

[Ricard, George]

GEORGE RICARD

Mr. George Ricard, one of the oldest and most respected citizens of the Eastern District, died at his residence in South Second street at six o'clock last evening. Probably no instance is on record where the title of a self made man applies more truly than it does in this case. Mr. Ricard was of French extraction, his father being a native of Bordeaux, and in 1794 an officer in the French Navy. The father subsequently became a citizen of this country, and settled in the City of New York, where the subject of this sketch was born on Christmas day, 1798. He received an education that was common to boys of his class at that period. At the early age of 14 he left school and enlisted for the war of 1812 against Great Britain, serving his country faithfully until March, 1815, when he received an honorable discharge. He then became an apprentice to Christian Bergh, the celebrated ship builder. Among his fellow apprentices was Jacob A. Westervelt, afterward Mayor of New York... Mr. Ricard became a master of his business, after which he made several voyages to China and the East Indies in ships that had been built and launched under his own observation. Later on he entered into successful mercantile business in New York City. In the year 1832 he was appointed by President Andrew Jackson to an official station in the Revenue Department, which he held until the year 1842, when, owing to failing health, he retired from all active business. During the same year he changed his residence to the then Village of Williamsburgh which was then in its infancy. He constructed for himself a substantial residence on South Second street in which he continued to reside until his decease. He invested in real estate and soon became thoroughly identified with the place. In the year 1851, the population having reached 30,000, he, with some of his neighbors, organized the Williamsburgh Savings Bank, and was constituted the first vice president of that flourishing institution. Soon after he was elected president, which office he continued to hold for the remainder of his life, he having been elected yearly and the last time as he lay upon his death bed. That of itself shows the high esteem and confidence entertained for him by his associate trustees. His sterling integrity, careful business habits and devotion to his duties aided largely in the firm establishment and wonderful success of the institution. With many of its depositors it was commonly known as "Mr. Ricard's Bank." He was an organizer and director of the Williamsburgh Fire Insurance Company, and the Cross Town Railroad; also a director of the Mechanics' and Traders' Bank, and the Broadway Railroad until his death. In his earlier life he was a member of the Mechanics' Institute of New York City, also of the Columbian Order, and took an active part in the old Tammany Society, being politically at that time a Democrat. He then enjoyed the personal acquaintance of such men as General Jackson, Martin Van Buren, Silas Wright, Michael Hoffman, Preston King, William C. Bouck and Mayors Westervelt and Havemeyer. In the year 1856 he joined the Republican party and voted for General Fremont and for every President elected since that time. In 1864, he was the Presidential elector for the Third Congressional District, the only political office to which he was elected, for, although oftentimes urged by his fellow citizens, and taking, as he always did, a warm interest in public affairs, yet he steadily refused to become a candidate.

[Ricard, George]

In charitable and benevolent societies he was known as a good friend and a generous giver. The permanent financial success of the Industrial School may be dated from the time he gave to that society a tract of land on which it was expected they would build, but which was exchanged for other property. The Mariner's Family Asylum, at Staten Island, was another institution that enlisted his sympathies, and for several years, ending only with his death, he was president of its Board of Council. His name is also frequently found as a contributor to the Williamsburgh Dispensary and Hospital, to which he gave a substantial donation toward the erection of a new building, The Relief, now in course of construction on South Third street.

His heart was ever open to the call of suffering humanity, and very many who have for years shared his bounty will learn with sorrow of the death of their benefactor. In religious matters he was of the Universalist faith, and was one of a small number that organized in 1845, and in 1848 erected the church corner of Fourth and South Third street. Afterward the same congregation erected a new edifice on South Ninth street, now known as All Souls' Church [First Universalist Society of Williamsburgh], the building of which engrossed much of Mr. Ricard's time, and commanded largely of his means. He was President of the Board of Trustees from the organization of the society to the time of his decease. He was widely known throughout the denomination, and its most renowned preachers, Ballou, [Edwin H.] Chapin, [Thomas J.] Sawyer, and many others were proud to call him their friend. In every station in life Mr. Ricard's chief characteristic was his sterling, unflinching integrity. His sense of duty was keen and his industry indefatigable. From an ordinary position he rose to high and honorable stations and comparative wealth. He was a close friend and an open enemy. He so lived as to leave room for every one to become his friend. His life is an example that may be safely followed, and all who knew him will surely mourn his death.

Mr. Ricard was left a widower fifteen years ago, and childless. Since that time his sister, Mrs. Mary Connor, has been in charge of the household. He leaves three sisters and one brother, and many nephews and nieces, one of the latter having been adopted as his daughter, several years ago. All his connections were regarded by him with great affection, which they in turn fully reciprocated.

Mr. Ricard had been confined to the house during the past three weeks, though not seriously ill but two weeks. His chief ailment was an affection of the heart, combined with a paralytic affection of the throat, which at the last prevented him from taking any nourishment whatever. Death ultimately ensued without a struggle, within a few hours of which event Mr. Ricard was in the enjoyment of his natural faculties. The funeral will take place on Monday afternoon, from All Souls' Church, South Ninth street, and the interment will be at Greenwood.

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