

[Graves, Ezra]

OBITUARY NOTES

The Hon. Ezra Graves, ex-County Judge and ex-State Prison Inspector, died at Herkimer yesterday. He was a prominent Universalist.

New York Times, New York NY, Tue. 9 Jan 1883

EZRA GRAVES DEAD

Hon. Ezra Graves died of pneumonia at his home in Herkimer at 3 p.m. Monday [Jan. 8]. In the death of Judge Graves, Herkimer county loses one of its most honored and respected citizens. Born in the town of Russia in 1803, Judge Graves' life has been a long and useful one. He was educated at Fairfield Seminary and always looked back to his school days with pleasure, and old Fairfield never had a warmer friend than he. For many years he has attended the anniversary exercises at this institution and renewed acquaintances formed years ago. After completing his education in the year 1829, he was appointed under sheriff and jailer of the county by his father, John Graves, who had been elected sheriff. He then removed to Herkimer, and from that time until the present has been a resident of Herkimer. Many changes have taken place there during that period, and it was decidedly interesting to hear the Judge tell of the growth of the village and the many improvements made during the past forty years. After holding the office of under sheriff for about a year, the Judge resigned, and was succeeded by Gen. F. E. Spinner, the old "watch-dog" of the treasury. Soon after this the deceased commenced the study of law with General Charles Gray, then a prominent lawyer of the county. After being admitted to the bar he was appointed commissioner of deeds in 1834. In 1840 he was elected supervisor of the town of Herkimer, and re-elected in 1841. [On] January 24, 1845 he was appointed, by Governor Silas Wright, first judge of the court of common pleas of the county, and in April of the same year he was appointed surrogate of the county, both of these offices then being appointive, under the constitution. At the constitutional convention held in 1846, both the office of county judge and surrogate were made elective offices, and in June 1847 Judge Graves was elected county judge and surrogate. He was re-elected four successive terms, holding the office at this time for ten years. In 1855 he was succeeded by Hon. Robert Earl, who held the office until 1860. In the fall of 1859 Judge Graves was again

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elected, and re-elected in 1861. Judge Graves held this office for fourteen years, being the longest time it was ever held by one official, except by the present incumbent, Hon. Amos Prescott, who was elected in 1867. At a special election held April 23, 1867, Judge Graves was elected one of the delegates from this senatorial district (then composed of Herkimer and Otsego counties) to the constitutional convention held in that year, being elected by 740 majority over his Democratic opponent, Hon. Arfaxed Loomis of Little Falls. His colleagues from this district were Oliver B. Beals of Litchfield, and Elijah E. Ferry and John Eddy of Otsego county. In the fall election of 1872, the deceased was elected state prison inspector, a position which he filled acceptably for three years. During this time the Judge was instrumental in setting about many needed reforms in the state prisons. In this way, and by treating the convicts kindly, he became their trusted friend. There is now hanging in his office a handsome testimonial, presented by the life prisoners of one of the prisons, Clinton, I believe, expressing their gratitude for the many acts of kindness which he had rendered them.

The deceased was a member of Herkimer Lodge No. 423, F. & A.M., and was one of the first masters of the lodge, being elected in 1857. For the past twenty years Judge Graves has practiced law at the county seat, and has been a friend and adviser of many citizens of the county. He has been a republican since that party was organized, although during a few of the last years of his life he has acted independently in politics and voted for whom he believed to be the best man. He was well posted on all the leading topics of the day, and wrote many interesting articles for the press on topics agitating the public mind. His writings were able and independent and had the ring of a forcible, clear mind. In all positions in life he was honest and straightforward, and a man of sterling integrity. Strictly temperate in his habits he was an earnest advocate of temperance reform. Ezra Graves was perhaps as well known as any man in the county, and now that he is gone, a host of friends will mourn his loss. Surely a good man, a kind hearted neighbor, and an upright citizen has been taken away—one whom all honored and respected. The deceased leaves an aged wife [Maria Card Graves] and three [of their seven] children [John Card Graves of Buffalo, and Margaret E. Mayton and George Graves of Herkimer].

Richfield Springs Mercury, Richfield Springs NY, Sat. 13 Jan 1883

Transcribed on 24 Feb 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY