

[Sprague, Sarah Elmina]

Had Attended Suffragist Meeting in Evening

WELL KNOWN AS AN EDUCATOR

Death Was Due to Acute Indigestion—

Was Long Identified With Educational Work in Western States

After returning home from the suffragist meeting Friday evening, apparently in the best of health, Dr. Sarah E. Sprague was suddenly taken ill about midnight at the home of Mrs. Mary B. Delaney of 706 Washington street, where she had apartments, and despite medical attention, died within an hour. Dr. G. S. Farmer, who was called, reached the bedside about ten minutes before Mrs. Sprague passed away. Her death was due to acute indigestion.

Mrs. Delaney said this morning that Mrs. Sprague was apparently in the best of health throughout the day Friday. In the evening Mrs. Delaney and Mrs. Sprague attended the mass meeting and listened to the address by Miss Leonora O'Reilly. Mrs. Sprague talked with Miss O'Reilly and Miss Janet Moffatt when she entered the meeting place and she was requested by Miss Moffatt to take a seat on the platform and give a short talk. Mrs. Sprague declined, saying she was a new comer to Watertown and preferred not to take a prominent part. After the return from the meeting Mrs. Sprague retired at about 11. Shortly after midnight she seemed to have difficulty breathing and Mrs. Delaney, who was in the next room, went to her aid. Dr. Farmer was summoned and arrived in a few minutes but Mrs. Sprague was sinking rapidly and she died in less than an hour... Her brother, D. F. Sprague of Harrisville, was notified of her death and he came from that village to this city in an auto.

Sarah Elmina Sprague was born in the town of Fowler, St. Lawrence county, in June, 1848. She was a daughter of Chester H. Sprague and Melissa Johnson, at the time prominent residents of southern St. Lawrence county. They were thrifty farm residents of that town and represented the first generation of settlers in that section.

As a child she attended district schools near her home and when a young woman went to the old Gouverneur University. She left this school before she completed her course and then went to St. Lawrence University, enrolling there as a student when she was 14 years of age. She was graduated from St. Lawrence University in the class of [1866?] and enjoyed the distinction of being one of the first two young women ever graduated from that well known institution of learning.

She taught school for a time in Ogdensburg, and later became professor of pedagogy in the state normal school at Plattsburg. She soon went west, however, and the principal years of her activities as an educator were spent there. She taught in Minnesota, Kansas, California and Washington. She was a member of the faculty of Throop Institute at Pasadena, Cal. for a time and later became a member of the faculty of Washington University, at Seattle, Wash. She also taught for a time in Kansas and was for six years deputy state

[Sprague, Sarah Elmina]

superintendent of schools of the state of Minnesota. For a long period of years she was an institute instructor in various western states.

She had been honored by various western colleges and in the '90's her alma mater, St. Lawrence, conferred upon her the degree of doctor of philosophy.

About [18?] years ago she retired from active service as an educator and went to Chicago, where she entered the employ of the Rand & McNally company as a writer of text books. She was the author of various volumes for use in public schools, including the Sprague series of school readers. She was a frequent contributor to newspapers and magazines and wrote verse which was widely copied.

She retired from this work about a year ago and returned to Gouverneur, where many of the friends of her youth resided. She spent last winter there and in the spring decided to come to Watertown to make her home. She then engaged apartments at the Delaney home, 706 Washington street. She had been there but little during the summer, however, having spent the greater part of the time at the home of her brother, D. F. Sprague, at Harrisville. She had only recently returned here.

Dr. Sprague had been identified with the suffrage movement in Northern New York, and had shown a keen interest in women's club work.

She was a life-long member of the Universalist church, and on coming to Watertown became identified with All Souls Church.

She was a woman of strong personality, courageous at all times, not afraid to lead an unpopular cause, always a pioneer in new causes that promised reform. She made an unusual success of teaching and her impress had been left upon thousands who were her pupils and many other thousands who came under her influence when she was an institute worker.

The funeral will be attended from the home of her brother, D. F. Sprague, in Harrisville Monday morning at about 11, and the body will be taken to the Gulph burying ground in the town of Fowler for interment. All of her deceased relatives are buried there...

Dr. Sprague is survived by two brothers, D. F. Sprague of Harrisville and W. B. Sprague of Canton. Two sisters, Mrs. Marion McNair of Great Falls, Montana and Miss Clare Sprague of Harrisville, also survive.

*Daily Times, Watertown NY, Sat. 18 Oct 1913*

Transcribed on 7 May 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY