

Richard Perkinhon Clarkson

ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

"Richard Perkinhon Clarkson." *The Annals of Iowa* 7 (1906), 315-316.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.3277>

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Sincerely yours,

R. P. Clarkson

RICHARD P. CLARKSON.

Pioneer settler, farmer, soldier, printer, editor of the *Des Moines Daily Register*,
and U. S. pension agent for Iowa and Nebraska.

NOTABLE DEATHS.

RICHARD PERKINSON CLARKSON was born in Brookville, Indiana, April 16, 1840; he died in Des Moines, Iowa, October 3, 1905. The published biographical sketches of Mr. Clarkson say little concerning his early education, except that he learned the printing trade in the office of *The Brookville American*, which was owned by his father. The family removed to Grundy county, Iowa, in 1855, and settled upon a tract of land which became widely known as "Melrose Farm." Upon this farm Richard labored for some years. He came to Des Moines in 1861 and worked a few months as a printer in the office of *The Des Moines Register*, then published by Frank W. Palmer. In October of that year he enlisted in Company A, 12th Iowa Infantry, which soon afterwards left for the front. The regiment participated in the battle of Shiloh, where, after hard fighting, it was captured on the 6th day of April, 1862. Richard spent seven months in Confederate prisons, after which he was exchanged and returned to his regiment, with which he served to the end of the war. Returning from the army in 1865, he resumed his labors on Melrose Farm, where he remained until 1870. In that year the Clarksons, father and two sons, Richard P. and James S., purchased *The Des Moines Register*. In 1872 the sons purchased their father's interest. In the year 1889 James sold his interest to Richard, who published it thereafter until he sold the establishment in July, 1902, to George E. Roberts, now Director of the U. S. Mint. Some months after he left the office he was appointed U. S. Pension Agent for the district of Iowa and Nebraska. Mr. Clarkson was one of the leading journalists and representative men of this State from the time that he acquired *The Des Moines Register* until his death. Whatever engaged his attention he was sure to prosecute with all the energy he could command. A man of marked intelligence and great earnestness, he retained to the last vivid impressions of his army life. Several questions arose touching the service of the regiment and the tactics of the division of which it formed a part, in the discussion of which he entered with great zeal. In fact, his whole life was an exemplification of his characteristic earnestness. On the farm there was no more untiring laborer, nor one who had a more intelligent idea of what he was doing. While editing *The Register* he brought to the attention of the farmers of Iowa—from his actual experience—the fact that they were losing hundreds of thousands of dollars every year by the use of poor seed corn. He prosecuted the discussion arising therefrom occasionally throughout his entire editorial career. This subjected him to much badinage, which he never dignified with the slightest notice. He lived, however, to see his ideas become a part of the agricultural literature of the State. In this discussion, which has resulted in great profit to the farmers of Iowa, he was unquestionably the pioneer. Its substantial results entitle him to grateful remembrance. As a practical printer and later as an editor, earnestness and devotion to duty as he comprehended situations, marked his entire career. For many years he himself made up the forms of *The Weekly Register*. On Thursdays one could always find him at his post, wearing a newspaper in lieu of an apron, and so engaged in this weekly duty that he would suffer no ordinary interruptions. As an editor he was an ardent, uncompromising partisan. In one direction, however, he was extremely liberal. If he had given offense to any man, that man could always have a hearing over his own signature in the columns of *The Register*, a privilege which all journalists did not concede. It mattered not how severely Mr. Clarkson was criticised, his opponent could always have his "day in court." In his later years he was afflicted with deafness, and this led him to adopt a very retired life. Two places claimed his entire time and attention—his home, and the editorial rooms of *The Register*. In the direction of business he was very successful and at his death left a

handsome fortune. This was the result of his habits of prudence and economy no less than of his large business ability. While he was strictly economical in his personal habits, and cautious in his expenditures, those who were closest to him and knew him best have known that he was always charitable to the unfortunate, dispensing gifts with a liberal hand to the deserving poor. Aside from the acrimony arising from strenuous politics, and the many bitter memories which so long survived the civil war, he was a man of kind and genial disposition—a man of many friends. While he remained in editorial life he often indulged in kind words concerning the Historical Department. No man in Iowa was more deeply pleased to hear of its continued growth. An unusually fine photograph, with one of his rare autograph letters, are pleasant memorials of this pioneer farmer and journalist.

JAMES D. WRIGHT was born in Belmont county, Ohio, Nov. 30, 1820; he died at Chariton, Iowa, Dec. 26, 1905. His parents were pioneers in Ohio, and as was usually the case with the children of early settlers, his youth involved much hard work on the farm, with meager education. His first experience with the world at large came at the age of sixteen, when he teamed across the mountains over the government pike to Baltimore. A few glimpses of the world made him realize the need of education, and he left home and for three years attended Monroe Academy at Woodfield, O. In 1840 he began the study of medicine and graduated from the Medical College in Cincinnati in 1843. He immediately set out for New York, pursuing further courses in medicine and surgery, soon receiving the appointment of physician of a district including the Five Points in New York. His experience in this celebrated region was varied and valuable in the development of professional skill, but it convinced him that his future was in the west, and he returned to Belmont, where he began the practice of medicine. At the outbreak of the Mexican war he sought service as a surgeon, but his health was broken by illness at Nashville, and he was obliged to return home. In 1856 he came west, intending to go beyond the Missouri, but inclement weather prevented, and he settled in Knoxville, Marion county, where he lived until 1861, when he removed to Chariton, where he continued to reside until his death. Besides his interest in his profession, Dr. Wright was generally concerned in outside business undertakings and in the promotion of civic and social enterprises. He was actively engaged in the building of the B. & O. R. R. in Ohio, and later in promoting the Burlington road in Iowa. At Knoxville he was active in organizing the County Fair Association and was identified with the State Board of Agriculture, of which he was a director for eleven years. At Chariton he purchased a flouring mill and conducted it for a number of years. It was an important institution in those days, being the only mill within many miles of that point. So important was the mill that he was unable to secure competent help to manage it during the early days of the civil war, and was thus prevented from enlisting, as he greatly desired to do, because the operation of the mill was essential to the people of Lucas county. It was not until 1864 that he secured a competent substitute and thereupon enlisted as a private in the 46th Iowa. Very soon thereafter he was made surgeon of the 47th Iowa. Owing to the illness of other physicians he was given the care of an additional regiment and at one time was in charge of a refugee hospital. After the war he was elected to the State senate from the 5th district and served during the 12th and 13th general assemblies. He won high esteem and general confidence, and was elected a trustee of the Iowa State College of Agriculture at Ames, and served during the important formative days of that institution. In 1874 Dr. Wright was stricken with paralysis, but he was a man of firm, vigorous will power, of cheerful disposition, and in large part overcame the ailment and continued to be a strong, influential citizen to the day of his death.

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