

James William Willett

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JAMES BELLAMY WEAVER, born August 19, 1861, and died May 11, 1940. He was born in Bloomfield, Iowa, the son of General James Baird Weaver, and was in the practice of law in Des Moines 58 years. After some schooling at the Southern Iowa Normal and Scientific Institute in Bloomfield, he became clerk in a store, but graduated from the law department of the Iowa State University in 1882. He associated himself with Senator C. H. Gatch and Judge W. A. Conner in the law, and continued along after their passing. Mr. Weaver devoted himself to bank and corporation law and served many prominent clients. He was elected as a Republican to the 37th General Assembly, to represent Polk County in the House, and was twice re-elected. He was an unusually active and influential member of the legislature, taking a lead in moves for social betterment and progressive legislation. He was foremost in advocating good roads legislation. He was much interested in help for the soldiers and for a bonus. He worked for the St. Lawrence deep waterway, opposed a proposed co-ordination of the educational institutions deemed detrimental, was chairman of a national homes conference held in Des Moines, and was chairman of an Iowa child welfare commission which secured valuable legislation. He was president of the alumni association of the state university. He served long on the Des Moines public library board, was president of the Press and Authors Club of Iowa, interested himself in the little theater project, was president of the Prairie Club, the University Club, and Golf and Country club. He was state director of the American Red Cross at the time of the world war. He was active in planning for the city of Des Moines and he had been chairman of the public welfare bureau. In his later years he devoted much time to the promotion of fine arts and was a member of the Des Moines Association of Fine Arts. With much of the talent of his father, who was one of the foremost orators of Iowa, he was in demand as a public speaker, and spoke at dedications of state parks and openings of highways and similar events. He spoke and wrote freely, and was a contributor to magazines both in prose and poetry, so that he had a wide acquaintance among authors and artists. Mr. Weaver was married to Fay Atkins in 1889, she passed away in 1919, leaving a son and a daughter who survive. He was also survived by four sisters and a brother. Mr. Weaver will be best remembered for his activity and zeal for civic betterment and the welfare of his own community. He was modest and unselfish and seemed ever ready to help in every good cause.—ORA WILLIAMS.

JAMES WILLIAM WILLETT, who was born March 8, 1846, died May 13, 1940. His birthplace was Keithsburg, Illinois, but for 70 years he had been a resident of Tama county, Iowa. He had been active in the practice of law through his 94th year. He was son of William Willett and Nancy Dennison Willett. The father had come from Kentucky and the mother from Indiana and they were pioneers of Mercer County, Ill.

James W. at the age of 17 tried in vain to enlist in the Union army and was rejected by three Illinois regiments, later going to Buffalo where he became a sailor and in 1863 he succeeded in getting into the navy and was assigned to gunboat service. As a boatswain's mate he had charge of the gun deck on the U. S. S. Springfield. After 1864 he was engaged in the river packet service on the Mississippi. Later he located in Toledo, Iowa, in 1870, and engaged in selling plows. There he studied law and was admitted to practice Feb. 1, 1872. In 1914 he was appointed district judge, and was later elected and served 12 years on the bench. He was head of the firm consisting of his son and grandson. In 1922 he was elected commander in chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, and at the time of his death was serving as judge advocate general, and also as department commander for Iowa. He had also been post commander in his home city of Tama, and was the last civil war veteran surviving in his county. On behalf of the G. A. R. he had traveled and spoken in nearly every state. He was a Mason and an Odd Fellow and gave a tract of land to the City of Tama for a public park. He had throughout his life taken deep interest in public affairs and was one of the Iowa delegates to the Republican national convention of 1884. He was last to survive of that delegation. As a lawyer he stood high in the profession. He was greatly respected as a judge of the district court. He was much beloved by his associates in the G. A. R. and they delighted in his accounts of his own colorful and thrilling experiences in the navy in a service of much importance on the Mississippi and tributaries. Judge Willet was married to Ann Rebecca Stoner at Christmas time, 1874, in Toledo, and she passed away January 27, 1927. They had three children, of whom two survive and also seven grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.—ORA WILLIAMS.

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