

[Stevens, Abram W.]

ABRAM W. STEVENS

Abram W. Stevens, one of the oldest and best known residents of Auburn, died at his residence, No. 16 Orchard street, Saturday evening.

Abram W. Stevens was born in the Western part of the town of Genoa, Cayuga county, New York, February 14, 1815. His father, Daniel Stevens, was a weaver and knitter, maker of the old fashioned home spun goods. He had three brothers and two sisters, two of the brothers and one sister surviving him. With only limited education he left home at an early age to gain his own livelihood, engaging in carpenter work, assisting in erecting several buildings which yet stand at Northville. He was also for some time employed at boat-building at Kings Ferry on Cayuga lake and later became a millwright, his first venture in this line being to equip a large flour and feed mill at Northville.

When about 21 years of age he opened a shop in the basement of Milton Remington's foundry and machine shop at Genoa and there constructed a stationary steam engine having a boiler built up of cast iron rings and cast iron flues, it being impossible to obtain plate iron or steel boilers in that day without great expense. This engine was the wonder of that section of the country and Mr. Stevens' reputation as a practical inventor rapidly extended. He constructed several of these engines and erected them at various points throughout the State.

In 1842 he married Miss Lorana Remington, of Genoa, a niece of Milton Remington, who survives him. Unto them were born five children, three dying in infancy and two still living, Mrs. Helen S. Close, of Iowa City, Iowa and LeRoy W. Stevens, of Chicago. In the same year of his marriage he, in partnership with Joseph Mosher, began the manufacture of threshing machines. After a few years Hiram Birdsall, of Poplar Ridge, N.Y., was admitted into the firm but later both Messrs. Mosher and Birdsall retired, leaving Mr. Stevens to conduct the business alone.

His first threshing machine was very primitive, consisting merely of the cylinder supported by a frame, there being no fan, separator or stacker. As the trade demanded various appliances and improvements, they were added until his machine reached a nearly perfect state. The result of his inventive mind is shown in all the threshing machines of the present day, many of his inventions having been universally adopted and continued in use in the most modern machines. Besides threshers, he manufactured all kinds of agricultural implements, plows, barrows and wagons. In 1878 the shops at Genoa, which had grown to be quite extensive, were totally destroyed by fire and he removed to Auburn, leasing the plant in Washington street formerly occupied by the Dodge & Stephenson reaper works. In 1870 his son, Le Roy

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W. Stevens, was admitted into partnership and the firm became A. W. Stevens & Son, and at about the time of the fire, Norman Lester, of Genoa, was admitted, the firm being styled A. W. Stevens, Son & Co. After a couple of years Mr. Lester retired and the name again became A. W. Stevens & Son and so remained until 1898, when Mr. Stevens retired and the business was transferred to Marionette, Wisconsin.

Until his coming to Auburn, there had been but little call for engines to operate threshing machinery, the sweep horsepower answering all purposes, but soon demand arose for engines and a plain engine was produced which in a short time was superseded by the traction or self-propelling engine, the entire details of which were the result of Mr. Stevens' study and investigation. The practical mechanical side of the business always received his personal attention and the Stevens machinery held the highest place among goods of its class.

He was a staunch Republican, but never aspiring to political positions, though he held the office of supervisor of the town of Genoa for two terms. He had taken the New York Tribune regularly since its inception in 1841 and had years of its files stored away.

Having been an employer of labor for over 60 years, he understood and appreciated the working life of a laboring man. He was always ready to lend a helping hand and give an encouraging word, was a believer in good men, good wages and steady employment and this was a maxim well kept throughout his busy life. One of his greatest pleasures was the supervision and work among his employe[e]s, many of whom continued with him for years, and to them he was always and affectionately known as "Uncle Abram." He was a man of strict integrity and honor, a lovely character, genial and sociable. He was a member and trustee of the First Universalist church of Genoa when there, and held a like position in the Universalist church of this city. He was quiet and retiring in his manner and preferred the ties of home to all other associations. His death removes one of the old type of sturdy, inventive minds and Christian characters which have contributed so much to the upbuilding of the best of the American people.

Funeral services will be held at his late residence to-day at 4 p.m. The remains will be taken at 6:15 p.m. to Iowa City, Iowa, for burial on Thursday.

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