

NOTABLE DEATHS

JAMES M. PARSONS, late associate justice of the Iowa Supreme Court, died in Des Moines, December 16, 1937, following several months illness and an unsuccessful operation. The son of Mr. and Mrs. Silas Parsons, pioneer settlers of Iowa, he was born on a farm four miles southwest of Anamosa, Jones County, Iowa, October 16, 1858. With the death of his mother in 1868 he was left an orphan. In the fall of 1876 he matriculated at Iowa State College, only to transfer to Cornell College the following year, where he remained two years. In 1879 the successful defense of his interests in the estate of his father against the claims of his guardian induced him to forsake the profession of civil engineering for that of the law. Entering upon such a career in 1879, he was admitted to the state bar the succeeding year at Anamosa. In 1881 he located in Rock Rapids where he remained, serving a term as Mayor and a term as county attorney for Lyons County, until 1906, when he removed to Des Moines. For many years he was counsel for the Iowa Bankers Association. In 1934 he was successful in a candidacy for the Iowa Supreme Court. A life long Democrat, he was a recognized leader in his party.—K.E.C.

If we look back seventy-nine years over the history of Iowa we cover the span of Judge Parsons' life, for, within the borders of Iowa he was born and here he spent his entire career.

There seem to be some men who pass thru life, regardless of honors that may come to them, regardless of the positions they hold, whose title is not that used by their friends in salutation. Judge Parsons was known as "Jim" Parsons. This circumstance is complimentary, and means that honor rather than disrespect was intended.

Judge Parsons' life was lived in the best American tradition, a tradition which we all trust will for many generations continue to stand as emblematic of the aims, ideals and possibilities of this great country. We have here a poor boy, who thru his own enterprise and energy, received an education that gave him the profession which for so many years he graced so ably. He started out in life to become a civil engineer but that did not meet with his approval and he commenced the study of law in an office in southeastern Iowa. In 1880, six days after his twenty-second birthday, he was admitted to the practice of law.

In the conduct of litigation in trial courts he was tactful and courteous. His methods were direct and his presentation distinguished by candor and good humor. He was forceful, and if the occasion warranted, eloquent in argument. His practice covered the entire field of the law. It is doubtful if any man in the history of Iowa has played a more important part in the legal profession than did Judge Parsons. Fifty-six years of continuous participation in the trial of cases, criminal

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.