

James Whitcomb Ellis

ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

"James Whitcomb Ellis." *The Annals of Iowa* 17 (1929), 151-152.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.5358>

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NOTABLE DEATHS

MICHAEL F. HEALY was born in Lansing, Iowa, April 1, 1863, and died in Fort Dodge June 23, 1929. His parents were Michael and Catharine (Murphy) Healy. He attended public school in Lansing, Notre Dame University, Harvard University, and the Law Department of the University of Michigan. Being graduated from the latter in 1885 he at once began the practice of law at Fort Dodge. At this time he formed a friendship with John F. Duncombe, which influenced him professionally as well as politically. He soon attained a large practice and achieved a high standing in his profession. He gave much time to politics, but held no public offices, preferring only to aid his friends and to advocate those principles in which he believed. In 1888 when twenty-five years old he was temporary chairman of the Democratic State Convention in Des Moines. Since then he has been a favorite at the conventions of his party in Iowa as well as on the stump. He served his party as Tenth District member of the State Committee in 1896 and 1897, being chairman of the Executive Committee during 1897. He frequently attended Democratic national conventions and especially in 1924 won a notable ovation when he seconded the nomination of Alfred Smith. In the 1928 convention he was also accorded an ovation. Some twelve years before his death he became totally blind. This did not prevent him from continuing his law practice, nor from delivering public addresses. On the platform he had a fine presence, dignity, strength, courtesy, refinement, and a voice rich and beautiful. He had elegant diction, a marvelous memory, an acquaintance with the classics and a readiness in quotation, a keen sense of humor, an appreciation of the beautiful, and a good philosophy. These were some of the qualities that made him rank with the few real orators his state has produced.

JAMES WHITCOMB ELLIS was born near Danville, Hendricks County, Indiana, November 25, 1848, and died in Maquoketa, Iowa, April 9, 1929. His parents were Jesse and Ailsea (Jeffers) Ellis who settled near Maquoketa in 1852. James W. was reared on his father's farm, and attended public school until fourteen years old. He made several attempts to enlist in the Union Army during the Civil War, but was rejected because of his youth. However, in June, 1864, when less than sixteen years old, he got to the front long enough to witness the intensively fought campaigns at Culpepper and Petersburg, but was returned home. In May, 1866, he enlisted in Company H, Fifth United States Infantry, in which he served three years on the southwestern frontier. He then returned home and devoted himself to farming until 1889 when he began writing fire insurance. In 1907 he removed to Maquoketa, continuing his insurance, to which he added some real estate business.

A Democrat in politics, he was active in public matters. He was justice of the peace four years, and president of his school board twenty years. He was active in Grand Army circles and was commander of the Department of Iowa of the Union Veterans Union. In 1908 he was elected representative and was re-elected in 1910, serving in the Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth general assemblies. During his first term he succeeded in having an appropriation made for the erection of a monument to the memory of Ansel Briggs, the first governor of the state of Iowa, at his former home at Andrew, Jackson County. Mr. Ellis then raised the necessary money and had the remains of Governor Briggs removed from Omaha, where his death occurred May 5, 1881, and re-interred at Andrew. The monument was unveiled September 22, 1909. Mr. Ellis was the author of a *History of Jackson County* in two volumes, as well as of many articles of a local historical nature. He was secretary-treasurer of the Maquoketa Pioneer and Old Settlers Society for twelve years, and in 1903 organized the Jackson County Historical Society of which he became secretary and curator. All his life he was a collector of prehistoric, Indian, pioneer, and military relics, until he had one of the best private collections in the state.

CHARLES JOSEPH WONSOR was born at Erie, Whiteside County, Illinois, July 19, 1862, and died in Tama, Iowa, June 6, 1929. His parents, F. J. M. and Julia Weaver Wonsor, brought him with them as they removed to Tama in 1865. He attended public school in Tama and when fourteen years old, left Tama High School to assist his father who was the owner of the *Tama Herald*. In 1881, when nineteen years old, Charles became owner and editor of the paper and so continued until January 1, 1925, when the *Herald* was merged with the *Tama News* as the *News-Herald*, after which he was the senior editor of the consolidated paper, remaining in active work until a few weeks before his death. He was an active Republican but desired no political position. He served his city as mayor, and was postmaster at Tama from March, 1889, for seventeen years. He was master of a good style as a writer, was active in public service, and exercised a wholesome influence in his city and community during the half century of his activity.

WILLIAM T. RIGBY was born at Red Oak Grove, Cedar County, Iowa, November 13, 1841, and died in Vicksburg, Mississippi, May 11, 1929. Burial was in the National Cemetery at Vicksburg. His parents were W. A. and Lydia (Barr) Rigby. He attended common school and did farm work. He aided in enrolling Company B, Twenty-fourth Iowa Infantry, and was appointed its second lieutenant July 22, 1862. He was with his regiment in its campaigns and battles through Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, including the siege of Vicksburg. On August 6, 1863, he was promoted to captain. The regiment having been transferred to Virginia he participated in the famous Battle of Winchester

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