

Skinner, Alanson

Hon. Alanson Skinner

It has been very aptly said that "a truthful representative of a worthy life is a legacy of humanity." Acting upon this assertion, we present an outline of the business, social and official character of Alanson Skinner, a pioneer of Brownville, who was prominently identified with all its interests. He was born at Westmoreland, New Hampshire, May 21, 1794, and was the son of Timothy¹ [and Ruth Warner] Skinner, and the third of a family of nine children,—eight sons and one daughter. In 1814 he came to Brownville from his native State, and after 1830 never changed the home of his adoption, where, in all that related to the growth, success, and prosperity of the village, he took an active part. He grew up with it through all its changes, ever remaining one of its most respected and worthy citizens. He took an active part in military matters soon after he came, and served under Gen. Jacob Brown, in the troubles that then existed between the United States and Great Britain. Soon after he settled in Brownville he became actively interested in manufacturing, and for many years owned and conducted an extensive foundry and stove-works, carrying on a large business, always managed with carefulness and success. This industry was an important one in those days and the firm of Skinner & Davis will long be remembered in this part of the State. He continued the business alone for many years, when his sons, William T., James, and Horace, succeeded him, the former still remaining in the business. Mr. Skinner was supervisor of the town during the years 1839-40 and 1846, and for nine years, between 1832 and 1849, was one of the village trustees, being chosen president of the village in 1836. In 1850 he represented this district in the State senate, and it can be truthfully said of him that in whatever position he was placed he was always actuated by a faithful desire to do his duty to his constituents and to maintain a reputation for personal honor. He was a careful and systematic businessman, and his extensive investments were almost invariably attended with success. He was industrious and economical, and no man ever bore a name more worthy for honor and integrity. For several years he was the honored and respected president of the National Union Bank of Watertown, in which he had long been a large stockholder. Socially, he was one of the most genial and cordial of men. He was hospitable in his home, in his conversational powers attractive and entertaining. He was for nine years an earnest and consistent member of the Masonic fraternity, being a member of the Watertown Chapter and commandery of Brownville lodge. At showing the esteem at which he was held by his fellow Masons, we append the following extract from the "Memorial Tribute" placed upon the records of the Watertown commandery, No. 11, Knights Templar:

¹ This was a Universalist family.

Skinner, Alanson

"The members of the Commandery unite in cordial recognition of the sterling virtues of the late Sir Knight Alanson Skinner. As a Sir Knight he exemplified the great Templar characteristics of charity, and hospitality...His unswerving integrity as a man deserved the assured success that attended his efforts"....

His town has had few equals and no superiors in integrity and capability as representatives in the county board of supervisors. While a member of the State senate he was distinguished for his firm adherence to principle.

On the 29th day of September, 1819, Mr. Skinner was united in marriage with Miss Mary Woodward. This union was blessed with four children, namely, Horace, born September 27, 1820, now resides in Brownville; Mary, born November 22, 1822, now the wife of the Rev. Luther Rice, of Watertown; James, born November 19, 1824, and lives in Aurora, Illinois; William T., born December 11, 1826, and now represents the business established by his father.

On the 7th of June, 1876, Mr. Skinner died, full of years and honors. At his death he was eighty-two years of age, and he retained all his faculties to the last. In his death, the community lost a respected and worthy citizen; his wife, a devoted husband; his children, an affectionate father, and his acquaintances, a true Christian companion and friend.

L. H. Everts, *History of Jefferson Co.* [NY] (1878)

Transcribed on 5 Aug 2007 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY