

[Davis, Fitch M.]

THE PASSING OF FITCH M. DAVIS

He Is Found Dead in His Automobile Wednesday Morning—
Heart Trouble the Cause—A Life of Intensity and Usefulness—
Services to Be Held To-morrow Afternoon

Fitch M. Davis, a life-long resident of this village, died very suddenly from heart trouble about 8:30 Wednesday morning. He was found in his automobile, sitting in an almost natural position behind the wheel, ready to drive.

It had been his custom to carry the milk down from the farm to the village for trucking, stopping at his residence on the way to eat breakfast. Wednesday morning, it appears, he did as usual, leaving the car east of the railroad bridge, near the Marvin barn. As he was planning to go to Rochester on the 9 o'clock Hornell bus, spending the day with his son Wheeler, en route to a meeting elsewhere, it is likely that he ate rather hurriedly, and then after changing his clothes hastened across the bridge to the car, which he expected to drive down town with the milk. A very heavy wind was blowing, and it is evident that hurrying to complete his work and pushing his way against the gale overtaxed his heart. It had bothered him for the last five years, but within the past twelve months it had caused him and his family some considerable anxiety. He had had several bad spells, but was unable, it seemed, to lessen the intensity of the life to which he was accustomed. The night before his death he attended the installation ceremonies of the Eastern Star, and to-morrow he was to have spoken at a meeting of the Western New York Newspaper Publishers association, at Powers Hotel.

Fitch M. Davis was born in Henrietta on the 3d of May, 1867, the son of the late Joseph W. and Elizabeth Martin Davis. When he was about a year old his family moved to Livonia, where they lived for a time in the house now owned by Mrs. Richmond. Mr. Davis gained his schooling at the local school, at the Syracuse high school, and at Clinton Liberal institute in Fort Plain. On January 23, 1889, he was married to Miss Mabel S. Eaton. To them three children were born—Arnold E., Ruth E., and J. Wheeler. Mrs. Davis died on the 27th of August, 1899. [On] November 11, 1903, Mr. Davis was married to Miss Erma Gilbert, who, with the children and one sister, Mrs. Harry Pease, survives him. There are also three grandchildren.

The funeral will be held from the farm home to-morrow afternoon at 2 o'clock, the services at the grave to be in charge of the Masonic order.

It is almost impossible to think of any worthy local organization or movement with which Fitch Davis [was not involved in] some capacity. At the time of his death he was one of the Livonia library trustees, and likewise president of the school board, of which with the exception of the years 1909-1912, when he was supervisor of this town, he had been an interested and active member for almost twenty-five years. He was also district president of the Dairymen's League, an organization whose principles he had energetically sponsored. He was a true Mason, had held all of the offices in the Blue Lodge and Royal Arch chapter and was a Grand Lodge officer for one year. He was a past master of the local grange and had been district deputy. He was a former president of the farm bureau, and but a

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couple of weeks before his death had been re-elected president of the Livingston County Mutual Fire Insurance company, an office which he had held for several years. His church membership was in the Universalist denomination, although his consistent support was given to any and all denominations.

To say that the loss of Fitch Davis, so sudden, so unexpected, so shocking, will be keenly felt here and by his long list of acquaintances, is but a triteness. What a mystery it is that men such as he are snatched away—men with a character so builded that it never swerves, with a belief in right and fair play so strong that it cannot be altered, with an optimism so ingrained that it never fails, with a vision so extended and clear and honest that it is always accorded the highest respect in spite of difference of opinion, with a charity for others' mistakes and a tolerance for others' views that marks them as men of justice, with a primary aim in life to be of use to their fellows, with a spirit of comradeship and good fellowship that makes them the most delightful of associates, with a conception of the meaning of home life and its implications that renders them exponents of all that is finest in that basic institution, with a practical interpretation of Christianity that is applied every day in their social and business contacts—what a mystery that such men are snatched away when they seem so badly needed. And Fitch Davis was one of that kind.

A man's life itself is his most powerful commentary, his truest tribute. Fitch Davis' life spoke volumes, many times over what his friends can say. He lived his fifty-seven years with an intensity and a zeal so great that the break had to come. But he was ready. For he had spent his days in the only way which makes that possible, a way which no one can picture more beautifully than has William Cullen Bryant in lines of his "Thanatopsis":

So live that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, that moves
To the pale realms of shade, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon; but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Thus Fitch Davis lived. And thus he died.

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Transcribed on 26 Sep 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY