

Memorial
of
Henry Wilson Lamberton
(1831 – 1905) *

**Winona County
Third Judicial District**

Winona County Bar Association

**Filed
February 1st, 1907**

* The date of Henry Lamberton's death is not noted in the following memorial but the Minnesota Historical Society's index of death certificates lists it as December 31, 1905.

The date this memorial was delivered in district court is not known, but it was filed by the Clerk of Court on the 1st of February, 1907.

The family name of Lamberton is of pure Scottish origin, and, like all ancient names of Scotland, territorial in its derivation and association with the earlier historic times of that country. The name occurs as early as the reign of Edgar, (1097-1107). John de Lamberton appears on the rolls of Scottish nobles and others invited to accompany King Edward into Flanders, May 24, 1297. Perhaps the most famous one of the name in early historic times was William de Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews from 1298 to 1328. He was one of the three bishops who crowned King Robert of Bruce, March 27, 1306.

General James Lamberton, a lineal descendant of Bishop de Lamberton, was born in the year 1755. He emigrated toward the close of the war of Independence and settled in the Cumberland valley of Pennsylvania. He located at Carlisle in the year 1783, where he became largely engaged in mercantile pursuits. January 4, 1785 he was married to Jane McKeehan, daughter of Alexander McKeehan, who emigrated from the north of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century.

Major Robert Lamberton, son of James, and father of Henry W. Lamberton, was born March 17, 1787, at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, was educated at Dickinson College, and was a college mate of James Buchanan, later President of the United States between whom existed the strongest ties of friendship. He had studied for the law, but when the last war with Great Britain was declared he was appointed paymaster in the service of the United States.

Upon retiring from the United States service, he returned to Carlisle, where he engaged in mercantile trade, and where he was postmaster for many years. He died at Carlisle, August 9, 1852, at the age of 65 years. He married Mary Harkness, daughter of William Harkness, of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, April 20, 1815. His widow survived him many years, passing to her final rest in the ninetieth year of her age. Her physical activity and the humor and clearness of her bright mind remained with her until the last. She left surviving, four sons and two daughters, among whom was Henry Wilson Lamberton, the subject of this sketch.

It is worthy of note that Rear Admiral Benjamin P. Lamberton of the United States Navy, who took a part in the late war with Spain as Admiral Dewey's Chief of Staff in the battle of Manila Bay, May 1, 1898, is a nephew of the late Mr. Lamberton.

Henry Wilson Lamberton was born on the 6th day of March, A. D. 1831, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where he received his early education. He studied law and completed his course under the tuition of his brother, Robert A. Lamberton, who was an eminent lawyer for many years in the Key Stone State. H. W. Lamberton was admitted to the bar in 1852. He was engaged in the practice of his profession in Franklin, Pa. until the spring of 1856, when with his brother-in-law, Hon. Samuel Plumer, he removed to Winona, Minnesota, where they continued together the practice of law.

At the first municipal election of the city of Winona, in the spring of 1857, Mr. Lamberton was elected city attorney, defeating Hon. Daniel S. Norton, who was later United States Senator from Minnesota.

Business engagements caused Mr. Lamberton's removal, temporarily, from Winona to Faribault, thence to St. Peter, where he was residing at the time of the Indian uprising and massacre in 1862. In 1863, he returned to Winona, where he continuously resided to the date of his death.

In 1864, Mr. Lamberton was the Democratic candidate for Congress in the Winona district, which at that time embraced a territory of nineteen counties. He "stumped" the district, visiting nearly every county. His opponent was Hon. William Windom, who latterly was elected a United States Senator from Minnesota, and still later appointed Secretary of the Treasurer of the United States under the administrations of presidents Garfield and Harrison. Upon the election of Mr. Windom to congress, Mr. Lamberton congratulated his brother townsman upon his election, and jocularly remarked to his late opponent: "During the campaign he had done the best he could to 'increase his majority'". Mr. Lamberton as a public speaker

was forceful, logical and convincing, and had he continued that profession which he had chosen in earlier life, he would have attained high eminence at the bar.

In this connection, it may be appropriately remarked that Mr. Lamberton possessed a fine vein of humor. If there was a humorous side to a subject he at once detected it, and was quick to make the most of it. His very nature was the well-spring of delightful humor.

In 1866, he was appointed land commissioner of the Winona and St. Peter Railroad Company. In 1876, the Winona and St. Peter Land Company was organized and purchased from the owners 500,000 acres of land, granted by the United States to the Railroad Company. Mr. Lamberton was elected commissioner of this company, and held the position at the time of his death.

In 1868 he organized the Winona Deposit Bank of which he was elected president, an office he continuously held. It was through his business sagacity and financial ability that this bank has become one of the strongest and safest banking institutions in the state.

He was elected School Director from the First ward of the city of Winona in 1880, serving one term as a member of the Board of Education.

In 1880, at the Democratic State Convention at St. Paul, he was elected a delegate and attended the Democratic National Convention at Cincinnati, which nominated General Winfield S. Hancock for the presidency; at this convention he was appointed by its chairman, one of the committee of notification, to notify the candidate of his nomination. He was elected mayor of the city of Winona in 1881, and reelected in 1882, and declined the Democratic nomination in 1883. His service as mayor was during a period of our municipal government, when city officers were annually elected, and when the mayor was the presiding officer of the city council. It was under his administration as mayor of Winona, that the present excellent system of waterworks was inaugurated and constructed,

which has been a pride to this city. He believed a public office a public trust; and during his mayoralty he gave much of his time and personal supervision to the welfare of the city. He guarded the disbursements of the public funds with the same jealous care which he gave to his personal affairs.

In 1888, he was chosen chairman of the Democratic State Convention which nominated Hon. Eugene M. Wilson for governor.

In 1893 he was appointed, without solicitation, by Governor Nelson, one of the Capitol Commission, for the erection of the present magnificent capitol building, which honorable position he filled at the time of his death.

In 1894 he was elected president of the Winona and Western Railway Company, and preceding that date he was president of the Winona and Southwestern Railway Company, being the same line of road purchased by the Chicago Great Western Railway Company, extending from Winona, Minnesota to Osage, Iowa, a distance of 117 miles.

Mr. Lamberton's political affiliations were with the Democratic party, and until recent years he had always taken an active part in the councils of his party, his influence extending beyond the confines of his own state.

Such is a summary of the notable achievements attained in business and public affairs in the career of the departed one, who came to Minnesota in the pride of his young manhood, and for nearly five decades was an influential and prominent citizen of the beautiful city of his adoption.

Mr. Lamberton was married May 4, 1852, to Margaret J. Plumer, second daughter of Arnold Plumer of Franklin, Pennsylvania, who passed to her final rest after a lingering illness, April 21, 1902. Their long wedded life was one of uninterrupted domestic happiness, as truly attested by his assiduous attention and faithful devotion during her prolonged illness.

Their children are: Arnold Plumer Lamberton, who was the eldest, deceased; Charles Harkness Lamberton of Aiken, South Carolina; Henry McClellan Lamberton, attorney-at-law; Mary Ella Lamberton, married to John R. Mitchell, and Margaret Plumer Lamberton, married to C. A. Boalt, the last three named children being residents of Winona.

In the annals of the biography of the subject of this imperfectly prepared sketch, we find that Henry Wilson Lamberton sought his home in Minnesota nearly half a century ago, before it had emerged from its territorial existence to assume the crown of statehood. We find that he belonged to that noble band of heroic pioneers, who invariably leave an imperishable and honored impress upon the weal of a great commonwealth. And in the later territorial times in the administration of its public affairs, he was closely allied with the prominent men who conceived and formulated the destinies, of the material interests of the North Star State.

In the prime of his vigorous manhood he frequently mingled with the chosen intellectual pioneers who had come to cast their fortunes, for weal or woe, in the then land of the Dakotas. Acknowledged among his contemporaries as a man of excellent wisdom, keen in intellect, correct in judgment, conservative in counsel, with ready wit and genial in companionship, his presence was ever a source of congratulation. "Harry" Lamberton, as he was familiarly known among a large circle of friends, was always a welcome visitor at the capital of the state. Of those with whom he was once so familiar and with whom he associated whose names are firmly woven in the historical annals of Minnesota, are: Ramsey, Sibley, Gorman, Flandrau, Windom, Eugene Wilson, Davis, Mitchell, Dunnell, and a host of others who have responded to the celestial roll call and are now numbered with the blessed dead.

Mr. Lamberton's acquaintance with public men was not restricted to his own state. Attending during his life time as a delegate, or otherwise, Democratic National Conventions, he came in contact with the leading statesmen of his party, which gave him an

opportunity to form the acquaintance of many of the public men of his time. His large business transactions also brought him in close touch with prominent men in the business world, with whom he had an intimate relationship.

Since the spirit of commercialism has so universally taken possession of the people of this country, it is apparent there is a growing sentiment or prejudice abroad in this republic, which prevails among the class denominated "plain people" against men who have accumulated enormous wealth or multimillionaires, men who have suddenly come into possession of vast fortunes, perhaps by due process of law but possibly by question-able methods, which incite adverse criticism. Admittedly, there is justification for this created sentiment, and unless the cause is utterly removed, or materially remedied, it will ultimately become a menace to the perpetuity of the nation.

But, a righteous judgment should mark the distinction between the "financial wrecker" and the honest man, who by due diligence, after a long and successful business career may have accumulated a fortune. Mr. Lamberton's commercial relations were especially free from the spirit of speculation. During his long period of business activity in our midst, whatever fortune he may have acquired was acquired by honorable means, characterized by judicious investments, through the exercise of good judgment and cautious management. Mr. Lamberton was ever alert for self-preservation in business transactions, but his methods were strictly honorable. In all business negotiations, his word was as good as his note, and his note was as good as his bank. In the prosecutions of his vast business transactions during a period of nearly fifty years in this community, no man can truthfully assert that he was ever wronged or betrayed by act or deed of his to whom these obituary lines are dedicated. His impulses were kind and generous. It was ever a pleasure for him to devote both time and attention to extend a neighborly act; and his ready spirit to accommodate a friend was manifestly pronounced.

The writer hereof, coming into almost daily contact with Mr. Lamberton, for continuous years, was afforded ample opportunity to estimate his character and judge his daily walk and conversation. Like us all, faults he possessed, yet his heart was responsive and his nature sympathetic when appealed to for relief of those in distress, sickness or any other adversity, and few men responded more readily or cheerfully than H. W. Lamberton:

“No further seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode;
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
The bosom of his Father and his God.”

/s/ B. A. Man — /s/ Earl Simpson — /s/ L. L. Brown
Committee

The committee acknowledges its indebtedness to Mr. W. J. Whipple for valuable assistance in preparing this sketch.

“WHEREAS, Honorable H. W. Lamberton, lately departed this life,

“AND WHEREAS, the deceased was a pioneer settler of the State, and the first City Attorney of the City of Winona,

“NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the Winona County Bar Association, that we deeply regret the death of Mr. Lamberton, and extend to his family our heartfelt sympathy,

“AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of these Resolutions be presented to the District Court of Winona County, and a copy forwarded to the family of the deceased.” ■



Posted MLHP: November 13, 2011.