

[Van Wormer, John Orville]

J. VAN WORMER, 80, CIVIL WAR VETERAN, DIES Retired Contractor and Builder Was Once a Member of Local Police Force

John Orville Van Wormer, aged 80 years, of No. 214 North Massey street, a life long resident of this city, and a well known Civil war veteran, having served with the 186th Volunteer Infantry, passed away at his residence at about 8 o'clock Friday evening. His death came after a long illness.

Mr. Van Wormer's illness dates back about three years ago, it was said at the home on Saturday. At that time he was commander of the Joe Spratt Post, G. A. R., and on Decoration Day was supposed to officiate at the memorial services that were to be held in honor of Mr. Van Wormer's dead comrades. He was stricken ill the night before and was unable to execute in his official capacity. Since that time he had been in ill health. Since February he had been seriously ill and had failed steadily since that time.

John Orville Van Wormer was born in this city, October 9, 1843, the son of the late Orville B. and Angeline Pierce Van Wormer. He had always resided in this city and received his education in the schools here. At an early age he entered the employ of a contractor of this city and later established a business of his own here, doing contracting and building. On New Year's day, 1879, he was appointed to the local police force. At that time the local police force consisted of four men and Mr. Van Wormer's appointment made the fifth man to protect the interests of the people here.

In 1864, when he was 20 years of age, the Civil war broke out and Mr. Van Wormer was one of the first young men of this city to volunteer his services for the northern forces. He enlisted in the 186th New York Volunteer Infantry and was immediately assigned to Sackets Harbor. This infantry unit was established by the late General Bradley Winslow, after he had once been forced to resign a commissioned officership in the Black River Corps, one of the earliest of the local military organizations to tender their services to the governor of the state.

This regiment took an important part in the capture of the Weldon Railroad in October, 1864, and led the attack that captured Fort Malone, one of the outposts of Petersburg.

In an attack on Gettysburg, Colonel Winslow was seriously injured, a bullet passing through his body, and Mr. Van Wormer, who at that time was a sergeant, was among the men detailed to remove him from the field of battle.

During the Civil war Sergeant Van Wormer saw much active duty and at various times saw and conversed with Abraham Lincoln. He often related his experiences which occurred during those days to his grandchildren and friends of this city.

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For the past 30 years he had been retired from active business, having given up his contracting and building business and also retiring from the police force in 1894.

On January 1, 1864, Mr. Van Wormer was united in marriage in this city [to Catherine, daughter of Zephaniah and Sophia Mckenzie DeWitt]. His wife survives. Last New Year's Day Mr. and Mrs. Van Wormer celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary at the home of one of their sons, Orville D. Van Wormer, of No. 1023 Academy street.

About 1918 Mr. Van Wormer was elected to the office of commander of the local G. A. R. Post in which he had always served in an active capacity[,] and after serving two terms in that capacity was called to serve for a third time as executive of the Civil war veterans. He was forced to decline this nomination at this time, however, because of declining health.

Surviving Mr. Van Wormer are his widow, two sons, Orville D. Van Wormer and Floyd S. Van Wormer, both of this city; two grandchildren, Anna Laura Van Wormer and Norwood H. Van Wormer, both of Los Angeles, California, but formerly of this city; one sister, Mrs. Laura O. MacGreagor [MacGregor], and several nephews and nieces.

Funeral services will be held from the late home in North Massey street on Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock, Rev. Harry Westbrook Reed, pastor of All Souls' Universalist church, officiating. Burial will be made in the family plot at Brookside cemetery.

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