

NOTABLE DEATHS

JOHN FRANKLIN RIGGS, former state superintendent of public instruction of Iowa, died at his home in Des Moines, Iowa, June 19, 1937. Brial was at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. He was born February 14, 1860, near Salem, Iowa, the son of John and Rebecca (Allen) Riggs, pioneer settlers of Henry County. Receiving his elementary education in the rural schools of Henry County, he later attended Whittier College, Salem. After an intervening three years of teaching, he next attended Iowa Wesleyan College, Mt. Pleasant, from which he was graduated in 1885. In the November following his graduation he was elected county superintendent of schools of Henry County, to which position he was twice re-elected. Before the completion of his third term, however, he was elected superintendent of the Mt. Pleasant schools. In 1899 he became superintendent of the Sigourney schools. It was from this position that he resigned in 1904 to become state superintendent of public instruction, in which office he continued until January, 1911. Always active in the various branches of the State Teachers' Association, he had served on the executive committee for three years, and as president of the Southeastern Teachers' Association for one year. His record in the office of state superintendent was a distinguished one. The standards of the rural schools of the state at this time were low, equipment poor, and training of teachers inadequate. Mr. Riggs set about in his direct way to improve these conditions; he visited small communities all over the state, giving talks and explaining how conditions could be improved. Because of his personal knowledge and understanding of rural conditions and his innate kindness in dealing with people, he succeeded in arousing public sentiment for the proposals which he advocated for rural schools. He maintained that rural communities were entitled to equipment as good and teachers as well trained as were urban communities. To aid in getting sufficient money to pay for better buildings and equipment and to attract persons of ability and training to the work of teaching, he advised larger districts, the closing of small schools and the transportation of pupils. Thus he aroused sentiment that later crystallized in the establishment of the consolidated schools of Iowa. He further instituted teaching of agriculture in the one-room rural schools and the teaching of manual training and domestic science in the larger schools. The outstanding accomplishment of the administration of Mr. Riggs for the schools of Iowa, however, was the standardization of teachers' certificates and the centralization of that authority in the state. In 1907 Simpson College conferred on him an honorary degree of doctor of laws. After the completion of his administrative duties in the state department, Mr. Riggs established in Des Moines the J. F. Riggs Publishing Company, and continued active in it until his death. He was an active member of the Central Presbyterian Church. A man of high ideals, he was always modern in his thinking, he served his community and his state well. Moreover he was a kindly, home loving Christian gentleman.

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