

[Weeks, Jacob]

UNCLE JACOB WEEKS

The Millionaire who Served Ice Water and Entertained the Needy in Fifth Avenue

On a hot day in summer people trudging home from Central Park may have been surprised to see an old gentleman standing in front of the fine house at Fifty-eighth street and Fifth avenue giving drinks from a bucket of ice water to the thirsty. On a Fourth of July the same old gentleman may have been found looking after a picnic party of several hundred children, and seeing that they all got their ice cream. Needy people who stopped at the house were taken in and fed, and their other immediate needs were supplied. Neighbors say that once the old gentleman got a party of gypsies into his house and cared for them. He was a large man, with some severity of aspect and brusque in speech. To one who asked who he was, the answer would be have likely to be, "That's Uncle Jacob Weeks." He died last Friday, and the funeral service took place yesterday afternoon at his house and at the Church of the Divine Paternity [Fourth Universalist]. He leaves property valued at over \$4,000,000.

Mr. Weeks was born in 1803 in Mott street, of Quaker parentage. He began life as a carpenter's apprentice, serving out the time of his indentures. He was hard working, frugal, and economical. He told a relative some time ago that when he earned only \$3 a week he laid by some of it. After learning his trade he went first into the grocery business at Elizabeth and Houston streets. In 1845 he went into the coal business, starting at the corner of Houston and Bedford streets. He made large purchases, sold for moderate profits, and his maxim of business was, "Get full weight and give full weight." His business spread until he had a large yard on the Bowery, opposite Bleecker street, and half a dozen branch yards. As he accumulated money he bought real estate, mostly down town and on the west die. He avoided stocks and bonds, and it is said that the only investment of that kind he ever made was the purchase of \$80,000 worth of the early issues of Government bonds. Just before the war he bought a corner at Fifth avenue and Fifty-eighth street. It was then quite out of the city. It is stated that Mr. W.H. Vanderbilt has offered as much as (\$450,000?) for the corner of it. Four large brown-stone houses occupy the lot.

Mr. Weeks connected himself with Dr. [Edwin H.] Chapin when the latter, a young man, came to take charge of the old Universalist church at Barclay and Church streets. Mr. Weeks took an earnest interest in all of Dr. Chapin's philanthropic schemes, and was a supporter of the Chapin Hope [a nursing home], the Mission School, and of all the enterprises carried on by the church. The extent of his gifts for charitable purposes cannot be estimated, so quietly did he do such things. Among other things, he supplied the

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Newsboys' Lodging House and other institutions with coal gratis. He always maintained his frugal habits of living.

He enjoyed remarkable health until an extensive upturning of sewers in the neighborhood of his house brought upon his malaria fever, which ended in a fatal congestion of the brain. The funeral services yesterday afternoon were conducted by the Rev. Mr. [Charles] Eaton, Dr. Chapin's successor. The interment was in the old family vault on Second street, near Second avenue.

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Transcribed on 11 Sep 2013 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY