

Mankato Record - newspaper
Saturday - January 15, 1876
Volume 17, Number 30
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Death of Hon. Lewis Porter

Lewis Porter was born in the town of Covert, Seneca County, N.Y., May 2nd 1829. His father, Lewis Porter, was a prominent man in the Baptist Church. He was a deacon for thirty years, and in his will gave largely to missionary purposes. The subject of our sketch attended Groton Academy and an academy at Ithica [sic], and finished his studies at Hamilton College. He then studied law at Farmerville, with a Mr. Hunting. At the age of nineteen he relinquished his law studies to take charge of his father's farm, which he managed to the time of his father's death, fourteen years afterward.

In the fall of 1857, he was married to Esther Burr, of Schuyler County. He was elected Justice of the Peace the spring after he was married and retained the office during his stay in New York. He also held various county offices and was very active in originating and supporting war measures during the rebellion. In 1863 he came to Minnesota and purchased a farm near Mills' Lake, in the township of Garden City. Though he followed farming to the time of his death, he never abandoned the study of law. Last winter he was admitted to the bar in Mankato.

For several years after Mr. Porter became a resident of this county, he took a deep interest in politics. He was a Republican and wielded a strong influence in the councils of his party. In October, 1866, he was nominated for the State Senate in the 17th District, consisting of the counties of Blue Earth and Watonwan, and was elected by about 500 majority, over Hon. J. A. Wiswell, his Democrat opponent. His majority in this county was 384. He took his seat in the Legislature January 8th, 1867. A clear-headed thinker and a ready debater, he made his influence felt in that body and successfully shaped the course of legislation in which the people of Blue Earth County took a deep interest. He was conceded by his associates to be one of the ablest and most influential members of the Senate. Mr. Porter felt an intense interest in the establishment of a Normal School at Mankato. He carried through the Senate a bill to authorize Mankato to raise, by tax, the sum of \$5,000 which

secured the location of the Normal School in this city. The bill appropriating \$150,000 to provide for the erection of three normal buildings, at Mankato, Winona, and St. Cloud, respectively, received his most cordial and enthusiastic support and was only defeated by the veto of Gov. Marshall. Other measures of importance to Blue Earth County passed at that session by Mr. Porter's aid, were, a law to authorize the County Board to issue bonds to build a County jail; a law so amending the city charter to extend the city limits; also a law authorizing the Minnesota Valley Railroad Company to build a road from Mankato to Blue Earth City. Having been elected for a short term, Mr. Porter served but a single session in the Senate. He continued an active Republican until 1872, when he voted for Mr. Greeley, and has since been a Liberal Republican. He early became a member of the Patrons of Husbandry, was made Master of the Garden City Grange and took a lively interest in the success of the order.

The circumstances attending his death are as follows: On the last day of the old year he had been out buying corn. About three o'clock in the afternoon he came home tired and cold. After eating something he did his chores. He then came in and sat by the stove. After a while he got a file of agricultural papers and spent the evening in reading. About nine o'clock he lit a candle and went to his room to retire. Feeling still chilly he took a draught from a bottle which he supposed contained home-made wine, an article which had been kept in the house for a number of years, but the bottle contained corrosive sublimate, which had been kept in the house for killing rats, and had been moved out of its usual place in the cupboard, by himself, a day or two before, while searching for papers. He immediately came to the kitchen, still holding the candle, and exclaimed:

"Wife what was in that bottle?"

"Did you drink from that bottle!" asked his wife in alarm.

"Yes" he replied, "get me something quick to make me vomit."

Mrs. Porter at once gave him warm water and salt, and put some lard on the stove to melt. Before the lard was melted he vomited violently. Dr. Case, of Garden City was immediately informed of the accident. In the meantime, Mrs. Porter gave lard, white of eggs, magnesia and other things recommended in cases of poisoning. As soon as possible Drs. Cummins and Davis were sent for. They informed Mrs. Porter that she had given the proper antidotes. Mr. Porter sat up until Dr. Cummins came. We cannot give all the details of his sickness. On Tuesday he thought he could eat a baked apple and a cracker,

but these things, like everything else that he tried to eat seemed to nauseate him. He did not feel much pain, only a burning sensation in his throat and stomach, occasionally. He dressed himself every day till Thursday. Though he was not at all like himself, he recognized his neighbors and conversed with them. The last person he was known to address was Maj. Evans. That was at two o'clock on Friday afternoon. He gave Mr. Evans his hand and said: "I am glad to see you Major." He sank into unconsciousness, and at thirty minute past eleven, on Friday night, he died. The funeral services were conducted by Rev. Joseph Rockwood in the Baptist church at Garden City. The church was densely packed with mourners, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather. Messrs. Mendenhall, Fairchild, Bixby, Mills and others, officiated as pall-bearers.

The choir sang: "This place is holy ground." Mr. Rockwood read the fourteenth chapter of Job and made an impressive prayer. The choir sang: "There is a joy for souls distressed." Mr. Rockwood preached a discourse from Ecclesiastes, VII, 2. "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart."

The sermon was exceedingly appropriate, and we heard only one opinion concerning it. The closing remarks in allusion to the virtues of the deceased, were spoken with great acceptance. Mr. Rockwood said: We were attracted to Mr. Porter from the first by his noble bearing and generous impulses. Magnanimity, generosity, purity of mind, a uniformly courteous demeanor; these were the prominent characteristics of the good man suddenly taken from us. During his acquaintance with Mr. Porter he had never heard him use a coarse or improper word. As a husband, a father, a neighbor, a citizen, a man, Mr. Porter was a model for our imitation. After a short prayer and the singing of the hymn, "Rest weary heart." The friends were permitted to view the dead. Many followed the remains to the cemetery on the hill, and saw all that was mortal of Lewis Porter committed to the grave.

A sorrowing widow and three children, two sons and a daughter, aged respectively 16, 12, and 9 years, are left to mourn the loss of their best friend. We mourn with them in their great affliction.