

[Seward, Sutlief Truxton]

DEATH OF TRUXTON SEWARD

The death of Sutlief Truxton Seward, of this village, was like the crumbling away of a granite cliff that had stood so long, its final collapse was a loss to the landscape. In a little more than four years the span of his life would have been a century of time. He was born in Lebanon, Columbia county, N.Y., June 28, 1803, one of the seventeen children of Isaac and Abigail Eunice Edwards Seward. The only survivor of this astonishingly large family—even in pioneer days—is the father of Mrs. Lyman Damon of this town; Moses Seward of Bristol, Ontario county, aged 85 years. Isaac Seward was born in New Durham, Ct., from whence his father, a genuine Yankee representative of that brave old State, brought his family while Isaac was yet a child, to Columbia county. One notable proof of the physical and mental vigor of this strain of family blood, is the first cousinship of Isaac, to William H. Seward, of world wide fame. Isaac Seward married in Lebanon, Abigail Eunice Edwards, where several of their children were born. He learned the tanner and currier and shoemakers trades of his father, and taught them to several of his sons—Truxton being one. In 1819 he brought his family to Bristol, Ontario county—the same year settling at Honeoye flats, where he worked in his tannery and shoe shop till his death.

The first money Truxton earned after becoming of age, in 1824, was in haying and harvesting on the East hill for Moses Green, for fifteen dollars per month. He then went to Lima and got work at his trade of Elder Titus, a Christian minister who lived at East Avon—earned \$100 shoemaking, and took his pay in leather. He saved his money and in 1827 bought at the land office in Geneva, eighty seven acres of land at four dollars per acre—on the west side of Honeoye lake in Canadice. To show the young man's reputation at that time, I copy the following letter of introduction he carried. Richmond, Dec. 25, 1827.—Messrs. Fellows & McNab—Gentlemen: The bearer, Sutlief T. Seward, wishes to purchase some land. Mr. Seward is a very industrious young man, and I have no doubt he would fulfill his obligations. I should be glad to have him accommodated. Respectfully yours, Gideon Pitts. The balance he had not money to pay, he gave his note for, which Mr. Pitts took and sent his own note to Geneva, which, the day it was due, Mr. Seward paid.

About this time he went to Mendon and raised a crop of hops on Mars Blain's farm, and took them to Albany, getting thirteen cents a pound, which paid him \$100 for his share. In 1830, Sutlief T. Seward married Antha, daughter of Captain Roderick Steele of the war of 1812, who came from the same section of Connecticut that Isaac Seward did, and is mentioned in the history of Ontario county as one of the twenty three original settlers of

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Pittstown. The young couple settled on the eighty seven acres in Canadice, renting soon after of his brother Edwards, a tannery at the flats, which he ran two years. In 1835 he bought a tannery at Frost's Hollow for \$900—paid \$300 down. Soon after he sold his Canadice land for thirty dollars per acre and paid every dollar he owed and never contracted another debt during his long business career. Frost's Hollow became his home, and tanning leather and manufacturing boots and shoes his business, for many years. He was vigilant, active, successful and honest. John Dixson was a noted merchant and trader at Frost's Hollow then and Mr. Seward sold him large quantities of his work. Alden Pemberton of this town, a native of Richmond, says the first pair of boots he ever wore were made at Mr. Seward's shop. In 1854 Mr. Seward and his wife went to Iowa, each having two brothers, then pioneers in that western county. Mr. Seward was so charmed with the country that he came home, took \$1600, went back and bought and paid for 415 acres of wood land and prairie. Time has proved the soundness of his judgment. Today it is worth more than ten times its cost and on those productive acres are his children, Dwight, and Mrs. Fidelia Richards, and Albert O., and their families, enjoying the comforts of his fatherly foresight. Dwight came home and comforted his father and assisted his sister during the last five weeks he lived. In 1883 Mr. Seward bought a home in this village, where he spent the balance of his life.

In 1889 his wife died, leaving his daughter, Miss Edith C. Seward, the only remaining member of his family, and no father's declining years were ever blessed with better companionship, or more tender care. His endowment of vigor and energy was some thing wonderful. The volume of his life filled its channel and over flowed its banks. After his own affairs, which were always well managed, he did not, like smaller souls, find comfort in gossip about his neighbors affairs—the well being of his town, his State, and his native land, was what laid on his heart. The last talk I had with him was only four days before his death. In broken whispers he asked, "How are national affairs, are we coming out right?" In politics he was an old-fashioned Democrat—in religion a life long Universalist—a man of intense convictions on all subjects. When only 19 years old—away back in 1822, when only a few of the best people had got their heads high enough in the moral atmosphere to begin to see that intemperance was the greatest scourge of mankind, Richmond—always furnishing pioneers in moral enterprises, started a temperance pledge, among the first signers of which were Horace Gilbert, James Wells, Joseph Garlinghouse, George Pitts, Mervin and Truxton Seward, who put their names down at the same meeting—and Mr. Seward often said he had "never touched liquor or tobacco since." Mr. Seward hated a wrong thing, and integrity and honesty were native elements of every fibre of his nature. Behind a rugged manner that mostly

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dwelt in a bluff, positive way, impatient to get at the merits of the matter in hand, enforced by a very strong, positive voice, throbbed a warm, generous, manly heart that constantly prompted his possessor to search for and relieve want and suffering in oft repeated cases that never will or can be told.

The writer, whose nearest neighbor Mr. Seward was, has never seen, in man or woman, such a brave, strong, hearty, self posed, happy old age. While he did not court death,—he did not dread it, but spoke of his near departure as cheerfully as of any coming event. He said he was going to where “mother” is—the endearing name that expressed the tenderness of his memory of his wife. This was the last word ever articulated by his faltering lips. After leaving a message of thanks and love to all his friends and acquaintances for their good words and kind acts—the name of her he was going to meet was his goodbye—his benediction. Although unable the last two days to speak, the kind and happy look on his face told of peace and joy within, with very little evidence of pain, from which he was singularly free the whole of the seven weeks of his confinement to his bed. When he finally did go, the smile of a happy child was left on his face in the lineaments of which almost a century had failed to engrave a corroding line. The funeral was held at his house Saturday, conducted by the Rev. H. P. [Herbert Philbrook] Morrell of Buffalo, who has been called repeatedly within the past year to attend the funerals of deceased Universalists in this and adjoining towns. Mr. Morrell has most happy, satisfactory lines of thought, in administering the last services over the event of death, dispelling much of the gloom that has been the pall of the ages. The burial was in the old burial ground at Richmond Center.

H. D. K.

Livonia, May 22.

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[paragraphs created by transcriber]

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