

[Harding, Erastus Dennis]

LEONARDSVILLE MATTERS
Death of Erastus D. Hardin of Peoria, Ill.

Oct. 7. Sad news often comes when least expected, as was the case on Monday morning when a dispatch was received by Mrs. R. E. H. Wheeler, announcing the death of her brother, Erastus D. Hardin, in Peoria, Ill. Mr. Hardin's relatives here and elsewhere were entirely unprepared, and are deeply grieved at an affliction which has taken from them one of their best and truest friends. Such facts as are hastily recorded here will deal chiefly with the events of Mr. Hardin's early life as a native and a resident of this community during his youth and until as a young man he left here nearly fifty years ago to enter the business life of Peoria, where he was esteemed most highly among the foremost business men there for his strict and unwavering integrity and his superior ability in financial affairs, as well as for the purity and blamelessness of his social and religious life. This phase of his can best be expressed in the language of the pastor of the church which he attended, who said in the presence of Mr. Hardin's sister that "Erastus Hardin was the whitest souled man he ever knew." Erastus Dennis Hardin was born in Leonardsville Nov. 3d, 1832, and was therefore nearly 75 years of age. He was the son of the late Dennis and Eliza Brown Hardin, being their eldest child. His early education was acquired at the village school, but close association with his father was of great value to him in bringing practical and expert knowledge of business affairs, for which he had a natural talent, and he sought advancement in the commercial pursuits he desired to follow. His first experience in that line was gained while serving a clerkship in the store here conducted by his father and his uncles Dennis and Daniel Hardin. After that he held for a short time a situation in a store in Hamilton, being employed by a man named Mott. The profession of a banker appealed to him more strongly than a mercantile career, and his first step in that direction was taken when he went to Ilion and worked in the National bank there. From thence he entered the First National bank in West Winfield soon after it was organized and held a position there until he removed to Peoria, soon after his marriage. In that city Mr. Hardin quickly acquired prominence and became identified with one of the largest banks. He was a member of the banking firm of S. Pulsifer & Co. for many years, and after retiring from that concern, transferred his activities to the real estate business. His old home in Peoria, situated on a high bluff and commanding a superb view of the surrounding country, was one of the loveliest dwellings in the city, and for many years was graced by the presence of a devoted and rarely accomplished wife, who was beloved for her benevolence and her Christian life. Their social tastes brought them in

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contact with the best people of the city, one of their nearest neighbors being the celebrated Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, whose children and Mr. Hardin's attended school together. Mr. Hardin attended the Universalist church to which his wife belonged. He was not a politician in any sense, except that he took a sincere and patriotic (interest in?) Benjamin Harrison for President in 1888, representing the Peoria district. All his views of life were broad-minded and charitable, and he was beyond all question one who truly loved his fellow men. Refined tastes led him to study and appreciate the best in literature, and he had a cultured knowledge of art in many of the higher branches. To this sincere tribute of his worth and purity, it is only possible to add that he was loved the most by those who knew him best, and that he was seen at his best in the immediate circle of his relatives. In the course of time domestic bereavement and business cares came to him, but he bore his burdens bravely and met the future with a smiling face and loyal heart. One of his dearest wishes was to visit again the place of his nativity, but failing health and the demands of business prevented the journey here which others longed for as earnestly as he did. Only two weeks ago an affectionate letter came from him, followed last week by the gift to his sister of an illustrated book, descriptive of the industries of Peoria, which he knew so well. It was his last message to those he loved at home.

While living in West Winfield, Mr. Hardin married Sept. 28th, 1857, Miss Arminia J. Taylor, who was a sister of the late Nodiah D. Taylor and a cousin to Mrs. David M. Armstrong, whom he much resembled. Five sons were born to them, the eldest of whom, Clarence Taylor Hardin, died some years ago. Their surviving sons are Robert H., Erastus Brown, and Howard Irving Hardin of Peoria, and Herbert E. Hardin of Louisville, Kentucky.

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