

[Richmond, Billings]

DEATH OF BILLINGS RICHMOND

To the Editor of the Democrat and Chronicle:

SIR: One by one the hardy pioneers who found Western New York a forest and transformed it into a garden are passing from their fields of labor to the realms of rest. A few yet linger as if they find in life so much of sweetness that they are unwilling to exchange the joys of earth for the glories of heaven. At 5:50 Tuesday evening, February 17th, another link in the chain which binds the present generation to the past was broken and Billings Richmond of Churchville, N.Y., gave up his spirit to its maker.

He has been so closely connected with the history of the western part of Monroe county that an extended sketch of his life cannot fail to prove interesting to all. He was born in Woodstock, Conn., January 21st, 1789. At the early age of twenty he started out to examine the then western country with the view of locating there his future home. In the town of Riga he selected fifty acres of land upon which a portion of the village of Churchville is now built and secured it by purchase. He subsequently returned to Connecticut on foot. In 1814 he made his second journey to Western New York, and in 1815 returned to North Adams, Mass., where he was united in marriage to Miss Susan Willey, an old schoolmate of Hiram Sibley, of this city. In 1816 he again came to Monroe country [county], accompanied by his bride, this time to make it his permanent home. The first winter was exceedingly cold and stormy; great suffering prevailed among the pioneers and Mr. Richmond won the undying gratitude of many neighbors by distributing among them a large portion of his excellent crop of wheat during the previous season. He taught school for a time at Riga Center, and numbered among his pupils Horace Gay, Thomas Gay, and Edward Fitch, of Riga. Some years after taking up his permanent residence in Riga he purchased 200 acres more of land, which he subsequently sold to Henry W. Davis. In 1835 he built the Railroad house, and after keeping hotel a year traded with Alonzo Tupper for 250 acres of land in the northern part of the town. Mr. and Mrs. Richmond lived peacefully together for over fifty years, and in 1865 celebrated their golden wedding. Ten children blessed their union, seven of whom are still living: Major Henry Richmond, ex-sheriff of Monroe county; John W. Richmond, of Sacramento, Cal.; Horace G. Richmond, of San Francisco, Cal.; Dr. Charles Richmond, of Livonia, N.Y.; Mrs. Susan E. Wright, of Churchville, and Julia E. Thompson, of this city.

The death of Mrs. Richmond occurred in 1872, at the advanced age of seventy-two years. Mr. Richmond built the present homestead in 1852 and has lived there ever since. He has been a member of the Universalist society since 1823, his charity for mankind being so great that he could

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embrace no other creed than that in which divine justice is tempered in the highest degree by infinite mercy.

Mr. Richmond lost heavily at times by endorsing papers (as high as \$9,000 one time), but he never allowed the treachery of a few to destroy his confidence in all mankind. Honest and reliable himself in all his dealings, he trusted others as he liked to be trusted, and up to the time of his last illness was ever ready to listen to the tale of distress and aid to the extent of his means. A gathering of relatives was held at the residence of his son, Henry Richmond, in honor of his ninety-first birthday, January 21st, 1880, at which he had the pleasure of beholding, side by side, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

His genial temperament and kind heart made him a great favorite with the young, and the writer himself in boyhood was accustomed to call him "grandfather," and would sit with him for hours at a time, under a shady tree, listening to stories of early days when the country was new. His last illness commenced about two weeks ago, and all through it he expressed his belief that he would never recover. He suffered no pain during the last two days, and died without a struggle. He was the oldest citizen of the town of Riga, the next being Mrs. Elisha P. Davis, who is only one month younger. He enjoyed excellent health and was able to read his paper, with or without glasses, up to the time of his illness.

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Transcribed on 26 Oct 2015 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY