause. He left the Academy without waiting to be graduated and in 1863, before he was 19 years old, enlisted in the One Hundred and Fourteenth Heavy Artillery, in which he received a commission of second lieutenant. He served through the remainder of the war and saw plenty of fighting at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Malvern Hill, Petersburg and elsewhere and was present at the surrender of General Lee.

He returned home at the close of the war with the rank of First Lieutenant and was appointed a member of the staff of General Robinson and stationed at Albany. Then he became military secretary to Governor Hoffman with the title of colonel, by which he was known during the remainder of his life.

Theodore P. Cook had a natural liking for politics and while at Albany got a taste of public life and a knowledge of political affairs. It was during the famous investigation of the Tweed ring, which created a scandal that is still recalled by readers of state history and others who are old enough to remember that exposure, which amazed the whole country. He became a close friend of Governor Hoffman and other men of prominence and exercised his literary ability by writing sketches of members of the Legislature.

Though his father was a Republican, Theodore P. Cook chose the Democratic faith and became an ardent worker for the success of that party. At the close of his service at Albany he decided to become a lawyer and entered Columbia Law School, from which he was graduated in 1869. For a year or so thereafter he was connected with a firm of lawyers in New York City, but that profession did not excite his enthusiasm, which found vent in writing and in the strife of political warfare.

He returned to Utica about 1870 and obtained a position as editorial writer for the Utica Observer, a labor into which he entered with his whole heart. The paper was then edited by the late DeWitt C. Grove. Devoting himself chiefly to political topics, Colonel Cook bent his talents to attack and defense and his work greatly strengthened the editorial page of the paper, besides attracting the attention of newspaper men in other cities. As a result of his brilliant writing, he was offered a position as editor of the Brooklyn Argus, a newspaper which place he might have accepted, had not his

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employers here given him a share in their business as an inducement to continue with them. He also was offered a position with the Worcester Press, which he declined.

Besides writing for the Observer, he found time to write occasional articles for the New York Sun and to produce other literary work. He wrote a life of Horatio Seymour, whom he greatly admired, and it may be found in Appleton's Cyclopaedia. It is said that Governor Seymour, when asked to criticize this work, altered only one word. In 1876 Theodore Cook wrote the authorized "Life of Samuel J. Tilden," which was published in book form. Throughout his life he continued to produce poems upon occasions and some short stories. Some of the latter appeared in Harper's Magazine. He wrote a poem on the nomination of Horatio Seymour for Presidency and it was accepted by Henry M. Alden, editor of Harper's Weekly.

His poems covered a wide range of moods and subjects and invariably were distinguished by grace of form, rare imagination and fineness of sentiment. In speech as in writing his language was notable for its purity. He chose his words carefully to express the precise shade of meaning that he desired. His vocabulary was large and upon points of orthography and pronunciation he was learned to an exceptional degree. Harold Frederic, the novelist, came to the Observer office to work while Colonel Cook was there and, referring to their association, said afterward that he had "sat at the feet of Gamaliel." It was Frederic who succeeded Colonel Cook as editorial writer when the latter retired after about (10?) years of service, when his health began to fail.

Though he no longer occupied a desk in the newspaper office, Colonel Cook continued to contribute editorials to the Observer until about the time of the death of E. Prentiss Bailey, the editor of that paper. He wrote mainly of events of the past, upon which his mind dwelt with clearness, and he was most happy when commenting upon some event of the Civil War or the period shortly afterward. His last published article was on the death of former Governor Sprague of Rhode Island, which appeared since Colonel Cook had been confined to his home.

Colonel Cook was a lifelong student of history and a voracious reader. In his young manhood he had shown ability as an orator, and had rendered service on the slump in political campaigns. His speeches possessed the same clearness and vigor of thought that marked his writings. Only once did he become a candidate, when he ran for the office of Member of Assembly, and was defeated. He hated hypocrisy and despised cant. His own nature was frank and sincere and he had the courage to attack shame and speak his mind boldly.

Those who knew Colonel Cook know that it was always a pleasure for him to do a service for anyone. [Line obliterated] Post Bacon and deeply interested in its affairs. He was fond of churchgoing when he was able and often attended Plymouth Church.

It is said that Colonel Cook was instrumental in the formation of the Oneida [County] Historical society and that he was one of a small group of men whose conference on the lack of such an organization resulted in the establishment of the present society.

Colonel Cook is survived by only one near relative, Miss Viola Cook of this city.

*Herald-Dispatch*, Utica NY, Mon. 17 Jul 1916

[Cook, Theodore Pease]

Col. Theodore P. Cook

There was a large attendance at the funeral of Col. Theodore P. Cook, held this afternoon at 2 o'clock in the family residence, 287 Genesee street, where the services were in charge of the Rev. W. E. Selleck, pastor of the Church of the Reconciliation [Universalist]. Included in the attendance were many members of Bacon Post and other posts of the G.A.R. The bearers were E. H. Risley, E. B. Hastings, Edward Case, Sidney Dobbins, Joseph Hussner and John C. Bauer. During the services Mrs. Bertha Dean Hughes sang several selections including "Crossing the Bar" and "Lead, Kindly Light." The interment was made in Forest Hill Cemetery, where the committal services at the grave were in charge of Bacon Post.

*Herald-Dispatch*, Utica NY, Wed. 19 Jul 1916

Transcribed on 20 Dec 2014 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY