

John MacVicar

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NOTABLE DEATHS

JOHN MACVICAR was born in Guelph, Ontario, Canada, July 4, 1859, and died in Des Moines, Iowa, November 15, 1928. His parents were John and Mary (McEwan) MacVicar. In 1868 the family removed to Erie, Pennsylvania. The son attended public school in Guelph and in Erie, and in 1882 removed to Des Moines taking employment with a wall paper company, but soon entering business in that line for himself. In 1884 he married Nettie M. Nash, daughter of the Reverend John A. Nash, noted pioneer preacher and educator of Des Moines. In 1888 he was elected recorder of North Des Moines. Rather than sign certificates for contracts which had not been completed, he was forced to resign, but the next year ran for mayor on the issue and was elected. Before his term as mayor expired, North Des Moines was consolidated with Des Moines. During the next few years he was active in the movement for reduction of public service rates in the city and for the municipal ownership of the water works. In 1896 he was elected mayor of Des Moines on these issues and was re-elected in 1898. By this time he was attaining the national prominence he later reached as an authority on municipal government. In 1897 he was elected president of the League of American Municipalities. Having been defeated for reelection as mayor in 1900 he accepted the secretaryship of the league with his headquarters in New York City, became editor of *American Municipalities*, and devoted his time to the cause of better city government. In 1908 he returned to Des Moines and under the commission form of government was elected commissioner of streets, was re-elected in 1910, but defeated in 1912. In 1916 he was elected again as mayor, but resigned in 1917 and in May, 1917, entered the officers' training camp at Plattsburg, New York, became a captain in the quartermasters' corps, and was honorably discharged March 6, 1919. In 1922 he was elected superintendent of public safety. In 1924 he ran for mayor but was defeated by the then mayor, Carl M. Garver. In 1926 he ran for superintendent of streets, but was defeated by W. F. Mitchell. In 1928 he was elected mayor again. He was the author of many magazine articles on municipal government, made many addresses on the subject throughout the United States, and was regarded as an outstanding authority on city affairs. His public activities were confined to the municipal field, although he had an interest in state and national matters, identified himself with the more progressive wing of the Republican party, had charge of the Cummins-for-president headquarters at the National Convention of 1912, and later in the campaign supported Theodore Roosevelt for election. He was a man of integrity, high ideals, and great courage. His vast collection of printed authorities upon his special subjects and his personal correspondence have been deposited in the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.

ARTHUR HENRY DAVISON was born near Blooming Valley, Crawford County, Pennsylvania, March 6, 1857, and died in Des Moines, Iowa, December 1, 1928. Burial was at Rock Rapids, Iowa. His parents were Wesley and Cynthia Amelia (Thompson) Davison. Arthur H. attended common school in the country and in Blooming Valley. In the fall of 1873 he attended State Normal School at Edinboro, Pennsylvania, and for the next six years he alternated between teaching near home, working in creameries, and attending State Normal School, except that one year he spent in Platte County, Nebraska, where he taught, and worked on a farm. In 1879 he was graduated from the State Normal School at Edinboro and in September of that year removed to Rock Rapids, Iowa, where he became principal of the town schools. He occupied that position until the summer of 1881 when he was appointed county superintendent of Lyon County to fill a vacancy. That fall he was elected county superintendent and was re-elected in 1883, serving in that office until January, 1886. In November, 1883, he with Charles Creglow purchased the *Rock Rapids Review* which he edited for about a year as a Republican paper. In 1885 he purchased the *Lyon County Reporter*, a Republican paper, which he published and edited until August, 1887. From 1885 to 1897 he dealt extensively in real estate. In 1893 he was elected representative for Lyon and O'Brien counties, and served in the Twenty-fifth General Assembly. In 1895 he received Lyon County's support for the nomination for state senator, but failed after 1700 ballots. In May, 1896, he was admitted to the Iowa bar but never entered extensively into the practice. For years he was a member of the Rock Rapids School Board, and of the Public Library Board. He removed to Des Moines in December, 1898, and in January, 1899, became secretary of the Executive Council of Iowa. That body had been created but eighteen months and he was its first formally elected secretary. During his tenure and largely by his insistence, the importance of the Council in all matters touching the state's business, was greatly enlarged, and that body became dominant in innumerable details of government. The secretary was of necessity the burden bearer. Every order, contract, bill, voucher, came under his watchful eye; and he formulated and enforced regulations for the transaction of public business consistent with best methods in private business. He was invaluable for his knowledge and industry in those larger responsibilities of the Council in the assessment and taxation of property. He was conscientious and thorough. The hostility he often incurred was a real tribute to his honesty. He was largely responsible for carrying through to the finish, in harmony with the spirit of the legislation, the capitol grounds extension project, and in such way that captious criticism was forever silenced. He devised the section of Iowa law providing that condemnation for state purposes of real estate by a "sheriff jury" selected by the chief justice of the Supreme Court. Nothing suspicious or questionable was ever suggested in connection therewith. It was largely through his insistence that provision was made for an archives

department for preservation of the records of the state. He was ever looking for betterment of methods, always to the end of greater efficiency or better results. He gained the confidence of leading legislators who often consulted him. Governors and other state officials came to rely upon him in many matters effecting the welfare of the state. In a modest way, without thought of himself, free from selfish ambition, Secretary Davison was a useful public servant who blazed a way that will be followed long after his name has been forgotten.—Ora Williams.

DAVID JAMES PALMER was born in Washington County, Pennsylvania, November 15, 1839, and died in Washington, Iowa, November 19, 1928. He was with his parents, Samuel R. and Margaret (Munce) Palmer, in their removals to Carroll County, Ohio, in 1842 and to Washington County, Iowa, in 1856, where they located on a farm near the town of Washington. He attended public school in Ohio and in Iowa, and helped on his father's farm. He attended United Presbyterian College in Washington in 1859 and 1860, and taught school in 1860 and 1861. On July 10, 1861, he enlisted as a private in Company C, Eighth Iowa Infantry, and was promoted to corporal September 9, 1861. On April 6, 1862, at the battle of Shiloh he was severely wounded and left on the field for dead, captured by the enemy, his wounds neglected for two days when in the maneuvers of the battle he found himself as near his comrades as his captors, crawled to the Union lines, where he was cared for, and weeks afterward was sent home. When the Twenty-fifth Iowa Infantry was organized that summer Corporal Palmer, who had organized Company A of that regiment while his arm was in a sling, was elected its captain. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the regiment when less than twenty-four years old, June 9, 1863. He was with his regiment, commanding it much of the time, as it was making its great record at Vicksburg, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Columbia, and at the grand review at Washington, and was mustered out June 6, 1865. He then returned home and devoted himself to farming and stock raising. He was elected county auditor of Washington County in 1875 and was re-elected in 1877, serving four years. In 1884 he was elected a presidential elector, running as a Republican. In 1891 he was elected senator and was re-elected in 1895, serving inclusively from the Twenty-fourth to the Twenty-seventh general assemblies. He resigned as senator at the close of the Twenty-seventh and accepted the appointment by Governor Shaw made on March 22, 1898, as a member of the Railroad Commission. By elections he continued in this office until 1915. His farm home was only a few miles from Washington, but the last twenty-five years of his life he and his wife, who was Letitia Helen Young before their marriage in 1866, and who survives him, resided in the city. He was outstandingly useful in church work, in politics, in social life, and in every other useful activity of the community. He was a lifelong member of the United Presbyterian church, for over thirty years was superintendent of the Sunday school, and for practically all his

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