

[Van Nostrand, William]

William Van Nostrand

The death of William Van Nostrand, which occurred at his home at Short Tract, town of Granger, on Thursday evening, ended an exceptionally long, active and useful life, for he was born in Saratoga county February 28, 1814. He traced his ancestry to the Dutch-French families who settled near Bridgeport, Conn., about the close of the seventeenth century. William Van Nostrand was the fourth child in a family of eleven of the late Captain Isaac Van Nostrand, who came from Milton, Saratoga county, in 1819, and purchased about 300 acres of land on the "Short Tract" and built a saw mill, the Indians on the (Ca??ades) reservation turning out to help at the raising. In 1820 Captain Van Nostrand brought on his family, and in a few years they were all settlers so near him that he could visit any of them in half an hour. He had for some time the only timepiece in the settlement, and so made it a custom to blow a huge conch shell morning, noon and evening, so the settlers might preserve some regularity in going to bed, getting up, and having their dinners. William received the only education obtainable at the common schools of his day. He had a vigorous mind and became a thoroughly well-informed man. He pursued the business of farmer and lumberman. In 1840 he married Emily, daughter of Enos and Elmira (Conkey) Baldwin, and the young couple at once commenced housekeeping on the farm he ever since owned, and upon which still stands the first framed barn of the town. When Mr. Van Nostrand was a lad the Indians on the reservation nearby were frequent visitors at the settlement, and with many of them he became personally acquainted. He knew the celebrated old John Mohawk, and used to tell of seeing the wonderful and historic scar on his shoulder, the result of a blow from a tomahawk in the hands of the renowned Major Moses Van Campen.

When the time [came] for the erection of the town of Granger it was William Van Nostrand who gave it its name in honor of Francis Granger, of Canandaigua, who was postmaster-general under the administrations of Harrison and Tyler. Mr. Van Nostrand was honored by his townsmen with various official positions, being supervisor six years, assessor and highway commissioner. Mr. Van Nostrand had probably the most extensive and valuable collection of books to be found in the home of any farmer of Allegany county. He was a great reader and was judicious in his choice of reading, which, combined with a wonderfully retentive memory, made it at all times available, and which made him a recognized authority, a regular walking political cyclopedia. He was noted for his hospitality, which many have enjoyed. In politics he was a Whig of the Seward stamp until 1856, then a Republican, being one of those who "were in at the borning," the

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birthplace of the [Republican] party being only twelve miles distant from his home. He had never missed an election nor town meeting since he was a voter, though at the last election, for the first time, he had to be helped to the polls. Mr. Van Nostrand was never connected with any church, but in religious convictions was probably nearer the Universalist faith than any other. He led an exemplary life in many particulars, and his loss will be sadly felt by a wide circle of friends throughout the county, who will keep his memory green for long years to come. He leaves a widow, four daughters and two sisters.

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Transcribed on 29 Nov 2011 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY