

Edward Randall Mason

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ANNALS OF IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

NOTABLE DEATHS

EDWARD RANDALL MASON was born in Franklinville, Cattaraugus County, New York, December 18, 1846, and died in Des Moines, Iowa, January 30, 1929. His parents were Lewis J. and Nancy (Winslow) Mason. Edward was the eleventh in a family of twelve children. The family removed to Bentonsport, Van Buren County, Iowa, in 1858. He attended common school, clerked in local stores and on May 19, 1864, enlisted in Company K, Forty-fifth Iowa Infantry, and was mustered in as second corporal, and was mustered out September 16, 1864, at Keokuk at the end of his service. Returning home he clerked for a time in a general store, then took up the study of medicine at the Keokuk College of Physicians and Surgeons, but in 1869 removed to Des Moines and clerked in a grocery. August 5, 1870, he was appointed deputy clerk of the United States Circuit Court for the District of Iowa. In 1875 on the resignation of the clerk, Mr. Mason was promoted to that position, which he retained thirty-five years, or until in February, 1910. When he was appointed deputy clerk he began studying law and in 1872 was admitted to practice. He was United States Circuit Court commissioner from 1870 until 1902, was custodian of the United States Court House and Postoffice Building in Des Moines from 1889 until the advent of the following Cleveland administration, from 1885 to 1888 he was receiver for the Des Moines, Osceola & Southern Railroad, and was for brief periods deputy clerk of the United States District Court under Clerks J. J. Steadman and W. C. McArthur. During this busy official career he was engaged in several business enterprises. In 1870 he established a factory in Des Moines for making tinware and sheet iron ware, but in 1881 he changed to the making of barbed wire, the firm being the Merchants Barbed Wire Company, doing a large business, but finally selling to the trust. In 1875 he began the breeding and raising of Jersey cows and trotting horses on his small farm in Van Buren County, which he continued for over twenty years. In 1888 he and his brother, James F. Mason, organized the Des Moines Cotton Mill Company and for a few years did an extensive business in making cotton cloth. In 1906 he and Fred Duesenberg began the manufacture of the Mason automobile which continued with some success until in 1910 they sold to F. L. Maytag. On relinquishing the court clerkship in 1910 he devoted himself more particularly to his law practice in Des Moines having for a time J. B. Dyer as a partner, but in later years practiced alone, being engaged in the preparation of a case at the time of his death.

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