

[Shelley, Chester F.]

The Death of Chester F. Shelley

The second edition of yesterday's JOURNAL contained a hurried reference to the sudden death shortly before 4 o'clock the same afternoon of Mr. Chester F. Shelley, an old and honored citizen of this city. The announcement—which was the first intimation our people had of the sad event and which was necessarily a simple statement of fact without details—caused sincere sorrow wherever read. With this regret was astonishment at the suddenness of the news. Mr. Shelley had been upon our streets in the morning in apparently vigorous health for a man of his years. He had been about his accustomed duties, and many of our citizens had seen and talked with him. The facts about his death are as follows: He came down street about 3 p.m. yesterday from his residence, corner of Niagara and Prospect streets, to get a clock which was being repaired. He soon returned with it to his home. In the house with him at the time was a niece, Mrs. Bristol, and a servant girl. Mr. Shelley placed the clock in position and turning to Mrs. Bristol asked the time in order to set it, at the same time also taking out his own watch. Mrs. B. barely had time to turn about before Mr. Shelley suddenly fell striking his head upon the castor of a table. Mrs. B. and the servant immediately hastened to his aid and summoned Dr. Gould, but Mr. Shelley only gasped twice and died almost immediately. Such are the outline facts of this sudden death, which has cast a gloom over the community.

Chester F. Shelley was born at Pittsford, N.Y., of humble parentage, February 7th, 1811. He was therefore 76 years of age. When only eight years old, with a younger sister—six years of age—he left his home and started westward to visit relatives probably. Somehow the two lost each other and the lad eventually found himself alone in Lockport. The sister also, in due time, found a home in the west. Here he fell in with Elliott Lewis and learned the trade of a harness maker, working many years at it. He was married in 1852 to Mrs. George P. Hawes, *nee* Miss Clarissa Craine, who originally came here from Herkimer county. They lived most happily together until last March, when she died. Since her taking away Mr. S. had been greatly depressed. Of late, however, he seemed more cheerful, and although, as he recently informed a friend he did not expect to live but a few years at the furthest, still he appeared resigned to the situation. It is generally known, however, that Mr. Shelley was unusually cast down over his wife's death, and never fully rallied from the terrible blow. His death is supposed to have been caused by heart disease. Few if any suspected this trouble. We are informed, however, by an old friend of Mr. Shelley's that he had been with him when symptoms of such a malady were noticeable.

Chester F. Shelley was most respected by those who knew him best. He possessed a rugged and, in some respects, angular character. He was a positive man; strong in his likes and dislikes; perhaps too ready sometimes to express an adverse opinion—but under it all was a substratum of solid honesty and unimpeachable integrity that won universal respect. Especially were these latter traits noticeable in official station. Mr. Shelley was elected sheriff of Niagara county in 1852. He was subsequently appointed

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supervisor of the distillery of this city; also superintendent of this section of the canal. In each one of these important places his unbending honesty was recognized as above suspicion and reproach. It is not necessary for us to go into details about this. It is known of all, and many incidents in proof well testify his character in this direction could be easily cited.

It was an especially exciting political time when he ran for sheriff, there being several tickets in the field. When election night came it was found by the managers in Lockport that Mr. Shelley was defeated with Somerset to hear from. Worse than that the usual Whig majority in that town would not be sufficient to elect. It proved, however, that Somerset was unusually true that year, and Mr. Shelley had some fifteen majority in the county. He made a good sheriff and it has also been the remark that this section of the canal never had a more faithful superintendent than Chester F. Shelley. He was long a Whig challenger at the polls. Later on he was an uncompromising Republican [e.g. after the dissolution of the Whig party and its subsequent replacement by the Republican party], and so continued to the day of his death. He believed in the Union and had no quarter for its enemies North or South. He detested shams in politics as well as elsewhere and was never afraid to say so. In his day and time he was a zealous political worker, and a successful one too. The party is the better and always will be for the presence of such uncompromising men.

Mr. Shelley was equally honest, earnest and straightforward in all other walks of life. He had always been prominently identified with the Church of the Redeemer (Universalist) of this city, to which he gave liberally of his time and means. Nowhere will his loss be more deeply felt than in this church of his choice.

It is a noticeable fact that about the first pleasure trip of Mr. Shelley's life was taken last summer when he visited relatives in Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin, being absent some six weeks.

He leaves as nearest relatives Mrs. Charles Wilson, of Milan, Mich., a daughter of the sister mentioned above from whom he became separated in early life; Theo. Mead, of Marcelona, Mich., a nephew; Elwin Mead, lawyer, of Grand Rapids, Mich., a nephew.

Mr. Shelley left a reasonable competency.

The funeral will be held next Friday at 1 p.m. from his late residence, corner Prospect and Niagara streets—his pastor, Rev. G. W. Powell, officiating.

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